



Blackdown and the Temple of the Winds

Distance: 3½ km=2 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 5-jun-2010

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Refreshments: Haslemere after the walk

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

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High hills, views

In Brief

This is a glorious easy walk around the highest point in Sussex with magnificent views in all directions. Being near Haslemere in Surrey, Blackdown is very easy to reach from the London or Guildford area. This is a pristine natural landscape but excellent refreshments can be found nearby in Haslemere.



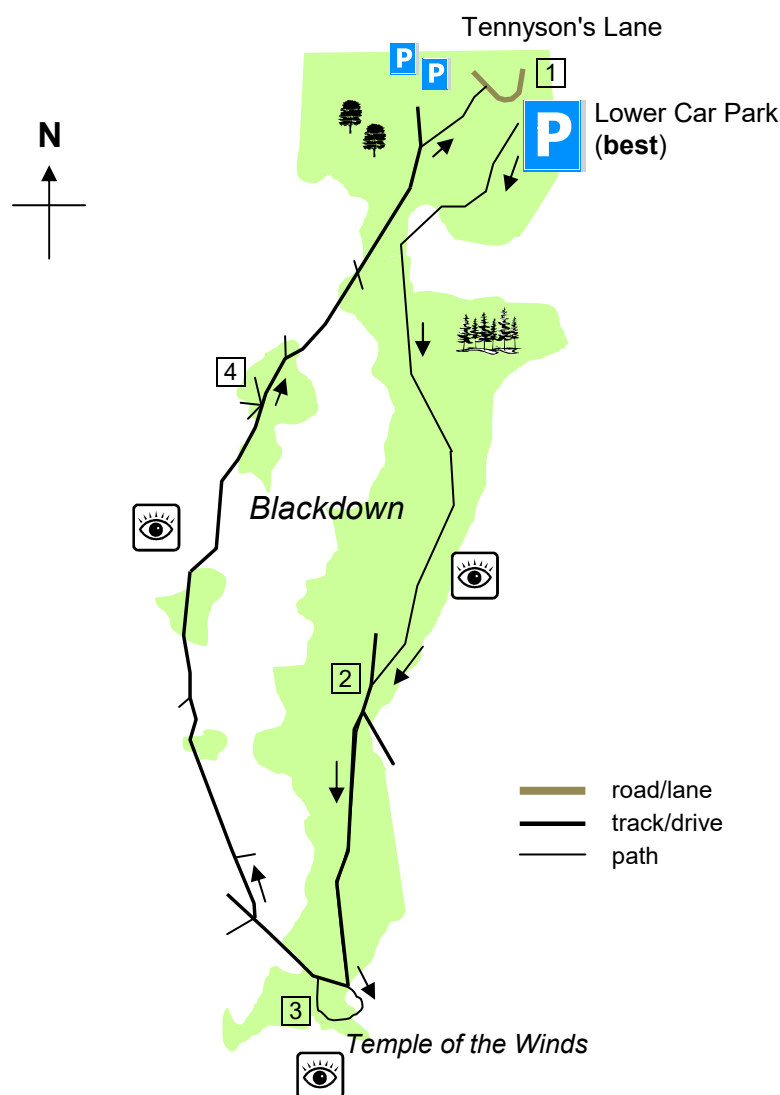
There are no nettles and no stiles on this walk and the ground is nice and dry most of the way. Your dog is very welcome.



If you love this area, there are several other walks on this site that go over Blackdown: *Hindhead and Blackdown, Woolbeding Common and the Temple of the Winds, Fernhurst and the Temple of the Winds.*

The walk begins at the **Blackdown Lower car park**, nearest **postcode GU27 3BJ**, grid ref SU 921 307. If you parked in one of the *upper* car parks – the ones visible from Tennyson's Lane – you are welcome to walk along the main path with all those families and day trippers. But it is **much** better to walk down the lane to the *lower* car park because the route described here gives you some quite stunning views that other walkers don't see. For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 Just before the car park, you may have noticed the gates to *Aldworth House*.

Aldworth House was built in 1869 by the poet Lord Tennyson who was eager to escape summer trippers who came to his Isle of Wight home, Faringford. This French-style Gothic house was designed by Sir James Knowles and is built of local sandstone. Tennyson also purchased Blackdown and often walked there.

With your back to Tennyson's Lane, walk straight on through the lower car park, up through a gate and onwards to Robin Carr's seat. You are immediately rewarded by a magnificent view across the Weald, with a view that few people see, of Blackdown looming up on your right. Turn **right** up a narrow path on the **edge** of the hill to another seat and another viewpoint. Keep to a narrow path that ascends a gradual slope. *Always keep to the edge of the hill on the left. Do not join the main sunken track.* Continue upwards through heather and up more natural steps to a platform with more views. You reach Stephen Peters' seat. Here do **not** take the path alongside the seat that goes upwards but instead take a path on the **left**, slightly downhill, still hugging the edge of the hill. You now stay on this narrow path for some distance as it winds and undulates. Later, the path goes slightly downwards through woodland, passes a tall pine almost in the middle of the

path, broadens and rejoins the edge of the hill. It now runs under a magnificent canopy of beeches, emerges into the light and runs under another fine canopy through which it rises. At the end of the path, go up some steps with a handrail and turn **left** on the broad main track.

- 2 Almost at once, you arrive at a three-way signpost of bridleways. Take the **right**-hand fork, avoiding the left-hand track which would gradually take you down the hill. You pass a small pond on your left. After around 100m, where the track curves right, follow a sign directing you straight ahead to the *Temple of the Winds*. This path leads to the southernmost tip of Blackdown. Enjoy the stone seat with fine views across the Weald.

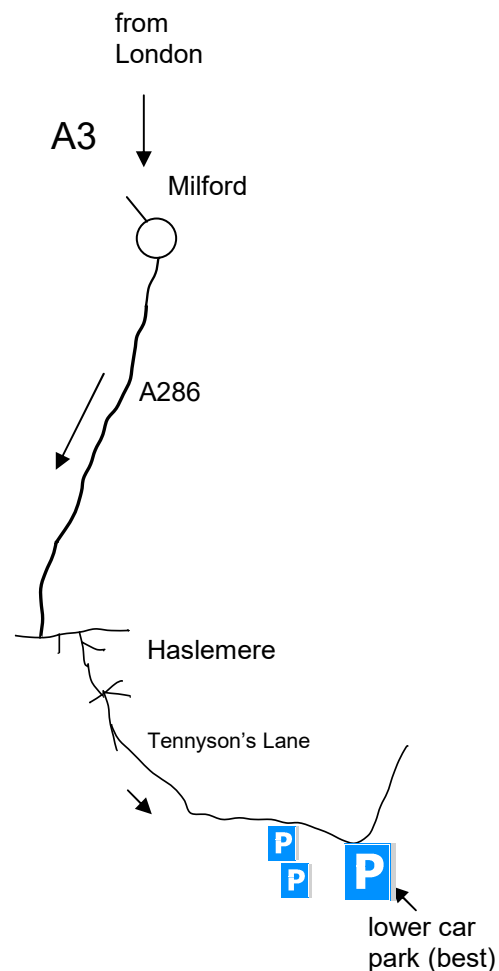


Blackdown, or Black Down, is the highest point in Sussex, at 280 metres (918 feet), being second only to Leith Hill (295 metres, 968 feet) in south-east England. The pine and heather-covered slopes are owned by the National Trust. Although it is common land, Blackdown was the property of various landowners until W.E. Hunter donated it to the National Trust in 1948, as a memorial to his wife. The Hunters are remembered by an inscribed stone seat at the Temple of the Winds. Flint artefacts show that there has been a settlement on Blackdown since mesolithic times, around 8000 years ago. The name of the ancient track, pen-y-bos, indicates links with the long lost Celtic world as its name comes from the ancient British language.

- 3 Facing the view south, turn **right** on a narrow path that curves right past a small wooden barrier. Keep to the edge of the hill on a very narrow path to a viewpoint with a new seat dedicated to *Bonnett, Braithwaite, Bennet, Lah Di Dah*. Notice that you are on the *Serpent Trail*, a sinewy long-distance path. Continue onwards away from the edge of the hill and in 10m, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a wide path. At the next T-junction, turn **left**, rejoining the main track. This track leads west and then north over the other side of Blackdown. You soon reach a junction with a seat and two paths leading off left, the second being a steep sandy track. **Ignore** both turnings-off and keep straight on. This gorgeous track runs for some distance with terrific views left over Hampshire. In about 600m, you reach a seat on a stone platform with a direction finder. Continue on the main track until you reach a major junction under trees with a fingerpost and three paths of different sizes leading off left. This is the “five-way junction”.
- 4 Go **straight on** at the five-way junction and keep to the main, sometimes sunken, track, avoiding all tracks and paths leading off, until finally you see a notice board and a white pillar ahead. The upper car parks are straight on. For the lower car park, go down a narrow sunken path **right** about 20m *before* the notice board, through a wooden gate and down to the lane. Turn **right** into the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: If coming from the London area, take the A3 through Guildford, turn off for **Milford** and take the A286 Haslemere road. (You can instead stay on the A3 until a sign for “Brook”, where you turn left through the beautiful Witley forest and turn right at the next crossroads; but this route *cannot* be done in reverse on the homeward journey.) Go through the centre of Haslemere, down the high street and turn **left** at the T-junction at the end, signposted “Petworth”. *You now need a few minutes’ concentration.* Ignore the first road right (Museum Hill) and go slowly! In about another 400 yds (350m) look out for the next narrow road, just after the main road rises and dips, and turn **right** here. There is no clear road sign for this turning but you will see an old-fashioned signpost at the start of the road, indicating “Blackdown and Whitwell Hatch”. Ignore an immediate turning left and continue up the road until you reach a 5-road junction. Pause here for a moment. Straight ahead there are **two** roads. The one slightly left is private. The one **slightly right** has an old road sign pointing that way marked “Tennyson’s Lane and Blackdown”. Take this narrow road. Soon after, turn **half left** at another sign into Tennyson’s Lane. Continue for about a mile (1½ km). **Ignore the first two car parks** on the right (one behind the first) and continue further to **just before the lane bends sharp left** with the white gate and posts of *Aldworth House* straight ahead. Turn **right** here into the lower car park. The entrance is not obvious, being unsigned, and is a little muddy and bumpy. You should have the National Trust sign on your **right**. Don’t worry about the notice that says “car park closed 8am-8pm”.



Note: There are **three** car parks serving Blackdown. You can park in any of them but, as you will see, the **lower** car park suits this walking route best. The *upper* car park is the one on the right that you passed. The *second* car park (also to be avoided unless the others are full) is immediately after the first car park a few meters down a broad sandy track half right branching off the lane. If you find that you have parked in one of these first two, walk down Tennyson’s Lane to the bend and walk into the lower car park because the walk starts there.

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