



Round The Punch Bowl Gibbet Hill, Hindhead Common

Distance: 7¼ km=4½ miles

moderate walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 19-jun-2011

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Refreshments: Punch Bowl Café, Devil's Punchbowl Hotel

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Views!, woodland, hills, heath, views!



In Brief

This walk takes you along the rim of the Punch Bowl, across to the opposite side and over the highest points with spectacular views. It returns via Gibbet Hill and a part of Hindhead Common with views all around. This walk is perfect at all times of the year, including in winter.



Any sensible clothing is fine. You may find this walk easier with good boots because of the stony paths. There are no nettles, so shorts should be ok. If you bring your dog, please always have a lead handy because of the highland cattle that roam almost anywhere in the Punch Bowl.

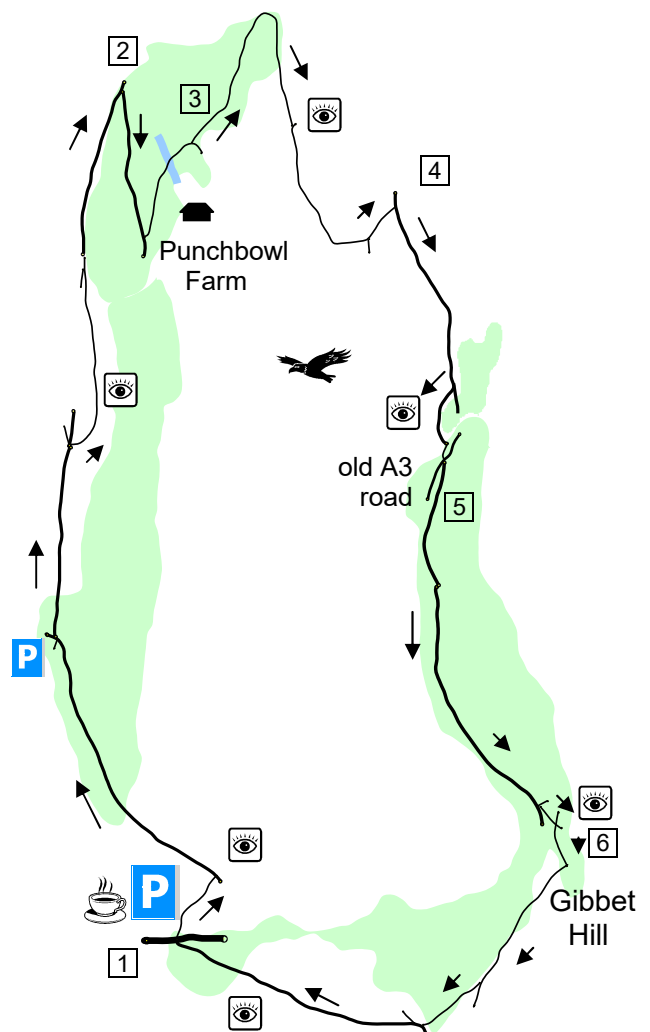


The walk begins at the **National Trust Punch Bowl** car park (postcode **GU26 6AB**). There is a small charge to non-NT members (as 2016: £4 or £2 if you spend £10 or more in the shop/café). There is a small *free* car park at Highcombe Edge at the end of Gorse Hill (postcode **GU26 6SJ**). For travel details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

WC



Map



The Walk

- 1 Go forward from the car park, past the noticeboard and the Surrey Hills pole, to the famous viewpoint over the Punch Bowl. Turn **left** here along a wide level path, passing a group of mature pines. After about 700m with fine views, you reach a junction of tracks at Highcombe Edge near a prominent relay mast. Bear slightly **right** in the direction of the *Highcombe Hike*, shortly going through a wooden gate beside a cattle grid and a noticeboard. In 100m, just after a seat, fork **right** on a narrower path which gives better views of the Punch Bowl. 50m after you re-join the original track, fork **right** with the main track but immediately fork **right** again on a lesser path which leads to a seat and a memorial to the bequeathal of Highcombe Copse to the National Trust.



Highcombe Copse is one of several pieces of donated land that make up the Devil's Punch Bowl. Historically, the Punch Bowl was regarded with fear and superstition as a dark malevolent province of smugglers and deadly spirits and few people dared to set foot there.

Continue onwards to re-join the main track. In another 400m or so, you enter a wood with mature pines and reach a post with many arrows.

- 2 Turn sharp **right** at the post, almost doubling back, staying with the main track, and follow it downhill into the Punch Bowl. When, in 400m, you reach a post with blue arrows near the entrance to a pasture, turn sharp **left** on a bridleway. Punch Bowl Farm is on your right. In 100m, avoid the track on the right leading to the farmhouse and continue ahead. The path takes you over a wooden bridge across the stream and then uphill between banks. At the top, go through a wooden gate to a junction with two paths ahead.

- 3 The route from here is chosen so as to give you a gradual ascent, avoiding any steep sections. Your path will rise up over some distance until you are on the high rim of the Punch Bowl, but always at an easy gradient. Take the wide path on your **left**. The path begins level and later rises a little. In about 350m the path loops completely round to the right before a fence, still going gradually uphill, and soon runs close to the fence. In 250m, the path veers right, away from the fence, and immediately meets a wide crossing track by a yellow arrow on a stump. Go straight over the track onto a narrow sandy stony path opposite. After 300m or so, you pass a clump of pines on your right, with an opportunity to look down on the terrain you covered earlier. *You may see some Highland cattle that roam these hills and woods. They are gentle animals, despite their forbidding horns.* After the pines, keep to the path as it curves left and right again, passing the corner of a fence. Fork **left** round the fence and immediately keep **left** at a T-junction on a wide rising path which veers away from the fence. *As you go, you have fine views left across Thursley Common to Kettlebury Hill.* You reach a one-bar green metal barrier. Turn **right** here on a major, very stony, track.

- 4 Your path still runs very gradually uphill. In 250m, just before a green metal barrier on your left, a narrow path on your right leads to a hidden bench from where you can rest awhile and enjoy views of the whole Punch Bowl. Your path is now smoother and more level. Soon, on the right, just past a second line of stumps, you come to a sign *pedestrian path*. Fork **right** at this sign onto a much narrower path. This path leads up to a high spot – the highest in the Punch Bowl – where you have views in all directions,



including for the first time south and east. Continue in the same direction, now steeply down and soon bear **left** to go **right** through a wooden gate next to a cattle grid and down to a surfaced trail, the old Portsmouth Road. Cross it to a track diagonally opposite. (Turning **right** onto the trail would take you more quickly back to the car park, but by a less interesting route.)

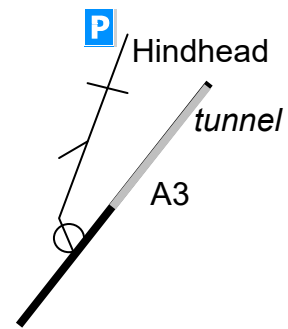
5 The track runs parallel to the trail at first. Then it veers away and joins a pleasant metalled “quiet lane”. *Note that you are on the Greensand Way, indicated by occasional “GW” signs, a national trail running from Haslemere to near the coast in Kent.* The lane levels out and rises again, very gently. After about 700m, it meets a green metal barrier at a junction on the left. (The path on the left leads to a viewing area for the Hindhead Tunnel project, once of much greater interest when it was being constructed. Turn left after about 300m to reach the viewpoint. Return the same way.) Fork **left** on a path past the barrier, passing two concrete blocks. In just 30m, by a post with arrows, fork **right** uphill to reach Gibbet Hill. On your right is the Celtic Cross and ahead are a sloping information board and a triangulation pillar marking various sights visible from this hill. *From here you can see Hascombe Hill, Pitch Hill and Holmbury Hill, all featured in other walks of this series. It was on Gibbet Hill that three men were hung in 1786 for the notorious murder of a sailor returning to his ship in Portsmouth. Charles Dickens even used this story in Nicholas Nickelby.*

6 Turn **right** at the triangulation pillar, going past a post with a “GW” arrow. At a large wooden gate, keep straight on, ignoring a right fork (which leads directly to the car park). You pass another “GW” arrow and a green one-bar metal barrier. Go straight over a junction by a small fingerpost, ignoring the right fork marked *café*. You come through a gate beside a cattle grid, still keeping straight ahead. A quick diversion here on a path to your left will take you out onto the open hillside with another great view and a bench to admire it from: across the valley to Haslemere and beyond to Marley Common (see the *Marley Common walk in the W.Sussex section on this site*). In 70m, at a post with arrows, fork **right**, following another blue “GW” arrow. You reach a junction at a curve in a major track with a seat and various minor tracks leading off. Avoid the first track on the right and veer **right** to join the wide sandy track that goes up into the open, still on the GW. *You now have great views south, to the South Downs and Butser Hill (with the antenna).* Stay on this wide track, avoiding all side turns, however tempting. Finally, go through a gate, past some maintenance sheds (*the old rangers' accommodation and site of an ex-WW2 RAF radar station*), to the road. A little further on the left is the Devil's Punchbowl Hotel and pub. Across the road is the *café* and the car park where the walk began.



Getting there

By car: Take the A3 and turn off, just south of the tunnel, at a sign for Hindhead. At the traffic lights in Hindhead, keep straight ahead into a cul-de-sac. The car park is on the left. For the small free car park at Highcombe Edge, go west from Hindhead on the Tilford Road and, just before it forks, turn right on semi-tarmac Gorse Hill; the car park is at the end. Refreshments are available at the Punch Bowl Café.



By bus and train: several bus services from Haslemere station. Check the timetables.

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