

Oaks and Beatles

A 2.5 mile circular route from Sevenoaks station, passing through several areas of this historic market town and learning about its heritage and famous residents along the way.



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Discover a beautiful row of houses built in 1870s as housing for working people by architect Sir Thomas Jackson. He also built the Lime Tree Temperance Hotel in 1882 to help tackle drunkenness in the area. It was a cycling club headquarters as well.

- 14 Returning to London Road, descend the hill past the Sevenoaks District Council offices then turn left onto Eardley Road. A few hundred metres on the left, there is a blue plaque.

H G Wells lived here for a time in 1894 when he wrote *The Time Machine*. He wrote a number of utopian works and foresaw the advent of space travel and nuclear weapons.

- 15 Continue down Eardley Road then at the crossroads, turn right along Granville Road. At the junction with the main road, turn left and continue downhill to Sevenoaks station.



The Darent Valley Rail Trails have been created by the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme. DVLPS is led by the Kent Downs AONB, working throughout the Darent Valley to conserve the area's rich heritage landscapes and encourage people to enjoy, explore and connect to them www.darent-valley.org.uk

A selection of the Rail Trails are available to use on the Darent Valley Trails app, available free of charge on the App Store and Google Play. With special thanks to Sarah Newman for devising this route.



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Co-financed by the European Union and the European Regional Development Fund

- 11 Continue on to the High Street heading to centre of town.

A small alleyway next to park area, Six Bells Lane (named after the bells of St Nicholas, though there are now eight!), is worth a detour. Descend and have a look at picturesque cottages.

- 12 Continue along the High Street to the junction near Waitrose, take the left-hand fork down London Road.

Erected in 1882, the ornate water fountain provided vital free drinking water to locals. Branded – this building is one of oldest buildings in London Road. Known as the Bishop's House, it used to be a famous leather business selling saddlery and only closed in 2001. The Stag – originally built as the Majestic Cinema in 1937, later becoming the Odeon. Since 1983 this has been a Town Council-run community arts centre.

Foraged and Found – this used to be a photography studio, set up in 1913 by Henry Essenhig Corke, a pioneer plant photographer. When a previous shop took on the premises, they found 500 glass plates of Henry's photographs behind a shelf, now safely stored at Kent Library and History Centre.

Sevenoaks Art Shop – note the blue plaque on the outside of the shop about poet W H Davies (1871 – 1940) who stayed there for a time in 1930s. Famous for his work 'The Autobiography of a Super-Tramp' (1908) - inspiring the rock group Supertramp for the band's name – Davies lived a great part of his early life in rough shelters and self-published his poetry, with growing success. He is famous for the line 'What is this life if, full of care/ We have no time to stand and stare.' Fleetwood Mac recorded the song 'Dragonfly' based on one of his poems.

- 13 Diversion left down the lane Lime Tree Walk near Hoad's Shoes.



Gates to Knole Park. This famous park has ancient woodland, parkland, woods, ponds and nationally scarce species, and a herd of 350 deer. Knole (the house) is now owned by the National Trust but was formerly the home of the Sackville-West family and prior to that, an Archbishop's Palace. Author Vita Sackville-West was born at Knole in 1892 and invited many famous figures of the era to visit, including her long-term partner author Virginia Woolf.

- 9 Continue along the High Street, turning slightly to the left to see the lantern entrance gates of Sevenoaks School.

Sevenoaks School. William Sevenock rose from poverty to become Mayor of London in 1418. When he died in 1432 he bequeathed his wealth to the people of Sevenoaks to establish a free grammar school and alms-houses for the poor. This was very unusual at the time and makes Sevenoaks one of the oldest secular school foundations in England. Interesting former students include Thomas Heatherwick (Olympic flame, London Transport buses, Kings Cross), Daniel Day Lewis (actor), Adam Curtis (documentary maker), Charlie Higson (comedian and author).

- 10 Retrace your steps back towards the town centre, continuing this time on the left-hand side of the road going north (High Street/A225). Go past the Old Post Office (on the left) – this was once a 16th century inn and became a sub post office in 1895. There is a rare Victorian Ludlow letterbox outside. Continue past St Nicholas's Church.

Dating from the 13th century, the church had a major renovation in 1995. One of its most famous clergymen linked to the church was preacher and poet John Donne, vicar here from 1616 until 1631. Two of author Charles Dickens' daughters are buried here.

Start /end point: Sevenoaks station

Length: 2.5 miles / 4km

Terrain: Pavements in the town

Accessibility: Road crossings, long hill at the start of the walk

Toilets/refreshments: At Sevenoaks station and various options in the town centre

What3Words: ///divisions.sounds.snows

OS Explorer map: 147

On The Way

- Walk through Sevenoaks' residential streets and visit the UK's first cricket ground
- Explore Sevenoaks High Street, learning about the history and famous residents of the town
- Option to visit Knole Park and Knole House

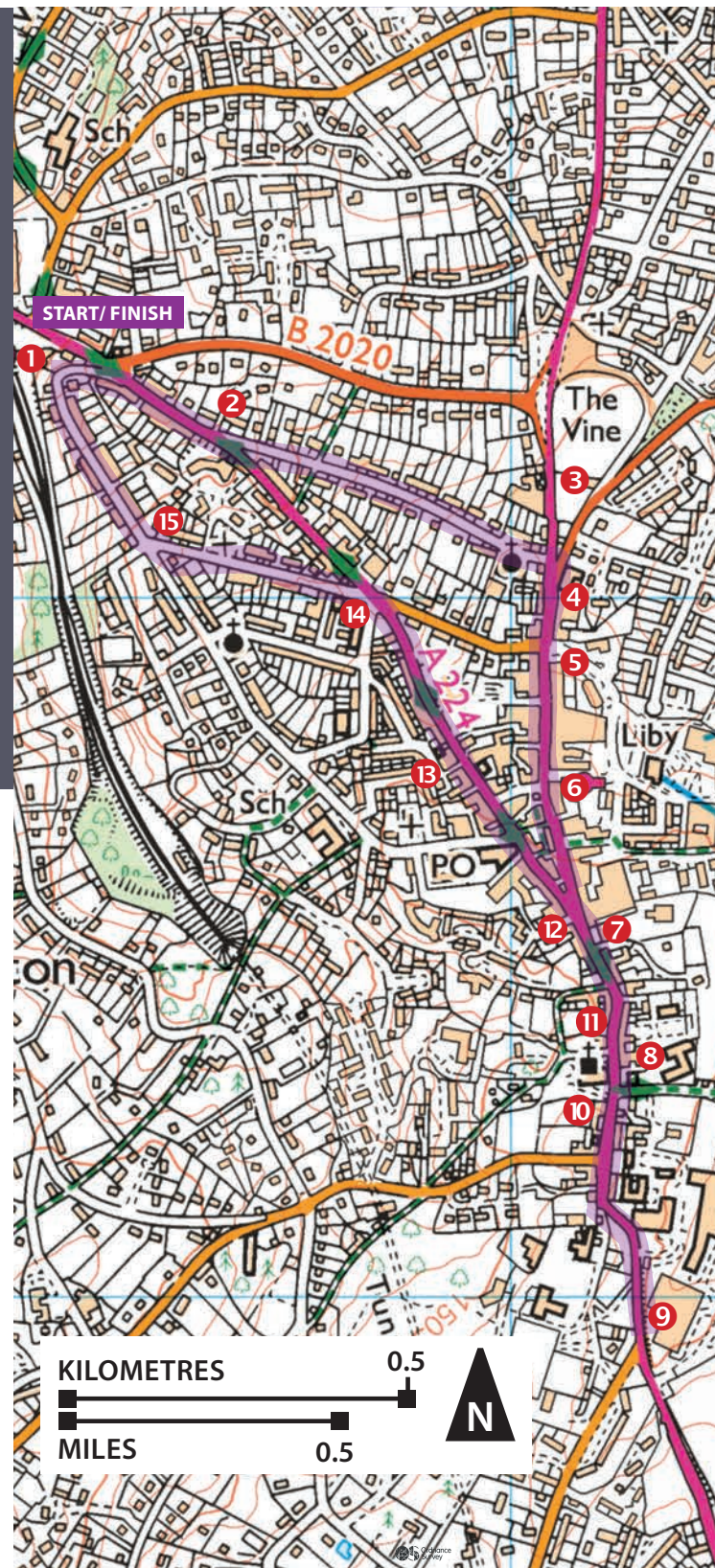
- 1 Exit Sevenoaks station using the main exit to London Road.

Note the large modern building to the left of the traffic junction. This was the site of Sevenoaks' cattle market (a version of which existed since the 1200s), until as recently as 1999.

- 2 Turn right up the hill briefly and cross over at the road at the pedestrian crossing near a small row of shops. Continue up the hill on London Road, crossing over the end of St Botolph's Road. Turn diagonally left up The Drive, a leafy residential street typical of this part of late 19th/ early 20th century Sevenoaks.

Of note at the top of The Drive is an ornate building formally known as the Carnegie Free Library, designed by Edwyn Evans Cronk, Jacobean in style with elaborate stone dressings. Opened in 1905 on donated land, it closed in 1986, and is now used as offices.

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It is one of an estimated 2500 libraries built worldwide between 1883 and 1929 using grants from Scottish-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who believed that everyone should have access to books.

- 3 Continue to the end of The Drive, go over the pedestrian crossing and turn left towards the Vine, one of the country's oldest cricket venues.

The Vine Cricket Ground, still used by clubs for matches today, was given to the town of Sevenoaks in 1773 by John Frederick Sackville, the 3rd Duke of Dorset. It may once have been used as a vineyard, hence its name. Seven oak trees were planted in 1902 to mark the coronation of King Edward VII. Sadly six were blown down in the Great Storm of 1987, but seven were immediately replanted. The cricket pavilion is Grade II listed, built in 1850. The ground boasts a number of firsts, including first even century scored (1769), first use of three rather than two stumps, and was the location for the earliest recorded game between one county and another.

- 4 Retrace your steps back to the pedestrian crossing near The Drive, cross over and turn left up the High Street.

Sevenoaks Bookshop - there has been a bookshop on this site for many generations. The Writers Café celebrates the many writers linked to the town including John Donne, Anne Seymour Damer, H G Wells, Edward Thomas, W H Davies, Vita Sackville West, Virginia Woolf, Martina Cole, John Humphreys.

- 5 Continue straight over the traffic lights to join the main town High Street.

Note a number of older buildings along the High Street including the Oak Tavern and Tap House which was once Bligh's Farmhouse. It was used by The Beatles for costume changes when filming a video to promote Strawberry Fields Forever, in nearby Knole Park.

The Market Hall building (Toni and Guy's) reminds us that Sevenoaks has always been a prosperous market town. Markets still take place every Saturday further up the High Street by The Chequers pub and at nearby Bligh's Meadow.

Behind Toni and Guy's find the entrance to the Shambles, a quirky courtyard decorated with recent artwork depicting how this was once an area for meat vendors.

- 6 Leave the Shambles and continue up the High Street.

Many of these High Street shops have been around for a long time: Horncastle's (1888) has been in the same family for over 130 years; Leslie Warren Opticians was founded in 1915; Sun Do, the first Chinese restaurant in Sevenoaks, was opened by Miss World Lesley Langley in 1966, for owner Mr Man, and is still operating.

- 7 Continue straight up the High Street south towards Tonbridge Road, to explore the older heart of the town.

The Red House, now occupied by solicitors Knocker & Foskett, once belonged to Jane Austen's great uncle and Jane came here as a young girl in 1788. A former occupant was Dr Thomas Fuller (c. 1688). Locals enjoyed his eccentric practices: prescriptions included live millipedes, woodlice, beetles, earthworms and mice!

Leverets - a legal practice at 44a High Street. On 31 January 1967 The Beatles filmed sequences for Strawberry Fields Forever in Knole Park. During a break John Lennon bought a Victorian poster advertising Pablo Fanque's Circus Royal at the antiques shop formerly on this location. Within the text of the poster were the names of circus performers and the words which inspired the song 'Being for the Benefit of Mr Kite' on the Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band!

- 8 Progress along the High Street.