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## Clowes Wood

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Distance: 5 km=3 miles

easy walking

Region: Kent

Date written: 12-aug-2018

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Last update: 25-jul-2019

Refreshments: picnic

Map: Explorer 150 (Canterbury) *but 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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*Ancient woodland, long trails, hidden paths*

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### In Brief

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Clowes Wood, covering 235 hectares (580 acres) in northeast Kent, belongs to the Forestry Commission. Although half of it has been planted with conifers, the remainder is ancient woodland. This walk takes you through these ancient parts of pristine mixed woodland of great beauty and variety. Although this wood is popular with locals and visitors, you will probably meet very few other people, because this walk finds lesser-known paths in the most hidden parts of the forest.

This walk can be combined with the Blean and Thornden Woods walk to make a full day's excursion.

The wood is far from agricultural land so there are no nettles. The brambles will be noticed more for their blackberries in late summer rather than for their scratchiness. Boots were not needed when this walk was researched in summer but, since it uses a lot of narrow woodland paths, you may be glad to be wearing boots in other seasons. This walk could have been **made** for your dog!



The walk begins at the **Clowes Wood car park**, at a bend on the Radnall Road, south of Whitstable, nearest postcode **CT5 3ER**. It is easily accessed from the M2 and A299 trunk roads, maximum 1½ hours from London. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

## The Walk

Clowes Wood is part of the 3,000 hectare Blean woodland complex which covers a vast area of northeast Kent where the forest seems to go on forever. Part of the wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Clowes Wood is known as a habitat for foraging bats which feed on the many insects and other invertebrates that make their home here. It is a nationally important site for the Heath Fritillary butterfly. The more open heathland supports spring migrant birds, such as the nightjar and turtle dove, and resident species like the Dartford warbler and woodcock.



- 1 With the road on your right, walk to the far side of the car park where there is a notice board and width restrictors. Follow this footpath for about 50m to a major junction of tracks. Cross straight over onto a wide straight forester's track. In 300m you arrive at a new wooden seat on your right. Fork **right** here on a wide sandy / grassy path and, in 20m, keep straight ahead, avoiding a much narrower side path on your right. In 450m you will see a marker post with a yellow arrow on each side of the path. Turn **right** on this path.
- 2 This winding path leads up through mixed woodland, and soon a forest of tall pines. You arrive in 100m at a T-junction by another marker post. Turn **left** here on a narrow, fairly level, footpath through light woods. In 200m or so, your path comes down into a darker oak wood, going over a 3-plank bridge to a T-junction. Turn **left** here on another forest path, as directed by a yellow arrow. In 70m, you come over another 3-plank bridge in the depths of the wood. Immediately after this bridge, your path bears **left**.

(Don't miss this turn by carrying on following the stream! As a guide, your path passes a long narrow fallen tree trunk.) In nearly 250m you come over another 3-plank bridge. You pass through what looks like an abandoned oak plantation, then some beautiful pristine oaks and pines. At last, your path once again meets the wide sandy track, by a tall marker post with a yellow arrow. Keep **right** on the track and, in 250m look to your right for another marker post with a yellow arrow. Turn **right** here, back into the deep woods. Your path bends left and runs level. In 70m, at a marker post, ignore a junction on your left by keeping straight on. Finally you come out onto a wide tarmac path. Turn **left** on this path, uphill.

- 3 You can't fail to notice that this is a cyclist's path: in fact, it's part of the National Cycle Network and very popular. *This cycle path runs along the course of the ancient monuments known as the Bowl Barrows; it was once a section of the Canterbury to Whitstable line - the first passenger railway line in the world.* You need to keep clear of cyclists struggling to change gear up the incline. In 100m, at the top, you reach a junction where the cyclist's path (literally) wheels right. Leave the tarmac here by turning **left**, going over a small patch of grass and crossing a gravel track onto a narrow path into the woods. (This path is difficult to see at first since it's so narrow: you just need to look straight ahead.)
- 4 This wonderful path is the highlight of this walk, taking you through a variety of woodland. After 600m you come to a wide forestry track. Cross over, a fraction left, and continue on a similar narrow woodland path. You shortly go over a narrow crossing path and, in another 300m, you pass under power lines. *Any mud here will shortly clear.* In a further 200m, your path ends at a very wide forestry track. Turn **right** and, in 80m, at a T-junction, turn **left** on another wide track. In 30m, ignore a track on your right by keeping straight ahead on the straight track which is now grassy.
- 5 In 150m, you meet a narrow crossing path. This path is a signed footpath but the yellow arrow is missing, so you need to be sure not to miss it. (As a guide, it appears just before your path enters deeper woods: it is the only decent crossing path.) Turn **left** on this path. The path quickly widens and you will see a post with a yellow arrow. Your path runs through an old coppice (trees cut down close to the roots). It takes you diagonally under the power lines. The path runs close to a bank on your right. The wood on the other side is called Minteys Wood. You finally emerge from the woods to a 3-way junction by a marker post.
- 6 Turn **left** on a wide sandy path across the open heath. In 150m, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a wide gravel forestry track. In only 70m, you will notice on your right a bench seat in a grove of pines. Fork **right** here and follow the woodland path, ending at a wooden barrier, between stumps, into the Clowes Wood car park where the walk began.

## Getting there

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By car: if coming from the west (Maidstone or London), the best route is as follows. Take the A2 / M2 (from East or North London) or the M25 / M26 / M20 / A249 / M2 (from South or West London). Where the M2 ends, keep in the same direction on the A299, signposted to *Margate, Ramsgate*. After Yorkletts, fork **left** at a sign for *Whitstable, Canterbury*. Follow this road, Thanet Way, over two roundabouts and, after another mile, at a third roundabout, turn **right** as for *Superstore, South Street*. Continue to a T-junction and turn **right** on a residential road. Follow this road, soon through open country, for nearly a mile. At a T-junction, turn **right**, going under the A299 trunk road, This is Radnall Road. Follow it for a mile, passing the *Dogs Trust Canterbury* on your right. The car park is another ¼ mile on the right after a bend.

You can also reach Clowes Wood from Canterbury, via St Stephen's Hill, near the University of Kent.

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