



## Cowden and Dryhill: Three Manors and a View

Distance: 7¼ km=4½ miles

easy walking

Region: Kent

Date written: 28-may-2011

Author: KentWalker1

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Refreshments: Cowden

Last update: 13-mar-2018

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

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Village, woodland, country houses, views*

### In Brief

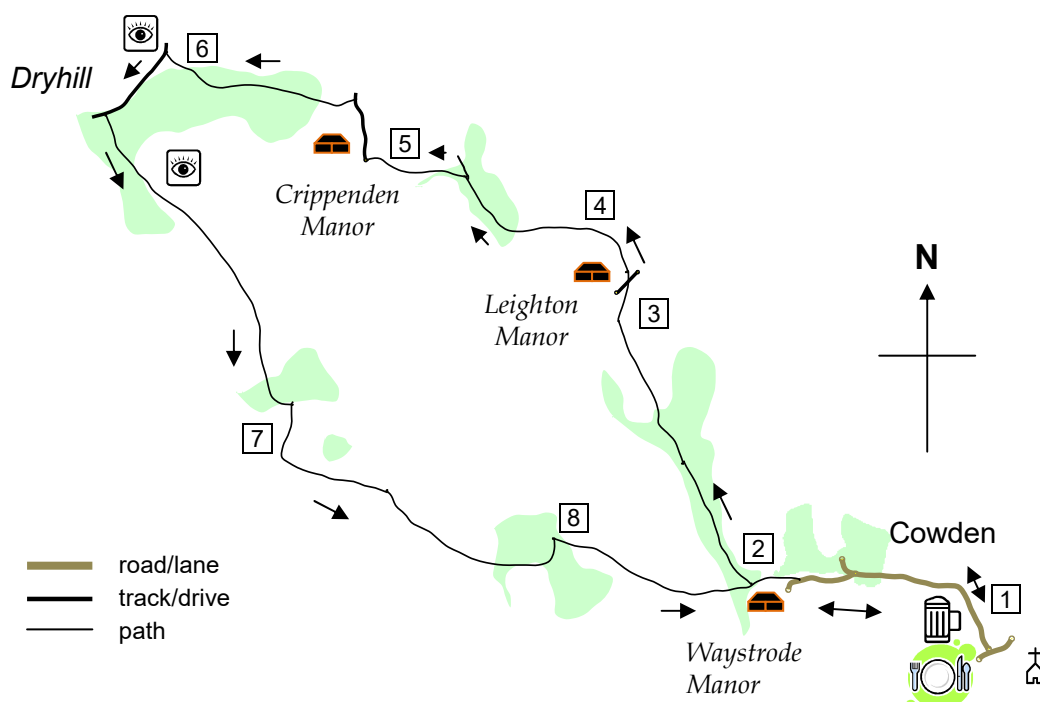
This is a gentle, easy walk starting in the peaceful village of Cowden, West Kent, near the Sussex border and visiting three manor houses of great character, before taking in a high viewpoint and returning across grassy meadows.



There are one or two patches of easily avoidable nettles. Any stout shoes are fine, except in the wetter months, when mudproof boots are preferable. Your dog can come too.



The walk begins in the centre of **Cowden** (postcode **TN8 7JE** grid ref TK465404). Park considerately in the village. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



## The Walk

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

- 1 Coming from the church down the main street, turn **right** into North Street, which soon becomes Spode Lane. After ½ km, where the lane bends right, keep straight ahead 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, through trees, down steps and onto a woodland path. In 50m, at a junction with a wooden post and yellow arrows, take the **right** fork. Continue along the woodland path (strewn with woodland debris after the strong winds of recent winters). After 400m or so, you go across a small stream via a new bridge with handrails. In another 150m your path winds uphill to take you through a small metal gate, out of the wood, into a sheep pasture. Cross the pasture on a faint path, veering slightly away from the boundary fence on your left, with great views developing. As you reach the brow of the meadow, you will see before you Leighton Manor with its oast and little clock turret.



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

- 3 Continue towards the house, where the pathway sweeps **right** beside the boundary fence on your left. Go **left** through a small metal gate and cross straight over the driveway, with a stone bridge on your left. Go across a patch of grass to cross the stream by a long bridge with handrails. Climb a slope on the other side and go through a small metal gate into a small meadow. Go straight across the meadow, with the boundary fence on your left. At the other side, go through a small metal gate adjacent to a large (possibly open) metal gate and go straight across the centre of the next field.
- 4 At the other side, go through a small metal gate adjacent to a large metal gate into a downward-sloping pasture. Go down the grass, heading slightly to your left, passing to the left of a nearby oak tree, as indicated by an arrow on a wooden post under the tree. At the bottom of a fairly steep slope, go through a small metal gate straight ahead into woods. Immediately veer **right** at a waymarker and continue through the woods for about 150m where you should see a wooden post with waymarkers on your right. Take a **left** turn here. Cross a bridge with handrails over a small stream and go over a (just squeezable) stile into a horse pasture. Keep to the boundary fence on your left at first, heading for the redbrick Manor. As you come over the crest of the field, veer **right** towards the adjoining farm buildings, with Crippenden Manor and its haha to your left.



*Crippenden Manor is a grade II listed property, built around 1607 by Richard Tichborne who had a foundry in the parish. For details, see:*

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

- 5 As you approach the farm buildings, go through a large metal gate and keep **left** on a concrete driveway between outbuildings. You have another view now of Crippenden Manor on your left, with its pond straight ahead. Turn **right** here and walk down the driveway, passing the stables of a large equestrian centre on your right. In 150m, just before a right hand bend, look for a wooden markerpost on your right. Go **left** here, leaving the driveway, through double wooden gates up an unmade track. Keep **right** beside the hedge, ignoring a small wooden gate, and follow the track as it sweeps **right** into woodland. Stay on this woodland path and in 300m ignore a metal gate on your left which only leads into a field. You shortly have views on your left but you still have nearly 200m to go. Finally, at the top, your path veers right, out of the woods, to reach a T-junction at Dry Hill with 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** enjoying the views. In 250m, at the next waymarker, just before the path bends right, turn **left**, back into the woods. In nearly 150m, you come out of the wood onto a wide path with woodland to your right and a field and boundary fence on your left. At the next small wooden gate into another meadow, leave the bridlepath by taking the **left** fork, following the yellow arrow across the centre of this field. In the far left hand corner of this field, go over a wooden stile or through a metal gate. Keep ahead along the left-hand side of the next meadow and through a metal kissing gate into woodland with a pond on your right. At the end of the woodland path, go through the metal kissing gate out into a large green field which has a copse in its centre. The waymarker on this gate directs you immediately **right**, encouraging you to skirt the perimeter of this large field.
- 7 [2018: Walkers report new metal fencing in these latter sections: you may need to make adjustments to the route as described here.] Your exit point is a small metal gate diagonally across this large field, hidden by the copse in the centre. 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 large metal gate with an adjacent small metal gate, taking you into the next meadow. Go down the left-hand side, with good views ahead, to go through another small metal gate on your left. Continue downhill as directed keeping the boundary hedge to your right. Go through the next metal gate, adjacent to a large metal gate. At a wooden post with a yellow arrow, take a pathway down the left-hand side of the meadow, beside woodland on your left. In the left-hand corner, your path enters woodland. After 100m through the woods, avoid a large metal gate on your left and sweep **right**, as directed by the waymarker, leading into a large meadow.

- 8 Cut across the middle of this open grassy field, down towards a gap in the trees at the bottom, passing a wooden post. Go down the centre of the next grassy field, with the rooftop of Waystrode Manor visible ahead. The pathway leads you into the woods and across a wooden bridge with metal handrails, across a small stream. At a wooden post, turn **right** on a path which may be familiar from your outward journey. Go up a few steps and through a wooden gate with a yellow arrow. You are now back at Waystrode Manor. Go up the driveway, keeping Waystrode Manor to your right. Turn **right** into Strobe Lane, leading into North Street, and thence into Cowden's main street where the walk began.



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

## Getting there

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

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

Not by train: note that Cowden Station is 2 km=1½ miles from the village, making it unsuitable as a starting point.

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