



Devil's Punch Bowl and hamlets Gibbet Hill, Bowlhead Green, Brook



Distance: 13 km=8 miles

easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 22-nov-2013

Author: Schwebefuss

Date revised: 25-sep-2015

Refreshments: Brook, Punch Bowl Café Last update: 1-mar-2021

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Dramatic hills, village, pub, woodland, small green meadows

In Brief

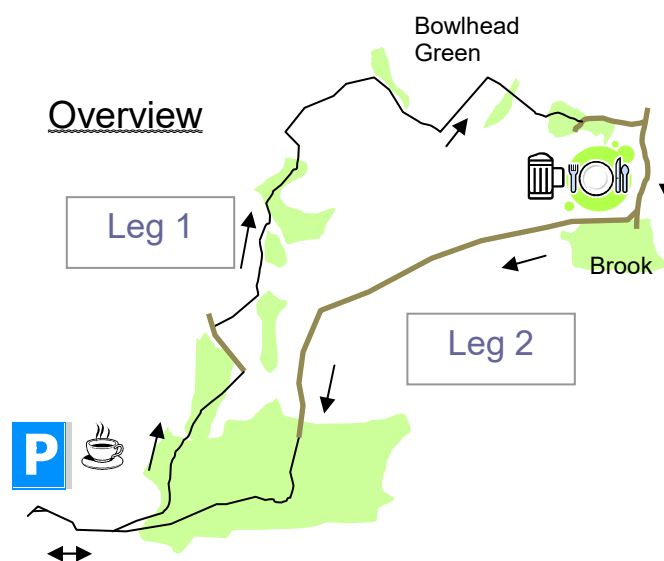
This walk takes you to the notorious Gibbet Hill, then down into the valley to visit some delightful isolated timbered cottages and several hamlets and small settlements, including Brook with its noteworthy pub. (For bookings, call 01428 682763.)



? There are a few places on this walk where the nettles have grown profusely so you may find bare legs uncomfortable, especially in late summer. The ground underfoot is fairly firm, with just one muddy stretch by Cosford Farm, so sensible walking shoes are acceptable if the weather is dry.

There is a just one group of four stiles in one section, but this should not prevent your dog from coming along too.

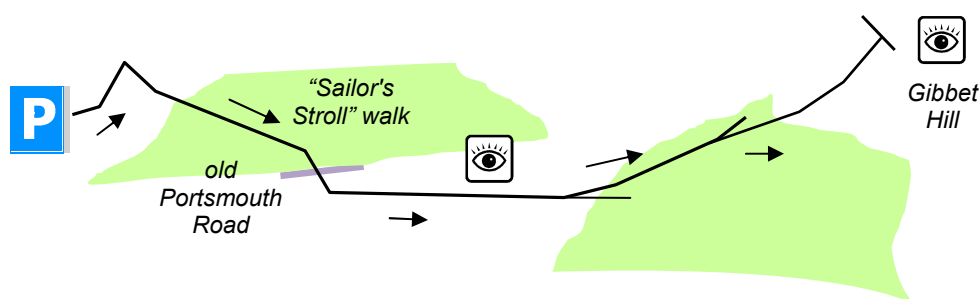
The walk begins at the **National Trust Punch Bowl** car park in Hindhead, Surrey, postcode **GU26 6AB**. There is a small charge to non-NT members (as 2021: £4 for 4 hours or £6 all day. The small *free* car park at Highcombe Edge (postcode **GU26 6SJ**) requires an extension to the walk. You can also park in **Brook** (postcode **GU8 5UJ**) with refreshments at the Punch Bowl. For travel details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



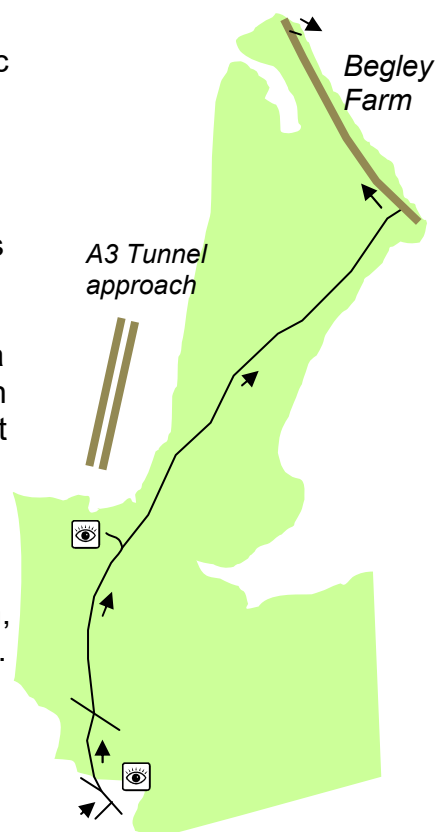
The Walk

Leg 1: Descent to Brook 7 km=4½ miles

- 1 After possibly stopping to admire the view over the Punch Bowl from the famous viewpoint at the back of the car park, turn **right** by the noticeboard in the direction of the *Sailor's Stroll*. Your path zig-zags left-right into trees. Immediately keep straight ahead, avoiding a left fork and a wooden gate. In 150m, you cross the old road, now a wide strip. 50m after, turn **left** on a surfaced track, still on the *Sailor's Stroll*. You have great views left and soon pass the Sailor's Stone. *It commemorates the notorious murder of a sailor returning to his ship in Portsmouth. It was on Gibbet Hill that three men were hung in 1786 for the crime. Charles Dickens even used this story in "Nicholas Nickleby".* 80m further, you reach a marker post. Turn **right** here, still on the *Sailor's Stroll*, passing a NT sign for Gibbet Hill. Keep **left** on the path, soon emerging onto the open space of Gibbet Hill with its triangulation pillar, Celtic cross and extensive views of the other Surrey Hills and the valley below where you will shortly be walking.



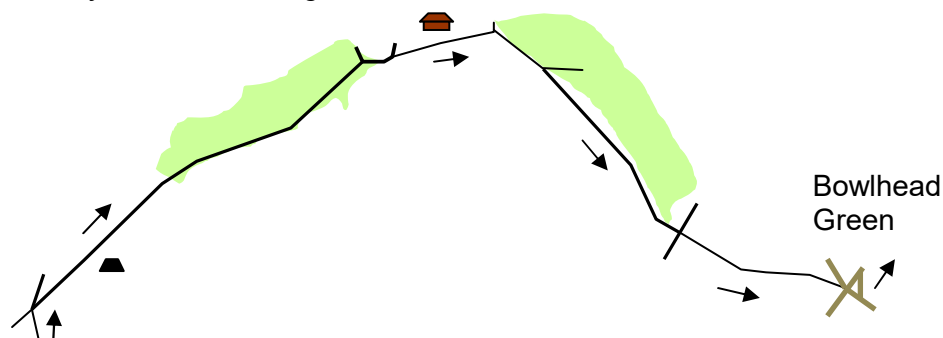
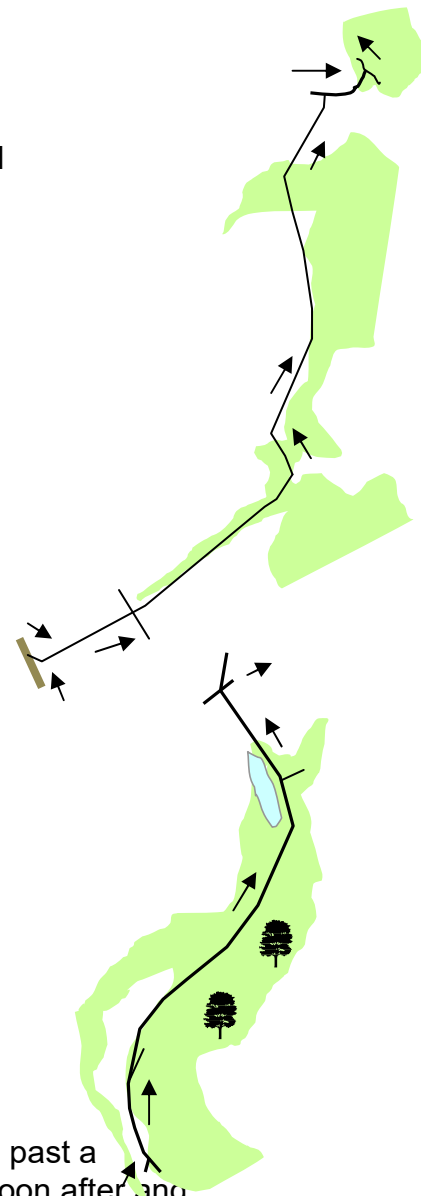
- 2 Turn **left** along the edge of the hill and take the **right** fork, as indicated by a yellow arrow, just before the Celtic cross. Your path leads downhill and crosses a sunken path to a post with a number of arrows. Keep ahead, curving left past holly bushes, shortly passing a path on your left leading to the *Tunnel Viewing Platform*, once of great interest during the construction. Avoid minor paths leading off and keep to the widest path on a shallow descent. You soon pass a stump with arrows and another purple-arrowed post. Your path comes next to a junction where a path bends sharp left to the observation area for the A3 tunnel, a sight which is of far less interest now that the project is complete. Keep straight ahead regardless, on a path between birches. The A3 road is visible on your left, accompanied by the rumble of traffic which will soon subside as the path becomes sunken. Your path now becomes wide and stony and leads down, past a wooden barrier, to a lane beside Boundless Farm. Turn **left** along quiet Boundless Road for about 300m until you see a large wooden gate on your right with a sign for Begley Farm.



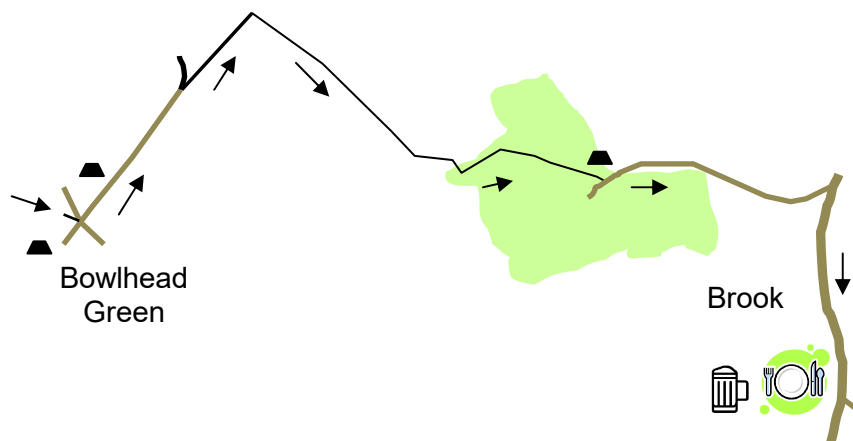
3 Turn **right** at the entrance to Begley Farm but do *not* go through the gate (known as “Twiglet’s Gate”). Instead, turn **right** up a shallow bank, through a swing-gate and **left** along the left-hand side of a meadow. At the other side, about 20m from the corner, pass to the left of a redundant swing-gate and keep ahead on a grassy path with a wire fence on your right. You soon pass a derelict swimming pool on your right (a recent mystery: was it once fed from a stream? who wants a bracing dip?). In the next grassy clearing, at a marker post, turn **left**. Keep ahead to an old metal gate and go over a stile beside it. *Note the round steel shields with a star, crown and letter “P” on the gate. You will see these on many of the old metal gates in these parts, a reminder that this was once part of the Lea Park estate of Lord Pirrie.* Turn **right** along the edge of the meadow. At the far end, after passing a collapsed stile, go down a slope into the copse, quickly reaching a pond on your right. Go up steps and almost immediately veer **right** down a bank and cross a lovely sloping meadow with the 16th and 17th century timbered grade II listed *Blackhanger Farm House* on your left. Go over a stile and turn **right** on the driveway.

4 The drive crosses a stream and bends left to a 3-way junction. Keep **left** in the direction of the blue arrow on a wide level woodland path, avoiding a private track forking right soon after. *The bank of beeches on your right and the sloping meadow on your left make this a memorable section of the walk.* After more woodland, your path passes a pond on your left. Ignore a gate and yellow arrow on the right here. Your path goes over a culvert, sinks between banks, meets a path coming from a cottage on the left and arrives at a 4-way junction.

5 Take the **first** path on your right, slightly downhill. It takes you past a timbered cottage and its barn. Ignore a footpath on the right soon after and continue on the track, gently uphill. Soon you join a tarmac drive coming down from the left, passing a spectacular piece of topiary as you walk in front of *Cosford Farm House* on a wide grassy route between old brick walls. The track veers right in front of a large wooden gate and arrives at a fork and a marker post with arrows. Take the **right**-hand option, a bridleway running beside the cattle pasture on your right beneath the wooded hill known as Mount Pleasant. At the top, go through a metal gate to a crossing track. Cross straight over the track, going through another metal gate and continuing on a sunken cinder path straight ahead. This path brings you up to a crossroads in the hamlet of Bowlhead Green. *Its name presumably derives from the Devil’s Punch Bowl but there is very little known of the history of this charming rural settlement.*



- 6 Avoid French Lane sharp left but take the **second** road on the left, Lower House Road, passing a small triangular green on your right. *Chapel Cottage on your left is well-named.* After 300m, by the red-tiled *Heath Hall Cottage*, take the **right** fork, marked *Lower House only*. At the end of the driveway, immediately before the gates of *Lower House*, go **right** through a tall kissing-gate. Follow a wide grassy path downhill and up the other side of a valley under oak trees. Your wide fenced path levels out and curves left. As the field ends, keep ahead to a large metal gate with a beautiful grass field of scattered oaks beyond. Turn **left** in front of the gate on a narrow path. Your path goes through a very old kissing-gate, veering right under dark hollies with a view of the oak meadow again. Dark laurels foreshadow a very steep descent where you need to take care in slippery conditions.

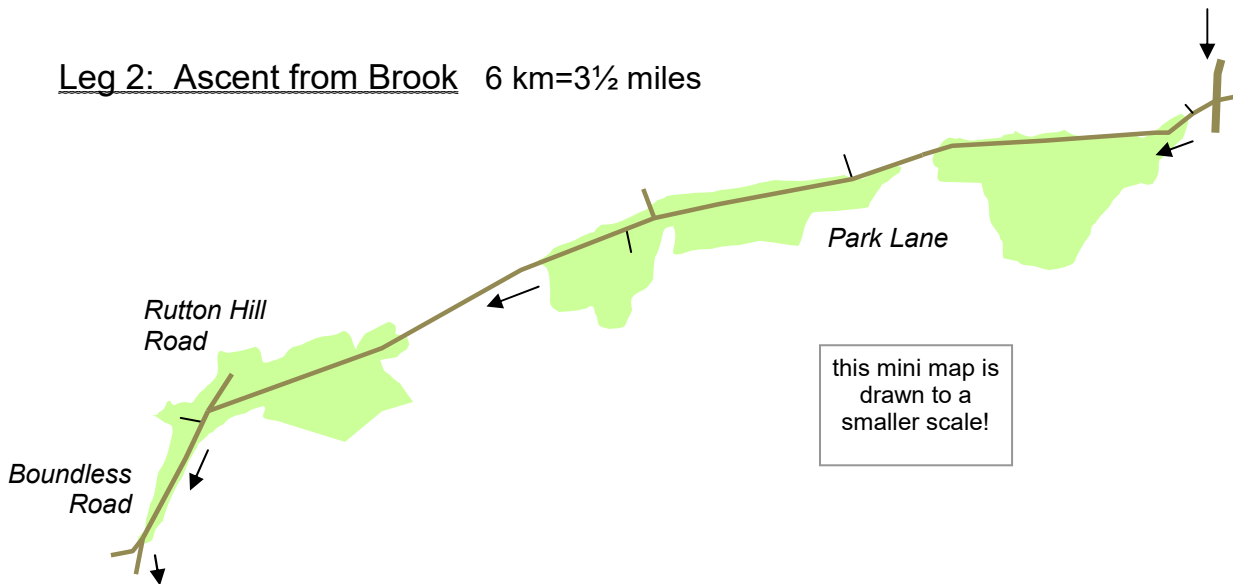


At the bottom your path takes you through a kissing-gate by a gatehouse to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane, Bowlhead Green Road, with the walls of Witley Park on your left. (For a remarkable account of the history of this house, see another walk in this series "Witley, Hambledon, Chiddingfold".) In 400m, you reach the main road in the village of Brook. Turn **right** on the road to reach the village green and the *Dog and Pheasant* pub.

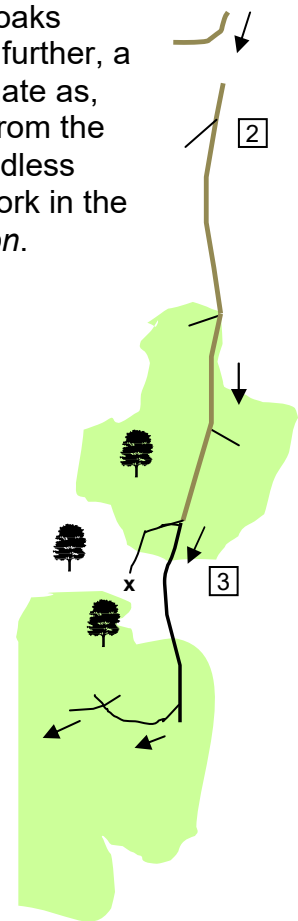


There are two really important places in the hamlet of Brook: the Cricket Club, with its long history of contributing to the game, and the "Dog and Pheasant". The pub was purchased in 2008 by four local businessmen one of whom lived at the pub as a boy. It really is the centre of the community with every day a special day. Every Wednesday the chef comes out of the kitchen and will grill your T-bone steak in the inglenook. Bring together more than five people and you can have a suckling pig. Beers are Ringwood, TEA and a rotating range of other guests. For bookings, call 01428 682763. You may arrive in time for the Brook Fête on May Bank Holiday when the pub plays host to the Brookfest with live bands. The building on the other side of the cricket pitch is the Pirrie Hall, given in 1923 by Lord Pirrie whose initial is emblazoned on all those metal gates.

Leg 2: Ascent from Brook 6 km=3½ miles

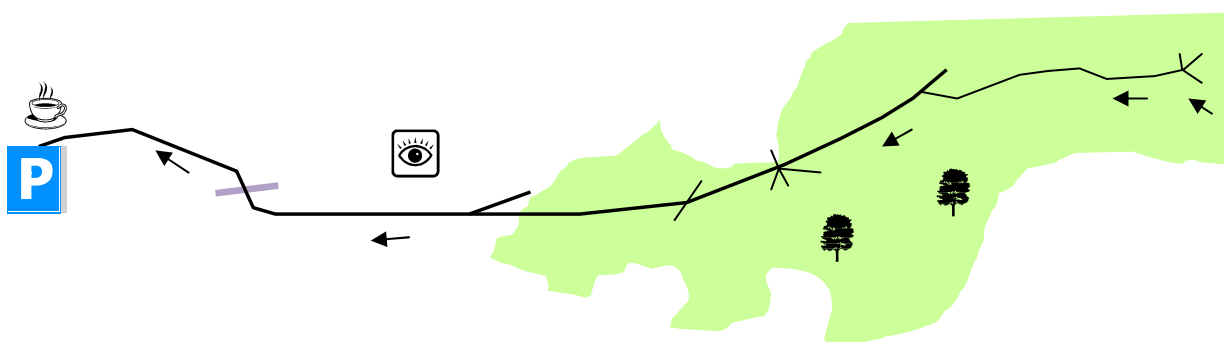


- 1 After possible refreshment, continue along the main road. In 250m, at a crossroads, turn **right** on Park Lane, signposted *Bowlhead Green*. Ignore a footpath immediately on the right and begin your long stroll along this very quiet road passing various properties. *The road bridge crosses a track built within the Witley Park estate to maintain its isolation.* You pass on the right the entrance to *Uplands Park* high up on the estate, a noted stud farm. The woodland soon partly clears, giving you views on the left. As tall oaks shield the sky, ignore a road on your right, *Beech Hill*, and, 600m further, a footpath on the left by a small wooden gate. Beeches now dominate as, about 2 km since you left the village, you meet a road coming in from the right at the Boundless Road sign. Keep **left** on what is now Boundless Road, ignoring a footpath on your right shortly after. At the next fork in the road take the minor **left** hand fork on the road towards *High Button*.
- 2 Stay on the tarmac lane, avoiding a byway forking right, soon with good views left across to Hascombe Hill. *Note another old metal gate with that round "Pirrie" shield.* Pass *Creedhole*, ignoring a signposted track on the right, still keeping to the tarmac, uphill. *On your left soon is the FC's Hurthill Copse, worth exploring another day.* Pass houses *North and South* and *High Button Cottage* at the end of the lane, now a rough track, to reach a steep grassy bank.
- 3 Ignore a footpath over to the right (which is rather muddy and partially blocked by branches) and take the bridleway straight up ahead past a line of posts, passing a NT sign for High Button. Your path goes steeply uphill beside a bank of beeches. Ignore a post with a yellow arrow pointing up left to an old-fashioned kissing-gate. 15m after that, you reach a stump with arrows on top. Fork **right** here on a footpath, indicated by a yellow arrow. [Feb 2021: only the stump is visible as the arrow markers are broken and arrow missing.] Your path goes across an area of felled trees with a slope down on your right. (The footpath is very overgrown at first, but it soon clears.) The path snakes its way round the valley side and through woodland. After a scenic 250m or



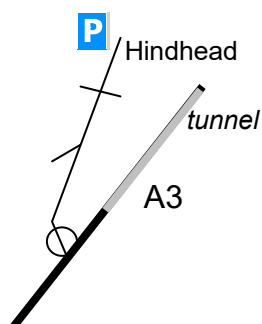
so, it bends right, down to a crossing path. Turn **left** here on an uphill path.

- 4 Keep straight ahead on this wide byway, soon passing a post with red arrows, curving round a bikers' slope and going uphill between ferny banks. You now have a steep 250m climb to reach a 6-way junction with Gibbet Hill up on your right. Keep straight ahead here, still following the red arrows, on a byway slightly uphill. You reach a metal barrier, firmly anchored to a concrete block, and a diagonal crossing path at a 3-way fingerpost. Go straight over, heading towards the café, as directed by one of the fingers. Your path merges with a tarmac path coming from the right which turns out to be the same familiar scenic path you took on the outward journey. Keep ahead and in 300m fork **right** by a post with markers on a path leading through trees to the Punch Bowl car park and café where the walk began.



Getting there

By car: If coming via the A3 road, turn off just south of the Hindhead tunnel, to **Hindhead** village. At the crossroads in Hindhead, keep straight ahead into a cul-de-sac. The car park is on the left. Refreshments are available at the Punch Bowl Café.



Brook can be reached from Milford, on the Haslemere road (A286).

By bus/train: various buses from Haslemere station. Check the timetables.

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