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Snodland to Sole Street

The North Downs and Kent's Weald Way.

Start: Snodland station

Finish: Sole Street station

Length: 13.1km (8.1 miles).

Time: 4 hours. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 7 hours.

Transport: Trains go from London Charing Cross to Snodland. You will have to change at Strood (on the Gillingham line), and the journey time is 1 hour 30 minutes. Trains back from Sole Street to Victoria run hourly (journey time 51 minutes). Buy a day return to Snodland, and take the train nearest to 10am. For the Sole Street circular walk, take the train nearest to 10.15am. For those who are driving, the alternative circular walk is the best option - but you can leave your car at Strood station and catch the train to Snodland, if you wish. For the return train from Sole Street to Strood, change at Rochester.

OS Landranger Map: 178

OS Explorer Map: 148

Snodland, map reference TQ706618 is in Kent, 7.5km north-west of Maidstone.

Toughness: 5 out of 10

Walk Notes: Don't be put off by the rather industrial nature of the train ride to

the start of this walk. As soon as you leave Snodland, the landscape becomes rural and peaceful with good views and a surprisingly away-from-it-all feel. The majority of the walk is over the North Downs, mostly through wooded areas and across open fields, and is hilly at times.

Soon after lunch at Harvel, the views open out before you descend into tranquil Luddesdown, with its historic church and what may be the oldest continually inhabited house in the country. In summer, you're likely to encounter Kent's favourite sport, cricket, both on the green behind the lunchtime pub stop (which comes half-way round the walk) and in Luddesdown behind the Victorian school. Real-ale lovers will appreciate the tea stop, the Cock Inn at Luddesdown.

Walk options: Directions for the alternative start are given at the end of the main walk text.

a) Alternative circular walk from Sole Street: By starting at Sole Street, you can make the walk slightly longer at 13.5km (8.4 miles). Trains to Sole Street go from Victoria.

WALK DIRECTIONS**[1] [Numbers refer to the map.]**

At **Snodland Station**, cross the railway footbridge and descend the left-hand set of steps. Turn right and follow the red sign to the town centre, your direction 300 degrees. In 70 metres the road curves to the left. After another 50 metres turn right over a bridge across the A288. Immediately over the bridge turn right down a concrete path with metal railings on your right.

After 60 metres turn left along a road, which becomes the High Street, your direction west.

You pass by a church then a playing field on your left and after a while you can see the North Downs ahead in the distance. After 230 metres you reach a crossroads.

Turn right along Holborough Road, your direction 20 degrees. After 70 metres turn left up Lee Road, then in 150 metres turn right along Covey Hall Road. After 120 metres, just before house no. 121, turn left along a concrete road between houses and a row of garages, your direction 290 degrees. (If you reach a small green on the left you have gone too far.) After 70 metres the road narrows to a path.

After 50 metres, you reach the corner of an open space on your left, to go along its right-hand edge. In 90 metres at the far end continue along a fenced-in path. After 300 metres the path leads out onto a lane. Turn right and follow the lane, as it becomes a car-wide track. Follow the path for 1.2km until you reach a large wood up ahead at [2].

In more detail: After 60 metres the path swings round to the left, with a cemetery on your left. The path goes slightly uphill and past a disused quarry on your right.

After 300 metres the hedgerow on your left gives way to a low bank and open fields. In 150 metres the path enters a tree arbour as you continue uphill, your

direction 280 degrees. After 160 metres the trees on your left give way to open fields. The path curves right then left. After 600 metres you reach a crosspaths with a wood ahead and double metal fieldgate on your left. [2]

Cross the track and cross a stile into the wood, your direction 310 degrees. After 30 metres cross a car-wide track to go uphill, passing by a house on your right.

In 150 metres, (and 25 metres before going under some national grid cables), the footpath starts to level, (as you pass on your left a car-wide track leading up to a metal fieldgate). Keep straight on along a narrow path that contours along the side of the hill.

In 650 metres, you come down to a clearing to cross diagonally over a car-wide track, to carry straight on down a car-wide track into the wood, as marked by a footpath post, your direction 300 degrees.

In 180 metres, you reach a path T-junction. Turn left up a car-wide track, your direction 280 degrees. In 20 metres, fork right uphill, your initial direction 310 degrees, on a path that ascends steadily through the wood.

After 400 metres you come out into a field. You see two fields ahead. Go into the left-hand field and go uphill with a wooded boundary on your right, your direction 300 degrees.

After 280 metres, at the top of the field, where the path levels off, go past a metal fieldgate to go up a fenced-in car-wide track, your direction 280 degrees.

After 100 metres cross over a lane. Follow the footpath down across a field, a track, and up the other side to veer left along a fenced in car wide track until [3] below.

In more detail: Continue ahead on the footpath down across a field following a mini pylon cable run, your direction 290 degrees.

After 120 metres you pass by a mini pylon post, where the path begins to descend more steeply. Continue downhill along the path, following the cable run. After 50 metres a wood on your right-hand side borders the footpath. In 50 metres, at the end of the wood, ignore a car-wide track off to your right, to continue down the right-hand edge of the field. After 120 metres at the right-hand corner of the field, cross over into the next field to go down its left-hand edge.

In 80 metres, at the bottom of the hill, go through a motorcycle-blocking barrier to cross a car-wide dirt track. Continue in the same direction up the left-hand edge of the next field following a grassy car-wide track, your direction 280 degrees.

After 400 metres, *at the top-left corner of the field, veer left along a fenced in car wide track, your direction 260 degrees, initially with a line of trees to your left.*

[3] After 250 metres, *where the path swings round to the right, go straight ahead past a wooden horse-blocking barrier with a yellow (footpath) arrow. Cross a tarmac car-wide track and go through a wooden kissing gate, to go across a small field, your direction 250 degrees.*

After 50 metres, cross a stile and a tarmac lane to follow a bridleway sign ahead, your direction 300 degrees. In 90 metres, just after you pass by some metal buildings on the left, the path starts to descend. In 100 metres you pass by a waymark post on your left and reach track junctions. Continue downhill through a wood with a wire fence to your right. In 130 metres the path curves between two open fields.

In 30 metres, at the end of the fields, *keep straight on uphill, ignoring the broad (bridleway) path to your left, your direction 280 degrees. After 50 metres go over a stile into a field, to cross the field towards its far corner (next to a timber-frame house), your direction 290 degrees.*

After 240 metres leave the field through a metal kissing gate (left of a double metal fieldgate) and *veer left onto a tarmac lane to Harvel. In 25 metres fork right diagonally across a green (a suitable picnic spot), towards a bench on the far side, your direction due west.*

*In 100 metres [4] when you reach the lane, turn right following the signpost to Harvel and Meopham, passing by a duck pond on your right. In 180 metres you reach the **Amazon and Tiger** pub, the suggested lunch stop.*

After lunch *turn left out of the pub and backtrack to the duck pond. Turn left down Dean Lane, signposted to Luddesdown, with the green on your right. In 270 metres, at a footpath signpost, cross over a stile on your left. Follow the sign half right, across a field, your direction 340 degrees.*

In 170 metres, *at the far corner of the field, go through a metal gate (left of a metal fieldgate). In 40 metres you come out into the corner of a field. Continue along the right-hand edge of this field, with woodland on your right, your direction due north.*

In 80 metres, *at the right-hand corner of the field, go through a metal kissing gate into the next field to go down across it, to join the left-hand edge of this field. Keep to the edge of the wood on your left, along the top of the field (not the bottom of the valley that develops to its right).*

After 300 metres, at the corner of the field, go through a metal kissing gate into the next field, continue with the wood on your left-hand side, your direction north. After 180 metres, at the corner of this field, go through a gap between holly and hawthorn trees into the next field. Continue across the upper (left-hand) edge of this field in the same direction, north.

After 120 metres go through a metal kissing gate slightly to your left to *enter a wood. In 150 metres cross over a tarmac lane, and carry on uphill, following a*

byway signpost, your initial direction 340 degrees.

After 100 metres the byway swings round to the left but you turn right, following a footpath post, your direction 70 degrees. In 70 metres, where the track forks, take the lower right-hand track. In a further 60 metres, the path plunges into a dense wood.

After 550 metres you *come out alongside an open space on your left, with a wooden fence and a house on a hill.*

Ignore a path up to the left and go right downhill, your initial direction 60 degrees.

In 140 metres cross a small field (bordered by two wooden kissing gates), your direction 40 degrees, and after 50 metres you go back into woodland to then go through a wooden kissing gate after a further 50 metres.

In 130 metres, ignore a fork down to the right, and after 70 metres go through a wooden kissing gate. In 100 metres pass by the gates of a house on your left to continue down a car-wide track.

After 300 metres, *where the car-wide track swings round to the left, keep straight ahead*, to go through a metal kissing gate, **[5]** into a large field. *Continue in the same direction, down towards the far corner of the field*, your direction 40 degrees.

In 340 metres at the corner of the field, go through a metal gate and *turn left onto the lane. After 120 metres turn right across a stile* in a gap in the hedge. *Turn left along the upper left-hand edge of the field.*

In 150 metres, (about 120 metres before a pylon tower), cross a stile in the fence on the left. Keep to the right-hand edge of the next field, your direction 70 degrees. In 130 metres go through a wooden kissing gate into the next field, to go along its right-hand edge; you can see Luddesdown church straight-ahead.

In 250 metres, at the corner of the field, turn left following a yellow arrow with a fence and hedgerow on your right.

In 60 metres turn right at the fence corner post, again following the right-hand field edge and a yellow (footpath) arrow, your direction 70 degrees. After 160 metres *in the corner of the field cross a stile and descend some steps. Turn right along a lane* towards the church. Turn right into the churchyard to visit the church of **St Peter and Paul, Luddesdown.**

Coming out of the main door of the church, do not retrace your steps, but *go through the small wooden gate ahead and turn left*. Note the house behind the wall on your right, **Luddesdown Court.**

In 30 metres turn left at the millstone along a cobbled road, and in 80 metres go through some large wooden gates. (You may like to turn right at the footpath sign to look at the village notice board, which is targeted at walkers and has information about Luddesdown Organic Farm.)

After 25 metres *fork left at the road fork* with the green space sporting the Luddesdown village sign on your right. *In 30 metres cross the road and go through a wooden kissing gate* following the direction of a footpath signpost. Keep straight on, your direction 350 degrees, passing a Victorian school and house on your right. Beyond the school, go along the field edge following a wooden fence that encircles a cricket pitch.

At the bottom of the dip, where the fence curves, continue ahead uphill, your direction 350 degrees. In 300 metres, at the top edge of the field, go through the gap in the hedge and, following the direction of the yellow (footpath) arrow, through an area of undergrowth.

Go through a wooden kissing gate into the next field and keep straight ahead, your direction 330 degrees. Once over the brow of the hill head for the field corner down below. After 350 metres go

through a wooden kissing gate to go down through a small wooded area. After 20 metres cross over a stile into a field, to go down across this field, towards a stile, your direction 340 degrees.

In 120 metres cross the stile **[6]** and *turn left onto a lane* into Henley Street. After 270 metres you come to the **Cock Inn** on your left for refreshments.

Coming out of the pub turn left. In 140 metres turn left along a path between street signs for Henley Street and Gold Street. In 40 metres go over a stile by a tree into a large field, to continue straight ahead across it, your direction 300 degrees. Once a red tiled house becomes visible ahead, aim slightly to the left of it.

In 600 metres, you reach the field edge, (30 metres to the left of the red tiled house), to go along an enclosed footpath. After 130 metres go through a wooden kissing gate. Cross the road, with the **Railway Inn** on your left. **Sole Street Station** is straight ahead.

WALK OPTIONS

a) Alternative start from Sole Street:

Coming off the London train cross over the footbridge to exit into the station car park and turn left up the station approach road. At the T-junction at the top cross over the main road to go through a wooden kissing gate to go along a fenced in footpath. After 130 metres you come out into a field and *turn half right across the field*, (passing under national grid cables along the way), your direction 170 degrees.

In 420 metres *exit the field and turn left down a car wide track to join the Weald Way (WW)*, your direction 130 degrees. In 140 metres you pass by a house and a double garage on your right to continue along the right hand side of a field with a wooded area on your right. After 300 metres go through a car wide gap (with a footpath post to its right) to cross into the next field to go (initially) down the left-hand side of the field, (passing under HV

cables along the way).

In 200 metres at the top left-hand corner of the field follow the footpath through a lightly wooded area. After 60 metres go through a metal kissing gate (left of a metal fieldgate) to *emerge from the wooded area into a field and turn right down its right-hand edge*, your initial direction 160 degrees.

In 100 metres at the bottom right-hand corner of the field, go through a wooden kissing gate to *go down some steps into the next field and turn left along the upper left-hand side of this field*, your direction 80 degrees.

After 120 metres cross over into the next field. In 70 metres ignore a footpath (WW) down to the right to continue in the same direction.

After 240 metres go over a crosspaths with a bench just beyond on your left to follow the footpath round to the right and down the left-hand edge of the field. In 320 metres *at the bottom left hand corner of the field turn left* to go through a wooden kissing gate (right of a metal fieldgate) **[A1]** and *turn left along a lane* towards Lower Luddesdown.

After 120 metres you pass by The Golden Lion on your right hand side and *in 40 metres turn right up a lane* sign posted Great Buckland 1¾, your initial direction 160 degrees.

[!]*In 180 metres as the lane levels out fork right off the lane along a signposted footpath*, to go along the upper left hand edge of a field, your direction 200 degrees. In 45 metres at the corner of the garden fence on your left the footpath continues across the field. In 50 metres at the corner of an adjacent field on your right, continue in the same direction now along the right-hand edge of the field.

In 220 metres *the field edge having curved round to the left, ignore a footpath to the right into a wooded area.* **[!]** *In a further 25 metres turn right* as marked by a footpath post to go through

a wooded field border. In 8 metres you pass a footpath post to come out into the next field. Turn half left up and across the field, (aiming in the direction of an HV pylon tower just to the left of the brow of the hill), your direction 200 degrees.

In 300 metres go over a stile into the next field to rejoin the Weald Way. **[A2]** You now follow the Weald Way for the remainder of this section and for the most part it is clearly sign-posted.

In more detail: Go up the left-hand side of this field. In 80 metres turn left to cross a stile (left of a metal fieldgate), to continue down the upper right-hand edge of the next field, your direction 170 degrees. In 100 metres at the right-hand field corner go over a stile (right of a metal fieldgate) to go up in the same direction along the right hand edge of this next field.

In 300 metres where the field edge curves up to the right by a footpath post, veer left across the field, (cutting its upper right hand corner, aiming for a stile on the far side), your direction 170 degrees. In 150 metres go through a metal gate into the next field and veer left down across this field cutting its lower left hand corner. In 80 metres go through a metal gate and continue in the same direction down across the next field, your direction 190 degrees, (passing 30 metres to the right of a small tree clump in the field and going under a national grid cable run).

After 180 metres go through a metal gate into the next field and continue in the same direction across the field towards its far side. In 550 metres cross over a stile to go up some steps to then turn right down a lane. In 25 metres fork right down the lower lane.

In 220 metres you pass by a house on your right as the lane starts to ascend. In 130 metres where the lane swings up to the right, continue ahead through a wooden kissing gate and up a car wide track, your direction 230 degrees.

In 70 metres go past a redundant stile (right of a metal fieldgate) to enter a lightly wooded area. In 60 metres go over a stile to leave the lightly wooded area to go up a fenced in footpath. In 200 metres the footpath enters Luxon Wood. Continue up this clearly defined footpath through the wood.

After 520 metres you emerge into the top corner of a field to go along its upper right-hand side, your direction 210 degrees. In 180 metres *at the right-hand field corner turn right along a fenced-in car wide track*, your direction 260 degrees, initially with a line of trees to your left.

You now follow the main walk directions from [3].

Lunch and Tea places

Amazon and Tiger *Harvel Street, Harvel Village, nr Meopham, DA13 0DE (01474 814 705)*, **Open** noon-11pm Mon, Fri-Sun; noon-3pm, 6-11pm Tue-Thur. **Food served** noon-2.30pm Mon-Sat; noon-4pm Sun. The terrace garden at the rear of the pub overlooks the cricket pitch. Groups of more than eight should phone in advance. Situated 6.3 km from the end of the walk. This is the suggested lunch stop for the walk.

Cock Inn *Henley Street, Luddesdown, DA13 0XB (01474 814208)*, **Open** noon-11pm Mon -Sat; noon-10.30pm Sun. **Food served** noon-2.30pm Mon-Sat. Known for its real ales, this pub also serves tea and coffee. This is the suggested tea stop for the walk. (Please note: allow 15 minutes to walk to Sole Street station from the pub.)

Golden Lion *Luddesdown Road, DA13 0XE (01474 815644)*. 2.5km from the start of the walk from Sole Street **Open** daily. **Food served** noon-3.00pm, 5-9pm Tue-Fri. noon - 9pm Sat, noon - 6pm Sun.

Railway Inn *Sole Street, DA13 0XY*
(01474 814375). **Open** 11am-11pm daily.
This pub beside Sole Street Station
serves food at lunch and also in the
evenings from 6.30pm.

Sole Street Post Office, 50 metres from
the Railway Inn, sells drinks and snacks
(closed Sunday afternoon).