



Hever to Ashurst Walk

A surprisingly remote part of the High Weald on the Kent/East Sussex border

Length **Main Walk:** 16¼ km (10.1 miles). Four hours 5 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8 hours.
Long Walk, with Kent Water loop: 19½ km (12.1 miles). Four hours 50 minutes walking time.
Two Short Walks, to & from Cowden: both 11¾ km (7.3 miles). Two hours 55 minutes walking time.

OS Maps Explorers 147 & 135. Hever station, map reference TQ465445, is in Kent, 3 km **SE** of Edenbridge.

Toughness 4 out of 10 (5 for the Long Walk, 3 for the Short Walks).

Features This walk takes in a quiet part of the High Weald on the border of Kent and East Sussex. At its centre is the sleepy village of **Cowden**, whose surprisingly industrial past is preserved in some evocative local names: The Old Forge, Furnace Pond, etc. The village did indeed have a blast furnace from 1573 and the region's plentiful supplies of iron ore supported a thriving industry until the 18thC, when coke from the northern coalfields replaced charcoal from local trees as the preferred fuel.

The walk route passes several attractive old manor houses but the area's well-known historic houses which are open to the public (Hever Castle, Penshurst Place, etc) are all on the other side of the railway. Away from the tourist coaches, this is a surprisingly remote area of low hills and wooded valleys with some fine bluebell woods, notably Heathersome's Wood and Coomb Wood.





The Wealden soil does not drain well and parts of the walk can be muddy even after moderate amounts of rain.

Walk Options You can lengthen the walk by 3¼ km by doing an extra out-and-back loop along a river valley in the afternoon. This **Long Walk** variation looks somewhat artificial on the map but the upper and lower routes are quite different in character and it has the benefit of extending the rather short stretch between the lunch and tea places on the Main Walk.

The route above the valley also serves as a way of shortening the walk by letting you divert to Cowden station. In fact two distinct link routes are described between the lunchtime village and its station (2 km away by road), in effect splitting the Main Walk into two **Short Walks**. If you caught a train an hour later than the main group you could carry on to Cowden station and do the second of these, getting to the lunch pub at about the same time as the others.

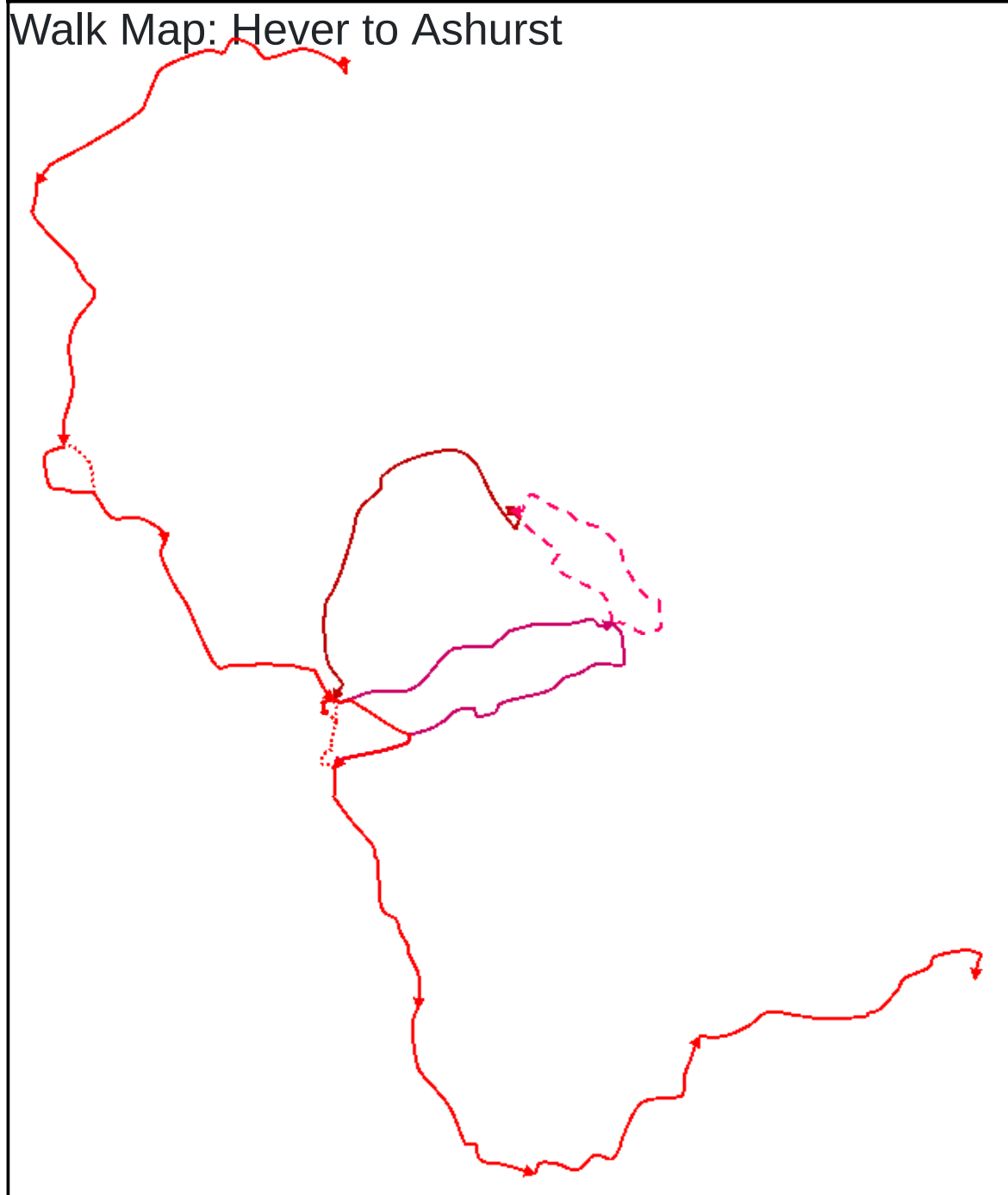
Another option for a longer walk would be to combine the Cowden finish with one of the variations of [Extra Walk 78](#) (Cowden to Hever), creating a long Hever Circular walk.

You will need to print those directions from the other walk document.

Additional Notes	An alternative afternoon route was dropped when the White Horse at Holtye closed in 2014. Without the option of an alternative lunch pub there was little point in retaining this slightly longer route, especially as parts of it had become neglected and overgrown. However, similar problems are now affecting other rights of way in this area and although the route has been tweaked in one or two places the little-used footpaths are not the easiest to follow.
Transport	<p>Hever, Cowden and Ashurst are adjacent stations on the Oxted–Uckfield line, which has an hourly service. A direct train from London Bridge to Hever takes 40 minutes. On Sundays you need to change at East Croydon and/or Oxted, with a longer journey time. Buy a return to Ashurst (Kent), or Cowden if you are planning to finish there.</p> <p>There are few buses in the area. At the time of writing there are two or three buses a day (Mon–Sat) on Go-Coach 234 from Cowden village to its station and Edenbridge in one direction, and Ashurst station and Tunbridge Wells in the other.</p> <p>If driving, all three stations have small free car parks, but they might be full on weekdays.</p>
Suggested Train	Take the train nearest to 10:00 from London Bridge to Hever . If you are doing the Short Walk from Cowden and want a pub lunch in the village, leave an hour later.
Lunch	The only pub on the walk route is The Fountain (01342-850528) in Cowden village, about 7½ km from Hever. This is an attractive village pub with a new conservatory and a secluded beer garden. It serves good home-made food up to 2.30pm (later on Sundays), but is closed Monday lunchtimes (except Bank Holidays). At weekends it is popular with walking and cycling groups, so call ahead to book a table.
Tea	<p>There are few tea places in this remote countryside, but the routes to Ashurst pass the Perryhill Orchard Farm Shop & Tea Rooms (01892-770595) in mid-afternoon. The Farm Shop is open daily to 5pm (5.30pm Fri & Sat) and sells a tempting range of local ciders (which you can taste beforehand); the tearoom closes at 4.30pm and might only be open at weekends in winter. Allow at least an hour to reach Ashurst station, 4 km away.</p> <p>There are no other refreshment places before Ashurst station, and none at all on the link route to Cowden station. However, you could break your return journey at Oxted, which has several cafés and coffee shops plus a conveniently placed JD Wetherspoon's pub right next to the station, the Oxted Inn (01883-723440).</p>
Help Us!	After the walk, we would love to get your feedback
Photos	Upload your photos to the SWC Group on  Flickr , and videos to  Youtube . This walk's tags are:
	<div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"><div style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> swcwalks</div><div style="border: 1px solid #e91e63; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> swcwalk175</div></div>
By Car	Start: TN8 7ER Finish: TN3 9TL
Help	National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Travelline SE (bus times): 0871 200 2233 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234
Version	Jun-17

Walk Directions

Walk Map



All maps © OpenStreetMap contributors

Walk Options

- M. Main Walk (16¼ km)
 - a. Long Walk, with Kent Water loop (19½ km)
 - b. Short Walk, finishing at Cowden (11¾ km)
 - c. Short Walk, starting from Cowden (11¾ km)

Walk Directions

If you are doing the Short Walk from Cowden station, start at §8.

1. Hever Station to Christmas Mill (2½ km)

Arriving from London, do not exit through the station car park but **cross the footbridge** and take a fenced path sloping up the bank. At the top **turn sharp right** onto a short path which leads you through a metal kissing gate into a field. Continue alongside the fence on your right for a short distance, where the field opens out.

You will eventually be leaving this large field by a group of trees ahead on your left (300m away, due west), but the right of way goes up to the left-hand end of a copse 150m ahead and turns left there. There is no path on the ground so it is tempting to start in this direction and make a gentle arc round to the left towards the second group of trees (which you will find are concealing a large pond).

Keeping these trees on your right, continue over a stile and follow the field edge round to the right. Go through a fieldgate and bear left onto a farm track, passing a barn and then a house on your right. Before the track turns right, **veer left** at a footpath marker post onto a grassy path, continuing through a wooden gate into a private garden. Follow the gravel path round to the right of Lydens Barn and along its driveway past a newly-restored oast house to Lydens Lane.

Turn left and go along this quiet lane for 700m to a T-junction with the B2026. Cross the main road carefully and go over a stile to continue on a wide track between a wire fence and a hedge. At the end go over another stile and turn half-right to go along the bottom of a large field, maintaining direction where the hedge bends right after 200m. Continue through a gap and along the right-hand edge of the next field.

At the end of the field go over an unobtrusive stile to the right of a metal fieldgate. Cross a lane and go through a metal gate to continue in your previous direction for 300m, near the right-hand edge of two more fields. After going over a stile into a third field follow a grassy path ahead and round to the left to the opposite corner (ignoring an exit in the first corner and a gate into a private garden). In this top corner go past an oak tree and over a stile to come out onto a lane at a bend.

2. Christmas Mill to Crippenden Manor (2 km)

Turn left onto the lane to go uphill, with a large old mill pond on your right. Where the lane curves round to the left **keep ahead** on the driveway to "Ockhams", signposted as a footpath and going gently downhill. At the bottom of the slope, where the drive goes between two ponds, **turn left** over a stile beside a large oak tree onto a path alongside the water's edge, heading **SE**.

At the end of the pond continue in the same direction, going gently uphill across a field. On the far side cross a stile, a tarmac drive and another stile just off to the right. In this field head for the top right-hand corner and go through a gap to continue along a fenced path at the edge of a field. In the next corner follow the path into a wood to continue in the same direction.

At the end of this woodland path, with a pond on your left, go over a stile into a field and **turn sharp right** to go along its edge. Go through a gate in the fence ahead and continue along the right-hand side of a long narrow field between two woods, still climbing and gradually curving round to the left. At the brow of the hill you cross some more stiles and come out into the top of a large field.

Keep ahead down this field, at first with a small wood on your right and later alongside a projecting group of trees on your left. About 50m before the bottom of the field go through a metal fieldgate onto a short track, then out through another fieldgate onto the driveway to Crippenden Manor.

3. Crippenden Manor to Leighton Manor (1¼ km)

The suggested route goes past the attractive manor house but the exit from the Equestrian Centre there can be very muddy. For a short cut bypassing the house you can turn left onto the driveway and in 50m veer right onto a bridleway across a patch of grass between a wooden fence and a pond. This leads into a wooded valley, with a stream below on your right; the main route rejoins from a footpath on the right after 200m. If you do this, continue the directions at [•] below.

For the suggested route **turn right** onto the driveway and follow it round a curve to the left and uphill, ignoring a bridleway on the right. At the top go past some riding stables and through a wooden gate into a small landscaped area, with a pond on the right and **Crippenden Manor**¹ directly ahead. **Veer left** in front of the house to head **E**, passing a footpath waymarker and some outbuildings to reach a metal fieldgate.

Go through the gate and down across the grass, slightly to the right (with a good view of the manor house over your right shoulder). As the ground dips away and you can see the far side of the field, aim for the bottom right-hand corner. Go over a concealed stile here onto a short path which crosses a stream, then **turn right** at a T-junction with a bridleway.

[•] Take the bridleway through the wooded valley for 200m, eventually veering left at a marker post to cross a stream on a wide brick bridge. On the other side do not follow the bridleway round to the left but **keep ahead** through a metal gate to climb a steep slope on a faint grassy path, heading **E**. At the top of the hill pass to the right of an oak tree and go through a metal gate into a second field.

Go straight across this field and through another gate in the middle of the far side. In the third field **turn half-right** as indicated to find a gate near the bottom right-hand corner. Follow a path down and across a stream on a wooden footbridge. On the other side veer right up a short slope and go across the driveway to Leighton Manor.

4. Leighton Manor to Cowden village (1¾ or 2 km)

Go through a metal gate and continue up the right-hand side of a large field, with a fence and trees on your right screening the impressive buildings and landscaped grounds of **Leighton Manor**² in the valley below. At the top of the slope, where the fence turns half-right, **bear left** and follow a faint grassy path across the field, passing an isolated tree in the middle.

On the far side of the field go through a small metal gate, 10m to the left of a more obvious high metal gate. Follow a path down to the right, through a wood. The path levels out and soon crosses a stream on a plank footbridge to continue along the valley floor, where you may have to pick your way around some waterlogged sections. Eventually the woodland path climbs gently and comes to a three-way junction with a marker post, where you turn left.

The path soon veers right up a flight of steps and then leaves the wood through a wooden gate. Keep ahead along a tarmac driveway, past ponds on your left and the entrance to the picturesque **Waystrode Manor**³ on the right. The drive comes out onto a road (Spode Lane) at a bend.

Maintain direction along the road, **taking care as there is no pavement**. In 300m the road turns right and becomes North Street as it enters the village of Cowden. In a further 200m you come to a T-junction with the High Street, with the parish church just off to the left.

The main routes leave the village on a path through the churchyard, but follow the detour below if you want to visit the village pub.

- **Detour to The Fountain (+¼ km)**

Head **W** along the attractive High Street, away from the church. Follow the road round a left-hand bend and downhill to find **The Fountain** on the right.

Afterwards, unless you are taking the short cut out of the village, retrace your steps up the High Street. Go past the junction with North Street and veer right into the churchyard.

If you are doing the Main Walk and heading directly for Ashurst, go to §9.

5. Cowden village to Moat Farm (2 km)

Take the path through the churchyard and past the south door of **St Mary Magdalene**⁴ (which is worth visiting) to an exit in the far corner. Outside the churchyard there are paths on both sides of a wooden gate into the New Burial Ground.

Take the narrow footpath ahead and to the left of the new cemetery, between a hedge and a wooden fence. At the end go over a stile and continue down the left-hand edge of a field, heading **E**. In the bottom corner cross a stream on a footbridge and bear right onto a grassy path along a narrow valley, gradually climbing to the top left-hand corner. Go through a metal fieldgate to head **E** again across a field.

Continue over a stile and down through some trees, across a stream on a footbridge and up a bank on the other side. Go through a metal gate and **turn half-left** to head **NE** across the next field. On the far side go through another gate onto a narrow enclosed path leading past a modern house to the B2026: **take care when you reach it** as the traffic is quite fast and there is no pavement. Cross the road carefully (slightly to the right) and go through a metal kissing gate into a large field.

The right of way across the next set of fields rather oddly goes from one side to the other and back again, perhaps reflecting older field boundaries.

To follow the right of way head **E** (away from the road and slightly to the right) towards a field corner 200m away. Go through a wide gap in the hedge and **bear left** to head **NE** towards a fieldgate on the field boundary, 150m away. Go through a side gate here into another large field.

If there is no clear path aim for the right-hand edge of a copse in the middle of the field. On reaching it bear slightly right towards the far corner of the field, where you go over two stiles and turn right onto a minor road (Moat Lane). This turns right and left, passing a few cottages and a converted oast house at the second bend. In a further 100m there is a footpath on the left and a bridleway on the right, just past the entrance to Moat Farm.

If you are doing the Long Walk to Ashurst, go to §7.

6. Moat Farm to Cowden Station (2 or 1¼ km)

There is a choice of routes to complete the Short Walk to Cowden station. The upper route in §6a is more scenic but much of it is along tarmac lanes and farm drives. The lower route in §6b is better if you are in a hurry to catch one of the hourly trains, but you might have to negotiate some boggy areas.

a. Upper route (2 km)

Ignore both ways off and continue on Moat Lane for a further 350m, climbing steadily and eventually crossing over the railway. Immediately after this bridge **turn left** onto a signposted footpath through Sandfields Farm. Go past a house and farm buildings, through a gate and up the right-hand side of a field, climbing steadily.

Ignore a fieldgate in the top right-hand corner and **veer left** to go along the top of the field, with some sandstone rock outcrops behind the undergrowth on your right. Follow the field edge round to the right and go through a gap into another field, with the railway visible down to your left. Bear slightly left down the slope, to find a stile in the trees a little way to the left of a wide gap for overhead power cables.

Cross the stile and continue along the top edge of the next field. In 200m go over a stile to the right of a double metal fieldgate and out to a track beneath the power cables. Turn left and follow this track past farm buildings, where it becomes surfaced (Wickens Lane). In 250m there is a signposted footpath on the right.

If you are switching to Extra Walk 78 and doing a long circular walk back to Hever, turn right onto this footpath; that walk starts by coming up Wickens Lane from the other direction and turning left at this point.

For Cowden station, continue along Wickens Lane for a further 400m to a T-junction with a minor road (Blowers Hill). Turn left and go downhill on the road for 100m, **taking care as there is no pavement**, then turn right into the station's access road.

b. Lower route (1¼ km)

For the shorter route **turn left** off Moat Lane, going over a stile to the right of a rusty gate into a large field. If there is no clear path across the field then head away from the road and slightly to the right, skirting around the low hill ahead. Go up to and follow the right-hand field edge, with a tree-lined stream on your right and the railway on an embankment behind it.

In the field corner go over a stile to the right of another rusty gate to continue across a smaller field. In the next corner a gap takes you into a clearing between trees. Ignore a fieldgate up ahead and follow the grassy path round to the right past a loop of the stream. Go through a metal gate, across the stream on a footbridge and under a high railway bridge.

On the other side go through another gate and **turn left** onto a short path through some trees. Go across a muddy area on planks and over a stile into the corner of another large field. Keep ahead to stay near its left-hand edge, parallel to the railway. In the far left-hand corner go over a stile and turn right briefly onto a minor road (Blowers Hill), then turn left into the station's access road.

If the station's entrance hall is locked you can go past it to get onto the single platform⁵, which is used by trains in both directions.

At the time of writing the train indicator display is based on the scheduled timetable (not real-time running information) and overdue trains simply disappear from the display when they are more than about five minutes late, a not infrequent occurrence. As a rule of thumb a London-bound train (going from from left to right) usually arrives 7-8 minutes after an Uckfield train has passed through in the opposite direction.

7. Moat Farm to Sweetwoods Park Golf Course (2½ km)

For the Long Walk **turn right** off Moat Lane, going through a metal side gate into a field. Go all the way along its right-hand edge, passing the buildings of Moat Farm on the right. At the far end go through a wooden gate, across a footbridge over **Kent Water**⁶ and **turn right** at a path crossing onto the **Sussex Border Path**⁷ (SBP). This immediately recrosses the stream and brings you out into water meadows.

Follow a grassy path near the left-hand edge of these meadows for nearly 1 km, going through a couple of gates along the way. About 100m before a road and some houses up ahead, **veer left** with the path through a wooden gate and across another footbridge over Kent Water. Bear right to continue along the

other side, going through a small field and then a yard to come out onto the B2026.

Turn right onto the road to cross the stream (and county boundary) yet again and immediately **turn left** onto a signposted footpath, going through a gate to resume your progress along the water meadows. In 250m go over a stile beside a wooden fieldgate and keep left across the next meadow. In 250m **turn left** onto a wide bridge to cross Kent Water for the final time.

On the other side of the bridge immediately **turn right** onto a faint path across the grass, with a fine view of the picturesque **Sussex House Farm**⁸ on a slight rise to your left. In 100m pass to the right of a large ornamental pond and continue through a gap into another large field. Keep ahead across the grass, aiming just to the right of an isolated tree, to find a stile in the hedge on the far side.

Go over the stile onto **Sweetwoods Park Golf Course** and keep ahead on a faint path through a strip of rough grass dotted with trees. In 200m you come to another hedge where it appears that you are expected to go through a narrow gap and immediately **turn left** by a footpath marker post, but it is easier to simply turn left in front of the hedge, leaving the SBP.

Continue the directions at §10.

8. Cowden Station to Cowden village (3 or 3¼ km)

From the platform⁵ go out through the entrance hall and turn right. Take the right-hand of two ways out and turn right onto a minor road, going under the railway. On the other side **go over a stile on the right** onto a signposted footpath which climbs gently through a long strip of woodland, with a stream on your left. In 500m ignore a footpath going over the entrance to the railway tunnel on your right. In a further 150m **fork left** in front of a large beech tree in the centre of a three-way junction.

Follow the track across the stream and keep ahead where it joins the driveway to "The Grove". After climbing for 350m you come to the buildings of Pylegate Farm. Follow the drive as it turns left and then right, avoiding the entrance to several houses. This takes you past farm buildings and a modernised B&B "Becketts" to the B2026. Cross the road carefully and go through an awkward metal fieldgate into Harnett Claydene Farm.

Go past some run-down farm buildings, then veer left and right in front of a barn. At the end of this barn go through a new metal gate by a handwritten "Footpath" notice into the top of a large field. **Veer left** away from the farm, aiming for the right-hand end of a hedge 75m away. On reaching the hedge bear left to go alongside it for a short distance. After going through a gap into another large field **turn half-right** and follow a faint grassy path downhill for 350m to its bottom corner.

Cross a stream here on a wooden footbridge and continue up the edge of a field, with a row of tall conifers on your left. At the top of the slope bear left onto a broad grassy path between hedges, heading **S**. As you approach Cowden the path veers left and right and comes out onto a gravel driveway, with a pond on the right.

Go past a house and garden on the left, then immediately **turn left** by a concealed footpath sign at ground level onto a short narrow path leading out via a stile into a field. Bear left and follow a grassy path to its far corner, 150m away. Leave through a wooden kissing gate and turn right onto a road towards the centre of the village, passing the parish church on your left and coming to the start of the High Street.

The main routes leave the village on a path through the churchyard, but follow the detour below if you want to visit the village pub.

- **Detour to The Fountain (+¼ km)**

Head **W** along the attractive High Street, away from the church. Follow the road round a left-hand bend and downhill to find **The Fountain** on the right.

Afterwards, unless you are taking the short cut out of the village, retrace your steps up the High Street. Go past the junction with North Street and veer right into the churchyard.

9. Cowden village to Sweetwoods Park Golf Course (1¼ or ½ km)

The original route onto the golf course is slightly confusing where the right of way switches from one local authority to another, but has been retained as the optional short cut in §9b.

- a. **Main route (1¼ km)**

Take the path through the churchyard and past the south door of **St Mary Magdalene**⁴ (which is worth visiting) to an exit in the far corner. Outside the churchyard there are paths on both sides of a wooden gate into the New Burial Ground.

Take the broad grassy path to the right of the new cemetery, between a wooden fence and a brick wall. At the end go through a gate and keep ahead down the grassy border of a large field, heading **SE**. At the bottom go over a stile beside a wooden fieldgate and across a ditch on a wide concrete

bridge.

Continue in much the same direction, aiming for a wooden pole 60m away, in front of the line of trees on your right. This leads you to a gap in the trees where you **turn right** across a wide bridge over **Kent Water**⁶, joining the **Sussex Border Path**⁷ (SBP).

On the other side of the bridge immediately **turn right** onto a faint path across the grass, with a fine view of the picturesque **Sussex House Farm**⁸ on a slight rise to your left. In 100m pass to the right of a large ornamental pond and continue through a gap into another large field. Keep ahead across the grass, aiming just to the right of an isolated tree, to find a stile in the hedge on the far side.

Go over the stile onto **Sweetwoods Park Golf Course** and keep ahead on a faint path through a strip of rough grass dotted with trees. In 200m you come to another hedge where it appears that you are expected to go through a narrow gap and immediately **turn left** by a footpath marker post, but it is easier to simply turn left in front of the hedge, leaving the SBP.

b. Short cut (½ km)

- i. From the area around the church, head **S** down the short lane going past its lychgate and bear right onto a signposted footpath leading into allotments. Follow a broad grassy path running down through them.
- ii. For a direct route from the pub, cross the road at the bend and go through a new wooden gate to the right of a telephone box. Go down an enclosed path into allotments and turn right onto a straight grassy path in the centre.

At the bottom of the allotments continue through a small scrubby area to a high wooden swing gate. Go through this, across a tarmac drive and down a short path between hedges. As it swings to the right **fork left** through a wooden gate with a yellow footpath marker, entering **Sweetwoods Park Golf Course**. **Keep ahead** at a three-way footpath signpost, passing the back of a green on your right.

The onward route is confusing. At a T-junction do not cross a footbridge on your left but instead **turn right** to go past the side of the green. After passing it **turn left** onto a second footbridge across **Kent Water**⁶, the one used by golfers moving to the next tee.

Despite appearances, this is the right of way. There used to be a footpath waymarker on this second bridge.

On the other side bear right to go past the back of the tee and then **turn left** as indicated by a footpath marker post. Go alongside a patch of rough grass between the tee and a fairway for 50m to another marker post in front of a hedge and **turn right** to go uphill towards a wood.

10. **Sweetwoods Park Golf Course to Coomb Wood** (1¾ km)

At the end of the hedge watch out for golfers playing from the left. When it is safe to do so bear right to cross the fairway at a slight angle, aiming for a small gap in the trees and shrubs opposite. Go through this onto a grassy path climbing gently through the undergrowth. In 100m you emerge into a more open area, with a green and two lakes down to your right, and the path peters out.

Keep ahead past an elevated tee on your left towards a wooden bench, dedicated to Captain Paul Burnham. Just beyond it, keep to the left of a birch tree and take a faint path into the trees. In 25m you cross a ditch and the path – such as it is – bends slightly right to go between some holly trees. In a further 25m you come to a T-junction with a well-defined path.

On a tree at this junction there is a yellow footpath marker pointing back the way you came, confirming that this little-used path is the right of way.

Turn left onto this clear path to go up through **Heathersome's Wood** for about 400m, heading roughly **SE**. At the top of the wood the path bends slightly right and you can glimpse a field off to your left. Soon afterwards **fork left** at a Y-junction to go out through a wooden gate into the corner of a large field (where the right fork leads back onto the top of the golf course).

Go along the right-hand field edge, heading **S**. The exit is over a stile in the hedge about 100m to the left of the corner ahead, a little way to the right of a metal fieldgate. At the far end follow the grassy path round to the left to find this stile and go over it onto the grass verge beside the A264. Cross this busy main road with great care.

Do not take the obvious continuation – a signposted bridleway along a tarmac driveway opposite the stile – but instead **go past an old wooden fieldgate** to its left, with a sign for Chantler's Farm. Follow this narrow footpath through some trees and across a potentially boggy semi-open area. The path goes back into the trees and later bends right to go alongside a fence, with a large pond on the other side. At the end a stile takes you out into the corner of a field.

Turn half-right towards a line of trees on the far side, heading **S** and aiming for a fieldgate about 75m in from the right-hand corner of the field. Go through this into the next field and continue in much the same direction for 250m on a grassy path near its right-hand edge. Near the far right-hand corner go over a rudimentary stile into Coomb Wood.

11. Coomb Wood to Perryhill Orchard (1½ km)

Inside the wood there is no clear path at first. You need to **veer left** through the trees for about 50m to pick up a well-defined path (at the time of writing there was a little wigwam of logs at the start of this path, but that may not be a permanent feature). The woodland path descends and later turns half-left to head **S**, following the course of a stream down to the right. After going through the wood for 400m the path merges with a bridleway coming in from a field on the right.

Continue along this broad track, ignoring exits to the sides and heading **SE**. Where the track swings round to the right after 400m, **keep ahead** through a wooden gate onto a driveway, with some large buildings behind the high wall on your left. Shortly after passing the imposing **Gatehouse** (with cupolas), turn left at a T-junction. At the next (right-hand) bend there is a clear view of **Bolebroke Castle**⁹ in the grounds on your left.

Go along the driveway for a further 500m. On your left you pass the landscaped grounds of the manor house (where you might be able to see traces of an abandoned miniature railway) and later a large orchard. Shortly before reaching the B2026 you come to the modern **Orchard Tea Rooms** and Farm Shop on your left, the last refreshment place before Ashurst station.

12. Perryhill Orchard to Beech Green Park (1¾ km)

Go out to the B2026 and turn left onto the road, crossing over carefully at some point. In 75m **turn right** into a lane with a concrete bridleway marker. After passing some cottages keep left at a three-way junction and follow the lane over a stream, round to the left and uphill to the buildings of Perryhill Farm. Go past a wooden fieldgate and **fork left** in front of the attractive farmhouse onto a wide driveway leading up to Millwood Farm.

In front of the entrance to the farmhouse bear right onto a grassy track leading into a large field. In theory the right of way is a narrow path between two rows of poplars at the left-hand edge of the field, but it is much easier to follow a grassy path near these trees. In 100m, however, you need to **veer left** through a metal fieldgate in a gap in these trees and then turn right to continue along the top of the field on the other side. In 200m you come to a bench with views back towards Ashdown Forest.

Go over a stile behind this bench onto a short path along the edge of a wood. At the end go over another stile (or squeeze past a metal gate) into a field and turn right to head **E** along its edge. On the far side go through a metal fieldgate and turn left to go along a quiet minor road (Beech Green Lane) for 400m. Shortly before reaching a large house on the left (Beech Green Park) **turn right** off the lane, going over a stile to the right of a double metal fieldgate.

13. Beech Green Park to Ashurst Station (2¼ km)

Bear left across a yard towards the corner of a wire fence, to the left of another double metal fieldgate. Go through (or around) a wooden swing gate to continue alongside the fence, heading away from the road. At the end go through another gate and **turn half-left** across the grass, passing some large trees but with no clear path. Aim for what looks like a wooden fieldgate about 150m along from the corner of the parkland to your left.

In this area you need to find an inconspicuous stile which takes you onto a short path through the trees. Go over another stile into more grassland and keep ahead alongside a wood, with a prominent house (Highfields Park) away to the left. Follow the field boundary as it curves round to the right, then veer away from it to go up to the top corner of the field. Go over a double stile here and keep ahead across the next field, still climbing and with increasingly fine views across the Medway Valley.

As you go over the brow of the hill aim for a metal fieldgate and stile which lead you onto a tree-lined grassy track, gently descending towards Lodgefield Farm. At the bottom go through a wooden gate and turn left briefly onto a concrete driveway, then almost immediately **turn right** down a flight of steps cut into the bank. Keep ahead on a wide concrete track, passing a large barn on the left.

Go out over a stile and down across the field, **turning half-left** as soon as it opens out. In the bottom corner, where a gap leads into another field, **go over a stile on the left** to follow a fenced path down the edge of the field. About 50m before the bottom corner the right of way is to **turn half-left** across a plank bridge onto a grassy path through a neglected orchard, but if you miss this simply follow the path round to the left at the bottom: either way leads you out via a stile onto a lay-by on the A264.

Turn right to walk carefully along the grass verge of this busy main road. Shortly before going under a railway bridge you cross the **River Medway**, returning to Kent. Ignore a footpath and a cul-de-sac on the right, then turn right into the access road to Ashurst station. Cross the footbridge for trains to London.

Walk Notes

1. The current house at **Crippenden Manor** was built in 1607 by Richard Tichbourne, a local ironmaster. It is now part of a large Equestrian Centre.
2. **Leighton Manor** was originally a late medieval farmhouse but the property has been extensively modernised, with some attractive landscaped grounds and lakes.
3. The picturesque **Waystrode Manor** is a restored 15thC farmhouse, with later additions. The gardens of this private house are occasionally open to the public.
4. The oldest parts of **St Mary Magdalene, Cowden** are 13thC, with its wooden shingled spire being added in the 14thC. A traditional couplet (reputedly about a dispute with another parish) refers to this noticeably skewed spire: *Cowden church, crooked steeple / Lying priest, deceitful people*. A modern stained glass window celebrates "the remarkable preservation of this village during the years 1939-45".
5. A plaque on the station platform commemorates the five victims of the **Cowden rail crash** in October 1994. A northbound train passed a red signal in thick fog and collided head-on with another train on the single-track section to the south-east of the station.
6. **Kent Water** is the county boundary between Kent (to the north) and East Sussex. It flows into the River Medway north of Ashurst.
7. The **Sussex Border Path** runs for 240 km along the length of West & East Sussex, from Thorney Island on the Hampshire border to Rye.
8. **Sussex House Farm** was greatly enlarged at the beginning of the 21stC but retains at its core the original timber-framed house dating from 1580.
9. The 15thC **Bolebroke Castle** is one of the earliest brick buildings in Sussex and contains a fine Elizabethan staircase and 16thC tapestries. Conveniently close to Anne Boleyn at Hever Castle, it was used as a hunting lodge by Henry VIII and featured in the 2008 film *The Other Boleyn Girl*. Its late owner tried to cash in on this association by offering a paltry audio tour called the "Henry VIII Experience".

» *Last updated: August 26, 2016*

© Saturday Walkers Club. All Rights Reserved. No commercial use. No copying. No derivatives. Free with attribution for one time non-commercial use only. www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml

Saturday Walkers Club • © 2000-2017 All Rights Reserved • saturdaywalkers@walkingclub.org.uk