



Thursley, Hankley Common, Kettlebury Hill

Distance: 8 km=5 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 26-nov-2015

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Last update: 8-jun-2021

Refreshments: Thursley

Maps: Explorer 145 (Guildford) and 133 (Haslemere)
but the map in this guide should be sufficient

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

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Village, heath, woodland, hills, views

In Brief

The village of Thursley, named (it is said) after the god Thor, is a little Surrey jewel situated on the edge of the vast area of commonland comprising Thursley and Hankley Commons, stretching as far as Elstead in the east and nearly to Frensham in the west. The village itself is tranquil despite the number of ramblers who come to walk across the commons. Kettlebury Hill is an arc-shaped ridge shaded with pines and offering fantastic views of seeming wilderness. This walk is perfect for any season, even the bleakest winter.



Just near the start and end lies one of the iconic pubs in Surrey, a real gem, like its village. To enquire at the *Three Horseshoes*, ring 01252 703900.



There are no nettles or brambles on this walk to worry bare legs and *no compulsory stiles*. The terrain is almost entirely sandy with no claggy mud anywhere, making boots optional. This walk is popular with dog owners but please be prepared to put your pet on a lead in case you should pass close to army personnel on exercise on Hankley Common. (Access, by the way, is *not* restricted and there are *no* “live” military exercises.)

The walk begins at the **Thursley car park**, near the cricket green and playground, postcode **GU8 6QA**, www.w3w.co/control.hairspray.upstairs. (Park facing the road so that the sun’s glare of your windscreen doesn’t disturb the cricketers.) It gets crowded now that these walks are getting popular, but there are opportunities for “creative” parking. For a midway break at the pub in Thursley, park in the central (“Lions Mouth”) car park on **Hankley Common**, *approximate* postcode **GU8 6LW** at SU891411. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 Starting in the Thursley car park, walk parallel to the road on your right towards a children's playground and take a narrow path between the playground and an oak tree with a circular bench. You pass a welcome notice board for the Thursley Nature Reserve and, in 60m, reach a marker post with blue arrows and a crossing path.
- 2 Turn **left** at the crossing path which takes a rather narrow sunken course through bracken. In nearly 200m, you arrive at a junction with a diagonal crossing path, offering you a choice of two paths ahead. Take the **right** fork, slightly uphill. (The left fork is the riders' path which runs down on your left close to a pasture, maybe a less attractive option.) Follow the path through a pleasant birch wood for nearly $\frac{1}{2}$ km where you meet a fork in the path. Take the **left** fork, leading down in 20m to a post with a blue arrow. Keep **right**, joining the bridleway and stay on the wide horse path, soon with a pasture on your left, until in 150m or so, you reach a T-junction with a farm track. Keep ahead on the track passing a cottage and its garden on your left and reaching the Thursley Road.

- 3 Turn **left** on the road and, in 100m, turn **right** on a tarmac track, passing *Truxford Cottage* and October Farm. In 350m, at a 4-way crossing, keep straight ahead. In 300m you pass a car park on your left and go past a heavy metal barrier. The tarmac goes gently downhill for another 250m and curves left. Just after the curve, you will see on your right a post with blue arrows and a sandy track going uphill.



Decision point. You now have a choice of route leading to the spectacular views at the top of the ridge. The **high path**, section [4a](#) is an exhilarating walk along the ridge path. The **low path**, section [4b](#) is shorter and also provides good views.

- 4a The **high path**. Turn **right** at the post with blue arrows and follow the sandy track uphill. In 300m or so, you reach a sandy space with many tracks leading away in all directions, including steep paths on your left and right. This is the *Lion's Mouth*, a yawning gap in the ridge. Ignore a steep irregular sandy path immediately on your left, but take the **second** path on your left, a wide straight track going gradually uphill. *Just out of sight on your right is a thick stone wall. This is the Atlantic Wall used in WW2 for training for the D Day landings, worth a visit.* At the top of the slope, in 150m or so, veer **right** on the wide ridge path. At once you have great views left across the valley. You will be following this excellent wide path for 2 km, gradually curving left. After 650m, at a large marker post, another wide path joins from your right. Soon your views are obscured by pine forests. *There are portable loos here sometimes, apparently for general use.* In about 350m suddenly you have open views right. In a further 400m, at a marker post, the wide valley path joins you from the left crossing via a steep drop on your right. Keep straight on.



- 4b The **low path**. Keep straight on, ignoring the blue arrows and the sandy track, staying on the tarmac. In 20m, as the tarmac curves left towards an army enclosure, leave the track by forking **right**, effectively straight ahead, on a shingle path between trees. Pass just to the right of the army huts and out into the open valley. Your valley path is visible far ahead, a snaking course leading up to the ridge about 1 km distant. Follow this path, with great views all round. Towards the end, the path gets a bit steeper and goes through pines till finally you meet the ridge path. Veer **left** to join it.

- 5 Your path immediately comes into the open with great views on all sides. This walk will take you about ½ km further along this excellent high path up to a promontory which you can see ahead to the left. Avoid all minor side paths until you reach a major fork: take the **left** fork, slightly narrower, going up to the promontory. This is the highest point on the ridge and here you have the best views with perhaps a chance for a breather and a photo.



- 6 **Care!** This section is tricky and you may need to concentrate more than usual. Veer **right** to descend to the original main crossing path and immediately turn **left** on it. In 20m you reach a junction of many tracks with a small marker post on your left bearing yellow trail-marker arrows. Avoid the first wide track on your left which goes steeply down into the open plain and instead take the **second** wide sandy track on your left. This track goes downhill through pine trees. In 250m you approach power lines running down on your right. Just **before** the first pylon, turn **right**, cross under the power lines and go straight over a sandy path onto a narrower forest path on the other side. This path is relatively grassy and knobbly and is usually marked by vehicle tracks. It runs straight for 200m, gradually descending at the end. You can now see a small white house in the bottom of the valley,

together with a horse path and a dirt driveway. Just before your path curves away left, take a narrower **right** fork, crossing over the sandy horse path and meeting the dirt drive near the entrance to the garden of the house, *Howndown*.

- 7 Turn **right** on the drive and follow it for 150m to be faced with the large spikey garden gate of *Hounmere House*. Stay on the drive as it curves **left** and, immediately after another large gate, turn **right** by an electricity pole next to a house on your right. Follow this signed bridleway running up beside the fence of the property. At the end, in 100m, you meet the Thursley Road. Turn **left** on the road and follow it for 100m till, just over a crest, you see a small fingerpost. Turn **right** here on a narrow footpath running beside a pasture on your right. This path, overgrown with tree roots, leads down over a lively stream via a sturdy bridge with rails. *This path can be slippery so take care!* Your path takes a pleasant curving course by a low timber fence and takes you past a large wooden gate into a very pretty water meadow with the meandering stream threading its way through. Go over a flat bridge passing a duck pond on your left. *The large house up on your left is Dye House, built in the mid-1700s.* Go through a gap by a large wooden gate onto a narrow tarmac lane.

Decision point. The main walk takes you on a very brief circuit to the church and back through the village. If you are in a hurry to get back to the Thursley car park, do section [8b](#) instead of [8a](#).

- 8a **Village walk.** Turn **right** on the lane, soon going past *Little Shavings* on the left. *The garden on the right has a bank which, in spring, is covered in snowdrops.* Just past Smallbrook Farm on the right and a black wooden barn on the left is a fingerpost. Turn **left** here, joining part of the Greensand Way. Go up the concrete ramp and through a small wooden gate on the right. Follow the fenced path between pastures, then trees, until you reach Thursley churchyard. Walk through the churchyard keeping to the **left** of the church, thus leaving the Greensand Way. (The entrance is on your right.) *For some historic details of this rare church, see the walk "Devil's Punch Bowl, Lion's Mouth, Thursley".* Go **left** with the path beside a railing to reach a drive. Follow the drive to the road, called *The Street*, and turn **left** on it. Continue, passing several historic houses, until you arrive at the little green in the centre of Thursley. Fork **left** here and continue left to reach the car park where the walk began.

- 8b **Short cut.** Turn **left** on the tarmac lane. In 100m or so, turn **right** on the main Dyehouse Road. In less than 100m, where the road curves up to your left, look for a small fingerpost and a forest path forking **right**. Take this path but immediately ignore the official footpath by keeping straight on instead of turning right. Your path leads up a shallow gully. In 150m it curves left to re-join the road, opposite the entrance to the car park where the walk began.



For refreshments, the *Three Horseshoes* is only 100m **right** along the road.

Getting there

By car: Thursley is signposted just off the A3 road nearly 10 miles south-west of Guildford, before the tunnel. Keep **right** at a fork, go into the village, keep straight on and park in the car park on the right by the cricket green almost at the end of the village. If starting in the **Hankley Common** car park, go through Thursley, turn **right** at a T-junction onto the Thursley Road and in ½ mile, before a Z-bend, turn **left** on a tarmac drive. The car park is 0.4 miles on the left.