Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Dorking and The Nower
Bury Hill, Deepdene Trail, North Holmwood

Distance: 10 km=6 miles moderate walking with long easy stretches

Region: Surrey Date written: 18-mar-2019

Author: Zweigknospe Last update: 7-oct-2026

Refreshments: Dorking, North Holmwood

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

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

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

Open pastures, views, ponds, high woodland trails, country town

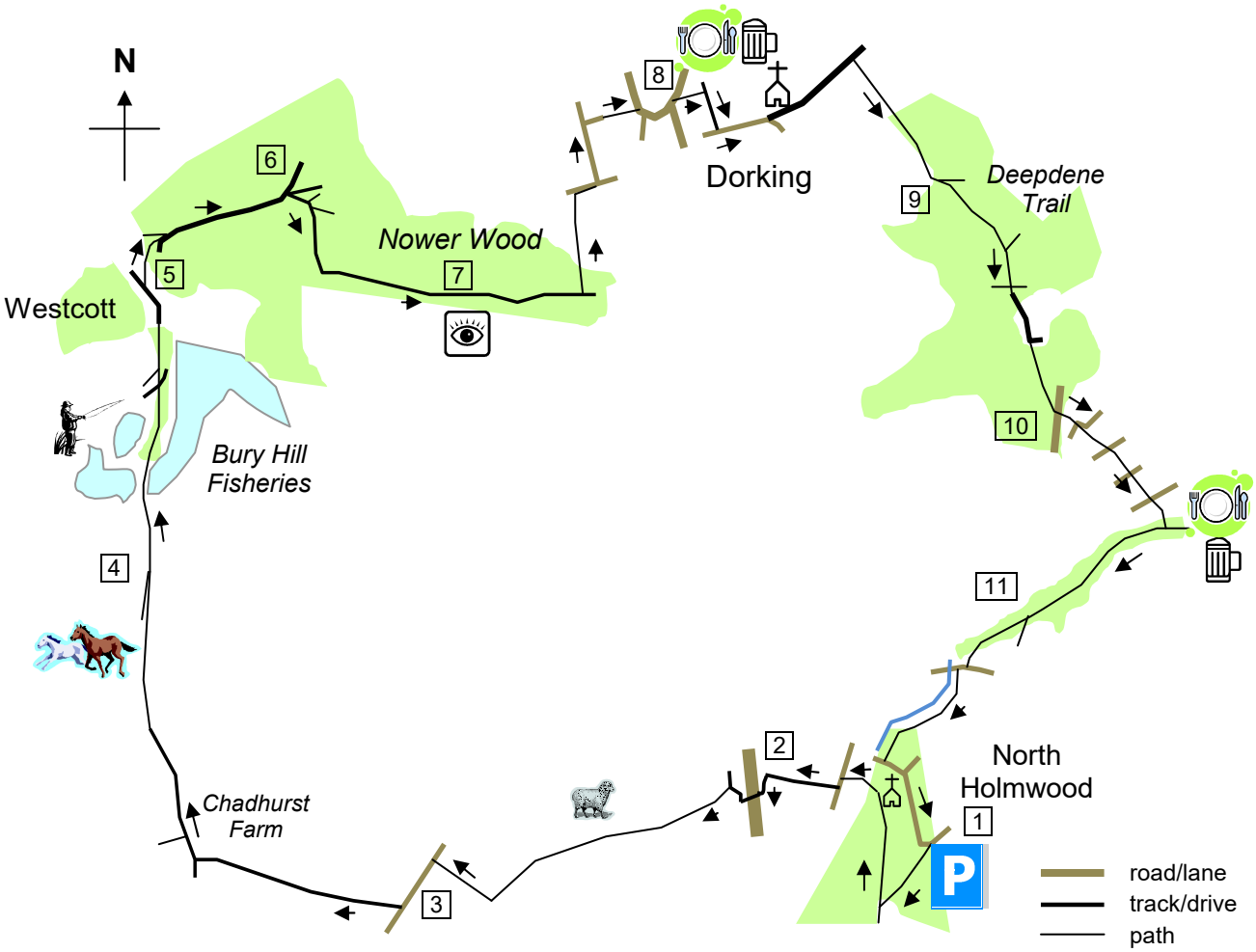
In Brief

This is a walk with many surprises and, even if you think you are familiar with this area from the other walks in this series, you will see everything in a new perspective. You begin on easy paths in open country with views of the North Downs. You then follow a stretch of the Greensand Way over The Nower – a high ridge with terrific views. The walk comes through the outskirts of Dorking, taking in an excellent pub* with other chances to eat. Near the end, it leads you along part of the Deepdene Trail. (* To enquire at the *Queens Head*, ring 01306-883041.)

There are no nettles or undergrowth worth mentioning on this walk, so shorts may be worn. Some of the narrow fenced paths tend to get churned up in the wetter seasons, so boots are generally recommended. Your dog is welcome, with a good lead of course, because of the sheep fields and the section through town.

The walk begins in the National Trust **Inholms Lane** car park in North Holmwood, postcode **RH5 4JH**, w3w:office.puts.snail. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



1 From the Inholms Lane car park, take the main wide path past the NT (National Trust) sign for Holmwood Common. When you shortly come to an area of open grass with a signpost, turn very sharp **right** (direction *North Holmwood*) on a wide path. You come out near North Holmwood church by a noticeboard on the green. Keep **left**, tight along the edge of the green, passing a small pond on your left. A tiny bridge with a rail leads onto a road. Turn **left** on the road and, in 40m, go **right** at a signpost, just before a redbrick house, on a tarmac drive.

2 In 200m, the drive bends left. **Ignore** a yellow arrow and a wooden swing-gate at this point and turn **left** to stay on the drive. The drive dips to pass under the main road and emerges on the other side near Holmwood Farm. Keep **right** on the drive, heading for the old farm buildings and, beside a black shed, go **left** by a marker post on a grass path. After a swing-gate, keep going in the same direction, straight ahead into the middle of the open country with green fields on each side. Squires Great Wood (visited on other walks on this site) looms up ahead to your left. Your path goes through a swing-gate [Feb 2021: grounded] into another meadow, veering a little to the right, passing just to the right of an electricity pole. When you come through a gap, by a redundant stile, into the next meadow, continue along the right-hand side. A second gap leads you into yet another meadow: again, keep to the right, going up a very slightly gradient. In the corner, go through a

modern kissing-gate and veer **right** across the centre of a sloping meadow, heading just to the right of a house. Hop over a stile beside a large metal gate onto a road.

3 Turn **left** on the road. *You pass on your left the Dorking Rifle Club, which explains the firing you may have heard along the way.* In 150m, just before a house (*Chadhurst Lodge*), turn **right** on a cinder and concrete drive signed to Chadhurst Farm. You reach the farm in about 500m, passing between a duckpond and the Dutch-gabled Farm House. Keep straight ahead past a signpost and bear **right** in front of the buildings. At another 3-way footpath, ignore the left turn and keep straight ahead on a hedged farm track. At the end of the track, go through a large metal gate and continue along the right-hand side of a horse pasture. You gradually merge with a footpath coming from your left and, at the far corner, go through a modern kissing-gate.

4 Follow the wooded, sometimes muddy, path, soon passing between the four lakes of the Bury Hill Fisheries, an angler's paradise. On your left you are following the Milton Brook. Your path crosses a driveway at a bend and passes a little bridge on your left where a yellow-arrowed footpath joins. An old metal gate or kissing-gate leads you onto a driveway beside some attractive cottages in the village of Westcott.

> *Westcott's most famous son was Thomas Robert Malthus. He was born with webbed feet ("syndactyly") and was bullied from an early age, arousing his interest in eugenics. In 1779 he foresaw the famous "Malthusian catastrophe" where population growth outstrips the food supply.*

Just before the end of a manicured holly hedge, fork **right** at a fingerpost on a path up into woods.

5 *You pass on your right a curious little door leading under the hill, ideal for a hobbit.* Your path goes under a garden bridge and, at the top, meets a narrow path coming from the left. (This is the Greensand Way (GW) long-distance path and you will be following it through Dorking.) Keep ahead on a tarmac lane. In 20m ignore a steep left-forking path and keep straight on along the lane. In late spring the woods on your left are full of bluebells. You arrive at a small parking space with a 4-way fingerpost and an info board for *Milton Heath and Nower Wood*.

6 Go **right** through the wooden barrier to be faced with a choice of two wide paths leading into the woods (not counting a very narrow path on the right). Take the **right**-hand wide path, just to the right of an info board [Sep 2026: missing], staying on the GW. (The left-hand path avoids some steep steps, but you would completely miss Nower Wood – the most spectacular section of this walk.) Follow this path, very slightly uphill, keeping **right** shortly at two marker posts, always following the GW arrows. [Apr 2022: care! the path was hidden by a fallen tree – you need to go round it to the left.] The path takes you steeply up steps. It then winds its way up more steps until finally you reach the highest point with two seats. The first seat gives you a good view of the North Downs with the spire of St Barnabas church visible (passed on several walks in this series). At the top, you come to the "Temple" from where you have great views all round, including the Greensand hills, Box Hill and Dorking in the valley below.

> *The Nower is a long greensand hill which holds a mystical significance to the people of Dorking – hence the "temple" on the crest which has been carefully rebuilt. The woodland was natural with many veteran trees but it has been landscaped with conifers, copper beeches and western hemlock. The Nower is*

also a nature reserve and is a haven for a nuthatches, treecreepers, woodpeckers, tawny owls (which sometimes sound in the daytime) and other bird species, with rarer reptiles thriving at ground level.

7 Continue straight ahead along this high path, passing more seats and a trig pillar. 600m after the Temple, with the end of the path in sight, look for a bench seat on your right opposite a marker post. Turn **left** here with the GW, by a new marker post, on a much narrower path, passing a broken bench. The path leads down to a large green open space. Keep straight ahead, aiming for the bottom right-hand corner. Turn **right** here, still on the marked GW, on a gravel path, passing a large metal gate and joining a road. In 15m, turn **left** on residential Nower Road. In 150m, at the first side junction, turn **right**, still on the GW. As the road peters out, continue ahead on a paved footpath which leads down to a main road, part of the one-way system in the southern part of Dorking.

Dorking ("Dorchingas" in AngloSaxon) has long been famous for its ancient market where they sold that five-toed fowl, which you may have seen on the big roundabout. Kings and mighty barons owned the manor of Dorking and by the 1700s wealth had sprouted all around the hilly country with great houses and estates: Deepdene, Chart Park, Betchworth Castle, Denbies, Bury Hill, Pippbrook – as seen on other walks in this series. That eminent chronicler John Aubrey claimed that Dorking once had a castle, but no trace has been found.

*Until quite recently, Dorking had a tradition of **street football**, played each Shrove Tuesday. Shop windows were shuttered and business suspended whilst the streets were given over to an extensive riotous game. Dorking was used to riots: in 1830 there was very serious disorder in Dorking during the Swing Riots, the protests against mechanisation of agriculture. In 1875 Dorking was centre of another revolution: **cycling**! If you had been a housemaid then, you might have been scared out of your wits by the sight of Stanley Boorer riding his clanking velocipede (or "bone shaker") into town from Denbies with glow worms attached to his hat. In 1870, Dorking ironmonger Lewis Saubergue and three mates went on a cycling tour of Germany on the newly-invented penny-farthings. Cycling gave women independence. Local suffragette Margaret Pennington saw the bike as a social revolution in emancipation for women. Dress habits changed in Dorking with knickerbockers coming into fashion because skirts were impractical on bikes, but innkeepers at first refused admission to the "immodestly dressed". To counter this, a gypsy caravan was set up on Leith Hill to cater for female members of the cycling club.*

Turn **right** and shortly **left** across a junction, heading for the *Queen's Head* pub. Carefully cross another major road junction to reach the pub.

The Queen's Head advertises itself (not unreasonably) as Dorking's Crown Jewel. This tile-hung local dates from the 1780s, a former coaching inn. It is a Fuller's pub, usually with a choice of four decent brews. The restaurant provides a good menu of favourites, including their famous burgers. At the back, there is a patio and a surprisingly large garden. Food is served all day from noon. Your dog is welcome in the bar.

8 Turn **right** facing the pub and, *immediately* after the pub building, turn **left** on a very narrow tarmac path uphill. You pass the patio and garden of the pub on your left. At a T-junction, turn **right** on a wide tarmac path, direction *St Paul's*, leading to a residential road. Turn **left** to reach a junction by St Paul's church with its funny little spire. Keep straight on past the church on St Paul's Road. You pass a rather classy private road and reach a primary school building. Turn **right** immediately before the school on a semi-tarmac path, signed to Glory Wood and the GW. At the end, continue

through the smaller of two gates [Sep 2026: grounded] on a sandy path, passing allotments on your right. Shortly, a slanting info board [Nov 2023: info missing] next to a seat reminds you that this is part of the *Deepdene Trail* which is well worth exploring. *(The Deepdene Estate used to cover a large area of these hills, before being cut in two by the A24 road. The other side is visited on another walk in this series, starting in Brockham.)* You come past a wooden barrier into Glory Wood.

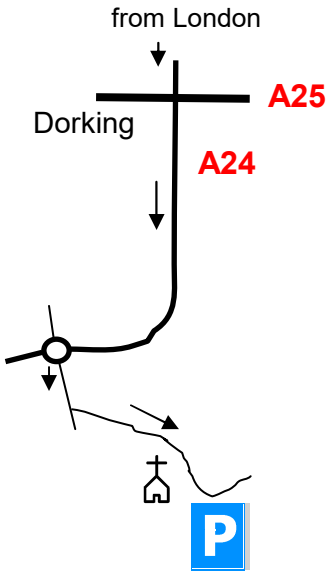
9 Immediately keep straight on uphill at a marker post, to the right of an info board. You are still on the Deepdene Trail. After a section of oakwood, with pines, beech and chestnut, you reach a junction by a wooden bench. Ignore a path on your left here and continue straight on as per the yellow arrow. After a descent, at a fingerpost, keep straight on to join a smart residential road. *(Note the little clock-turreted garage on your left, now (2021) showing the right time.)* Where the road bends left, keep straight ahead on a woodland footpath, avoiding steps on your right. You are back in Glory Wood. Shortly, ignore a right fork and stay on the rising path. The path descends, finally reaching the main A24 road.

10 Cross the road carefully using the traffic island and take a tarmac path into a housing estate. Keep to the tarmac path which leads between garden fences to another road. Cross straight over to follow a minor road which runs along the right-hand side of a large green. *(The small general store across the green to your left is usually open, even on Sunday.)* Cross straight over onto a wide tarmac path between fences. At the bottom, cross over a residential road, a fraction left, onto a narrow tarmac path. The path leads you over a bridge with rails across a wide stream to a T-junction. Turn **right** on a wide forest walk. *(But, by turning **left** for a short distance, you would reach the Royal Oak, a clean-looking local, with a good lunch menu. You need to retrace your steps afterwards.)*

11 At an info board, keep straight on, staying beside the stream, with houses now on your left. Finally, your path bends left by a large brick building. Cross a road, a fraction right, to a footpath opposite. This narrow, and sometimes muddy, path leads up and down and emerges on the green in North Holmwood. Turn **left** along the short side of the green and go **left** into the woods in the near corner. This winding woodland path leads out to a road opposite the church. Turn **left** on a road, Inholms Lane, using the footway part-way, quickly arriving back at the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: The *National Trust* ***Inholms Lane*** car park in Holmwood Common can be reached via the A24 through Dorking. Just over a 1½ miles=2½ km after Dorking you reach the North Holmwood roundabout. Turn **left** here and, soon after, turn **left** on a road signposted *Leigh, Newdigate*. Continue past North Holmwood church to the next blind *(careful!)* bend where the car park is on the **right**.



By bus/train: several buses take you from Dorking station to the other side of town where you can start the walk at the *Queens Head* pub, such as bus **22**, **32** or **93**. Check the timetables. Dorking West station is a little nearer, with a 15-minute walk. You can also take bus **93** from Dorking station to North Holmwood.

fancy ***more*** *free walks?* www.fancyfreewalks.org