

Last walk check	
1 st May 2021	
Current status	Document last updated Tuesday, 11 th May 2021
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Welwyn Circular

Start and finish: Welwyn Garden City station

Length: 18.3 km (11.4 miles).

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

Transport: Trains go from London Kings Cross to Welwyn Garden City, journey time is 26 minutes, with a half-hourly service Mondays to Saturdays and an hourly one on Sundays.

OS Landranger Map: 166

OS Explorer Map: 182

Welwyn Garden City, map reference TL 240129, is in **Hertfordshire**, 12 km north east of St. Albans.

Toughness: 2 out of 10

Walk Notes: This walk benefits from a fast and frequent train service, which whisks you well past the M25 in less than half an hour. Once out of the Garden City and over the A1(M) you are in some attractive Hertfordshire countryside, including the landscaped parkland of Bocket Hall and Lamer House. In the afternoon you reach the picturesque village of Ayot St. Lawrence, which has two unusual churches – one reminiscent of a Greek temple, the other an ivied Gothic ruin – and if you wish you can visit the home of George Bernard Shaw, Shaw's Corner, now owned by the National Trust. (Open to the public Wed - Sun from May – October.) For lunch you have the choice of the more upmarket Bocket Arms at Ayot St. Lawrence or a more traditional pub lunch at Wheathampstead earlier on in the walk (adds at least 2.5 km).

Walk Options: An infrequent 366 bus service operates Mon – Sat between Welwyn Garden City and Wheathampstead if you wish to shorten the walk, there is also a daily service 304 to St. Albans.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Take the nearest (fast) train to 10.05am from Kings Cross Station to Welwyn Garden City. If stopping at the earlier lunch stop at Wheathampstead, take the nearest (fast) train to 10.35am

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WALK DIRECTIONS

Exit the main entrance of the station into the Howard Shopping Centre. Take the down escalator to *leave the shopping Centre through the main ground floor exit ahead*. Veer right to go up the right hand side of the boulevard (Howards Gate), your direction 290 degrees. In 60 metres cross over Stonehills and in a further 200 metres cross over (the dual lane) Parkway passing by a fountain on your left-hand side, to continue in the same direction up Russellcroft Road.

After 80 metres cross over Guessens Road. In a further 150 metres *turn right along Handside Lane. In 180 metres at a T-junction with Bridge Road*, cross over and *turn left for 50 metres to then turn right* up a car wide tarmac bridleway through a wooded area, your direction north.

In 60 metres, go over a cross-paths to continue along a car wide tarmac track, and after 80 metres go past a car-blocking barrier to continue past a green on your right hand side. In 120 metres cross over Sherrardspark Road and pass by a car blocking gate, to join a car wide track to *enter Sherrardspark Wood*, your direction 350 degrees.

In 70 metres fork left up a car wide bridleway, your direction 300 degrees.

Continue along this car wide track for 900 metres, (ignoring turnings to the left and right). *80 metres before a fieldgate ahead that leads out to the main road, fork left down a footpath*, your direction west.

In 140 metres go through a metal kissing gate to *exit Sherrardspark Wood. Cross the B197 with care and turn left for 25 metres to then turn right across a road bridge over the A1(M). Immediately over the bridge turn left* across a grass area to join Brickwall Close. After 150 metres you pass by the Waggoners pub on your left hand side.

Immediately past the Waggoners, turn right to join a footpath (bordered by a wood on your left and a field on your right). In 70 metres go through some wooden posts to enter Bocket Estate, your direction 210 degrees.

After 50 metres you go between a green and a (golf course) tee to continue down a car wide track through a wooded area, your direction 220 degrees. In 180 metres you emerge from the wooded area to cross a 60 metre wide fairway. Continue down a car wide track through the wooded area for 45 metres to then **[!]** veer left, down across a fairway, your direction 210 degrees.

After 70 metres go to the right of a wooden footpath post, to follow the path for 20 metres through a lightly wooded area, to then cross a car wide track. In a further 90 metres you emerge from the wooded area to cross a tarmac track, to then go between a green on the right and a tee on the left, and after 50 metres go through a lightly wooded area, your direction 220 degrees. In 80 metres you emerge from the lightly wooded area to follow footpath posts down across the golf course, your direction 210 degrees.

In 300 metres you reach a car wide tarmac driveway (with a barbed wire fence and tennis courts beyond on your right hand side). *Turn right to join the Lea Valley Walk footpath* with the fence on your left, your direction 340 degrees.

After 250 metres cross over the driveway entrance to Bocket Hall, to immediately turn left down a footpath with a wooden fence on its left-hand side. In 130 metres you pass by a distinctive tree on your left hand side behind a wooden fence, (with a golf clubhouse further beyond), your direction 300 degrees.

In 350 metres follow the footpath into a wood. In 800 metres you *come out to a*

lane, (with a ford over the river Lea on your left-hand side). *Turn right for 50 metres, to then turn left* along a bridleway to continue along the Lea Valley Walk. After 500 metres ignore a bridleway up to the right, to continue along the Lea Valley Walk ('Wheathampstead 2'), your direction 310 degrees.

You follow a left-hand fence and a mini pylon line up off to the right (initially not visible through the treeline) and in about 700 metres go through a metal kissing gate into a large pasture. After 350 metres **[4]** the path forks by a marker post on the left, 80 metres before a wooden kissing gate in the lower left-hand corner of the field. (There is an elevated main road (audible if not always visible), 250 metres further on in the distance.)

There are two alternatives: **(i)** Divert to take the earlier lunch stop at Wheathampstead increasing the walk by 2km, or **(ii)** continue with the walk for lunch at Ayot St. Lawrence.

(i) Lunch at Wheathampstead:

Continue ahead to go through the wooden kissing gate into the next field to follow its left hand fence and leave the field through a wooden kissing gate about 30 metres from its far-left corner and turn right along a fenced path.

After 80 metres *turn left through some posts to go down some steps, to then turn left* along a sunken car wide concrete track going *under the main road*, your direction 200 degrees.

Ignore a steep right turn up some steps immediately after the bridge and in 40m turn hard right up a signposted footpath up a gentle incline to then turn right and along a fenced in path. In 600 metres (having gone through 2 gates along the way) ignore a footpath to your left (leading to a footbridge across the river). In a further 170 metres you come out to a cul-de-sac (signposted Wheathampstead village Centre ¼ mile). After 80 metres at a T-junction with the

High Street, turn left for 100 metres to reach Charlie's café and the Miller & Carter Steakhouse (formerly The Bull) on your left, and continue further up the High Street for the recommended Swan, passing The Reading Rooms Micropub en route.

After lunch, retrace your steps to go under the road bridge but continue up the car wide shingle track. In 140 metres, (with a bridleway off to your right), you go round to the right of a metal fieldgate to continue up the car wide byway, your direction 20 degrees. Rejoin the route at the asterisk [*] below.

(ii) Skip early lunch at

Wheathampstead: *Veer right up across the field* (passing under a mini pylon cable run) to its upper right-hand corner. After 60 metres go through a metal kissing gate *into the next field and turn left* along a bridleway. *In 250 metres exit the field through a metal gate, and turn right* passing to the right of a metal fieldgate, to continue up a car wide byway, your direction 20 degrees.

[*] After 50 metres *fork left up a footpath* for 10 metres, to go through a metal kissing gate into a field to slice its right hand corner, your direction 330 degrees. After 60 metres go through another metal kissing gate, to cross over a sunken car wide track to go through a metal kissing gate to go along an enclosed footpath, (with a field on your left and a wooded area on your right), your direction 340 degrees.

After 370 metres cross over a lane, to go through a gate to the right of the entrance to Lamer Park ('Lamer Park 3/4'). Continue in the same direction along a fenced in grass track along the right-hand side of the driveway (leading to Lamerwood House). After 320 metres continue in the same direction through a lightly wooded area. In 150 metres *at a footpath T-junction, turn half left*, your direction 300 degrees, along a car wide shingle track.

In 300 metres *go through a metal kissing gate and turn right* along a shingle lane, your direction 20 degrees. After 550 metres you join a car wide tarmac track and pass by a footpath off to your right.

After 120 metres *just before the brick gatepost entrance to Lamer Park Farm, fork right* through a metal kissing gate (to the right of a wooden fieldgate), to go along a car wide enclosed track, your direction 50 degrees.

In 800 metres (having gone through a metal kissing gate along the way), *turn right at a cross paths (a public footpath joins from the left)*, along a narrow footpath through a lightly wooded area, your direction 80 degrees. In 210 metres ignore a footpath turning left and *after another 380 metres turn left through a metal kissing gate and up a lane*.

In 140 metres you reach Shaw's corner. If visiting Shaws House (and/or its coffee kiosk) turn left, otherwise continue along the lane into Ayot St. Lawrence. After 130 metres you pass by the ruins of the old church of Ayot St. Lawrence on your left-hand side. In a further 80 metres you reach the **Brocket Arms** on your right hand side, the recommended lunch stop.

40 metres past the Brocket Arms follow the lane round to the right. After 170 metres you pass by Lord Mead Lane on your left-hand side, to continue down Hill Farm Lane, your direction 150 degrees.

After 200 metres, (where the lane curves down to the right), *fork left* through some wooden posts in a hedge and go *along a raised bridleway across a field*, your direction 130 degrees. In 270 metres go through a gap in a hedgerow into the next field and follow a car wide grass path. In a further 250 metres cross over into the next field, to go down its right hand grassy boundary.

After 600 metres *cross over a lane* to go up a bridleway between fields, your direction 120 degrees. In 350 metres at the corner of the field on your left-hand

side, veer slightly right down the bridleway (acting as a field boundary), your direction 150 degrees, i.e. ignoring a left forking footpath.

In 500 metres you *come out to a lane opposite Ayot St. Peter Old Churchyard and turn right*. After 250 metres, where the lane curves to the right, *continue ahead through the signed side gate entrance* to Ayot Place to follow the driveway, your direction 210 degrees. In 150 metres, where the main driveway swings round to the right, *turn left along a car wide tarmac track footpath*, bordered by a metal railing fence on your right, your direction 130 degrees.

[!] After 130 metres (having gone through a metal kissing gate along the way), *turn left through a gap in the hedgerow* (opposite some black metal gates) to cross a field, aiming for the far corner, your direction 130 degrees. In 300 metres *at the far corner, go through a gap to cross a car wide track* (disused railway), *into the corner of a field and turn right along its boundary*. In 70 metres turn left across the field at a marker post, aiming for the corner of a wood. (In dry conditions, you can take a permissive path diagonal shortcut that leads to the corner of the wood.)

After 50 metres at the corner of the wood, go through a gap into the wood. After 60 metres you go past a redundant metal kissing gate, to emerge from the wood to go up a tree-lined footpath, (your direction 160 degrees). In 70 metres go past another redundant metal kissing gate, to continue up a wooded field boundary.

After 150 metres go through a wooden horse blocking barrier, to then *turn left up a lane*. After 130 metres *at a small green, turn left along Ayot Little Green Lane*, your direction 70 degrees. In 120 metres (where the lane curves to the left), *fork right, across a small open space*. After 50 metres you pass by the entrance to a house on your right, to go down a footpath to the left of the house alongside

its fence. In 30 metres you go into the corner of a field to go down its right hand side fence, then along a hedge. After 200 metres at the right hand corner of the field go through a fence gap and *turn right up a lane*, (your direction 200 degrees), initially along tarmac, after about 200m there is a gravel drive along its left.

In 400 metres you reach a road bridge. For the Waggoners pub turn right for 160 metres, otherwise *cross the bridge over the A1 (M) and turn right*. In 25 metres, *cross the main road with care, to go through a metal kissing gate, to follow the footpath into Sherradspark Wood*, your initial direction 130 degrees.

In 180 metres at a footpath junction, (with a crater on your right hand side), veer right, your direction 150 degrees. In 90 metres ignore a fork to the left, to continue ahead, your direction 150 degrees.

In a further 80 metres, *with a golf course off to your right, turn left down a footpath*, your direction 70 degrees. *In 150 metres you turn right along a car wide track* (disused railway line), your direction south. *In 750 metres at a cross paths, turn right down a car wide tarmac path to reach the main road, to now backtrack on the morning route.*

[Directions: At the main road cross over with care and turn left. In 40 metres turn right along Handside Lane. After 180 metres turn left to reach the entrance to the Howard Shopping Centre (and station) after 500 metres.]

Lunch and Tea places:

The Bocket Arms Ayot St. Lawrence, AL6 9BT (01438 820250) Located 11 km from the start of the walk. *Food served daily 12pm – 2:30pm and Tue - Sat: 7pm -9pm.* **Miller & Carter Steakhouse** 11 High Street, Wheathampstead, AL4 8BS (01582 833379) *Food served Sun - Thu: 12pm – 10:30pm Fri - Sat: 12pm -11pm (Add 2.5 km extra to walk)*

The Swan 56 High St, Wheathampstead, AL4 8AR (01582 833110) *Food served daily: 12pm – 3pm and and Fri and Mon evenings (Add 2.5 km extra to the walk)*

The Waggoners Brickwall Close, Ayot Green, AL6 9AA. (01707 324241)

Located 2.4 km from the end of the walk

Welwyn Garden City offers a wide variety of lunch and tea places, which include:

Caffè Nero 31 Howardsgate, AL8 6AP

(01707 390040). *Open till 6.30pm Mon to Sat and 6pm Sunday.*

Costa Coffee 50 Howardsgate AL8 6HA

01707 299487 *Open till 7pm Mon to Sat and 5pm Sunday.*

Simmons (café and bakery) 33

Howardsgate, AL8 6AP (01707 321051)

Open till 5pm Sun to Fri, and till 5.30 Sat