

## The Moonraker route



From London, turn off the M20 at junction 8 for the A20. Follow the A252 up Charing Hill to Chilham and the A28 to Canterbury. Then the A2 to Dover.

### Maidstone to Charing

*"At six o'clock that Tuesday evening towards the end of May, James Bond was thrashing the big Bentley down the Dover road along the straight stretch that runs into Maidstone."* For this, take junction 4 off the M20. You might identify the Thomas Wyatt Hotel *"just outside Maidstone"* where

Gala Brand tried to outwit Sir Hugo Drax on their way back to London. The duel between Bond in his Bentley and Drax in his white Mercedes took place on the A20 between Leeds Castle and Charing –

*"The Mercedes was a beautiful thing... It was a type 300S, the sports model with a disappearing hood"*. They were unexpectedly joined by a supercharged straight-eight red Alfa Romeo, which Drax edged off the road to crash and kill its young driver.



Leeds Castle

*eighty in third and he held it in the same gear to negotiate the hairpin at the top of the long gradient leading up to the Molash road... accelerating down the straight stretch of road past Chilham Castle ... Bond took the short cut out of Canterbury by the Old Dover Road and looked at his watch. It was six-thirty. Another fifteen minutes to Dover and then another ten minutes along the Deal road."*

### Pett Bottom

Just south of Canterbury, best approached from the A2 at Bridge, lies one of the few clues to James Bond's early upbringing, recounted in his Times obituary in **You Only Live Twice**. He *"came under the guardianship of an aunt, since deceased, Miss Charmian Bond, and went to live with her at the quaintly named hamlet of Pett Bottom near Canterbury in Kent."*



The Duck Inn

*There, in a small cottage hard by the attractive Duck Inn, his aunt, who must have been a most erudite and accomplished lady, completed his*

*education for an English public school...*. The Duck Inn was one of Ian Fleming's favourite pubs and can be identified, as well as the aunt's cottage, now



### Dover Castle

Turn off the A2 at Lydden to follow the old road into Dover.

*"Bond concentrated on his driving as he coasted down into Dover. He kept left and was soon climbing out of the town again past the wonderful cardboard castle.... he motored slowly along the coast-road, the ruby spangled masts of the Swingate radar station rising like petrified roman candles on his right."*



Dover Castle

### Kingsdown

Sir Hugo Drax's rocket research establishment is *"on the edge of the cliffs between Dover and Deal."* The World without Want Inn is *"on the edge of the site"* three miles north of Dover. Perhaps Ian Fleming



THE SWINGATE INN

had the Swingate Inn in mind. What is clear is that he pictured the rocket site between Kingsdown and St. Margaret's Bay. *"On the edge of the trees there were the lights of a large house half hidden behind a wall six feet thick"* – perhaps Drax's house is one of those in the middle of the Kingsdown Golf Course. The steep cliff path can easily be found at Oldstairs Bay at Kingsdown, leading down from the golf course.

friends such as Somerset Maugham, Noel Coward, Evelyn Waugh, Patrick Leigh Fermor and the Duff Coopers. He was fascinated by the shipping in the channel and erected a telescope on the terrace of White Cliffs to watch the procession of ships. The relationship with Noel Coward was a special one. Coward had been the previous owner of White Cliffs and there was a good-humoured exchange over the price and condition of the house when it was bought. The close friendship had started in Jamaica, where they were neighbours at Goldeneye, and Noel Coward was Caspar Fleming's godfather.



Royal St. George's

*"They both felt keyed up and in high spirits. A hot bath and an hour's rest at the accommodating Granville (Hotel) had been followed by delicious fried soles and Welsh rarebits and coffee"*. Alas the Granville Hotel no longer exists but the new block of flats at the end of Granville Road occupies the same splendid site and outline. Bond's other famous meal in the area took place in the Café Royal in Dover – based on the now vanished Royal Café in Bench Street. Its owners too were Italian Swiss – *"In Dover Bond*



## Charing Hill

*"Drax took the left-hand fork at Charing and hissed up the long hill." Near the top Drax orders his servant to cut the ropes on a lorry carrying rolls of newsprint as they overtake it, so that the rolls crash down on Bond's Bentley coming up behind. "There was a series of huge thuds as the left-hand rolls poured off the back of the lorry into the road and went hurtling off into the darkness. And more thuds as the right-hand rolls parted. One roll burst as it landed and Drax heard a tearing rattle as the unwinding paper crashed back down the one in ten gradient...."*

Then Drax *"settled himself back to enjoy the part of the drive he had always liked best, the spring woods full of bluebells and celandines on the way to Chilham."*



## Chilham / Canterbury

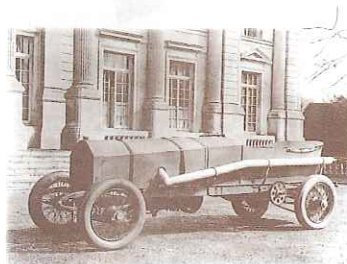
These extracts from **Moonraker** echo Ian Fleming's own favourite spots on the way to St. Margaret's.

*"Bond did a racing change and swung the big car left at the Charing Fork, preferring the clear road by Chilham and Canterbury. The car howled up to*

part of the pub.

## Higham Park

Just off the A20 east of Bridge is Higham Park, home of the cars on which another Ian Fleming creation, **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang**, was based. There were three such



cars, still legendary in East Kent in the 1950's when Ian Fleming was writing. Count Louis Zborowski inherited Higham Park and was a motor-racing fanatic

who fitted aeroplane engines to automobile chassis, testing these monsters down the A2. Chitty Chitty Bang Bang II had a 18, 882 cc Mercedes Benz aero engine. After Count Zborowski was killed at Monza in 1924 the car was owned locally and kept near St. Margaret's.

The Count also had a private light railway to bring his guests from Bekesbourne station to Higham and two 15 inch gauge 4-6-2 pacific locomotives based on the 'Flying Scotsman' type were sold after his death to the owner of the Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway.

Between 1960 and 1962 Ian Fleming owned the Old Palace at Bekesbourne, just north of Higham Park, which he used for long weekends of golf with his wife Ann and son Caspar.

*"They scrambled down a steep cliff-path to the beach and turned to the right beside the deserted small-arms range of the Royal Marine Garrison at Deal. They walked along in silence until they came to the two-mile stretch of shingle that runs at low tide beneath the towering white cliffs of St.Margaret's Bay."*



## St Margaret's Bay

St. Margaret's Bay is central to the James Bond story. It was here that Ian Fleming bought the house called White Cliffs in 1952. The house, white with lime-green shutters and a red roof can easily be identified at the north end of the beach. It was his weekend and holiday home for the crucial decade in which he conceived and wrote the James Bond books. It was close to his golf club, Royal St. George's at Sandwich, which he describes as *"the best seaside golf course in the world"*. When he edited the Atticus column in the Sunday Times, Ian Fleming's long weekends ran from Friday afternoon to Monday night and were invariably spent at St. Margaret's where Ian and Ann Fleming hosted

*pulled up at the Café Royal, a modest little restaurant with a modest kitchen but capable, as he knew of old, of turning out excellent fish and egg dishes. The Italian-Swiss mother and son who ran it welcomed him as an old friend and he asked for a plate of scrambled eggs and bacon and plenty of coffee to be ready in half an hour."* Both these establishments were favourite local haunts of the Flemings and their weekend guests. Did the Royal Café or the Café Royal lend its name to Ian Fleming's first book, Casino Royale?

## The Pines Garden Museum

The Pines Garden Museum at St. Margaret's Bay has an exhibition of memorabilia relating to both Noel Coward and Ian Fleming and their associations with St. Margaret's, as well a café. This makes an excellent halfway stop on the James Bond Country Tour. Keep strictly to the paths on the cliff top walk between St. Margaret's and Kingsdown. The chalk is unstable and James Bond and Gala Brand were lucky to survive the landslide engineered by Sir Hugo Drax. Dogs should be kept on leads as they tend to chase the sea-birds which glide over the cliff edge on the thermal breeze.

