



Cowfold and Crabtree

Distance: 11 km=6½ miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: Crabtree

Map: Explorer 136 (Horsham) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Village, woodland, grassy meadows, gastropub, bluebells in spring

In Brief

This is a gentle country walk through woodland and meadows in central Sussex. It could be treated as a pub walk for the *Crabtree* pub / restaurant. The *Crabtree* is run by Simon Hope who once ran the *Food for Thought* restaurant in Covent Garden and is a cookery writer. The 3-course lunch menu at £20 (as 2017) is outstanding value. (To reserve, ring 01403 892666.)



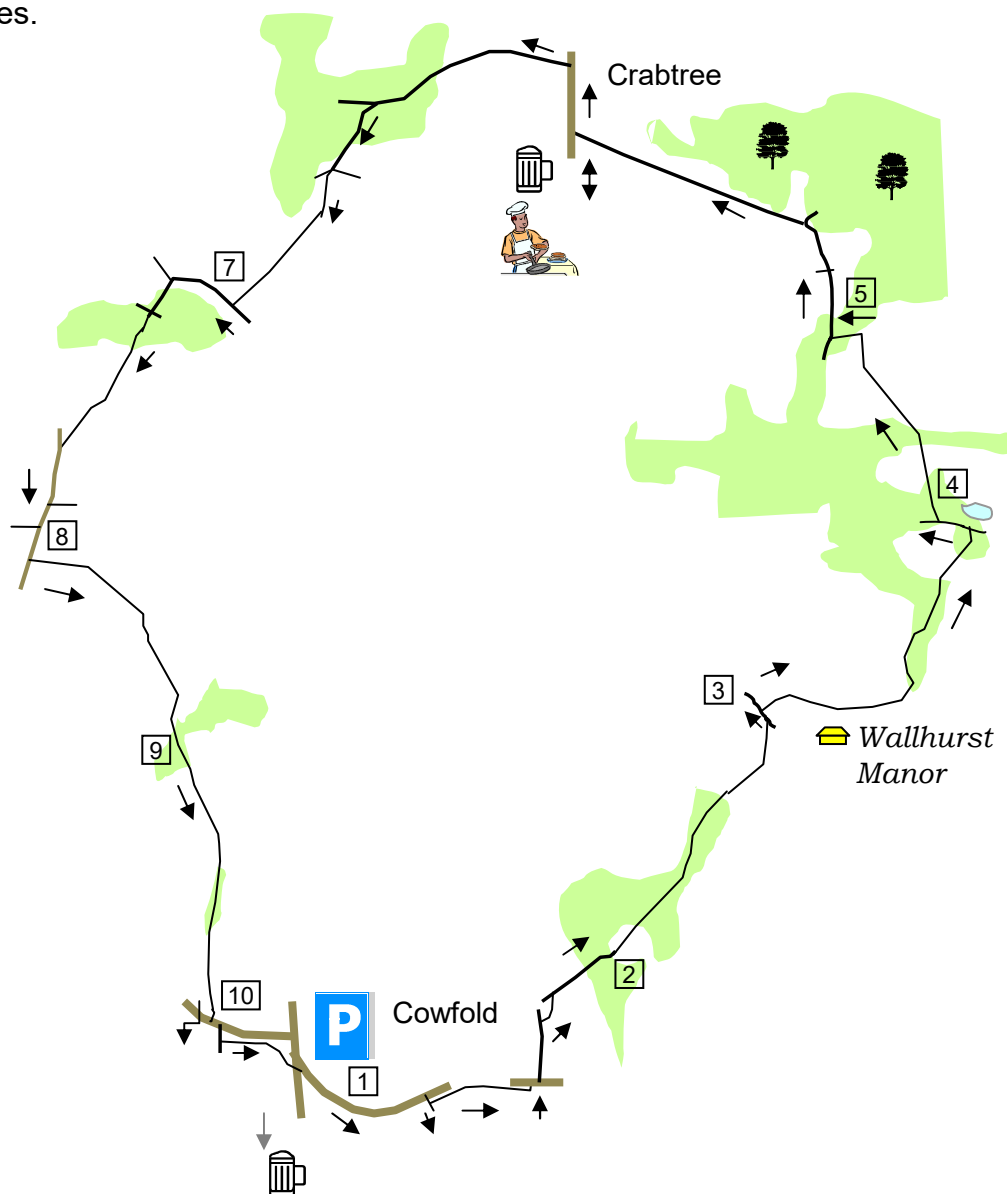
No nettles or brambles were encountered when this walk was researched in January but in summer they may grow prolifically up to shoulder height. The paths are generally easy to walk but, as this is a wealden walk, you will need good boots in the winter months. Although it will be much drier underfoot in summer and autumn, you will still find boots a comfort. Most stiles have a gap for a dog but one or two will be a challenge for a large dog. There may be young beef cattle in a corner of one or two of the large fields.


The walk begins in the village of **Cowfold**, postcode **RH13 8BW**. There is a free car park just after the start of the A272 road, signposted *Haywards Heath*. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

- 1 See map overleaf.** From the crossroads in Cowfold, walk along the A272 road eastwards, signposted *Haywards Heath*, passing playing fields on your left. Ignore a footpath on the right but, at the entrance to *Eastlands House*, turn **right**. Immediately go **left** over a stile and walk along the left-hand side of a horse pasture, parallel to the road. After 250m or so, just before a pond, go **left** over a stile, cross the main road and take a footpath opposite, next to *Averys*. Follow this wide track for 150m till, just before a bend, look for a 3-way fingerpost and turn **right** there past an unnecessary stile on a narrow path. Immediately fork **left** to cross a wide stream by a wooden bridge. In 20m, take the right fork (or the left fork beside the stream) to reach a wide semi-tarmac track in about 40m. Turn **right** on the track, going under grid lines. At a junction of paths, keep straight ahead past a

cottage on your left to enter a yard containing a couple of old military vehicles.



-  **2** Go left and right round the trucks and take a path diagonally across the centre of a plantation of young oaks. At the other side, your path crosses a track and enters Ashurst Wood, with a fine show of bluebells in spring, as for much of this walk. Keep to the main path which veers left at a junction over a bridge and follows a wire fence on your right. The path becomes a surfaced chalky track and comes out into an open field. Ignoring a footpath on the left, cross the field diagonally **right**, heading for a stile visible in the fence. [2014: if the crops are dense you may need to go right around two sides.] Cross the stile and turn **left** beside the fence. In the corner go through an old metal gate onto a lane. Turn **left** on the lane.
- 3** In 20m, turn **right** on a narrow path running along the edge of a band of trees. On your right soon are the grounds of Wallhurst Manor. *This ancient Manor goes back to Robert of Wallhurst in the 1200s but the houses were rebuilt in yellow sandstone 1890. Soon you can see the building behind you when the trees clear.* A stile takes you into a small meadow. Veer **left** across the centre to go over an avoidable stile in the corner and then along the right-hand side of a large grassy field. In the first corner, your path enters Harbour Wood [2014: with fallen tree branches]. You come out through a large metal gate into a pleasant sloping meadow fringed with large oaks. Keep to the right-hand edge, passing

a small pond, and keep ahead between lines of trees heading for a house *Long House*. Fork **left** as you near the house to arrive at the edge of a large pond at the top of the slope. Turn **left** beside the pond, away from the house.

- 4 About 20m after the pond, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn **right** over a stile, or through an open metal gate, and follow a path down the left-hand side of another sloping meadow with large oaks. After only 30m, fork a fraction right, passing to the right of a large oak. The path now takes you down to a stile and a fingerpost into Ashen Wood. Go over a footbridge over a lively stream and up over a stile into a large sheep pasture. Go diagonally **left** across the pasture and over a stile on the other side. Cross a track here and veer **left** onto a path into a crop field. Keep **right** along the edge of the field and, in the first corner, go over a stile into woods. Immediately turn **left** on a path that runs along the top edge of the wood. The path takes you down to a surfaced track by a bridge. Go **right** over the bridge which conceals a culvert from which a gushing cascade of water emerges.
- 5 Follow the track, passing *Old Laundry Cottage* and soon *Gorsedene* with its peacocks, both real and clipped as topiary. At the top of the drive, keep ahead on the tarmac, ignoring a bridleway on the right (*which leads past Leonardslee – see another walk in this series “St Leonards Forest”*). Continue past a mixed collection of houses on Mill Lane to reach the main road. Your route is **right** along the road, but first you will wish to turn left for 70m for refreshments at the *Crabtree* pub / restaurant.



The Crabtree dates back to 1576, its pub sign showing the harvesting of crabapples. It was recently nicely renovated as a pub / restaurant with a clean regency look, concealing a friendly welcome and service. The menu is not over long (five choices of starter and five of main) which is always a good sign. The lunch menu price at £20 (2017) for three courses is really good value.

- 6 After refreshment, go back to where you reached the main road and continue along it, passing the South Lodge Hotel on your left (which also does coffee and tea). Just after the curtain-shaped entrance pillars, turn **left** on a bridleway into woods. The path soon joins a cinder track. After 600m or so, at a 3-way fingerpost, avoid a right fork into woods and stay on the wide track as it curves left. You reach a small group of houses. At a fingerpost, ignore a footpath left into a field opposite the houses but, at a second fingerpost, fork **left** on a downhill path between banks. Passing a large wooden gate and a house, continue on a driveway between wire fences. This pleasant driveway crosses a woodland stream and runs between a field and a meadow. You reach a T-junction with *Old Woldringfold* on your right.
- 7 Turn **right** at the T-junction towards the house, passing to the **right** of the house. [2015: walkers report a new permissive path here, avoiding the house.] At a bend in the track, avoid a wooden swing-gate and turn **left** uphill with the main driveway. At a junction, with excellent views behind, keep ahead on a curving driveway uphill. Just before a house, leave the drive by forking **left** over a new stile on a path down a grassy meadow. Go over another new stile and keep ahead just to the left of a round clump of pines in a meadow dotted with large oaks, part of Trenchmore Beef and Cider Farm (see www.trenchmore.co.uk). There may be young beef cattle here and in the next field; if they worry you, keep to the far side of the field. Head for a small gatehouse visible ahead and, when you reach it, go over a stile onto a lane. Turn **left** on the lane.

8 Ignore a footpath on the left just before *Burnthouse*, soon passing *Little Burnt House* and then a driveway on your right. Just before *Northfield Barn*, turn sharp **left** on a signposted footpath, going up the right-hand side of a field, through a small metal gate beside a large metal gate. At a 4-way fingerpost, fork **right** through a metal gate into a meadow. Avoid the obvious wide path ahead, which is for farm use, and take a diagonal route to a point $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way along the far edge. (In case the field is ploughed up with no paths visible, simply walk round the right-hand side, past the first metal gate until you reach the metal kissing gate.) Here, go through a metal kissing-gate and over a 2-plank bridge, then along the left-hand side of a field. After 30m, your path turns left at a fingerpost between two ponds. Now take a path diagonally **right** to the far corner of the field (or, if recently ploughed, go right round two sides).

9 In the next field, go along the left-hand side but, just after half way, fork **left** at a fingerpost into a wood. Avoid a path on the left into another field and instead take a narrow path that leads straight ahead through the trees. In 150m, you come out into a large field. Keep straight ahead across the centre. At the other side, at a 4-way fingerpost, keep ahead over a foot-bridge and follow the path uphill along a strip of trees. An enclosed path now takes you beside a field on the right and, at the end, joins a tarmac drive, leading out to a road.

10 Turn **left** on the road, cross by the lights and turn **right** on the other side. Immediately turn **left** into Potters Green. In the corner is a small public garden with a bench seat. Turn **left** beside the garden, on a paved path passing a line of charming cottages, some with seats outside. On entering the churchyard, fork **right** towards the church which is worth a visit. *St Peter's church was built in the 1200s. The roof has been renovated (2014).* Leave the churchyard into the village centre and cross the road to the car park where the walk began.



For final refreshments, since the closure of the "Coach House" (rumoured to be a new site for the Co-op), the village has only one modest pub, the "Hare and Hounds", which is 400m south on the A281. Cowfold has a 13th-century Indian restaurant! It also boasts one of the smallest teashops, the Little Bean Café, with seating inside and out, serving tea, coffee and freshly made cakes, panini, sandwiches, cream teas etc.



Getting there

By car: Cowfold is easily accessed from the M23, via Pease Pottage or Bolney and from Horsham via Mannings Heath. If coming on the A24, the easiest way is to turn onto the A272 eastwards at the traffic lights, about 3 miles south of Southwater.

By bus/train: bus 17 runs from Horsham station to Cowfold and Crabtree, including Sundays. Check the timetables.

