



Sheepleas and the North Downs Way

Distance: 10½ km = 6½ miles, easy walking with 2 short steep sections

Region: Surrey

written: 27/11/09

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revised: 1/12/11

Refreshments: East Horsley, after the walk

Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford)

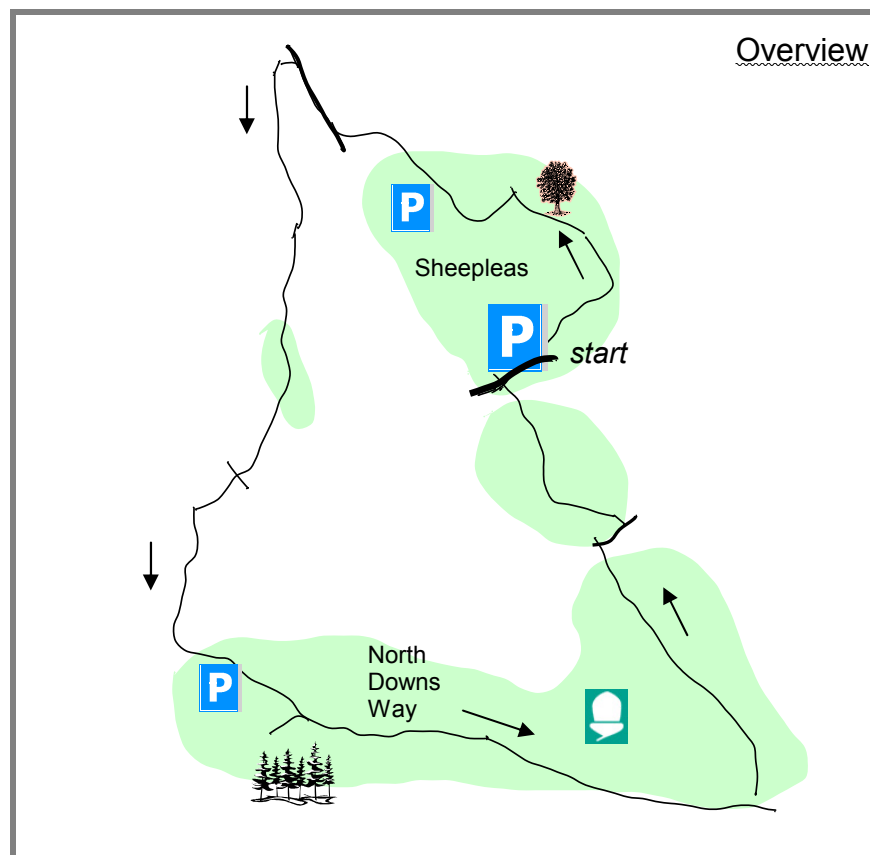
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Long woodland trails, views, meadows

In Brief

Sheepleas is a large undulating stretch of commonland with views northwards to London. This walk covers a wide area across to the North Downs but it is not tiring. It's fine at any time of the year.



There are no nettles but there is mud in some sections though this is never a problem. Still, boots are advisable and as always they make the walk so

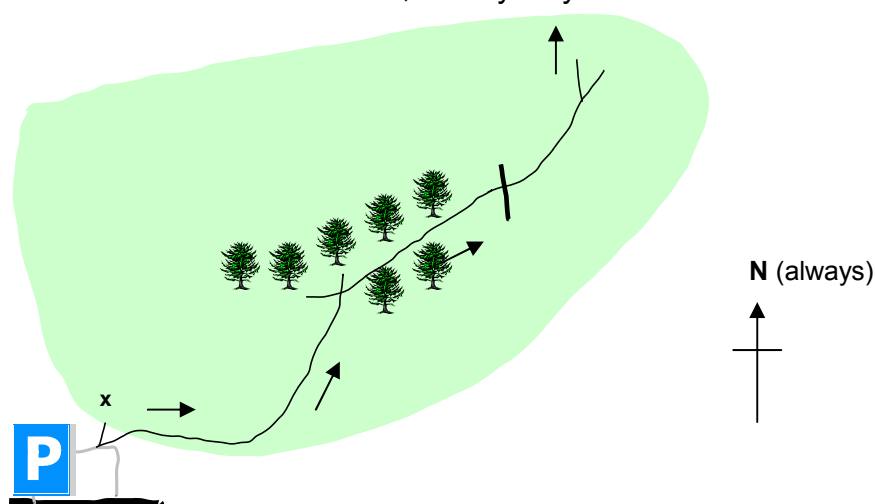
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much pleasanter. This seems to be an excellent walk for the dog too with few fields of livestock and a high proportion of woodland. There are no pubs or cafés en route but plenty in East Horsley for after the walk. The stile count is average.

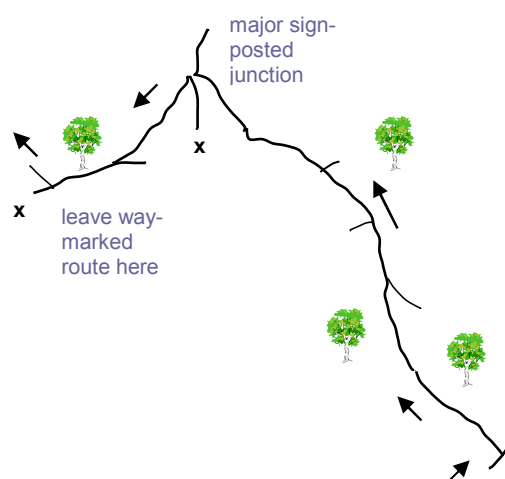
The walk starts at the **Green Dene car park** near East Horsley. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

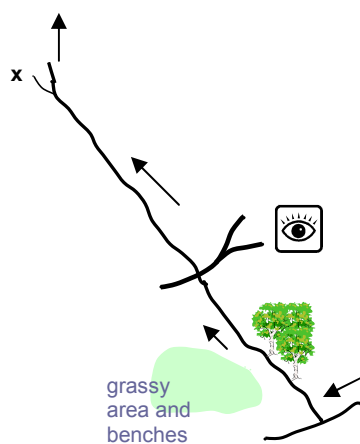
- 1 Facing away from the road, take the exit at the back right-hand side of the car park. Ignore the path leading ahead uphill and instead turn **right** following the sign for the *Self-Guided Trail* (a white arrow outlined on a white background). You will follow this trail for a considerable distance. Just keep following those white-on-white arrows. It runs parallel to the road and then curves left uphill. The trail turns **right** into a splendid yew avenue. Go through posts, over a crossing path and past a 1-bar gate and, 90m after, take a **left** turn with the trail, clearly waymarked with a white arrow.



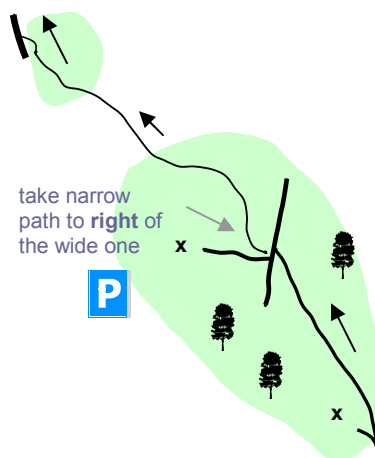
- 2 Follow the broad path gradually uphill, always following those white-on-white arrows. A wide path joins from the right. Continue, avoiding all paths off, left and right. After some distance, the path has a railing on the left and comes to a major junction with a multiple signpost and many paths leading off in different directions. Keep following the white-arrowed trail here by taking the **second** path from the left. After 200m, at a T-junction, turn **right** with the white arrow. Soon after this junction, you meet a signpost pointing half left marked *Permissive Horse Ride* with the white-on-white arrow pointing that way. This is where you **leave** the Self-Guided Trail by ignoring the turning and the arrow and forking **right** on the bridleway.



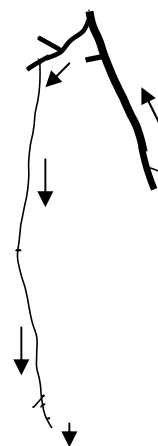
- 3 The path you are now on will take you straight to the road at *Bonny Bank*, but you need to be careful. Soon you see an open space with some picnic tables on your left. Here, keep close to the tree line on the right with the open space and tables on your left. Soon you reach a crossing path with a signpost where your route continues straight over. On your right however you will see a viewing platform where there are views North and East to London; if you go there to take in the view you will need retrace your steps to stay on the original path. About 100m after this junction, there is a clear fork. Take the **right** fork.



- 4 Carefully follow the path as it winds through woodland and promptly goes through a clearing with paths off. After some distance, the path descends, passing a signpost and a junction of paths, goes through a clearing and immediately reaches a very wide and prominent crossing track in a darkly wooded area with tall thin beeches. Immediately opposite you, on the other side of the track, there are **two** paths. The one almost directly ahead is a wide bridleway, but you need to find a much narrower, less obvious, path to its **right**. Take this narrow path. It winds gently right through tall woodland, goes across a light meadow and through tall grass, then through more trees, eventually reaching the road opposite houses called *Bonny Bank* and *Russet House*.



- 5 Turn **right** along this quintessentially English country suburban road. Pass Jefferies Road on the left and continue to a property called *White Gates*. Turn **left** here on a gravel road. Follow this road, ignoring turn-offs, past *Windmill Hill House* until, just before *Chalk Pit Cottages*, take a narrow footpath on the **left**, marked *Footpath Only No Horses*. This narrow enclosed path crosses an unneeded stile and proceeds with large fields on the right and large residential gardens on the left. Eventually you pass a kissing gate on the right, which you ignore, and a second stile. After passing through a small meadow, go over (or squeeze past) a third stile beside a gate into a large meadow, *Daws Dene*, which has a wood at the end and steep slopes on each side.



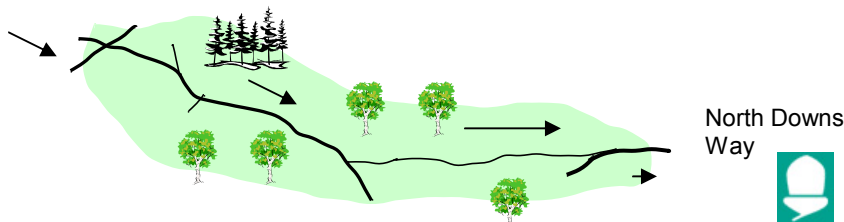
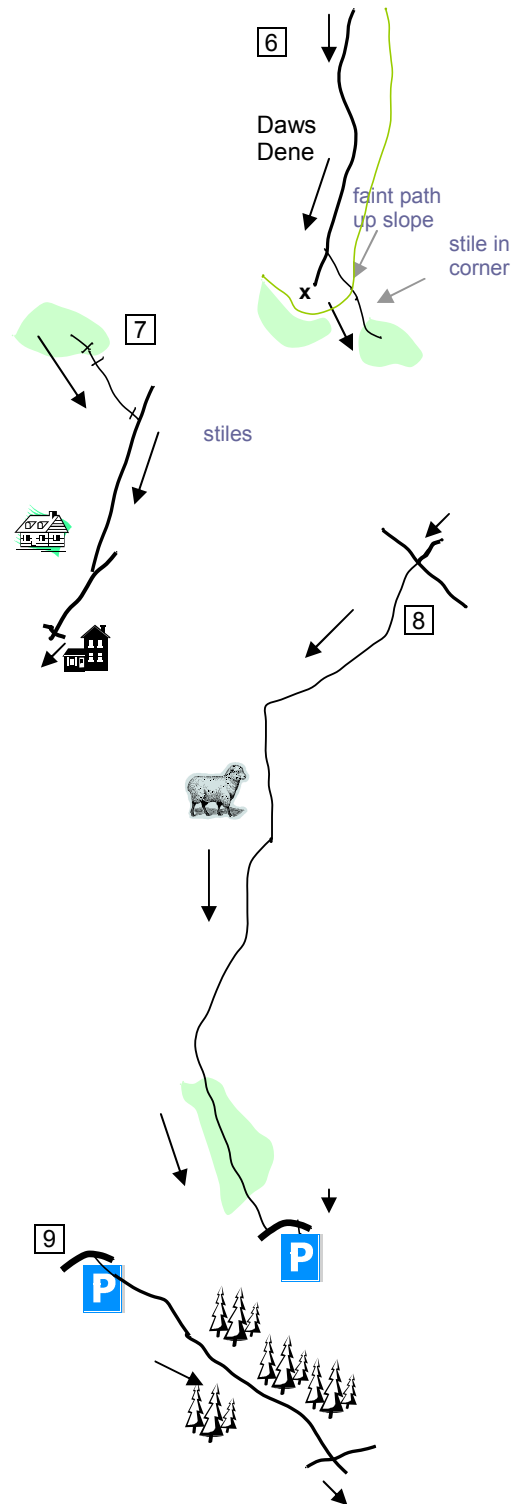
6 Continue along the bottom of Daws Dene until just before you reach the end of the meadow with woodland ahead. Here take a narrow path forking **left** steeply up the slope into the far left-hand corner. Hidden up in the corner under trees is a stile. Go past the stile on a woodland path.

7 The path leads to another stile. After this, keep to the **left**-hand side of a meadow until you cross another stile at a junction with a much wider footpath. Turn **right** here. This easy path takes you past Hookwood Manor. Veer **right** between the buildings of the hamlet.

8 After the hamlet, go over a wide crossing path to a path opposite. This enclosed path passes a tennis court and zigzags between fields mainly used for grazing sheep and, after a 1-km long haphazard course, eventually comes out to a road. Turn **left** at the road, round a bend and shortly come to some wooden bars and Francis Corner car park.

9 Turn **right** through the car park and a metal barrier, continuing straight on at a low barrier with signs for *Francis Corner* and *Easy Access Route*. This beautiful woodland path eventually comes out to a junction with a crossing track and two signposts. Cross the track diagonally and continue your route on the rising track ahead.

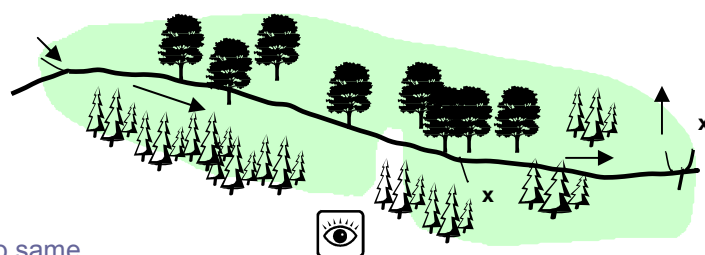
10 In a short distance, at a gentle curve right, ignore a footpath sharp left and a marked bridleway on the right. 60m further on, the track veers right again and here you fork **left** on a narrow green path. Follow this marshy path until it meets a wide track coming in from the right. Continue on this wide well-surfaced track with fine scots pines on your left, beeches on your right. This is the *North Downs Way* which you will follow for some distance.





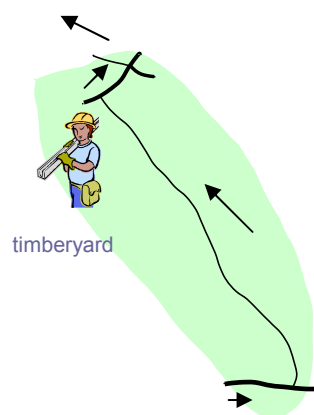
The North Downs Way, opened in 1978, is a long distance footpath from Farnham in Surrey to the coast at Dover in Kent. It is 156 miles long, including a loop through Canterbury, with a shorter option via Folkestone. The path runs along the chalk ridge of the North Downs through quiet, open and beautiful countryside.

- 11 Eventually you pass a large round water tank on the left. Later, there is an open area on your right marked *Little Kings Wood* where you have extensive views southwards. Soon after, there is a signpost indicating a right fork for the North Downs Way. **Leave** the North Downs Way here by ignoring the fork and continuing straight on. The path eventually passes through a metal barrier. 40m after the barrier, look out for a low barrier on the left with a post and coloured arrows. This is before a marker post pointing right. Take the **left** turn over the barrier in the direction of a blue arrow.

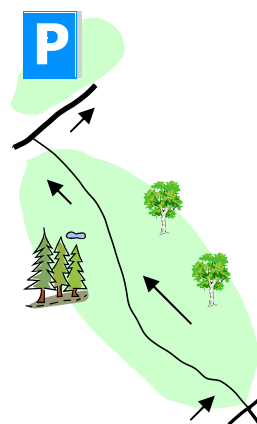


not to same scale!

- 12 The path is narrow at first but later widens where it is joined by a forestry path. After a considerable distance you come to a large timberyard on your left. Veer **right** after the timberyard on another path with piles of timber on each side. You reach a gate and a cross-roads. There is a road ahead and a wide track on the right (part of another walk in this series: *Horsley Lovelace Bridges*) but your route is a narrow path **left** leading steeply uphill.



- 13 After a short but arduous climb the path flattens out. Follow the narrow path through shrub and woodland. It finally comes down to a road. Turn **right** here to the car park, a short distance on the left, where the walk began.



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Getting there

To get to the **Green Dene car park**, East Horsley, by car from the London area, take the Leatherhead-Dorking Road, the A246. After the junction with traffic lights at Effingham, go over 1km (nearly 1 mile) towards Guildford, till you pass the sign for East Horsley and the road widens. Here look out for a signpost on the left to *Green Dene*, *Sheepleas and Shere*. This is Green Dene Lane. (If coming from the Guildford direction, this will be on the *right*.) Follow this lane, later taking the main right fork, still in the direction of Shere. Ignore further turnings off for about another 1½ km (1 mile) until you see the Green Dene car park on the right.

