



Walton-on-the-Hill and Headley

Distance: 16 km=10 miles

moderate walking with long easy sections and one strenuous ascent

Region: Surrey

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Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Villages, heath, woodland, hills

In Brief

This is an extremely varied walk that includes two remarkable stretches of heathland with fine views. The going is always easy, except for one steep descent and a brief very steep ascent (requiring some fitness) up the escarpment of the North Downs.

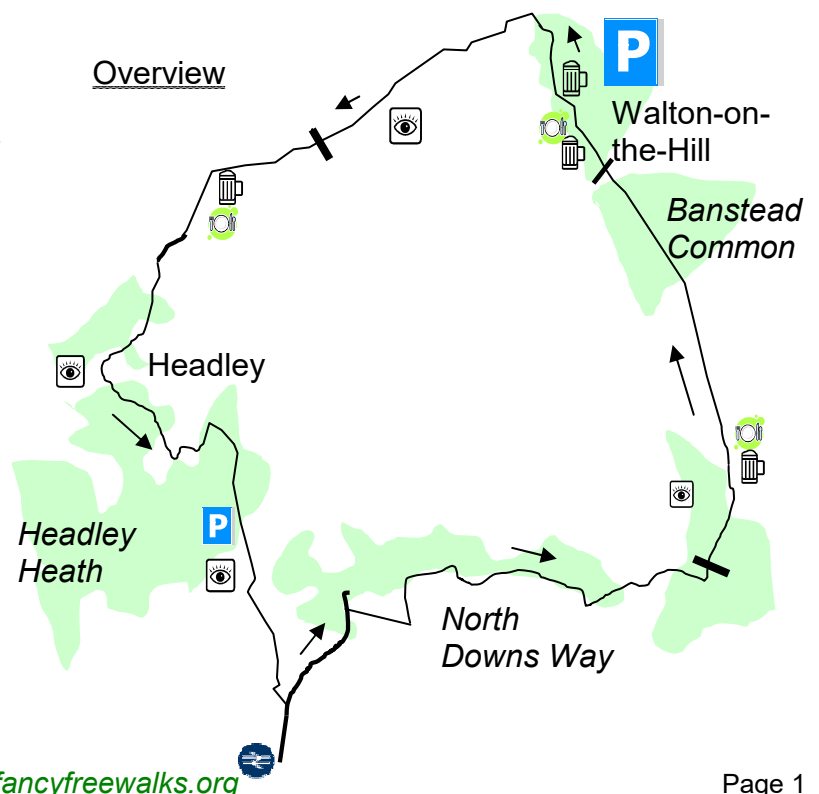


There are few nettles to worry bare legs but in high summer it's always best to cover them. Boots are essential if the weather has been wet because the two steeper sections and the North Downs Way can be very slippery, and some paths across Headley Heath can be a bit squishy. A walking pole is very helpful here too. It is fine for your dog.

The walk begins at the **Mere Pond in Walton-on-the-Hill**, postcode **KT20 7UE**. Park on the roadside of Deans Lane near the *Blue Ball* pub. A good alternative is the **Brimmer car park** on Headley Heath, nearest postcode **KT18 6NR**, free to NT members: begin at Leg 3. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

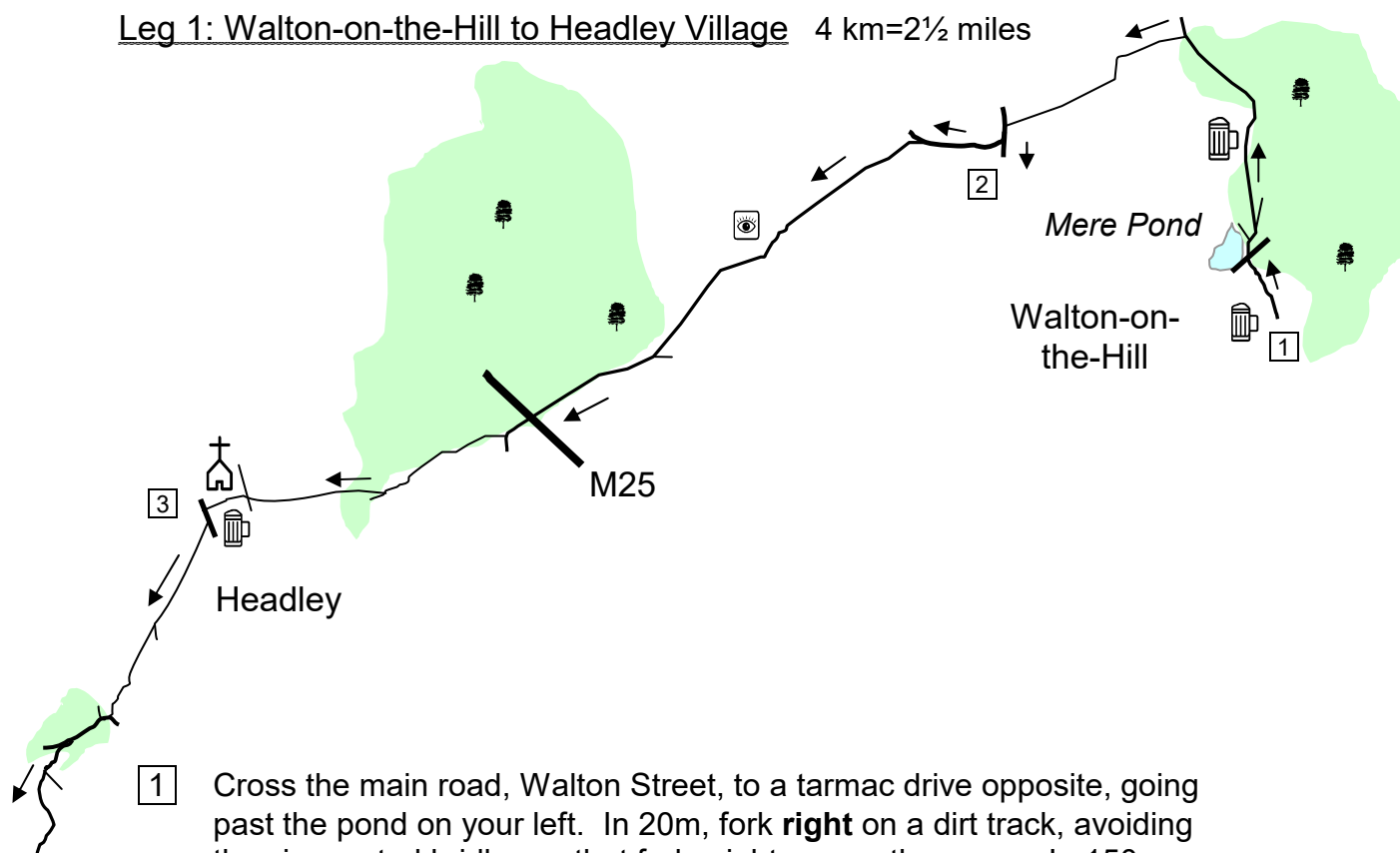


You can also begin the walk at **Betchworth Station**. Turn **left** up the main road for 300m using the sheltered footway and join the walk at Leg 3 section **3**.



The Walk

Leg 1: Walton-on-the-Hill to Headley Village 4 km=2½ miles



1 Cross the main road, Walton Street, to a tarmac drive opposite, going past the pond on your left. In 20m, fork **right** on a dirt track, avoiding the signposted bridleway that forks right across the grass. In 150m, on reaching a little green with houses, keep **right** on the main track. Shortly, you reach a corner known as Withybed Corner and a little gem of a pub at the end of a line of cottages. *The little secluded "Bell Inn" is known locally as "The Rat" but no one is sure why. It is open all day from 12 at weekends and has one of the few remaining bar billiards tables.* Continue past the garden by the pub on a track. In 100m, you pass a white coal tax post. Immediately, at a fork, take the **left-hand** of two paths, with a wire fence on your left and a wooden lapped fence on your right. Ignore a footpath and stile on the right as your path runs between new houses site on the left and a house and garden on the right. Continue on a bendy path between fences, over a crossing path and finally through a wooden barrier to a lane.



2 Turn **left** on the lane and immediately **right** at a road junction. Avoid a bridleway on the right and stay on the road for 150m where there are some metal gates on the left. Fork **left** here on a sheltered bridleway just to the left of the gates. As you go, the tip of Headley Church is visible. There are horse jumps on your right as your path gradually descends between meadows. In 750m, your path meets a path coming from the left and veers **right**. The path gradually ascends and passes underneath the M25 motorway. Keep straight ahead on the bridleway, avoiding the wide track that curves off left uphill. You are now walking between tree plantations of Costal Wood. About 300m from the underpass, you meet a fingerpost. Fork **right** here on a footpath. The path leads beside a metal gate and between meadows to the church at Headley. Go through its solid wood kissing-gate into the churchyard and continue beside the church on your right, noting the unusual wooden tombs. *St Mary's Church dates from Norman times but it was rebuilt around 1850. The rector from 1916 to 1941 was T.E.R.*



Phillips the celebrated astronomer. Continue to the road beside the *Cock Inn*, a pub-restaurant that also does afternoon teas; the terrace is a pleasant place to chill out.

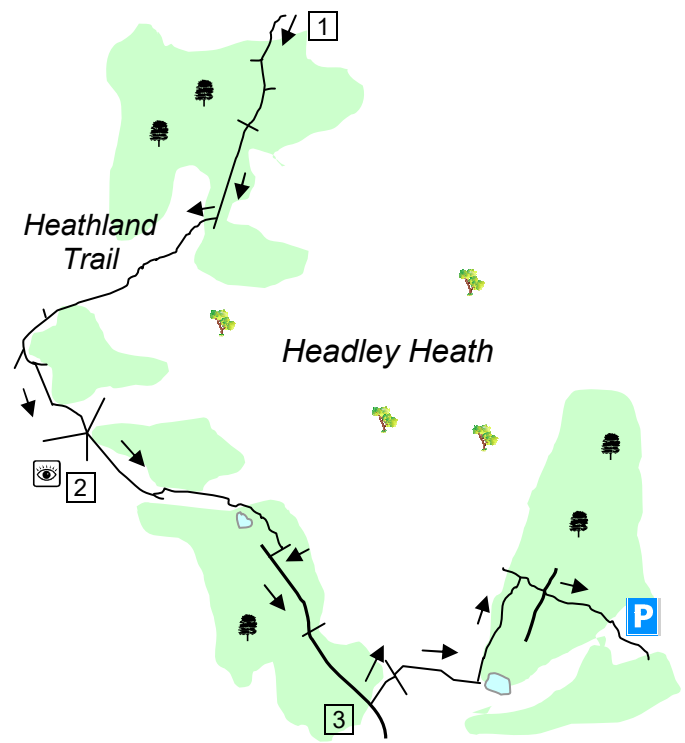


Headley was recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 as "Hallega" meaning a clearing in the heather. Before then, the manor was held by Goda, daughter of King Ethelred the Unred (see "Godstone" in this series). Nearby Headley Court is Britain's principal rehabilitation centre for amputee servicemen.

- 3 Turn **left** on the road for only 20m and then **right** on a footpath beside the entrance to *Threshers Dean*. This path takes you across a valley between horse pastures. Avoid a footpath on the left and continue between a fence and a wall to a road. Turn **right** on the road, ignoring Tot Hill Lane on your right and, in 150m, split away **left** on a tarmac track leading to a National Trust sign for Headley Heath. Turn **left** on a track, Crabtree Lane, avoiding the footpath to its left. In 100m, at the metal gates of *Broom House*, keep **right** on a sandy and stony track and, at the top, go through a small wooden gate next to a larger one into Headley Heath.

Leg 2: Across Headley Heath 2½ km=1½ miles

- 1 Headley Heath is a beautiful, fascinating sweep of heather, birch and light oak, spread over a complex topography. The directions below will take you along the Heathland Trail, an easy-to-follow route marked by orange-topped posts, ending at the Brimmer car park. (This is not the main car park but the smaller one 600m further south.) Keep straight ahead on a wide path, ignoring minor paths right and left. In 60m, between two deep wide pits, take the **right** fork next to a blue-topped post. Keep straight ahead where your path is quickly joined from the left by a stony path. Keep following the blue-topped posts, immediately going over a crossing path. Shortly, your path goes down a dip. Turn **right** at the bottom to a post with an orange top. From here you could take a rest from reading this guide by simply keeping to the Heathland Trail, following those orange-topped posts, until you glimpse the Brimmer car park through the trees. There are so many of these posts that we'll use the abbreviation "OTP". Follow the arrow, with its lizard symbol, by veering **left** at the post. The route goes down and up across a valley where jays sometimes abound to another OTP. Keep ahead to the edge of a plateau where there is a seat and terrific views ahead across to Box Hill and beyond.
- 2 Keep on to another OTP where the route curves down sharp **left** (with a short cut on a rooty path). You can see the next OTP ahead up to the right; fork **right** here up a grassy path to a bench seat near the post. Keep left to another post with an orange arrow and keep straight on as indicated. You are also on part of the purple long walk, a trail worth doing another day. This path takes you to a big complex junction with a seat and another chance to





admire the view. Keep ahead past the bench on a level path as indicated. In 100m, an OTP points you **left** to another OTP in woodland. Turn **right** here as indicated. After 80m through gorse, an OTP directs you on a **right** fork along a grassy path, keeping right past a small pond, and onwards on a narrow grassy path. In 30m, at a T-junction, turn **right** to find your next OTP, where the route turns sharp **left** on a wide path.

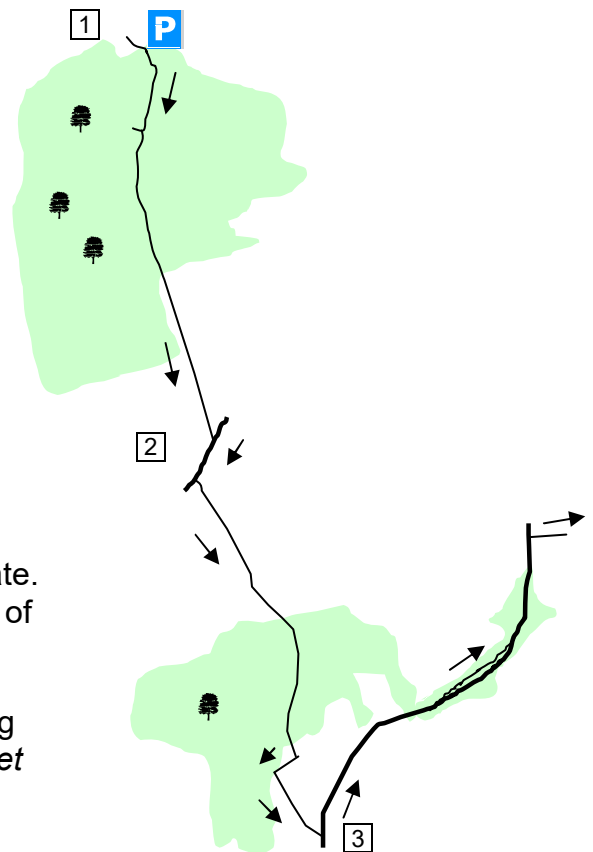
- 3 There's an OTP in 150m. Continue 130m to a second OTP and turn sharp **left** here as indicated. In 50m, your path crosses a wide path to another OTP. Veer **right** here, as indicated, on a delightful grassy path heading for another OTP in the distance. When you reach it, you will see a pond straight ahead with a bench. Turn **left**, as indicated, across the grass and brambles to the next OTP, marked as number "9", which is 150m away, under two birch trees by a small pond. Here you reluctantly have to leave the Heathland Trail by forking **right** instead of turning left. Keep right to cross a wide horse track and take a wide path ahead. The path soon goes through a small wooden gate into the Brimmer car park.

Leg 3: Brimmer Car Park to Pebblehill Road 2½ km=1½ miles

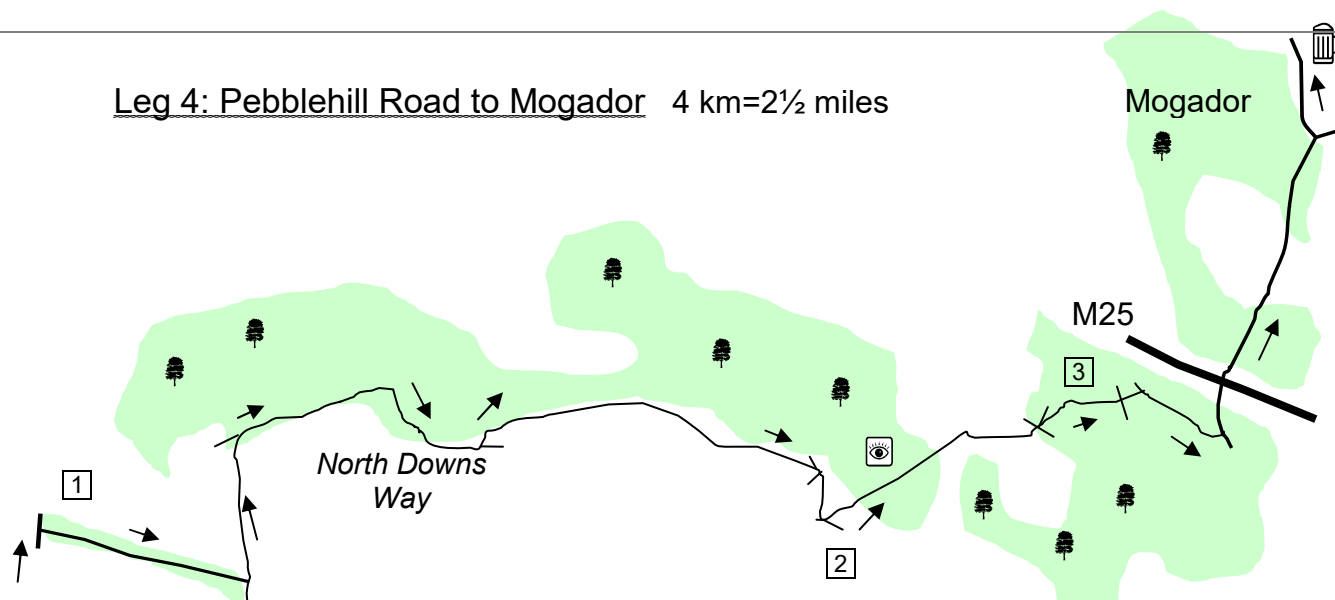
- 1 With the main road on your left, keep ahead through the car park to the far side and go through a small wooden gate, with "14" carved into the gatepost, into the woods on a nice wide winding path. Where, in 150m, the main path bends right, keep ahead, as indicated by a blue arrow, on a narrower path. On meeting a fence in 80m, go straight through a wooden gate, by a white arrow, beside gardens. Soon there is a covered water reservoir on your left. Go through a metal kissing-gate, along the right-hand side of a horse pasture and through another kissing-gate to a road. Turn **right** on the road.

- 2 After 70m, go **left** on a path beside a wooden gate. You now have some fine views ahead, including of Reigate Hill on your left. Your path begins to go downhill, taking you over a stile and then more steeply down through woodland with overhanging branches. *Take great care here, especially in wet weather!* This is followed by a yew forest and a more open terrain. The path now runs between gardens to a driveway. Turn **right** on the drive and **left** at the corner, still on the tarmac drive. Continue down past houses, meeting the North Downs Way (NDW) joining you from right and onwards to a main road, the B2032 Pebblehill Road.

- 3 Turn **left** on the main road using the footway. After *Hazelcombe*, your footpath splits from the road and runs parallel to it on a green route with young yew trees on each side. Later, it rejoins the road. As the footway ends, cross the road and, in nearly 100m, turn **right** at a signpost for the NDW.



Leg 4: Pebblehill Road to Mogador 4 km=2½ miles



1 Your path runs along a fine wide beech avenue and ends at a modern kissing-gate. Turn **left** here at a fingerpost. Go through a small wooden gate and along a hedged path. After a gentle ascent, turn **right** at a fingerpost through a wooden barrier on a level path through Dawcombe Nature Reserve. In 300m, your path rises to a fence and a fingerpost. Keep **right** beside the fence on a track, still on the NDW. Where the paling fence ends after nearly 250m, at a fingerpost, turn **left** up some steps onto another level path. This path runs for 750m along the hillside. Finally, you meet a 4-way fingerpost with a path coming down sharp left. (By turning **left** on this path, **right** at the top in 500m, and another 750m, you can avoid the steep climb in the next section – *much* longer, details left to the walker.) Keep straight ahead here, still on the NDW, but immediately keep **left** beside a paling fence. In 100m, you reach another 4-way fingerpost. Here, the short tough section begins. Turn **left** up steps. *You will need to take your time and be especially careful here if the weather has been wet.*

2 There are three ways of dealing with a steep climb: (1) flex your ankle muscles to boost your upward thrust, (2) look down and imagine you're walking on the flat, (3) every 20m or so, stop, turn round and say "I just **have** to stop to admire this wonderful view!". There are natural steps in the hillside of Mount Hill and posts with white arrows to guide you up through the yews. Suddenly the path levels out at the top passing by a white house on your left, and by a wire fence with a large white bungalow on your right. Go over a stile and cross a track by a 4-way fingerpost. Avoid a drive ahead that runs next to a fence, but take a narrow signposted path to its right, soon joining a drive from *Mulberry Lodge*. Turn **right** on a wide tarmac drive.

3 Stay on this drive, ignoring all turnoffs, for about 350m, all the way to a T-junction. Turn **left** here on a tarmac drive, crossing the M25 motorway. Ignore a bridleway left and stay on the tarmac ahead, passing scattered houses and bridleways leading off. Nearly ½ km from the motorway, at a road junction with a sign for the *Sportsman* (sometimes invisible in the branches of a big tree), turn **left** on the lane, quickly reaching the pub.



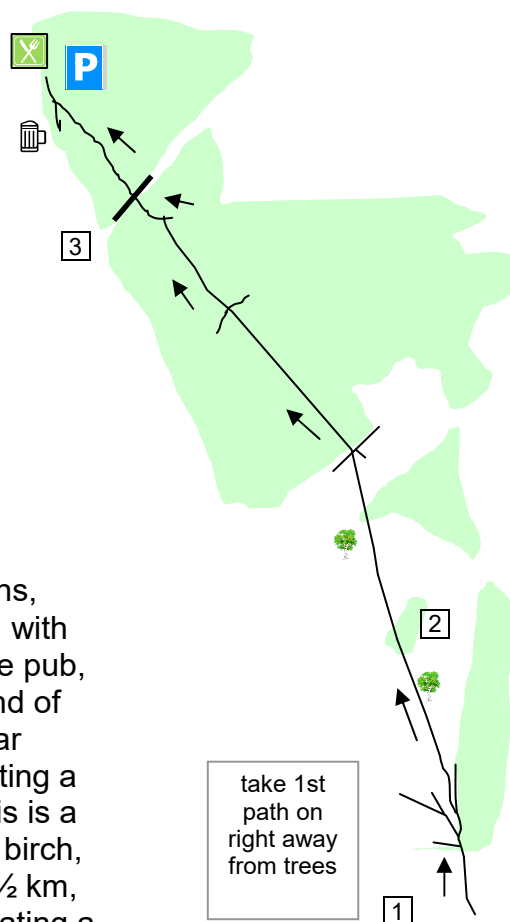
In a peaceful site just on the edge of Walton Heath, dating from 1532, the "Sportsman" was once a hunting stop-off for the royal family. It has recently been thoughtfully renovated. It is famous for its out-of-doors atmosphere which is so welcoming for walkers, horse riders, cyclists and families. The beer too is good and includes Youngs and Doom Bar as regulars, plus two guests, such as Whitstable Bay and Hooky Gold. The "Sportsman" is open all day every day from midday for food and drink.

Leg 5: Mogador to Walton-on-the-Hill 2½ km=1½ miles

1 Continue past the pub on your right to a barrier and noticeboard at the start of the open Banstead Common. From here, there is a straight route to Walton-on-the-Hill. You need to get your initial direction exactly right and the rest is automatic. Take a path just to the left of the noticeboard but, in only 10m, fork right on a more grassy path. In 80m, your path runs close to the woods on your right and the path ahead divides. Avoid the path that runs next to the trees but take the parallel path about 20m to its left. This path leads you across the centre of the common and passes to the left of a dense clump of silver birches. Keep straight ahead at all times.

2 The grassy path goes over several crossing paths, through gorse, sparse silver birch, then heather, with an open space on the left. Almost 1 km from the pub, the path runs through a sheltered grove in a band of trees. 150m later, you meet a crossing path near some thicker woodland. Go straight over, deviating a fraction left, on a wide sandy path opposite. This is a beautiful section of woodland of oaks and silver birch, later with tall pines further over on the right. In ½ km, the path crosses a wide track by two posts indicating a “permissive ride”, plus a post with arrows, becoming very stony. At a T-junction turn left, quickly arriving at the main Dorking Road.

3 Cross the road carefully via a wooden barrier on each side. Keep straight ahead, zigzagging right-left past a signpost and going over a narrow crossing path into trees. After 300m or so, houses of Walton-on-the-Hill come into view. As your path comes out into a clearer area, take any path left towards the *Blue Ball* pub/restaurant and so back to the road where the walk began. For final refreshments, the *Blue Ball* offers ales and food in smart surroundings. The “*Rat*” is two minutes away. There is also a pizzeria on the corner.



Getting there

By car: Walton-on-the-Hill can be reached from the A217 Sutton-Reigate road. Turn off at the Tadworth roundabout, taking the road west signposted *Tadworth Walton-on-the-Hill*. Follow this road over a railway bridges, across traffic lights and through woodland, reaching the pond in one mile (1½ km). Turn left and park on Deans Lane.

By train: Tadworth Station is only ½ mile (700m) from the walk. There is a short cut to Thyme Avenue and thence across the Common. See the map.

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