



Hindhead and Blackdown

Distance: 23 km=14 miles easy or moderate walking
or 2 walks of 12½ km=8 miles and 14 km=9 miles

Region: Surrey, West Sussex Date written: 29-jun-2008

Author: Hautboy Date revised: 25-jul-2014

Refreshments: Haslemere, Punch Bowl Café Last update: 11-apr-2017

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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High hills, views, woodland, heath, country town, meadows

In Brief

This is a high walk between some of the highest points in Surrey and West Sussex with magnificent views in all directions.

The **Great Loop** (23 km=14 miles) is the full walk going from the Devil's Punch Bowl around Blackdown, through Haslemere and back. Although this is a high walk, no climbing is needed and this full day's walk is hugely rewarding and you are strongly urged to do the whole thing. It can be split into two shorter walks:

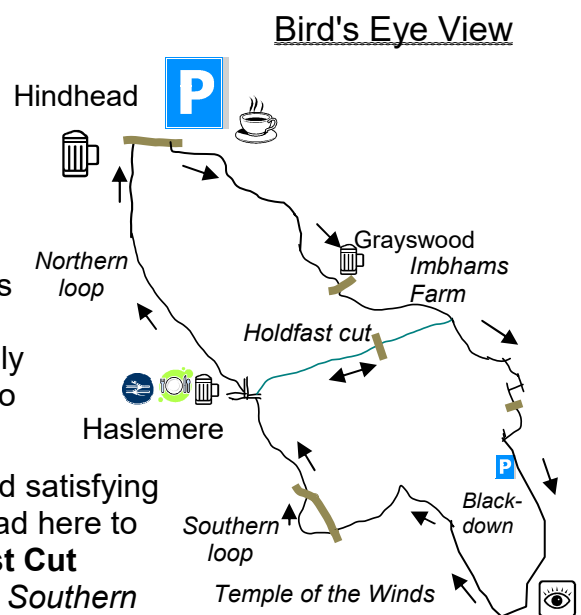
The **Northern Loop** (12½ km=8 miles) is a full and satisfying walk but it omits Blackdown. It goes from Hindhead here to **Imbham's** on Leg 1 and Leg 2, takes the **Holdfast Cut** westwards and returns via Leg 6. You can do the **Southern Loop** another day.

The **Southern Loop** (15 km=9½ miles or 14 km=9 miles) goes around Blackdown and through Haslemere but omits the area near the Punch Bowl. You can do the **Northern Loop** another day.



Good walking shoes are sufficient for these walks in the drier months, but for the **Great Loop** boots make it less tiring. There is a short stretch of persistent mud just before Grayswood. There are no nettles except for a tiny stretch on the optional **Sheetlands Loop**. This walk is fine for a small-to-medium dog.

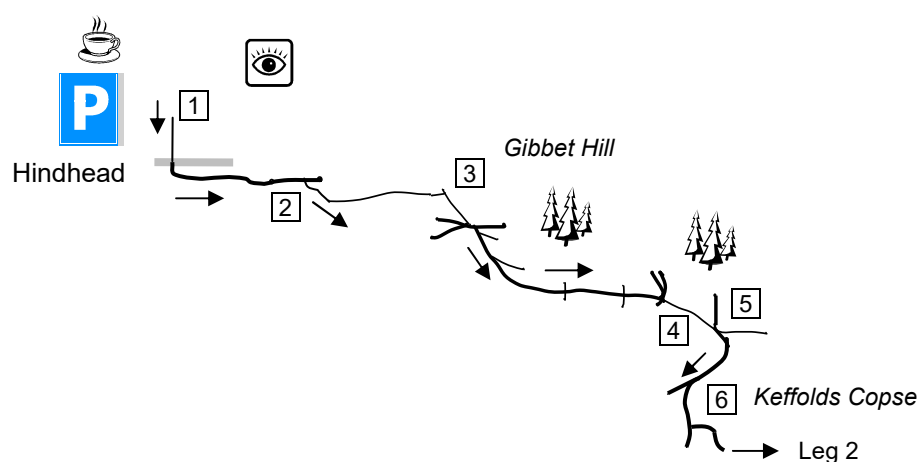
The walk begins at the **Devil's Punch Bowl** car park, **postcode GU26 6AB** (small charge for non-NT members), or the free **Blackdown lower** car park, nearest **postcode GU27 3BJ**, grid ref SU 921 307. For the **Great Loop**, the Devil's Punch Bowl car park is a more satisfying starting point. You can also set out from **Haslemere Station**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

If you are doing the **Southern Loop**, skip down and start at **Leg 4**.

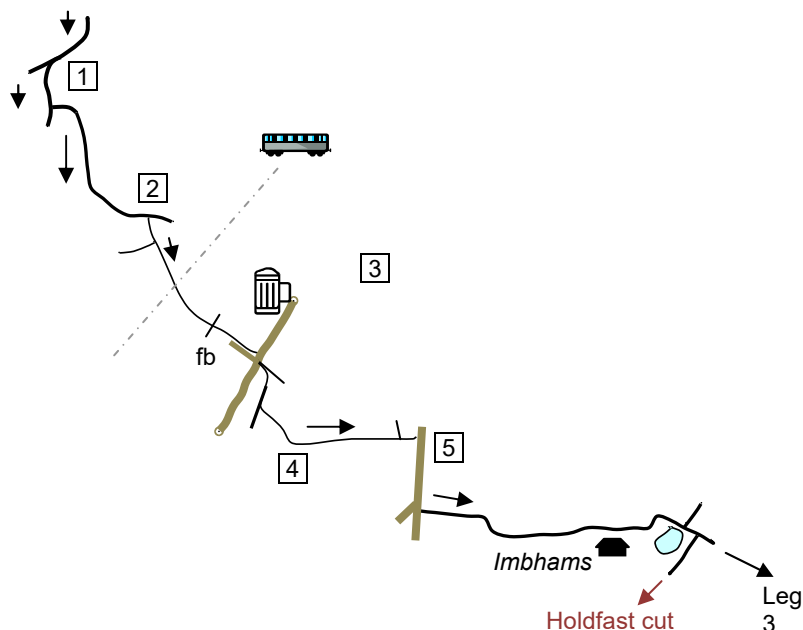
Leg 1: Hindhead to Keffold's Copse 2½ km=1½ miles



- 1 After stopping to admire the view over the Punch Bowl from the famous viewpoint at the back of the car park, turn **right** by the noticeboard in the direction of the *Sailor's Stroll* walk. Immediately keep straight ahead, avoiding a left fork and a wooden gate. Avoid a very wide rough track (the old A3 road) and, 50m later, turn **left** on a surfaced trail, still on the *Sailor's Stroll*. You have great views left and soon pass the Sailor's Stone. *It commemorates the notorious murder of a sailor returning to his ship in Portsmouth. It was on Gibbet Hill that three men were hanged in 1786 for the crime. Charles Dickens even used this story in Nicholas Nickleby.*
- 2 After 400m on this trail, turn **right** on a wide track, still on the *Sailor's Stroll*, past a NT sign for Gibbet Hill. Veer left on a path, soon emerging onto the open space of **Gibbet Hill** with its Celtic cross and extensive views of the other Surrey Hills. *Not far from here is the entrance to the A3 **Hindhead Tunnel** which was completed in 2011. In 1945 a Curtiss C46 aircraft struck one of the radar masts in low cloud here and crashed, with 31 fatalities.*
- 3 From the direction finder, turn **right** at the very edge of Gibbet Hill, following a sign for the *Hidden Hindhead* walk, on a winding narrow path that descends through pine trees, eventually reaching a junction of many paths. Take the wide path gently rising directly ahead through a metal barrier. In 20m, ignore a path branching left and, where the path splits at a tall bank of trees by a marker post, keep to the path on the **right**. This path has fine views to the left, where the foliage permits. As you go, ignore two marked paths right, thereby leaving the *Hidden Hindhead* walk. The path passes on your left the octagonal foundation of the lost Temple of Four Winds and 80m later comes down to a junction of wide paths under tall beeches.
- 4 Ignore wide paths to the left and right and go straight ahead on a somewhat narrower path that curves right and descends steeply through a coppice. At the bottom, it joins a path coming from the left and immediately reaches the side of a broad valley and a junction of paths.

- 5 Keep straight ahead at this junction on a level bridlepath. Stay on this broad path for about 500m, with great views left, ignoring a wide path on the left at a junction, until you reach the untidy arrangement of house, pond, sheds, hutches and farmstock known as Keffolds Copse.

Leg 2: Keffold's Copse to Imbham's 4 km=2½ miles



- 1 Avoid a right fork just before the house. About 250m after the house, at a junction with a post with blue markers, just before the present track goes uphill, turn **left** on a wide stony path downhill. This path winds through woodland and then between fields. About 500m from the junction, just after the start of a small livestock meadow on your right, turn **right** through a modern kissing gate leading into a small grassy meadow. **Take care not to miss this turn.** *This little pasture is home to goats, llamas and small ponies, some of which are used for therapy.*
- 2 Cross the meadow and go through another metal kissing gate into hazel woods and, at a post with yellow arrows, immediately **avoid** a right fork. Shortly your path takes you past an old metal kissing gate, over a stile and up to a railway. Cross the line via a new crossing, going down over another stile. The path then winds through more attractive woodland, crosses a sturdy bridge over a stream, goes up steps alongside a garden on the left and comes out to a residential road. Turn **left** on the road up to the main road at Grayswood. In case you need early refreshment, the *Wheatsheaf Inn* is on the left.
- 3 Cross the main road and take a marked footpath directly opposite, leading diagonally **left**. In 20m, turn sharp **right** on a narrow unmarked path leading into the woodland. (At the time of writing, there are two small wooden planks at the junction.) This winding path runs at first parallel to the main road, gradually rises into the woodland, passes some posts and reaches houses. Join a tarmac drive and continue for about 100m after the first house until there are footpath signs on the right and left. Turn **left** here steeply up some wooden steps. (You can avoid the steps by taking a sharp **left** turn shortly further up the track.)

- 4 At the top, continue ahead up some more steps. The route runs through a tunnel arch, along an enclosed path and over a stile into a wonderful sheep meadow. *Note the fine collection of trees in the garden up on the left.* Turn diagonally **left** down the centre of this meadow past two trees in the centre and at the far corner go through a kissing gate, to a seat (a lovely spot to take a breather) and down the centre of the next meadow. *Your destination, Blackdown, looms ahead to your right.* In the opposite corner, go through an old kissing gate on an enclosed path by allotments, down to the road, through a small wooden gate, at Clammer Hill.
- 5 Turn **right** along the road for about 300m and then, just opposite a road junction, take a bridlepath **left**, over a stile or through a gate. This path leads alongside a meadow, through a gate and woodland, then by more meadows to reach, about 700m from the road, Imbham's Farm.

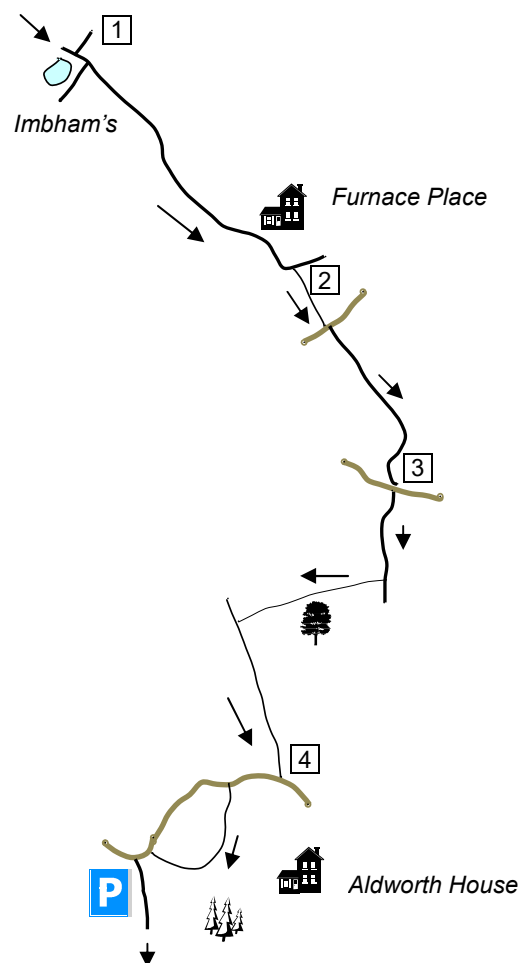
The farmhouse is from the 1500s and the barns have been restored to near their original state on their raised stone stalks. This area was a centre of the iron industry at that time, the two artificial ponds providing the power, explaining the names of some of the nearby ponds and houses.

Bear **left** on the main track past the farm, turning right with the track, passing a pond on your right and ignoring a left turn at a fingerpost. You come to a junction where the tarmac bends right by the pond.

Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **Northern Loop** go directly to the **Holdfast Cut** described near the end of this text.

Leg 3: Imbham's to Blackdown Car Park 4½ km=3 miles

- 1 **Leave** the tarmac and keep straight ahead on a wide gravel track. The track passes another pond on the right and eventually a large house *Furnace Place* on your left and becomes tarmac. On the right is a deep verdant valley. A little further, the track curves right over the stream that ran through the valley. Just after a left bend, take a marked footpath on the **right** by *Stream House*. (You have to walk a couple of metres into the private drive of the house where the stile is on your left.)
- 2 Cross the meadow diagonally and go over a stile, a 2-plank bridge and a lane to a drive opposite that leads to *Verney*. Before the house, veer **right** along the right-hand side of a large field. After about 500m, at the end of the field, the route curves right through an orchard, left through more trees, and right again through a small wooden gate to the Petworth Road at Ansteadbrook.



3 Cross the road straight over to a driveway with *Brook Cottage* on your right. Where the drive bends left in 150m, keep straight ahead on a dirt track and shortly go over a stile or through the gate beside it. After about 300m, just after the first meadow on your right ends, at a signpost, go over a stile on the **right** into a second meadow. *Don't miss this turning!* There are fine views of Blackdown to your left. Follow the right hand edge of the meadow, over a narrow stile, continuing straight on, then through a wooden swing gate into woodland. The path soon ascends quite steeply into a field. Continue over a drive, through a swing gate and straight across a horse grazing area, to a swing gate on the far side. Turn **left** here on a bridlepath. This path becomes a track, leads through a metal gate, joining a surfaced driveway, and leads onwards to Tennyson's Lane at *Barfold*.

4 Turn **right** along this quiet narrow winding lane. After about 250m, opposite *Owlden*, turn **left** on a narrow marked footpath [2013-4: the signpost missing its finger]. Follow this path, at first parallel to the road, then uphill over National Trust land. Keep to the main path, avoiding branches off. The path runs under wires and a magnificent stand of pine trees. After the path flattens out and begins to descend, take the wider **left** fork. (The narrow path straight ahead is a "cheat's shortcut".) Cross a drive that comes from *Aldworth House* on your left.

Aldworth House was built in 1869 by the poet Lord Tennyson who was eager to escape summer trippers who came to his Isle of Wight home, Faringford. This French-style Gothic house was designed by Sir James Knowles and is built of local sandstone. Tennyson also purchased Blackdown and often walked there. He died in the house in 1892.

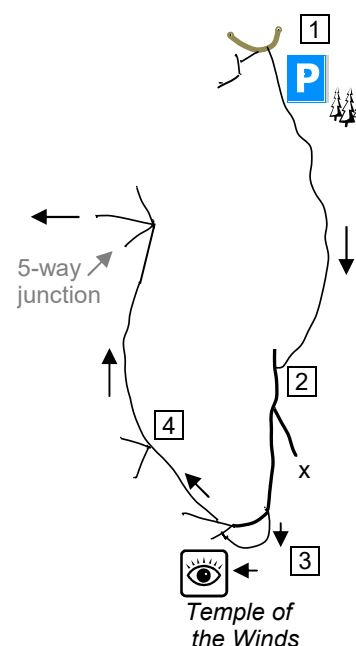
Turn **right** immediately along a bridlepath parallel to the drive. You arrive back at Tennyson's Lane with Blackdown lower car park immediately on your left. *The bird symbols on the signpost show you that you have been walking on the Sussex Border Path.* Turn sharp **left** into the car park, on the left of a National Trust sign, even if you are not parked there. Do *not* take the sunken path to the right of the NT sign.

Leg 4: Blackdown Car Park to the 5-Way Junction 2½ km=1½ miles

This is the preferred start for the **Southern Loop**.

This stretch begins at the Blackdown lower car park. If you parked in one of the upper car parks – the one visible from Tennyson's Lane – you are welcome to walk on the main path with the families and day trippers; but it is much better to walk down the lane to the lower car park because the route described here gives you some quite stunning views that other walkers don't see till later.

1 With your back to Tennyson's Lane, walk straight on through the lower car park, up through a gate and onwards to Robin Carr's seat. You are immediately rewarded by a magnificent view across the Weald, with a view that few people see, of Blackdown looming up on your right. Turn **right** up a narrow path on the **edge** of the hill to another seat and another viewpoint. Keep to a narrow path that ascends via shallow steps. *Always keep to the edge of the hill on the left. Do not*



join the main sunken track. Continue upwards through heather to a platform with more views. You reach Stephen Peters' seat. *This seat was established by Richard Cooke, a regular user of this site, also in memory of his wife Carys.* Here do **not** take the rising path alongside the seat but instead take a path on the **left**, at first slightly downhill, still hugging the edge of the hill. Stay on this narrow path for some distance as it winds and undulates. Later, the path goes slightly downwards through woodland, passes a tall pine almost in the middle of the path, broadens and rejoins the edge of the hill. It now runs under a magnificent overhang of beeches, emerges into the light and runs under another fine canopy through which it rises. At the end of the path, go up some steps with a handrail and turn **left** on the broad main track.

- 2 Almost at once, you arrive at a three-way signposted junction of bridleways. Take the **right**-hand fork, avoiding the left hand track which would gradually take you *down* the hill. *Notice that you are on the Serpent Trail, a sinewy long-distance path.* You pass a small pond on the left. 150m later, where the track curves right, leave it to go straight ahead on a narrower path. This path leads to the southernmost tip of Blackdown at the *Temple of the Winds*. Go down through posts to the stone seat with fine views across the Weald.

Blackdown, or Black Down, is the highest point in Sussex, at 280 metres (918 feet), being second only to Leith Hill (295 metres, 968 feet) in south-east England. The pine and heather-covered slopes are owned by the National Trust. Although it is common land, Blackdown was the property of various landowners until W.E. Hunter donated it to the National Trust in 1948, as a memorial to his wife. The Hunters are remembered by an inscribed stone seat at the Temple of the Winds. Flint artefacts show that there has been a settlement on Blackdown since mesolithic times, around 8000 years ago. The name of the ancient track, pen-y-bos, indicates links with the long lost Celtic world as its name comes from the Brythonic language.

- 3 Facing the view, turn **right** on a narrow path that curves right through more posts. In 15m, fork **left** on a very narrow path on the edge of a hill to a seat and another viewpoint with sight of the Bexley Hill relay mast. Continue onwards away from the edge of the hill and in 10m, at a T-junction with a small wooden post, turn **right** on a wide path. In 60m, at the next T-junction, turn **left**, rejoining the main track. This track leads you over the other side of Blackdown. You soon reach a junction with a seat and two paths leading off left, the second being a steep sandy track.

- 4 **Ignore** both turnings-off and keep straight on on the wide level sandy track. This gorgeous trail runs for some distance with terrific views left over Hampshire, including the "golfball" radar at Oakhanger (*see the walk in this series "Kingsley and the Hangers"*). Much later, you reach a seat on a stone platform with a direction finder. Continue on the main track another 300m until you reach a major junction and fingerpost under trees with three paths of different sizes leading off left. This is the "five-way junction".

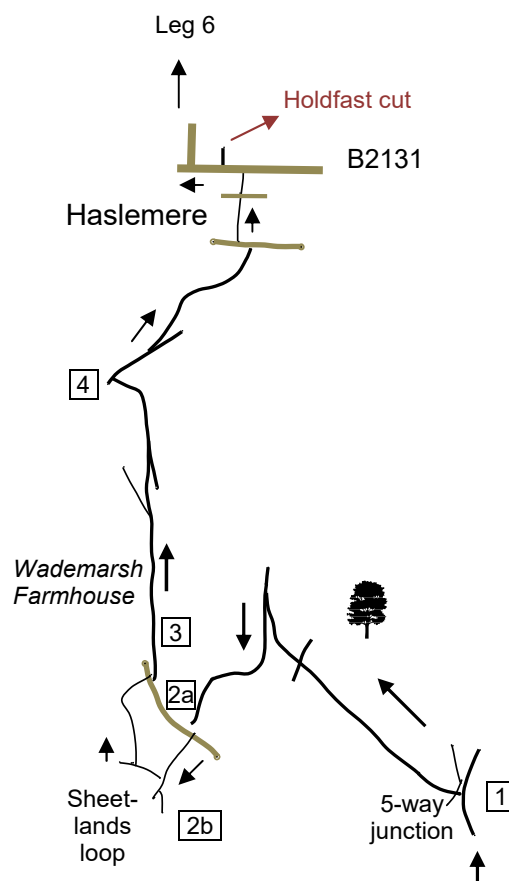
Leg 5: The Five-Way Junction to Haslemere 5 km=3 miles

1 Take the path on the **left**, a wide level path, in the direction signed as a bridleway. It rises at first. About 150m on, fork **left** as indicated by a signpost but ignore further paths off. The path eventually descends slightly and you reach a major junction of tracks and a 4-way fingerpost. Go straight across through a wooden gate. About 50m further on, look for a marker post with a blue arrow, almost hidden in a bush. Fork **left** here on a lovely grassy path. *Don't miss this turn!* In 200m, at a fence, turn sharp **left** through a wooden gate, almost doubling back, on a descending sunken path. (If you meet belted Galloway cattle, they are placid creatures and may need to be gently shooed away.) If there is mud at first, it soon clears completely. The path bends right and reaches a drive and a pond at *Valewood Lodge*. Continue as indicated by the signpost, forking **left** away from the drive, with the pond on your left, through woodland until you reach a quiet lane, Fernden Lane.

2a If you are feeling tired or have bare legs, turn **right** on the lane for about 100m to Wadesmarsh Farm and continue from section 3.

2b This next section is the optional picturesque **Sheetlands Loop**. Turn **left** on the road a short way and turn **right** on a lane for *Sheetlands*. At a three-way signpost before a sign indicating "private", turn **right** on a footpath through thick woodland. In about 100m, look for a marker on your left which may be obscured by undergrowth. Turn **right** here up a bank on a marked footpath. *Take care not to miss this turn!* The path zig-zags right and left, ascending rather steeply. [2017: There has been a large log across the path for some time: you need to step round it through a rather tight gap.] It leads over a stile into a meadow where your path ahead follows the right-hand side. At another stile, keep straight on along the right hand side of a large grass meadow. At the far corner, turn **right** over a stile onto a narrow enclosed path that leads down to the road near Wadesmarsh Farm where you turn **left** for a couple of paces.

3 Just after *Wadesmarsh Farmhouse*, take a footpath diagonally **right**. This path leads down the valley with fine views ahead, across the meadows of Valewood Park. About three quarters of the way down, ignore a path forking left at a fingerpost. You come through a gate to join a tarmac drive. The drive gets rougher as it runs past the 17th-century *Valewood Farm House*. It goes through a watery landscape, finally runs between stone posts and immediately comes to a junction.



- 4 Turn sharp **right** on a stony track where the wall on the right has a sign indicating *The Stables* and a little further you pass a house called *Stedlands Farm* on the left. As the path enters woods, at a fork, take the **left**-hand fork which becomes a sunken track leading steeply up Stedlands Hill. The track reaches a road. Go **left** for 15m and **right** again past a barrier on a tarmac path, leading past playing fields on your left. This narrow path descends, crosses a residential road, goes down steps and reaches the main Petworth Road in Haslemere at *The Coach House*.

Decision point. If you are shortening the walk by doing the **Southern Loop**: turn **left** on the road and look out for Collards Lane about 100m further on the **right**. (If you visit Haslemere town centre, which is only a few metres further, you need to retrace your steps to this lane.) Now skip to near the end of this text and do the **Holdfast Cut Eastwards**.

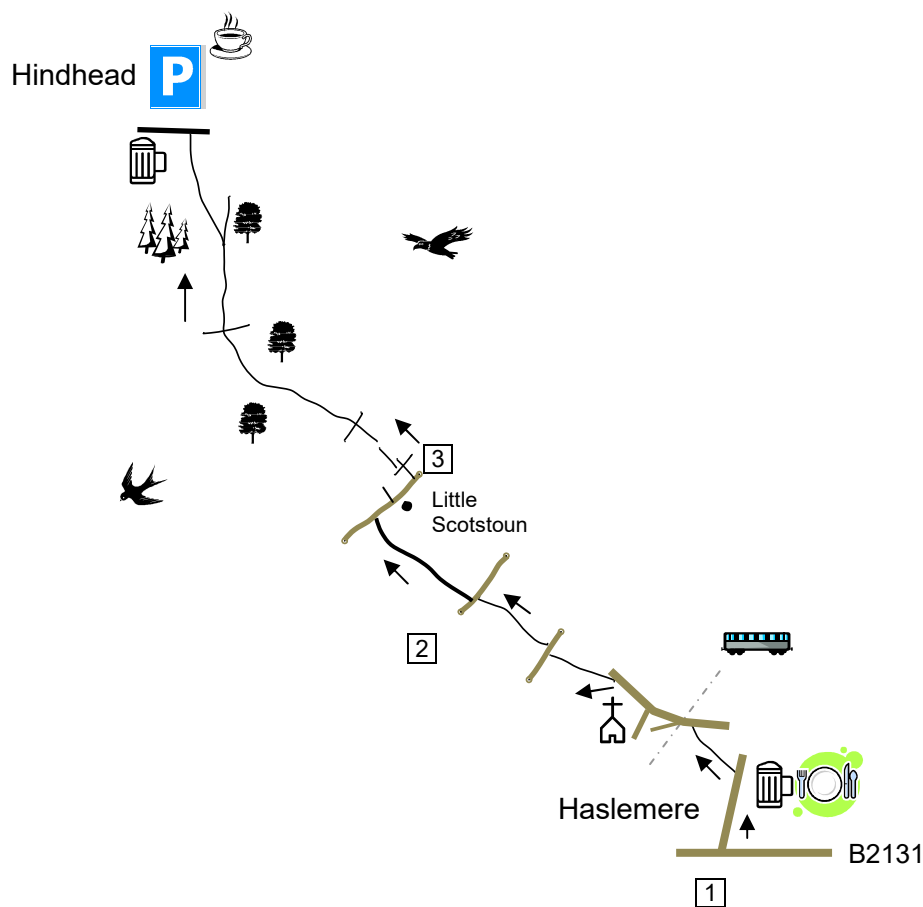



Turn **left** on the road into the centre of Haslemere, turn **right** down the broad High Street and continue with Leg 6.



*Haslemere is a perfect country town, situated in the most prosperous part of the Surrey stockbroker belt. The wide high street attests to its having been a cattle market in earlier times. There is only one supermarket in the town centre (a Waitrose, naturally) the remaining businesses being small shops and estate agents. Haslemere was one of the **rotten boroughs** (represented in parliament despite a tiny electorate) until the railway arrived.*

Leg 6: Haslemere to Hindhead 4 km=2½ miles

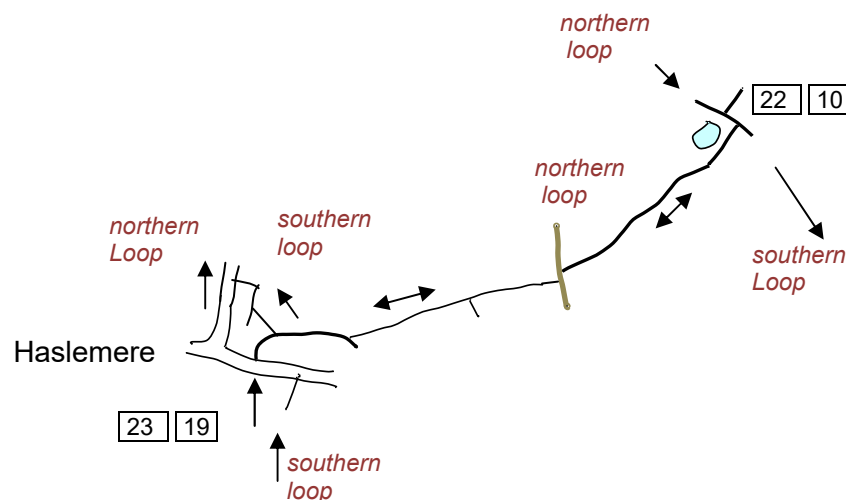


- 1  On your left, after the *Georgian House Hotel*, next to the 16th-century *Tudor Cottage*, on a side wall is a plaque marking the start of the Greensand Way (GW), a long-distance path following the [Greensand Ridge](#) all the way to near Ashford in Kent. Turn **left** here on a path between houses, past small housing estates until you reach Church Lane. Turn **left** over the railway and fork **right** at the church up High Lane. In about 100m, opposite no. 11, on the **left**, take a narrow enclosed footpath. On reaching a road, cross straight over to a path opposite. This path leads past fields for 350m to Bunch Lane.
- 2 Turn **left** on Bunch Lane for 100m, go over a bridge across a stream, turn **right** and fork **left** up a narrow lane past *Little Stroatley Farmhouse* and rather steeply up Stroatley Hollow. Where the tarmac drive bends left, keep ahead on a rough path. Mercifully, the path soon levels out, joins a driveway and reaches a quiet road, Farnham Lane. Turn **right** on the road and follow it for about 400m, ignoring one fingerpost on the left, until you see a small red letterbox on your right followed by a house called *Little Scotstoun*.
- 3 Take a signposted footpath on the **left** which soon goes through a wooden swing gate, still on the GW. The finishing point at Hindhead is about 1km straight on but you need to avoid turning off accidentally. The path goes through woodland and crosses a broad path, a fraction right. It then goes steeply down on a narrow course with views left to the fine houses across the valley. It crosses a narrow path under trees and then a broad sandy track. The path levels out and runs past a bench seat. Ignore all paths off until, at the bottom of the valley, you go past some gates and a fence on the left. Continue straight on close to the fence and, after 200m or so, at a post with blue arrows fork **left**. (Or you can take the **right** fork on a rather airier path and turn **left** at the top when you reach a fine stony path.) The path rises up through rather dark woodland and through a wooden gate. At a junction by gates and gardens, zigzag a few metres **right-left**, to keep the same direction, staying in the wood. Suddenly you are at the cul-de-sac road at Hindhead with the Devil's Punchbowl pub / hotel / restaurant on your left. Cross the road back to the car park where the walk began.

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The Holdfast cut 2½ km=1½ miles

This shortcut is used if you are doing the **Northern Loop**, in which case you walk *westwards*, or the **Southern Loop**, in which case you walk *eastwards*. However, it holds its own delights.



Westwards (Northern Loop)

Avoid the rough track ahead and stay on the tarmac lane as it curves **right** next to the pond. It zigzags through a farm and continues for some distance, reaching a road. Cross the road, slightly left, and go through a small wooden gate by a house. The path curves right in a meadow and soon goes through a gate to join a track serving several houses. Your route is now straight on through woodland and a charming series of meadows, bridges, woods and gates (never stiles!). Most of the area here belongs to the National Trust and you pass signs for *Swan Barn Farm*, *Witley Copse and Mariners Rewe*, and later *Hunter Basecamp*. At a signpost in woodland, fork left and, at the next signpost, keep straight on. You eventually arrive at a farm via a gate onto a track. Turn quickly **right** and **left** and follow the track ahead. About 200m after the farm, go **right** through a wooden gate marked with the *Serpent Trail* symbol. Go up a grassy path by a fence to a swing gate and noticeboard for Swan Barn Farm. Turn **right** on the path with views right across the meadow, passing several seats. At a wall that conceals the Haslemere Town Well, turn **left** to the High Street of Haslemere. Most of the shops are on your left but your route continues **right**.

Your adventure now continues from **Leg 6** of the main walk.

Eastwards (Southern Loop)

After possibly visiting Haslemere, take Collards Lane already mentioned, on the **right**, a few steps from the point where you joined the road into the town. The lane passes a National Trust sign for *Hunter Basecamp and Swan Barn Farm* and curves right. *The meadow on the left has been restored by the Trust and is well known for its wealth of flora.* At the farm, keep straight on past a black shed through a gate and slightly left across the meadows to the next gate. Now keep straight on through a charming series of meadows, bridges, woods and gates (never stiles!). Most of the area here belongs to the National Trust. At a signpost in woodland, keep

straight on. You pass more NT signs for *Witley Copse and Mariners Rewe* and later *Swan Barn Farm* again. You reach a residential track with houses on the right. Here, go through a gate on your **left** as indicated by the sign (easily missed). You reach a road via a gate next to a house. Cross over directly to a lane opposite, slightly left. This lane eventually zigzags through a farm. After passing a lake on the left, you reach a T-junction where the tarmac bends left. Turn **right** here on a broad gravel track, thus leaving the tarmac lane.

Your adventure now continues from **Leg 3** of the main walk.

Getting there see diagram overleaf



If going by **train**, get out at Haslemere, walk or take a bus to the centre of the town and join the *Great Loop* at Leg 6 or the *Southern Loop* at the *Holdfast Cut* eastwards.

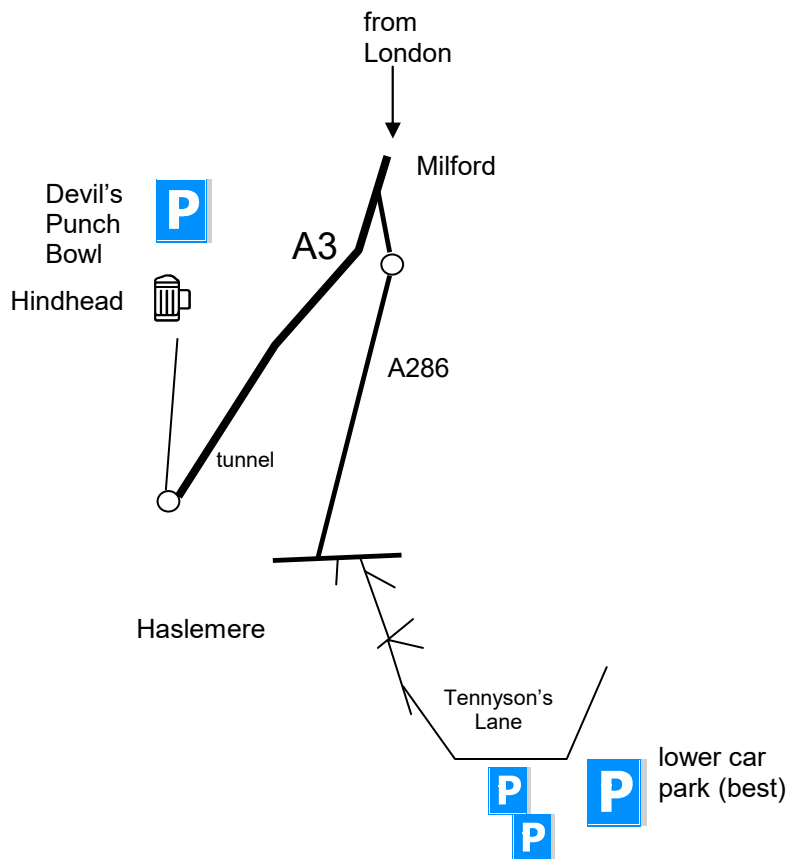
If going by **car**, park either in the Devil's Punch Bowl car park, **postcode GU26 6AB**, or the Blackdown car park, nearest **postcode GU27 3BJ**. See the *overview* to decide. For the *Great Loop*, the Devil's Punch Bowl car park is a more satisfying starting point.

For the **Devil's Punch Bowl car park**:

Take the A3 and turn off, just south of the tunnel, at a sign for **Hindhead**. At the traffic lights in Hindhead, keep straight ahead into a cul-de-sac. The car park is on the left. Refreshments are available here.

For the **Blackdown car park**:

Take the A3 through Guildford, turn off for **Milford** and take the A286 Haslemere road. (You can instead stay on the A3 until a sign for "Brook", where you turn left through the beautiful Witley forest and turn right at the next crossroads; but this route *cannot* be done in reverse on the homeward journey.) Go through the centre of Haslemere, down the high street and turn **left** at the T-junction at the end, signposted "Petworth". *You now need a few minutes' concentration.* Ignore the first road right (Museum Hill) and go slowly! In about another 400 yds=350m look out for the next narrow road, just after the main road rises and dips, and turn **right** on it. There is no clear road sign for this turning but you will see an old-fashioned signpost at the start of the road, indicating *Blackdown and Whitwell Hatch*. Ignore an immediate turning left and continue up the road until you reach a 5-road junction. (Pause here for a moment.) Straight ahead there are **two** roads. The one slightly left is private. The one **slightly right** has an old road sign pointing that way marked "Tennyson's Lane and Blackdown". Take this narrow road. Soon after, turn **half left** at another sign into Tennyson's Lane. Continue for about a mile (1½ km). **Ignore the first two car parks** on the right (one behind the first) and continue further to **just before the lane bends sharp left** with the stone gate posts of *Aldworth House* straight ahead. Turn **right** here into the lower car park. The entrance is not obvious, being unsigned, and is a little muddy and bumpy. You should have the National Trust sign on your **right**. Don't worry about the notice that says "car park closed 8am-8pm".



Note: There are **three** car parks serving Blackdown. You can park in any of them but the **lower** car park suits this walking route as you will see. The upper car park is the one on the right that you passed. The second car park (also to be avoided unless the others are full) is immediately after the first car park a few meters down a broad sandy track half right branching off the lane. If you find that you have parked in one of these first two, walk down Tennyson's Lane to the bend and walk into the lower car park because this walk starts there.

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