



Shere Heath and the Hurtwood

Distance: 15¾ km=9¾ miles

moderate-to-easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 10-jul-2009

Author: Schwebefuss

Date revised: 4-dec-2015

Refreshments: Little London

Last update: 29-oct-2020

Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Heath, woodland, hills, views

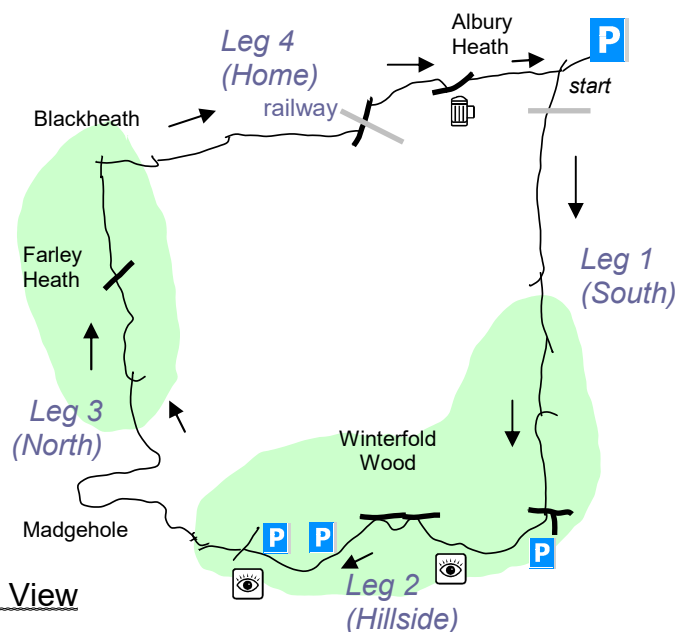
In Brief

This radiant walk is an excursion from the shimmering heathland in central Surrey to the verdant Greensand hills in the south and back through more wild forest and luminous heath.



This walk is fine at any time of the year – even in winter because the heath has a special shimmering quality and you get great views southwards through the trees. There are some nettles, so shorts are not advisable, and boots are necessary except possibly after a dry spell when good walking shoes are adequate. The stile count is very low and the walk seems fine with a dog.

The walk begins at the **Hurtwood Control car park No. 7** on Shere Heath, Surrey, approximate **postcode GU5 9DG or GU5 9QL**, grid ref TQ070470. If you prefer to have the pub in the centre of the walk, you could start at one of the other Hurtwood Control car parks along the southern flank of this walk, as shown in the mini-map. For full details, see near the end (→ **Getting There**).

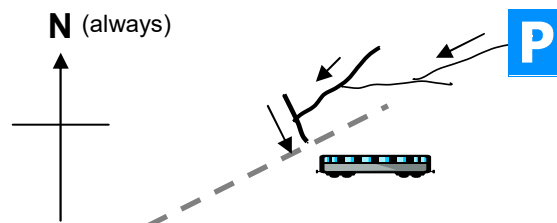


The Walk

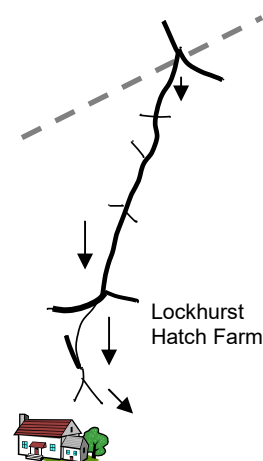
The Hurtwood is a huge area of heath and forest stretching to the boundary of the Greensand hills, where this walk leads. It was one of the first privately-owned places in England to create a "right to roam", in 1926. The present-day Hurtwood Control Trust looks after 3000 acres (1200 hectares) and 60 miles of official paths, not to mention small unmarked ones.

Leg 1: South 5½ km=3¼ miles

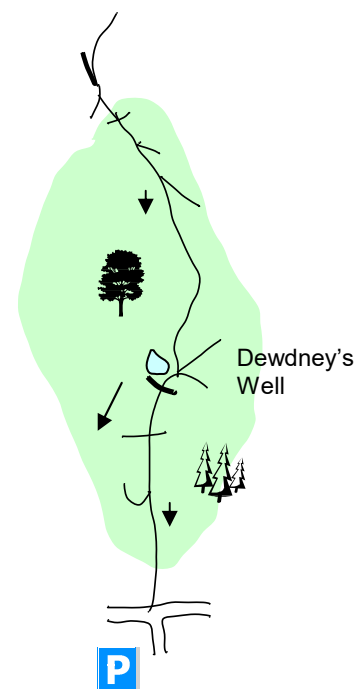
- 1 From the car park, with the road on your **right**, take the mossy path, nearest to the road, across the beautiful heath. Avoid all minor paths off. Your path becomes fringed with bracken and meets a diagonal crossing path. Keep **left** on the crossing path and follow the sandy track to a T-junction at a marker post. Turn **left** here to a railway crossing. Cross the railway carefully.



- 2 Turn **right** on the broad track, Ponds Lane, straight ahead past houses on your left. You will be following this lane for about 1 mile=1½ km, ignoring all turnings off. At first it is extremely sandy and you go past Ponds Farm. Half way, after Dilton Farm and a metal barrier, you reach a tarmac lane. Keep **right** on it. Finally, at an entrance on the left to the historic Lockhurst Hatch Farm, the lane curves right. Leave the lane here by going **straight ahead** between posts on a marked narrow footpath [2016: stepping over a fallen tree trunk]. Later, the path is joined by a track from the right. A short distance further, your track forks either side of a beautiful cottage and garden. Take the **left** fork.

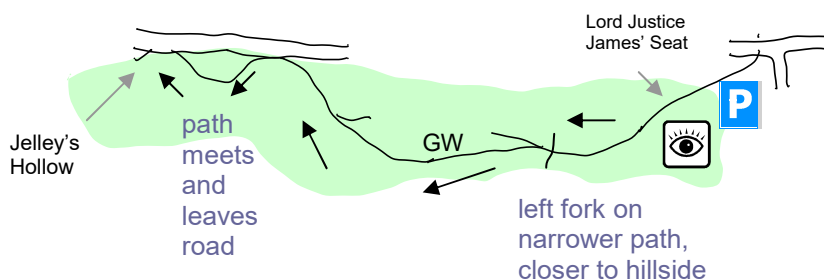


- 3 The track leads you on a straight, then wandering, course into Winterfold Wood. Within the first 500m you pass marked paths leading off left and right and then reach a marker post with blue arrows at a major fork. Take the **right** fork. In another 500m, the path ascends to a major junction known as Dewdney's Well with a gate on the left and a bend in a forest track. Turn **right** on the track, passing a pond on the right and crossing a tarmac forestry road. Keep straight on at all times, avoiding a track right in 100m. In another 250m, just after you pass a pond on your left, the forestry track swings away to the right but your route continues ahead through a gate. Gradually it enters the more upland vegetation of pine and bracken. Finally, 1 km from Dewdney's Well, the path reaches a road at a junction with a car park ahead.



Leg 2: Hillside 3½ km=2½ miles

- 1 Cross the road to the car park (*Horseblock Hollow*, Hurtwood Control 4) and turn **right** through it, passing a wooden barrier. You are now on the Greensand Way and you follow it for about 1 mile=1½ km. In 250m, you pass Lord Justice James' seat on the left, a well-known viewpoint with great views to the left across the Weald of Sussex. Roughly 200m after the seat, you pass a marker post. In 20m, ignore several small paths, especially a narrow cyclist's path on the left. 30m later, you come to a definite fork. Take the **left** path, the narrower option, temporarily leaving the GW. This path goes briefly down, giving you good views left to Hascombe Hill and Blackdown, and then up again, re-joining the GW after 200m. The path comes near to a road on your right. Don't join the road but veer **left** on the main track. In 200m, the path reaches the road again at a junction of paths with a deep ravine known as *Jelley's Hollow* on the left.

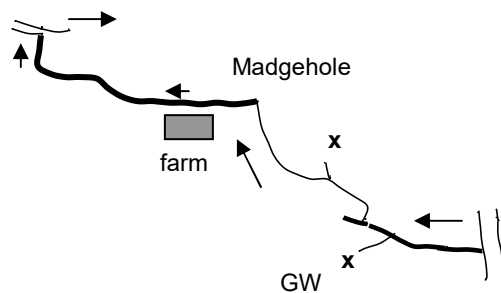


Greensand is a sandstone rock that was laid down during the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods before the clay and the chalk that form the Downs. The whole structure makes up the Wealden Anticline, which is like a huge dome stretching between the North Downs and the South Downs, with the central part completely worn away to expose the underlying rocks.

- 2 Do not cross the road but continue on the Greensand Way, marked with the familiar GW symbol, that goes up **left**, leaving the road. Keep looking out for the yellow GW arrows on posts. The path keeps left at a line of tree stumps by a hollow. 150m from the road, it crosses a rough tarmac drive and curves right. After another 400m, the track passes Hurtwood Control car park 5 on your right. *Just before the car park is a remarkable creation by sculptor Giles Miller called "Perspectives", a sheltered circular seat made from wooden "leaves", from which you can admire the fine views south over the Weald.* About 100m after the parking area, the path forks. Take the **left** fork, still on the GW. In 40m, at a fork, turn **right**, thus avoiding the path straight ahead with the very steep decline. In 50m you reach a second fork. Turn **right** to stay on the GW. Your path goes under wires and straight over a crossing path. On your left is an open view with a metal seat. Immediately after, you reach Hurtwood Control car park 6 and another viewpoint. Do *not* cross the centre of the car park but **keep left** on a path marked with a yellow arrow and go down steps to a road.

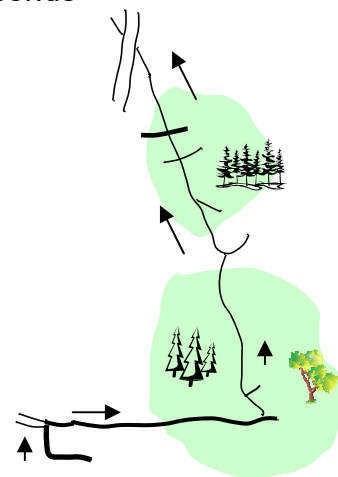


- 3 Cross the road, slightly left, on a level track ahead. In 200m you reach a large metal gate and a signposted fork. Go **straight on** here, ignoring the left fork and thereby leaving the Greensand Way. Your path veers right to run alongside a tree plantation on your right. Just before the track meets a metal gate, turn **left** as directed by a footpath sign fixed to a telephone pole. Almost immediately turn **right** at a T-junction onto a narrow path that leads you into trees. It widens and becomes a stony sunken track. It leads down to the historic isolated hamlet of Madgehole. Turn **left** on the drive past buildings and continue on Madgehole Lane past the magnificent Tudor *Madgehole Farm* on the left. Stay on the winding lane for some distance, with a right bend, as far as a tile-hung house called *Smarkham*.



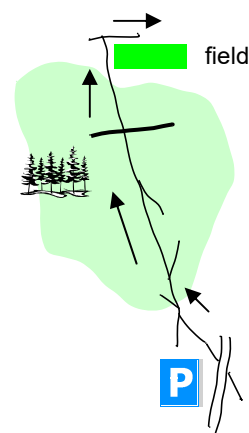
Leg 3: North 3 km=2 miles

- 1 Leave the lane here by turning **right** on a track. The track ascends gradually beside a spruce plantation on your left and becomes very stony. After 850m, after a narrow wooden bridge, you reach a junction by a wire fence, a marker post and a tall ash tree. Turn **left** here on a narrow sandy path running beside the fence and, in 50m, ignore a stile and footpath on your right. There are a lot of nettles at first but they soon ease off. The path becomes wide and sunken and gradually rises to meet a junction after 400m. Go straight ahead here on a very sandy path. In 200m, you are joined by a straight path coming from the right. At a crossing path, weave left-right to continue straight on, ignoring the minor path almost straight ahead, later crossing a wide track used by vehicles. The path continues across magnificent Farley Heath, site of an ancient Roman camp, with its fine tall pines then a mix of oak, birch, rowan and whitebeam until, after ½ km, it finally meets a road.



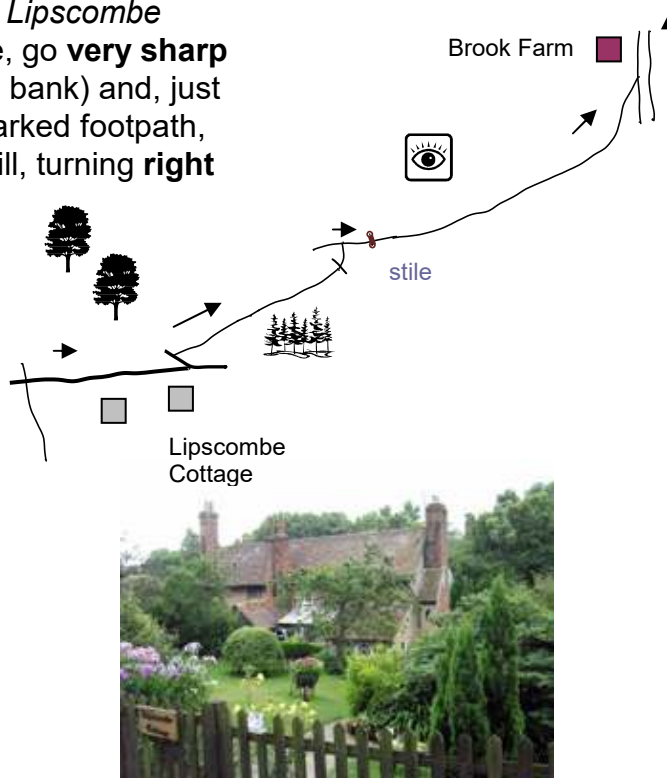
- 2 Cross the road, going through a large area used as a Hurtwood Control car park 8 and a timber repository.

- P** When you pass a noticeboard at the far end, veer **right**. Avoid the first path on your left, a wide horse path, and turn **left** on the **second** path, a narrower path, just **after** a small oak with a blue arrow beneath it. Stay on the main narrow, slightly sunken, path. In 80m, avoid a path that branches up right and generally ignore all side paths. 400m from the car park, your path joins a wider sandy path coming from the left. In another 400m, your path reaches a wide crossing track. Go straight ahead here. In 200m, you can see a small green meadow over on the right with a house visible just beyond it. Immediately after the meadow, turn **right** at a post with several arrows [Aug 2018 - Oct 2020: the post is missing: some walkers still miss this turn!] including a Fox and Crown symbol indicating that this is part of the *Fox Way*, a 39-mile circular walk around Guildford.

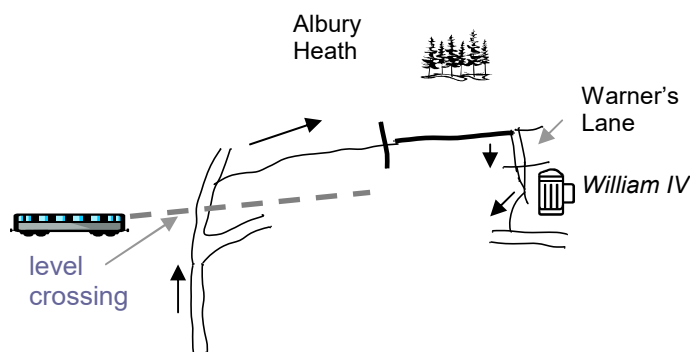


Leg 4: Home 3 km=2 miles

- 1 Go past the entrance to the house, *Remnants*, and continue on the drive to the delectable *Lipscombe Cottage*. Immediately past the cottage, go **very sharp left** up a track (or take a short cut up a bank) and, just before a barrier, turn **right** on a waymarked footpath, still the Fox Way. Follow the path uphill, turning **right** at a T-junction, to a superfluous stile and go straight ahead through the pinewoods of the Broomfields Plantation. At the end, at a T-junction, turn **right** to go through a metal gate into a large meadow. You now have a fine view of the North Downs with the hamlet of Brook ahead. Follow the path between fields and, where the hedge on the left ends, join a farm track leading to a road. Turn **left** on the road and ignore a road on the right. (It also leads to the pub but by a less interesting route.) The road passes Brook Farm on the left with its magnificent redbrick house.

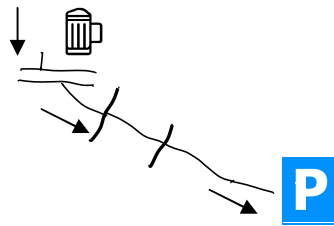


- 2 Continue over a level crossing. Immediately after the crossing, turn **right** on a narrow path between banks. Once out of the very thick bracken, you reach a Y-junction. Take the **right** fork onto a distinct mossy path across the south (right-hand) side of Albury Heath. Cross a wide track and continue, past a large brick shed, on another wide track leading to houses, keeping ahead at a junction. Keep the heath on your left and houses and gardens on your right. 200m after the start of the houses, you pass a house called *Heather Lea*. 50m after that, turn **right** on Warner's Lane. It leads to a junction of drives: keep straight on here and, at the end, turn **right** over a stile. The path leads down through a small farm plot and piggery, via another stile, and out into the car park of the *William IV* pub. (For more details of the pub, see the walk *Shere and Little London*.)



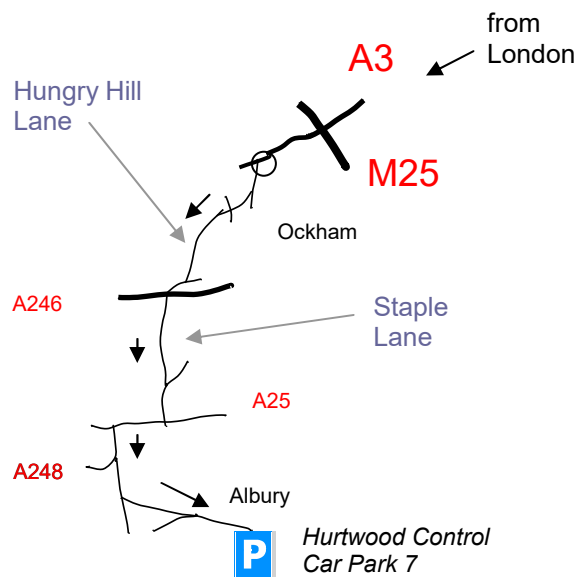


- 3 Turn **left** up the road from the pub. In about 20m take a path forking off **right**. This leads over Shere Heath. In 200m you meet a major crossing track. If you did *not* begin the walk in the Shere Heath car park, turn **right** on this path to reach and cross the railway, and resume from section 2. Cross the track and and keep straight ahead at a minor oblique crossing path, to reach the car park where the walk began.



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Getting there



By car: The walk begins at the Hurtwood Control car park No. 7 on Shere Heath, Surrey. To get there from the London area, first you need to get to the start of the A248 off Shere Road, signposted Godalming and Albury. If coming from the A3, **one** way is through Ripley and West Clandon and straight over the traffic lights.

Another scenic route is as follows. Take the A3 and, after crossing the M25, exit at a sign for Ockham and Ripley. Take the B2039 road **left**, signposted to Ockham. In about 1 km=0.6 mile, at a left bend, just after the entrance to the church, turn **right** on Guilehill Lane. This lane becomes very narrow for a short stretch ahead and there are passing spaces in case you meet another car. Follow the lane to a T-junction and go straight on, slightly right, on Hungry Hill Lane. Follow this lane all the way to East Clandon village and turn **right**. On reaching the main A246 Leatherhead-to-Guildford road, cross straight over carefully and continue up Staple Lane. This lane goes over the Downs and ends at a junction with Combe Lane where you go straight on downhill. On reaching the A25 Shere Road, turn **right**. The A248 is the second road left.

Either way: At a junction where the A248 bends sharp right, turn **left** (really straight ahead) on a road signposted *Albury Heath, Farley Green, Peaslake*. In about ½ mile=800m, take the first road on the **left**, Park Road, signposted *Peaslake, Ewhurst*. Follow the road for ½ mile=800m and go past a triangular junction with Little London. The car park is about ¼ mile=400m further, on the **right**. You can also get there through Shere, but the village already has enough cars (see the walk *Shere and Little London*).