



Leith Hill, Broome Hall, Coldharbour

Distance: 8 km=5 miles

easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Coldharbour, Leith Hill

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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, lake, village, woodland

In Brief

This walk takes you down from near the sunny side of Leith Hill across the forests and fields below, to the village of Coldharbour with its pub and up to Leith Hill itself at the end, in time to bask in the afternoon sun.



? There are some nettles on the short fenced path into Coldharbour and by the stream in section [2](#) and in high summer the undergrowth may be high. So short clothing is not generally advisable. In the damper seasons you will find boots *essential* because of some muddy patches in the tracks below Leith Hill, especially challenging during a wet winter. This walk is not ideal for a large dog because of the stiles.

The walk begins at the northern* **Windy Gap car park** beneath Leith Hill, grid ref: TQ139429, www.w3w.co/taken.both.rescue, *very approximate* post-code **RH5 6LX**. (*There are two Windy Gap car parks close together. This walk starts from the car park on the same side as Leith Hill itself.) For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

- 1** **See map overleaf.** From the Windy Gap car park, go out to the road. Turn **left** and in 30m, at a fingerpost, turn **right** past a National Trust sign for *Leith Hill Place*, by a 1-bar barrier. Continue down this wide level path which levels out a bit, with views ahead thanks to the NT's recent landscaping, dips again and curves right. Here, look out for a marker post and turn **left** on a narrower path down into bluebell woods, thus leaving the NT's "orange-topped" trail. Your path goes over a bridge across a stream and out through a small wooden gate into a sloping meadow. Go down the meadow, keeping to the right-hand side, with great views ahead as far as the South Downs. About $\frac{2}{3}$ of the way down, the small crop field on your right ends and reach a large oak just before some crossing wires. Turn **left** here across the meadow aiming for some fence posts visible on the other side, Leith Hill Tower now high above you on your left.



Map of the Walk



- 2 At the other side, go between the fence posts and straight on, still following the wires. (Stay directly underneath the wires, ignoring paths running parallel.) As the first field ends, your path goes through a band of woodland. Turn **right** here at a marker post on a path through Fattening Hovel Copse. At a crossing path with a field on your right, at a marker post, turn **left**. Your path goes along the left-hand side of a field to a stile in the corner. Go **left** over the stile and follow a narrow path running beside a stream and over a bridge in woodland. A stile takes you into a field: keep to the right-hand side. At the top of the field, turn **left** in front of a brand new garden house (built in 2018 on the site of an old barn) and, in only 15m, go **right** over a small stile [Jun 2020: stile gone leaving a gap] into the garden of Woodyers. Continue **left** and **right** round the edge of the house's garden, to come out onto Broome Hall Lane.
- 3 Turn **right** on the lane and, in 20m, turn **left** on a rough track by a signpost. After a patch of woodland, keep straight ahead along the left-hand side of a large field, following a narrow grassy border. At the far side, Broome Hall is visible on your left.

You may have been wondering why Oliver Reed, Wimbledon pub brawler and star of films like "Oliver!" and "Women in Love", accepted roles in a huge number of very forgettable films. The answer is: he needed every penny he could collect to buy and renovate Broome Hall in the 1970s. This stone mansion dates originally from 1750 with heavy Victorian additions. Post-Reed it was divided into luxury wings.

Turn **right** in the corner along the edge of the field. Soon you join a track passing two tile-hung cottages. At a T-junction, turn **left** on a straight track going over a stream and through Buckingham Farm. *This track is in fact the Roman road Stane Street which also runs through Ockley: you can see where the main road follows the course after a bend.* You pass the farm's timbered house, another grade-II listed building and continue onward on a grassy path. On entering a field, keep straight on on a faint path across the centre, avoiding a path branching off right, heading for the left-hand end of some woods ahead. *There's such a large number of pheasant feeders everywhere you go, you wonder why Tesco's shelves aren't stocked full of them.*

- 4 Continue up the right-hand side of the next field with Great Copse on your right, then the length of a narrow meadow keeping to the left side, going through a 25m-wide gap between two woods into a large field. Turn **left** along the side of the field for 20m to the corner of the fence. From here you should see a path across the centre of the field, possibly rather faint depending on the season. Cross the field, aiming for a stile and yellow arrow visible about half way along the fence on the other side, with a grey/white house about 100m to its right. *Unfortunately this path is sometimes lightly ploughed over and sown with crops, although it is always navigable and the line is clearly visible (as in June 2020 for example).* At the far side, cross a stile, a track and another stile into a similar but smaller field. Your path, also faint in some seasons, goes over the high point and as you go over the brow you will see a stile and yellow arrow in the tree line ahead. *Summer foliage permitting, Broome Hall Lake is visible behind you.*
- 5 When you reach the far side, do *not* go over the stile but turn **right** along the top of the field. A redundant stile in the corner leads you along the left-hand side of the next small crop field. After another unneeded stile, continue along the left-hand side of a larger field. In the corner, go over a sturdy stile near a small pond on your right to meet a fingerpost at a fork. Take the **left** fork, a wide track, passing on your left a large barn. 20m after the barn, ignore a stile and footpath on the left and stay on the track going through a large metal gate beside *Bearehurst*. Stay on the tarmac driveway, keeping ahead at a fingerpost to go over a bridge beside a pond on your right, usually with a flock of white geese, and out into Henhurst Cross Lane.
- 6 Turn **left** on the lane, now Anstie Lane. In about 100m, as the lane bends right, leave it by going **left** at a fingerpost on a wide footpath. Avoid a farm track that forks off left and continue into a sloping meadow. Your route is along the **left**-hand side of the meadow, keeping roughly 15m from the trees on your left. After 300m or so, look for a wide opening in the hedge-row and a faint trodden path where others have walked. Go through this opening into the next flowery meadow and veer **right**. Follow a faint footpath uphill. As you go over the brow of the hill, you see a large wooden gate and a stile ahead. Go over the stile (or through the gate) and veer **left** on a tarmac drive passing buildings on your left and soon an original stone wall, extended in brick. 20m after the start of the brick section, turn **right** on a narrow path into woods by a new fingerpost.
- 7 Your path snakes its way uphill under chestnuts and hollies. On your right is Anstiebury Hill Fort and there is an unmarked path, not on your route, that leads round it (*see the walk in this series "Leith Hill from Holmwood Common"*). Continue straight on through the wood till the path takes you over a stile and along the top of a delightful small sloping pasture. A stile

and a narrow path, takes you out through a small wooden gate to the road in Coldharbour. Turn **right** to arrive immediately at the *Plough Inn*.

Coldharbour must be one of the most romantic isolated villages of the Surrey hills. For many years it was looked on with fear by inhabitants of the lowland towns as a refuge for smugglers who would keep their caches of contraband in safe underground sites and would deal ruthlessly with any outsider who interfered. The Plough Inn (renovated in 2016 under new owners) serves several real ales, including three brewed next door in its own brewhouse, and has a garden in the back. It also offers accommodation. 2016: The Plough has opened a little shop selling teas, proper coffee, warm sausage rolls (very yummy) and other bites. If the pub kitchen is closed, they will let you eat your shop comestibles in the pub. Note: this is your last “comfort stop”.



- 8 With your back to the inn, cross the road to a ‘phone box and turn **left** uphill on a wide track going past a white house aptly named *Clock Cottage*. Keep to the main track, following a sign for Leith Hill Tower. After a 500m-long steady ascent (with a wooden bench at your disposal for a view and a breather), you emerge into an open space, also a cricket pitch – the highest in Surrey. *The following is just one route to the tower out of several, some used by other walks in this series.* Continue ahead to a 3-way fingerpost and fork **left** on a wide path marked as a “byway”. Stay on the main path through woods, soon walking beside a bank on your right. You meet another ancient bank on your left and your track is lined with tree stumps part of the way. Eventually your path bends right as it meets another path coming from the left by marker posts. Stay on the main track as it curves downhill to a 5-way junction. Turn **left**, avoiding a path sharp left which descends into the hollow. Your path, often shared with daredevil cyclists, leads steeply uphill whereupon you quickly reach Leith Hill Tower.



The tower was built in 1766 to raise the height of Leith Hill to the symbolic 1000 feet. It fell into disuse until 1864 when the side-tower staircase was built and was fully restored by the NT in 1984. The servery has refreshments and nice homemade cakes, now open daily, closing at 5, or 3 weekdays. You can ascend the tower where there is a view all round with miles of seeming wilderness.

- 9 After a possible breather and a snack, continue your direction past the tower and on the main downward path to a noticeboard. Turn **left** here in the direction of a sign for *Windy Gap car park*, passing an S-shaped seat, with great views. At an orange-topped post, begin your descent down a series of steps. There are quite a number of them and you need to take care in slippery conditions. There is a level section after which the path bends sharp left, as indicated by a yellow-topped post and a “car” symbol, leading down more steps to the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: the Leith Hill Windy Gap car park can be reached from the A25 road near Dorking. The well-named Hollow Lane is signposted *Abinger Common, Friday Street, Leith Hill*. The junction is about 3 miles=5 km west of Dorking, via Westcott, and about 8 miles=13 km east of Guildford. Follow this lane, sometimes through a dramatic cutting, for about 3½ miles=6 km. Avoid the Starveall car park on your left and continue on the road, keeping left at a junction. The Windy Gap car park is further along on your left.

By bus/train: there is an irregular bus service from Dorking which runs only on Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri. Check the timetables.

