

Walk Awhile

Briefing Paper 19



Crundale Downs Tour

Introduction

The beauty of Crundale's hidden valleys is well worth the 9.3 mile or 15km detour off from the North Downs Way National Trail. The walk out-lined in this brief starts from a tarmac lane that leads down to Coombe Farm, at a point where the North Downs Way National Trail crosses Coldharbour Lane (the Wye to Hastingleigh road). This is 100 metres due north-west from the Devils Kneading Trough



Restaurant along Coldharbour Lane at OS reference TQ 457077. The restaurant is open 7 days a week from 10.30 am for teas and coffee.

Despite its inaccessibility by road, the route along the Downs follows well marked bridleways and footpaths. The walk can be shortened if desired, by crossing the valley after 3.5 miles (5.6 km) at the Church of St. Mary the Blessed Virgin, Crundale. The village's name is derived from 'Crundala', in which 'crun' means chalk and 'dala' means dell or valley. By the 12th century the village was known as Crundale.¹

Crundale is of particular interest to the walker because it cannot be accessed by road from the western end of the valley. The route along Crundale Downs follows a pre-Roman road and much of the 9.3 miles and much of the walk is along ancient flint and chalk tracks and by-ways. These old track-ways, which link the dozen or so farms in the parish, leave the walker with the impression that this small piece of Kent has been cut off from the modern world. The valley to the left, between the Wye-Hastingleigh Road and Crundale is known as the western valley. The eastern valley can be seen from the ridge along the top of Crundale Downs just before the St.Mary's church is reached. To the north of

¹ A Guide to the Church of St. Mary the Blessed Virgin, Crundale by Albert J Lancefield p.2 2001

the church the western and eastern valleys merge into one wider valley that runs down to the River Stour at Godmersham.

Crundale Downs (To St Mary's Church)

Follow the tarmac lane for half a mile ignoring the first footpath off to the right. Take the next footpath to the right, which runs between two fields just before Coombe Manor Farm is reached. There is a hand written footpath sign.

Continue walking between the fences and after 100 metres turn left to follow a footpath due north into Hurst Wood. Follow the path through Hurst Wood for 0.5 miles (800 metres) until it emerges on a rough trackway. Take a sharp right up hill along the track-way for 200 metres and turn left onto a bridleway, leading off to the left into Towns Wood.

The bridleway, which is a pre-Roman trackway, continues for a mile until St Mary's Church is reached, following the high ground between the two valleys. Towards the church the track-way provides superb views across Crundale Downs.



Circular Route through Eggringe Wood

At Crundale Church it is possible to take a shorter route back to the North Downs Way via a footpath that crosses to the western side of the valley, just south of the village of Crundale.

However one can continue on a 4-mile (6.4 km) circular route round Eggringe Wood, linking up with part of the Stour Valley Trail. This route can be followed round to Crundale village before returning along the west side of the western valley and back along to the North Downs Way National Trail at the Devil's Kneading Trough.

Leave the church and head down hill along the lane that runs due north towards Crundale village. After 100 metres take a footpath off right and into the woods. Follow the path through the woods for about 20 metres until a stile is reached. From the stile a footpath breaks out across arable land. Follow this path, which can be clearly seen as it descends to the floor of the valley and then climbs up on the other side of the valley, crossing the lane from Sole Street before entering Eggringe Wood. When the



footpath emerges onto the lane running to Sole Street, turn right and walk up hill for about 30 metres and then take a bridleway off to the left and into Eggringe Wood.

The Compasses Inn Sole Street

The Compasses Inn at Sole Street (01227 700300) OM reference TQ 494097 is situated about 0.5 miles further up the lane from the bridleway leading into Eggringe Wood. It is open 7 days a week between 12.00 and 2.30 for food and drinks.

Follow the bridleway through Eggringe Wood for about 1 mile (1.6 km). After about 1 mile the bridleway bears right onto a dust track. Continue along the track until it emerges onto a lane running due north. Turn left onto the tarmac lane and follow this for about 0.5 miles until the end of the long wooden fence bordering Thruxted Mill. Take the footpath off to the left and follow this down hill into the woods, keeping the side fence of Thruxted Mill on your left. After about 400 metres the footpath emerges into an open field which descends into the valley below Blue Downs. Forest Farm is on your left.

Go through the gate at the bottom of the field and follow the lane due west for 100 metres. Just before Woodsdale Farm leave the lane, crossing a stile and walk diagonally across the field, up the side of the valley, making for the far corner. Make for the top corner of the field, slightly to the left of the reservoir marked on the map. At the top of the field there is a stile. Cross the stile and follow the footpath marked Stour Valley Walk. Very shortly you will get superb views across the Stour valley towards Godmersham.

Continue along the footpath marked Stour Valley Walk for about 1 mile, as the path descends down the side of the Stour valley towards Eggerton Lane. At the gate into Eggerton lane turn left and continue along Eggerton lane for about 1 mile until the T-junction with the lane from Winchcombe Farm is reached. Turn right for 20 metres and then left onto a footpath running behind the gardens of the cottages.

From Crundale back to the North Downs Way National Trail

After about 400 metres drop down from the field and cross a stile into the lane leading up to Crundale village. This is still marked as the Stour Valley Walk. Follow the lane as it winds up through

Crundale village, first turning to the left and then to the right by the telephone box. After about 100 metres past the telephone box take the footpath into Warren Wood, continuing to follow the Stour Valley Walk signs. Keep to the east edge of the wood with Crundale village behind you. Don't break out into open ground but skirt along the edge of Warren Wood and make for the semi-circular boundary of the wood ahead of you. Where the boundary of the wood curves round you will see a footpath sign marking a footpath into the woods.

Follow the rough path through the woods and up hill for about 200 metres until a junction with two other paths is reached. Take the path to your left running down towards Marriage Farm. The farm is named Marriage farm due to the fact it is situated on a boundary ridge between Wye and Crundale. A large Ash tree that stands on the track above the farm is a boundary tree.²

After crossing the valley take the footpath into the woods at the opposite side of the valley. After about 20 metres turn right along a footpath, which continues to climb up through the woods.. After 400 metres the path emerges in a field. Keep straight ahead and along the west side (keeping the wood to your left) of Collyerhill Wood. The footpath gradually bends round to the right as it follows the edge of the fields until it bears left for 50 metres. After 50 metres the path meets up with the North Downs Way National Trail.

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Walk Awhile
April 2004
Brief No 19*

² Stour Valley Walk, from source to sea 1995 - Kent County Council page 17