



Leith Hill from Holmwood Station

Distance: 10 km=6½ miles moderate walking with long easy sections

Region: Surrey

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Leith Hill, Coldharbour, Beare Green

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, high hills, views, village, bluebells

In Brief

Leith Hill by train! But you can also take your car to the start of this excellent circular route, with easy access from the main A24 road. As you approach Surrey's highest point, you have the option to visit the village of Coldharbour and its celebrated pub with its own brewhouse. Hot drinks and snacks are available at the tower at the top of the hill and there is a direct alternative route to the tower, shortening the walk a little. In late spring, the woodland floors along the route are glistening mauve with bluebells.

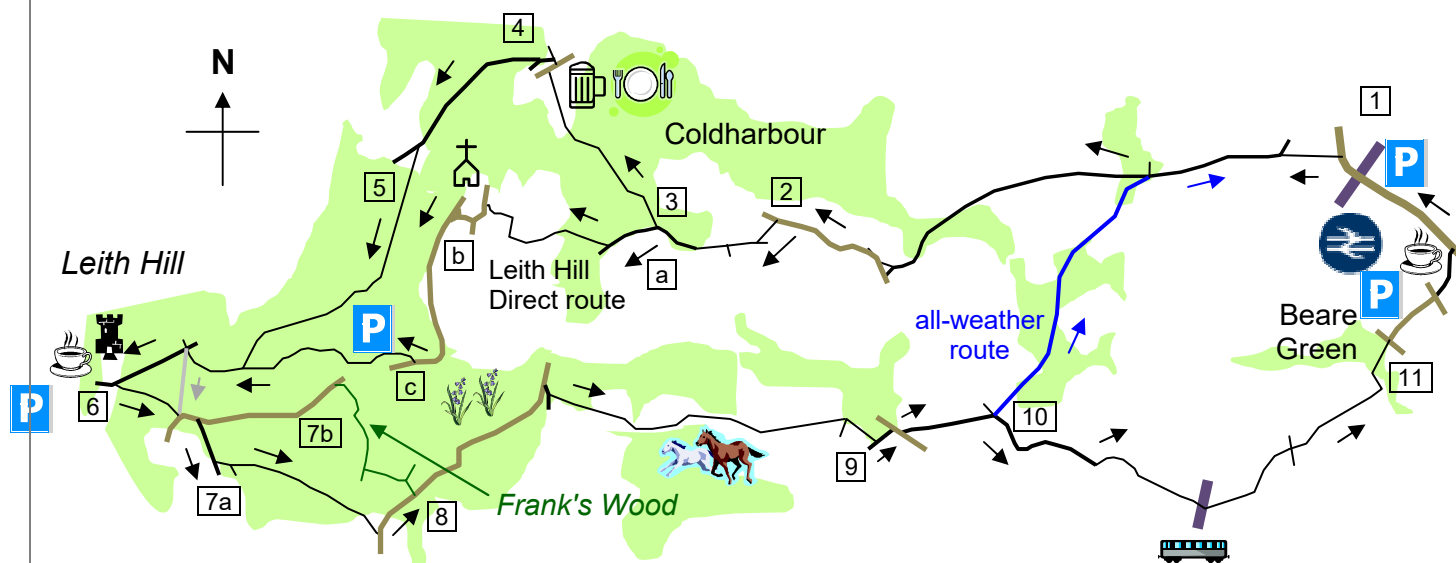


There are no nettles and few brambles to worry bare legs. In the wetter seasons there is inevitably some mud on the tracks and in the fields but there is an “all-weather” option making this walk *relatively dry*. It is still essential in wintery weather to wear boots. There is one steep section where you may find an optional hiking pole handy. With no main roads and few stiles, this walk is fine for your dog.



The walk begins at the **Holmwood Station**, near Dorking, Surrey, **post-code RH5 4RB**. **There is no service on Sundays**. But otherwise there is a good service from Dorking, Sutton and London termini. **Check the timetables**. If you come by car, there is ample space for parking near the start of the walk. Note that Holmwood Station is really in Beare Green. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 From Holmwood Station, turn **left** on the road. In 150m, just after the last cottage, turn **left** at a fingerpost (completely hidden in bushes), just to the right of a farm track, passing an old kissing-gate, on a narrow path. **Any initial mud will quickly clear.** At the other end, another redundant old kissing-gate leads to a tarmac lane. Keep **left** on the lane and follow it for 400m, going past the gates of *Capel Leyse* and ignoring a footpath on your left at Jersey Farm. You reach a signposted junction of drives. Avoid a drive on the right and take the **right** fork ahead, a tarmac lane marked as a bridle-way and a dead end. You pass a large house *Moorhurst Manor* on your left after which the lane becomes a rough track. Ignore a stile on your right, staying on the track. The track rises gently through woodland, soon passing large houses on your left and on your right. Just after the houses, at a fork, keep **right** and continue to a tarmac lane. Bear **right** on the lane.
- 2 On your left soon you pass the entrance to *Kitlands East Lodge* [May 2020: **name hidden by building work**] with its fine spring colours. 150m after it, look for a stile on your left (easy to miss) with a fingerpost indicating a footpath. Turn **left** over the stile, follow a path along the right-hand side of a small grassy meadow and descend to a junction. Turn **right** here on a farm track with great views on your left across the Surrey/Sussex weald. Ignore a stile and yellow arrow on your left and stay on the track which becomes tarmac. 15m after the start of a brick wall on your left, there is a new fingerpost on your right indicating a footpath into the woods. Here you have two options:

Decision point. If you would like to go **direct** to Leith Hill where there are hot drinks and snacks available (*NB but no loos*), omitting the village of Coldharbour and the pub, skip forward in this text and do the section called **Leith Hill Direct**. Otherwise, continue with the next section.
- 3 Turn **right** at the fingerpost into the woods. Your path snakes its way uphill under chestnuts and hollies. On your right is Anstiebury Hill Fort, part of English Heritage and there is a path, not normally open to the public, that leads round it. Continue straight on through the wood till the path takes you over a stile and along the top of a delightful small sloping pasture. A gate in a new wire fence, a stile and a narrow path take you out to the road in Coldharbour. Turn **right** to arrive immediately at the *Plough Inn*.

Coldharbour must be one of the most romantic isolated villages of the Surrey hills. For many years it was looked on with fear by inhabitants of the lowland towns as a refuge for smugglers who would keep their caches of contraband in safe underground sites and would deal ruthlessly with any outsider who interfered. The Plough Inn (renovated in 2016) serves several real ales, including three brewed next door in its own brewhouse, and has a garden in the back. It also offers accommodation. Next to the pub is the Shop at the Plough which sells food and snacks.



4

Turn **left** opposite the inn and immediately turn **left** again uphill on a wide track going past a white house aptly named *Clock Cottage*. Keep to the main track, following a sign for Leith Hill Tower. You have a 500m-long steady ascent, with a wooden bench at your disposal for a view and a breather. Finally the trees on your left give way to a clearing, with a cricket pitch (the highest in Surrey) and its pavilion visible ahead on your right. *There are views left here on a clear day to Gatwick Airport.* 30m before the nearest corner of the cricket pitch, **leave** the track by forking **left** on a path across the grass. Follow this path into the woods and through a wooden barrier. There is a green-topped post here indicating that you are on the National Trust's *Heathland Trail*.

5

Follow these green-topped posts through woods for nearly 1 km. Basically, they lead you straight on, parallel to the edge of the hill. The path crosses an official footpath with yellow arrows. There are one or two unexpected turns, so watch out for those posts – or you can simply keep to the edge of the hill. There are good views to your left where the trees permit and soon a bench seat. Eventually you see a sign for the Tower carved on the back of a sign for the car park. The walk now curves **right** on a much wider track, descends deep into the woods, and later reaches a deep hollow on your left (* note for future reference). Leave the green-topped route here and instead follow the sign for the Tower, going **left** steeply uphill on a broad path frequented by daredevil cyclists, also part of the Greensand Way. In 100m or so you reach [Leith Hill Tower](#).



The tower was built in 1766 to raise the height of Leith Hill to the symbolic 1000 feet. It later fell into disuse until 1864 when the side-tower staircase was built and 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 is a view all round with miles of seeming wilderness.



6

After your break, turn **back** in the direction you came but, immediately *opposite a corner of the tower*, veer **right** across the grass passing a post with a blue arrow. [Jan 2021: the marker post is missing; the start of the path is not clear at first: just cross the rough grass as described and you will see the descending path.] You now have a steep descent without steps, perfectly manageable (the path is a bridleway!); but if conditions are hazardous there is an alternative wide path down the deep hollow (*) which you passed earlier which leads to the same point. Your narrow path descends steeply through trees and finally comes out to a road. Turn **left** on the road. In 30m on your right is a NT sign for Cockshot Wood and, just before it, a signposted footpath. [The footpath down to the Broomehall Road from here \(option 7a\)](#) is now (2018) a bit rough in places but quite easy to walk, after completion of work on a new tree plantation. The other option [7b](#) below takes you through an attractive NT wood, slightly extending the transit by road.

7a Turn **right** at the footpath sign on a grassy path leading to a track, recently resurfaced. In 120m, leave the private track by taking the **left** fork as indicated, a level woodland path, full of late bluebells in May. In about 250m you reach a new tree plantation. Cross over a track and go straight down through the plantation on a wide space between saplings. At the other side, keep straight ahead through undergrowth and over a stile to the edge of a crop field. Take a route straight across the field (a fraction right), on an unclear path, to a rather hidden small old metal gate. (If the field is heavily ploughed, you can go left round three sides.) The metal gate leads down to the Broomehall Road. Turn **left** along the road. In 150m you pass, regardless, a NT sign for Frank's Wood and, 100m later, an ornamental metal gate. [Skip the next section 7b.](#)



7b [Alternative via Frank's Wood.](#) Ignore the footpath sign and continue along the road for another 500m. At the bottom of a dip, just past some redwood trees, you will see a pink-topped-post ahead on the right marked *Landslip Viewpoint*. Turn sharp **right** at this sign and bear left at the next post, joining *Frank's Walk*. Follow the pink waymarked route, **right** and down over a plank bridge, curving left, going down 3 steps, over another plank bridge, down more steps to a bench seat. Turn **left** at the seat, as indicated, and follow the path over a plank bridge to another bench seat. Turn sharp **left** at the seat, as indicated, and follow the route over three plank bridges to reach a junction under a tall redwood. **Leave** the walk here by ignoring the arrow and instead turning **right** on a narrow unclear path, quickly reaching the road next to an ornamental gate. Turn **left** on the road.




8 *On your left on a gate post is a sign for Mosses Wood given by Lady Editha Ivy Pigott-Brown of Broome Hall as a memorial to her son John killed in 1942 in Tunisia.* Continue along this quiet road for another 400m. After a double bend and shortly after a house, *Highlands Rew*, turn sharp **right** at a fingerpost on a track. Immediately **leave** the track by forking **left** over a stile beside a large wooden gate. Go down the left-hand side of this long meadow and continue up its centre. At the top, go over a stile just to the right of a large metal gate. Continue down the right-hand side of a large pasture. [\[Winter: there is some mud here caused by horses clustering round the gate; it will soon clear.\]](#) At the bottom, go over a stile, over another stile and along the left-hand side of the next meadow. At the bottom corner, bear **left** through an (open) metal gate and resume on the right-hand side of the next meadow. At the end, veer **right**, avoid a footpath on your right and go over a stile onto a path beside a wire fence. The path leads down to a tarmac lane.

9 Turn **left** on the lane to go over a bridge beside a pond on your right, usually with a flock of white geese, and out into Henhurst Cross Lane. Turn **right** on the lane and immediately fork **left** by a fingerpost in the direction of *Trout Grange*. In 300m, the drive comes to a crossing of drives and tracks. [You now have an option of an all-weather path which is good in damp conditions, although it duplicates 500m of the outward route; if the weather is dry and summery, continue with the next section to enjoy good views; otherwise take the following option:](#)

All-weather path. Keep straight on at the junction, on a rough track. The surface is not perfect but in wet conditions you can hop to one side of any puddles. The track goes through the old coppice of Nobs Copse and Butlers Copse and runs beside a meadow on your right. It finally comes out to a junction of lanes, familiar from your outward journey. Go straight ahead. In

350, at a left bend, fork **right** on a signposted footpath (or stay on the lane) and turn **right** on the main road, back to the start.

- 10 Turn **right** at the junction with the main driveway. Just before the entrance pillars of Trouts Farm House, veer **left**, as directed by a fingerpost, past an unneeded stile beside a large metal gate, down the right-hand side of a large field. In the far corner, go over a pair of stiles, along the short right-hand side of a meadow, over a stile and up steps. Cross the railway line carefully. Go down steps, over a stile and along the right-hand side of the next field. In the far corner, go over a 2-plank bridge, ending at an unneeded stile, to a concrete farm drive. Cross the drive to go over a stile into a field. Keep along the right-hand edge, soon going between two fields. Turn **left** in the corner to go shortly through a swing-gate on your **right**.
- 11 Your path goes over a sturdy bridge, up steps beside a garden fence and out to a road in Beare Green. Cross the road and keep ahead on Woodside Road. At the end, cross a road and take a tarmac footpath opposite. This path leads out to a little shopping precinct with a café. Turn  **left** on the main road, passing the village pond and reaching the station where the walk began.

Leith Hill Direct

- a Stay on the tarmac drive. Avoid turnings off, shortly passing the entrance to *Kitlands* on your left. 20m after this, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a narrow footpath. You pass the ancient farm buildings on your left of Kitlands Farm. Your path curves left across a bumpy meadow with isolated trees and then curves right up a bank. It runs beside a bramble hedge up to a gate in a wire fence. It turns right under laurels, left by a cluster of bamboo and uphill beside the wall of a house. The path goes over a chunky stile and right on a driveway. Near the doors of *Chasemoor Cottage*, turn **left** up a bank to a signpost and turn **left** on a tarmac lane.
- b Turn **right** shortly at a road junction, passing Christ Church (built by John Labouchere of Broome Hall, consecrated in 1848). Fork **left** in the direction of the *Car Parks* and keep left on the major road, Abinger Road. Ignore a footpath on the right at a sign for Coldharbour Common and continue past more red-tiled cottages. After 400m on this road, it bends right and you reach the Landslip car park.
- c Go **right** into the car park and keep left through it, following a footpath sign and a *Tower* symbol. The path goes down at first parallel to the road. It then rises under some magnificent redwood trees with ever-widening views. After a not-too-taxing climb, with steps at the end to assist you, you join a wide track coming from the right. The track descends to a multiple junction with a deep hollow on your left (* note for future reference). Follow the sign for the Tower, going **left** steeply uphill on a broad path frequented by daredevil cyclists, also part of the Greensand Way. In 100m or so, you reach [Leith Hill Tower](#). Now re-join the main walk at section [6](#).

Getting there

By car: Beare Green lies just off the A24 road, just after South Holmwood, south of Dorking. If coming from the north, **ignore** a turn off for South Holmwood. Turn off at a sign with a rail symbol marked **Holmwood Station** and *Beare Green*. There is ample room to park in the village. In the rare instance that you can't park near the station, park in a side road by the village pond or at the end of Woodside Road (on the route), **postcode RH5 4RH**.



By train: begin the walk at **Holmwood Station**, one stop south of Dorking, with good services from Dorking, Sutton and London termini, **excluding Sundays**.

By bus: bus 93 runs from Horsham or Dorking. Check the timetables.

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