



Holmwood Common Pub Walk

Distance: 9 km=5½ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 6-mar-2015

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Last update: 9-dec-2018

Refreshments: Stonebridge

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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Meadows, woodland, nature trail, pub, bluebells in spring

In Brief

Holmwood Common is now a major Nature Reserve and a local attraction for ramblers and families, thanks to a fine well-marked (and dry) Circular Trail which has been created by the National Trust. This walk extends the route to take in a local pub and some nearby meadows and woodland. In late spring, the undisturbed meadows in the first half produce a wonderful show of bluebells.



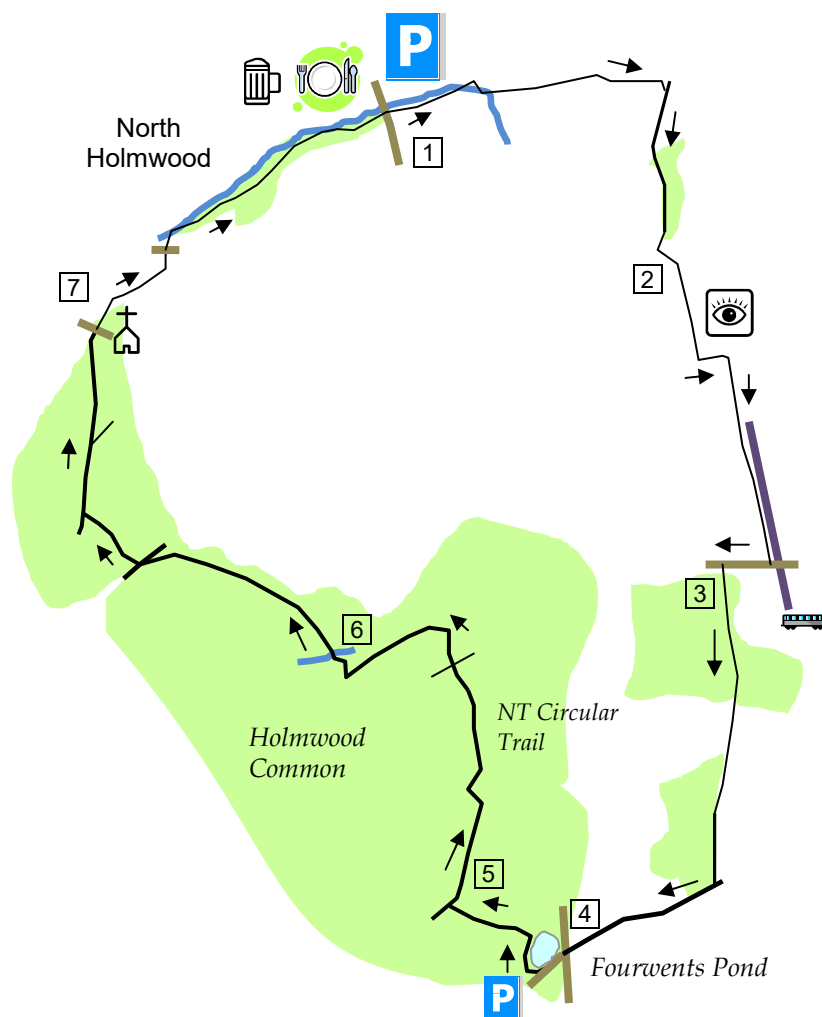
The *Royal Oak* is a newly refurbished but otherwise typical clean-looking local. The lunch menu has some basic favourites (this is not a gastropub) and also offers snacks and hot drinks. The food seems to be very well received. Note that the pub is *closed on Mondays till 3pm* and therefore unable to serve food. (To reserve, ring 01306-885420.)



There is just one patch of nettles on this walk but bare legs may survive if you are careful. After excessive rain, much of the farm land has standing water with resulting in deep muddy patches but, apart from these, the route is generally dry along the cindered tracks of the Circular Trail in Holmwood Common. So boots are advisable in the wetter months. There are some stiles in the section round the fields so a dog will be welcome if small or medium-sized.

The walk begins at the off-road car park opposite the **Royal Oak at Stonebridge**, postcode **RH5 4DJ**. The landlord is happy for customers to park and walk before their visit. If you want the pub in the middle of the walk, or if you are not intending to be a customer, park in the **Fourwents Pond, Mill Road** car park, postcode **RH5 4NX** (begin the walk at section 4). (Note that this car park is *not* the same as the Fourwents Blackbrook Car Park next door.) For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1** With the *Royal Oak* on your right, start walking along the road but immediately take a footpath **left** at a fingerpost into a field, using the generous grass path along the left-hand side. At the end, go **right** for 20m and **left** over a long bridge over the Bents Brook. Follow the footpath between a hedge and a fence, to go over a stile at the end and along the left-hand side of the next field. At the far corner, go over a stile-and-bridge combination, then veer right across the grass and turn **right** on a wide concrete drive. Ignore a footpath on the right as the drive curves left over the brook, then right to a cottage, *Scammells Farm House*, with a fine show of bluebells in late spring (but mind the nettles!). Ignore a footpath left and keep straight ahead on the drive. Where the concrete shortly ends, keep ahead on a narrow path, possibly with some temporary mud, through the trees.
- 2** Your path takes you over a wide bridge with rails, then over a stile into a long meadow. Keep along the left-hand side of the meadow which soon opens out giving you an attractive panorama of the tree-lined meadows. At the far corner, go over a stile and turn **left** in the next meadow towards the railway with great views on the North Downs on your left. Turn **right** in the corner and continue along the long side. Ignore a bridge over the railway on your left. Next come a modern kissing-gate into the next meadow similarly and another stile under trees by a water channel. Continue to meet a road via steps and a stile. Turn **right** on the road, Red Lane.



3 In 100m, go **left** at a fingerpost on a bridleway, Brimstone Lane, past a large wooden gate. You pass a wood yard on your left, keeping ahead through woods with evidence of forestry work visible on your left. A large wooden gate takes you into a pasture. Keep ahead along the right-hand side to go through a metal gate (which may be open) in a fence. Continue along this narrow horse pasture. You may encounter some mud, churned up by the ponies: fortunately this is a brief section. [Dec 2018: a walker found the exit blocked by horses and seeks advice.] Ignore a footpath on your right and continue through a large wooden gate on a much firmer track. This track leads to a tarmac drive near the big Lodge Farm. Turn **right** on the drive to reach the main Blackbrook Road / Henfold Lane at a junction.

4 Cross straight over the main road onto Mill Road passing the Fourwents Pond on your right (sometimes running a bit dry in summer). In about 20m, side right to join the cinder path that skirts the pond. Keep going round the pond passing the car park on your left (an alternative start). The path goes over a small bridge and passes two benches. At a fingerpost, leave the pond by turning **left** as for the *Circular Trail*. Follow this winding cinder path, right over a brook and left into the depths of Holmwood Common. You reach a 3-way junction with another of those large fingerposts. Bear **right** as for *Scammells Car Park*.

5 You will now be following the *Circular Trail* for over 2 km. The trail is entirely wide and dry in summer, if less dry in winter, and well marked, so you can relax and enjoy this beautiful woodland. After passing several minor junctions, you go between two Little Ponds. Your trail winds its way uphill through forest. You reach a wide junction with a large 4-way fingerpost. Keep straight on as for *North Holmwood*. You come to a marker post by a bench. Turn abruptly **left** here with the trail downhill, ignoring any minor turnoffs. You may be aware of gardens on your right, including a swimming pool. At another marker post, turn **right**, still following the *Circular Trail*, heading for a ford. Here, go across a sturdy bridge over the Black Brook next to a red tile-hung house, *Ford Cottage*.

6 Veer left and right on the drive, passing another house. The drive, Mid Holmwood Lane, is now very wide and dusty. Ignore paths leading off at *White Barn* (a clapperboard house) and continue on the main drive another 120m. You reach a 3-way junction and a fingerpost where another wide drive comes in from the right. Leave the main drive here by veering **right** at another signpost on a slightly narrower path, in the direction *Inholms Car Park*. In another 200m or so, at the next fingerpost, veer **right** in the direction *North Holmwood & Inholms Car Park*. In another 200m, at a fingerpost, keep straight ahead as for *North Holmwood*. Follow this long cinder path, gradually downhill. It takes you out to the green by North Holmwood Church. On a summer weekend, you may be able to sit here and enjoy tea and cakes. The little church of *St John The Evangelist* is in fact much newer than it appears. The church hall is open every weekday from 10 till noon and they provide coffee, tea and biscuits.

7 Cross the road directly opposite the entrance to the church. **Avoid** the tarmac path that goes past a bench across the green. Instead, veer slightly **right** and take a very narrow unmarked path through the trees [2017: skirting a fallen tree]. Turn **right** in front of the vicarage (a red tile-hung house) and immediately **left** in the corner on a narrow path between garden fences, rather muddy(*) in winter, leading down to a residential road. Cross over, a fraction right, to a signposted footpath, passing a noticeboard. (*You can skip



the muddy stretch by walking **left** for 100m along Inholms Lane from the church, turning **right** along Spooks Hill for 180m and **right** along Holmsdale Road for 250m until you reach the above mentioned footpath on the **left** with the noticeboard.)

Follow this wide path with the Bents Brook nearby on your left and, further off, the main road which soon veers away. **As a small diversion, on your right is a pond, worth a pause.** At a junction by a dip, keep left, staying on the main path. Finally, this path leads out through a wooden swing-gate to the road with the *Royal Oak* on your left where the walk began.



*The "Royal Oak" at Stonebridge is open all day from midday. Food is served all day on Sunday and till 2.30 pm other days **except Monday.***

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Getting there

By car: The pub and car park are in **Chart Lane South** which is a side road of Deepdene Avenue, the main A24 road in Dorking. If coming from the London area, go over the main roundabout, as for **A24 Horsham**. After 0.8 mile, turn **left** at a sign for **Blackbrook**. The *Royal Oak* is ½ mile on the right with the car park on the opposite side of the road (park **end-in** between the lines). The Fourwents Pond is another 1½ miles on your right.

