



## Sheepleas and the North Downs Way

Distance: 10½ km=6½ miles      easy walking with a short steep section

Region: Surrey

Date written: 27-nov-2009

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Date revised: 15-nov-2016

Refreshments: East Horsley after the walk

Last update: 26-mar-2021

Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford)

Problems, changes? *We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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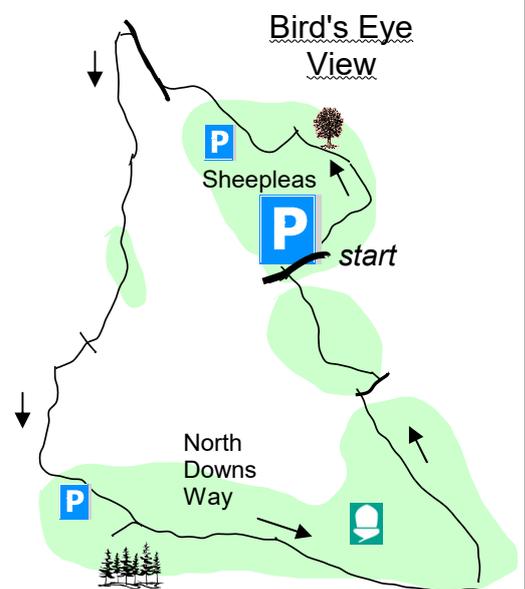
*Long woodland trails, views, meadows*

### 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 in the wetter months, especially on the path after Hookwood Manor. Still, boots are advisable and as always they make the walk so 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.

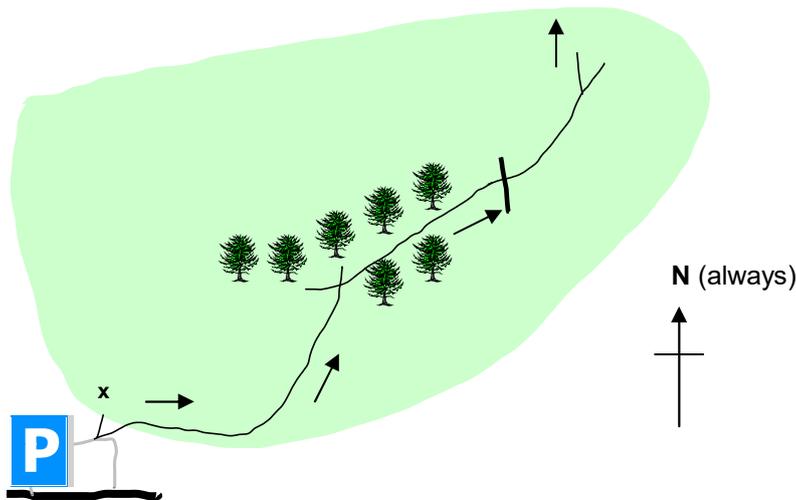


The walk starts at the Sheepleas **Green Dene** car park in Green Dene, near East Horsley, nearest **postcode KT24 5TA**, grid ref TQ 090 510. (*Don't confuse it with the Sheepleas Shere Road car park, although it is possible to start there, with a small diversion.*) An alternative start is the **Francis Corner** car park in Combe Lane which is nearly 1½ miles further along the lane. Some walkers extend the walk by starting at **St Mary's car park**, by the church on the A246 road, W.Horsley (postcode **KT24 6AP**), with an extra section each way. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). **Warning: isolated car parks!**

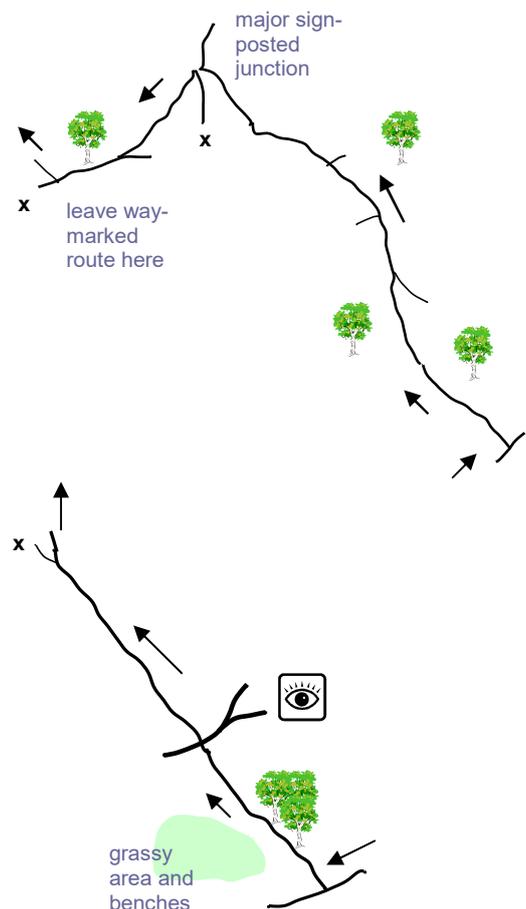


## The Walk

- 1 Starting in the Green Dene car park, with your back to the road, take the exit furthest from the road, at the far **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 1½ km in a forest of maple, beech and red oak. Just keep following those white-on-white arrows. It runs parallel to the road and, in 150m, curves left uphill. In 80m, the trail turns **right** into a splendid yew avenue. Go through a barrier, over a crossing path, past a 1-bar gate and, nearly 100m after, take a **left** turn with the trail, clearly waymarked with a white arrow.



- 2 Follow the broad path gradually uphill, level and downhill, always following those white-on-white arrows. After 250m or so, keep **left** to join a wide path coming from the right. Continue onwards, avoiding all paths off, left and right. After another 300m, the path comes to a major junction with a multiple signpost and many paths leading off in different directions. Turn sharp **left** and immediately fork **right**, still following the white-arrowed trail. After 200m, at a T-junction, turn **right** with the white arrow. 25m after this junction, you meet a signpost pointing diagonally left, marked *Permissive Horse Ride* with the white-on-white arrow pointing that way. **Ignore** the horse ride and the arrow and instead fork **right** on the bridleway, thereby leaving the Self-Guided Trail.

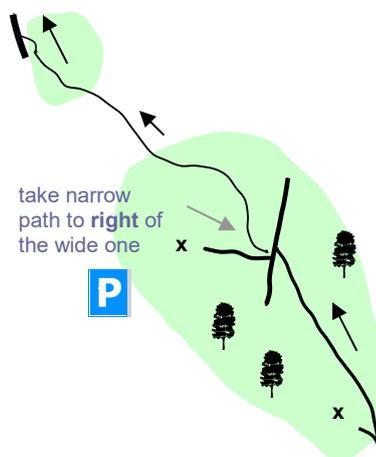


- 3 The path you are now on will take you straight to the road at *Russet House*, but you need to be **careful**. You pass a post with long "fingers" and immediately you see an open space with some picnic tables. Keep close to the tree line on the

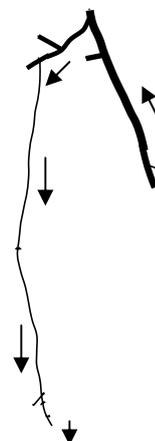
right with the open space and tables on your left. Immediately after, you reach a crossing path with a signpost where your route continues straight over. **On your right however you will see a viewing platform where there are views North and East to London; if you go there to take in the view you will need retrace your steps to stay on the original path.** About 100m after this junction, there is a clear fork. Take the **right** fork following a blue arrow.



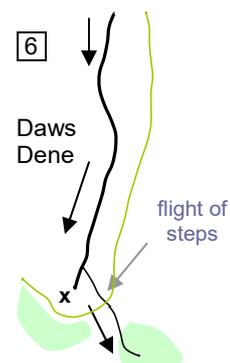
- 4 Carefully follow the path as it winds through woodland and promptly goes through a clearing with paths off. After 150m, the path descends, passing a signpost and a junction of paths, goes through a clearing and immediately reaches a very wide and prominent crossing track in a darkly wooded area with 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 take a different, less obvious, path to its **right**. This path begins straight ahead, then veers right, winding gently through tall woodland, passing swings suspended from tree branches. It goes across a light meadow and through tall grass, then through more trees, eventually reaching the road opposite houses called *Long Meadow* and *Russet House*.



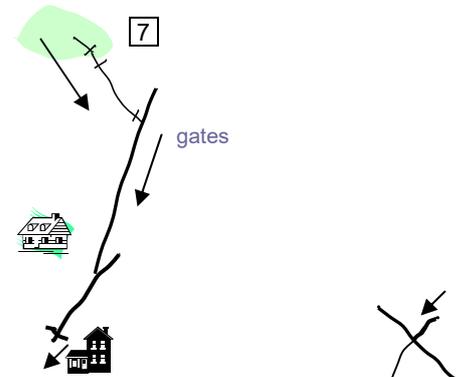
- 5 Turn **right** along this quintessentially English country suburban road. Pass Jefferies Road on the left and continue just past a bungalow called *White Gates*. (Note: house names sometimes change.) Turn **left** here at a public footpath sign onto a gravel drive. Follow this drive, ignoring turn-offs, past *Windmill Hill House*. 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 between fences with large fields on the right and large residential gardens on the left. After nearly 500m, ignore a path on your right just before you pass between two large wooden gates. Go through a gap next to an overgrown stile into a large meadow, *Daws Dene*, which has a wood at the end and steep slopes on each side, with a sheep-proof ribbon fence on your right.



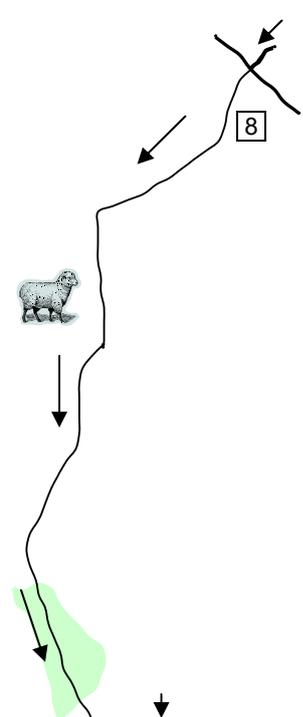
- 6 Continue along the bottom of Daws Dene with good views until just before you reach the end of the meadow and the edge of the wood by a yellow arrow. Veer **left** here uphill, going up a long flight of steps, where you pass an unneeded stile onto a woodland path.



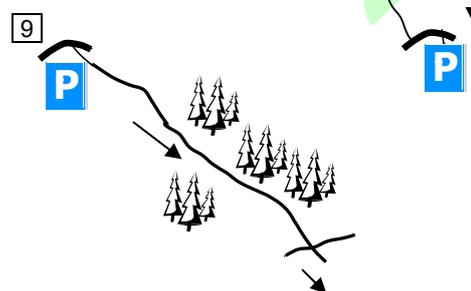
7 The path leads through a kissing-gate and along the **left**-hand side of a sheep meadow until you pass through another kissing-gate at a junction with a much wider footpath. Turn **right** here. This easy path takes you past *Hookwood Manor* and its stables. Veer **right** between the buildings of the hamlet.



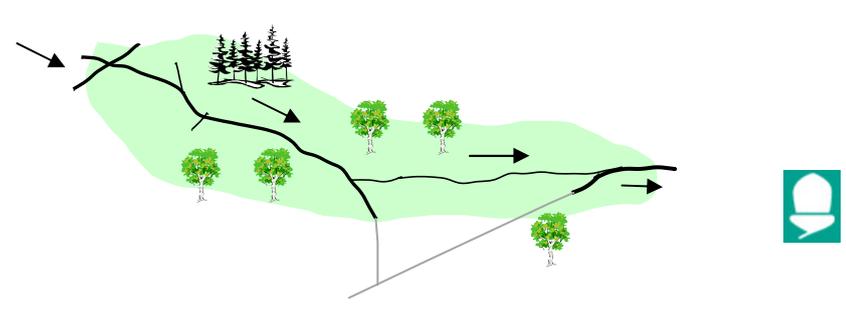
8 After the hamlet, go over a wide cinder crossing path to a path opposite. This enclosed path passes a tennis court. *In very muddy conditions, you may find it drier either on the short path between the wooden fence and the tennis court or on the narrow path near the barbed wire fence on the right (but be careful as where the path re-joins the original you can easily walk into the low rusty barbed wire fence coming from the left).* The path 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, to arrive shortly at some wooden bars and Francis Corner car park (alternative start).



9 Turn **right** through the car park on a wide path, through a metal barrier. In 50m, at a low barrier, continue straight on. This beautiful surfaced woodland path comes out in about 350m to a junction with a crossing track by a partly hidden old circular water tank. Turn **left** and immediately fork **right** on a rising track.



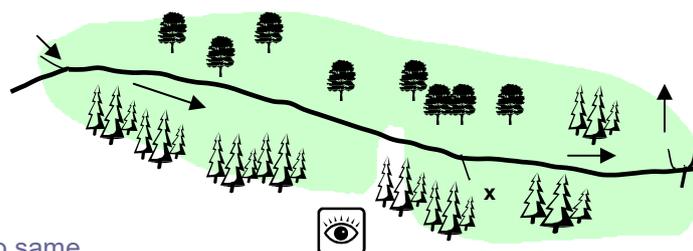
10 In 100m or so, at a gentle right curve, ignore a footpath sharp left and a marked bridleway on the right. Only 60m further on, where the main track veers right again, **leave** it by forking **left** on an unsigned narrow green path which runs beside a cleared area on your right. Follow this mossy path until, in 200m, it meets a wide track coming in from the right. Veer **left** 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 over 1½ km.





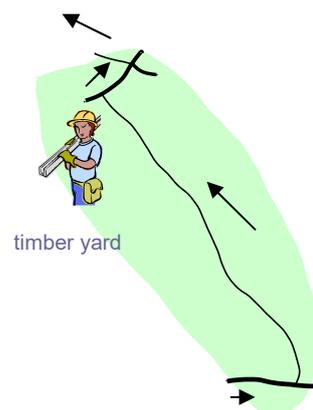
The North Downs Way, opened in 1978, is a long distance footpath from Farnham in Surrey to the coast at Dover in Kent. It is 156 miles long, including a loop through Canterbury, with a shorter option via Folkestone. The path runs along the chalk ridge of the North Downs through quiet, open and beautiful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

- 11 In 400m, you pass a large round water tank on the left. 450m later, there is an open area on your right marked *Little Kings Wood* where you have extensive views southwards. 180m 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, over a crossing track. In 500m, the path passes by a heavy metal barrier. Just 40m **after** the barrier, turn **left**, passing to the side of a low barrier (*don't miss this turn! – the barrier may be hidden by undergrowth*).

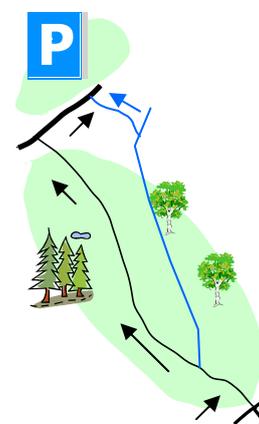


not to same scale!

- 12 The path is narrow at first [2016: with a slight detour around debris of a fallen tree] but, after 500m, widens where it is joined by a forestry path coming down from your right. After another 700m, you come to a large timber yard on your left. Veer **right** after the timber yard on a wide track with piles of timber on each side. You reach a gate and a crossing of tracks by a noticeboard. There is a tarmac drive 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 You now have an arduous climb for 150m. As the path flattens out, avoid a path that veers right over a shallow bank through rhododendrons. (But this rather hidden path will also take you direct to the car park: follow this lovely path through tall conifers and mixed woodland for 600m and when you come out of the woods into the open, go 60m and turn **left** on a very narrow winding path through brambles.) Follow the very twisty path straight ahead through pines and shrubbery. At a Y-junction take the **right** fork. You soon meet a wire fence with a small wooden gate in it. Ignore the gate, which is private, and continue with the fence on your left. Finally, the path comes down to a road. Turn **right\*** here to the car park, a short distance on the left, where the walk began.



\* If you did not park in the Green Dene car park and would like to skip the yew avenue and cross Sheepleas more directly, do as follows. Cross straight over the road and take a brideway opposite, just to the right of a private drive. Follow the brideway uphill, a wire fence on your left. In 250m, the path flattens out and there is a large barn on our left. As the meadow on your left ends, you reach a fingerpost pointing to brideways in four directions. Turn **left** here. The brideway take a right bend in 300m. In another 150m, you can turn **left** on a path leading to the Sheepleas car park. Alternatively, for the main walk, continue 400 further to meet a path coming down sharp right. The path you have been walking is the “very wide and prominent crossing track” referred to in the middle of section 4. Your route therefore continues by turning **left** here on a narrow path into the trees.

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## Getting there

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By car: to get to the **Sheepleas Green Dene car park**, East Horsley, from the London area, take the Leatherhead-Dorking Road, the A246. After the junction with traffic lights at Effingham, go over 1 km (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. (If coming from the Guildford direction, this will be on the *right*.) Follow this lane for a *total* of 2 km=1¼ miles, avoiding two left forks (Crocknorth Road and the very rough Honeysuckle Bottom), always in the direction of *Shere*. The Green Dene car park is on your right.

