



White Down and Dunley Hill

Distance: 4½ km=2¾ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 7-apr-2017

Author: Fusszweig

Refreshments: picnic

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

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

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Woodland, heath, grassy meadows

In Brief

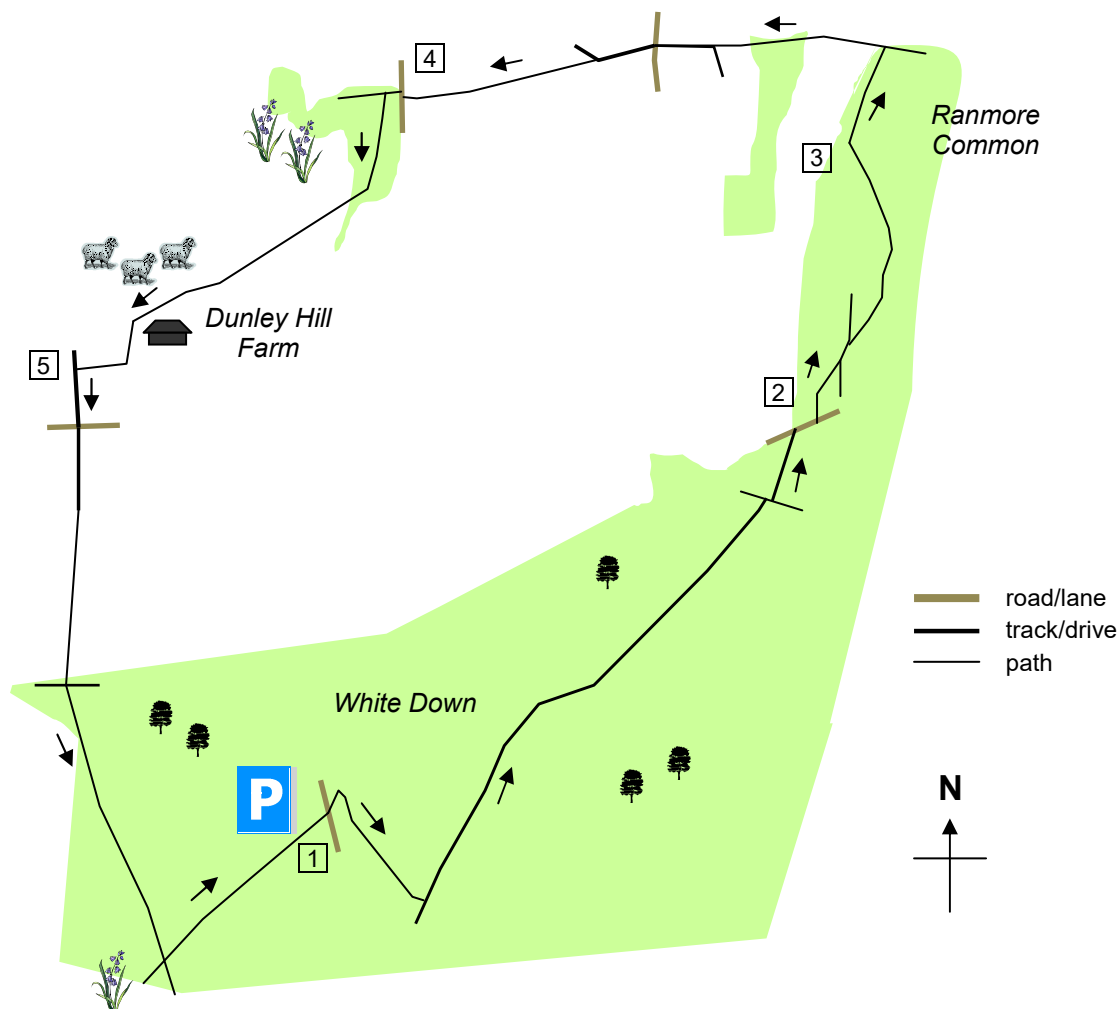
This is a most unusual walk using rare local paths which will probably be unknown even to regular Surrey ramblers. It is excellent in late spring or summer when the woodland paths are relatively firm. This walk is an ideal companion for the *White Down Bluebell Walk*, making a very satisfying five mile figure-of-eight circuit.



There are no nettles or brambles to speak of on this walk, so any sensible clothing is fine. Boots are necessary because of the forest paths, except in very dry weather. Your dog can come if he can be lifted over two stiles, with a short lead to cross a sheep field.

The walk begins at the **White Down** car park, grid ref TQ 114 495, very approximate postcode **RH5 6SX**, in Whitedown Lane, north of Abinger, Surrey. To get there from the London area you can use either of the routes at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 Go out of the car park, cross the road and take a narrow path on the other side, a fraction right. The path turns immediately left, then wheels right and snakes its way up over the hillside to meet a wide bridleway after 150m or so. Turn **left** on the bridleway, passing a group of fallen tree trunks. The bridleway runs along a good, fairly straight route through birch and gorse. *There may be a few muddy patches, even in summertime, but you can nearly always skip round them.* After 750m on this path, you meet a wide crossing path, with a road visible on your left. Your route is straight over, but there is woodland debris in your way, so you need to skirt around it, left or right. In another 150m, you reach the road, Ranmore Common Road, opposite *Ranmore Lodge*.
- 2 Turn **right** on the road for 20m, then **left** on an unmarked path into the woods of Ranmore Common. In just over 100m, another path joins you from the right and, 20m after, your path forks. Take the **right** fork, the slightly more uphill choice. In 100m you come out into the open on a glowing heath dotted with oaks and silver birch. Go straight across the heath, heading for a wooden post. When you reach the post, you will notice that it has red and white bands and the characters "1" and "E", a marker on a rider's trail. Keep straight on past the post, on a clear grassy path. When you reach the corner of some woodland, keep straight on, passing the woodland on your right. You reach a large green meadow where horses graze.

3 Your path wheels **right** to run beside the meadow. Soon you meet another marker post, this time with the characters “10” and “Z”. Keep **left** past the post. Your path runs close to the horse pasture again and soon reaches the far corner where it comes to a T-junction. On your right is a very muddy horse path, but fortunately your course is **left** on a nice dry path, with the horse field still on your left. Soon you have a view across sheep fields on your right and your path descends to meet a tarmac drive coming from a house on your left. Keep ahead uphill to meet tarmac lane at the top. Cross straight over the lane, a fraction left, onto a surfaced drive for *Friars Elm*. Where the drive curves right, **leave** it by going over a stile and along the right-hand side of a large meadow. At the far side, go over a stile and continue ahead. Near the next corner, go over a stile and steeply down the grass slope to a wooden swing-gate and a road, Critten Lane.



4 Turn **right** on the road for only 5m and then go **left** on a footpath steeply uphill. In only 15m, at a fork, turn **left** on a narrow woodland path, **away** from the wire fence. *In late spring, you will see a fine show of bluebells here.* Your path gradually climbs, with the road down on your left, zigzagging past woodland debris. As you approach a meadow, your path bends right and goes through a metal kissing-gate and up into a large meadow. Cross the meadow diagonally left, heading a fraction to the right of the large house prominent on the other side. This is Dunley Hill Farm with its belvedere tower. At the other side, go over a stile into a small sheep field and cross it diagonally. Exit the sheep field just before the opposite corner, **left** over a stile. Your path is a narrow passage which comes out into a yard and turns **right** by some sheep sheds. You come out to a driveway. On your right (not on your route) is a small business/retail park. Immediately next to you is a sentry box, one of the few clues to what was Dunley Hill Camp.

Dunley Hill was a WW2 camp where Canadian soldiers were barracked. The camp housed around 300 men and was used from 1941 to 1945. Nissen huts were hastily erected giving a muddy and uncomfortable way of life, punctuated by battle-drill and exercises, with lectures on gunnery and gas. The Canadians wandered into Dorking, raised some high jinks and a few married local women. Some nissen huts have survived because they were pressed into use for farm storage.

5 Turn **left** on the drive, out to the Crocknorth Road. Cross straight over the road through an open wooden gate onto a track, then through a small wooden gate on a grassy path. There's a wooden bench here in case you would like a breather. Keep ahead on an avenue of hollies to enter the woodland of Old Simms Copse, famous for its bluebells. Cross straight over a wide track, up a bank, onto a wide path into the depths of the forest. In 400m you reach a 3-way fingerpost.



*You now have the opportunity to do the [White Down Bluebell Walk](#), by turning **right** at the fingerpost. Otherwise ...*

Turn **left** at the fingerpost. In 250m, you reach the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: From **Dorking**, follow signs for *Ranmore*. Go just over 3 miles, avoiding the Denbies car park and three junction on your right, till you reach a **cross-roads** with Critten Lane and Whitedown Lane. Turn **left** on Whitedown Lane. The car park is 600 metres on your right.

You can also start at the **A3-M25** junction. Take the *slip road* signposted *A3 Guildford* but, in 100m, turn **left** on a road signposted *Effingham* that runs past a lake through forest. Follow the road to a T-junction and zigzag right-left over a humpback bridge, passing *Effingham Junction station*. At Effingham village, go straight ahead over two mini-roundabouts. Go through traffic lights over the main A246 road and follow a winding road to a crossroads with Ranmore Common Road and Crocknorth Road. Give way (!) and cross straight over. The car park is 600 metres on your right.

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