



Reigate Hill and Gatton Park

Distance: 11½ km=7 miles easy-to-moderate walking
or 2 walks of 6½ km=4 miles and 5½ km=3½ miles

Region: Surrey

Date written: 30-may-2010

Author: Schwebefuss

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Refreshments: Wray Lane, Reigate, Mogador

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking)

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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High hills, parkland, woodland, views

In Brief

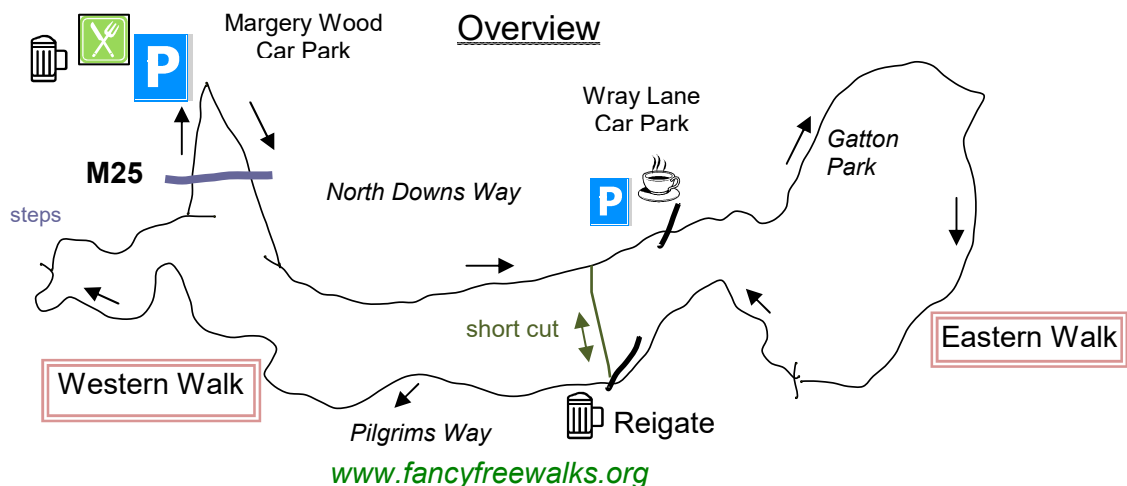
This is a bracing walk over the North Downs with fine views, handsome parkland and deep forest. One good pub is on your route (to enquire at the *Yew Tree*, ring 01737-244944).



There is a one fairly steep climb, using steps, at the end of this walk, but good walking shoes are fine in dry weather. There are no nettles. Dogs are welcome but, please note, *the National Trust requires you to keep your dog on a leash in the several places on this route where sheep may be grazing.*

The walk can be divided into two shorter walks, an easy **eastern** walk round Gatton Park of 5½ km=3½ miles and a much more strenuous **western** walk over the Downs of 6½ km=4 miles.

The **full walk** and the **western walk** begin at the National Trust **Margery Wood** car park off the A217 (low cost pay-and-display by *debit card*) near the M25, **postcode KT20 7BD**. The **eastern walk** begins at the free Wray Lane car park, **postcode RH2 0HX**. The full walk can also begin there. For more details and for alternative transport and starting points see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

If you are doing the shorter **eastern** walk, starting at the Wray Lane car park, skip to section **3** below.

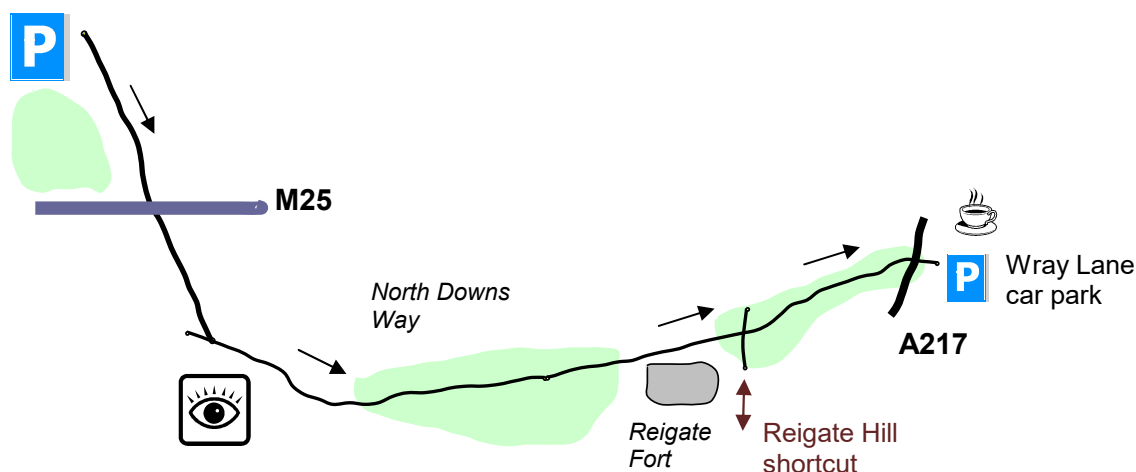
- 1** Leave the car park at the entrance by which you came in and turn **right** on a tarmac driveway signposted as a bridleway. This takes you across a bridge over the M25 and finally through a new metal gate onto the open hillside of Colley Hill. *At once you have a terrific view south into Sussex and west to the other hills. Leith Hill is over on the right, the town of Reigate on the left and ahead in the distance the South Downs.* Turn **left** along the broad track. You are on part of the North Downs Way (NDW), a long-distance footpath running from Farnham to Dover. The track runs past the Inglis monument and through a gate. Soon you pass a bunker, a viewpoint and finally the National Trust's Reigate Fort.

Reigate Fort was one of thirteen 'mobilisation centres' built as recently as the 1890s to protect London from invasion. The 'entente cordiale' was not yet in effect and the French had been building up their navy, so they were perceived as the major threat. In 1945 a US Flying Fortress plane crashed just near here. The seat in memory of the nine airmen is nearby. The fort is open most days, admission free.

Continue on the main track. After a section of tarmac and some houses you reach a 4-way junction and a fingerpost.

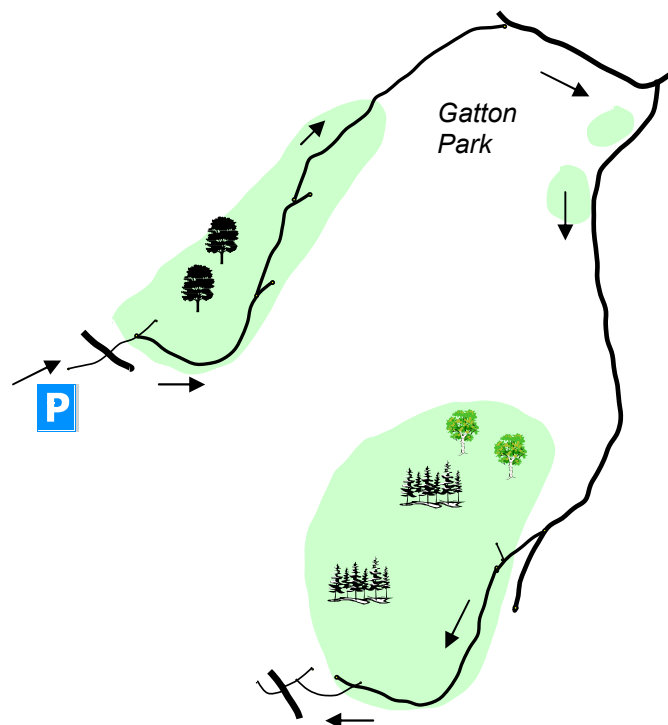
Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **western** walk, omitting Gatton Park, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Reigate Hill Descent**. Otherwise, **cross straight over**.

- 2** Continue on a track, part of the North Downs Way and the Millennium Trail. Eventually, the path crosses the main A217 road via a fine cast-iron bridge and reaches the Wray Lane National Trust car park (an alternative starting point). *The Junction 8 Café here has some good refreshments, such as Mövenpick icecream, some colourful deckchairs and toilets during opening hours.*



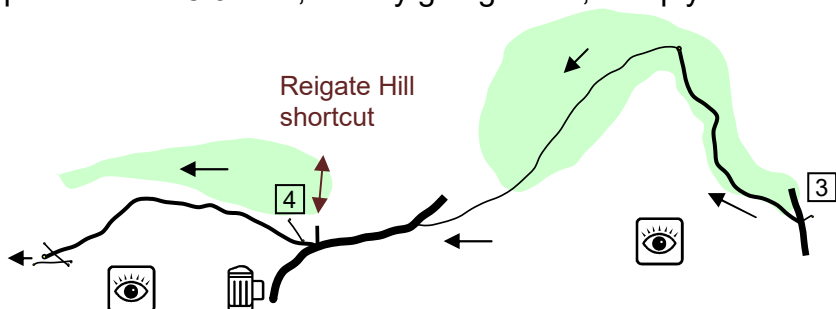
- 3** **See map overleaf.** Cross Wray Lane to a path opposite by a NT sign for Gatton Park. At a black post, keep **right** downhill, at the next two black posts, keep **left** and, at the next black post, merge with a track from the left. Eventually, at a T-junction, by cottages, turn **right** on a drive. You have great views here south across a valley. Go through a metal gate into Gatton Park itself, staying on the main drive.

Gatton Park is one of Surrey's hidden treasures. The Gatton estate is partly owned by its own trust and partly by the National Trust. The Park, of approximately 600 acres (240 ha), was designed in about 1750 by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and its several fine gardens are Edwardian. The Royal Alexandra and Albert School here is a rarity: a co-ed comprehensive boarding school. The main routes through the estate are freely accessible and the gardens and the Hall can be visited on the first Sunday of each month, February to October.



After passing a ring of stones on the right (The Millennium Stones) turn sharp **right** under lime trees. The route passes interesting features, such as the Hop Garden Pond on the left, the Burpit and the Bundle Planted Oak on the right, some of them old sites for stone mining. Go by a metal gate past woodland on the right and continue past a wooded hill on the right. After about 700m on this path, on meeting a wooden garden fence on your left, fork **right** past a wooden gate up to another black post and keep straight ahead there, ignoring the sharp right turn indicated. Keep ahead through the edge of the Nut Wood on the North Downs Ridge Circular Walk. After 350m, at a wooden barrier on the right, you meet a crossing point. Turn **left** here, shortly going down, steeply in parts, beside a fence. At the end of the fence, turn **left** to a road, Wray Lane again.

- 4 Cross the road to a bridleway opposite. This path curves right and runs beside several gardens, sometimes affording good views south. It reaches a



drive by houses. *On your right shortly are the art deco gates of Wray Lane House with mobile sculpture visible in the drive.* Keep ahead here on a fenced path, with more sculpture visible on high. After an enjoyable stroll of about 500m through fine woodland, the path leads out by more houses to the A217 main road. Turn **left** on the road. In under 140m, at a left bend, cross the road carefully, to reach a 2-way fingerpost on your right, set back from the road and possibly hidden by shrubs, by a house called *Craig Cottage*. *The cosy "Yew Tree" pub provides food "all day every day", It is a little further down the road. You need to backtrack uphill to find the fingerposts.*

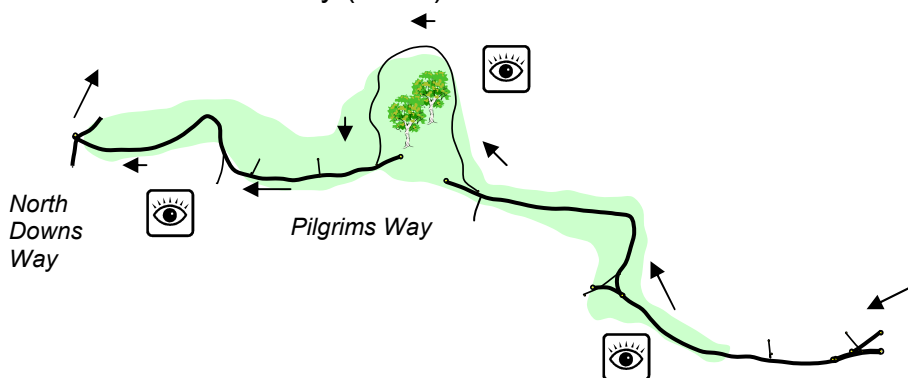


Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **eastern** walk, omitting the North Downs, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Reigate Hill Ascent**. Otherwise, **ignore** that first fingerpost and continue as below.

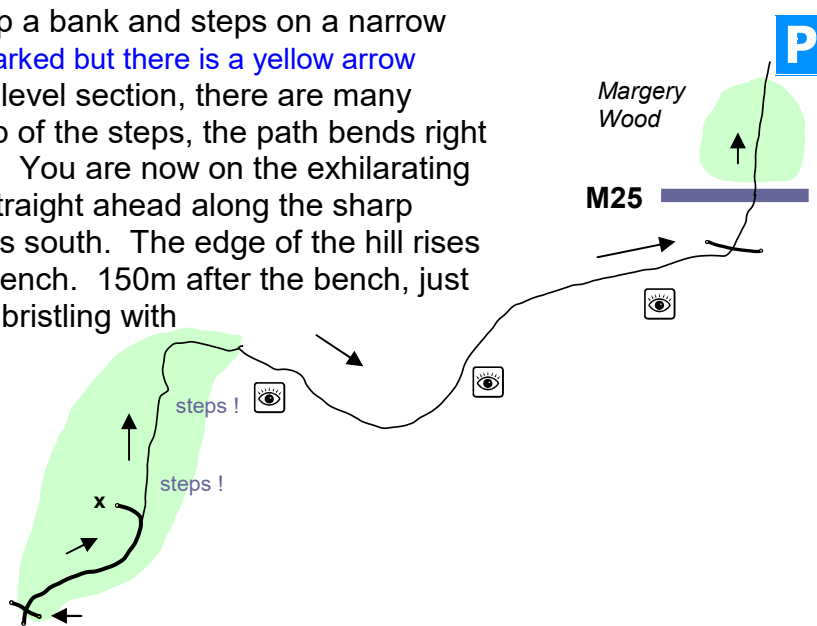
- 5 Continue 20m along the main road to another fingerpost with *Pilgrim's Cottage* on your right. Turn **right** (or **left** if coming back from the *Yew Tree*) on a track here and immediately fork **left** on a track past cottages. It runs for about 500m past houses. (Some of the houses on the right are built into a high buttressed wall that appears to be holding the hillside up.) Soon a break in the trees allows some fine views. Eventually, the track comes to a 4-way junction before it joins a lane coming from the left. **Here you could turn right through white metal posts to return to Colley Hill**

and retrace the first stretch back to the car park. However, you will miss the most exhilarating part of this walk and a fairly steep ascent using steps.

- 6 Continue ahead along the lane past houses. The lane becomes a track again. Stay on the main level path (the Pilgrims Way) at all times, ignoring a footpath on the right and other paths leading off. In under 200m, avoid a major left fork and stay on the main level path with views on your left. The path soon narrows and bends left with Colley Hill looming up on your right. In another 300m or so, you come to a marker post and a 4-way junction with one path left, another diagonally right. Take the **right** fork uphill. You are following a dramatic loop round a deep wooded ravine. There are railings along the way to support you. The path runs close to the open hillside, loops back and descends through yews. Finally you arrive back at the main path at a T-junction, where it comes up a steep flight of steps on your left. Turn **right** back on the main path and continue onwards, avoiding several stiles on the right that lead onto the hillside. After about 300m, you reach a junction with a stile on the right and a yellow arrow pointing left. Ignore the stile, turn **left** at the arrow and immediately **avoid** a meadow-side path on your left and carry **straight on**, staying in the woods (thus leaving the North Downs Ridge Circular Walk). After another 200m or so through woodland, you arrive at a major junction with a fingerpost and a circular badge. Turn sharp **right** here uphill on the North Downs Way (NDW).



- 7 Where, after a strength-sapping 200m, the NDW turns left by a wire fence, **leave it** by going steeply up a bank and steps on a narrow path directly ahead (currently unmarked but there is a yellow arrow helpfully painted on a tree). After a level section, there are many more steps. Eventually, at the top of the steps, the path bends right and goes through a wooden gate. You are now on the exhilarating open hillside once again. Keep straight ahead along the sharp edge of the hill, admiring the views south. The edge of the hill rises gently, curves left and passes a bench. 150m after the bench, just before an odd square brick tower bristling with antennae, turn **left** across a track and through a metal gate. This leads over the M25, through beautiful Margery Wood thick with bluebells in spring, and takes you back to the car park where the walk began.

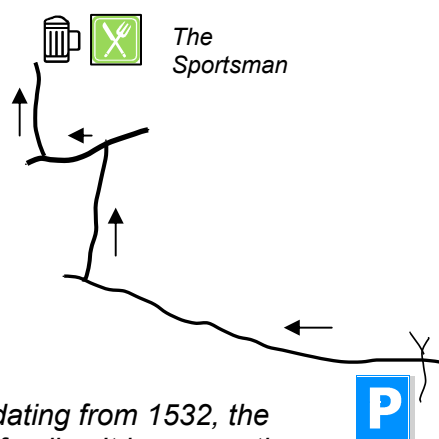


For a refreshing extension to the walk, see the next section.

Refreshments in Mogador



For a final refreshment stop, if your legs have a little strength remaining, the *Sportsman* at Mogador, one of the great pubs of the region, is easy to reach from the Margery car park (800m or ½ mile). Exit the car park and turn sharp **left** on a bridleway beside a meadow with the car park on your left. Eventually you reach a lane beside *Laurel Cottage*. Turn **right** here. At the end, turn **left** on a road. The *Sportsman* is down a lane, next on the **right**.

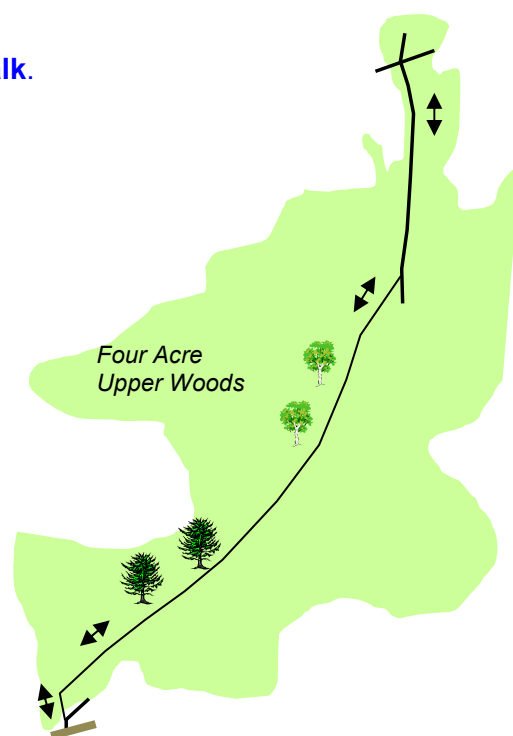


In a peaceful site just on the edge of Walton Heath, dating from 1532, the Sportsman was once a hunting stop-off for the royal family. It has recently been thoughtfully renovated. It is famous for its out-of-doors atmosphere which is so welcoming for walkers, horse riders, cyclists and families. The beer too is good and includes the delicious Otter brew plus Sharp's Doom Bar.

Reigate Hill Descent ½ km

Use this short cut if you are doing the shorter **western walk**.

Turn **right** at the 4-way fingerpost on a bridleway. Follow the stony track downhill to a marker post with blue and yellow arrows. Take the **right** fork, the yellow arrow. (The bridleway on the left also leads to the same point but the footpath is more attractive.) Follow this winding woodland path downhill, soon more steeply under yews. Eventually, at a metal fence, turn **left** and **right** at the bottom to a main road. Turn **right** on the main road and resume the main walk at section **5**. (The *Yew Tree* pub is a short distance further down the main road.)



Reigate Hill Ascent ½ km

Use this short cut if you are doing the shorter **eastern walk**.

Turn **right** by the entrance to a drive and immediately go **right** and **left** steeply up on a footpath. (The bridleway on the right also leads to the same point but the footpath is more attractive.) After a very steep section, your path turns right away from a fence and goes up steeply under yews. The gradient gets easier with hawthorn and ash. A bridleway joins you from the right at a marker post. Continue on a wide stony track to a crossing of tracks by a 4-way fingerpost. Turn **right** at the crossing and resume the main walk at section **2**.

Getting there

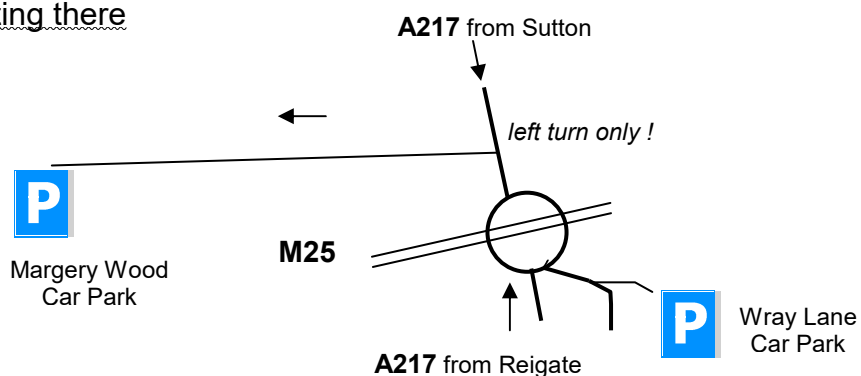
By car: the **Margery Wood** car park is accessed from the A217 (Reigate-Sutton road). The fee is low but the National Trust now ask non-members to pay by *debit card*, so please be sure to bring one. It is the **first** turning left, only about 100m, going **north** from the M25 roundabout. To access it from the M25, go north on the A217 and take the first small road **left**. If coming from the Sutton direction, you need to go *all the way round the roundabout* and back on the A217 for 100m. For the car park, go as far as you can (about 1 km) until the tarmac finishes.

The other car park is the free **Wray Lane** NT car park, also the starting point for the **eastern walk**. It is accessed by following the sign for *Reigate* at the M25 roundabout and immediately filtering **left** on a minor road. If you park here, please do still take the diversion over the M25 to Margery Wood and back, as it so attractive.

You can also start near the *Sportsman* pub at Mogador (see the diversion above).

By train: Metrobus 460 from **Reigate station** (check the timetables) or walk 1 km to the *Yew Tree*.

Getting there



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