



**National  
Trust**

## **Chartwell Access Statement**

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### **Introduction**

Chartwell was the family home of Sir Winston Churchill. The site is set on the side of a steep valley, which offers stunning views but has steep slopes and steps to the front of the property. The key features of the site are:

- the House, presented to visitors as it was when the family lived there
- terraced hillside gardens and formal gardens with steps and sloping lawns down to the lakes
- the Studio where a collection of Sir Winston Churchill paintings are displayed
- the kitchen garden which includes the Marycot, a brick playhouse Churchill built for his youngest daughter Mary, and a chicken coop
- woodlands including the Canadian Camp with hammocks, a natural wild play area for children with swings, balance beams and a replica caravan, a bomb crater, a treehouse and woodland walks

Mobile signal is generally weak across most of the site.

A Duty Manager has responsibility for the site each day and will coordinate staff to deal with any incidents. The staff in each team have access to radios in the house, visitor reception, shop, café and the garden team.

Assistance dogs are welcome throughout the property, all dog walkers are welcome in the grounds only, and in the gardens dogs must be kept on short leads. There is a dog water bowl outside the visitor reception, café, the house and studio. The bowls are filled in the morning and can be refilled on request.

Entry to the house is by timed ticket which is available at the visitor welcome centre. This system allows us to regulate footfall through the house to ensure a comfortable experience, help with the conservation of the house and the collection, and ensure fire regulations are adhered to. Light levels inside the

house are kept low to help maintain the collection. All large bags are to be carried in front of the body so that they do not brush against walls, books or knock any of the items on display.

## **Arrival & Parking Facilities**

### Road signs

There are brown signs on the motorway (M25), and local A roads (A21, A22 and A25). The local areas such as Westerham, Edenbridge and Four Elms have brown signs leading to Chartwell. The entrance to the main car park is signed coming from either direction of Mapleton Road.

### Main car park

The car park is Pay and Display for paying visitors (National Trust members are free), there are two ticket pay unit; the ticket pay units on the middle lane are on level ground and are accessible.

There is a one way, steep and windy tarmac road down to where the car park splits into two lanes. There are speed ramps on the flat car park lanes.

The main car park is mostly hard tarmac embedded gravel surfaces, with some parking areas being gravel. The parking bays are marked out with chestnut spacers. On the banks the surface is re-inforced plastic where the grass grows through; these areas are slippery in the wet weather.

Leading from the parking lanes to the exit is a flat, hard surface lane which cars and coaches use to park in the coach park and to exit. Next to the lane is a hard and flat pavement with benches on the right and steps up to the terrace, shop and café area.

If you turn to the left and go straight to the visitor welcome centre, it is 10 metres down a 1in5 gradient hill.

The distance from the car park to the house is a quarter of a mile, depending on where you are parked.

### Overflow car parks

The first overflow car park has a surface of reinforced plastic, with parking bays marked out with small white lines. There is one ticket pay unit in the centre of the overflow car park.

The second and third overflow car park are through a further gate and are grass. If the weather has been wet and rainy for a considerable time (over a few days) we do not open the second and third overflow car parks.

### Disabled visitor parking

We have six designated disabled visitor car parking bays on the top lane, and twelve in the middle lanes of the car park, which are clearly marked and towards the end of each lane to be near as possible to the visitor welcome centre.

If a visitor is going to the café and shop only, we would advise that the top lane disabled parking bays are used as this offers a level tarmac surface to the café. Depending on the parking bay used, the furthest distance to walk is 40 metres to the café and 50 metres to the shop. In the middle lane from the furthest disabled car parking bay it is a 50 metre walk past the mobility bus to the end of the lane.

The disabled parking bays have a hard tarmac surface and the lanes are marked by white lines. The bays are 3.7 metres wide and 4 metres long.

### Mobility Bus

Where the mobility bus is parked there is a bench that visitors can sit on to wait for the bus. The mobility bus is volunteer driven and has a tail lift that can take a visitor in a wheelchair of a maximum weight of 300kg. There is one step up onto the minibus and 6 seats with seatbelts. Up to two folded wheelchairs can be stored on the mobility bus for use by visitors when they disembark the mobility bus.

The mobility bus goes from the car park, through the coach park, left at the exit onto Mapleton Road and through large wooden gates to the drive at the front of the house.

The mobility bus runs every 15 minutes or adhoc depending on the number of visitors. The driver has a radio and can be contacted by staff at the entrance of the house and at the visitor centre if there are visitors waiting to use the bus.

If the mobility bus is not running, or the disabled parking bays are full, the visitor welcome centre can arrange for visitors to use the drive at the front of the house as a drop off point.

## **Toilets**

### Car park area

We have the following toilets in the car park end of the site:

- an accessible toilet adjacent to the visitor centre, 1600mm by 2600mm in size. There is a fixed hand rail on the left hand side of the toilet and a pull down rail on the right hand side of the toilet. The toilet is lit by fluorescent lighting and has an automatic hand dryer and an emergency alarm. The door opens outwards and is 970mm wide.
- an accessible toilet on the first floor of the café, accessed by a lift which has a safe working load of 400kg. The toilet is 1530mm by 2200mm in size, there are rails to the left (fixed) and right (drop down) of the toilet, an automatic dryer and an emergency alarm. The door opens outwards and is 970mm wide.
- there are no adult changing facilities
- there is a baby changing area next to the accessible toilet at the visitor reception, this room does not have a separate toilet, is lit by fluorescent lighting, the door opens outwards and the width is 708mm.
- separate male and female toilet blocks are situated behind the shop
- Lockers for bags and personal items are situated beside the toilet blocks

### Garden

There is a toilet block near the entrance to the house which houses two unisex toilets and an accessible toilet.

### House

There are no toilets in the house.

## **Catering**

### Café

There is ramped and stepped access to the café from the top parking lane. Depending on where you have parked it is up to a 50 metre walk on a hard, flat surface. The step-free route is in front of the café to ramped access by the side entrance. You can also take the covered area walk to double doors, which are manual and would need to be opened by staff, each door is 730mm wide.

The entrance to the café is a large open area, with queuing to the left hand side. A wheelchair would be able to undertake a full 1500mm turn in this area. Trays are provided for self-service food and bottled drinks. Hot beverages are served at the till area. There is seating in the café area; the tables are 740mm high. The chairs do not have arms. Wheelchair users would be able to sit at some of the outer tables.

All the counters are 940mm high. The till points have induction loops. The self service area of cakes is accessible.

Staff will assist disabled visitors and wheelchair users.

Access to the Lady Soames room is through a passage way and two sets of double doors where there are extra tables and chairs, the chairs do not have arms, the tables are 770mm high.

In the passage way between the self service area and the Lady Soames room (both areas have double doors which are kept open on busy days) is where the lift is situated to take disabled visitors to the first floor and the accessible toilet. A member of staff will assist in the operation of the lift.

There is an outside terrace area, with a wooden decking floor, the tables are 735mm high, the chairs do not have arms; the decking area can be slippery in wet weather.

## **Retail**

The shop is situated next to the café, and would be up to 55 meters walk from the top lane disabled parking bays. There is a route past the café and outside seating area that can be crowded on busy days. There are a mixture of chairs with and without arms, the tables are 750mm high.

The shop is a large open area with plenty of space to do 1200 turn between displays. The two till points have hearing loops. The counter is 925 mm high, with a lower shelf of 760mm high. Staff will assist in reaching down items to view and with telling visitors the prices of items.

The garden annex which houses the plant benches is not wheelchair accessible but wheelchairs can go thorough it to the toilets. The plant area at the front of

the shop has enough space for wheelchairs to move between tables and plant display areas.

The second hand bookshop is not wheelchair accessible currently, but the format and layout is being reviewed to confirm if it can be made wheelchair accessible by creating more space; either by moving/reducing shelf space or removing the counter area to create more space.

### **Visitor Welcome Centre (VWC)**

The visitor welcome centre is a wooden building with lots of windows for natural light. It has a flat step-free concrete area outside, with a low wooden shelf containing leaflets for walks and dog poo bags.

Entrance to the building is through two narrow doors that can both be opened for wheelchair and buggy access. Each single door is 600mm, offering a 1200mm width when both are opened. The doors are kept open in the warmer weather. The entrance and exit doors open manually inwards and are secured by hooking back. If the doors are closed, staff are available to open the doors and assist disabled visitors.

The reception desk is 900mm high and has a lower area 750mm high. There is a separate membership area with tables and chairs with armrests. There is space for a 1500mm diameter turning circle.

The majority of the floor is stone floor but there is a membership area is carpeted. The lights are halogen. The building is not sound proofed and can be noisy at busy times.

There is an induction loop at the reception desk.

There are three manual wheelchairs that can be borrowed on a first come first served basis.

### **Garden**

A welcome map is given out by VWC staff, showing key features of the site and the hard paths to the house. The VWC staff can explain the access difficulties and point out where the steps are.

There are hard paths leading into the garden with seated benches along the way. The hard paths are steep in areas with up to a 1in3 gradient. The 24 shallow steps up to the house have a handrail on the left hand side. The hard paths are a gravelled tarmac surface; the steps up to the house are paving stones.

On the walk up to the house there are large ponds (open water) on the right hand side. The grass areas slope down to the lakes (open water) and are a 1in4 gradient. The ponds and lakes are open and not fenced off. We have signs warning about our grumpy swans that ask visitors not to feed them.

It would be very difficult to push a wheelchair across the grass areas as they would be at a slant and could easily topple to one side or, if pushed down the grass slope, topple forward.

The terraced garden to the back of the house has an accessible entry (via a ramp through the gate) which takes visitors through the Marlborough Pavilion to the flat grassed area. There is a path which is a concrete paving stones around the edge of the grass close to the house.

The formal rose garden area is only accessible by steps.

## **House**

The area outside the house is a large, open, flat gravelled tarmac surface with a grass sloped area (gradient 1in3) up to some seated benches.

Entrance to the house is by ramp or by two steps. The front door is manually opened and the doors open inwards. The doors are kept open for visitors from 11.00am to 4.10pm.

There are volunteers on the front door to assist disabled visitors, and they liaise with the VWC team via radio to organise car drop off, and with the mobility bus driver via radio.

We have large print guides of the house as well as braille and visually impaired guides are available on request.

From the entrance to the house there is a right turn into the wheelchair accessible sitting room where a virtual tour is situated. Due to limited accessibility to upstairs and downstairs, the virtual tour includes information and pictures of all the showrooms that are not accessible. One wheelchair user at a time can watch the tour.

In the centre of the sitting room is a table that allows for a 1.5m turning circle for wheel chairs but this can be significantly reduced on busy days. The front door volunteers monitor the number of visitors in the sitting room as it can become quite cramped on very busy days.

There is one-way flow through the house, with visitors following a specific route.

From the sitting room there is access to a hall with a mixture of wooden and tile flooring with some carpet. Access to the drawing room is on the right followed quickly by a sharp left and then right turn of roughly 750mm wide

For greater access to the drawing room, double French glass and wooden doors to an inner hall that can be opened. As you enter the inner hall there is a side table to the right which narrows the route to 850mm. There is then a 900mm turn to the right, against visitor flow, for entrance in to the drawing room.

To exit the Drawing Room and to return to the inner halls requires a full circle turn in a wheelchair. On quiet days there is a 1m space to do so.

From the inner hall and opposite the entrance to the dining room there is a narrow doorway of less than 900mm in to the library.

Exit from the library for wheelchair users is through the same door, and on a quiet day allows for a 1m full circle turn against the flow of visitors.

There are two steps in the inner hall leading to the staircase and the upper floor.

Exit for visitors in wheelchairs from the house is via the entrance. From the inner hall this is through the French glass and wooden doors back in to the main hall past the 850mm space with side table and against visitor flow. Exit is then via the main entrance doors and down the ramp.



Due to the nature of the building and the extensions to it, there are steps between some rooms on the ground floor. There is a main staircase with banister on the right up to the first floor; the stairs are wooden with no floor covering. There is a wheelchair on the first floor and a seating area in the museum room.

Exit is down the main stairs to the dining room, kitchen and exhibition room.

We have a volunteer in each of the key rooms in the house. All volunteers have access to the touch list, a list of objects that can be made available to partially sighted visitors to help them engage with the house and its collection.

Group guided tours, pre-booked by groups, are delivered by volunteers for groups of fifteen plus on Mondays only.

## **Studio**

It is a half a mile walk from the visitor centre to the Studio. It is 50 metres from the Marlborough Pavilion past the back of the house to the Studio sign.

From the terrace at the far end past the house there is a sign to the Studio which takes visitors down a hard surface path (1in4 gradient) through the orchard; this is a 50 metre walk. At the bottom of the path is a left turn past some cottages on the right which takes visitors to the door of the studio. The path is flat and concrete paved with a seating bench.

The doorway to the Studio is 900mm wide, there is a lip 75mm over into the lobby area and another door into the Studio. There is space for a 1500mm turn in the studio so visitors in wheelchairs can enter and exit through the front door.

There is an annex to the studio down several steps from the main room leading to a door; this is a fire exit.

The Studio can get busy and crowded in the summer months.

## **Kitchen Garden**

It is up to half a mile walk from the VWC to the Kitchen Garden which also houses the Marycot, Golden Rose Avenue, and cut flower bed.

The Kitchen garden can be found by taking the same route through the orchard towards the Studio but turning right and heading towards a brick archway through to the kitchen garden; this is a 20 metre walk.

This area is flat with concrete paved tiles but some paths in the garden have a slight increase in gradient for 70 metres. In the middle of the garden is the Golden Rose Avenue which has bench seating and a concrete tile path up through the rose lined walk. The Marycot is a brick built playhouse with steps down to its entrance and is not accessible.

There are 47 flagstone steps that lead to a terrace overlooking the kitchen garden. The terrace has 3 benches for seating.

## **Woodland**

Access to the woodland from the gardens is via the pathways to the right and left of the lakes. The lefthand route is down a steep path left of the pond, past the first swings and through 2 sets of gates, going up and across a field and then following steep paths into the wood either next to the Dormouse Dens or above up a very steep hill. Here visitors can access the woodland walks, Old Quarry and Canadian Camp.

Walking further up from the fingerpost sign is a short steep hill with 30 steps and a bannister, and up onto a bark chipping footpath of approximately 80 metres visitors can access the Bomb Crater play area and the Tree house.

If there has been heavy rain, the paths across the field and in the wood can be very muddy and become inaccessible. If there is high winds warning of Level 3 visitors are not allowed in the wood.

The woodland is a Grade 2 Ancient Woodland so the National Trust is restricted as to the interventions it can make to give full disabled access.

Consideration has been given to how access to the woodland could be made available to visitors with mobility issues, but there are no short-term solutions to this. The mobility bus is a hire vehicle and not suitable for off-road terrain. In the long term, providing an alternative route using the gate entrance next to

Hosey Common Lane could be explored, but would require significant funding and resourcing as it would need to be booked in advance to ensure staff would be available to open the gate. Only one car or van can park in this area due to emergency access and weather conditions.

### Tree house

The tree house is a newly built structure made from FSC pine, plywood and maple tiles. This structure was inspired by the first tree house Winston Churchill built for his children in 1923. From the Hosey Common Lane side there is a clear marked path with logs (on either side) and bark chippings down to the Tree house site of 50 metres. The pathway starts flat then drops to steep. From the Bomb Crater it's a walk up a steep pathway, estimated 30 metres, up to the tree house site. Visitors with buggies need to be confident that the tyres are suitable for muddy pathways.

The tree house is surrounded by a surface of bark chippings. Access up to the first floor is up 2 wide wooden stairs cases estimated 290 cm long, 79cm wide with grips on wood steps and wood bannisters on either side. The first floor is at a height of 195cm. There will be small furniture made from horse chestnut wood inside suitable for children.

There is also a stainless steel metal slide with safety wings 145cm high, 300cm long, 50cm wide for children to play on depending on the weather conditions. There are 2 safety bars (one metal and one wood) to encourage children to sit before going down the slide and prevent pushing from behind.

The two doorways on the first floor are 94cm wide and 167cm high. To get to the second floor visitors have to climb a ladder 175cm high by 55cm wide using 2 handrails. Tall visitors will have to watch their heads at the start of the ladder and to get into the second floor hatchway, which is 98cm high by 77cm wide.

There is interpretation on the outside and inside the tree house highlighting the story of the first tree house built by Churchill. The interpretation is carved in wood and lighted in white to enable reading in grey/dark weather. There are signs near the treehouse warning parents of risky play and the need to keep an eye on their children. There are 2 flat wood benches on the Tree House site.

We aim to put video footage and images of the tree house on our website so all visitors can see what it looks like.

### Bomb Crater

The bomb crater is near the treehouse and is a crater estimated 4 metres deep, created by the bombs that allegedly fell on the estate at Chartwell as the planes left London. The crater has ropes for children to climb.

### Canadian Camp

Canadians camped out here in the woods at Chartwell during the Second World War and the camp is now another area for children to play in. The camp includes hammocks, and seating areas and shelters made of wood.

### Old Quarry & Doormouse Dens

The Old Quarry is a play area for children that houses swings, see-saws, balancing beams and a replica caravan with a dressing up trunk. The quarry is on a steep slope. The caravan has step free access to a narrow door and a window hatch that is locked open.

### **Contact details for more information**

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