



Dormansland

Distance: 11 km=7 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey, W.Sussex

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Refreshments: Dormansland

Map: Explorer 147 (Sevenoaks) and small sections of 135 and 146
but the map in this guide should be sufficient

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

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Village, easy country lanes, sheep pastures, view of scenic railway, woodland, spring flowers

In Brief

Here is a walk in a variety of landscapes in the south Surrey, near the borders of Kent and Sussex. Along the way you pass through quiet lanes and patches of woodland. If you come in early spring, there is a spectacular display of daffodils; or in late spring, a great show of bluebells. You also see good patches of woodland, and open sheep pastures.

The village of Dormansland is rather modest and unassuming, but it does have three pubs. Of these, the *Royal Oak*, which is at the start of the walk, is a little rough-and-ready, but an excellent place of a quiet drink and perhaps a pizza. The *Plough* is much more a country pub with a garden, a well-thought-out bill of fare and a Thai menu. The *Plough* is not on the route but it is quite easy to make a diversion (it is not far from the centre) and approach the walk via the cul-de-sac lane towards Greathed Manor. (The lane is marked in dark grey on the map below.)

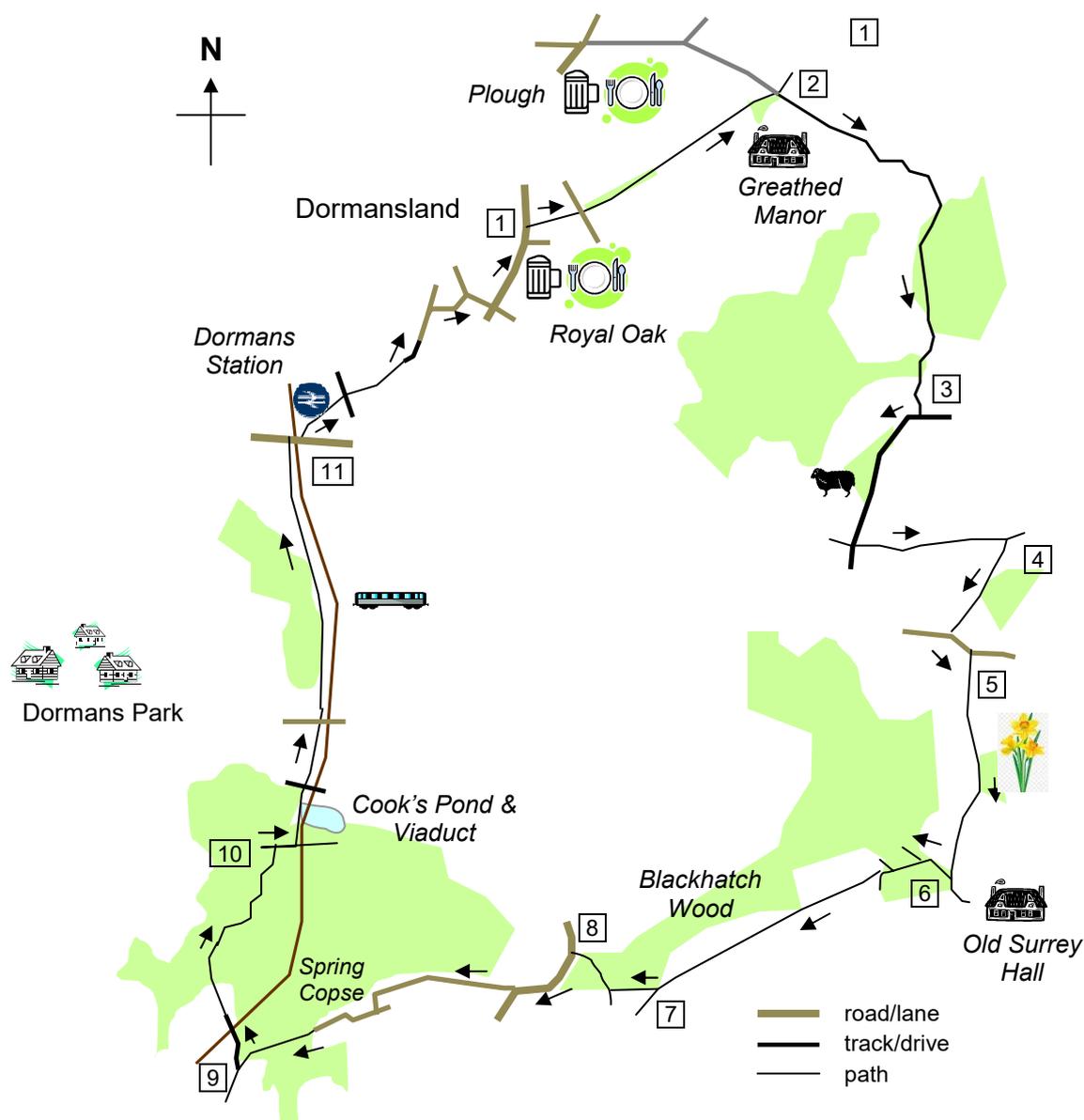
The first part of this walk is quite comfortable, with tarmac drives and wide tracks. The walk was researched not long after winter rain and storms and consequently it gets a little more challenging in the stretch between sections 7 and 9 where you encounter some fallen trees (which should be cleared soon), a short portion on a quiet residential road, and later some mud. The mud should dry out enough during the warmer months to keep you fairly dry-shod. But for this reason, waterproof boots are recommended. However, there is very little undergrowth, so shorts should not be a problem. Fine for your dog too.



The walk begins at **Dormans Railway Station** (start at Section 11) or in the village of Dormansland, Surrey, near the *Royal Oak* pub, postcode **RH7 6PU**, www.w3w.co/fight.spots.popped. There is plenty of roadside parking. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

The name of the village of Dormansland comes from a landowner called Richard Derman who lived here in 1435. It was then called "Dermannysland". The village lies close to the border with Kent and Sussex (see the walk "Four Counties" in this series) and this was an advantage in the days of bare-knuckle prize fights where the fields outside the village were an ideal place to hold them. The magistrates of one shire sometimes passed an order to ban the fights, whereupon the organisers simply moved them into a neighbouring county.



- 1 Beginning the walk in the centre of Dormansland, walk along the main road, past the *Royal Oak* pub on your right, ignoring the adjoining side street, *The Meades*. In 50m, look to your right for a driveway marked *Holly Bush, The Twitten*. Turn **right** here and, where the driveway ends, continue on a narrow path between garden hedges, leading out to a residential road. Cross straight over onto a woodland path under holly trees. Your path comes out into a crop field. Keep **left** along the edge of the field. *The great*

house visible on your right is Greathed Manor, a Victorian country house, now a nursing home. At the far corner, your path leads over a plank bridge and through a metal gate on a narrow, rather watery, path. You emerge onto a junction by a 4-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here between brick pillars on a tarmac drive.

- 2 You pass on your right the entrance to Greathed Manor. At a junction, keep **left** to avoid a private entrance and follow the winding drive past a small pond on your right. At a junction beside an old shed, keep **right**, staying on the tarmac. On your right soon is a small stud. You are now on a track with woodland on your left. About 200m after the stud, ignore a track on your right but, just 15m later, where the track branches, take the **right** fork, a narrower bridleway. You ascend gently through a birch wood. The bridleway veers left to avoid a field gate and leads through a rider's gate. A fenced path leads up to some farm buildings. Keep ahead, following the narrow track to meet a T-junction.
- 3 Turn **right** at the T-junction on a comfortable wide tarmac drive, known as Moon's Lane. This pleasant stretch leads between meadows and sheep pastures. After 500m on this drive, you will see narrow footpaths on your right and left. As a guide, this is where a sheep pasture on your right gives way to a small meadow, with a low brick building visible ahead. Turn **left** here over a stile beside a large wooden gate, into a large meadow. Follow a course dead straight across the pasture, following a faint path, passing under two sets of wires. The path comes close to the woodland on your right. Stay close to the trees. Shortly you meet two lines of posts which shepherd you along a narrow path. A step-over leads into a spindly wood with a pond on your left.
- 4 Only 30m into the wood, go **right** over two stiles. You are in one end of the rolling landscape of a large sheep pasture. Your route is over a step-over, straight up the left-hand side of the pasture, over a step-over on the far side, and finally a stile. Ignore a stile straight ahead and instead turn **right** on a path running uphill beside the wooden fence of the same sheep pasture you just crossed. Your path leads over a stile beside a large wooden gate, passing a stable yard on your right. *You will notice that you are on a small section of the long Sussex Border Path.* Another large wooden gate is followed by a rough driveway between wooden fences. A stile beside a large wooden gate leads out to a road. Turn **left** on the road to reach a left bend in less than 100m .
- 5  Turn **right** just before the bend on a semi-tarmac drive, as directed by a fingerpost, known in this guide as the *Daffodil Trail* for reasons soon to be seen. *If you do this walk around the beginning of March you will be entranced by the display on of daffodils along the banks.* After nearly 800m on this drive, just after a bungalow, *The Stables*, with its fine front garden, where the tarmac bends left, **leave** the drive by turning **right** on a signed footpath. *But if you make a short return detour straight ahead on the drive, you will come to the great 15th-century timbered house, Old Surrey Hall, as described in the neighbouring walk "Four Counties".*
- 6 *You have re-joined the Sussex Border Path.* In 100m, keep **left** to avoid a private rider's path. Continue up a slope for 100m and avoid another track on your right. You come to a large metal field gate. **Leave** the track here by going **right** over a stile into a tufty meadow. Your route is not the path on your right which goes round the perimeter: instead follow a wide but faint

path across the centre, continuing in precisely the same direction as the track you arrived on. In 300m or so, you come down to a large metal gate in a gap in the trees, with the corner of Birchetts Wood in your right. Go over a stile here, diagonally across a track past a redundant stile into the next large meadow. Your path is visible, snaking up the centre of the meadow. At the top, go over a stile and a 2-plank bridge into a shaded area with a Blackhatch Wood on your right.

- 7 Only 30m into the wood you meet a 3-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here on a narrow path, thus leaving the *Sussex Border Path*. The path runs along a raised course tight beside the wire fence of the wood on your right, revealing a great show of bluebells in late spring. In 150m or so you reach a T-junction of footpaths by a fingerpost. Turn **right** here. (In 2022 there was some residual debris, avoidable since the fences have collapsed.) Your path goes down a bank, past large metal gates on each side, over a 2-plank bridge, finally reaching a road.
- 8 Turn **left** on the road, using the verge on this side at first but, in about 50m, carefully switch to right-hand side where you meet the start of a concrete footway. After 250m beside the road, immediately after a *Welcome to West Sussex* sign, turn **right** on very quiet residential Woodlands Road. Follow the road for 500m to the end and turn **left** with the road. In 50m, at the end, turn **right** at a T-junction. Stay on this road as it curves right and left. In a further 100m you have passed the last house and enter a verdant area. Keep **right** here to meet a notice welcoming you to *Spring Copse*. Follow the tarmac footpath through this local beauty spot. *To the left of the path, in late spring, you may see purple bell-shaped snake's head fritillaries, a beautiful and quite rare plant.* After 250m, you come out through a barrier to a junction of residential roads.
- 9 Turn very sharp **right** down a semi-tarmac driveway, passing houses on your left. The driveway goes over a railway bridge, down a rough track, to an unusual barrier, possibly designed to let only thin-shouldered people and bikes through. At a 3-way signpost keep straight ahead on a narrow footpath between garden fences and down into woodland. Your path veers right and runs down a sunken section under hollies. You are now in an area of mixed woodland in a muddy section which can mostly be avoided on the left. A solid bridge leads over a stream and your path runs beside the meandering stream on your left for 100m or so. You come over a small bridge, down three steps and over a bridge-with-rail. Avoid veering to the left here, thereby maintaining your original direction. There is now a muddy section for about 150m where you also need to keep an eye on the route ahead, so as to keep to the correct path, especially where it shortly bends slightly to the right. Finally you reach an avoidable swing-gate and a T-junction. The worst of the mud is now behind you.
- 10 Turn **right** at the T-junction on a broader track. In 50m on your left is a junction with a path between fences which is unsigned. Turn **left** here. *Don't miss this junction! if you find yourself beneath a tall railway viaduct, you have come too far.* You come through a metal barrier and across a long bridge over the Cook's Pond, with the high and spectacular Cook's Pond Railway Viaduct on view on your right. (Compare the Ouse Valley Viaduct, seen on the *Ardingly Lake, W. Sussex walk in this series.*) The path runs along an embankment and crosses a tarmac drive. (The track on your left – not on your route, although you are welcome to visit – goes to Dormans Park.)

Dormans Park is an outré swish gated estate of houses, each with its own woodland setting, all in the £3 million band, a prime choice for celebrities, especially given East Grinstead's Scientology connection. It began after Dormans Station was built in 1884, when the Bellaggio Estate Company bought 218 acres of farmland with an over-ambitious vision to construct an exclusive residential area with lakes, a hotel, including Lingfield racecourse. Its name changed to Dormans Park in the 1900s when around 200 magnificent properties were built.

Your path runs through more woodland, gradually uphill. In 250m or so, you reach a crossing road and bridge: as before, continue straight ahead. In 900m, all the time with the deep railway cutting on your right, you reach a road bridge. Go up some steps (*care! sudden traffic*) and turn **right** over the bridge, immediately reaching Dormans Station on your left. [If you began the walk here, the adventure is over.](#)

- 11 Immediately after the station, turn **left** on a tarmac path. This lighted way runs through woodland and, in 200m, reaches a crossing driveway with a bench seat on your left. Cross straight over the driveway onto a tarmac path, following a sign for *Dormansland Centre*. The path graduates to a tarmac driveway and reaches a junction of narrow roads. Avoid a road on your left here and continue straight on up this narrow lane, soon passing St John's Parish Room on your left (a kind of village hall) and coming to a T-junction. Turn **right** here. (All the roads are called *The Platt* just to confuse us.) Continue uphill, passing St John's Church on your left and reaching the main road. Turn **left** on the main road, quickly reaching the centre and the *Royal Oak* pub where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Dormansland is near Lingfield which is signed off the A22 shortly after Blindley Heath, 2 miles after you go under the railway at South Godstone. At mini roundabouts in Lingfield, signposts point you roughly straight on to Dormansland, passing Lingfield Racecourse on your right. Just over 1 mile after Lingfield, Dormansland is signposted at a **right** fork off the main road. Park on the roadside near the *Royal Oak* pub.

By train: frequent trains to Dormans Station from London Bridge. Some off-peak trains start in Victoria.

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