

NORTH DOWNS WAY WALKS

Shepherdswell, Waldershare and Eythorne



This 4¼ (7½km) walk starts in the village of Shepherdswell, between Canterbury and Dover. It passes several historic sites including Coldred Court and Waldershare House, and allows the walker to explore some varied countryside, with distant views to the coast on a clear day.

Shepherdswell is on the Canterbury-Dover railway line from the station, turn right out of the entrance drive, then left up Church Hill to reach the starting point near the church. Shepherdswell and Eythorne may also be reached by bus. For Public Transport Information, telephone 0870 6082 608. There is limited on-street car parking in the village.

1. The village is also known as Sibertswold. These names derive from the Old English words 'Swiobeorhtes' weald', meaning the forest of Swiobeorht'. The church of St Andrew was dedicated in 1865, but there are references to a church on the site dating back to 944. In the porch there are two mediaeval grave-markers and an interesting old headstone. A number of shops and pubs may be found in the village.

Join the North Downs Way just north of the church and follow the waymarked route across fields towards Coldred.

2. The circular walk follows the North Downs Way National Trail between Shepherdswell and Waldershare House. This part of the 'northern loop', which links Boughton Leeds near Wye with Dover, by way of Canterbury. On a clear day it is possible to see the coast at Ramsgate. In summer skylarks can be heard singing, and in winter they form flocks to feed in the fields. Kestrels may sometimes be seen hovering.
3. The earthworks near the farm are the remains of an early Norman ringwork and bailey, cut in two by the modern road. North-west of the road farm buildings, some of mediaeval date, have been built over part of the earthworks. In this area would have stood the main residential buildings, along with a chapel which is still in use as

the parish church of St Pancras. On the other side of the road would have been stables, workshops and soldiers' accommodation. In 1086 the manor of Coldred was held by Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, Earl of Kent and half-brother of William the Conqueror.

From Coldred Court continue to follow the North Downs Way, crossing the road and going through a small wooded area with tall beech trees, then take the path across fields.

4. The large brick Queen Anne mansion was built for Sir Henry Furnese who purchased the estate in 1705, it presents an imposing appearance as one approaches across the park. The house was gutted in 1913 and subsequently a number of changes were incorporated, including the prominent tall chimney stacks. The park contains many mature trees including beeches and Spanish chestnuts and a fine avenue of lime trees.

Join the metalled road near the House and almost immediately go through a gate on the left. Pass to the left hand side of the avenue of lime trees and cross a stile. Continue to a second stile, cross a small road and go through the gate opposite. Follow the path towards Eythorne. Ensure that gates are closed after you.

5. Eythorne, pronounced Ay-thorne, is an ancient name which means 'Heahgyo's thorn bush'. Heahgyo was a Saxon woman, and the name is first recorded in the year 805. More recently, the village lay close to Tilmanstone Colliery in the now disused Kent coalfield. The circular walk passes close to a pub, and there are shops nearby.

On entering the village, cross the road at the roundabout and enter Flax Court Lane (taking the broad lane on the left, not the narrower footpath). After several hundred metres, turn left again into Brimsdale Lane (there is no name board).

6. At first the lane runs between high hedges, a haven for small birds such as robins, dunnocks, great and blue tits and, in summer, chiffchaffs and willow warblers. It then emerges along the edge of a field. Occasionally small flocks, or coveys, of partridges may be seen here and elsewhere on the walk. 'Brimsdale' is another ancient name, meaning 'Bryn's muddy pool'.

Follow the lane to the road, go straight over and across the field towards Shepherdswell. Pass behind houses on the edge of the village until reaching a fenced pathway to Siberts Close. Turn left, then right and left again at the telephone box, returning to the starting point at the church.

Remember to wear appropriate clothing and footwear and please follow the Country Code

This walk can be found on OS Explorer 138 starting at GR 258482