Fancy Free Walks

point your feet on a new path

Fetcham Downs and Ranmore Common

Distance: 13 km=8 miles easy-to-moderate walking
or 2 walks of 7 km=**4½ miles** and 7½ km=**5 miles**

Region: Surrey Date written: 4-dec-2009

Author: Schwebefuss Date revised: 28-oct-2011

Refreshments: Bockett's Farm, Denbies Hillside? Last update: 10-feb-2017

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

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

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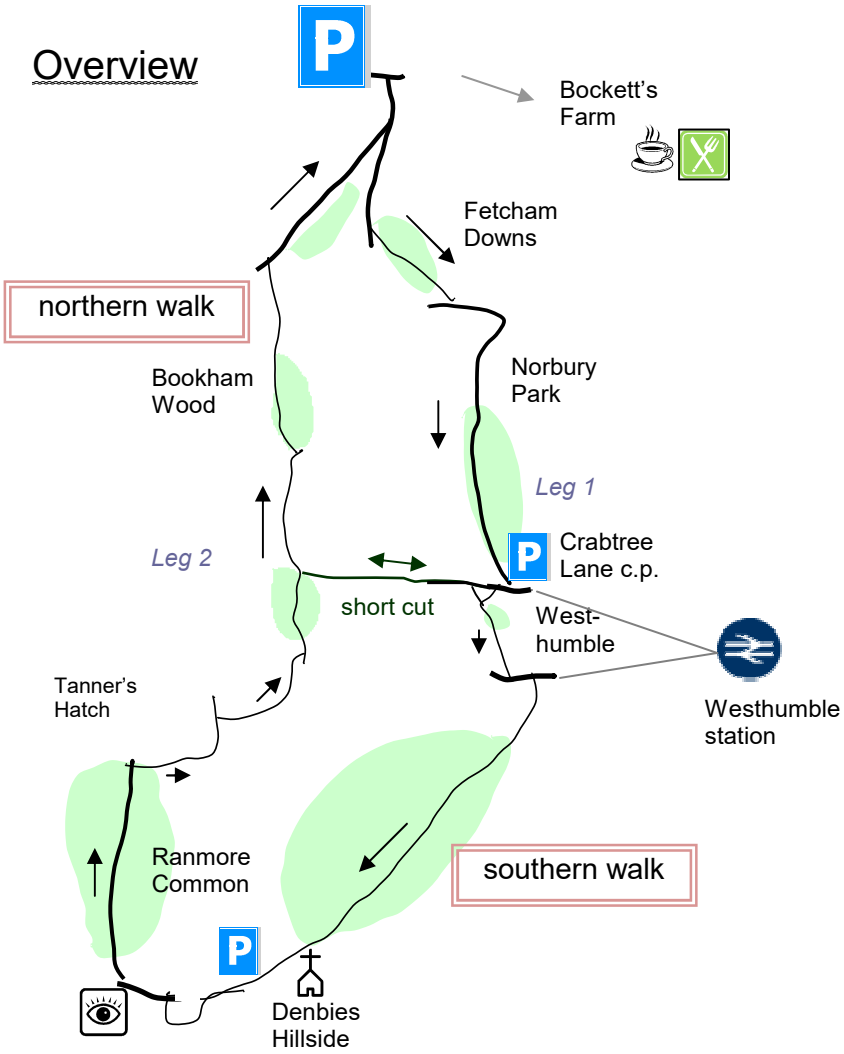
Woodland, hills, views



In Brief

This is a bracing walk with good long stretches that take you far from the starting point to distant parts, but always along good wide paths that make the going easy. This walk is a good winter walk because the views are enhanced. There are no nettles. However, in the wetter months there may be some muddy patches, so boots are a must. Most of this trail is ideal for dogs, with no main road crossings and only one or two small fields of livestock. There are no cafés or pubs *en route* but Bockett's Farm, near the start, has an excellent tea room.

The walk can be split into two different shorter walks, a **northern walk** covering Fetcham Downs and Norbury Park (7 km=4½ miles) and a **southern walk** over Denbies Hillside and Ranmore Common (7½ km=5 miles).

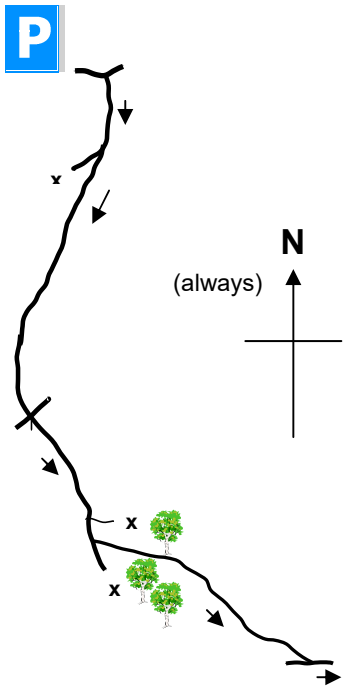
The **full walk** and the **northern walk** begin at the small car park in Fetcham close to the **Bockett's Farm** roundabout, nearest **postcode KT22 9BW**, grid ref TQ 150 549. The **southern walk** begins in the **Denbies Hillside NT car park** on the Ranmore Common Road, **postcode RH5 6SP**. Another possibility is the **Crabtree Lane** car park, nearest postcode **RH5 6BQ**, grid ref TQ 157 525, which can be used as a starting point for **all three** walks. The **full walk** and the **southern walk** can also begin at **Westhumble Railway Station** which is only ½ mile from the walk. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **southern walk**, starting in Denbies Hillside, go through a swing-gate onto the famous hillside. Then skip forward in this text and begin the walk at **Leg 2**.

Leg 1: Fetcham to Denbies Hillside 6½ km=4 miles

1 Exit the car park at the far end and turn **right** on a fine broad track which is surfaced at the start. In about 100m, ignore a wide path forking right. Soon the trees on the right give way to a small meadow and you have the pleasing sight on the right of *Roaringhouse Farm* (so named because it lies in a windy gap) with its fine old granary. Soon you come to a wide crossing track with a 4-way signpost. Here keep straight ahead on the broad track. Soon, you pass and ignore a signposted footpath on the left, by a wooden railing. Soon after this, at a crossing with a four-way finger post, take a signposted bridleway pointing **half left** uphill. After an ascent, the path runs level, with gates on the left leading to Fetcham Downs and *Walnut Tree Clump* and a view down to the valley on the right (an alternative route most people use). Continue ahead at all times until you meet a broad track coming from the right. Go **left** here.



2 The track leads to a 3-way junction with a heavy-duty metal fence on your right. Take the **right** fork, going past the gates of the Sawmill and continue on a wide track between fences, the left-hand fence being the boundary of the grounds of Norbury Park House. (For notes on this, see the other walk in this series *Norbury Park and the Mole Valley*.) Where the fence ends, as a short diversion, there is a viewpoint on the left with a seat and a picnic table with views over the Mole Valley. Continue on the wide track until eventually you reach a Y-junction with a fingerpost. Take the **right**-hand rising track. The track leads to the small Crabtree Lane car park (alternative starting point). Turn **right** on Crabtree Lane.

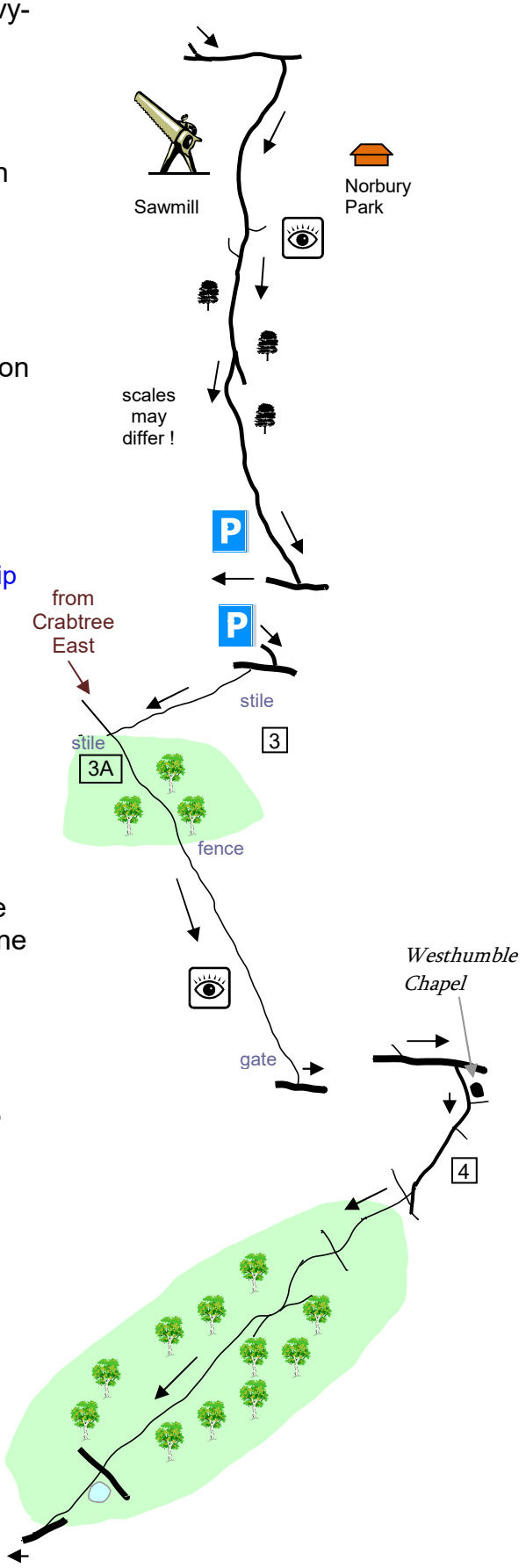
Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **northern walk**, omitting Ranmore Common, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Crabtree West** section. Otherwise, continue as below.

3 In just 15m, go **left** over a stile into a meadow and take a faint unmapped diagonal path across the centre. The path reaches a stile in the centre of a hedge at the bottom.

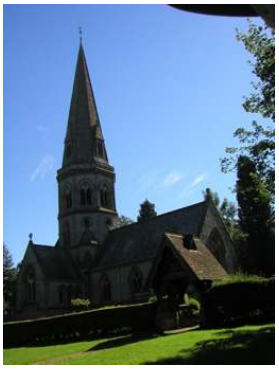
The **Crabtree East** section re-joins the walk here.

3A Cross the stile and descend through trees, through an a wooden swing-gate and down the left-hand side of a large sheep meadow with fine views west. At the bottom, go over another swing-gate into Chapel Lane and turn **left**.

4 In 100m turn **right** on a lane that goes past the ruins of a chapel on the left. *The flint remains of the shortlived Westhumble Chapel date from the late 12th century and are now a scheduled Ancient Monument.* Continue up the lane going past a footpath junction on the left. After some distance the lane bends left. Leave it here to continue in the same direction, a fraction right, on a footpath and shortly go straight ahead at a crosspaths. Follow this path straight uphill through dense woodland for some distance. At a wide crossing track continue straight on with alas no respite from the gradient. Finally the path reaches a junction at the top with another path coming from the left. Veer **right** here and in a few paces at a fingerposted junction, fork **right**. Eventually the path crosses a lane, goes past a pond on the left [2013: and a large tree that blocks the path] and continues to a road. Turn **right** on the road.

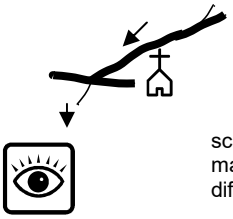


5 Continue along Ranmore Common Road, past St Barnabas Old School and St Barnabas Church which is definitely worth visiting.



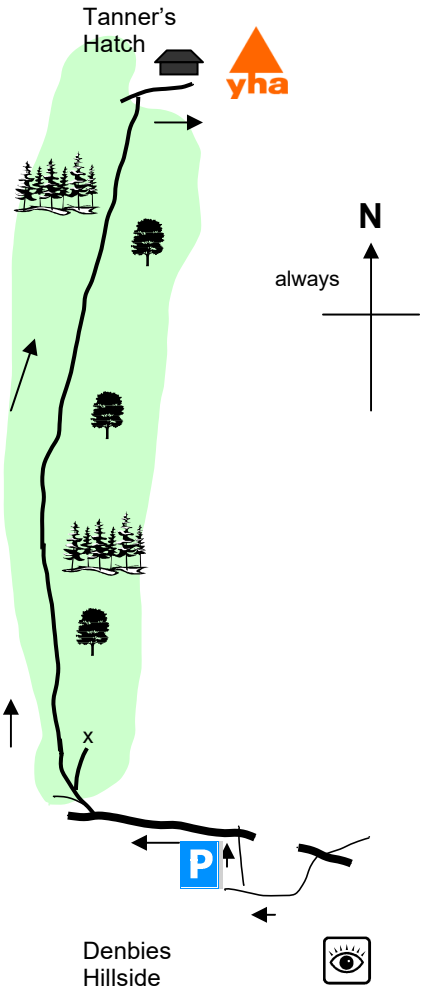
St. Barnabas, the Church on the North Downs Way, was built and paid for in 1859 by George Cubitt, MP, later First Baron Ashcombe to serve his family's recently acquired nearby estate of Denbies. It was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott (who also designed the Albert Memorial and St. Pancras Station). The slender spire stands over 700 feet above sea-level, visible all around. The tower contains a ring of eight bells the tenor weighing just under 1 ton. The extensive original interior marble still survives. In 1920 the South Transept was converted into a chapel by the Second Baron Ashcombe in memory of his three sons killed in the Great War of 1914-18. The church serves teas in summer on Sundays 2-5pm, when the church is also open.

Continue to a road junction and cross straight over through a swing-gate onto Denbies Hillside with fine extensive views to the Greensand Hills in the south. *A mobile snack bar is open on popular days.* Westcott nestles in the valley below with Dorking to its left.



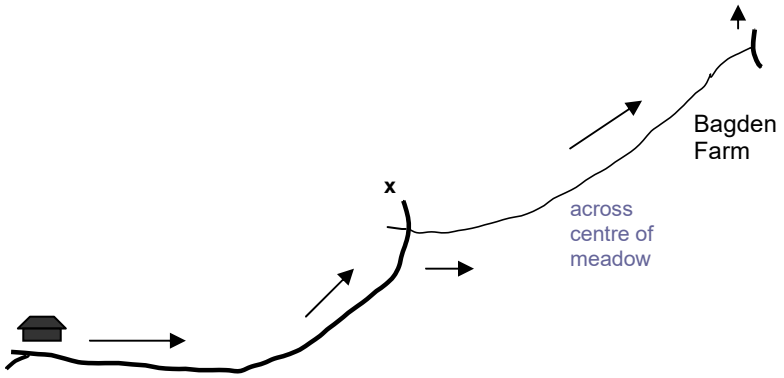
Leg 2: Denbies Hillside to Fetcham 7 km=4 miles

1 At a fingerpost for the North Downs Way, turn **right** and **right** again by a fence, going back to the road via another swing gate into the car park. Turn **left** through the car park and along the road. Cross the road, soon passing two small houses followed by a larger red brick house with tall chimneys. Turn **right** after this last house on a wide track at a sign for the Youth Hostel. Immediately ignore a footpath left and take the track forking **left**. After a long woodland trek, gently descending, you reach a junction and go past, on the left, *Tanners Hatch*.

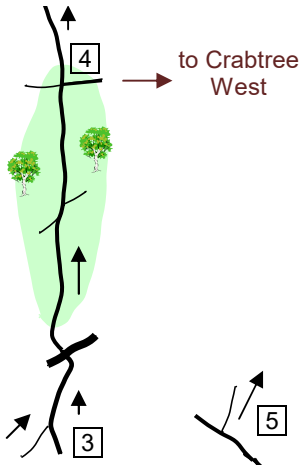


wc *Tanners Hatch was built in 1642 as two cottages and restored by YHA members after the war. It still retains its original features, such as gas lighting, open fires and triple bunks. There are outside loos here which could be used, maybe for a small donation to the YHA.*

2 Continue past the Youth Hostel on a good gently descending stony track which curves left. At the bottom, at a waymarker, turn **right** through a wooden gate beside a larger gate and go across the centre of a lovely big green meadow. Finally, at Bagden Farm, keep straight ahead between two barns through two large wooden gates and turn **left** on a stony path. (If the route is muddy, you can instead go through a smaller wooden gate to the **right** of the first large gate. This well-worn path passes to the right of the two barns.)



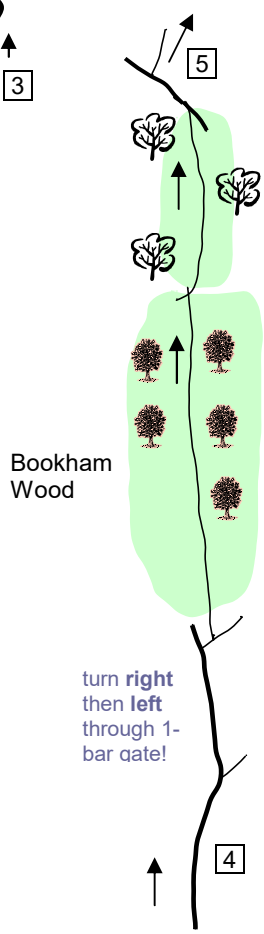
3 On reaching a lane, cross straight over, slightly left, to a bridleway by a National Trust sign for *Chapel Farm Fields*. Go through a gate and up to another gate leading into woods. The path goes uphill for some distance. At the top, it joins a level path coming from the left. Avoid a level path here branching off immediately right, thus maintaining your course uphill. In nearly 150m you come to a 4-way junction with a fingerpost.



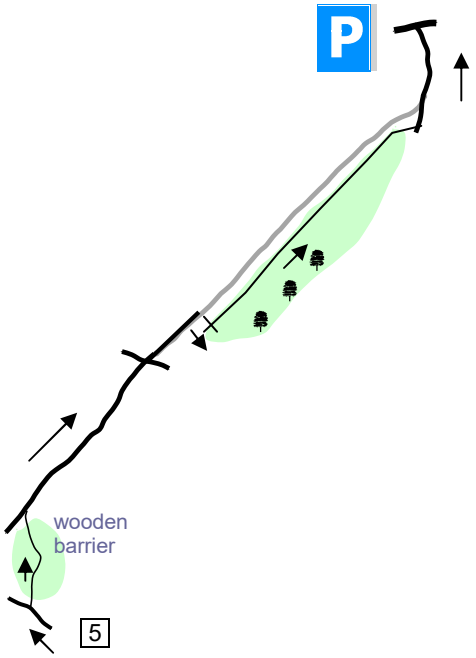
Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **southern walk**, omitting Fetcham Downs, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Crabtree East** section. Otherwise, **ignore** both side paths and keep straight ahead.

The **Crabtree West** section re-joins the walk here.

4 Follow the path for some distance now between fields. In nearly 400m, the path goes past a mobile phone tower. Continue ahead , ignoring a right turn by railings, and, on reaching a very definite fork in the path, swing **right** by some more railings towards a field. But in only 20m, just as you enter the field, turn **left** under a one-bar wooden gate into a long wide grassy path that runs through a long clearing in the middle of Bookham Wood. (In the summer season, this path can be very overgrown. If you prefer, you can go back to the railings and take the left fork on a narrow path through the wood.) At the end, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a path through woods and keep ahead at all times in the same direction through the wood until the path finally emerges. Here it meets another path coming from the right by a bench. In just a few paces, turn **right** through a wooden barrier on a waymarked footpath.



5 At the end of this little wood, the path goes through a wooden barrier. On meeting a wide track, turn **right**. This track later crosses another wide track with modern houses in view on your left. In just over 100m, turn **right** on a narrow but clear path into the trees. In 20m, at a junction of paths, turn left. This path runs beside a tree plantation on your right, parallel to the track you were on (but avoiding any mud). In the far corner, the path zigzags left-right and, after more side paths, finally comes out to a very wide track. Turn **left** here, in a short distance reaching the car park where the walk began.

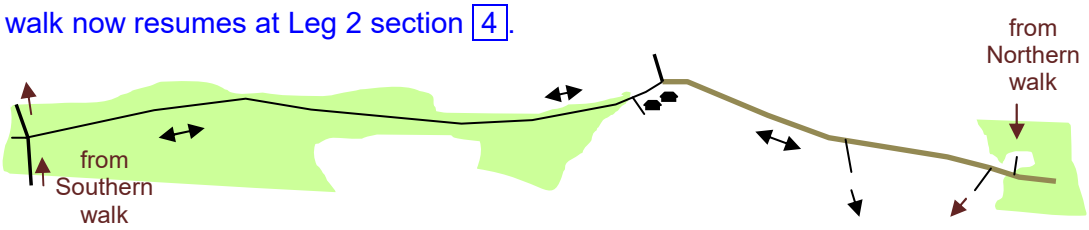


Crabtree West 1 km=⅔ mile

Do this section if you are doing the shorter **northern walk**.

Continue along tarmac Crabtree Lane ignoring a stile on your left. *The spire of St Barnabus church is visible on your left.* Ignore a footpath, bench and swing-gate on your left. You reach the isolated *Crabtree Cottages* and a junction of paths. Keep straight on, just to the right of the second cottage, ignoring a bridleway on your right. After the cottage, ignore a footpath on your left. The path rises gently under ash trees beside a pasture on your right. After a wooden barrier, follow the path beside a meadow on your left with Chapel Wood on your right, then deep woodland on your left. Your path goes through another wooden barrier and you arrive at a 4-way finger-post with open pasture ahead. Turn **right** at this crosspaths.

The walk now resumes at Leg 2 section 4.



Crabtree East 1 km=⅔ mile

Do this section if you are doing the shorter **southern walk**.

Turn **right** at the crosspaths, on a path through a wooden barrier into woodland. There is dense woodland on your right, then Chapel Wood on your left and a meadow on your right. After another wooden barrier, ignore a footpath on your right as you pass to the left of one of the *Crabtree Cottages*. Just beside the second cottage, ignore a bridleway on your left and keep straight ahead on tarmac Crabtree Lane. In nearly 200m, turn **right** through a swing-gate by a bench on a footpath. Follow a path diagonally across a meadow to reach a stile in the centre of a hedge at the bottom.

The walk now resumes at Leg 1 section 3A.

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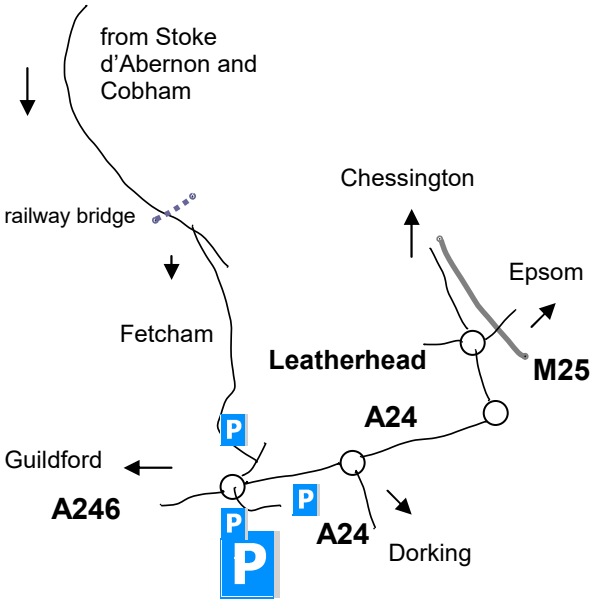
Getting there

By car: The **Fetcham car park** is in Fetcham, just off the roundabout on the A246 by the road leading to Bocketts Farm. If coming from the London area, take the A24 or A243 to Leatherhead. Follow the A24 as it goes around Leatherhead but, where the A24 turns left for Dorking, go straight ahead on the A246, signposted for Guildford. Bockett's farm is **left** at the next roundabout, signposted with a tourist sign. The Fetcham car park is immediately on the right. Bockett's Farm has a large car park, handy if you want to visit the farm as well.

If coming from Guildford, turn right on the roundabout a mile or so before Leatherhead. Another route is through Cobham, Stoke d'Abernon and Fetcham (after going under the railway bridge in Fetcham, fork right into The Street). (See map below.)

The small car park is sometimes full because it serves the many local dog walkers as well as ramblers. There are several spaces beside the road before the car park. As a last resort, park on the other side of the roundabout in The Ridgeway (the road leading to Fetcham).



The **Denbies Hillside car park** is near Dorking on the Ranmore Road. Follow signs out of town on a minor road signposted *Ranmore*. The car park is 1½ miles on the left.

The **Crabtree Lane car park** is in Westhumble. Come off the A24 just south of the big Box Hill roundabout. Fork **right** immediately after a bridge over the railway and follow this cul-de-sac lane for ⅔ mile. The car park is on the right.

By train: Chapel Farm (Leg 1 4) is only ½ mile from Westhumble Station. Go west along Chapel Lane.