

Walk 1

Totternhoe Knolls, near Dunstable

Attractive chalk downland walk from the village of Totternhoe to the Castle Hill Mound and ancient hill fort. Totternhoe Knolls Nature Reserve sits within an important medieval quarrying area; the resulting spoil tips are now home to a prolific range of wildflowers and butterflies, best seen during spring/summer months. There are some hill climbs, making this one of the more challenging walks, but you will be rewarded by panoramic views over the surrounding countryside.

Distance: 4 miles (allow 2 ½ hours)

Start: Car park at Totternhoe Knolls. Follow brown sign from main road through village. The car park is tucked away at the end of a narrow lane. Frequent bus service from Dunstable.

Access Information: Steady climb up to Castle Hill from the car park, with optional steep climb to the summit. Later, another fairly steep hill climb before returning to Totternhoe, although there is a gentler short-cut alternative.

Refreshments: Pub in Totternhoe and pubs and cafes in Dunstable.

Route:

From the car park at Totternhoe Knolls ① take the footpath on the left; soon you will meet a byway where you turn left and start the climb up towards Castle Hill mound, the remains of a 12th Century motte & bailey Castle. Ignore the first two footpaths on your left and continue until the path swings sharply to the right (you will see a metal kissing gate to your left). ② From here you can if you wish take a short detour up a steep, narrow path to reach the summit of Castle Hill but you need to keep left of the wire fence. Return the same way.

Continue following the byway downhill past quarry pits on your right then turn sharp left at the bottom. Soon after take a narrow footpath on your right which almost doubles back. ③ Follow the footpath as it curves

around the field boundaries, with the lime quarry buildings on the right, to where it meets a road. ④ Turn right and on meeting a junction, turn left and follow the public footpath to the cycleway. ⑤ Turn right and walk along the Sewell Greenway.

Cross bridge over the road at Sewell, ⑥ turning right, then left, on to a bridleway. After 300m where the bridleway turns right follow it. When it swings right again, follow it to a junction of paths. ⑦ Turn right to follow the ridge of the Downs, looking out for the embankments of Maiden Bower hill fort on your right. ⑧ The circular hedge marks the boundary of an iron age fort, and beneath this the remains of a neolithic camp. Turn left at the next junction of byways ⑨ and then almost immediately

right ⑩ which takes you over the hill.

At this point, there is an alternative short cut route back to Totternhoe village which avoids the steep uphill climb; simply continue on the track which takes you back to Castle Hill Road.

At the bottom of the hill turn left along the byway ⑪ and back to the car park.

