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## Norbury Park and the Mole Valley

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Distance: 10 km=6 miles or 5 km=3 miles easy to moderate walking

Region: Surrey

Author: Schwebefuss *comments please to feedback@fancyfreewalks.org*

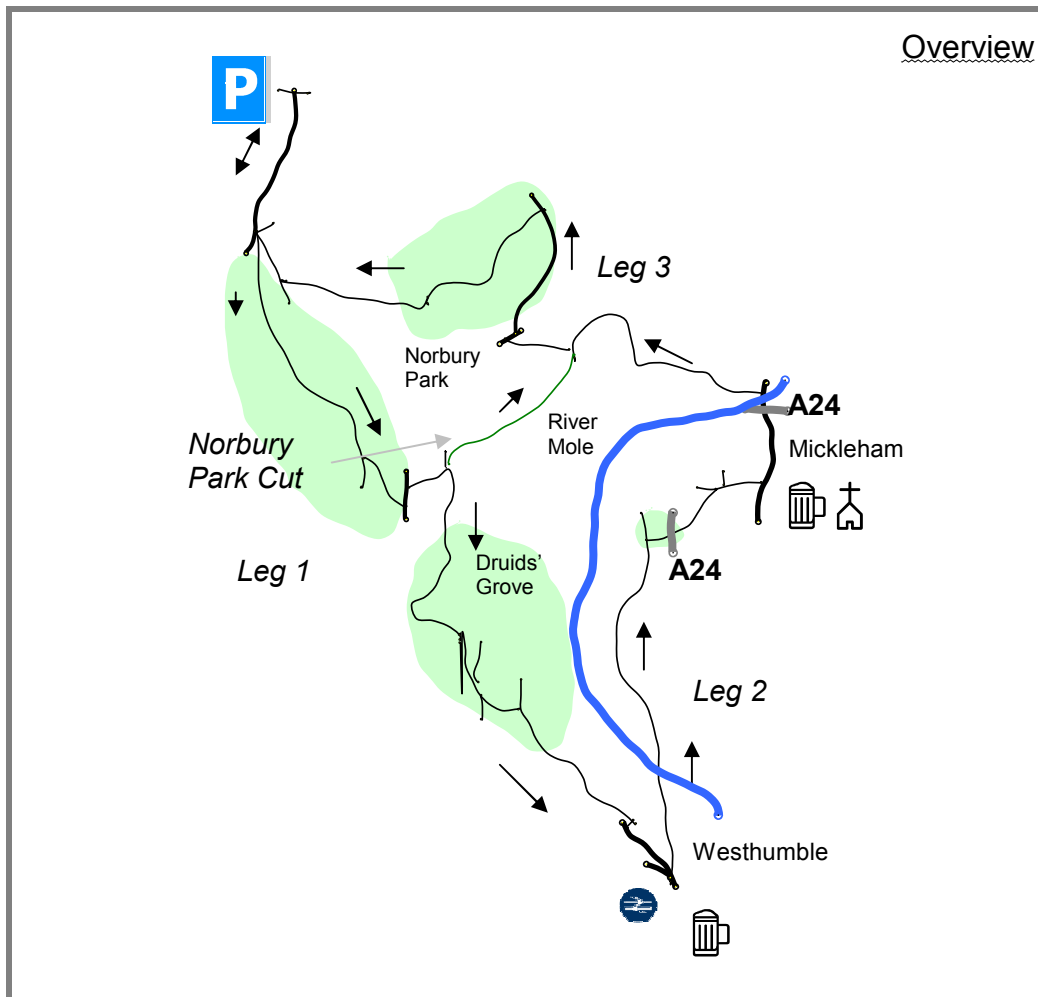
Refreshments: Westhumble, Mickleham

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking)

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*Views, river, woodland, fine houses, villages*

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## In Brief

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This is a classic walk but with several twists (literally). It is wonderful at any time, but in the winter the views over the Mole Valley are especially clear.



The much shorter *Norbury Park Loop* stays in the hilly woodland area around Norbury Park. The full walk crosses the A24 road twice (no problem because of the dual carriageway) giving you an inspiring stroll through Mickleham village.



Good shoes are needed because of the slippery chalk in some of the paths. There are no nettles. The *Norbury Park Loop* is ideal for dogs.

The walk begins at the **Bockett's Farm** car park in Fetcham. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

*Norbury Park is a working landscape with three tenanted farms and a sawmill. The park lies within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and covers 520 hectares. Many wood products and the hand-made Norbury Blue Cheese are produced here. Norbury was one of three manors owned by King Edward the Confessor until 1066. Norbury Park and its manor are mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as belonging to the parishes of "Leret (Leatherhead) and Fececha (Fetcham)".*

## The Walk

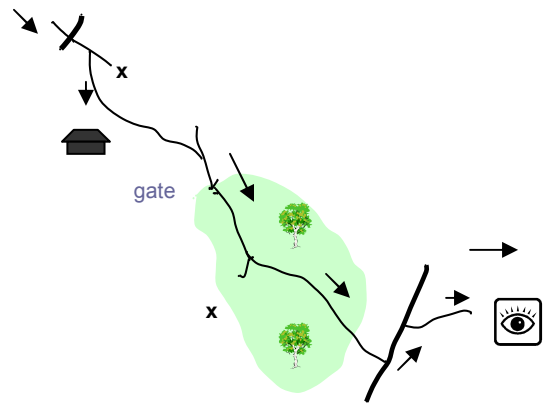
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### Leg 1: Fetcham to Westhumble 4½ km=2½ miles

- 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 leave the track you are on and avoid the track on the right but take the path **between** them, uphill through trees, just to the left of a seat. The path soon levels out, runs through two barriers either side of a crossing track and continues along a very wide grassy route, soon running under wires. After some distance, it descends to a crossing track in an open area.



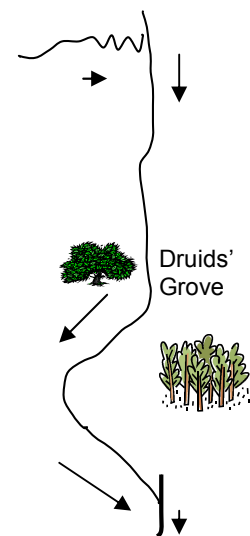
- 2 Cross the track to a grassy path opposite, through a line of little stumps, that goes up across the grass (*not* the track to the house). In just 20m, take a grassy path forking **right** and in 15m go over a crossing path. The house should be about 20m over on your right. Near the far side of the grassy area, the path is joined by another from the left and enters woodland through a one-bar wooden gate by a bridleway fingerpost. Soon there is a field visible on the right with another one-bar gate. Wheel **left** here with the official path. The path eventually comes to a T-junction at a well-surfaced track. Turn **left** on the track and in 50m turn **right** at a fingerpost. The path passes a picnic area and a very sturdy bench (*Jackie Smithers*) where you have a fine view over the Mole valley.



*Far up on the left is Cherkley Court, the distinctive profile of Mickleham church is on view in the centre and on the right is Juniper Hall with Juniper Top behind it and Box Hill to its right.*

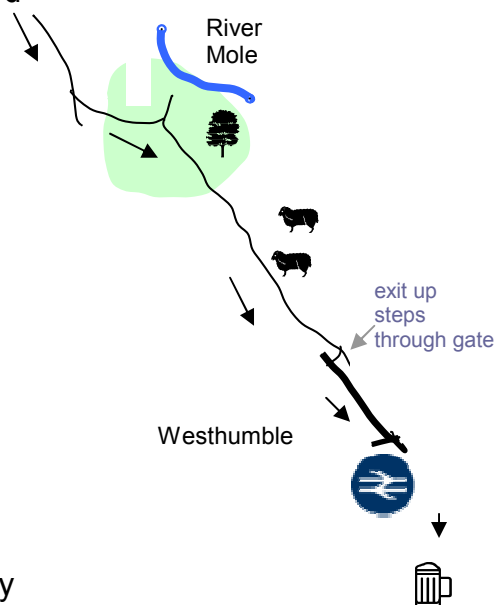
- 3 Continue down the slope to the sign for *Druid's Grove*. Follow the path down a series of zigzags with shallow steps. Because of the chalk, it may be slippery (from here to Westthumble in fact). Pause just after the **last step** where there is one path straight on and another very sharp left.

**Decision point.** If you are doing the shorter Norbury Park Loop, you need to turn sharp left on the *Norbury Park Cut* described at the end of this text and re-join the main walk at Leg 3 Stage 2.



For the full walk, keep straight ahead after the last step on a narrow path. This path takes you through the famed *Druid's Grove* by a long stimulating route with the valley falling away on the left. It passes under the large yews that give *Druid's Grove* its fanciful name, curves round the hill and descends through a coppice. Finally it reaches a T-junction with a much wider path. Turn **right** here.

- 4 In about 150m, take a **left** fork on a downward path, following the fingerpost. The path descends to a junction with a steep slope ahead giving a view of the River Mole. Veer **right** here. This path descends, steeply at first, through woodland. It then goes through a gate into a large sheep meadow. Keep straight ahead on the right-hand side of the meadow. Eventually you pass a seat on the right (*Horace and Daisy Charsley*). Soon after, look for steps and a swing gate on the right. Turn **right** here up the steps, through the gate and **left** on the lane, Crabtree Lane. (If you don't want to visit Westhumble, you could stay in the field and curve sharp left around it at the end.) This lane shortly leads into the village of Westhumble with a gateway on your right.



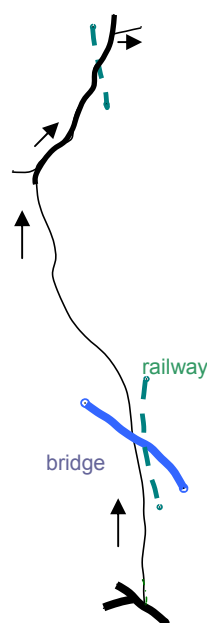
*The plaque here marks the site of Camilla Cottage that belonged to Fanny Burney, the novelist who influenced Jane Austen and married a French aristocrat and refugee from the Revolution.*

*Westhumble is a cosy village in the commuter belt best known as the stepping off point for Box Hill. It has some fine victorian relics, especially the railway station. The Stepping Stones pub and restaurant is over the bridge and at the end of the road. It has a wide-ranging menu but a small range of beers and dislikes dogs and muddy boots (though overshoes are provided at a paltry charge).*

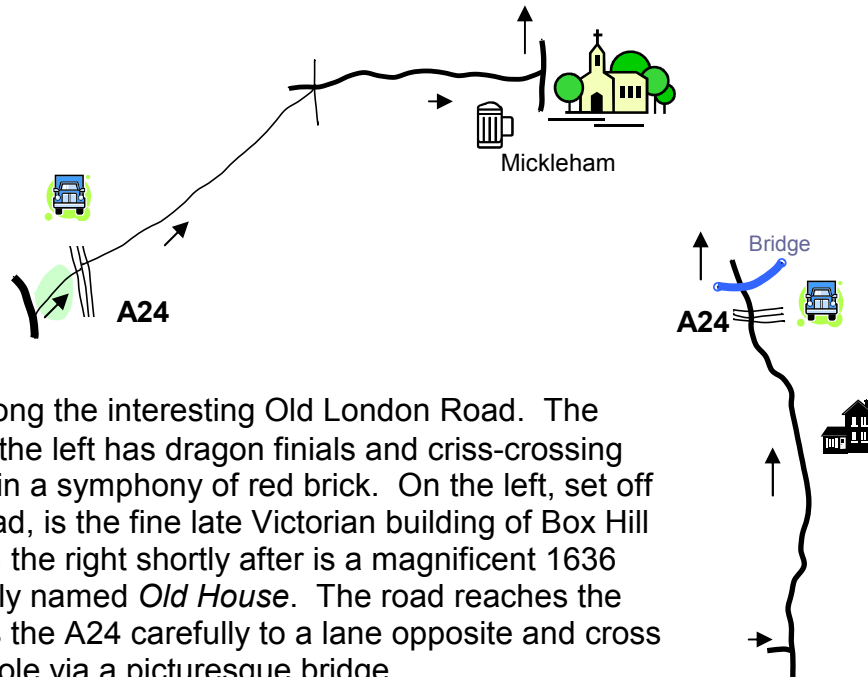


## Leg 2: Westhumble to Mickleham 2½ km=1½ miles

- 1 Immediately after the gateway and the junction of roads, turn **left** on an enclosed footpath. *Note the polished metal graffiti sunk in the path saying “(drink?)” pointing in the direction of the Stepping Stones pub.* The path goes through a gate into the sheep meadow. Keep to the right-hand side of the meadow. *On the right is a fine view of the Box Hill slopes.* The path reaches the River Mole and a bridge across it that runs next to the railway. *Note another polished metal graffiti in the path saying “follow the trains”.* Cross the bridge and shortly go through a gate and between fields for some distance. At the other side, go through a kissing gate and continue on a lane. The lane bends right by farm buildings, runs past the River Mole down on the left, goes under the railway and curves left again. About 100m from the railway bridge, look out for a fingerpost. Turn **right** on a narrow path here through woodland.



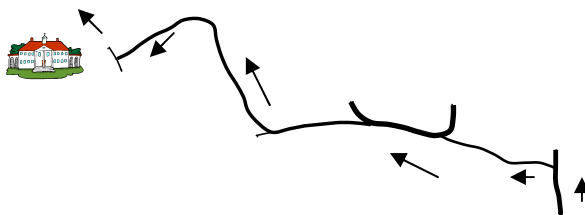
- 2 The path leads up to A24 road. Cross the two carriageways carefully to a fingerpost on the other side. The path leads into a meadow and goes along the right-hand side all the way to a junction of wide tracks. Ignore the track sharp right and take the lane **second** right, Swanworth Lane, leading to Mickleham village. The lane emerges next to the Running Horses pub and restaurant. On the other side of the road is Mickleham church. For a longer description of these two, see the walk *Headley Heath, Mickleham, Box Hill* in this series. *There is a General Stores on the right just past the pub but it closes Sundays and Saturday afternoons.*



- 3 Turn **left** along the interesting Old London Road. The building on the left has dragon finials and criss-crossing and waves in a symphony of red brick. On the left, set off from the road, is the fine late Victorian building of Box Hill School. On the right shortly after is a magnificent 1636 building aptly named *Old House*. The road reaches the A24. Cross the A24 carefully to a lane opposite and cross the River Mole via a picturesque bridge.

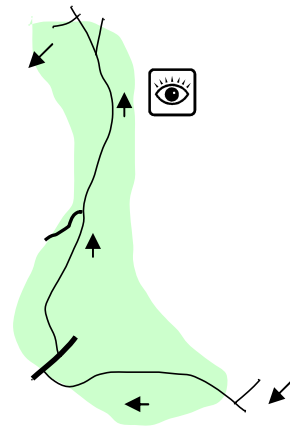
Leg 3: Mickleham to Fetcham 3 km=2 miles

- 1 Soon leave the lane by turning **left** on a signposted grassy bridgeway uphill. After some distance, the bridgeway joins the lane coming from the right. Continue along the lane until it bends right. Leave the lane here by continuing straight ahead on a track through a large wooden gate. After some distance, the track reaches a junction with a four-way fingerpost. Ignore the track straight ahead and veer **right** on a fine surfaced path. This path winds gently uphill and soon you have a view of the gates to the Norbury Park estate ahead. Eventually you reach the gates and fence. Turn **right** here on a bridgeway around the edge of the estate. Norbury Park House is easier to see from the adjoining hills.

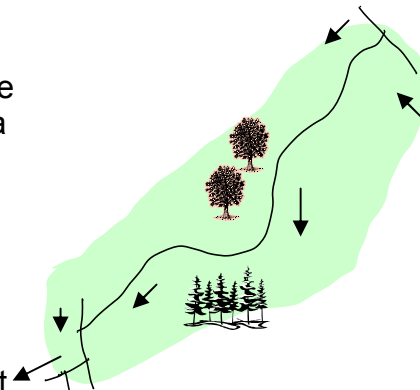


*The House was built in 1774 by William Locke who purchased the estate and commissioned Thomas Sandby to design and build it. Marie Stopes, pioneer of birth control and author of Married Love published in 1918, lived at Norbury Park from 1938 until her death in 1958. It is still privately owned.*

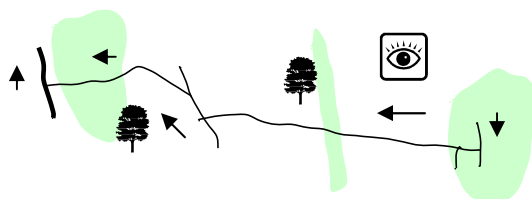
- 2 The bridleway soon comes out to a lane. Turn **right** on the lane for just 5m and then **left** on a path. The path goes steeply up and levels out. After some distance it joins a wide level path coming from the left. Continue for some distance on this path with fine views right across the Mole Valley while the path rises very gently. You pass a waymarked junction where a path forks off right, which you ignore. 150m after the junction, look out for a wide path curving off to the left. This path is not waymarked or signed but it is very obvious. Turn **left** here. Do not miss this turning!



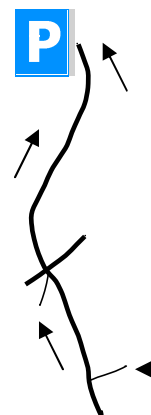
- 3 You need to follow the path carefully from here because it twists but it is very clear all the way. This fine woodland path leads through a clearing and curves left and, after some distance, right again. It passes through more pleasant woodland of tall trees and finally goes through a wooden barrier and is joined by a broad path from the right. 20m further, turn **right** on a path that leads to a fence and a meadow. Go through the fence and straight ahead on a path across the meadow.



- 4 The path goes through a belt of trees and continues across the next meadow with exhilarating views right over the valley. The path reaches a field corner on the right. Continue a few paces and then take a **left** fork across the centre of the meadow. On the other side of the meadow, the path enters trees and descends steeply. At a T-junction at the bottom, turn **right** on a wide bridleway.



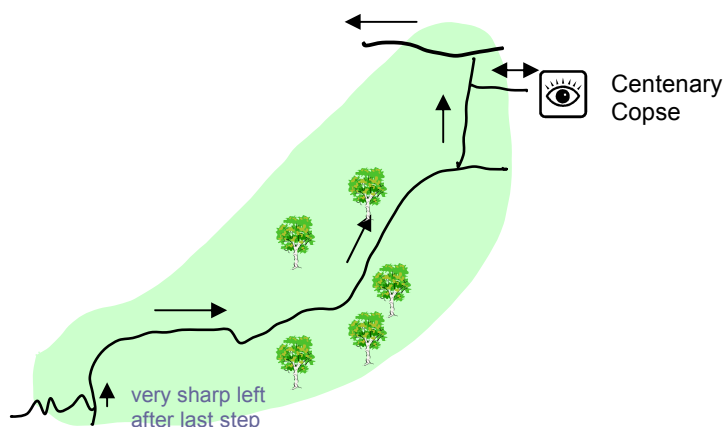
- 5 The bridleway shortly takes you to the junction with the 4-way signpost and the view of Roaringhouse Farm on the left. Keep straight ahead, curving round the valley and back to the car park.



## Norbury Park Cut 1 km (.7 miles)

Take this short cut if you want to do the shorter *Norbury Park Loop*, leaving the villages and the Mole Valley to another day.

After the **last** step take the narrow path **very sharp left**. You now follow a single, narrow and tortuous path round the fence of Norbury Park all the way to the entrance gate. The path comes to the fence and bends right around it, becoming very narrow. It now curves away from the fence and descends quite steeply through a coppice. About half way down, the path turns left and begins to rise again. If at any time you believe you have lost the path, just stop and take a careful look: the path has many unexpected turns but it is always clear. Soon the path curves left again approaching the fence and winds a lot through thick bushes. Suddenly there is a break in the bushes on the left and a definite junction with a path going up left towards the fence. Take this path **left**, taking care not to miss it. (If you find yourself eventually reaching a fingerpost for *Druids Grove* and a wide track, then you have missed the turning: turn **left** on the wide track and immediately **left** again and **right** when you re-join the fence.) Go through a coppice up to a fence and follow the path as it curves right around it. *Soon on the right is a little wooden gate leading to another wooden gate into the Centenary Copse where you have a fine view of the upper Mole Valley.* The path meets a wider track where you turn **left**, alongside the fence and eventually come to a junction beside (closed) gates into Norbury Park. Continue on the bridleway by the fence. Re-join the main walk now at Leg 3 Stage 2 above.



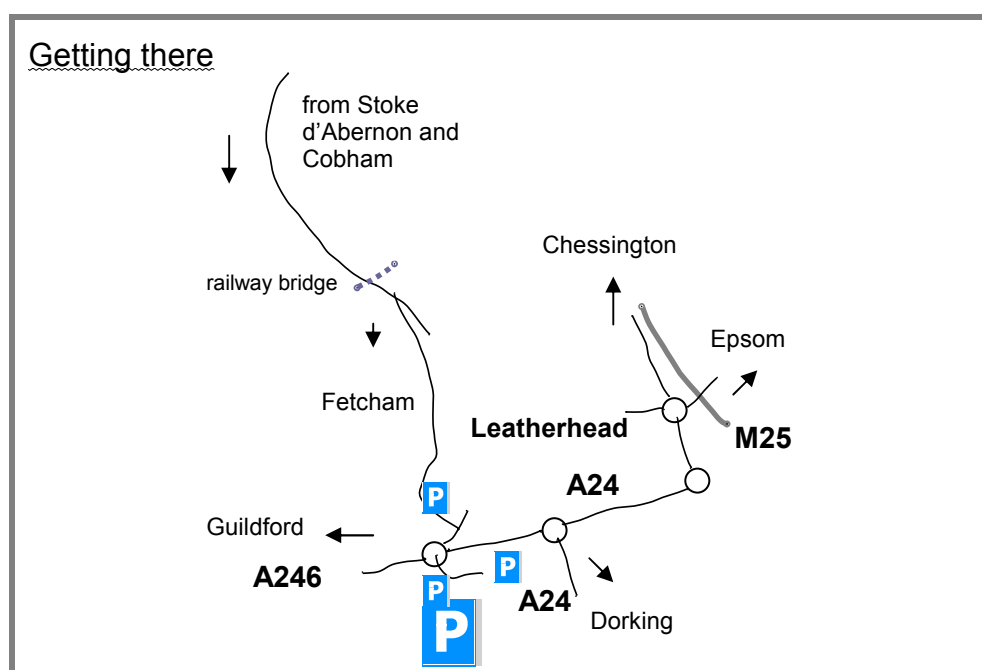
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## Getting there

*By car:* the walk begins at the Fetcham car park by the road leading to Bockett's Farm, just by the roundabout on the A246. To get there 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).



*By train* (full walk only): get out at Box Hill and West Humble station and begin the walk from *Leg 2* below.