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## Blackdown

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Distance 3½ km (2 miles), easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Author: Hautboy *comments please to [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

Refreshments: Haslemere

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere)

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*High hills, views*

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### In Brief

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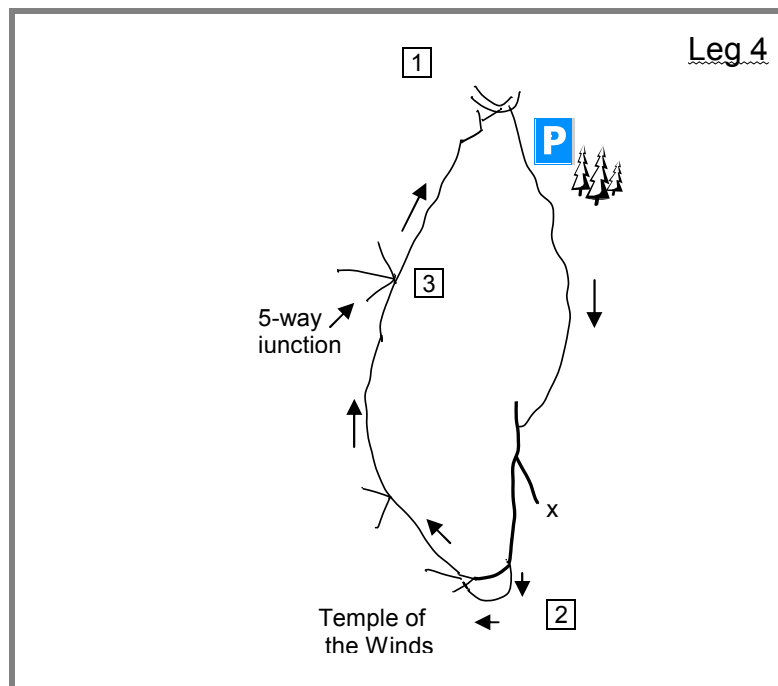
This is a glorious easy walk around the highest point in Sussex with magnificent views in all directions. It is an extract from the larger walk *Hindhead and Blackdown* in this series.



The walk begins at the **Blackdown Lower car park**. For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

### The Walk

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The walk begins at the Blackdown *lower* car park. If you parked in one of the *upper* car parks – the ones visible from Tennyson’s Lane – you are welcome to walk on the main path with the families and day trippers; but it is **much** better to walk down the lane to the *lower* car park because the route described here gives you some quite stunning views that other walkers don’t see till later. Just before the car park, you may have noticed the gates to *Aldworth House*.

*Aldworth House was built in 1869 by the poet Lord Tennyson who was eager to escape summer trippers who came to his Isle of Wight home, Faringford. This French-style Gothic house was designed by Sir James Knowles and is built of local sandstone. Tennyson also purchased Blackdown and often walked there.*

- 1 With your back to Tennyson’s Lane, walk straight on through the lower car park, up through a gate and onwards to Robin Carr’s seat. You are immediately rewarded by a magnificent view across the Weald, with a view that few people see, of Blackdown looming up on your right. Turn **right** up a narrow path on the **edge** of the hill to another seat and another viewpoint. Keep to a narrow path that ascends via shallow steps. *Always keep to the edge of the hill on the left. Do not join the main sunken track.* Continue upwards through heather and up more steps to a platform with more views. You reach Stephen Peters’ seat. Here do **not** take the path alongside the seat that goes upwards but instead take a path on the **left**, slightly downhill, still hugging the edge of the hill. You now stay on this narrow path for some distance as it winds and undulates. Later, the path goes slightly downwards through woodland, passes a tall pine almost in the middle of the path, broadens and rejoins the edge of the hill. It now runs under a magnificent canopy of beeches, emerges into the light and runs under another fine canopy through which it rises. At the end of the path, go up some steps with a handrail and turn **left** on the broad main track. Almost at once, you arrive at a three-way signpost of bridleways. Take the **right**-hand fork, avoiding the left hand track which would gradually take you *down* the hill. You pass a small pond on the left and soon after, where the track curves right, leave it to go straight ahead on a narrower path. This path leads to the southernmost tip of Blackdown at the *Temple of the Winds*. Go down through posts to the stone seat with fine views across the Weald.

*Blackdown, or Black Down, is the highest point in Sussex, at 280 metres (918 feet), being second only to Leith Hill (295 metres, 968 feet) in south-east England. The pine and heather-covered slopes are owned by the National Trust. Although it is **common land**, Blackdown was the property of various landowners until W.E. Hunter donated it to the National Trust in 1948, as a memorial to his wife. The Hunters are remembered by an inscribed stone seat at the Temple of the Winds. Flint artefacts show that there has been a settlement on Blackdown since mesolithic times, around 8000 years ago. The name of the ancient track, pen-y-bos, indicates links with the long lost Celtic world as its name comes from the **Brythonic** language.*

- 2 Facing the view south, turn **right** (west) on a narrow path that curves right through more posts. In a couple of paces, fork **left** on a very narrow path on the edge of a hill to S.E.Thornton’s seat and viewpoint. Continue onwards away from the edge of the hill and in half a dozen paces turn **right** on a wide path at a T-junction with a small wooden post. At the next T-

junction, turn **left**, rejoining the main track. This track leads west and then north over the other side of Blackdown. You soon reach a junction with a seat and two paths leading off left, the second being a steep sandy track. **Ignore** both turnings-off and keep straight on. This gorgeous track runs for some distance with terrific views left over Hampshire. Much later, you reach a seat on a stone platform with a direction finder. Continue on the main track until you reach a major junction under trees with three paths of different sizes leading off left. This is the “five-way junction”.

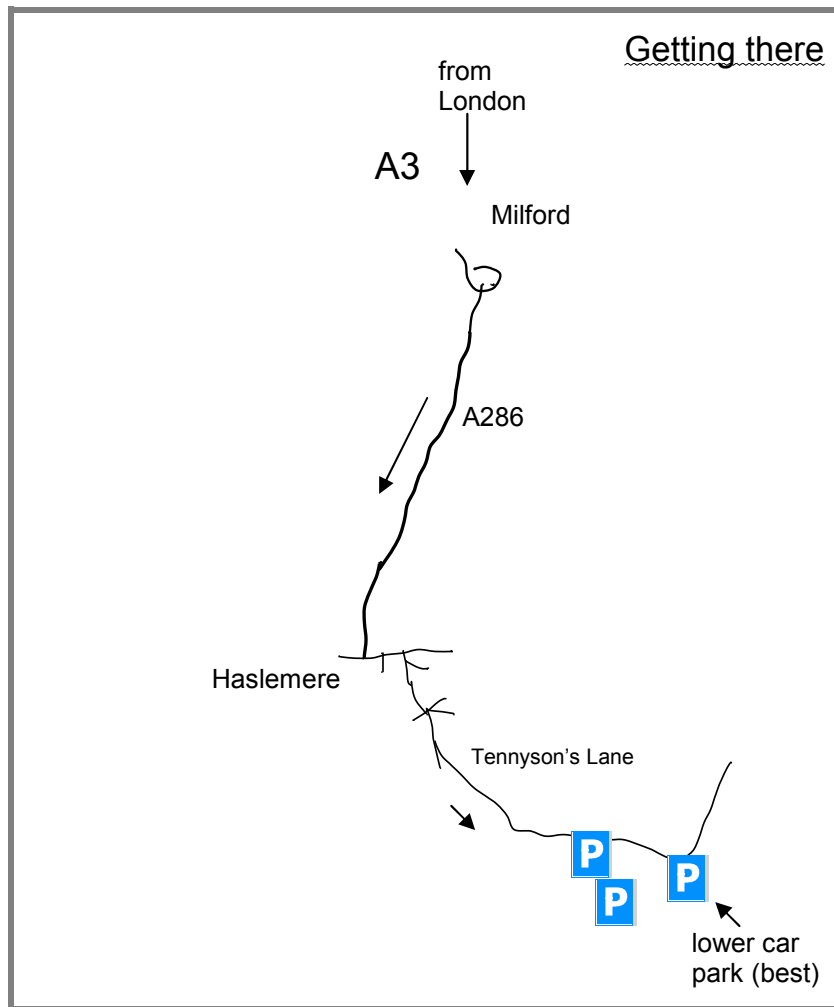
- 3 Go **straight on** at the five-way junction and keep to the main, sometimes sunken, track, avoiding all tracks and paths leading off, until finally you see a notice board ahead. The upper car parks are straight on. For the lower car park, go down a narrow sunken path **right** about 20m *before* the notice board, down to the lane and turn **right** into the car park.

### Getting there (see map overleaf)

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Take the A3 through Guildford, turn off for **Milford** and take the A286 Haslemere road. (You can instead stay on the A3 until a sign for “Brook”, where you turn left through the beautiful Witley forest and turn right at the next crossroads; but this route *cannot* be done in reverse on the homeward journey.) Go through the centre of Haslemere, down the high street and turn **left** at the T-junction at the end, signposted “Petworth”. *You now need a few minutes’ concentration.* Ignore the first road right (Museum Hill) and go slowly! In about another 400 yds (350m) look out for the next narrow road, just after the main road rises and dips, where you turn **right**. There is no clear road sign for this turning but you will see an old-fashioned signpost at the start of the road, indicating “Blackdown and Whitwell Hatch”. Ignore an immediate turning left and continue up the road until you reach a 5-road junction. Pause here for a moment. Straight ahead there are **two** roads. The one slightly left is private. The one **slightly right** has an old road sign pointing that way marked “Tennyson’s Lane and Blackdown”. Take this narrow road. Soon after, turn **half left** at another sign into Tennyson’s Lane. Continue for about a mile (1½ km). **Ignore the first two car parks** on the right (one behind the first) and continue further to **just before the lane bends sharp left** with the stone gate posts of *Aldworth House* straight ahead. Turn **right** here into the lower car park. The entrance is not obvious, being unsigned, and is a little muddy and bumpy. You should have the National Trust sign on your **right**. Don’t worry about the notice that says “car park closed 8am-8pm”.

Note: There are **three** car parks serving Blackdown. You can park in any of them but the **lower** car park suits this walking route as you will see. The upper car park is the one on the right that you passed. The second car park (also to be avoided unless the others are full) is immediately after the first car park a few meters down a broad sandy track half right branching off the lane. If you find that you have parked in one of these first two, walk down Tennyson’s Lane to the bend and walk into the lower car park because the walk starts there.



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