



Goudhurst and Cranbrook

Distance: 18½ km=11½ miles

easy walking

Region: Kent

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Last Update: 29-sep-2024

Refreshments: Goudhurst, Cranbrook

Map: 136 (The Weald) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? *We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org*

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Village and country town, meadows, woodland, views, churches, oasts

In Brief

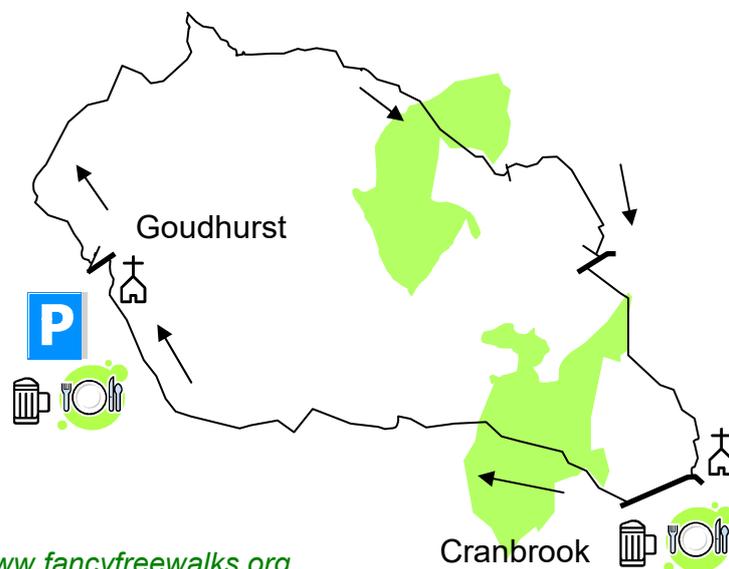
This is a wide-ranging but gentle walk through the Kent countryside, visiting two famous names: one a large village, the other a small town, both with huge charm. This is farming country but the paths avoid ploughed land and stay mainly on the flowered edges, in the grassy meadows and forests. There is very little unfenced livestock on this walk, all avoidable.



There are one or two patches of nettles along the route, so short trousers are inadvisable. In high summer you may need to have your arms covered and it is useful to have a hiking pole or stick to swish aside the undergrowth which can be quite dense in many places. Because of the distance and some irregular surfaces, you will find boots are a comfort. Some of the stiles on this walk will prove too much for all but a small liftable dog (but they are gradually being replaced by gates).

The walk begins in **Goudhurst, Kent, postcode TN17 1AG**. Park considerably in the village, preferably on the west side where there is plenty of off-road parking. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

Overview



The Walk

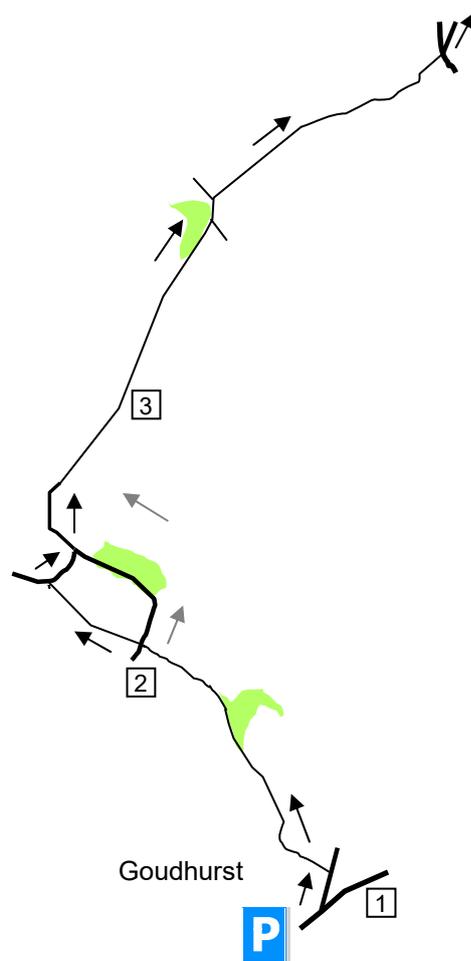
Long ago you would have been standing in the great forest of Anderida which covered the southeast. A small farming village sprang up on this high ground and, when the Normans came in 1066, it was well-established with a chapel and later a church. In its name, "hurst" is a "wooded hill" but of "goud" no one is certain (probably not "battle"). In the mid-1300s Flemish weavers arrived and the village prospered from Kentish broadcloth. The Flemings also brought a liking for hops in their beer which changed taste and the landscape. In the 1500s iron foundries sprang up all around in the many artificial lakes and ponds. In the 1700s the Goudhurst militia put an end to the vicious band of smugglers known as the Hawkhurst Gang (see the neighbouring walk "Bewl Water and Bedgebury Forest") who had spread their ruthless activities into West Sussex (see the "Harting Down" walk).

Leg 1: Goudhurst to Etchinghill 2½ km=1½ miles

1 From the High Street in the village, near the pond, go down North Road, next to *The Vine Inn* (closed in 2024 and "for sale"). Just after a bus shelter, turn **left** between two houses on a signed footpath. *Note that you are on part of the High Weald Landscape Trail (HWLT), a long distance path of 145 km=90 miles, running between Horsham and Rye.* The path goes steeply down and through a swing-gate. Keep right here by a fence. (If the ground is a bit too marshy and springy for comfort, you can avoid it by taking a left fork here and going around in a semicircle to rejoin the path.) Go past a post with yellow arrows, go through a swing-gate and over a wooden bridge. Go down the grassy slope in the direction of the yellow arrow, avoiding a path forking right as you go. Go through a swing-gate and over a wooden bridge, then down the right-hand side of a grassy meadow. Go through a swing-gate and over a wooden bridge. (This is becoming a habit!) Follow the grassy path beside a wire fence. *Ahead to the left you can see the tower of Church Farm with its oasts.* Go through two more swing-gates and, shortly after, a 3-plank bridge. A final swing-gate takes you out to a lane.

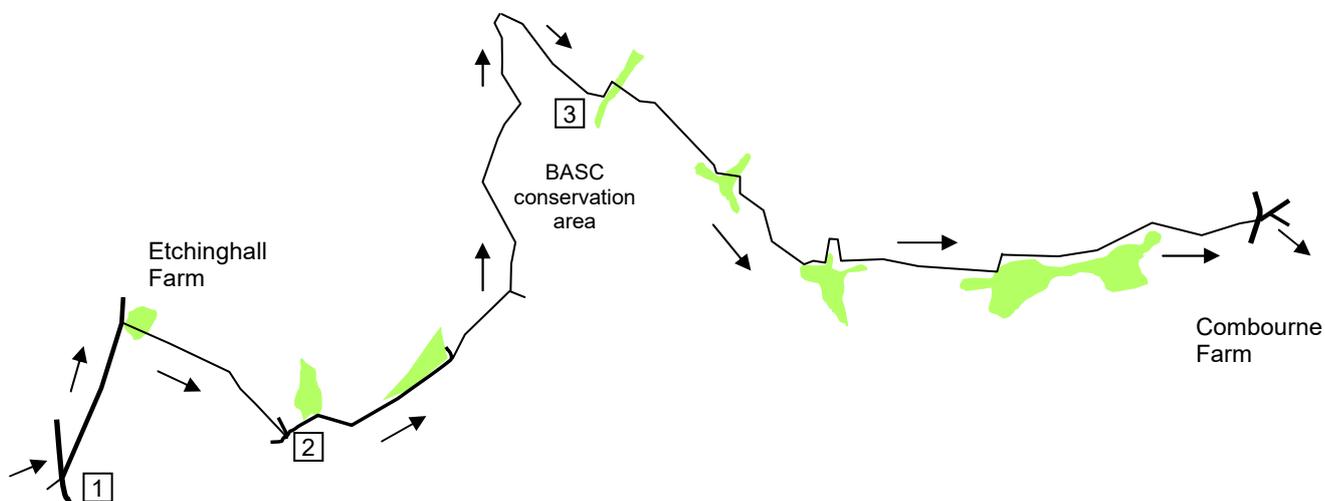
2 Cross the lane to go over a stile opposite into a pasture. (If you have a dog, you may prefer to turn right and left on the lanes.) Go straight ahead across the centre to the left of some trees, then veer slightly right to a stile in the fence. Turn **right** on the lane here, thus leaving the HWLT. Keep left at a triangle of grass and turn **left** on a private road to *Trottenden Farm*. Just before a beautiful trio of oasts, turn **right** in the direction of *Fullers Barn*. Pass the house and a pond, and go through a gate into a lovely long grassy meadow.

3 A gate takes you into a second meadow on a path across the centre. A glance back to the right gives you a view of the village where you began this leg. The next gate takes you into a field of oak saplings and waving grass. A footpath joins from the right as you go over another stile. After going through a belt of trees, immediately ignore a path on your left, keeping ahead along the right-hand side of the field. In the corner, go over



a bridge and along the right-hand side of the next meadow. At the far side, turn **right** on a path coming from the left, going past a pond on your left. Keep straight on past a derelict building, over a broken stile and ahead uphill on a track leading up to a road, the B2079.

Leg 2: Etchinghill to Combourne 2½ km=1½ miles



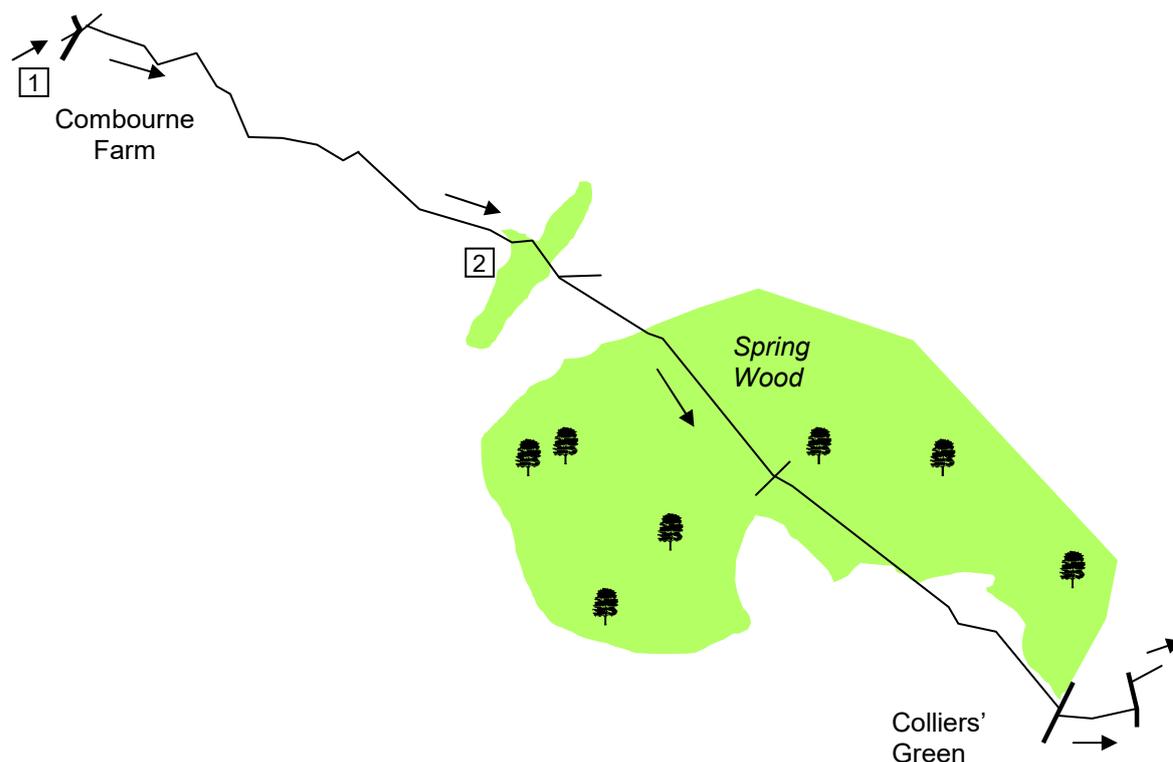
1 Cross straight over and take a lane opposite, Gore Lane. Ignore a footpath on the left but, shortly after, take a signposted footpath on the **right**, just short of Etchinghill Farm, through a small wooden gate. Your path goes between fence posts and straight ahead across the centre of a field on a wide grassy path. Continue straight on over a stile in a line of poplars, along a pleasant path between hedges, and down steps to a track. Turn **left** on the track avoiding a track sharp left and going past the timbered *Swan Farm House*.

2 Keep straight ahead on a grassy path and continue along the left-hand side of a field. At the corner of this first field, keep straight ahead, ignoring a bridleway on the right. (There is an unexciting route along the bridleways from here but the paths chosen take you through a noteworthy Conservation Area.) Where the farm track bends left, keep straight ahead along a line of poplars, staying on the left-hand side of the field, soon passing a pond on your left. In the first corner, go over a stile straight ahead, passing another pond. You are in one of the areas run by the BASC for preserving game birds. Follow the large green public footpath sign and keep left in this charming meadow. Cross a small meadow to another footpath sign and turn **right** as indicated. At the pond side, your path bears left by a wire fence. Over to your left are the four oasts of Harper's Farm. Keep following the fence, going over a wide concrete bridge. The path rises steeply into a field. Turn **right** along the edge of the field.

3 In the corner of the field, turn **left**. In only 30m, turn **right** over a long wooden bridge across a stream and straight ahead across a crop field. The path soon meets a corner and continues along the right-hand side of the field. At the next corner, bear **left** but immediately go **right** between metal posts into the next field. Go **right** and **left** round the corner of the field. The path runs for some distance along the irregular edge of the field. As the far edge of the field curves left, ignore a metal gate visible on your right and continue round the far side for another 20m. Go **right** here through a (usually open) metal gate, turn **right** in the next field and **left** in the corner.

(You must have got the idea by now.) Continue along the right-hand side of the field and, in the corner, go **left** and **right** under high-tension wires. In the next corner, go over a crossing path and keep ahead over a stile. Follow the path over a meadow, keeping approximately to the right-hand side. In the next corner, the path takes you over a stile and along a fenced-off path beside a pasture. As you approach the end of this field, bear **right** on a short overgrown section [Jul 2020: dense nettles and brambles] to reach a stile onto a lane by a junction in the hamlet clustered around Combourne Farm.

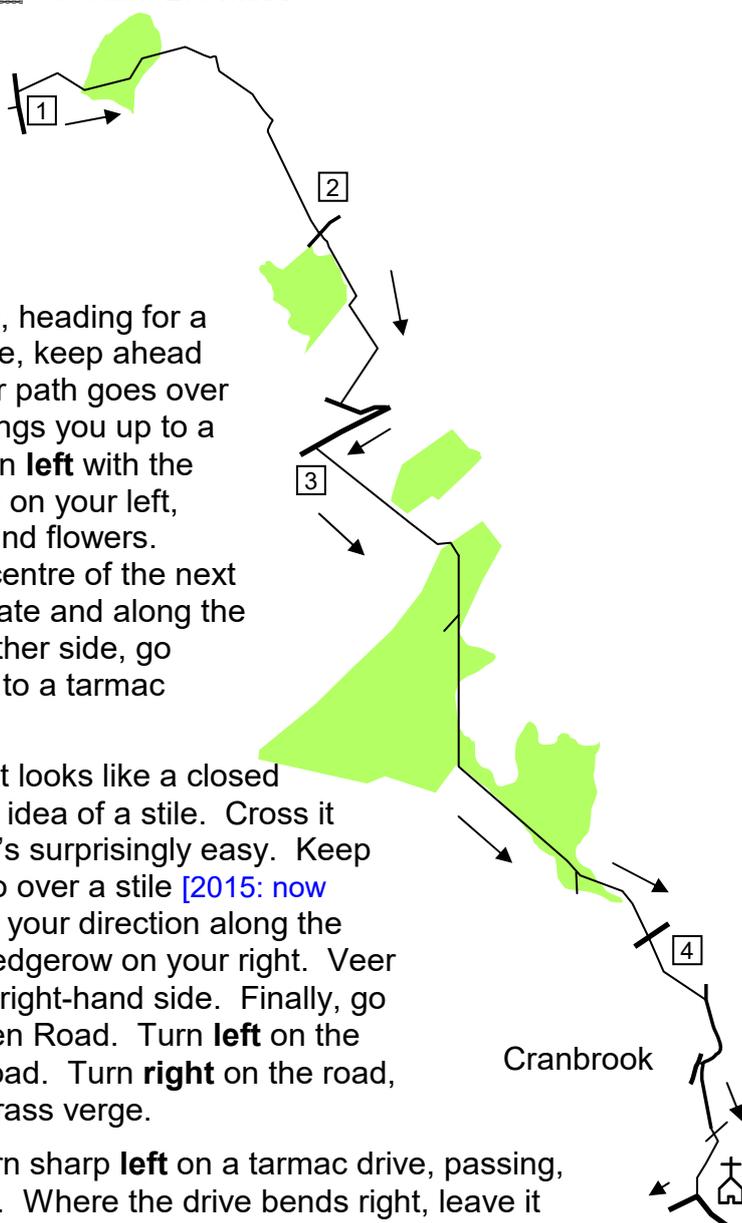
Leg 3: Combourne to Colliers' Green 2¼ km=1½ miles



- 1 Go **left** on the road for just 10m, **right** at the road junction and immediately **right** again on a track, heading for the three oasts of *Little Combourne*. Veer **left** before the oasts. (They have been well preserved with the cowls still free to rotate with the wind.) The track bends right and passes *Little Combourne Cottage*, well-maintained and modest in name. Zigzag left-right on the track, avoiding the orchard on your left. Keep straight ahead on a grassy path, still avoiding that orchard on your left. Go by a metal gate into a large meadow and proceed along the left-hand side.
- 2 Your path now takes you over a stile into woodland, over a 2-plank bridge across a delightful stream and over a stile into a rather large crop field. Go straight across the field and, at the other side, go through a wooden gate into the handsome woodland of Spring Wood. Follow this excellent wide path. Soon it goes over a wide crossing track and then through more woodland. On emerging from the wood, continue along the left-hand side of a field. At a line of oaks, go straight ahead on a grassy path next to an exercise meadow by a fence. Finally go through a metal gate to a lane in the hamlet of Colliers' Green. Cross the lane and go through a wide new wooden gate (or over a stile to the right if the gate is locked) into a newly levelled area (foundation for school car park?) and past some school grounds on your left. Keep left and go over a little bridge to another lane.

Leg 4: Colliers' Green to Cranbrook 4½ km=2½ miles

- 1 Turn **left** on the lane and, in 20m, turn right on a narrow path along the right-hand side of a hay field. Your path enters a wood in the corner and widens, discharging you into a hay meadow. Keep straight ahead across the centre, on an unclear path, heading for a pond on the far side. At the other side, keep ahead with another pond on your right. Your path goes over a 3-plank bridge under alders and brings you up to a field. Turn **right** along the edge. Turn **left** with the corner of the field, keeping the hedge on your left, gently uphill on a path of high grass and flowers. Continue on a clear path across the centre of the next field. Go through a modern kissing-gate and along the left-hand side of a meadow. At the other side, go through another modern kissing-gate to a tarmac drive.
- 2 Cross the drive, a fraction left, to what looks like a closed gate. This is in fact Hazelden Farm's idea of a stile. Cross it using the side planks as a foothold: it's surprisingly easy. Keep along the right-hand side of a field, go over a stile [2015: now gone] and zigzag right-left to continue your direction along the right-hand side of a field with a low hedgerow on your right. Veer **right** in the next field, going along its right-hand side. Finally, go through a metal gate to a lane, Marden Road. Turn **left** on the lane, soon reaching the main A262 road. Turn **right** on the road, crossing it soon to make use of the grass verge.
- 3 In 200m, at a sign for *Kennel Holt*, turn sharp **left** on a tarmac drive, passing, as you go, some attractive properties. Where the drive bends right, leave it to continue ahead on a track. Where the track curves left to a sheep meadow, keep ahead on a path. The path goes past a small tree plantation, over a stream and veers right uphill through holly. Keep straight on uphill avoiding several side turnings. Soon your path runs to the left of an old metal fence, beside an old gate. As you approach open fields, keep left and stay alongside some fences on your right. You pass a pond and are now walking between fences. The path rises gradually and joins a semi-tarmac drive, leading you through a small wooden gate to the main A229 road.
- 4 Cross the road carefully to a narrow footpath opposite. An unneeded swing-gate takes you up into an open commonland dotted with trees and shrubs. At a T-junction, turn **right** through a wooden gate onto a wide path running by a fence with a playing field on your left. You emerge by a school in a residential road. Don't join the road but turn smartly **left** on a signed tarmac path. Follow this path past some tasteful new houses and a green, and keep straight on into the churchyard of the great Church of St Dunstan, Cranbrook. *From this approach you get the best impression of the size of this church.* (The benches make an ideal picnic site.) Go diagonally **right** to pass the west side. The entrance is close by on the south side. *This is a fascinating building, well worth a visit.*

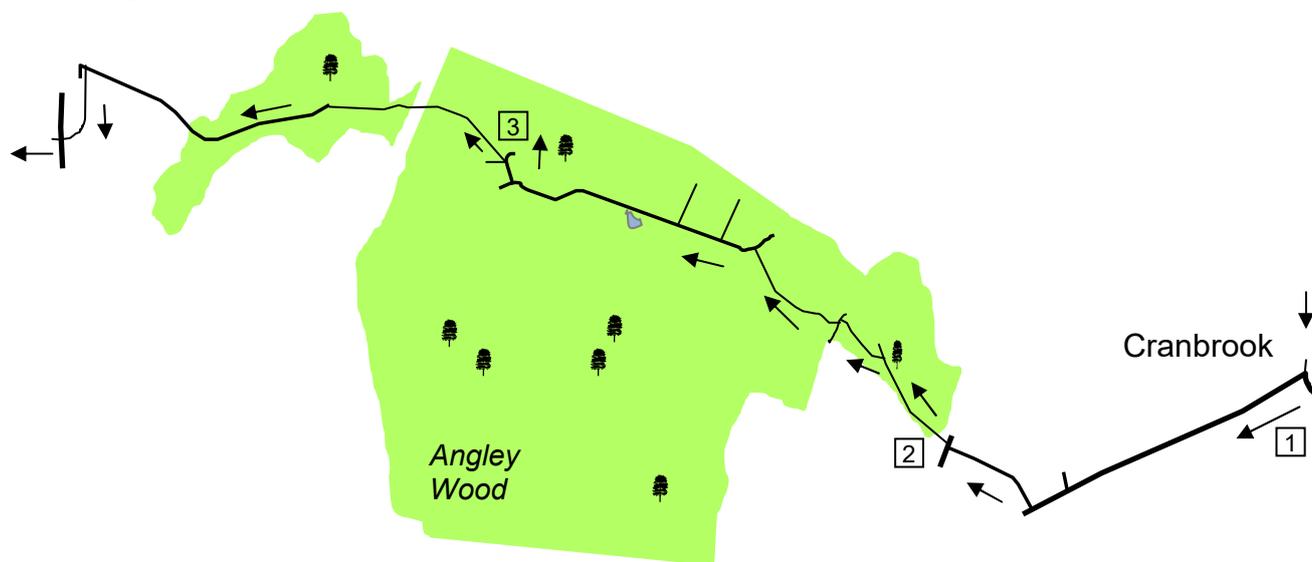


Cranbrook and its church were here before the Normans and the town appears in the Domesday Book as “Cranebroc”, referring to the local stream and the wading birds. Edward I granted Cranbrook the rights of a market town. Great wealth came to the town from the Flemish weavers, aided by the mills and streams that powered them. Cranbrook has a tradition of independent thought and religious dissent as well as being a refuge for artists. The railway came and went. Now it still retains many of the timber-framed, stuccoed and weatherboarded buildings from earlier centuries.

St Dunstan (909-988) was a key figure in restoring the monasteries after the Viking raids and the great church contains three images of him. Another age-less image is the Green Man in the west porch, a pagan adoption. In the 1400s the great wealth of the town piled in as bequests to the building and it gradually took on its impressive size and form. A series of information plaques will take you on a self-guided tour of this fascinating church.

Cranbrook’s other best-known building is the Union Windmill, built in 1814 and standing at the highest point overlooking the town. It is the tallest surviving smock mill (i.e. octagonal weatherboarded) in the British Isles, 72 feet high. It is open regularly during the warmer months and its own stoneground whole-meal flour is on sale.

Leg 5: Cranbrook to Glassenbury 3 km=2 miles

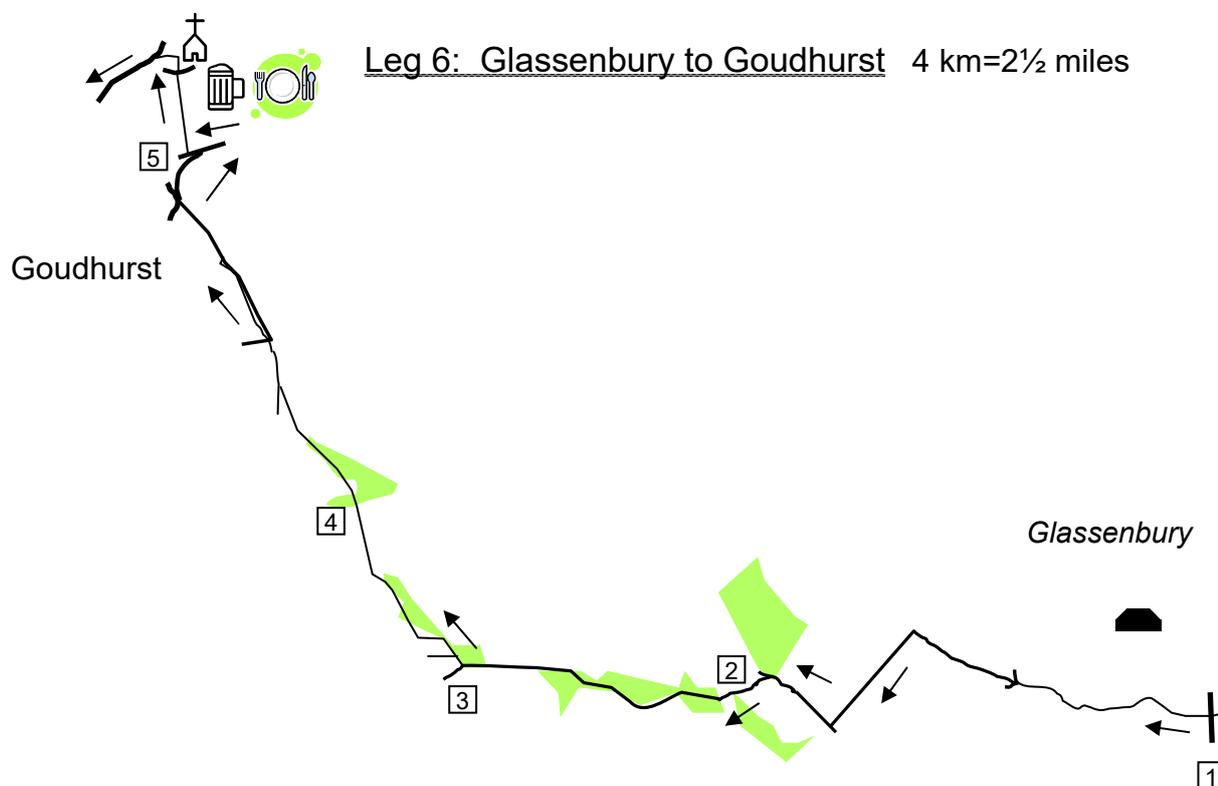


- 1 Leave the church precinct, going down steps past the Vestry Hall to the High Street. Your route is **right** along the High Street. However, it is worth first making a short visit to the east side of the town where the Windmill is immediately visible and where the little hills and the many weatherboarded buildings are so picturesque. You pass the White Horse pub which offers grub on a budget, many small shops and other opportunities for refreshment. After the fire station and Wheatfield Drive, turn **right** on the mis-named New Road. At the main road, cross straight over onto a rough track, going past a gate with an unusual barrier.
- 2 The track instantly takes you back into the dusky woods. After 100m you pass a wooden sign for Angley Wood [Nov 2023: sign missing; navigation through these woods is challenging and you need to concentrate]. 60m after the sign, opposite a tall thin oak tree, fork **left**, leaving the wide track and entering a chestnut coppice which in late spring is decked with bluebells. Keep to this path, avoiding the left-hand higher path after 70m. After 120m total, at a T-junction, turn **left** on a wide path and, in just 20m, turn **right** at a

post with yellow arrows [Nov 2020: gone – don't miss this turn!] deep into the forest on a woodland path (which is a bit muddy and overgrown in parts and strewn with wood debris and earth humps for BMX bike riders). In 250m, veer **left** on a wide sandy forestry track. You pass a junction on the right, regardless, then another. *Note that you are once again on the High Weald Landscape Trail.* You pass a small pond on your left which may be dry. 150m after the pond, you come to a signed [Nov 2020: sign gone – don't miss this turn!] 3-way junction. Leave the main path, which curves away to the left, by turning **right** here on a slightly narrower path.

- 3 In nearly 150m the track ends at a multiple junction with a dense bank of tall trees ahead. Ignore the level path on the left but take the path **second from the left** which rises gently at an angle up into the trees by a HWLT sign. Your path goes under wires and narrows through bracken. On your right you can make out an area used for horse exercises. When, 250m from the multiple junction, you reach a dirt track with a gate on your right, veer **left** on the main track going past a timber yard. Keep on this main hardcore track, soon going between fields. Eventually you reach the entrance to Glassenbury Hill Farm. Just before the tarmac drive, turn **left** on a path that runs along the right-hand side of a field. The path bends right and goes through a small wooden gate to a road, the B2085 Glassenbury Road. *The beautiful moated Glassenbury House will be over on your right as you proceed.*

Glassenbury House was built in 1475, replacing an even older house and given its Georgian façade in 1730, being occupied by the Roberts family for 700 years. Napoleon's horse "Jaffa", which he probably rode at Waterloo, retired to Glassenbury and is buried in the grounds.



- 1 Cross directly over the road to a footpath opposite, taking you along the right-hand side of a field. At the corner, the path goes over a wooden bridge and up the right-hand side of the next field. When you reach the next corner, continue through a small metal gate and straight on along a drive. Avoid private turnoffs each side (left into *Little Glassenbury* and right

into *Little Glassenbury Cottage*) as your driveway degrades to a farm track. At the corner, turn **left** with the track. At a T-junction with a track under wires, turn **right** thus regaining your original direction.

- 2 Your path reaches a junction with some gate posts on your left. Go **left** between the gate posts on a path running along the right-hand side of a field. Stay on the main track, ignoring a grassy downhill track off to the left. To pass a pond on your left, which is usually a home to a vast number of ducks. (Jul 2020: The land near this pond may be in the process of redevelopment, as much bulldozing and flattening of earth can be seen.) The track now takes you into woodland, going past another pond on your right. The track curves its way round the right-hand side of a large field and enters more woodland with another pond on your left. *At a break in the trees, a view of Goudhurst to your right indicates you are near the end.* You pass yet another small pond almost hidden in trees on your right. Immediately after this pond, as the track curves away left, leave it by turning **right** by a post with yellow arrows into a field.
- 3 Keep to the **right**-hand side of the field, avoiding another footpath to your left. Stay on the edge of the field as your path goes round a copse and becomes rather overgrown (with luxuriant summer flowers in season). The path runs between shrubs for a while and then reaches the corner. Go over a wooden bridge here, cross a track, traverse a line of trees and go straight across the centre of a hay field.
- 4 The path goes over a swelling stream, a tributary of the Teise, in a band of trees. It then goes up the right-hand side of a sweet-smelling meadow of tall grass and flowers. Finally, the path rises to meet a track by a post with many yellow arrows. Turn **right** on the track. You reach a tarmac residential road by houses. Avoid the tarmac both left and straight on and take a path diagonally **left** through a gate. The path leads up some steps, along the right-hand side of a new menage for horses, through a gate, and joins the tarmac drive on your right. Continue uphill passing *Whites Cottage*. At the top, at a road junction, turn sharp **right** on Maypole Lane, avoiding the major road.
- 5 At a junction with Tiddymotts Lane, turn very sharp **left**, with great views now left over the surrounding country. In just 20m, at a small fingerpost, turn **right** up some steps. This fenced grassy path between meadows leads up to a lane in the town. On your left is the back of the *Star and Eagle* hotel/pub. Almost opposite, go up steps into the precincts of the church, well worth a visit if not yet seen.



St Mary's Church goes back at least to 1119 but there was a church on the hill long before then. The church originally had a spire but this was destroyed in a storm in 1637. From the present tower you can (in theory) see 51 other churches. Inside, the church is a mine of interest, including the ancient turret clock.

Continue out into the High Street and follow it downhill, past *Sizzlers the Butchers*, back to the village pond and the (ex-?) *Vine Inn* where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: If coming from the London or Tunbridge Wells area, the usual way to Goudhurst is on the A21 (Hastings road). Goudhurst is signed left at a roundabout roughly a mile before Lamberhurst. Another approach is from Maidstone and the A229.

By bus/train: buses 295 and 297 run from Tunbridge Wells station, including Sundays. Check the timetables.