



Parkgate and Hammonds Copse Beare Green, Ewood, *The Surrey Oaks*

Distance: 9 km=5½ miles or 7¼ km=4½ miles easy walking

Region: Surrey Date written: 3-mar-2012

Author: Schwebefuss Date revised: 6-jul-2017

Refreshments: Parkgate Last update: 6-may-2021

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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Woodland, historic cottages, nature reserve, bluebells in spring

In Brief

This fine circular walk takes you through a great variety of Surrey woodland and open countryside, passing a hamlet with picturesque 16th-century cottages, along a wonderful Nature Reserve, hardly known outside the area, calling in at an iconic country pub, one of the best in this part of the county.



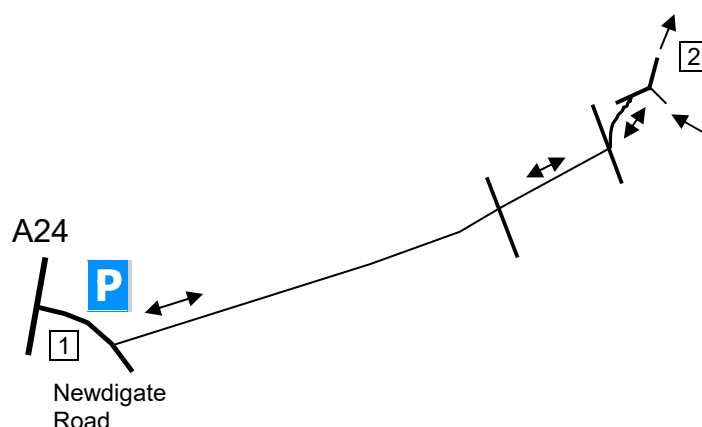
There are no stinging nettles but one section has a fair amount of undergrowth. So any sensible clothing and footwear are ok except that you will need boots after a lot of wet, especially during a rainy winter, when even the “dry” sections may be transformed. Your dog is welcome too but only if he is small enough to be lifted over three stiles (in section 7) which have wire netting.

The walk begins on the roadside in **Newdigate Road** in **Beare Green** Surrey, just off the big A24 roundabout, **postcode RH5 4QN/4QW**, grid ref 178429. There is plenty of secure parking here (but you may get competition during the school run). An alternative parking place is 150 yds further along the A24 and sharp **left** opposite the sign for *Capel* where there is a car park. Walk across the playing field to begin the walk.

You can also begin the walk at the pub, *The Surrey Oaks* in Parkgate, Newdigate, Surrey, postcode **RH5 5DZ**, reducing the length by 2 km. There is a large car park but, if you park there, you must use the pub's facilities either before or after the walk. Otherwise, you can park on the verge just opposite. You could also park at Hammond's Copse, off Broad Lane, postcode **RH5 5AT**, grid ref TQ213442, although the car park is small. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

If you are starting the walk at the pub instead of by the road in Beare Green, skip forward to section 8 and begin the walk there.

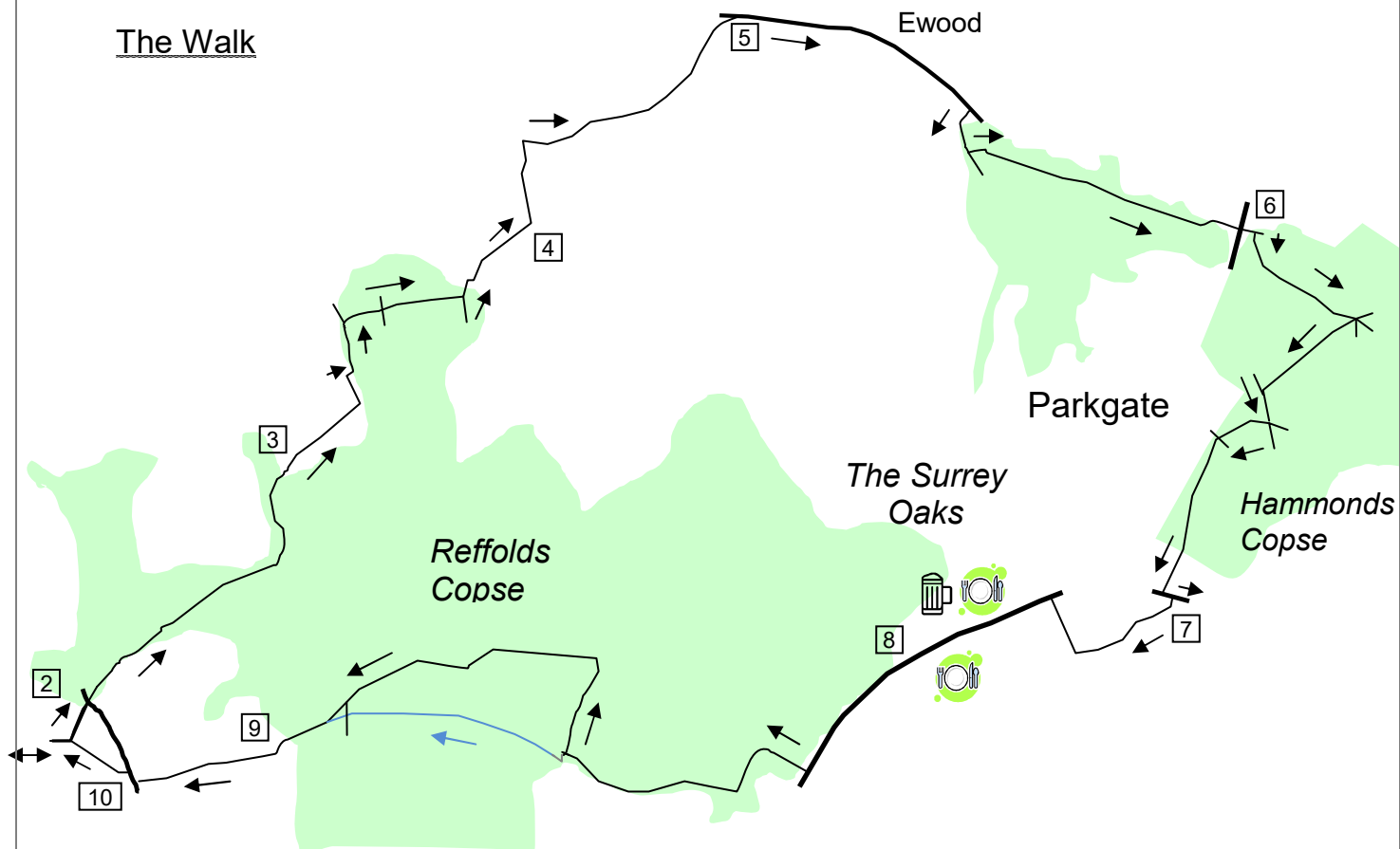


- 1 Ignore a sharp-angled footpath near the first redbrick houses and continue along the road from the junction for 30m. Turn **left** at a fingerpost, passing to the left of a freestanding double garage. The tarmac drive leads you to the picturesque small *Cherry Tree Cottage* (with its historic building plaque) and through a large wooden gate into a field. Keep to the left-hand side of a small field, then a larger field, through a wooden gate. [Winter 2020: if the gate is flooded, you can instead turn **right** beside the boundary hedge and go over a stile at the far end into the second field.] This gate leads into a third field.

*If you look to your left shortly, you will see a tree with a plaque commemorating the racehorse *Rough Quest* who presumably was “put out to grass” in this peaceful place till his death in 2016; he won the Grand National in 1986.*

Exit through another wooden gate at the far end. Go over a horse track, part of a large oval exercise route, along a grassy path between fences, and over the horse track again. Avoid the little metal garden gate ahead which is private and go diagonally **left** on a wide cinder path around the fenced garden and pond belonging to the magnificent Henfold Farm. On meeting their tarmac drive, continue 10m under a large oak to a second driveway, turn **right** through a large wooden gate and, in 20m, at a T-junction, turn **left** on a tarmac drive.

The Walk



2 The drive takes you past the *Old Kennels* on the left and a pond on your right. On your left there are now good views of the North Downs. Where the drive reaches a lane, go straight over to the driveway of *Copsemead*, signposted as a footpath. After the pair of houses, continue ahead beside a wooden gate on a grassy path. Your path continues along the edge of the wood and then downhill through the wood, avoiding side branches. In late spring bluebells are abundant. On your left soon is a large field popular with caravanners. After 250m, you join a wider path from the left. In 200m, you reach a pond. Cross a track here and keep straight ahead beside the pond. After the pond, go over the upper River Mole via a long bridge beside a ford into a long narrow meadow.



3 Keep to the left-hand side of the grass, keeping close to a crop field on your left, by a line of trees. (You can also take the bendy cinder path on the right-hand side of the grass, being careful not to wander off to the right or to disturb the anglers.) At the far left-hand corner, go **left** over a stile. Your path runs beside a crop field on the left. In only 30m, go **right** over a stile-bridge combination and immediately turn **left** on a path just inside the wood, thus regaining your original direction. (Some dog walkers stay in the field to avoid the stile.) Follow the path for 100m, keeping close to the field on your left, thus avoiding any paths branching away to the right. You arrive at a 3-way junction with a fingerpost [Mar 2021: still grounded], a redundant stile and a marker post. Turn **right** here, on a good path through the centre of the wood in a botanically rich area. After 100m, your path comes into the open and you will notice a wooden barrier on your left (part of an obstacle course). Go straight over a sandy crossing path and continue ahead dead straight on a clear path between silver birches. In 150m your path ends at a T-junction

and you will notice by some more commando apparatus on your right. Turn **left** here on a wide path and keep straight on into a crop field.

- 4 Keep ahead along the left-hand side of the field. In 150m, the path curves left with the edge of the field. In 100m, at the far corner of the field on your right, where the farm track curves left again, **leave** the edge by keeping dead straight ahead across the grass to find a junction of paths and a fingerpost. Turn **right** at the fingerpost on a bridleway over a concrete bridge crossing the River Mole again. Your path follows the left-hand side of a fairly rough meadow giving you wide vistas to the right. After 400m, at the far side, you pass some converted barns to pass a 4-way fingerpost and join a tarmac drive by *Ewood Old Farmhouse*, a timber-framed house built in the late 1500s.
- 5 Bear **right** on the tarmac, passing another timber-framed gem, *Mill Cottage*, this time from the 1600s. The tarmac lane goes over a brick bridge. In another 100m, ignore a footpath on the right and stay on the lane. Just after you pass white-brown *Ewood House*, at a fingerpost, go **right** on the gravel beside another house. Wheel **right-left** round a little summer house, keeping to the right-hand side of the house's garden. Where the garden ends, at a marker post with blue arrows, turn **left**. On your right is private woodland and soon on your left a redbrick house which is also a dog sanctuary. The path goes over a private driveway and back into the woods, avoiding a wooden gate on the left. In 400m, it joins a drive coming from *Bracken House*, leading to a main road.
- 6 Cross the road, a fraction left, via a small wooden gate, into Hammond's Copse. A noticeboard shows you a map of this nature reserve which holds little secrets not shown on the route given here.

Hammond's Copse is an ancient area of broadleaf woodland of nearly 30 ha, actively managed by the Woodland Trust. They are gradually thinning out the alien conifers to restore the Copse to its ancient state. The paths are beautifully maintained and there are several waymarked nature trails. In late spring, there is a magnificent display of bluebells.



Turn immediately **right**, between posts by a large wooden gate, and follow a good wide path through woodland. In 50m, ignore a path forking off right. In another 150m or so, ignore one or two small paths joining from the right. 40m further, you reach a very distinctive junction of **five** paths. (The Copse is worth exploring from here. As a diversion, forking right will take you on a curving path to a spot with a seat overlooking a reedy pond. You will need to backtrack to resume the walk.) Go **very sharp right**, almost doubling back on yourself. Along the way, you encounter a short wooden walkway and a bench seat on your right. Nearly 250m from the 5-way junction, you meet a T-junction. Turn **left** here. In 50m, you reach a crossing path by marker posts with a yellow arrow and a bench seat. Turn **right** here. In 200m, at the next crossing of footpaths, by a post with a yellow arrow, go straight over. Your path takes you over a stile and out of the wood, on a path between fences.

7



Your path leads over a stile to a road [care! sudden traffic on a blind bend: stop, look and listen!]. Turn **left** on the road and, in only 20m, turn **right** over a stile into a small sloping meadow. Stay on the right-hand side of the meadow to go over a (slightly rotten) stile in the corner. Keep to the right-hand side of the next meadow to go over a stile. Turn **right** on a wide grassy path between fences and, at the end, go over a stile to the main road. Turn



left on the road, using the footway on the other side, to reach *The Surrey Oaks* a perfect stop for refreshment.

The "Surrey Oaks" has been in the Good Beer Guide for yonks and you see the accolades pasted over the front door as you enter. Staple beers are Harvey's Sussex and the excellent well kept (and not overpriced) Ranmore Ale, plus rotating guest beers. The pub declares itself "open all day every day". Food figures highly with Today's Specials chalked up (always a good sign), starters under £5 and main courses under £10, which, believe it or not, is cheap in this stockbroker area. Note that the pub stops serving food after 3 pm. The Spice Tavern "Indian" restaurant opposite looks rather out-of-place but the reviews of the food and service are A-One. Drink first in the pub though!

If you began at the pub, of course your walk is now ended.

- 8 With the pub on your right, continue along the main road, shortly ignoring a footpath on your right. In about 300m, you pass the last house on the left and there is woodland on the right. Just over 100m further on, 10m after the footway ends, turn **right** at a wooden fingerpost on a bridleway into the woods of Reffolds Copse. Turn **left** at the end of a garden, keeping the garden on your left, and in 120m turn **right** again. Soon you are walking along the edge of the wood with pastures on your left. Any mud here is usually shortlived. Where the pastures end, you come to a post with a blue arrow. Turn **right** in the direction of the arrow, going deeper into the wood. If the path is very muddy, there is a **drier short cut** – see the end of this paragraph. In 150m, at a fingerpost, turn **left** as directed by a fingerpost. In 200m, the bridleway curves left, then right, then left again. Stay on the level path, avoiding paths off. This section is especially attractive with silver birches on your left, pines on your right and bluebells in late spring. As you approach a fence and a meadow ahead, keep **left** at a fork on the main path and, in 30m, veer **right** on a wide diagonal crossing track, going over a wide bridge, along a hardcore surface, with cows on your left and sheep on your right.

Drier short cut. *The route given in this guide may have mud in two sections near the start. The mud, which prevails only after a wet spell, gives way to a beautiful section, so this short cut is for emergency only. Ignoring the post with the blue arrow, keep straight ahead for a few metres, turn **left** over a ditch and immediately **right** over the remains of a wire fence on an unmarked horse path. This straight wide path leads between conifers to meet the official bridleway at the start of the next section.*

- 9 Stay the wide track and, in 200m, if you notice a footpath with a yellow arrow on the left, ignore it and stay on the track. You soon reach Henfold Lane. Turn **right** on the lane. In 20m, go **left** through an old kissing-gate, over a rickety stile and diagonally **right** across a pleasant grassy meadow. At the other side, go through a large wooden gate onto a tarmac drive.

If you began the walk at or near the **pub**, turn **right** on the drive and continue from section 2 near the start of this text. If you began at the roadside in Beare Green, continue as below.

- 10 The last stretch is the same as the first, in reverse. Cross straight over the track between buildings and veer **left** off the tarmac, under a large oak, onto a curving cinder track. Go over a horse track, along a grassy path between fences, over another horse track, through a wooden gate and along the right-hand side of three pastures to arrive back at the cottage and road where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: For a start at **Beare Green**: Take the A24 from Dorking or Horsham. Just off the Beare Green roundabout, follow the sign for *Newdigate* and park immediately on the roadside.

For a start at the **pub**: Parkgate is a Surrey hamlet 6 miles south of Dorking near the Sussex border. It is not signposted in its own right, so you normally follow signs to **Newdigate**, the nearest village. You can reach it via Brockham and Strood Green. A quicker way is via the A24 from Dorking or Horsham. Just off the Beare Green roundabout, follow directions for *Newdigate*. Follow signs into the village and turn **left** there, signed to *Leigh, Charlwood*. The *Surrey Oaks* is about 2 km=1¼ miles on the left.

By bus or train: Bus 914 runs on Wednesdays from North Holmwood to Beare Green and the pub. South Holmwood station is only 1 km from the walk.

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