



Lonesome Ranmore Ramble

Distance: 5¾ km=3¾ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 31-dec-2017

Author: Fusszweig

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Refreshments: picnic or after the walk in nearby facilities

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

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Woodland trails

In Brief

Ranmore Common is always a lonely place for humans, holding its own secrets and echoing birdsong and little else to break the hush. This walk avoids even the best-known paths and takes an imaginative course using unmarked routes where the only other people you are likely to meet are near the end, on a short section of the North Downs Way.

There are few nettles or brambles on this walk, so shorts are wearable.



Since this is a woodland walk, there is always some mud, especially in the winter and early spring months. The unfenced paths usually give you the chance to hop about but it is best to take good high boots which will need scraping when you finish the walk. (The author happily did this walk in mid-winter and strode through the muddy patches with ease.) This walk is also fine for your dog.



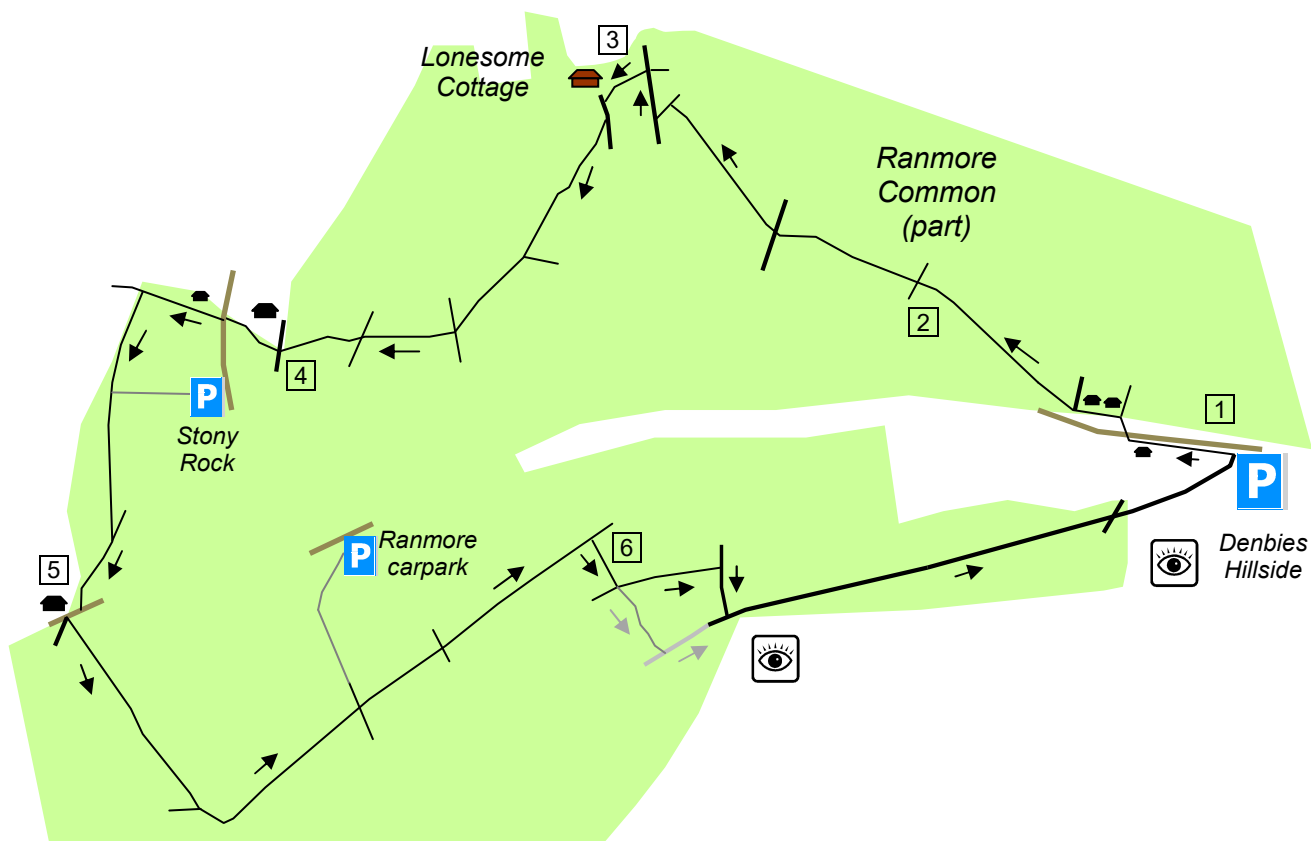
The walk begins at the **Denbies Hillside** National Trust (NT) car park, postcode **RH5 6SR**. Other possible (quieter) starts are:

the free **Stony Rock** car park on Hogden Lane, postcode **RH5 6SY**. To join the walk, take the main path across the common till you meet a boundary by a horse pasture and turn **left**.

the free **Ranmore Common** car park off Ranmore Common Road, also near the postcode **RH5 6SY**. To join the walk, take a path beside a metal barrier into woodland, in the corner near a National Trust sign, follow the main bendy path for 300m and turn **left** by a marker post on a crossing path.

For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 From the Denbies Hillside car park, take a path beside the road on your right. After passing a red-tiled house on your left, switch to the other side of the road. Ignore the first fingerpost pointing into the woods and continue parallel to the road, passing a grey house, a cottage and another red-tiled house. Turn **right** after this house, by a fingerpost and a butterfly symbol, onto the start of a track. But immediately **leave** the track by turning **left** at a wooden fingerpost onto a woodland path, as indicated by a yellow NT arrow, going past a new metal barrier.
- 2 In 350m, you come over a narrow crossing path with a NT marker post. Your path descends to meet a wide chalky track which runs along a lonely valley known as Ash Valley. Cross straight over the track onto a wide ascending path. In 250m you come finally to a T-junction with a grassy space on your right. Turn **left** here to meet, almost immediately, a wooden barrier and a wide surfaced track. Turn **right** on this track. In just 100m, you reach a marker post with paths on both sides. The path on your right is a wide path going through a gap in a fence, but your direction is **sharp left** on a narrow path, marked with a yellow NT arrow. In 100m or so, you pass an open grassy space on your left and reach a gravel drive coming from a cottage on your right. This is **Lonesome Cottage**, a name which could hardly be more appropriate.

Lonesome Cottage was the home of the wheelwright of the Denbies Estate, Charles Gale. His three children walked each day to school near St Barnabas church, whose spire is just visible in the photo from 1915 below. The winding path you just walked can be seen in the picture but, as you see, the woods were stripped by logging, leaving only bracken. The middle son, Edward, took a job as a railway porter at the Merton Abbey station earning 18 shillings a

week. He married Mary Elizabeth from nearby Wimbledon and they had a daughter, Gladys. He joined up in 1915 and was killed in France in 1917.



- 3 Turn **left** on the drive, away from the cottage. In only 30m, **leave** the drive by forking **right**, past a marker post, through a wooden barrier, on a wide path. This lonely path is perhaps the noblest in Ranmore Common, lined with majestic oaks and mature yew trees. In 300m, a grassy path joins from the left. After more oaks and yews, in 150m or so, you come down through a wooden barrier to a wide crossing path. Go straight over, uphill, veering a little to the right. In 100m you reach a wide grassy path with an open mossy clearing on your left: go directly over and keep straight ahead. Soon the path becomes narrower. You glimpse a house down on your right through the trees and your path curves right, down to a wide stony track with the house on your right.
- 4 Cross straight over the track on a path uphill, passing the house's garden on your right. You arrive at a tarmac lane, Hogden Lane. ([The Stony Rock car park is 150m on your left.](#)) Cross straight over on a footpath, with a house, *Gatehouse Cottage*, and then a large meadow on your right. In 150m, you reach a junction on the left (easy to overlook: it's 10m before the start of a large meadow). Turn **left** here, between posts on a good path through trees. Stay close to a green horse pasture on your right, avoiding equestrian marker posts that seem to inveigle you into the woods. In 150m, your path veers slightly left away from the pasture, beside an especially attractive part of the Common with shimmering moss and silver birch. Keep to the right-hand side of this area, soon re-entering a woodland of hollies. Keep to the main path, soon leading between posts to the Ranmore Common Road, near *Ranmore Lodge*.
- 5 Turn **right** on the road for only 20m to a fingerpost on the other side. The finger points along a bridleway almost parallel to the road. However, your route is **not** the bridleway but an unmarked path, **squarely left**, leading away from a large wooden gate. (You can usually reach the path by turning **left** just before the fingerpost, through a narrow gap in the gate.) The path

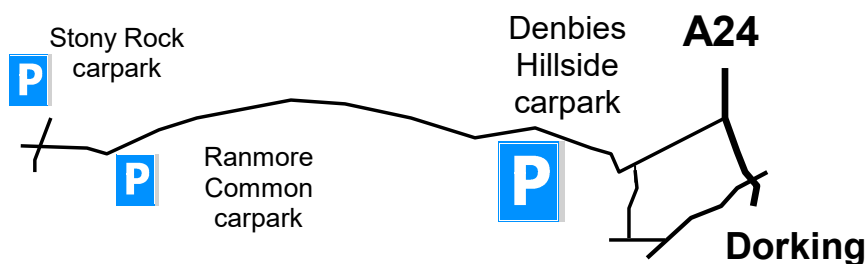
widens and becomes a beautiful straight path through an avenue of tall beeches. In 400m, your path meets a path coming from the right and curves left. Keep **left** past a Forestry Commission *No Riding* notice. In another 300m, your path reaches a crossing footpath by a marker post. (The Ranmore Common car park is 300m on your left.) Cross straight over, continuing on the unmarked woodland path. In 170m, ignore a crossing of minor paths. In another 300m, you reach another junction, this time with only a single path on the right. *Don't miss this junction!*

- 6 Turn **right** at the junction on a narrow path through a plantation of trees. In 100m, you meet a narrow crossing path. Turn **left** on it. (If the ground is especially muddy, you can instead go straight over on a very narrow path, winding down steeply to meet the North Downs Way, and turn **left** on it.) In 200m, you reach a T-junction opposite a Scout Camp. Turn **right** here on a wide track, leading in 100m down to a junction with the North Downs Way (NDW). Turn **left** on the NDW. The NDW immediately passes an open hillside on your right with seats from where to admire the view across the Tillingbourne Valley to Dorking, Westcott and the Greensand Hills. (Many people take a path along the open hillside, with great views, leading "by the back door" to Steer's Field. This route is explained in detail in the walk *Ranmore Common and Polesden Lacey*.) Continue along the NDW, finally, in 700m, going over a diagonal crossing path by a fingerpost, and through a gate onto the NT hillside of Steer's Field. Veer **left** to the main entrance gate and car park where the walk began.



Getting there

By car: Denbies Hillside NT car park is on the Ranmore Common Road, easily reached from Dorking. If coming via the A24 from Leatherhead, turn **right** just before Dorking, signposted *Guildford*, on Ashcombe Road, keep straight ahead at a mini-roundabout and turn **right** at a T-junction signposted *Ranmore*. The car park is over a mile, on the left, just past a road junction near the church. The Ranmore Common car park is another mile on the left. Hogden Lane is another 200 yds on the right.



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