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## White Hill, Headley

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Distance: 9½ km=5¾ miles challenging-to-moderate walking  
or two walks of 4¼ km=2¾ miles and 6½ km=4 miles

Region: Surrey

Date written: 8-dec-2013

Author: Fusszweig

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Refreshments: Headley

Last update: 27-feb-2021

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

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*High hills, woodland, village, views*

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### In Brief

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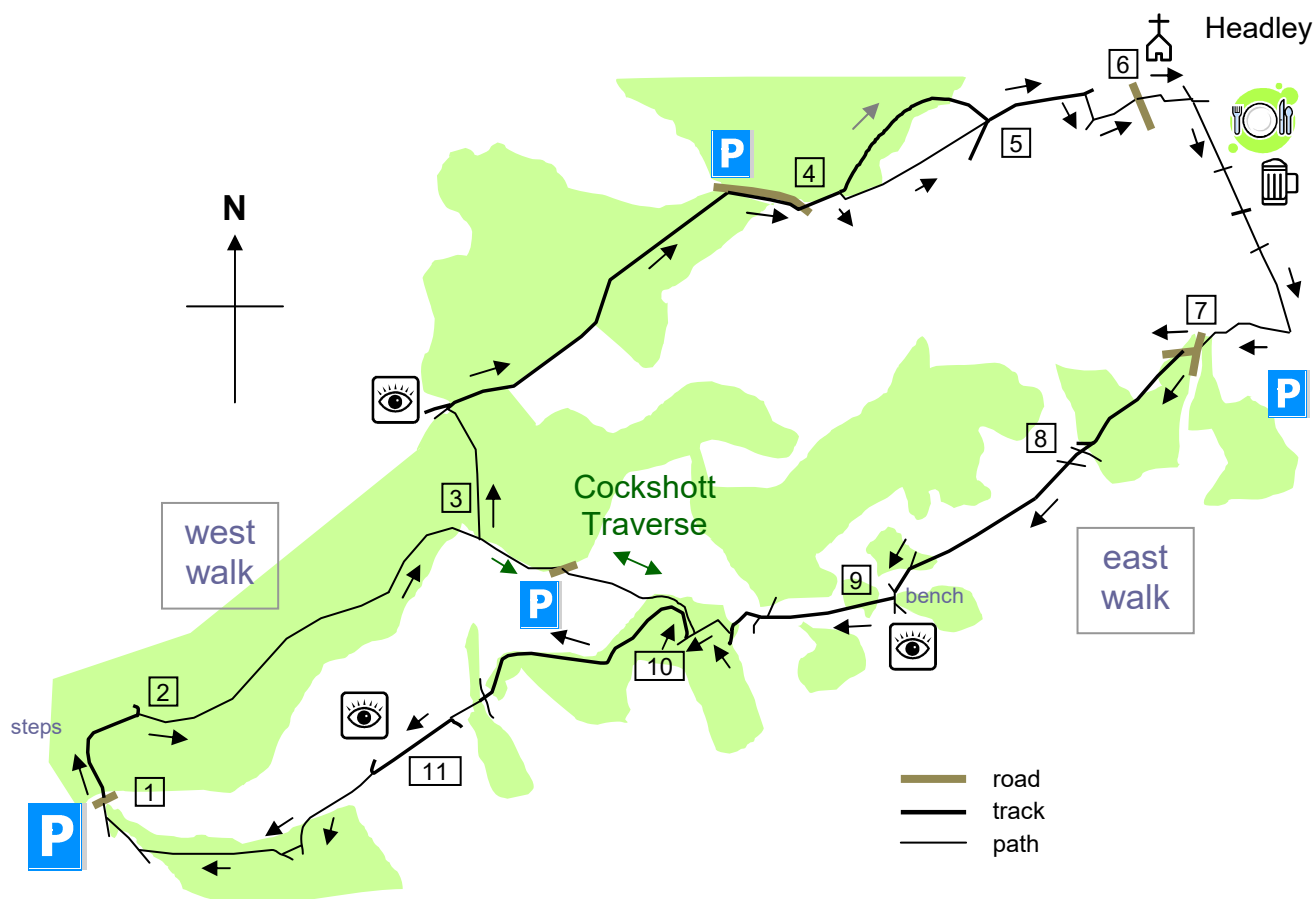
This is an invigorating walk taking you up the steepest part of Whitehill and onwards by a little-known path, to Headley for refreshments and a tour of the village. It then takes you back across Headley Heath with some more steep sections. One path especially runs beside a steep drop and the walk should not be attempted in slippery or icy conditions. Along the way, you pass through conservation areas with many native shrubs and wildflowers. Two shorter options omit the village of Headley or the White Hill area around Box Hill.



There are no nettles or brambles on this walk and conditions are generally fairly dry, so any strong footwear and sensible clothing should be fine. Your dog can come on this walk too since the only unavoidable stile has a good dog gate.

The **full** walk and the **west** walk begin at the free **Whitehill NT car park**, near Mickleham, Surrey, **postcode RH5 6DF**, grid ref TQ 180 525. This car park is rather small, so it is useful to consider alternatives, all mentioned below and marked on the map. The **east** walk begins at the main **Headley Heath NT car park**, nearest postcode **KT18 6QA**, grid ref TQ 204 539 (modest charge to non-members). You can also start the full walk here. Other possible starts (all free) are: (1) The Cockshot car park in Lodge-bottom Road (postcode **RH5 6DG**) on the shortcut section but only 200m from the full walk. (2) The parking area on the B2033 (Mill Way) road, near the Nower Wood Educational Centre (postcode **KT22 8QA**). (4) the car park of the *Cock Inn* (postcode **KT18 6LE**), if it is not full and provided that you are a patron on the day. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

## The Walk



If you are doing the **east walk**, begin from the section called *Starting and Finishing at Headley Heath*, near the end of this Guide.

- 1** This walk is not an easy stroll-in-the-park and some of the sections are steep. So we get the worst part over first, knowing that nothing will be as strenuous again for the rest of the walk. Go out of the car park and cross the road to a footpath on the other side, marked by a fingerpost and a sign for the *Box Hill Hike*. Now begins your long ascent of White Hill. There are 182 steps at the last count, but at least they are well-made. At the top, the path curves right and runs along the contour, soon with great views to the right into the valley below. The path leads to a bend with a seat and another marker post for the *Box Hill Hike*.
- 2** **Leave** the main path opposite the seat and take a very narrow path, to the **right** of the marker post. (NB: this path is narrow and easily missed.) This slender but clear path runs level through yews and mixed woodland. In 150m you enter a lighter area with some tall beeches. Keep straight ahead, with a fallen beech on your left, curving slightly **left** and then first **right** to maintain your direction, once again on a clear level path. Soon your path is running beside a fairly steep escarpment on your right with good views across the valley, if seasonal foliage permits. *Special care is needed, especially if conditions are wet or icy.* The farm below is Warren Farm. After more thick yews and box trees, the path curves right and goes downhill. You reach the head of the valley, with a green meadow visible on your right, and a junction of paths: one leading ahead and one narrower path coming down steeply from the left.

**Decision point.** If you are doing the short **west** walk, missing Headley Village and Heath, skip forward to the end of this text and do the section called **Cockshot Traverse East**. Otherwise ...

Turn sharp **left** uphill on the steep narrow path.

The **Cockshot Traverse West** short cut joins the main walk here.

- 3 At first, your route is unclear in the leaf-fall at the bottom of the short steep valley under beeches. At the top, the path becomes clear and snakes its way uphill through beech saplings. Finally you emerge at the top of Mickleham Downs, a long grassy slope with great views. (*See another walk in this series Headley Heath, Mickleham, Box Hill.*) Turn sharp **right** past a *Box Hill Hike* marker post and veer **right** on a wide path through woods. Shortly, at a marker post, avoid a bridleway on the right and keep straight on along a very wide path between a nature reserve on your right and Cherkley Wood on your left. After 800m or so, the path comes out to the B2033 road by a small car park opposite Nower Wood. Turn immediately **right** at a fingerpost along a bridleway running parallel to the road.
- 4 At the end of the path, cross the road carefully and take a bridleway opposite. In 80m, you reach a fingerpost. (*If you are walking the dog or you don't love stiles, you can stay on the bridleway as far as the junction of lanes and turn left. The following path prevents the walk being too easy, but it offers some excellent open views and a rural experience.*) Turn **right** here over a stile and follow the path down the field and **left** over a stile. Proceed along the left-hand side of a meadow, over a stile (or through the large metal gate) into the next meadow and over another stile into a long meadow with houses and the church at Headley beckoning ahead. At the other side, bear **left** to go over a stile that is tucked away in the corner. Turn **right** on the tarmac lane, almost immediately reaching a 3-way junction of tarmac lanes.
- 5 Turn **left** at the junction onto Slough Lane, towards the village, passing a big redbrick house on your right, *Tumber House*. At the end of the high wooden fence of *Tumber Lodge Farm*, turn **right** at a signpost onto a narrow footpath, curving right at the top. At a 3-way signpost, go **left** up to an old kissing gate and continue on a path. You reach a road, Church Lane, with St Mary's Church opposite.



*The "Cock Inn Pub and Dining" on your right (previously the "Headley Hills") is a rather upmarket new bar-restaurant, not popular with the locals (and not much liked by walkers). It has a large bar area and a separate restaurant. The terrace is a pleasant place to chill out. Immediately next to the "Cock" is the Headley village shop and tearoom, a friendly alternative. For more details of the church and the village of Headley, see the walk "Walton-on-the-Hill and Headley" in this series.*

- 6 Cross the road between the inn and the church and continue into the churchyard (**see important note at end!**). Zigzag right-left onto a path between clipped yews. *Note the rare wooden structures in place of gravestones.* Leave the churchyard through an old swing-gate, giving views of London, including Wembley arch. Turn immediately **right** at a fingerpost on a wide path and shortly proceed through a wooden swing-gate, on a grassy strip between horse pastures. Your route now is via a swing-gate over a farm track and straight over on a narrow path. Next is a brand-new swing-gate taking you straight across a meadow, through another new swing-gate and across a tarmac drive by the *Old Rectory*. After another

swing-gate, *Allan's gate*, with its wee footprints, go straight ahead and through another. (These gates are a joy: you won't want to see another stile – ever!) After a rough meadow, you meet a stile in the corner but your route is *not* over the stile. Instead, turn sharp **right** in the meadow and follow the path down past a metal gate with a garden fence on your left. Go past an unneeded stile and turn **right** on the house's driveway. *Note the unusual letterbox.* The drive curves left and right to meet the main road.

- 7 Cross the road carefully to go down Nut Ash Lane opposite, going past a NT sign for *Headley Heath*. In 40m, fork **left** on a rough track, quickly leading to another road crossing. Take a bridleway opposite, another rough track, marked as a private road. Follow the track past a white house, *Heath Lodge*, with a flint wall on your right and a pond on your left. At a 3-way fingerpost [Feb 2021: grounded], ignore a footpath on the right and stay on the bridleway. At the next junction and fingerpost, ignore a bridleway curving away to the right and keep straight ahead, over a narrow crossing path, up to a large wooden gate. Go through a smaller wooden gate beside it onto the open heath with a choice of paths ahead.

To return to the main Headley Heath car park, now skip to the section *Starting and Finishing at Headley Heath* near the end of this Guide. Otherwise ...

Go straight over on a very sandy horse track.

The link section from the main Headley Heath car park, joins the walk here.

- 8 This level path quickly crosses another path diagonally and assumes a course close to woodland on your left. You will be following this official bridleway for some distance across the beautiful Headley Heath. Keep to the path as it dips and rises, avoiding all side paths, however tempting. After ½ km, the path veers left under oak trees as it joins a path coming from the right. You reach a junction of many wide paths looking over a valley ahead, with a long bench, nearby on your left, perfect for a breather.
- 9 Ignore the first narrow path sharp right and take the next path on your right. This is a wide stony path going downhill past a blue-topped post with a blue arrow, clearly labelled as a *public bridleway*. (As a guide, it is almost straight on, veering a little to the right of your original path.) It descends quite steeply, eventually reaching a junction with a long flight of steps coming down on the right, shortly passing another flight of steps on the left. Your main path curves its way beside a small meadow on your right and reaches a blue arrow pointing to the right. **Leave** the main path here and turn sharp **right**, at the corner of a wire fence, by a marker post. *Don't miss this vital turning!* Your path goes very steeply up towards a house of High Ashurst and through a small wooden gate at the top. You reach a marker post with blue arrows pointing right and straight on.

**Decision point.** If you are doing the **east** walk, skip to near the end of this Guide and do the **Cockshot Traverse West** section. Otherwise ...

Keep straight ahead ignoring the right turn.

The **Cockshot Traverse East** short cut joins the main walk here.

- 10 Continue ahead to meet a tarmac drive coming from the Centre. Now turn very sharp **right** through the entrance of *High Ashurst*, via a new wooden swing-gate, and follow the tarmac drive high above the valley on your right. *High Ashurst is now an outdoor education centre but during World War II it was a billet for Canadian Troops.* After about ½ km, this easy route curves left and right to meet a drive coming from Bellasis House. *Bellasis House was used in*



*WW2 for Special Operations where Czech agents trained.* Go straight ahead at a fingerpost on a path steeply uphill. Keep ahead on a new tarmac drive coming from the left, with great views ahead (including the tip of Ranmore Church on a clear day) and a sheep pasture on your left.

- 11 Where the drive bends away sharp right, go straight ahead on a wide path. Keep to the right-hand side of a grassy slope and take a very narrow path next to a wire fence on your right. The path runs beside woodland on your left and in 120m enters the wood. Just 80m after entering the wood, keep **right** on a level path. (You should always keep sight of the grassy meadow on your right.) Soon you pass a marker post with a yellow arrow [[Feb 2021: broken and propped up against a tree](#)] to confirm you are on the footpath. Immediately turn **right** at a T-junction. Your path takes you over a sturdy stile (with a dog gate) and along a long straight path between birches, with a wire fence on your right. You emerge onto the open grassy slopes of Juniper Top. Turn **right** downhill to a large wooden gate. Go through a smaller wooden gate beside it and veer **right** on a track to the Whitehill car park where the walk began.

### Cockshot Traverse East

Take this short cut if you are doing the much shorter **west** walk, omitting Headley and a chance of a refreshment break.



Bear **right** on the straight path running along the head of the valley, lined with maples, with a green meadow on your right. The path comes down to the small Cockshot car park off Headley Lane (alternate start). Keep **left** beside the car park to cross the road by a fingerpost opposite, beside a flinty cottage. This wide path winds its way uphill beside a sheep pasture on your right and, after that, through trees, passing a field on your right which is used for archery. The path runs beneath the high walls of High Ashurst on your right and meets a bridleway at a waymarked T-junction. Bear **right** here, in the direction of the *Box Hill Hike* sign.

Now resume the main walk from section [10](#).

### Cockshot Traverse West

Take this short cut if you are doing the shorter **east** walk, returning to Headley.



*[provisional]* At the signposted T-junction, turn sharp **right** on a path which runs beneath the high walls of High Ashurst on your left. This wide path passes a field on your left which is used for archery, goes through trees and winds its way uphill beside a sheep pasture on your right and, after that, through trees, passing a field on your right which is used for archery, and winds its way downhill beside a sheep pasture on your left. On meeting a road, Headley Lane, cross over to a small car park (alternate start). Follow a path which runs along the head of a valley, lined with maples, with a green meadow on your left. In 200m, you meet a 3-way junction of paths. Fork **right** uphill on the steep narrow path.

Now resume the main walk from section [3](#).

**Important note for walkers through Headley Churchyard.** Although this is a public footpath, please remember that this is *consecrated ground*. Keep strictly to the pathway without straying onto the graves. Respect the temporary tape barriers which were placed in winter 2020-21 for a building project. The little circular *gate* is fragile: please be *very careful* in opening and closing.

## Starting and Finishing at Headley Heath

Here are brief link sections for walkers who park at the main Headley Heath car park.

**Start:** From the Headley Heath car park, walk across the wide grassy space, heading for a small wooden gate in the distance. When you reach it, do *not* go through the gate but turn **right** and go **left** through the next small wooden gate. In 15m, fork **right**, as for the blue arrow. In 80m, you see two wooden gates on your right. Turn **left** here on a very sandy horse track.

Now join the main walk at section 8.

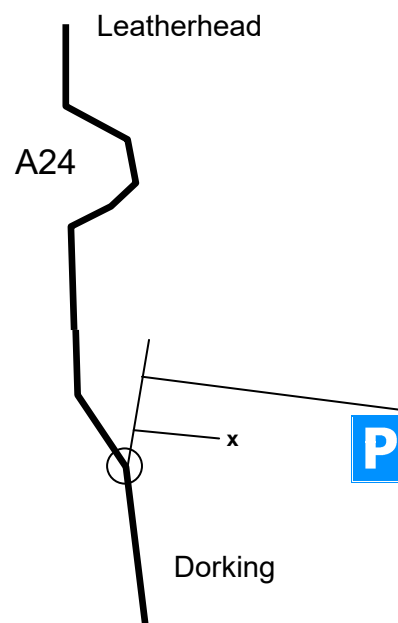
**Return:** At the choice of paths on the open heath, turn **left** on a sandy path. Keep **left** at a junction to go through a small wooden gate. The car park is visible straight ahead.

## Getting there

By car: to reach the **Whitehill** Car Park, take the A24 between Leatherhead and Dorking, turn off at the Burford Bridge roundabout, signposted *Mickleham Box Hill*, go past the hotel on the Old London Road and take the **second** road on the right. This is *not* the Zig Zag Road but the road after it, Headley Road, opposite a bus stop. The car park is 600m on the right. (See adjoining map.)

For the **Headley Heath** National Trust main car park, 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.

**Or**, if 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.



By bus/train: bus 516 goes from Leatherhead station to Headley, including Sundays. Bus 465 has a request stop at the junction of Old London Road and Headley Road. Check the timetables.

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