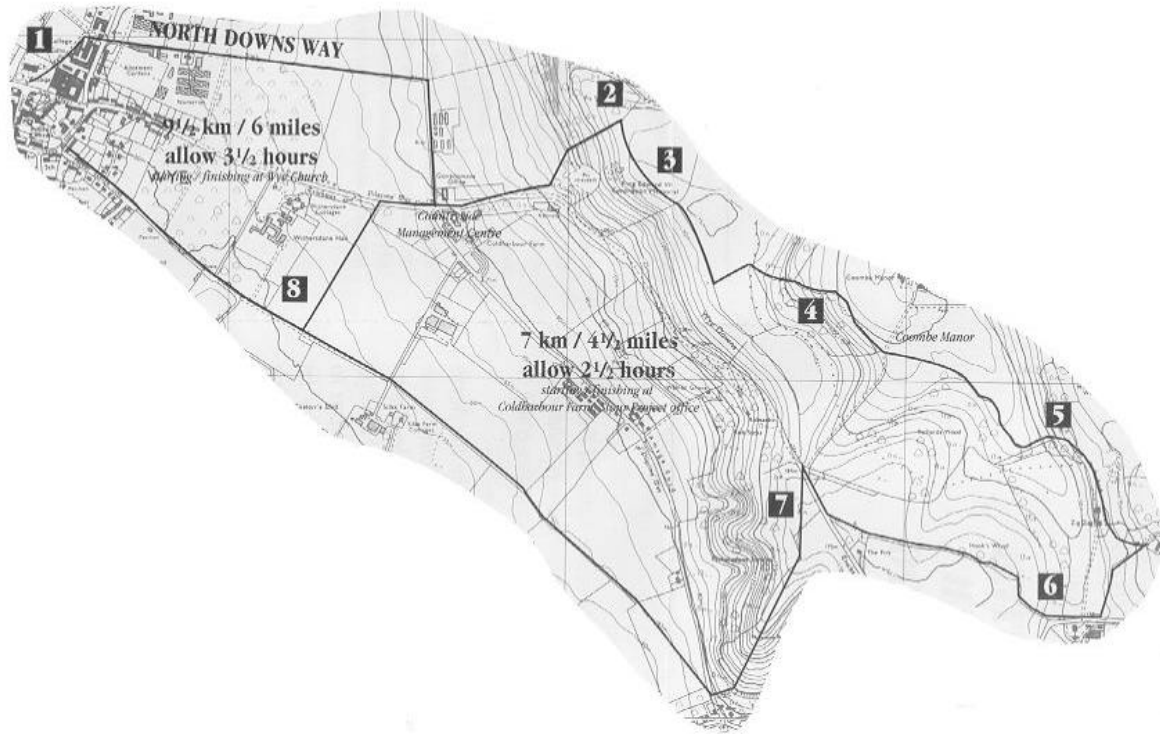


NORTH DOWNS WAY WALKS

Wye and Hastingleigh



Wye Village

1. The church of St. Martin and St. Gregory dates back to about 1200, and is typical, with its flint walls and square tower, of the Kentish style. It stands adjacent to Wye College, a faculty of the University of London. Founded in 1428 by Archbishop Kempe, it was originally a seminary college for priests. Today students from all over the world study agriculture, horticulture and associated subjects.

Follow path through churchyard and the college. Continue past glasshouses onto popular lined track. Turn right at road. Turn left at X-roads. Opposite the Countryside Management Centre (OMC), follow path running along edge of road, through woodland, rising gently. Follow waymarkers, turning right where paths diverge. Climb side and head straight up hill not for the faint-hearted.

Wye Crown

2. Carved in June 1902 by Wye College students to mark the coronation of King Edward VII, the Crown is one of only 25 remaining hill carvings in England. A major restoration project was begun in 1991 to halt further erosion of the crown. From the bench spectacular views of the Downs and the Stour Valley can be enjoyed.

At top of Downs, head South following fence line. Cross stile. Continue along path, keeping fence on your left.

Chalk Grassland

3. Chalk grassland is a valuable and diverse habitat. The soils, poor in nutrients, allow many species to compete and flourish. Orchids are found here, including the spectacular bee and early spider orchid, in addition to the common spotted, pyramidal and fragrant. The wide range of plants provide food for many animals and butterflies, including the marbled white and chalk hill blue. In recent years this important habitat type has been increasingly under threat from scrub invasion and the plough. Careful management through cutting/grazing should help to preserve the remaining areas of chalk grassland.

At kissing gate in fence, turn left through cropped field. Emerge onto track, descending through Richard's Wood.

Crundale Valley

4. In Richard's Wood look out for red campion, a woodland flower, which can be found growing by the track. It flowers throughout the year adding a dash of colour in the winter months. In spring, you will also smell the unmistakable wild garlic, with its white flowers which carpets the area. Much woodland in this area was affected by the Great Storm, opening up areas for natural regeneration. Having emerged from the hornbeam and oak woodland, the dry Crundale Valley opens up to your left, with Coombe Manor being visible ahead.

Follow path along edge of woodland. Turn left at right angle, keeping fence to right. The path ascends.

Hedges

5. Hedges are ancient features of our rural landscape, providing food and shelter for many species of bird, mammal and insect, as well as cattle-proof boundaries. (If well managed). Hawthorn is the most valuable hedging plant. Ascending the hill, other hedging species can be found to the left of the path, including wayfaring tree, spindle and blackthorn – the latter providing sloe berries, used in many old recipes most notably sloe gin.

Continue up the track to the oaks. Cross two stiles, coming out near Stoakes Cottage. Cross track, following grassy path down to stile. Cross stile, and follow line of beach trees down field and along to road. Turn right. At bend in road, continue straight on along PERMISSIVE footpath.

Ancient Trackway

6. This hollow lane was originally used to move animals along and a series of these paths ran to the market towns of Ashford and Canterbury. This section was restored and re-opened by the KSCP midweek volunteers, with help from the landowner. It is bounded by remnant hawthorn hedging which contains many wildflowers. The parasitic toothwort grows here, with its host plant, the hazel.

Follow waymarked route to Devils Kneading Trough restaurant. Cross road into Wye Downs National Nature Reserve car park. Continue over stile, through kissing gate and down to millstone.

Wye NNR

7. Managed by English Nature, this ancient chalk grassland supports 27 species of butterfly and 17 species of orchid, including the Lady Orchid or Maid of Kent. The Devils Kneading Trough was formed as a result of a glacial process known as solifluction, and was so named in Victorian times, when it was a reflection of prevailing attitudes that many places were prefixed by “angels” or “devils”. From the millstone one can enjoy the spectacular panorama, extending down to Folkestone on a clear day.

From millstone, follow winding chalk path down to base of hill. Follow waymarked route towards village (church tower is evident).

Wye College Estate

8. Note the old stile, ornately carved and dated, a reminder of a farming period when time could be spent on such detail. At this point you can cut the walk short if you began at the CMC, or you can continue to Wye.

To return to CMC, turn right along edge of hop garden. On reaching road, turn right and continue up to CMC.

To return to Wye, continue past stile, past Withersdane Hall gardens on right, onto metalled road. Continue onto hedged path, past playing field on left, and past houses. Emerging in Wye village, continue in same direction and turn right into Church Street, where you will see the church ahead.

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

This walk can be found on OS Explorer 137 starting at GR 054468