

The Walk

I'm nearly there, I'm nearly there. I could cut through here, but then that means missing out on looking at the towers. No, let's do it the way we always do it. You don't see the bride turn up at the altar without walking down the aisle. She approaches the aisle with a solemn sense of what she's about to do.

I'm going to enter here, with that same purpose, that same commitment, and with the same hopefulness. Nearly there, nearly there. I can see the gate now. I think it's seen better days, flaking paint which is taking away some rust as well. You can see what colour it used to be, and its colour long before that. But these gates that mean so much to me, just like the gates that go to heaven.

It creaks open, crying out for oil just as a baby cries for food, but that is the creak that you recognise. I could close my eyes and hear that creak and know where I was going. I close the gate behind me. It says so on the gate.

I'm here. I'm here. I walk along the small pea-gravel sandy path. It crunches under foot. It feels good. It's been swept clean, but still the scrunchy-ness reminds me of honeycomb when you bite into a Crunchy bar and get that sort of crispy feeling.

I walk about 50 yards. Here it is, my little oasis. I'm here. I'm here. There is an old wooden seat that could do with a rub down, as we all could. The metal parts are just like the gate, and seen better days. As you touch it, so the rust and the paint flake off and fall to the ground.

The river in front of me is rippling past, just like raspberry syrup going all over an ice cream. As it ripples round the geraniums, I smell that unique smell that can only be that of geraniums, you couldn't get it anywhere else. They're being planted one day and then it'll be like a sea of colour that's so beautiful the next.

I sit there and I close my eyes and it feels like this place is like a marshmallow wrapping itself around me. And I'm here, I'm here, safe. I feel quiet and serene whilst just 50 yards away it's a busy city with cars, commuters coming rushing, everybody looking out for themselves, everybody rushing around, buses going backwards and forwards, trains, roundabouts, honks. But here I'm safe and my mind can rest.

This is a walk that I used to take regularly every Wednesday when I went into Canterbury. There's a little gate that goes into a garden which runs along the River Stour in Canterbury between the river and the old city wall. The council made a pleasant area and they plant it out with seasonal plants, but mostly geraniums.

If you wish, you can walk all the way along the River Stour from the Westgate towers all the way to Chartham, which is on the way to Ashford. I thoroughly recommend that if you need somewhere peaceful to go, somewhere to offload your troubles, to talk to yourself and not look silly doing so, this is a good place. Also, opposite the towers is a good Wetherspoon's.