



Cowden: Three Manors and a View

Distance: 7¼ km=4½ miles easy walking

Region: Kent

Author: KentWalker1 *comments please to feedback@fancyfreewalks.org*

Refreshments: Cowden

Map: Explorer 147 (Sevenoaks) *the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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Village, woodland, country houses, views

In Brief

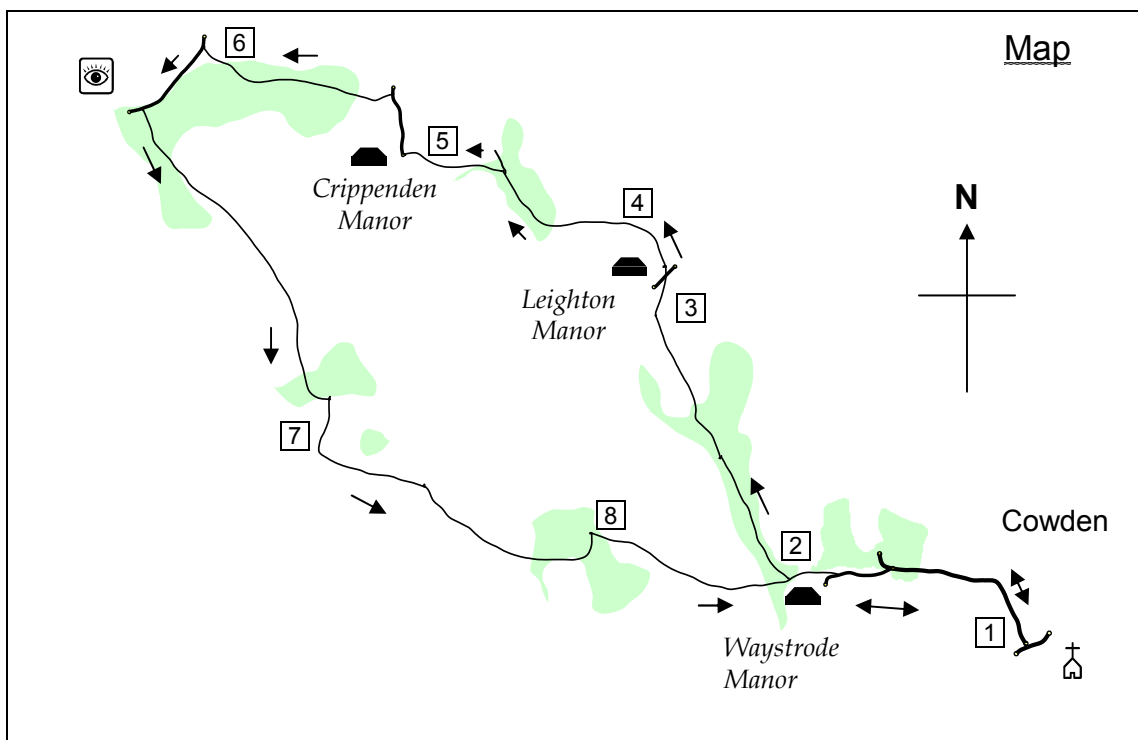
This is a gentle, easy walk starting in the peaceful village of Cowden near the Sussex border and visiting three manor houses of great character, before taking in a high viewpoint and returning across grassy meadows.



There are one or two patches of easily avoidable nettles. Any stout shoes are fine and your dog can come too.



The walk begins in the centre of **Cowden** (postcode TN8 7JE grid ref 465404). Park considerably in the village. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

- 1 Coming from the church down the main street, turn **right** into North Street, which soon becomes Spode Lane. Where the lane bends right, keep straight ahead over a cattle grid on the drive to Waystrode Manor, passing Waystrode Manor on your left.



Picturesque, Tudor, Grade II listed, Waystrode Manor has a Sussex style squared roof Oast House, instead of the Kentish cone. See:

<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-357121-waystrode-manor-cowden> for details.

- 2 Where the drive bends left, go through the right hand of two wooden gates ahead (marked FP658), down steps and onto a woodland path. At a junction with a wooden post and yellow arrows, take the **right** fork (marked FP661). Continue along the woodland path and across a small stream, bridged by two low level planks, with yellow arrows. Some way ahead you will see a metal gate / wooden stile (FP661). You now leave the woodland and cross the centre of a field, keeping the boundary fence and views to your left. As you reach the brow of the field you will see before you Leighton Manor.



Leighton Manor is a stunning late medieval, Grade II listed, property with Oast House, landscaped gardens and lakes. See: <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-357124-leighton-manor-farmhouse-cowden> for details.

- 3 Continue toward Leighton Manor's boundary fence, where the pathway sweeps right toward a wooden kissing gate, the boundary fence now being immediately on your left. Leave the field by going through the wooden kissing gate. Cross the driveway, with a stone bridge on your left, and take a path along the grass following the stream on your left until you reach a wooden post with yellow arrows. Turn **left** here and go down some steps and cross the stream using a wooden bridge with handrails. Climb up some steps on the other side and go through the wooden kissing gate (FP660), crossing a small field, with boundary fence on your left. Go through the next wooden kissing gate, adjacent to a metal gate, and across the centre of the next small field, keeping Leighton Manor's boundary fence to your left.
- 4 Go through the next wooden kissing gate, adjacent to a metal gate, and head slightly to your left, towards the oak tree just before you. At the oak tree you will note a wooden post with arrows that direct you downhill of this cowfield towards a wooden kissing gate, at the bottom. Go through this wooden kissing gate and into the woods, passing a waymarker on your left, until you see a wooden post with waymarkers, on your right. Take a **left** turn here (FP659) and cross three low level planks, that cross a small stream. Go over the wooden stile in front of you. An arrow on this stile points the way up over the brow of this horse field, boundary fence immediately to your left, soon veering right towards the farm buildings. As you climb this horse field, you will see the back of Crippenden Manor before you.



Crippenden Manor is a grade II listed property, built around 1607 by Richard Tichborne who had a foundry in the Parish. See:

<http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-357096-crippenden-manor-house-cowden> for details.

- 5 Head toward the right hand side of the Manor, and go through the small wooden gate with arrows, adjacent to a metal gate. A concrete driveway now leads you between outbuildings. Just in front of you, you will see a

pond with Crippenden Manor immediately to your left. You need to turn **right** here and walk down the driveway, with Crippenden Manor now behind you. The many stables of this Equestrian Centre should be to your right. A little way down the driveway you will note a wooden post, with arrows, on your right (on the corner of a right hand bend). Follow the arrows **left**, leaving the driveway, through double wooden gates up an unmade track, with the boundary hedge to your right. Quickly the track sweeps right into woodland. Keep on this woodland path, ignoring a metal gate on your left that leads into a field. Follow the arrows (FP656) on the wooden post. Before long you come out of the woods, by Dry Hill, and you have a great view of the Kent/Surrey counties before you.



Dry Hill is an Iron Age Hill Fort on a 24 acre site dating back to about the 1st Century BC, 170m=550 ft above sea level.

- 6 Turn **left**, as you leave the woodland, keeping the views to your right. At the next waymarker (FP654), turn **left**, back into the woods. The view should now be behind you. (You should be running parallel with the woodland path you have just walked up). Before long you come out of the woodland and onto a track with woodland to your right and field/boundary fence to your left. At the next wooden gate leave the bridlepath by taking the **left** fork, following the arrows across the centre of this field (FP657). In the far left hand corner of this field, go over a wooden stile by a metal gate / (FP657). Go across to the next metal gate / metal kissing gate that you see before you, keeping the boundary fence on your left. Go directly across and through the next metal kissing gate (FP658) into woodland. At the end of the woodland path, go through the metal kissing gate out into a large field with a copse in the centre. The waymarker on this metal kissing gate directs you immediately **right**, encouraging you to skirt the perimeter of this large field.
- 7 Your exit point is in fact a stile diagonally across this large field, hidden by the copse in front of you. So skirt the perimeter, as directed, keeping the boundary fence and woods immediately to your right and turn **left** at the corner, ignoring a metal farm gate half way along. When you reach the far right hand corner of this large field, you will see a metal gate with a stile adjacent. The arrows on the stile direct you downhill across the next field, with views in front and boundary fence to your left. The next metal gate / wooden stile again directs you downhill across the next field, keeping the boundary fence to your right. Go over the next wooden stile, adjacent to a metal gate (marked FP657). At the wooden post, (marked F658) in front of you, ignore the pathway that leads straight on across this next large clearing but take the **left** hand pathway, keeping the woodland immediately to your left. Enter the woodland in the **left** hand corner of this large clearing and follow the waymarker marked FP657, ignoring the metal gate on your left.
- 8 Sweep **right** out into an open field and cut across the middle, down towards a gap in the trees, at the bottom of the field. You will pass a wooden post, marked FP658. Go across the centre of the next field, keeping the roof top of the house directly in front of you. The pathway leads you into the woods and across a wooden bridge with metal handrails, across a small stream. At the wooden post, turn **right** (FP658) keeping the stream on your right. Go up a few steps and through a wooden gate with a yellow arrows (FP658). You are now back at Waystrode Manor, where you started out. Go up the driveway, keeping Waystrode Manor to your right. Go over the

cattle grid and turn **right** into Strobe Lane, leading into North Street and back into Cowden's main street.

For more information about Cowden and its church, see another walk in this series: 'Hever and Cowden'.



For refreshments, *The Fountain* (Harveys) a friendly pub-restaurant with a big garden is on the right.

Getting there

By car: the village is signposted from the B2026 south of Edenbridge.

By bus: route 234 from Tunbridge Wells or Edenbridge (check times).

By train: note that Cowden Station is 2km (1½ miles) from the village.

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