



Norbury Park and the Mole Valley Druids Grove, Westhumble, Mickleham

Distance: 11 km=6½ miles or 8 km=5 miles or 5 km=3 miles
easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey date written: 4-dec-2009

Author: Schwebefuss date revised: 11-oct-2015

Refreshments: Westhumble, Mickleham last update: 15-jul-2020

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

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Views, river, woodland, fine houses, villages

In Brief

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 medium-length *Mole Valley Loop* takes in the *Druid's Grove* but omits the villages. The full walk crosses the A24 road twice (no problem because of the dual carriageway) giving you an inspiring stroll through Mickleham village.



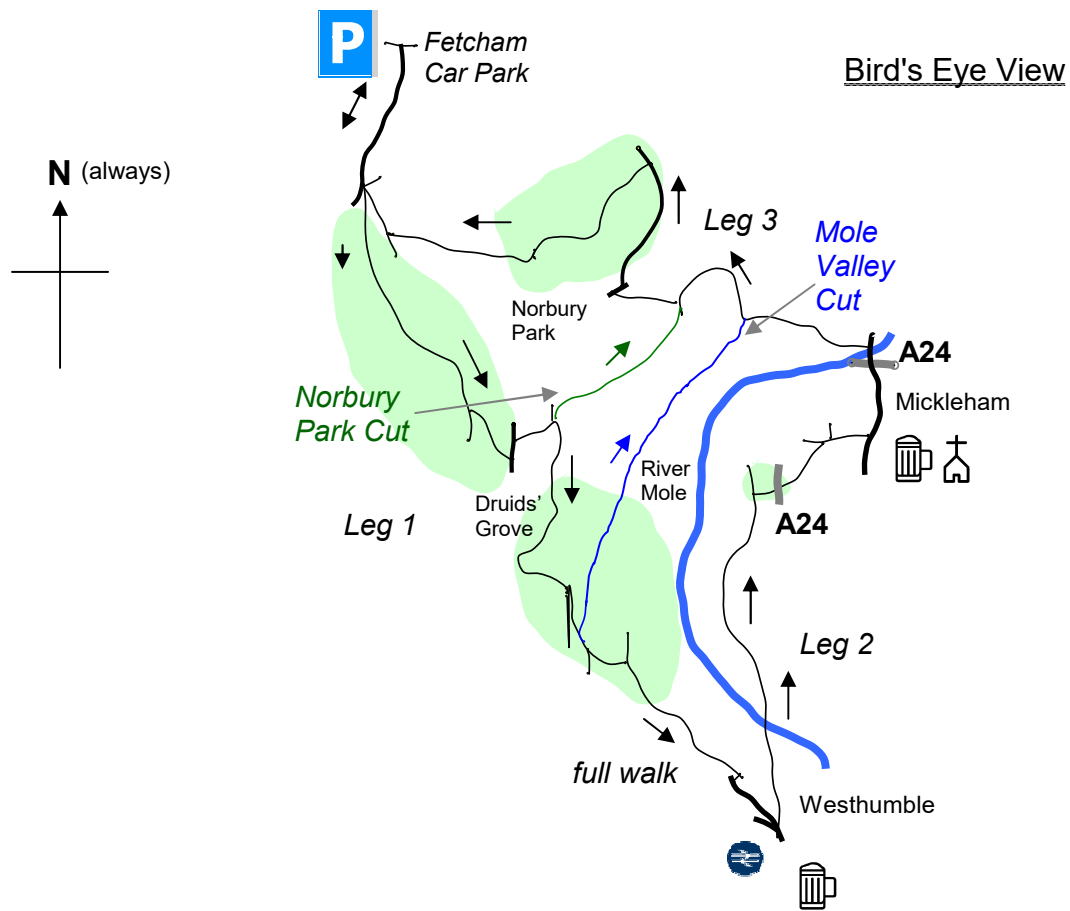
Good shoes are needed because of the slippery chalk in some of the paths, especially during or after a wet winter. There are few nettles. The *Norbury Park Loop* is ideal for your dog too.



The walk begins at the **Fetcham** car park, close to the roundabout on the A246, at the start of the drive leading to Bocketts Farm, nearest **postcode KT22 9BW**, grid ref TQ 150 549. This car park no longer makes a charge but can be crowded. There are a few free spaces on the other side of the main road by the little green. Best of all, park *free* at the end of **Downs Way** postcode **KT23 4BL** (go ahead on a track and turn **left** in 100m to join the walk). You can also start at **West Humble station**. 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 belonging to the parishes of "Leret (Leatherhead) and Fececha (Fetcham)".

The Walk

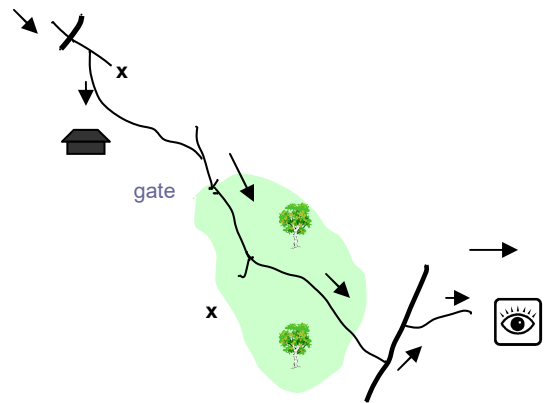


Leg 1: Fetcham to Westhumble 4½ km=2½ miles

- 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 that forks 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. Immediately 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, between posts, by a bench seat. The path soon levels out, runs though two barriers either side of a crossing track and continues along a very wide grassy route, soon running under wires. After more than 400m, it descends to a 1-bar barrier and a crossing track in an open area.

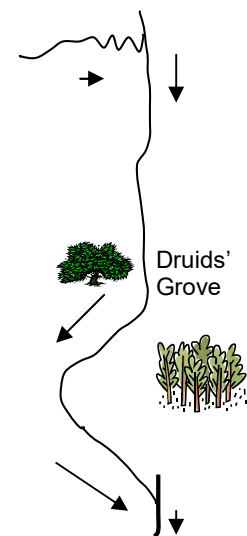


- 2 Cross the track to a grassy path opposite that goes up across the grass (*not* the track to the house). In just 30m, take a grassy path forking **right**. The house should be about 20m over on your right. Near the far side of the grassy area, the path is joined by another from the left and enters woodland through a one-bar wooden gate by a bridleway fingerpost. Soon there is a field visible on the right, then another field by a one-bar gate. Wheel **left** here, avoiding the gate, on the official path, staying in the woodland. In 250m, the path comes to a T-junction with 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. (There are three other walks in this series around Box Hill.)

- 3 Go straight down the slope from the left-hand picnic table to pick up a narrow gravel path. Follow the path down a series of zigzags with shallow steps. **Because of the chalk, it may be slippery (from here to Westhumble in fact).** Pause just after the **last step** where there is one path straight on (the full walk) and another very sharp left (the *Norbury Park Cut*).



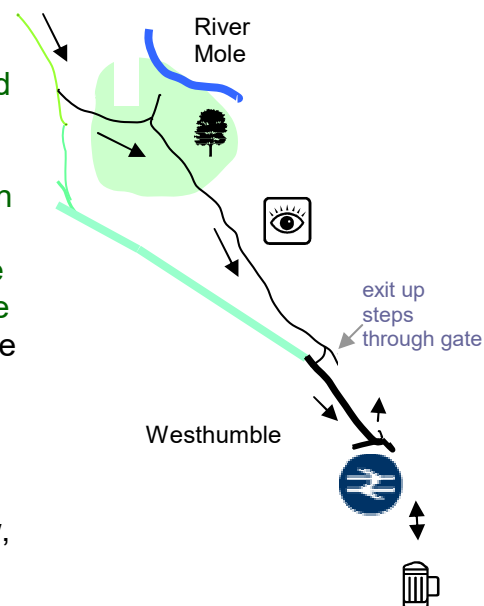
Decision point. If you are doing the shorter *Norbury Park Loop*, skip ahead to near the end of this text and do the **Norbury Park Cut**. Otherwise ...

Keep straight on after the last step on a narrow path. This path takes you through the famed Druids Grove by a long stimulating route with the valley falling away on the left. It passes under the large yews that give Druids Grove its fanciful name, curves round the hill and descends through a coppice. After one scenic kilometer, it reaches a T-junction with a much wider path.

Decision point. If you are doing the medium-length *Mole Valley Loop*, missing both villages, skip ahead to near the end of this text and do the **Mole Valley Cut** (by turning left). Otherwise ...

Turn **right** at the T-junction.

4 In about 100m, you reach a fork in the path. (On one visit, the author found a herd of cattle in the large meadow ahead [now in 2017 there are only **sheep**]. They were all of the gentle, docile breeds. If, however, you want to avoid this meadow, do as follows: take the **right** fork here on a permissive bridleway gently uphill; after 250m on this wide woodland path, veer **left** on a drive, past a barrier, and turn **left** on Crabtree Lane; follow the lane for 650m into Westhumble, skipping the rest of this section. You will pass the meadow again on the return leg but only for a short remote section.) Take the **left** fork, 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 meadow. Keep straight ahead on the right-hand side of the meadow, with Norbury Park now clearly visible behind on your left. Eventually you pass a seat on the right (*Margaret Roper*). Soon after, look for a small metal gate and steps on the right. Turn **right** here up the steps, through a swing 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.



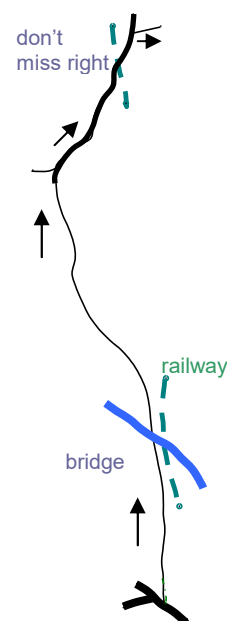
The plaque here marks the site of Camilla Cottage that belonged to Fanny Burney, the novelist who influenced Jane Austen and married a French aristocrat and refugee from the Revolution.

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, and some excellent new developments. The station café serves drinks, snacks and ice creams. 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.



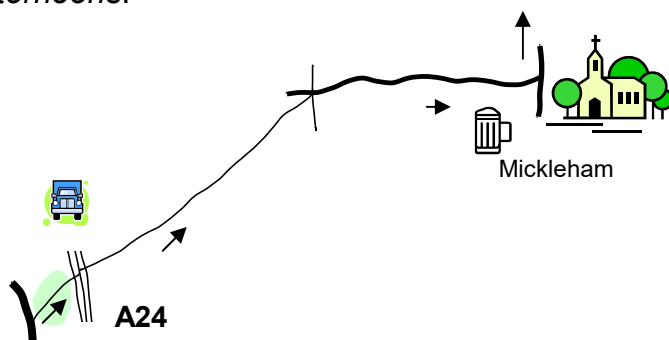
Leg 2: Westhumble to Mickleham 2½ km=1½ miles

1 Immediately before the road crosses the railway, turn sharp **left** on an enclosed footpath. (Or fork **right** after the railway bridge if coming back from visiting the village.) *Note the polished metal graffito sunk in the path saying "(drink?)" pointing in the direction of the Stepping Stones pub.* The path goes through a gate into the meadow. Keep to the right-hand side of the meadow. *On the right is a fine view of the Box Hill slopes.* The path goes through a small wooden gate to reach the River Mole and a bridge across it which runs next to the railway. *Note another polished metal graffito in the path saying "follow the trains".* Cross the bridge, shortly to go through a swing gate, veering left in 50m away from the fence and going between fields for 250m. At the other side, go through a swing gate and continue on a farm 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 marker post (*don't miss!*). 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 and swing gate on the other side, a fraction left. The path leads through an old kissing gate into a meadow and goes along the right-hand side all the way to a junction of wide tracks. Veer right on a semi-tarmac lane, Swanworth Lane, leading to Mickleham village. The lane emerges next to the *Running Horses*, a Brakspear 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 crisscrossing 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.

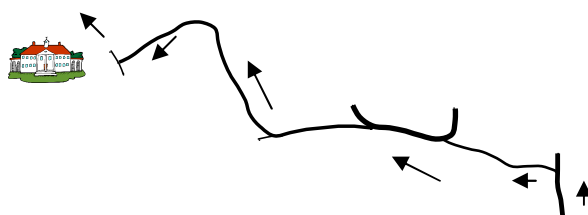


Leg 3: Mickleham to Fetcham 4 km=2½ miles

- 1 In only 50m, leave the lane by turning **left** on a signposted grassy bridleway uphill. In 150m, fork **right** to avoid a path that goes ahead through a wooden barrier into trees. In 100m, the bridleway 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 by a 1-bar wooden gate. In 100m or so, the track reaches a junction with a 4-way fingerpost. Ignore the track straight ahead and veer **right** on a fine surfaced path.

At this point, the **Mole Valley Cut** rejoins the walk.

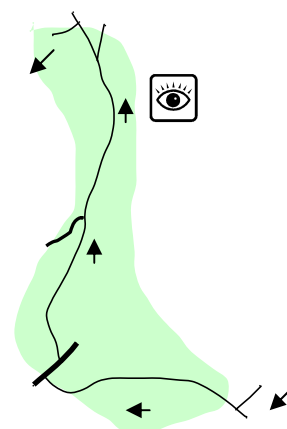
- 2 This path winds gently uphill and soon you have a view of the gates to the Norbury Park estate ahead. Eventually you reach the gates and a fence. Turn **right** here on a bridleway around the edge of the estate. Norbury Park House is easier to see from the adjoining hills.



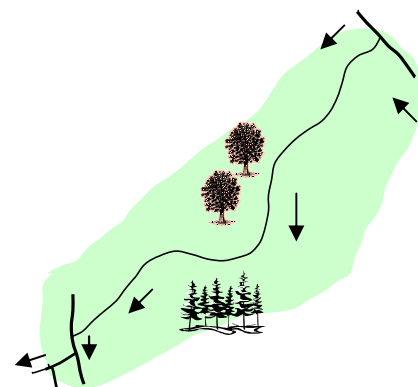
The House was built in 1774 by William Locke who purchased the estate and commissioned Thomas Sandby to design and build it. Marie Stopes, pioneer of birth control and author of *Married Love* published in 1918, lived at Norbury Park from 1938 until her death in 1958. It is still privately owned.

At this point, the **Norbury Park Cut** rejoins the walk.

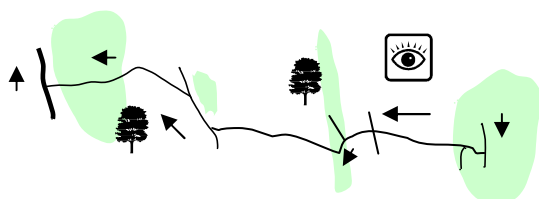
- 3 The bridleway soon comes out to a tarmac drive. Turn **right** on the drive for just 5m and then **left** on a path. The path goes steeply up and levels out. At a junction in 250m, it joins a wide level path coming from the left. Continue on this path with fine views right across the Mole Valley (foliage permitting) while the path rises very gently. [Dec 2017: this path was affected by tree felling and was deeply rutted.] 130m from the previous junction you pass a waymarked junction: ignore a path here which forks off right. 170m after that last junction, at the top of a gentle rise, look out for a good clear path branching off to your left. This path is immediately before a bramble bush. It is not waymarked or signed but it fairly obvious - once you see it. (If you find yourself in a lighter area with a grass verge on the left, you have overshot and you need to backtrack just a few paces.) Turn **left** here. *Do not miss this crucial turning!* This path is one of the wonderful secrets of the Fetcham Downs.



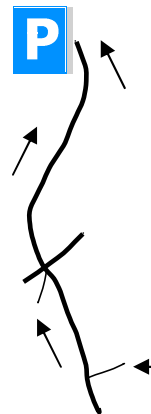
- 4 Your path goes gently uphill at first and runs between bracken and brambles and in 200m develops into a fine winding woodland path. After a further 150m, it wheels right past some large conifers. In another 150m, it runs through a coppice for 120m to a wooden barrier at an oblique T-junction. Turn **left** here on a wide path. In only 30m, turn **right** on a cinder path. Where this path bends left, go straight ahead between double fences and follow a clear path [Dec 2016: through a rather narrow gap in a wire fence at both ends (difficult for a large dog?) but the fence had been folded back to give you generous access] across the centre of a wild meadow.



- 5 The path goes over a grassy crossing path by a wooden post and leads down into a belt of trees by another post. Once in the trees, take a **left** fork. This takes you out onto a grassy plateau. Keep ahead, gently uphill, past a slender birch with a bench [Jan 2017: now missing] and an exhilarating view to the right over the valley to London (see the "City Skyscrapers" walk in this series). Continue on the same grassy path for 50m where you meet the edge of the wood on your right. Veer **right** here at an oblique T-junction onto another path, keeping the wood on your right. In 30m, just after a small oak, the path forks. Take the **left** fork, leading away from the trees. Your path soon curves left downhill and descends through a wood of young oaks. At a wooden barrier and T-junction at the bottom, turn **right** on a wide bridleway.



- 6 The bridleway shortly takes you to the junction with the 4-way signpost and the view of Roaring-house Farm on the left. Keep straight ahead, curving round the valley and back to the car park where the walk began.

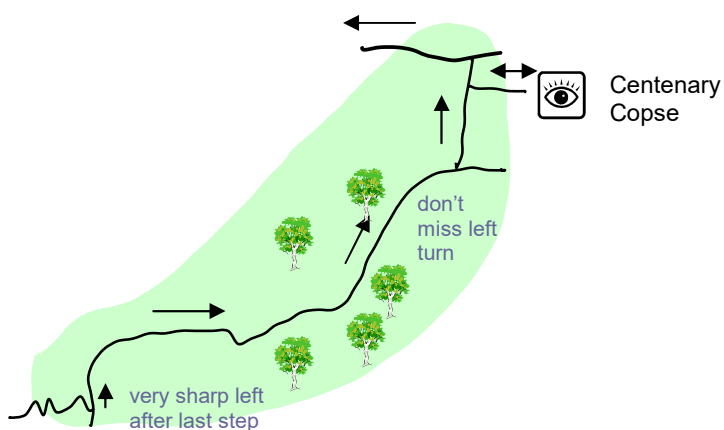


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Norbury Park Cut 1 km=0.7 miles

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**. This paragraph will guide you along a single, narrow and tortuous path round the fence of Norbury Park all the way to the entrance gate. As a simple rule, remember you are circling left around the fenced enclosure, keeping alert to stay on the decent path. In nearly 100m, the path comes to the fence and bends right around it, becoming very narrow. It shortly curves away from the fence and, within 100m, it meets a woodland of saplings and veers right. In another 50m, you reach a bank of box trees (evergreen shrubs) and your path veers right again, descending more steeply. In 40m, at the end of the box trees, your path veers left. You are still descending and the fence is visible again, 30m to your left. Your path shortly curves right past a large beech tree. It bends left and reaches a junction just before another large beech by some fallen tree trunks. Ignoring the minor path ahead, turn smartly **left** on the path uphill. After 200m, the path curves left uphill (*don't miss this unexpected turn!*), winds a lot, approaches the fence and enters more of those dense box shrubs.



The path runs level through these shrubs for 30m. 20m later, turn **left** through a break in the bushes on a well-defined narrow path going steeply up towards the fence. At the top, turn **right** beside the fence. Follow the fence round several bends to come to a T-junction. Your path is **left** at the T-junction, still following the fence. **However, by turning right and forking left after 20m, you come through a little wooden gate leading to another wooden gate into the Centenary Copse where you have a seat and a fine view of the upper Mole Valley. You have to retrace your steps afterwards.**



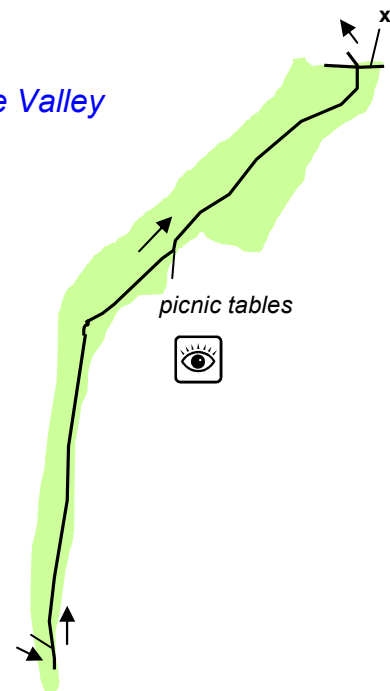
In another 20m, you come to a junction beside the closed gates of Norbury Park. Continue on the bridleway by the fence.

Now re-join the main walk now at Leg 3 Section **3** above.

Mole Valley Cut 1½ km=1 mile

Take this short cut if you want to do the medium-length *Mole Valley Loop*, leaving the villages to another day.

Turn **left** at the T-junction. You are on a beautiful wide path through woodland. In 300m the path curves round a grove. 50m later, ignore a wooden barrier and a path on your right. In another 600m, there is a gate and a footpath sharp right: this is *not* on your route but it leads to a pleasant picnic area in case you would like a break. Continue on the woodland path and, in 100m, avoid a path that forks right through a barrier. Your path rises with fathomless woodland down on your right, with the River Mole hidden in the depths. Finally, after a total of 1½ km on this woodland trek, you come into the open by a 4-way fingerpost. Cross straight over the crossing track here, taking an excellent wide surfaced path which runs a fraction **left** uphill. Turn **left** here and, in only 10m, **right** on a good surfaced path.



Now re-join the main walk at Leg 3, section [2](#).

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).

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.

