



Farley Heath, Wonersh and Blackheath

Distance: 12 km=7½ miles or 9½ km=6 miles easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey

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Author: Fusszweig

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Refreshments: Shamley Green, Wonersh

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

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Heath, woodland, village, views

In Brief

This is a wonderful walk through heath and woodland, visiting some of the lesser-known parts of Blackheath and calling in at the pretty villages of Shamley Green and Wonersh both with facilities for refreshment and some excellent pubs (to enquire at the *Grantley Arms*, ring 01483 893351).

Between the two villages you have an easy walk along the disused railway, part of the Wey South Path. With the villages, the pubs, the heath and the woods, this walk stands as one of the best and most varied in Surrey.

The walk can be shortened by 1½ miles, omitting Shamley Green and the Wey South Path. Note that this short cut requires walking along a busy section of the B2128 road (albeit with a 30 mph limit), unfortunately with no pavement and no alternative route.



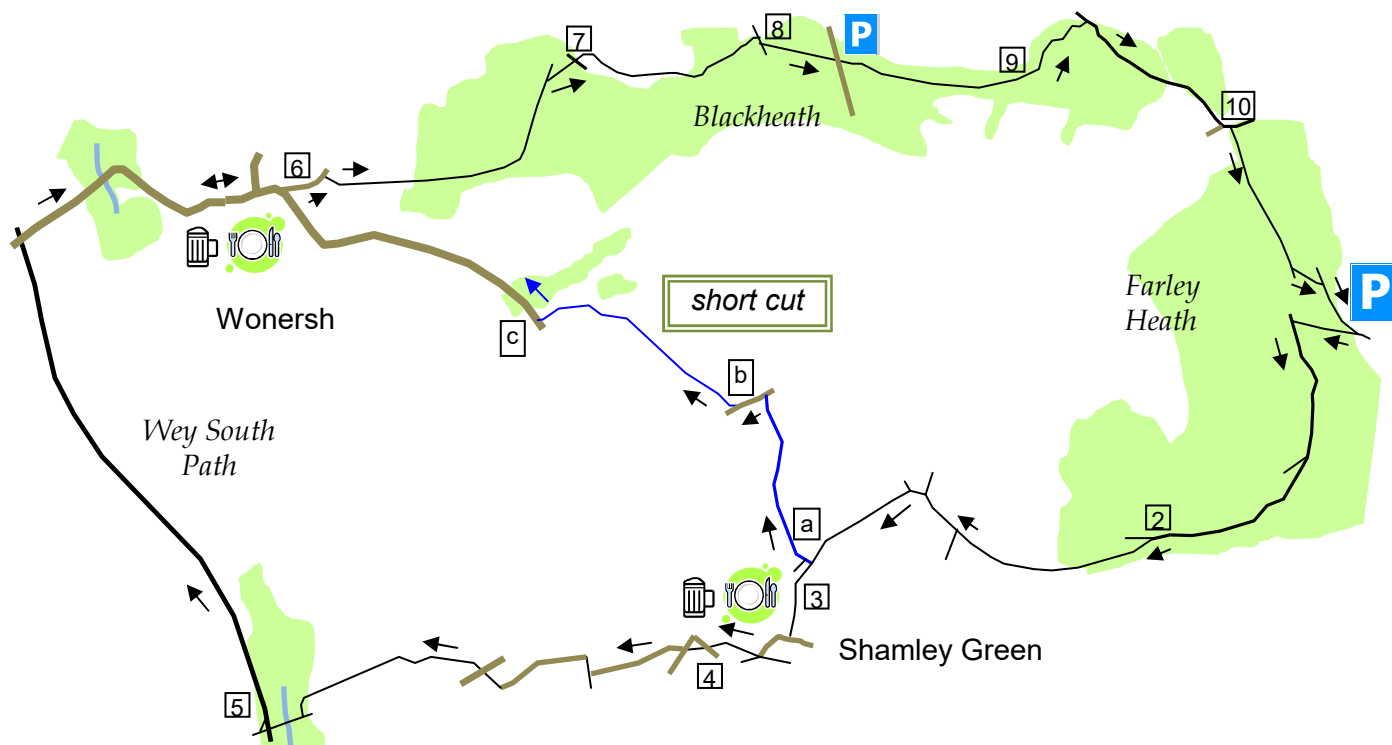
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There are some nettles on this walk on one of the narrow paths in summer but very few brambles, so you need either a pole to clear your path or long trousers. In the wetter months boots are recommended but otherwise strong walking shoes should be adequate. The full version of this walk is fine for your dog, but the shorter version is *not* suitable because of the main road and one dog-proof stile.

The walk begins at the **Farley Heath** car park, approximate **postcode GU5 9EW**. An alternative start is the **Blackheath Common** car park, approximate postcode **GU5 9EW**, grid ref TQ 050 448 on Littleford Lane, ½ km south of the crossroad in Blackheath village. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 From the side of the Farley Heath car park furthest from the road, take a wide path just to the **left** of the noticeboard, a straight sandy path. *You may find a big patch of mud just here in season: apart from another short stretch after the next junction, this situation is never quite as bad again on this walk.* In 150m or so, you reach a crossing path with a metal gate ahead. Turn sharp **left** on this path (using a narrow short cut on your left). You shortly reach an earth bank by some wooden railings. *(Most walkers take a narrow path on the left to skirt any mud.)* Keep ahead following the railing, allowing for one or two wide gaps, soon with a garden on your left. Your path zigzags right-left, still following the wooden rail, becomes quite sandy and runs close to the road. *On your right are Sandhurst Copse and Sheepwalk, private woodland that you can visit with permission: see the sign.* Keep the rail on your right and, where the track veers right through the rail, fork **left** on a narrower path, as indicated by the blue arrow.
- 2 This generous sandy path runs between the rail and a wire fence. Soon the path darkens with hollies. Suddenly you are out of the trees near a farm. You have great views: first, on the right, you can see as far as the church of St Martha-on-the-hill, Guildford, at Chilworth, which lies on the North Downs Way / Pilgrims Way; then, on your left, you have view of Hascombe Hill. Stay on the main track past the barns, ignoring a footpath left, avoiding a drive on the left into a rural property. Soon after, ignore a footpath on the right between two metal gates. Just 20m after the gates, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn **left** onto a narrow footpath between wire fences. There may be baby deer in the field on your left. Ignore a footpath on the right after the first field and continue a little more steeply down, going over two stiles and straight across a small pasture. At the bottom, go over a stile in the corner.

Decision point. If you want to take a more direct route into Wondersh, avoiding Shamley Green, skip ahead in this text and do the section **Wondersh Direct**. Note that this section involves walking 700m along a busy road.

- 3 Turn **left** over a small stile [2016: just a wire], ignoring a gate just to its right that leads into a meadow. Your path goes beneath overhanging hollies and beside a high fence to reach Woodhill Lane in Shamley Green. Turn **right** on the lane, immediately passing the entrance to *Tanyards Farm*, the childhood home of Richard Branson (*note the huge plastic animals*). On reaching the green, turn **right** along the edge, soon reaching the *Red Lion*.



Shamley Green was developed in late Saxon times as a subsidiary agricultural hamlet to Wonersh. The large village green is surrounded by many old listed timber framed buildings with the village store in the centre. The “Red Lion” gastro-pub has a promising menu and is a good vantage point to watch the cricket (which has been played here since 1840). The neighbouring “Speckledy Hen” café / deli (closed Sundays) sells sandwiches, soup and homemade cakes and is recommended by walkers.

- 4 Cross the road in front of the Red Lion and head across the green (or round it if cricket is in progress), bearing a little to the right, aiming for half way along the perimeter road on the other side. Here, you will find a side road leading away from the green, Sweetwater Lane. Follow the lane, passing *Arthurs Cottage*¹. Ignore a footpath on your right and stay on the lane to its end. Turn **right** on Stonards Brow and **left** again in 50m. Ignore another footpath on your right as the road narrows by a *School* sign. At the end, bear **right** and keep right beside a small green. On reaching a road, turn **right** and immediately **left** on a drive prominently marked *Westland Farm*. After the farm, keep left on a track, passing a small water works. Your path curves left to arrive at a T-junction with another path. Turn **right** to cross the River Wey by a bridge, continuing over the weed-choked old canal and under the dismantled railway, now the *Wey South Path* (WSP), also part of the *Downs Link*, (DL) and signed as such. Immediately turn **right** and veer **left** on the WSP/DL. *The WSP follows most of the old Wey and Arun Canal, a lost route to the sea. The canal has been restored along some stretches. Several other walks in this series follow it part-way. [Mar 2016: the path was being surveyed: was that portentous? nothing to report yet.]*

- 5 The WSP/DL runs through woods, then beside back gardens, some elaborate, leaving the road and running close to it again, passing the Greywaters Lagoon. After 1¾ km on this easy path, you reach a road opposite some old level crossing gates by the historic Bramley and Wonersh station. Turn **right** on Station Road. A bridge takes you over the river as the road bends right. *On your left soon, a small gate leads into Gerald's Wood, a small pleasant nature reserve but a dead end.* Continue on the road into Wonersh, passing on your right the originally Saxon church of St John the Baptist, usually closed, and the Church Green, once the village green till the Grantley family, owners of *Wonersh Park*, built a wall around it. After a row of Tudor houses, you reach the 3-way junction and the well-known *Peppercot*, opposite the *Grantley Arms*.


The name of the village was “Wogenhers” in 1199, derived from Anglo-Saxon words “wogen” and “ersh”, literally a “crooked stubble field”. (The “Won” of the name, by the way, is pronounced to rhyme with “Ron”.) But the prosperity shown in all those fine timbered houses didn't come from farming: it was one thing – cloth! The blue cloth of Wonersh was famed at home and abroad until the industrial revolution when production was lost to the mills of the north.



The Grantley Arms is named after the Grantley baronetcy, especially the first of them Fletcher Norton (1716-1789) who was a barrister and Speaker of the Commons and a “coarse, ill-tempered, tactless” man. He was known as “Sir

¹ No apostrophe: the correct Germanic possessive. (The apostrophe is an artificial modern convention.)

Bull-Face Double Fee” after his habit of charging each party in a law suit without informing the other. The pub opens all day Sunday and serves a praiseworthy menu throughout opening times. In 2015 it finished a refurbishment as a gastropub with prices to match. It is still dog-friendly and even welcomes muddy boots.

-  6 After a break and refreshment, veer **right** at the *Pepperpot* along the main road. (Or, if you took the short cut, retrace your steps.) In 70m, at a road junction, fork **left** on Barnett Lane using the sheltered pavement. Just after a side road, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a footpath, a wide track, also part of the Fox Way long-distance path. The track becomes a narrow path going uphill between fences. It goes over a crossing path by some old kissing gates and then runs uphill amidst tree plantations and woodland between paling fences, fringed with bluebells. It passes Burnett Hill conference centre on your left and begins to go downhill through a splendid pine forest. 100m further, where the paling fence curves right, fork **right** to follow the fence on an unmarked path downhill.
- 7 At the bottom, cross straight over a track, with a small car park for Wonersh and Blackheath Cemetery visible on your right. Your path bends right behind the cemetery on a sunken course and comes out into a valley behind the buildings of Lynes Farm. You now have a rather taxing climb through woods up to a high point on Blackheath. Some of Blackheath’s renowned blue-topped posts mark your way as you pass a junction on your left and continue ever upwards through pines. Finally, you emerge into a clearing in an especially magnificent part of Blackheath.
- 8 Turn sharp **right** at the corner of a wire fence but almost immediately fork **left** at a blue-topped post away from the fence on a narrow path across the open heath. At a junction, keep straight ahead passing two more posts.
- P** Your path crosses a tarmac lane by a fingerpost next to Blackheath Common car park (alternative start). You need to concentrate a little so as not to stray as the path runs between pines, then birches, with the car park on your left. After the next crossing path, you are walking along the rim of a dug channel, usually dry, as you pass another of those posts. The narrow path is a little twisty and rooty as you near a house *Hallams Court* and its pond. *Note the clock turret and the tree house.*
- 9 Your path winds its way past more posts and now you are on a straight level path in a wonderful heath of pines and bracken. At the next post, veer **left** to stay on the main path. You are high above the dug channel again. You pass a metal gate on your right where there is a fenced-off enclosure. Ignore the path on your left opposite this gate and keep ahead, near the rather decrepit paling fence, quickly meeting a wide track. Veer **right** on the track and keep right as it narrows, staying beside the paling fence. The track takes you between stumps where you join a driveway coming from *Woodsmoke*. You are now on a surfaced drive and in over 400m you come to a 3-way junction.
- 10 Keep ahead at the junction, avoiding a tarmac lane on your right. In only 40m, you come to a wide fork with a sandy track and wires to the left. Take the **right** fork, a much narrower option. *As this deep path is prone to mud, you may prefer to take a parallel high path up on your left, although there may be fallen trees to skirt around.* After ½ km, at a junction with a one-bar rustic barrier on your right, turn **left** on another path. At a T-junction in 120m, turn **right** on a wide sandy path which quickly leads back to the Farley Heath car park where the walk began.

Wonersh Direct

Take this short cut If you want to take a direct route into Wonersh, but with a section of busy road.

- a) Avoiding a footpath on your left and a small wooden gate, fork **right** on a level path running beside a wooden fence on your right. In 50m, go **right** over a stile into the meadow and continue in the same direction on a faint path roughly 20m from the left-hand edge. At the far side, go over a double stile. Your path continues on the right of a metal gate, along a grassy route between fences. At the end, a domestic drive joins from the left. As you approach dilapidated Lee Farm, fork **right** before the fence on a narrow footpath. The path leads down steps to a lane.
- b) Turn **left** on the lane and in only 20m fork **right** up a bank next to *Tree Tops*. The path runs above the lane, then diverges to go across a meadow and over a stile in the fence. *The line of hills far on your left across the valley include Winkworth and Hascombe: see the walk "Winkworth" in this series. Straight ahead you can see the small Chinthurst Hill with the tower folly on top, visited on the walk "Blackheath and Shamley Green" in this series.* Keep ahead, not far from the fence on your left, to cross a track and go over a stile into another meadow. Keep ahead aiming for a lake and a house in the valley. At the bottom, go over a stile and keep along the right-hand side of the meadow, avoiding a redundant footpath that runs beside the hedge. Cross a drive beside a house and immediately go over a stile* to continue on a hedged footpath (* avoidable by staying in the meadow and using a metal gate or skipping over a broken fence onto the path). **You must now be prepared for a potentially dangerous encounter with the main road. The path leads you directly into the path of traffic, so you need to listen first to make sure nothing is coming.**
- c) The path leads down to a stile and to the main road. Turn **right** carefully on the busy B2128 road, facing oncoming traffic. Follow the road, ignoring two footpaths on your right² and one on your left, passing the welcome sign for Wonersh and passing St John's Seminary. After 700m, there is finally a footway on your left as the road enters the village, passing a junction on your right and the *Dower House*, and coming to the main 3-way junction and the well-known *Peppercot*, opposite the *Grantley Arms*.

Getting there

By car: Farley Heath car park 8 is reached from the A25 Shere Road by turning off as for *Albury* onto the A248. In 500m, at a bend, turn **left** in the direction *Albury Heath, Farley Green*. In 2½ km, at the village of Farley Green, take the right fork, the major road. The very large Farley Heath car park is another 1 km on the right, **after** the smaller Farley Glade car park 15.

By bus/train: bus 53 runs from Guildford Station to Bramley, Wonersh and Shamley Green, hourly including Sunday; others available. Check the timetables.

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² Walkers have suggested the following route to avoid the busy road. It misses the town or duplicates a little of the return journey. Take the **second** of two footpaths **right** into the Seminary. Fork **right** and in 20m turn **right** (by a sign "not suitable for heavy vehicles"). Follow the path past vegetable gardens then cottages all the way to Lynes Farm. You can now either (a) turn **right** to re-join the walk proper in section [7](#), but omitting Wonersh; or (b) turn **left** and follow the path into Wonersh, returning the same way.