Sevenoaks Ramblers

Carpenters Arms to Westerham Circular- 10.2 miles

Sunday, 18th January

A grey overcast day with veiled (perhaps even atmospheric) views across the Weald and to the North Downs but that and the wet (occasionally muddy) underfoot conditions, did not dampen the spirits or quieten the chatter and commentary. There were erudite discussions about the horrors of “verbing” (using nouns as verbs), the role of AI in the professions, US and UK politics, and Larkins Brewery.
We welcomed back two people who were gluttons for punishment and returned after first walking with us last Sunday, and a new visitor from SE21 together with 8 regulars.
On leaving Limpsfield Chart we dropped down past Caxton House, previously a late Victorian convalescent home for printworkers (of which there were 30,000 in London at the time), and through Chartlands Farm before cutting across damp fields to Trevereux Manor, where the team were educated by the leader on the history of the building going back to the 15th Century, though burnt down in a tragic accident in 1989, before being restored to its 18th Century grandeur by Richard Stilgoe who still lives there.
A ripple of relief passed through the group as we crossed the Kent Brook out of Surrey into our home county, and then reached a tarmac lane which we followed for the next mile and a half without seeing any cars, being informed about the various desirable residences we passed, and the first snowdrops of the season, before reaching Crockham Grange, an NT property and Farm with an interesting 18th Century Granary.
We left the hard surface to climb up through the fields to Coachman’s where we stopped for a coffee break looking over the veiled Weald before we struck out for the summit and then walked along Crockham Hill’s border past the spring from which the mighty River Darent (“clear water”) starts its journey to its meeting with the Thames. We continued past Crockham House where Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon played in her childhood, and which boasts 16th Century wall paintings and gardens designed by Octavia Hill, before walking the ramparts of the iron age Westerham Camp as we approached our lunch destination.
One last slippery little ascent and an unveiled (the sun was breaking through) view over Westerham to the North Downs and we were eating our sandwiches on the green. The return to the Carpenters was only 2.5 miles and after the stairway to Squerryes was climbed, we walked through pleasant wooded paths before reaching our cars.
Thanks to Kate and Stephen for pictures under poor light, and to Wikipedia and AI for all the educational information, including Richard Stilgoe’s memoir about his house.




