



Lonesome Ranmore Ramble

Distance: 5¾ km=3¾ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 31-dec-2017

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Refreshments:

Last update: 9-aug-2022

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 a few brambles on this walk in high summer, making shorts possibly uncomfortable. Since this is a woodland walk, there is always some mud, especially in the winter and early spring months. (In 2020 there was a muddy and rutted portion between sections **3** and **4** due to forestry work.) 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.

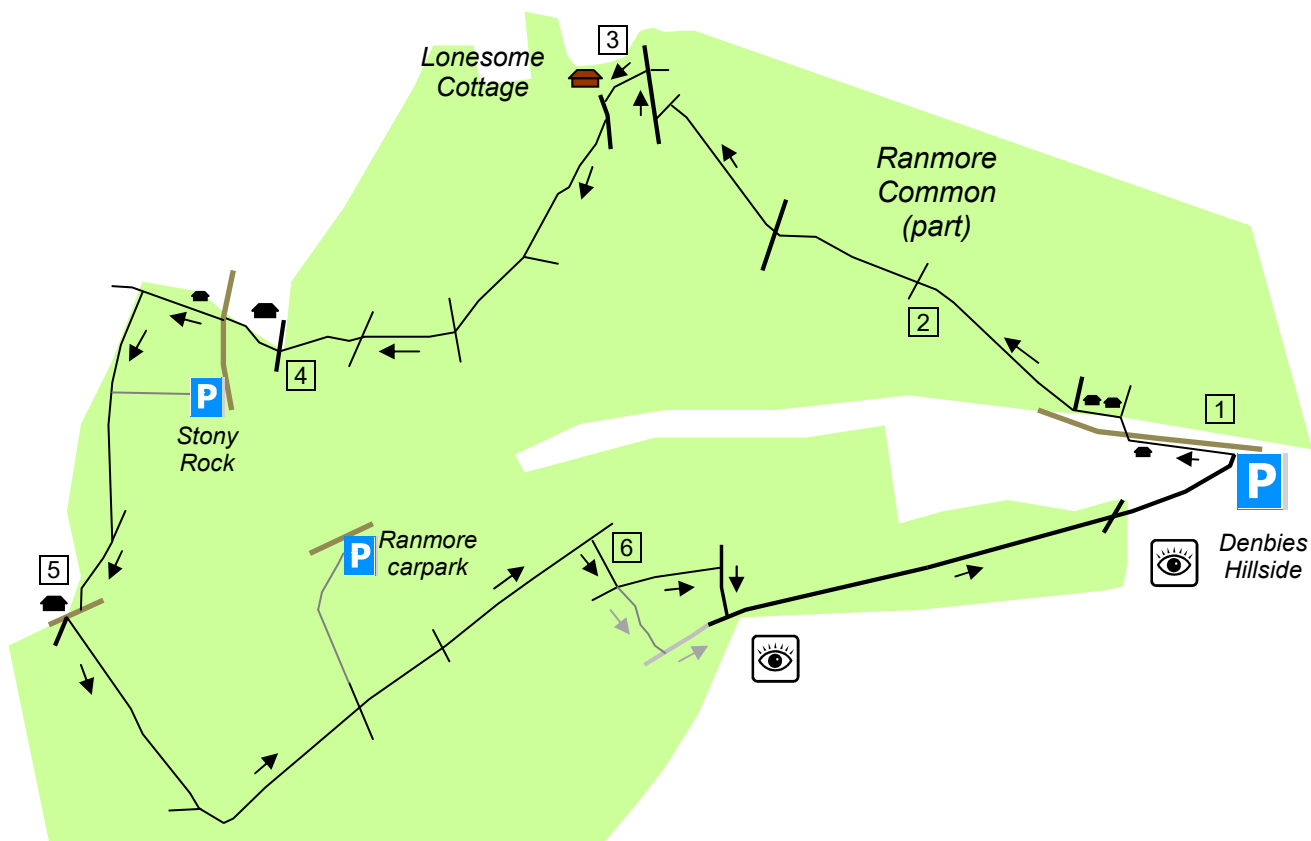
The walk begins at the **Denbies Hillside (Ranmore East)** National Trust (NT) car park, postcode **RH5 6SR**. Other possible (quieter) starts are:

the free **Stony Rock** car park on Hogden Lane, postcode **RH5 6SY**. To join the walk, take the main path straight 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, facing the road, turn **left** on a path that runs 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 (*Fox Cottages*). Turn **right** after this house, by a fingerpost and a YHA symbol, onto the start of a track. But, before you reach a new metal barrier, **leave** the track by turning **left** onto a signed woodland path past a different metal barrier.
- 2 After 350m, keeping straight ahead on this wide path, you come over a narrow crossing path with a NT marker post. Your path soon 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 wooden barrier, 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 forester's path joins from the left. After more oaks and yews, in 150m or so, you come down through a wooden barrier to a narrow crossing path. Go straight over, uphill. Keep ahead on the main path, ignoring all minor turnings off. In 100m you reach a wide grassy path with an open mossy clearing on your left: go directly over and keep straight ahead on a narrower path. Soon you glimpse a house down on your right through the trees and your path descends 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 three large gates and the start of a large meadow). Turn **left** here, past some 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. ([The start from the Stony Rock car park joins here.](#)) Keep to the right-hand side of this area, soon joining a path from the left and 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, approaching a fingerpost on the other side. But, 5m **before** you reach it, turn squarely **left**, ignoring the fingerpost, between two massive concrete blocks, on an unmarked path. [2022:

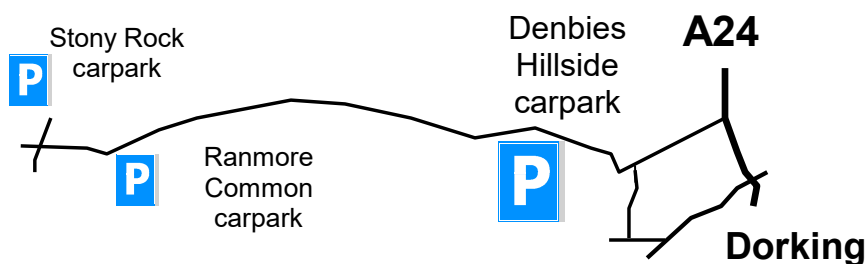
you need to go immediately round a large fallen tree.] The path widens and becomes a beautiful straight path through an avenue of tall beeches. One of the beeches is lying flat (2021) but a 1m-wide slice has been removed to allow easy passage. In 400m, your path meets a path coming from the right and 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 West car park is 300m on your left.) Cross straight over, continuing on the unmarked wide woodland path. In 300m, the first junction is a crossing of paths, on your left and right, narrow but quite distinct: ignore them and keep straight on. (The idea is to shift to a parallel path 100m to your **right**; you can take any side path to reach it but the way given here avoids most of the forestry work.) Go another 170m to reach another junction, this time with a path **on the right only**. *Don't miss this junction!*

- 6 Turn **right** at the junction on a narrow path through a coppice. In 100m, turn **left** on a crossing path. In nearly 200m, you reach a 4-way junction. 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, the Greensand Hills and Leith Hill Tower. (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 another walk in this series *Ranmore Common and Polesden Lacey*.) Continue along the NDW, finally, in 700m, going over a diagonal crossing path by a fingerpost. (Or if you did *not* park at Denbies Hillside and do not want to take refreshment at the mobile café, turn **left** here and **left** on the road.) Go through a swing-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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