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

Wye Downs and Crundale

Distance: 13½ km=8½ miles — moderate walking

Region: Kent — Date written: 18-sep-2014

Author: Malinovka — Last update: 17-jul-2026

Refreshments: Sole Street, Wye

Map: Explorer 137 (Ashford) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

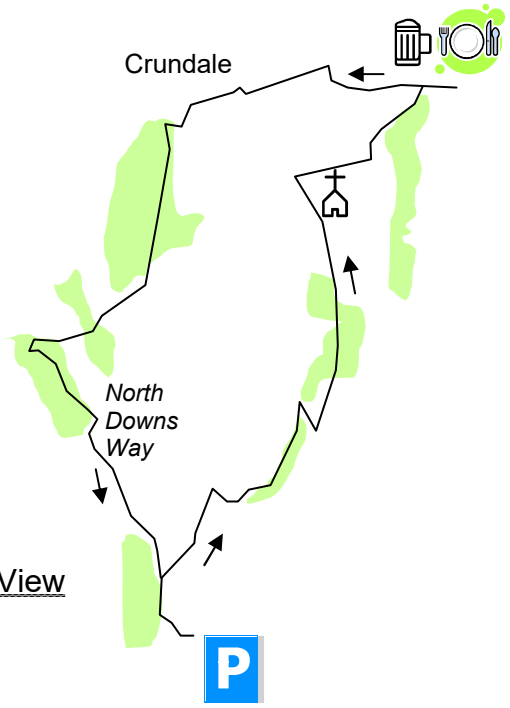
Dramatic hills, views, woodland, church, village

In Brief

Behind the historic village of Wye, in East Kent, the Downs are not just a line of hills but an undulating picture of ridges and valleys, woods and meadows. This walk tries to pick out the best parts of several classic routes, beginning and ending at a spectacular steep valley which so many come to see. There is a quirky inn in Sole Street, open weekends from midday. (For enquiries, it's essential to ring *The Timber Batts* on 01227-531898 or check their website.)

There are a few places where nettles encroach on the path, so shorts may be uncomfortable. The terrain is not difficult, some of it being on quiet lanes (so quiet, hardly a single car will pass you). So many walkers wear trainers but boots, as always, are comfortable, especially in the wetter months. The walk is fine for your dog too.

The walk begins at the **Wye National Nature Reserve** car park, postcode **TN25 5HE** (still often called the Devil's Kneading Trough car park) w3w:into.rear.polishing. There is a voluntary parking charge. This famous beauty spot is on the Coldharbour Road, just east of Wye. If coming from Wye, the car park is on the left, 1¼ miles after a double road junction. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

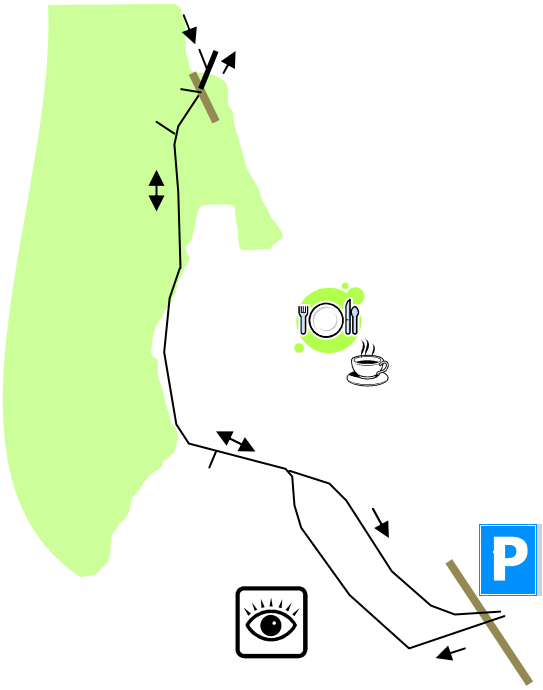


Bird's Eye View

The Walk

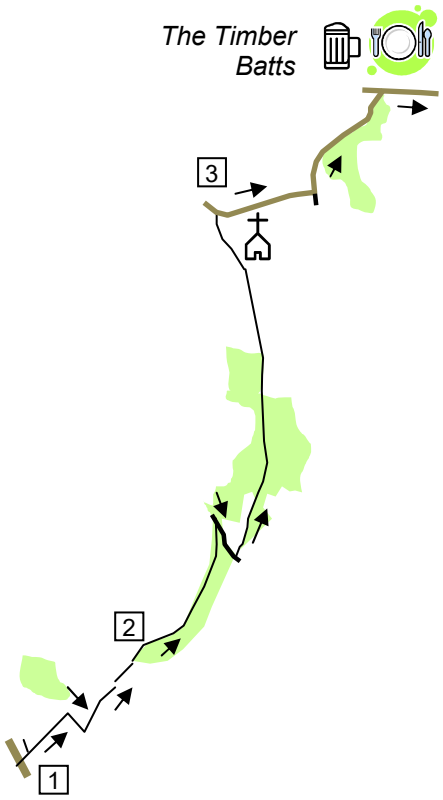
Preliminary: The Devil's Kneading Trough 600m=0.4 miles

The start of this walk takes you along a short section of the North Downs Way to see a famous scenic landmark. The end of the walk will provide another chance to see it, maybe framed by the setting sun.



From the middle of the car park, cross the road, go through a metal gate kissing-gate, then straight down the grass to the famous steep valley known as the *Devil's Kneading Trough* that looks west over the Kentish Weald. Turn **right** along the edge on what is part of the North Downs Way, (NDW), a long-distance footpath that runs from Farnham in Surrey to Dover. The path goes round the sharp point of the valley. When you reach some wooden gates on your left leading to a Nature Reserve, ignore them and continue straight ahead, passing a picnic table on your right. The path takes you through a metal swing-gate and along a grassy path, still on the NDW. It veers left through another metal swing-gate and down into trees. It then veers right up a very small slope. At a marker post indicating the nature trail, veer **right** on the main path, quickly going through a metal kissing gate and out to the road.

Leg 1: Outward 5½ km=3½ miles



1 Cross the road to a tarmac lane opposite, marked as a cul-de-sac. Avoid a signed footpath on your left (your return route), thus leaving the NDW. Follow this tarmac lane down into the valley, ignoring footpaths on the left and the right. Just before you reach *Coombe Manor*, turn **right** onto a bridleway, as directed by three arrows on a fence post. Continue straight ahead uphill for around 150m and then turn **left** through a large rusty gate. Almost immediately turn **right** at a marker post, again going uphill.

2 Just before the end of the uphill pasture, veer **left** through a metal kissing-gate, as directed by a yellow arrow. Your path takes you through a wooded area and, in around 75m, out again through another kissing-gate into a large field. Continue for 500m or so along the left-hand edge of this field, with woodland to your left. You eventually come out of the field through a metal kissing-gate onto a wide chalky track. Turn **left** and, almost immediately, fork **right**, thus leaving the chalky track and avoiding the large wooden gate. You are now on a wide path marked as a byway with a meadow occasionally visible on your left and woodland on your right. After 500m, suddenly you have open views on your right to the Downs at Waltham . Your path remains high and straight, running between hedges, with fabulous views on your left. Finally the church can be glimpsed through the hedge on your right and you reach a viewpoint with benches. St Mary's church, Crundale is always worth a visit.

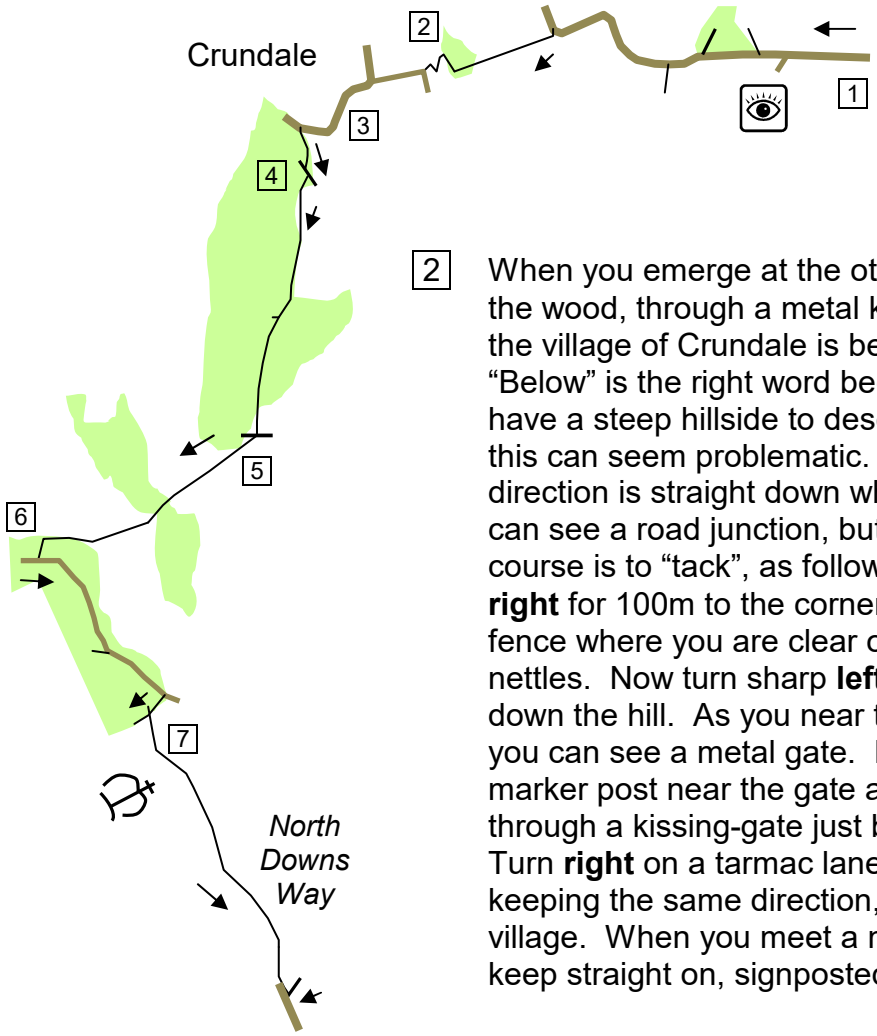
Crundale parish church of St Mary is a Grade I listed building, built by the Normans in the 1100s, with additions over the next 300 years. Three bells were cast at different times. Edward Hasted, author of "The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent" described church In 1798 as consisting of "one isle and one chancel, with a tower steeple on the north side, having a small pointed low turret on the top. There are three bells in it". Indeed, the unusual flint tower, the steep roof and the wonderful long light interior make this isolated church a memorable building.

3 After a possible break to visit the church, turn **right** on the lane beside the church. As you go, Hobbs' Hill looms up towards the east. When you come to a T-junction on this very quiet lane, turn **left** (on the right is private). The lane goes steadily uphill under a dark canopy of trees and it is quite a relief to reach a T-junction at the top where there is a seat. Assuming that you would like a refreshment break, turn **right** on the lane. (If you want to skip the pub and the village, turn **left** and omit the rest of this section.) You pass some small houses in the hamlet of Sole Street and soon reach the old *Compasses* pub, now a punky alternative to a traditional pub known as *Timber Batts*. This pub is open evenings, but announces itself as open from **12 noon Sat and Sun**.

Behind the pub is the vast Denge Wood, one of the largest in Kent, worthy of a whole day's exploration, alas not on the route.

Leg 2: Return 7 km=4½ miles

1 **See map overleaf.** After your break, retrace your steps back along the lane, ignoring the small lane on the left by which you arrived. Continue with great views on your left. You pass regardless a footpath on your right, a byway on your right and a footpath on your left. The lane curves right and then does a complete left turn to reach Winchcombe Farm. Leave the lane here by turning **left** through the metal gates into the farmyard. Turn immediately **right** on the grass and up the right-hand side of a field. At the first corner, continue ahead across the field on a faint path (or through crops, depending on the season). Head for the left-hand corner of a grassy patch visible ahead. When you reach it, keep ahead to go up on a path in Viney's Wood.



2 When you emerge at the other side of the wood, through a metal kissing-gate, the village of Crundale is below. "Below" is the right word because you have a steep hillside to descend and this can seem problematic. Your direction is straight down where you can see a road junction, but the best course is to "tack", as follows. Turn **right** for 100m to the corner of the fence where you are clear of the nettles. Now turn sharp **left** and zigzag down the hill. As you near the bottom you can see a metal gate. Head for a marker post near the gate and go through a kissing-gate just below it. Turn **right** on a tarmac lane, thus keeping the same direction, into the village. When you meet a major road, keep straight on, signposted to *Wye*.

The name "Crundale" comes from Old English "crundel" meaning a chalk pit or quarry (compare "Crondall" Hampshire, also on this site). An old account describes it thus: "The hills are very frequent in it, and exceedingly barren; the soil is in general chalk, covered with quantities of flints. The country here is very healthy; it is exceeding cold, and has a wild and dreary appearance."

3 Follow this winding lane past several classy properties. After the last house, *Valleys Green*, the lane rises into woodland. On your left shortly is a small fingerpost. Turn **left** here through a metal barrier into the woods and immediately fork **left**, almost doubling back. Your path curves right and, in 150m, meets a T-junction and a marker post. Turn **left** here on a wide path. In 10m, ignore a rough track on your right made by forestry vehicles. In another 10m, turn **right** on what looks like a dead end but immediately veer **left** up a bank, past a post with a yellow arrow, into a field. Veer **right** and follow a path along the wide grassy fringe, with Warren Wood on your right. At the far side, by a post with a yellow arrow, your path continues into woodland.

4 In 20m, you reach a T-junction with a farm track. Turn **right** uphill through woodland. Where the farm track quickly veers right uphill, keep straight ahead on a much narrower path in Marriage Wood, a noted haven for bluebells. [Jul 2026: care! some walkers went astray in this section, probably due to overgrown paths.] Follow this path on a more-or-less straight course between bracken and brambles which opens out into mature woodland. Turn **right** here. You are now walking parallel to a field on your left. You come out to a wide crossing track. Turn **right** on this track.

5 Immediately **leave** the track by forking **left** on a grassy path. Follow the path through a small metal gate beside a large one and go straight down this beautiful green meadow, at first not far from trees on your right, then up the centre heading for a metal kissing-gate visible in the fence. After the kissing-gate, continue in the same direction, up the highest part of the pasture (shared by cows *and* sheep, unusually), not far from the left-hand edge. At the other side, your path dips down to a black modern kissing-gate. Your path now drops steadily through woods. You emerge into another large field and a clear path straight across should be visible from above, in the direction of a tall transmitter tower in the distant woods. Take that path to the other side of the field and veer **right** along the edge uphill.

6 At the top of a slope, turn **left** at a marker post onto a clear path through woods and go down two steps to a tarmac lane. Turn **left** on this very quiet lane. Soon you have views left of the field you crossed and, in 500m, you are joined from the right by the North Downs Way (NDW) at a signpost. In another 250m or so, as the lane comes out of the trees, you meet another little fingerpost on your right pointing to the NDW. Turn **right** here on a path up steps, keeping straight on at a chain stile. At the top, another chain stile takes you to a four-way junction. Turn **left** along a ridge, still on the NDW. You have terrific views right across the Weald of Kent.

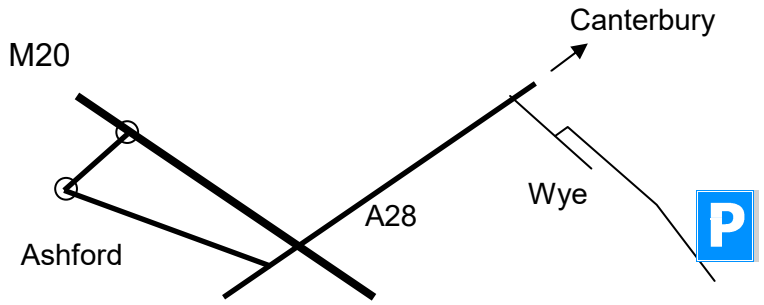
7 In 100m you reach a large pit and the *Wye Millennium Monument* in the shape of a giant crown that you can't see from ground level. Go round either side of the monument and continue on a path that runs between more pits and takes you through a black kissing-gate. The NDW now follows the hillside with a wire fence on your left. Finally, after 1 km, you reach a new metal gate which leads you over a cinder section and out to a tarmac lane, which you used on your outward journey. Turn **right** and cross the main road.

Postliminary: The Devil's Kneading Trough again 600m=0.4 miles

Same mini-map as start. The return to the car park is similar to the starting route. Go through a metal kissing-gate and veer **left** on the main path. The path comes out of the trees via a metal gate and veers right through another metal swing-gate and onto the open hillside. Veer **left** along the contour of the hill, going through yet another kissing-gate, enjoying more views of the dramatic ravine. Continue straight ahead until you eventually reach the kissing-gate, familiar from your outward journey. Cross the road to the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: if coming from the west (e.g. London), the easiest route is on the M20. Come off at exit 9. Follow signs for *A28 Canterbury* (filter right). This takes you under the M20, sharp **left** at a roundabout, **left** at a T-junction and back under the M20. Wye is signed right after about 2½ miles. Go over the level crossing, through the village and, after passing the church and the College, keep straight ahead as for *Brook, Hastingleigh*. The car park is 2 miles further, on the left, after the *Devil's Kneading Trough* restaurant.



By train: The wonderful village of Wye, with its railway station, is 1 mile from the walk. It could be included, using the paths shown on the OS map (begin behind the church) to make a very satisfying 11-mile walk.

*fancy **more** free walks?* www.fancyfreewalks.org