Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

# Bough Beech and Weald Village

Distance: 11½ km=7½ miles — easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Kent — Date written: 10-jun-2013

Author: Malinovka — Date revised: 26-jun-2018

Refreshments: Weald Village or picnic — Last update: 16-aug-2026

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

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

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*Village, lake, views, grassy meadows*

## In Brief

This is a peaceful circular walk from a pristine village just below the Greensand hills to Bough Beech lake. On the way you enjoy endless grassy meadows and, on the return leg, several unexpected delights. There is a perfect picnic spot just above the lake.

There is a good pub, the *Windmill*, in the village (still open in 2021 despite Google). Booking may be necessary as it is very popular (ring 01732-463330).

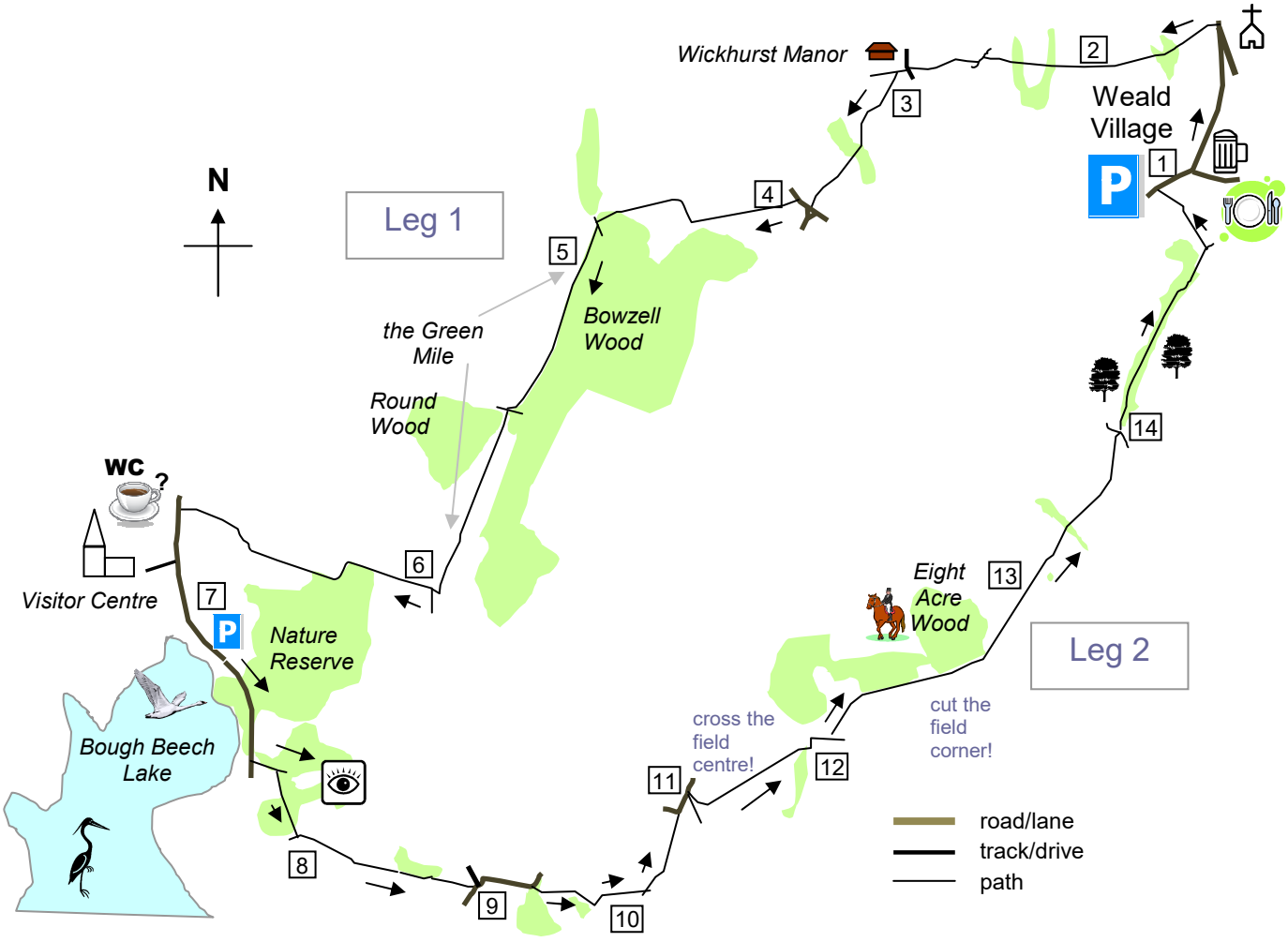
There is just one narrow path with nettles, so shorts *may* be inadvisable. In the drier seasons there is little mud on this walk so good walking shoes are ok, but in winter or wet conditions, as with any Wealden walk, you will find boots essential. A large dog will have trouble with some of the stiles; a lead will be needed much of the time in case you pass any livestock along the way.

The walk begins at the village green in Sevenoaks Weald, postcode **TN14 6PY**, w3w:acted.bugs.meal. The *Windmill* pub, a community shop/café and a school are in the village, so you could find a spot where you won't compete too much with customers or parents. There is also a large parking area by St George's Church Hall (w3w:ozone.voter.chest, postcode **TN14 6LT**) just north of the village centre (start at line 3 in Section 1, marked (*). Another possible start (though rather isolated) is Bough Beech lake, w3w:swim.shark.points, postcode **TN14 6LD**, where there is space to park on the causeway, thus placing the village and the pub at the centre for a lunchtime half-way stop. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

## The Walk

### Leg 1: Village to Lake 5½ km=3½ miles

*Sevenoaks Weald is never so called. To the people here it's the **Weald Village** and totally different in character from its big brother. The village is an eclectic mix of architectural styles and periods from 15th-century houses to ragstone cottages and tasteful modern houses. It's difficult to imagine a more decent portrait of middle England. A place where the postman can leave parcels on the doorstep; where if someone clipped your wing mirror they'd leave a note. Two buildings stand out: St Georges Church which you will pass shortly and Long Barn. This latter is a little way along the road north-west of the green, on the left. It is here that, it is believed, William Caxton, who brought printing to England, was born. It was also home to Vita Sackville-West (see the "Knole", "Sissinghurst" and "Withyham" walks in this series) and was later bought by the pioneering aviator Charles Lindbergh.*




1 Go down the lane Church Road opposite the *Windmill* pub, passing *Hurst Farm House* and *Romany Cottage* with its gypsy caravan. Continue over a stream and fairly steeply up to St George's church (*). 60m later, just after joining a major road, go **left** through a gate beside a bus shelter on a signed footpath. *You have joined the Greensand Way (GW), a long-distance path running from Haslemere into east Kent.* Keep ahead, going down the left-hand side of this large meadow under oak trees, heading for the farm buildings you can see on the nearby hill. Where the edge of the meadow curves right, your path goes straight ahead through gorse. (However, since

the footpath is rather obscure, you would be quite justified if you simply keep going down the meadow, through a wide gap over a stream at the bottom, up the other side, bearing left to the little oast.) Your path goes just to the right of a large oak, under three wires (with a junction pole 15m on your right), over a 3-plank bridge (which is hard to spot in the undergrowth) and steeply up a grass slope, heading for a little oasthouse. At the top, go through a small gate, onto a concrete drive, and turn right.

2 You will see a farm shed ahead on your right, with some new construction work (2018). Follow the concrete drive to the **right** and then immediately go **left**, walking behind the wood / brick shed and through a small metal gate. Go straight across the centre of a field. (The author encountered some friendly beef cattle here; they paused for a photo.) *You have views left to the South Downs and right to the Kentish Greensand Hills (see the "Brasted" walk in this series).* Your path crosses a stream by a bridge with a metal gate in a narrow band of oak trees. It now leads you through a field and through a metal gate in a narrow band of ash and hawthorn. Continue straight ahead aiming for some ash trees just to the right of farm buildings. In the corner, go through a metal gate and veer **right** on a farm driveway past a metal cowshed. (The farm sheepdog is extremely gentle.) Go through the smaller of two metal gates, diagonally **left** across a small pasture*****, and through a small metal gate. (*Aug 2026: more friendly beef cattle; see under "Cattle" on the FFW Hazards page.) Go through another metal gate and down a sheep pasture, then through the smaller of two metal gates. Turn **left** on a tarmac drive and immediately **right** on a concrete track. Your next turning is in 20m, **left** through a metal gate, thus leaving the GW. However, as a small diversion, by continuing a bit further along the track, you should get a good view of *Wickhurst Manor*.

> *Wickhurst Manor is a historic house, some parts going back to the 1300s, with much Elizabethan panelling, modernised in Victorian times. For centuries, it was home to the Isley family, who held various lofty ranks as sheriff in the 1400s. Sir John plotted against Richard III but kept his head. His grandsons were less lucky, after taking part in the Wyatt Rebellion of 1554, opposing "Bloody" Queen Mary's marriage to the expansionist foreigner Philip II of Spain.*

3 Having turned **left** through that gate, go diagonally across the meadow, through a metal gate in the far corner and round the curving left-hand side of a wild meadow. Go through two small metal gates either side of a farmer's path, then along the short side of a large meadow and through a small metal gate (hidden from view: you don't see it till you are a couple of feet away from it). Continue up the left-hand side of another pasture and, where the edge curves away left, keep ahead uphill, heading just to the left of a large white house. At the top, enjoying wide views, go through a small metal gate to a road near Bowzell Farm and turn **right** on it.

4 In 40m, go **left** through a kissing-gate, across a narrow meadow and through a belt of trees. Follow a path, angled slightly right, across the centre of a crop field. (In summer this path through the crops is a good width, very obvious and well kept, a welcome trend that applies to nearly all the fields you walk across today.) At the other side, go through a line of trees, by a redundant stile with yellow arrows, and turn **right** beside a large grassy meadow. In about 50m, turn **left** at the first corner. Where the edge of the field shortly curves away right, go diagonally right across the field towards the far right corner. On reaching the corner, go **right** over a bridge with a gate across a stream and turn **left** along the edge of the next meadow. In

50m, go over a stile and a bridge with railings. Go **left** and immediately **right** over a stile into a long grassy meadow.

5 **The green mile.** You are in a wonderful line of narrow fields and meadows where the grass is always fresh. Go straight ahead along the length of the meadow but veering towards the left-hand edge next to Bowzell Wood where the official footpath runs. In about 400m, at the far end of the meadow, ignore a kissing-gate on your left in the corner and keep straight ahead through a small metal gate into a crop field. Follow the path straight down the centre of the field. In the far side your route takes you through a metal swing-gate, over a 2-plank bridge and stile and along the right-hand side of the next grassy meadow. In 200m, about half way down, locate a metal gate on your right, opposite an electricity pole. Go **right** through the smaller metal gate.

6 Avoid a track on the left and go straight ahead on a wide track, gently uphill between hedges. *Up to your right you can see the pointed steeple of Ide Hill church.* In 300m or so, at the top, go ahead by an unneeded stile into a large field. Go straight ahead on a clear path* across the field, cutting the left-hand corner. (* If the field is cropped and the path invisible, go right-left-left round the edge.) At the other side, veer **right** on a path beside a hedge that separates two fields. *You should have a first glimpse here of Bough Beech lake on your left.* Your path zigzags right-left round the edge. At the bottom, go **left** on a path which crosses a stout bridge over the Bough Beech stream. Continue up the left-hand side of the next field and exit, next to metal gates to a tarmac lane. Turn **left** on the lane to reach, in 150m on the right, a drive with a sign for the *Bough Beech Visitor Centre*.

*Bough Beech Visitor Centre and oast house is now closed (winter 2017-18) except to booked groups. The sudden decision caused considerable dismay amongst the many visitors and temporary staff.*

Continue along the tarmac lane, soon reaching the causeway with an open view at the head of the lake.

P *Bough Beech lake (officially it's a reservoir, but "lake" is more poetic) was formed in 1968 by damming several streams and by pumping water from the River Eden. It is about 2 km long north-to-south and provides east Surrey with water. A medieval farmhouse, Bayleaf, was rescued from the flooded valley and re-assembled in the Weald and Downland Museum in Singleton, W.Sussex (see the "Singleton" walk in this series). On all sides there are nature reserves which are not open to the public. The lake is an important conservation area, run by Kent Wildlife Trust, for many species of birds, including egrets, terns, nightingales and ringed plovers, many insects and mammals, some of them very rare.*

## Leg 2: Lake to Village 6 km=4 miles

7 Continue along the road over the causeway, with water each side, passing various nature reserves. Soon you have woodland on both sides with only occasional views of the lake. About 400m after the end of the causeway, and just before the road leaves the wooded lakeside, look to your left for a signpost, stile and signboard showing *Bore Place Walks*. *(Don't miss this turn!)* Turn **left** through a metal gate, go over a plank bridge, through a wood and through a metal gate. Veer **right** along the top of a small flowery meadow with some of the best views of the lake, passing a huge wooden chair. *This is a commemorative community chair with a large wooden table/bench*

*next to it, making it the perfect place to stop for a rest, admire the view, eat your picnic and just chill out for a bit.* At the corner, go over an unneeded stile into beautiful Batfold Wood which is dominated by tall ash trees. On the other side, go past an unnecessary stile into a crop field.

8 Take a narrow but well-marked path diagonally **left** across the field. Your target (in case the path has been obscured, e.g. in winter or after reaping) is just to the right of a clump of pines visible on the other side. At the far side, go through a gap in the hedge about 15m to the right of the clump. Now go straight across the pasture, a fraction left, aiming for a metal gate and a wide track visible ahead on the edge of a wood. Go over the sturdy stile and keep ahead on the track. Where the track ends, go through a metal gate, along a narrow nettle-fringed path, and onto a delightful little meadow with rowan and silver birch trees, with the *Old Forge* on your left. A stile and footbridge in the corner take you out to a tarmac lane.

9 Turn **left** on the lane, Bayleys Hill Road, immediately avoiding a driveway on your left signed *Bore Place only*. *(Bore Place is the home base of an organic farm and study centre, who planned that woodland trail.)* Follow this quiet lane, immediately ignoring a wooden swing-gate on your left, until, in 200m, it curves left by a house. On your **right** are two signed rights-of-way. Ignore the wide driveway to *Bushy Wood Place* and take the **left**-hand narrower path up a bank. It leads to a stile and takes you diagonally across a flowery meadow. In the corner, under an electricity pole, go over a stile in a new fence and **left-right** into a field. Keeping the same direction, take a clear path diagonally across the field, cutting the right-hand corner. (Strictly, the footpath goes right-left round the edge in the corner, but the diagonal path is very clearly cut.) At the other side, go through a hedge into the next field.

10 Your path veers diagonally **left** on a path across the centre of this L-shaped field, heading for (but not going through) a large metal gate on your right. The exact route is changeable because of tracks made by farm equipment and the lack of an obvious path: in 2021 walkers took the *third* set of tractor tracks on the right; you can simply keep to the edge, round two sides. At the far side, avoid that large metal gate and instead turn **left** on a grassy path along the edge of the same field. At the corner, go through a modern kissing-gate and over a grassy crossing path, keeping ahead along the right-hand side of the next field [2018: first lifting an insulated hook in the fence]. Continue in the same direction over a stile beside a large metal gate, keeping ahead on a delightful path with tall oaks and planted trees, next to *Sharp's Place Oast* on your right. A sturdy stile finally pops you onto a lane, Bayleys Hill Road again.

11 Keep ahead on the lane and, in 50m, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a foot-path. Veer **right** past a brick shed and go round a large metal gate. Your track curves left around a large barn. From the near left corner of the barn, take a clear path diagonally **right** across the large field, heading for the far left-hand corner, going gradually downhill, passing under wires. In the far corner, ignore a gap on your left and go down for some steps in the belt of trees. (It is much easier, though not quite ethical, to go **left** through the gap and **right** in 15m on the "wide grassy path".) The steps will lead you over a bridge with railings and through a small metal gate into another field.

12 Turn **left** in the field, through some shrubbery, and, in just 30m, go **right** on a tree-lined wide grassy path which runs between two fields. In 80m, you will see a gap on your left by an electricity pole. Go **left** here into a grassy meadow and then diagonally **right**, gradually nearing the hedgerow and trees on the right-hand side of the meadow. *The picturesque Hale Oak farmhouse and oast will be visible over to your right.* When you reach a jutting corner under a broad oak tree roughly half way along the side, go **right** on a narrow path, at first between hedges, then along the left-hand side of a crop field. In the corner, a gap in the undergrowth, a plank bridge and a stile take you into another crop field. Keep dead straight ahead across the crop field, on a well-cut path, short-cutting the smaller three-sided section on your left and aiming for the next corner of the woods on the left. Keep ahead along the edge of the field with Eight Acre Wood on your left. As the edge of the field begins to curve right, go **left** over a bridge and past a (broken) stile, through a chain stile into the next field.

13 [Jun 2018: the path across the next field had been thinly planted over but there are clear marker posts at intervals.] Take a path straight ahead across the field, aiming well to the left of a copse in the centre, passing several marker posts. At the far side, go through a small metal gate, cross a track, go through another metal gate, and go straight ahead on a narrow but clear-cut path down the next field, aiming for a small dip under the trees on the other side. Here, go over a bridge across a stream and straight ahead in a ragged meadow, always keeping the same direction. The path comes down to a refreshing strip of woodland with a stile leading to a long bridge over a stream. It then takes you uphill along the wire fence separating two fields with New House Farm and its oast on your left. At the other side of this first field, be careful to avoid a ditch by going left-right-left over some planks. Keep the same direction through a metal gate and ahead along the green fringe on the left-hand side of the next field. At the other side, go through a small metal gate and over a 3-plank bridge to meet a tarmac lane.

14 Cross straight over the lane and take a wide track opposite, under large oak and tall ash trees. This wide shady byway makes a memorable end to the walk. It leads over a stream and through more mature woodland. Ignore several footpaths to the left and once you have seen a large timber-framed house some 150m off to the left, there is a choice of routes back to the Green. *Either* turn **left** between posts, on a footpath which leads to Long Barn Road, turning **right** and soon passing the impressive Long Barn on your right. *Or* continue on the footpath until just before a house, and turn **left** between posts on a footpath. *Either way*, when you reach a sports centre, keep ahead to reach the Green where the walk began.

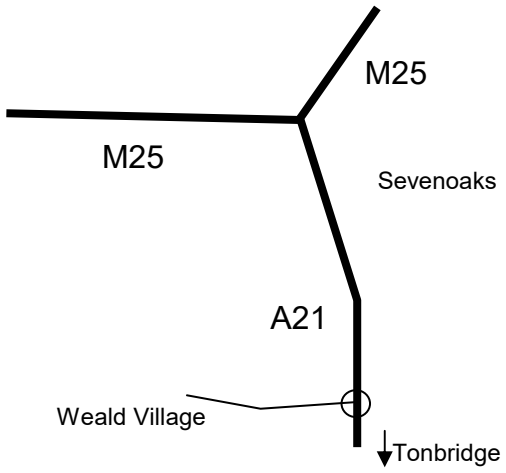
*The Windmill pub is an excellent location, recently saved by a campaign by the villagers. As well as Harveys ales and food it offers some imaginative musical entertainment in the evenings. It serves an interesting menu lunchtimes, extending to 4pm on a Sunday. There is also Giacomo's Italian Restaurant, on the eastern side of the village.*

*Other walks referred to in text:*

*Brasted: http://www.fancyfreewalks.org/Kent/Brasted.pdf*
*Knole and Ightham: http://www.fancyfreewalks.org/Kent/Knole-Ightham.pdf*
*Singleton: http://www.fancyfreewalks.org/W.Sussex/Singleton.pdf*
*Withyham: http://www.fancyfreewalks.org/E.Sussex/Withyham-AshdownForest.pdf*

## Getting there

By car: Sevenoaks Weald is signposted from the A21 between Sevenoaks and Tonbridge. Follow signs to the village and park near the Green.




By bus/train: bus 401 from Tonbridge station. Check the timetables.