



Banstead: Village and Woods

Distance: 10 km=6 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Banstead, *The Ramblers Rest*

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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Hills, views, village, woodland

In Brief

For London residents and Surrey people who live near the capital, this wonderful walk illustrates that you don't need to travel far out to find open country and extensive views, with a country village and perfect country pub (to enquire at the *Ramblers Rest*, ring 01737 552 661).



There are no nettles but maybe just a very few skippable brambles that might worry bare legs. Sensible walking shoes should be adequate for this walk. The entire area is popular with dog owners but you will need a short lead in the horse pastures. There are *no stiles*.



The walk begins at **Chipstead Railway Station** or at the large free **Holly Lane** car park in **Chipstead** Surrey, www.w3w.co/snacks.cake.expert, post-code **CR5 3NR**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

If you are beginning this walk at **Chipstead Station**, do as follows: Come down the steps by Platform 1 and turn **left** and **right** on Station Parade, going past a line of shops. At the main road, turn **left**, staying on this side. Keep straight on past a junction on the right (Lower Park Road). Immediately after Stagbury Avenue on your left, cross the main road carefully and go through a small wooden gate. Follow the path to a swing-gate into the Holly Lane car park.



- 1 From the Holly Lane car park, go out to the main road, Holly Lane, cross it over a road junction, turn **left** on the adjoining road, Park Road, and turn immediately **right** on a path uphill to the right of a noticeboard for *Banstead Commons Conservators*. Keep ahead through the woods beside garden fences on your right. At the far corner, go **right** through a wooden barrier and **left** on a path between fences. You come out through a barrier onto a lane: turn **left** uphill. In 30m, just after a house gate, at a new fingerpost, turn **right** past the remains of a wooden swing-gate. At a fork, keep **left**, going a little uphill. This path leads you up onto the great open eastern part of the Downs with sudden views.
- 2 Keep dead straight all the way, ignoring side paths and branch-offs, on the wide path that leads over the centre of the wide open space. You have great views ahead to the houses of Woodmansterne and these views will get even better as you walk. You can see your path ahead dipping down and up the valley. Go straight over a crossing path in the valley bottom and continue uphill. *You now have views on your right over Coulsdon and Kenley; up on your left is Scratch Wood.* As you approach a hilly ridge ahead, abandon the level path, which curves away left along the valley, and keep **right** on a wide path straight up the right-hand side of the slope. At a fork, keep **right** close to trees. As you near the top you pass quite close to back gardens, then the end of a residential road on your right. Ahead you can see some

large modern houses. Your path wheels left towards a horse pasture with a wooden fence. Keep ahead through a wooden swing-gate in the fence into the *Courtlands* horse pasture.

- 3 Your path traverses the full length of the pasture and, at the bottom, takes you through a wooden swing-gate. Cross a private road and continue on a narrow path with a hedge on your right. A small wooden gate [Aug 2023: completely broken] leads into a large sloping meadow. Turn **right** here and cross the meadow diagonally to go through a modern kissing-gate. Continue in the same direction between wooden-posted wire fences, through two metal gates and more wire fencing dividing the meadow. At the far side, go through another kissing-gate by a line of horsechestnuts into a green field. Cross the field, going to the left of two trees in the centre, heading for a large metal gate. On reaching it, go through a kissing-gate beside it to a road, Park Road.

- 4 Turn **left** on the road for 30m and then turn **right** on a wide track leading to *Rosehill Farm*, passing a metal gate. However, a further 200m down Park



Road will bring you to the *Mint* pub, a decent stop for refreshments (and possibly afternoon tea). Before another metal gate, turn **right** through a new metal swing-gate and continue along the left-hand side of a horse pasture, with stables over on your left. A similar gate leads onto a cricket pitch. Cross it diagonally (or round two sides if play is in progress!), coming out to a road, Avenue Road, at a bend. Your route is **left**, immediately forking **left** on De Burgh Park. However, you may first like to visit the church and part of the village for refreshment. For the church, cross straight over to a narrow tarmac path opposite. This interesting church with its vast churchyard is not to be missed.



Some of the older graves are tilted in various directions as though the occupants had become shifty and restless. Through the churchyard you can reach the High Street where there are places to eat. By turning **right** instead on Avenue Road and **right** at the High Street you can reach the *Woolpack Inn*. You need to retrace your steps after these excursions.

The name "Banstead" is Anglo-Saxon and probably means "bean farm". But it was sheep farms on the Downs that made the Manor rich, owing to the high quality of the wool. Henry VIII even included Banstead in the dowry of Catharine of Aragon but when she stubbornly refused to find a new husband he took it back. For a century up to the 1980s Banstead was well known for its mental asylum, now demolished (see also the "Coulston" walk in this series). The church of All Saints was built at the end of the 1100s. Some of the stained glass was designed by those famous pre-Raphaelite and art-and-crafts names Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Philip Webb and William Morris.

- 5 Having forked left on De Burgh Park, follow the road till it bends left and here turn **right** through a metal barrier onto a tarmac footpath. Soon you pass between allotments. Note that you are walking on part of the Millennium Trail, an 18-mile=28-km path running from Banstead to Horley. You will also be walking on part of the Banstead Countryside Walk. On reaching a road at a metal barrier, take a signed footpath opposite. This pleasant surfaced path runs between garden fences. In 250m take the **left** fork. Soon you have woodland on your left and a garden on your right which occasionally clucks and quacks with poultry. Keep straight ahead at all times avoiding turn-offs. Your path bypasses a partly broken stile, out into a large field.

- 6 Go straight across along the right-hand side of the field with woodland on your right. The sudden change to open countryside after the town is quite striking. At the top, turn **right** on a path, still with woodland on your right. This wood, known as Pages Acre, is a notable bluebell wood and you may



like to take a detour round it in the appropriate season. Keep straight ahead. After the remnants of a wooden swing-gate, next to a marker post, turn **right** and continue along the right-hand side of a field. The path soon re-enters the woods and reaches another unneeded swing-gate and a fingerpost. Turn diagonally **left** here on a path across the centre of a field (marked *Copt Hill Lane*). When you reach the other side, avoid a hedged path ahead and instead turn **left** on a crossing path (signed *Kingswood*), along the right-hand side of the same field.

- 7 In the far corner, your path goes beside a large metal gate. You pass a large green barn and reach a wide crossing path. Avoiding the remains of a stile ahead, turn **left** on this track, known as Reads Rest Lane. After 350m, ignore two bridleways on the right with their small metal gates and stay on the main track as it winds its way uphill towards the small wood ahead. You pass the wood, known as Lunch Wood, on your right. In nearly 300m you pass the first cottage of Perrotts Farm. At a large metal gate with a *no entry* sign, fork **right** through a wooden swing-gate into a large section of Banstead Woods known as Perrott's Wood, a celebrated landmark.

Banstead Woods are a 80-ha protected area and Site of Special Scientific Interest, roughly triangular in shape, known to host a vast range of wild plant species. It featured in the BBC "Domesday Reloaded" programme in 1986.

- 8 Follow the main wide path through the wood. In 150m, by a wooden memorial seat to Jean Sweeney, turn **right** on another wide path. Depending on the season, there is much to explore in Banstead Wood, including a marked 3-mile Nature Trail; the route provided here can be re-joined at various points. Follow the main path through the mixed woods with patches of bluebells and brambles. As you pass a pond on your left with a bench, avoid the left-pointing arrow for the nature trail and stay on the wide path ahead. After another 40m on this path, you come to a wide fork. Take the **right** fork, the narrower option. Immediately, at a junction of paths, keep **right** * and quickly, at a fingerpost, turn **left** on a path marked *Summer Route*. (* Turning **left** will take you back to the Holly Lane car park by a shorter route.) This long straight path takes you very gradually downhill beneath beeches, then under hawthorn. In 250m, **ignore** a right fork and a swing-gate leading out onto the hillside and keep to the level path through trees. In another 180m, you reach a junction of paths.

- 9 At the junction, avoid both a right turn and a path that descends to the right through woods and instead veer **left** on an uphill path, still on the *Banstead Countryside Walk*. Avoid minor paths branching off left and right, and the first wooden swing-gate. In 150m you reach a gap on your **right** with a wooden swing-gate leading out onto the open hillside. Go through this gate to meet a choice of paths. **Ignore** the *first* narrow path on the left against the wire fence. **Ignore** the *third* grassy path straight ahead that leads to a visible wooden gate in the hedge. Your route is the **second** wide grassy path on your **left**. About half way down, having passed two benches, you arrive at a wooden swing-gate. Go through the gate onto a marvellous grassy wild meadow with fine views ahead. Your route is straight ahead across the meadow, aiming just to the right of a line of low trees (the slightly lower of two faint paths). However, a small diversion will take you to the *Ramblers Rest* one of the best foodie pubs in the area and a perfect finish to the walk.



For the pub, turn **right** in the meadow on a path that runs close to the hedge. Go through a swing-gate into the pub's car park and turn **right** and **left** into the entrance. After refreshment, you can either (1) return to the car park and the swing-gate, turn **right** across the meadow and veer **left** across the grass heading for the left-hand edge of the line of low trees or (2) use the new tarmac pedestrian path inside the field, parallel to the road, as far as the mini-roundabout mentioned in the next section.



The Ramblers Rest is a large timbered and weatherboard cottage, with a winsome patio garden terrace in the back. This is a serious gastropub and the modern kitchen delivers an interesting menu, with a fixed-price option. (The author had arancini and duck salad with mooli.)

- 10 After going through a gap by the line of trees, keep straight ahead in the next meadow parallel to the distant road on your right. Aim just to the right of a bank of trees. Go through a swing-gate into a long narrow pasture. *Note: the Sussex cattle which sometimes graze here are quite docile. As you near a mini-roundabout in the road on your right, the route back is a **left** fork up a grassy slope. (As a short optional detour, by going **left** just after the last bank of hawthorn, over a step stile, you will meet a sculpted figure of *Aslan*, part of the Narnia Trail; closer on your left you will see *Lucy Under a Lamppost*, another of these sculptures). Finally go through a wooden gate to the car park where the walk began.*

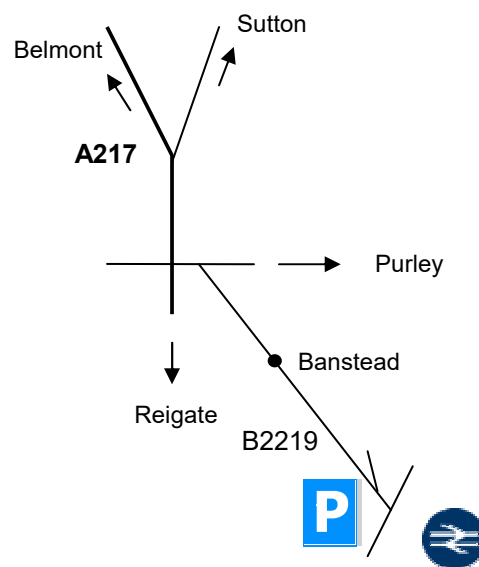


But if you came by **train**, your route is **right** through a swing-gate and a wooden gate, **left** after crossing the road and **right** at the Station Parade.

Getting there

By car: if coming from London or Sutton, your route is via the A217 road, signposted *Reigate*. But only 2½ miles south of Sutton, at a major crossroads with traffic lights, turn **left** in the direction *Coulsdon Chipstead Banstead*. Immediately, at a mini roundabout, turn **right** on the B2217, Boulters Lane. Follow this road through a series of junctions, passing Banstead Village on your left and reaching open country, now on the B2219, Holly Lane. The large car park is on the right, just before a road junction visible ahead.

By train: begin the walk at **Chipstead Station**; frequent trains daily, about 50 minutes from London Victoria.



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