



Headley Heath, Mickleham, Box Hill

Distance: 14 km=9 miles

easy-to-moderate walking with a steep bit

Region: Surrey

Date written: 4-sep-2011

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking)

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Author: Schwebefuss

Last update: 31-may-2023

Refreshments: Mickleham, Box Hill and Boxhill village

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

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Woodland, hills, heath, views

In Brief

This a variation on a classic walk, noted for its sudden great views, from the beautiful Headley Heath to Surrey's best known hill. This walk shows their unexpected beauty and complexity. This walk seems longer than it is because of the gradients and is longer than the given distance when these are taken into account.

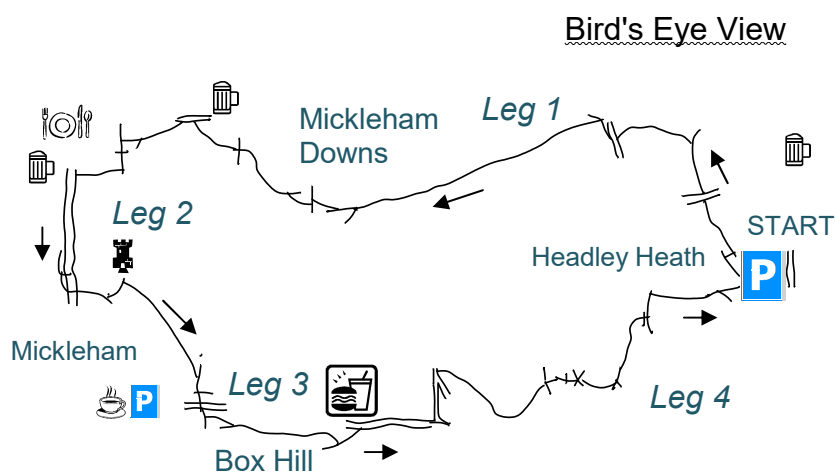


Despite the hilly terrain, this walk has long pleasant stretches on level paths. The stile count is **zero**. Any kind of attire is ok but in the wetter seasons you may find some mud on the bridleways. This walk is fine for dogs too.

The walk begins in the **Headley Heath NT** main car park (free to members: scan your card!), nearest **postcode KT18 6QA**, grid ref TQ 204 539. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



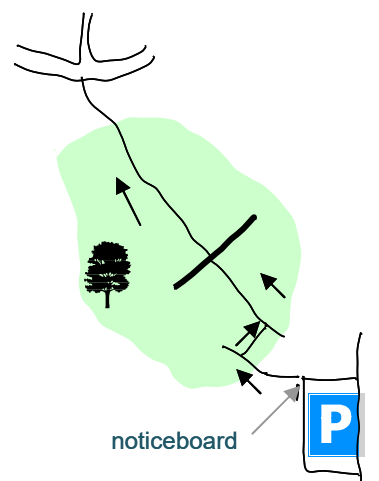
This walk is also the start of the **Box Hill-Reigate-Walton Monster**.



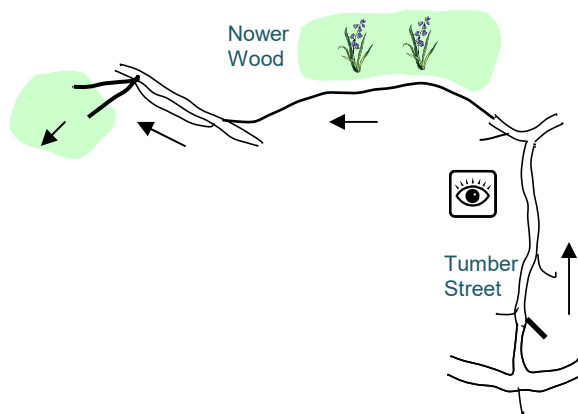
The Walk

Leg 1: Headley Heath to Mickleham, 4½ km=3 miles

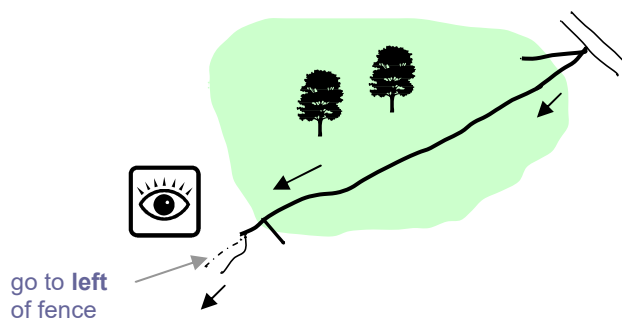
- 1 You need to concentrate a little, just at the start here. With your back to the road, go to the **right**-hand side of the car park, where there is a triangular notice-board. Go forward across the right-hand edge of the grassy space for just over 10m and, just before some benches under an oak tree, take a narrow path diagonally **right** into the woods. 15m after you enter the trees, before your path goes down a bank, turn **right** on another path. In 50m, at a T-junction, turn **left**. In about 100m, the path meets a dusty hard drive by a signpost. Go straight ahead on a footpath as indicated. This path runs through bracken and woodland, with gardens on your right at first. In ½ km, it comes down to a junction of sandy tracks and a road.



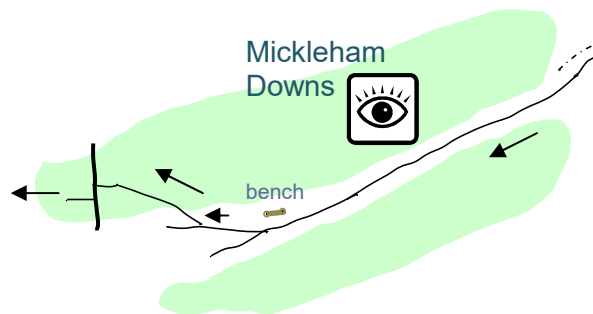
- 2 Cross the road to a lane opposite, called Tumber Street. Avoiding little paths branching off, you pass various cottages and a stud farm and finally ascend to a Y-junction. Take the **left** hand lane, Langley Lane, ignore a footpath left, and continue on a track where the lane ends. *The track passes Nower Wood on the right, an 80-acre area of ancient woodland run by the Surrey Wildlife Trust as an educational nature reserve. Nower Wood is open by appointment only when there are no school visits (ring 01483-795440).* The track emerges from the trees, giving you views ahead towards Box Hill and Ranmore Common, and comes down to a road. Cross the road and turn **right** on a footpath that runs parallel to it. Soon you come to a small parking area with two signposted bridleways leading off.



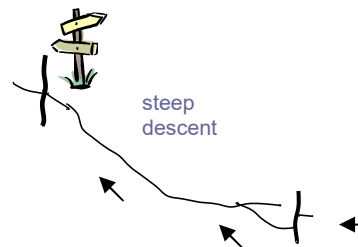
- 3 Take the **left** hand bridleway. This path runs under some fine beech trees and continues straight for almost 1 km. Suddenly the fence on the left ends. Ignore a track on the left here. You are now out of the trees on the open Mickleham Downs. From the start there is a wire fence separating walkers and riders. Keep to the **left** of the fence, just after the noticeboard and sign, and continue straight ahead down the beautiful grassy slope. The spire of St Barnabas church, Ranmore, is visible on the hill in the distance exactly in the direction you are walking.



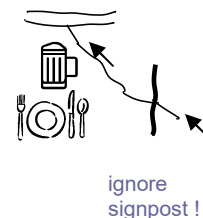
- 4 Continue along the grassy slope for 600m, ignoring any paths forking off. A fence on your right separates you from the horse track at first and breaks off. 80m after the separating fence begins again, you reach a wooden bench on your right, **after** which the path forks. Take the **right** fork, slightly to the right of your original direction. This wide grassy path goes along the right side of a clearing. When it rounds a curve and forks again just after a post, take the **right** hand fork, the less grassy path, that stays close to the trees on the right, goes past a triangulation pillar and enters woodland. Continue through the sycamores to a wide crossing path. Cross over to a path on the other side.



- 5 After 70m, veer **left** on another wide path joining from the right. This path runs through more woodland and then descends for about 200m quite steeply. **Careful: it may be slippery when wet!** It reaches a wide crossing path, an ancient track, with a signpost.

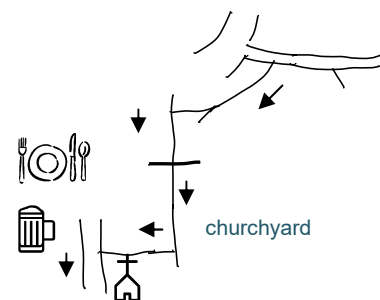


- 6 Go straight ahead over the track on another path, ignoring the signpost. The path goes down shallow steps past Mickleham Alms Houses and then alongside the King William IV pub. *The King William IV (locally known as the "King Billy") is an atmospheric pub dating from 1790 that serves several real ales and many good, if rather pricey, dishes in a pretty garden accessed up steep steps. It is closed Monday and Tuesday, otherwise open all day. (There are two other eateries en route.)*



Leg 2: Through Mickleham, 2 km (1 mile)

- 1 Turn **left** on the lane outside the pub. Before reaching the busy A24 road, turn **left** into School Lane. Where the lane curves left, carry straight ahead on a gravel drive. Avoid left turns into a children's playground by continuing straight ahead on a narrow hedged path next to houses. At a T-junction, turn **left** on a foot-path. The path runs alongside a field on the left and crosses a lane with yellow markers. *Shortly, the large tree on your left no longer carries the amusing notice "do not throw stones at this notice". A left fork here will take you into a flower garden of brief or eternal repose.* You soon reach the churchyard of St Michael's.



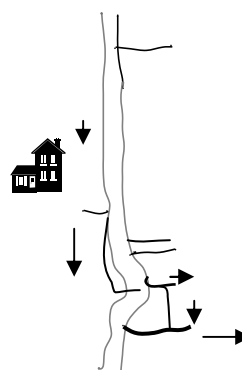
This ancient church with its squat spire still has traces of its Saxon origins but is mainly Norman, around 1180. The side chapel, known as the Norbury Chapel, with its chequered stone and flint walls goes back to around 1300. Note the few unusual wooden structures in place of gravestones.

Turn right alongside the church to the road. Opposite is the *Running Horses* pub.



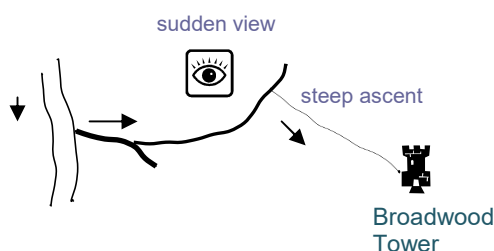
The Running Horses is a popular Brakspear gastropub, a hotel and a 16th-century inn. The pub restaurant with an al fresco dining option has a good menu and à la carte offerings suggesting fine dining, attended by bow-tied waiters. Although tempting, a full meal here may be inadvisable, since you are barely half way through the walk, unless you dispose of the languishing participants here to pick up later.

- 2 Cross the road and turn **left** along the pavement. The pavement runs past several houses, including Mickleham Lodge on the right. Near the end of the pavement, ignore a footpath right and at the end take a footpath on the **right** that runs parallel to the road. After passing the junction with Headley Lane on the left and some bus stops, immediately re-join the road, cross over and go **left** through the entrance to Juniper Hall Field Research Centre (FRC). In only 10m, before some huts, turn **right** and keep **right** on a path running uphill with a large meadow on your left. Where the meadow ends, keep ahead through woodland. The path comes to a T-junction with a surfaced track. Turn **left** on the track uphill.




Leg 3: Mickleham to Box Hill village, 3½ km (2 miles)


- 1 In 150m, where the track bends right into a house, keep straight ahead on a gravel path as indicated by the yellow arrow. Later, immediately after a wooden gate, there is a sudden break in the trees on the left with views down to Juniper Hall and up to Norbury Park on the hill in the distance. Here **leave** the footpath by turning **right** on a narrow path uphill. **This short stretch up to the Broadwood Tower is rather steep. If your legs are rebelling, you can reach the tower by continuing on the path, turning sharp right and keeping right at each junction.** Soon the Broadwood Tower comes into view and in a total of 100m you reach it.

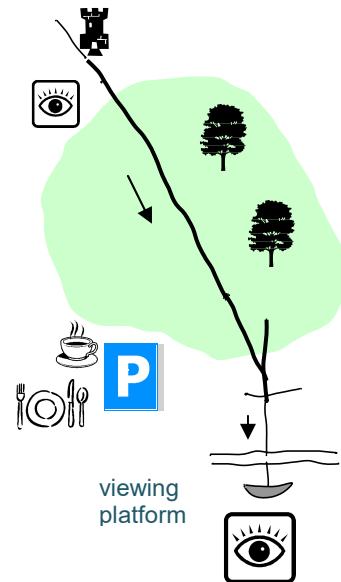


This odd little flint tower, known variously as Box Hill Tower or Broadwood's Folly was built by Thomas Broadwood the piano maker around 1814 as something to view from his splendid residence, Juniper Hall. The door is blocked now, probably for safety reasons, and grooves of old staircases can be seen inside.

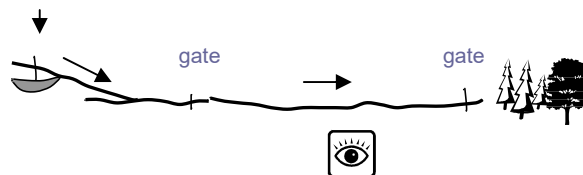
- 2 From the tower, continue in the same direction through a small wooden gate. Immediately there is a fine view westwards over the Mole Valley and the hills beyond. Stay on this wide pleasant level track, going through another small wooden gate, as it runs through woodland and, after 1 km, passes some junctions and waymarkers to reach the open grassy and usually well-populated, space that adjoins Box Hill car park over on the right (an alternative starting point).

 *There is also a shop, a servery and a small café through the car park.* Continue forward over the grass in the direction of the open hillside.

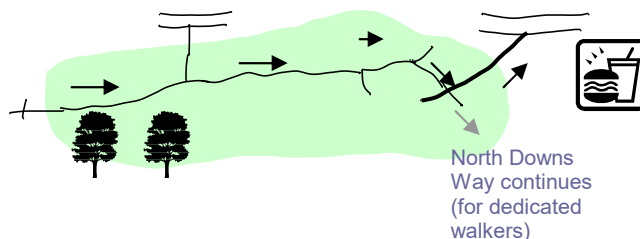
-  Shortly, cross a road and reach the stone viewing platform with views down to Dorking and Brockham and the valley of the westward-flowing River Mole.




- 3 Turn **left** from the viewing platform on a well-made path that joins a gravel track. You will see from the white acorn symbols that you are on the North Downs Way (NDW). *The North Downs Way is a long-distance footpath running along the North Downs from Farnham to Dover, via Canterbury or Folkestone. Part of its length coincides roughly with the ancient Pilgrims Way.* At a fingerpost, fork **left** uphill with the NDW. The path runs close to the road and later goes through a gate with more fine views right. In 50m, avoid a gate up on your left and go through a second gate ahead into woodland with a group of yews and beeches.

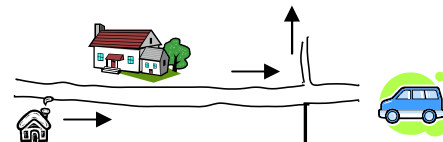


- 4 Keep on the main fairly level path following any white acorn symbols and avoiding turn-offs. Eventually, at a post with a white acorn and a yellow arrow pointing right, turn **right** as indicated, soon twisting and going down and up steps, then down more steps to a sunken path. Your route continues straight over the sunken path. **However, for refreshments, or for a short cut, turn left on the path, thus leaving the North Downs Way, shortly reaching the road at Box Hill village with a colourful restaurant on the right.**



 *The Smith & Western Bar Grill Diner is a fun family eatery providing burgers, nachos, BBQ ribs and the like, plus cold beer. The piped music has been assessed by transatlantic visitors as a woeful introduction to country music. If you visit this restaurant, apart from the shortcut below, you need to retrace your steps to the point where you met the sunken path.*

Decision point. *The following is a short cut from here, avoiding the gradients of the next section (it does **not** apply to the Monster!). It gives you ten minutes of easy walking before the delights of Headley Heath but is disdained by purists. Go to the Smith and Western, cross the road, turn **right** and walk along Boxhill Road for about 900m. This is a quiet road with a variety of properties on either side, ranging from some quaint cottages to large dwellings set in sizeable grounds, with jams and eggs for sale. Continue as far as the first decent left turn, Headley Heath Approach, a residential tarmac track, just after St Andrews Church and Village Hall. Turn **left** here. Resume the walk at section **2**.*



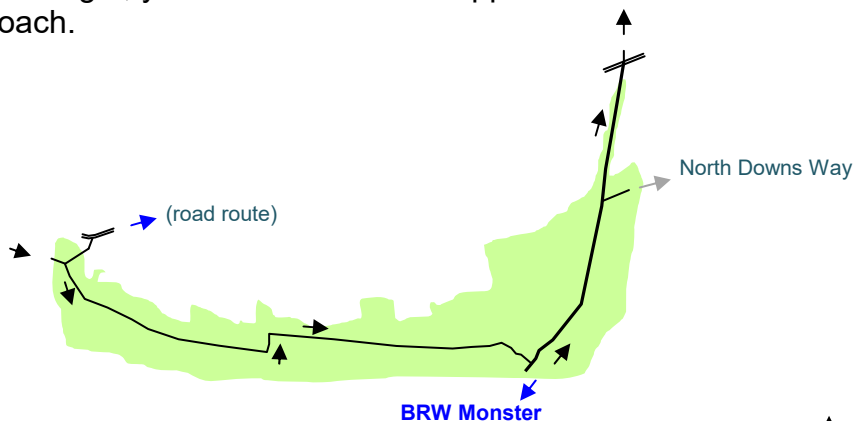
Leg 4: Box Hill village to Headley Heath , 4 km (2½ miles)

- 1** After crossing the sunken path, follow the undulating path, still the NDW, through woodland. Eventually, your path goes up two flights of steps, **right** along a wide level path, down a long flight of steps at the other end, to a T-junction.

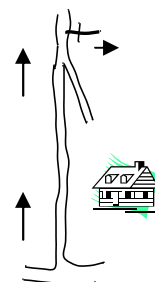


This part of the **BoxHill-Reigate-Walton Monster** ends here, turning **right downhill** instead of left on this track.

Turn **left** at a T-junction with a broad rising track. After a gradual, slightly tedious, ascent, you reach a 3-way fingerpost. **Leave** the NDW here by ignoring the right branch and keeping straight on. After going through woodland and past chalets on your right, you arrive at the road opposite the tarmac drive Headley Heath Approach.



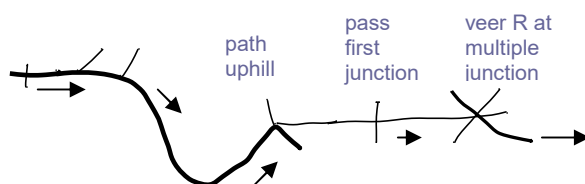
- 2** Follow Headley Heath Approach for some distance past various properties. After nearly 1 km, the track comes to a Y-junction where it joins another residential track coming from the right. *At the corner is Brackenhurst with its tolkienesque gateway.* Continue for 10m and turn **right** through a gate onto Headley Heath.



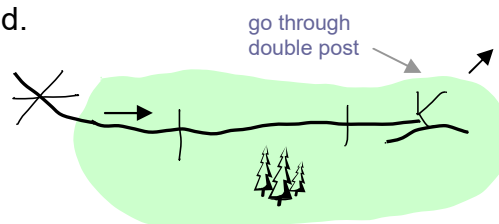
Headley Heath has a complex topography and there are many routes back to the car park. The beautiful route described here avoids the muddy horse tracks and also stays mainly on level ground. Watch out for the Belted Galloway cattle.

- 3** **See mini-map overleaf.** Go straight ahead on a broad path. Always keep to the main path, avoiding a narrower left fork in 100m and all other paths branching off. Your path curves **right** downhill, passing a blue-topped post where another path joins from the left. 100m later, ignore a wide right fork into a private house. Your path bends left again and begins to ascend. In 100m, at a 4-way junction, keep straight ahead through a wooden barrier on a wide path uphill. This stony path levels out and gradually becomes a pleasant grassy one. About 100m from that wooden barrier, keep straight

ahead over an oblique crossing path. In a further 150m, you reach a more complex junction of six paths with a *Box Hill Hike* post and a red arrow on your right. Take the **second** path from the **right**, i.e. not on the narrow path straight ahead but on the much wider track to its right.



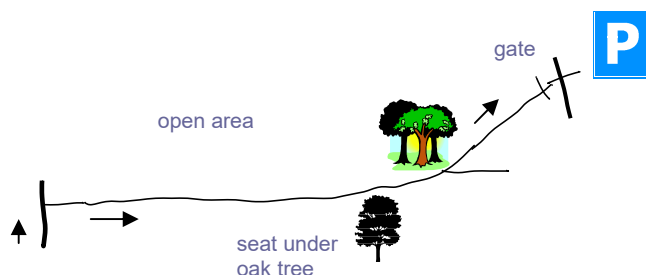
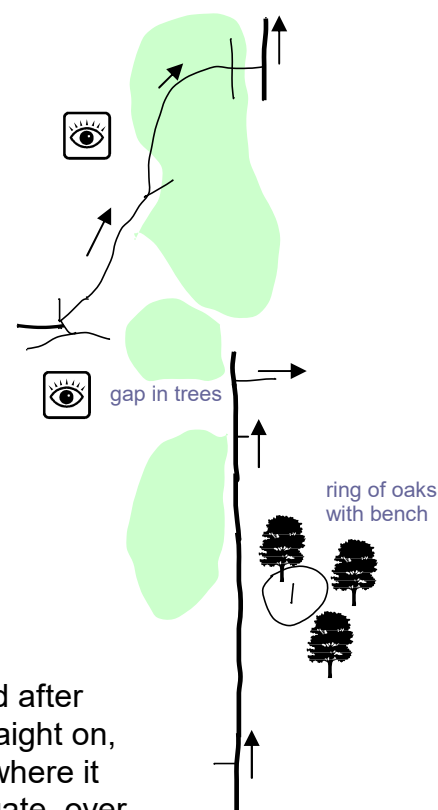
- 4 The wide track, which is rather rutted in parts, curves left and descends, going over a crossing bridleway after 200m. Shortly it starts to rise again. After a further 200m, as the track levels out, you reach a multiple junction of paths and tracks. Avoid the first path sharp left (with the blue arrow) and take the **second** path **left**, a narrower woodland path with open heath visible 50m ahead.



- 5 You have a stunning view over the open heath on your left. 70m after the start of the open heath, ignore a path that forks right into woods and stay next to the open heath continuing to enjoy the extensive views ahead. Stay on this pleasant narrow level chalky path for another 200m with heath on your left and woodland or bracken on your right. Your path abruptly bends **right**. In 50m it crosses another wide path (part of the *Heathland Trail* – you can see the yellow-topped post on your right). In a further 70m you arrive at a prominent wide straight stony track. Turn **left** on this track.

- 6 In 100m you pass on the right a circle of oak trees with a bench in the middle. In another 50m, you pass a path on your right which is marked by a short wooden post topped with purple paint. **Ignore** this path, go another 50m, and turn **right** on another narrow path, which is marked by an identical “purple-topped post”.

- 7 This stony path goes between dense expanses of gorse and after 250m reaches a welcome seat under a large oak. Keep straight on, passing more oaks on your left. Your main path veers **left** where it meets a path from the right. It shortly takes you through a gate, over a horse track and back to the car park where the walk began.





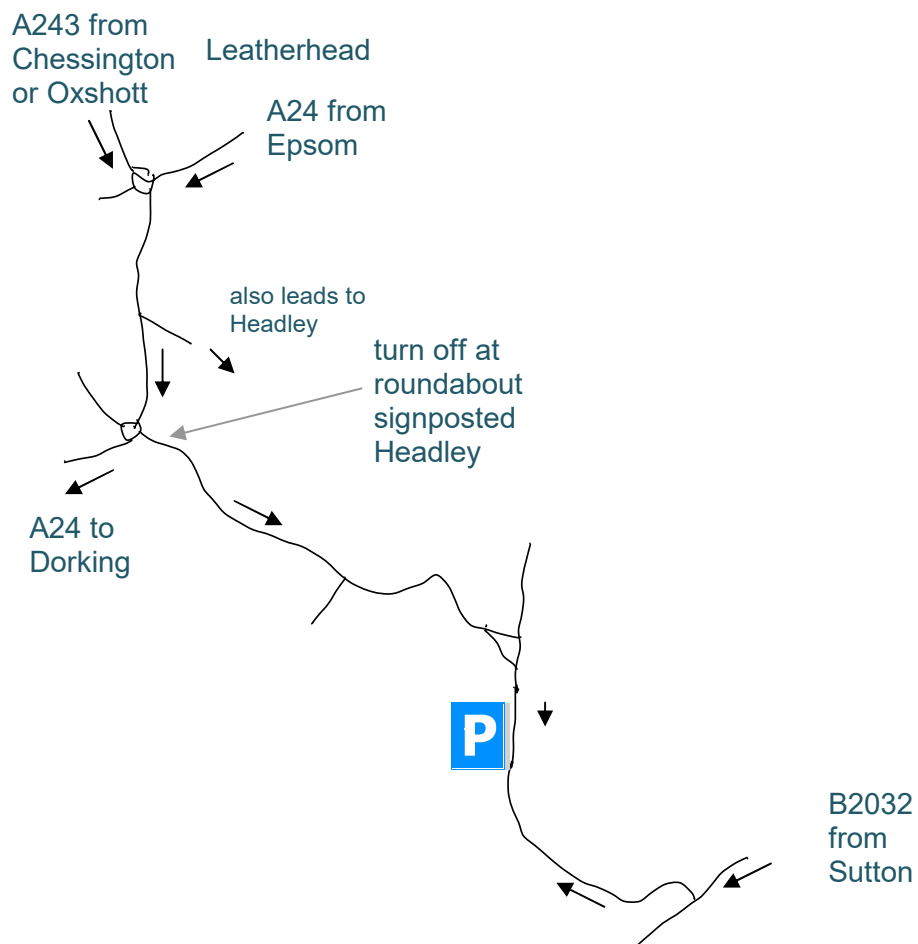
For final refreshments, the Cock Inn is about ½ mile (700m) north up the road. St Mary's church nearby is also definitely worth visiting.

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Getting there

By car: Park in the Headley Heath National Trust main car park. To get there from the London area, if coming from Chessington, Oxshott or Ashted, take the A24 Leatherhead bypass signposted *Dorking*. Ignore a left turn signposted *Headley and Tyrell's Wood* and take the *next left* at a roundabout signposted *Headley*. Follow the narrow road, avoiding minor turn offs, all the way to Headley village. Finally, at a T-junction, turn right. The big car park is a little way along the main road on the right. Coming from Reigate or Sutton, take the Pebblehill Road past Betchworth Station and turn left onto the B2033. Park in the *second* car park on the left, the larger one. Box Hill National Trust car park is an alternative starting point (begin at Leg 3, section 3).

By train: From Box Hill station, cross the A24 and take the well-known walk up the Whites of Box Hill, or over the stepping stones, and begin the walk from the middle of Leg 3.



By bus: bus 465 runs between Kingston and Dorking stopping at Mickleham, including Sundays. Bus 21 runs between Epsom and Dorking stopping at Boxhill village, not Sundays.