

Islington U3A Longer Walks Group

Walk Title	Welwyn	Walk No.	292
Area	Hertfordshire	Type	Circular
Date	Wednesday, 23 September 2020		
Distance	10.6 miles (17 km)		
Timing	4½ hours walking time + travel + lunch stop. Allow at least 7 hours in total. Therefore expect to be back in Islington by 5.00 pm		
Meeting up & travel	All to individually catch the Great Northern train to Welwyn Garden City (starts Moorgate at 09.32): Leader will board the rear carriage. Highbury & Islington dep 09.40 Drayton Park dep 09.43 Finsbury Park dep 09.46 Alexandra Palace dep 09.53 Leader joining here. Arrives Welwyn Garden City at 10.20. Buy an off peak day return to Welwyn Garden City £5.15 from Hadley Wood with Freedom Pass and Senior Railcard.		
Route	An easy circular walk heading west, north, then east, through some attractive Hertfordshire countryside, starting and ending at the Sherrards park wood bordering Welwyn Garden City. Exiting the wood we have to cross over the busy A1. From there we go through the landscaped parkland of the Brocket estate, following a section of the River Lea towards Wheathampstead, turning northwards through woods towards Lamer Park, and then east to the village of Ayot St Lawrence (once home to George Bernard Shaw (NT)) for a pub lunch. The afternoon walk then takes us across open farmland with far reaching countryside views, via Ayot Place and more sections of woodland to the village of Ayot Little Green and back across the A1 into Sherrards Wood and WGC.		
Lunch	Latish lunch at Brocket Arms pub with plenty of outdoor seating. Prices sandwiches £7.00 - £8.50, mains £10.00 upwards. They have a large aviary outside so avoid if that will upset you! Alternatively bring sandwiches to eat in nearby churchyard and joint others at pub for a drink.		
Dropping out	May be possible to drop out halfway through the morning by carrying on walking to Wheathampstead for a not very frequent bus service to Welwyn Garden City. Alternatively, it may be possible to ring for taxi from lunch stop.		
Suitability	Covid19 precautions will be complied with. Suitable for any reasonably fit regular walker. There are no particular difficulties. Terrain: easy countryside. Pavement in WGC near station. A small part on quiet lanes. Possible obstacles: No stiles, one short steepish downhill. Comfortable waterproof walking shoes/ boots. Waterproof jacket. Check weather forecast for temperature and likelihood of rain. Wear, or carry, an extra layer.		
Facilities	There are toilets at Welwyn Garden City station and in the pub in the middle.		
Walk source	Saturday Walkers Club No 69: www.walkingclub.org.uk		

Map & other references	OS Explorer 182
Leader & contact details	<p><u>Walk Leader:</u> <u>Berry Beaumont</u></p> <p><u>Beforehand</u> phone: 07808 724694 (leave message if necessary) e-mail: berry.beaumont@gmail.com</p> <p><u>On the day</u> mobile: 07808 724694</p>
Interesting facts	<p>We pass Waterend house, a large Jacobean house which lies on the River Lea and was built in 1611 by Sir John Jennings, a member of the Long Parliament for St Albans. His daughter Sarah Jennings, (by his second wife Alice Spencer) who became the First Duchess of Marlborough (1660-1744) was given the house. The Ayot Estate incorporates many historic features, among these are a network of iron age earthworks. One of these, The Devils Dyke [in nearby Wheathampstead] is thought to have been the capital of Cassivellaunus, who fought Julius Caesar in 54 BC.</p> <p>We will see rare cattle breeds as we pass Lamer Park Farm</p> <p>The Brocket Arms was originally the monastic quarters for the Norman church until the Reformation. Legend has it that a priest was tried and hanged in the building and that it has been haunted by the affable character ever since. In the village the attractive georgian Ayot House was once famous as Britain's only silk farm. The ruined Norman church was replaced in 1778 by the existing Palladian church. Ayot St. Lawrence is well known as the home of George Bernard Shaw, who lived there for 40 years until his death in 1950. His house, Shaw's Corner, now belongs to the National Trust.</p> <p>Part of the walk is on the Ayot Greenway, an abandoned railway line that travels from Welwyn Garden City to Dunstable. It opened in 1858 after a strong demand from Luton - the largest town in England still without any railway. It closed down in 1966 but the line can still be followed today and offers a peaceful and beautiful route.</p>