



Duke's Warren and Leith Hill

Distance: 5¾ km=3½ miles easy or easy-to-moderate walking
reducible to under 4½ km=3 miles

Region: Surrey

Date written: 14-oct-2018

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Refreshments: Leith Hill Tower

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Woodland, heath, distant views, hills, forest trail, chestnut walk, colours

In Brief

Duke's Warren is an enclosed section of heath next to Leith Hill, belonging to the National Trust. It is known for the stark beauty of its open landscape of pines, oaks, birch and heather. It is from here that you obtain the long-distance views over miles of apparent wilderness. Because of the colour of the heather and the pine trees, this walk is ideal for all seasons.



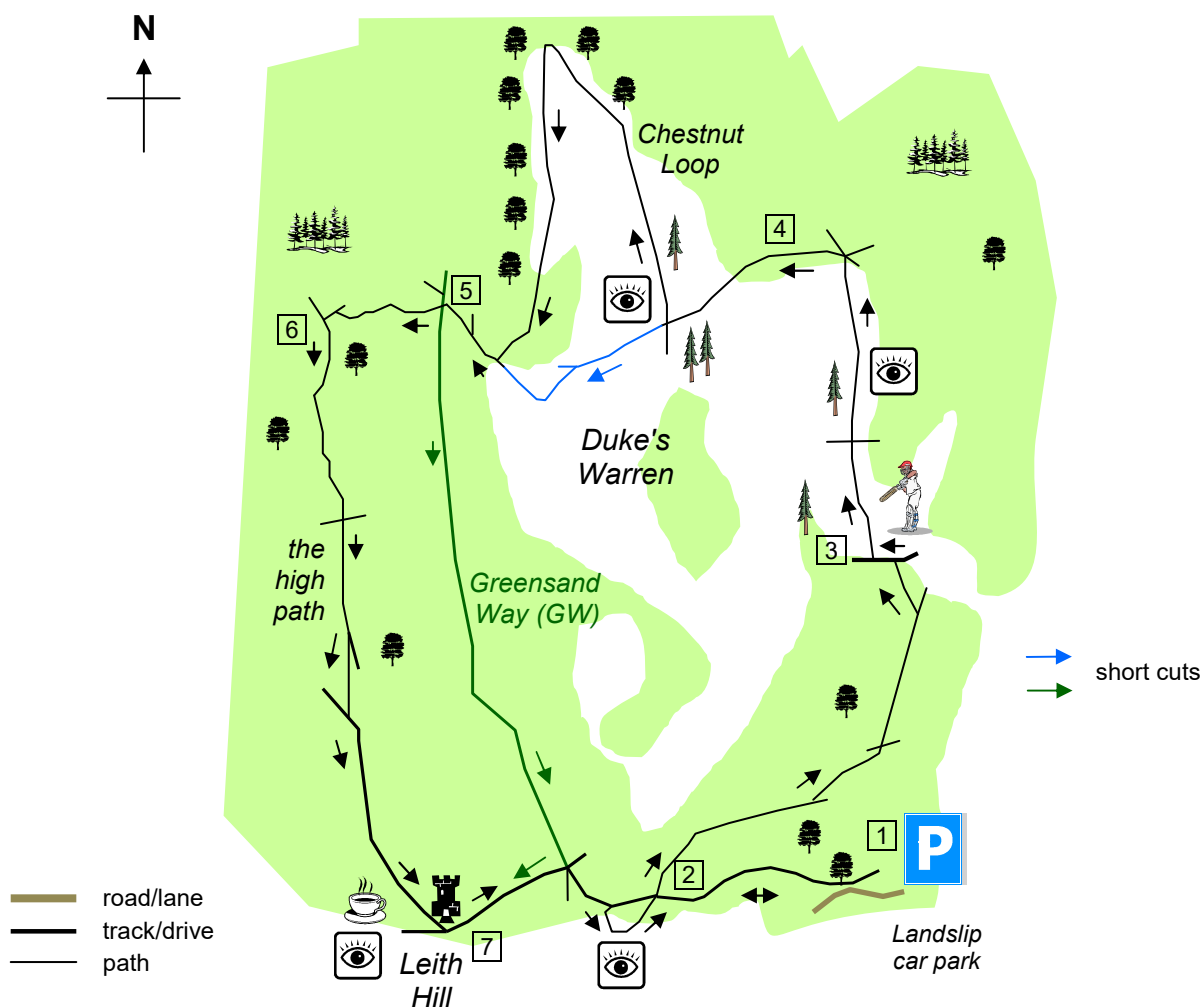
This walk includes an adventurous section on narrow paths, leading direct to the Tower. For those wanting an easy stroll, there is the Greensand Way alternative.

There are no nettles on this walk and only a little undergrowth on the narrow path leading up to Leith Hill, so shorts can be worn. Paths are generally wide and sandy or surfaced, so you can wear trainers or sensible walking shoes. In autumn, you may need a **hat** in case of falling chestnuts! Your dog will also enjoy this walk: there are **no stiles** or roads and only a few of those gentle belted Galloway cattle in the Duke's Warren enclosure.



The walk begins at the **Landslip** car park, near **Coldharbour**, Surrey, nearest postcode **RH5 6HG**. This is the first car park going westwards out of the village of Coldharbour. If coming eastwards, e.g. from Abinger, it is **after** the much smaller Windy Gap car parks. Landslip is large and popular and the route up to Leith Hill from here is a cakewalk. It's best to park on the west side (furthest from the village). For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 With the road on your left, walk to the far corner of the Landslip car park where there is a sign *Footpath to Tower*. Follow this easy path, going downhill at first, over a bridge, veering right at a “tower” icon. The wide path is steepish but perfectly comfortable to walk and there are optional steps at the end. On reaching the top, **leave** the Tower route by turning immediately very sharp **right** on a wide unmarked path along the edge of the hill. (Mountain bikes use the parallel path on your left.)
- 2 The path rises gently under beeches, passing a bench seat. Soon you pass a green-topped post, the first of a series you will be following in this first part. It bears the letter “K” and the words *Heathland Trail*. After a stone-surfaced section, you pass a bench seat and a post. At the next post, fork **left** as the green arrow. Your path goes through a chestnut coppice, over a raft of sticks and through a beech glade. Veer **left** here, ignoring a crossing path indicated by a post with a yellow arrow, staying on the level path. Your path snakes its way through a pinewood, passing another post. You reach another post, shortly before a wooden barrier you can see ahead. Turn **left** here as the green arrow. The path leads out, via a wooden barrier, to a wide track beside a cricket green (the highest in Surrey).

3 Go forward to the edge of the green and turn **left** past a 1-bar gate. Immediately turn **right** as the green arrow, going behind the pavilion. You are on an easy sandy path across the glistening heath of Coldharbour Common with heather, moss and pine trees, a perfect panorama whatever the season. In 200m, you reach another of those posts at a crossing path. Go straight on, thus leaving the *Heathland Trail*. In 300m, you come to a multiple junction of wide paths with blue arrows. Turn **left** and keep **left** to go through a small wooden gate beside a large one into the National Trust's Duke's Warren.

4 Gradually your path comes out into the open with ever widening views. After 350m, you come to a crosspaths with a marker post and blue arrows in a grove of oaks and pines. There is a rustic seat from where to admire the extensive views into the wooded valleys. Turn **right** here to start the delightful Chestnut Loop. (As a short cut, you could instead keep straight on through pines, downhill, forking **left** at a blue arrow, with a fine view of the Tower, to re-join the route; but you would miss the best part of this walk.) Follow this very wide sandy path under isolated pines heading towards the wooded valley that seems to stretch to the horizon. The colours change in every season. If you see any cattle near this path, they are the gentle belted Galloway breed. In 500m, **ignore** a marker post and a path on your right leading to a wooden gate. Shortly after, your path does a total left wheel, running under the first of the chestnut trees which dominate the rest of this path. The landscape here is striking with deep woods on your right and lofty heath on your left. The Chestnut Loop ends at a T-junction. Turn **right** and fork **right** to go through a wooden gate ahead, leaving Duke's Warren. Your path leads over a flat bridge to reach an oblique T-junction with a wide path near a fingerpost. This is part of the Greensand Way, a long-distance path. Here you have a choice:



Along the Greensand Way (easy). This route avoids the ascent in the next section by taking you back along this wide path. At the end, you can still take a break at the Tower with its café and views. Turn **left** on this wide woodland path and follow it for 1 km, avoiding all turn-offs. It rises during the last stretch up to the main multiple junction of wide paths by the hollow. For a break and refreshments, turn **right** uphill to the Tower. (You will be coming down the same way.) Or, if you are pressed for time, continue on a path ahead, just to the left of the hollow, leading back to the car park.

5 **The High Path** (moderate). The next section is quite an adventure and a little tougher than the preceding because it includes a steepish section. However, no climbing is involved and the path is perfectly manageable – but take your time! Turn **right** on the wide path for only 2m and go **left** up a narrow path. (This is the narrow path *before* the fingerpost, not the wider diagonal path *after* the fingerpost.) You have a steady ascent on a path where the many tree roots act as natural steps. (You may meet the occasional cyclist and need to stand to one side – they are usually very considerate: cyclists have to share all the paths with walkers and horses.) Avoid any side paths and keep going steadily upwards. In under 200m the gradient eases and you reach a T-junction. Turn **left** and immediately keep **left** on a good level path.

6 This narrow path will take you to the Tower. The course is always straight ahead and almost level all the way, because you are now on the long ridge on which the Tower stands. In 200m or so, your path goes through a space

where forestry work has left a lot of woodland debris: be sure to weave a little to the left and the right here so as not to lose the path. In another 100m, you come out into the open and go over a crossing path. Your path now goes over a fallen trunk (good! as it keeps cyclists away) and rises and falls over some steep bumps. The path now widens and there is a large stand of tall pines ahead to your right. You will meet a number of irrelevant crossing paths leading to more hillocks: always keep straight ahead on the level. After a total of about 500m on this high path, your path forks with the wide left fork going downhill. Take the **right** fork which is much narrower and only a little to the right of the downhill path. You are now walking very gently uphill through bracken. 200m after the fork, you meet a much wider path coming from your right. Veer **left** onto this path and continue, always keeping to the main path, uphill, reaching the Tower after 400m.



Leith Hill Tower was built in 1766 to raise the height of the hill to the magic 1000 feet. It later fell into disuse until 1864 when the side-tower staircase was built. It was fully restored by the National Trust in 1984. The servery has refreshments and nice homemade cakes, now open daily, closing at 5, or 3 weekdays. You can ascend the tower where there are extensive views all round.

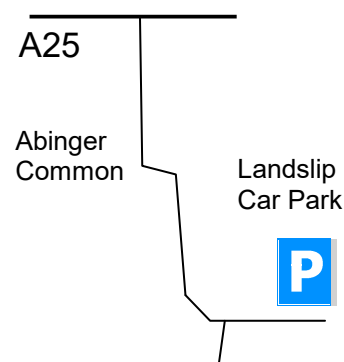
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After your break, facing the view, turn **left** steeply down, following the *Greensand Way* sign. In 200m or so, you reach a major junction with a hollow on your right. Go past the hollow and take the next path **right**, following a sign for the Landslip car park. After 100m on this wide stone-lined path, looking to your right, you will see a path between two posts. Turn **right** and take this narrow path through bracken. (You can of course, stay on the main path.) The path leads to a bench seat with terrific views across the Weald of Sussex, especially memorable at the end of a sunny day. The path ends at a green-topped post, back on the main path. Turn **right** downhill, retracing your route at the start, quickly leading back to the Landslip car park where the walk began.



Getting there

By car: the Leith Hill Landslip car park can be reached from the A25 road near Dorking. The well-named Hollow Lane is signposted *Abinger Common, Friday Street, Leith Hill*. The junction is about 3 miles=5 km west of Dorking, via Westcott, and about 8 miles=13 km east of Guildford. Follow this lane, sometimes through a dramatic cutting, for about 3½ miles=6 km. Avoid the Starveall car park on your left and continue on the road, keeping left at a junction. Avoid the two small Windy Gap car parks, either side of the road. The Landslip car park is a little further along on your left. You can also reach the car park from Coldharbour.



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