

To Leith Hill

Gomshall station - Abinger Hammer - Abinger Common - Friday Street - Leith Hill - Coldharbour - Holmwood station

Important note: this walk cannot currently be done on a Sunday due to the Dorking-Horsham line on which Holmwood is situated having only a Monday-Saturday service. There is unfortunately no alternative bus service available on a Sunday.

Length: 9 ¼ miles (15 km)

Underfoot: Generally dry upland paths and minor roads throughout much of the route, though there are a number of short stretches of bridleway that will be muddy after wet weather.

Terrain: Despite climbing to one of the highest points in the region, the ascent is incredibly gentle, albeit lengthy. There are, however, a number of steep descents both before and after Leith Hill.

Maps: 1:50,000 Landranger 187 Dorking & Reigate; 1:25,000 Explorer 145 Guildford & Farnham and 146 Dorking, Box Hill & Reigate.

Getting there: Gomshall is a minor station on the cross-country North Downs line with a First Great Western train every 2 hours in either direction, so it is necessary to plan your journey in advance. You can either travel via Redhill or via Guildford.

Redhill has 2 Southern services an hour from London Victoria (28 mins) via Clapham Junction 22 (22 mins) *for connections from London Waterloo* and 4

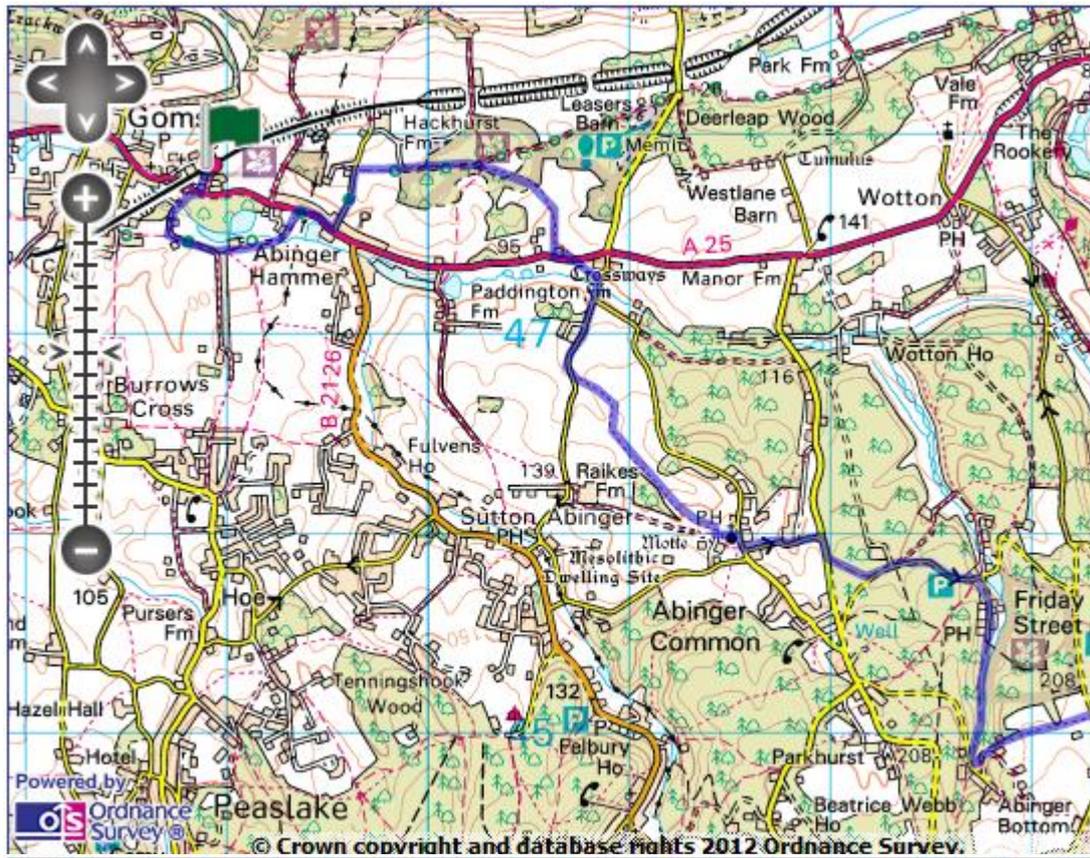
services an hour from London Bridge (36 mins) via Norwood Junction (23 mins) *for London Overground connections*. All 6 trains call at East Croydon (12-18 mins). From Redhill, First Great Western run a train every 2 hours to Gomshall (19 mins).

Guildford has 4 fast Southwest trains services an hour from London Waterloo (33 mins), 2 of which call at Clapham Junction (31 mins) *for connections from London Victoria*. From Guildford, First Great Western run a train every 2 hours to Gomshall (16 mins). **Note that travelling via Guildford is significantly more expensive than via Redhill.**

Useful websites: The walk climbs to the National Trust land and tower at [Leith Hill](#). On the descent, it passes below the wooded ramparts of [Anstiebury hill fort](#).

Getting home: Note that there are **no trains or buses from Holmwood on a Sunday**. Monday-Saturday, Southern operate one train an hour from Holmwood to London Victoria (59 mins) via Sutton (33 mins) *for connections to London Blackfriars and St Pancras* and Clapham Junction (51 mins) *for connections to London Waterloo*.

<p>Fares: You will need to buy 2 tickets for this journey/ If travelling to Gomshall via Redhill, purchase an off-peak day return to Gomshall for £11.40 (£5.70 child, £7.55 railcard). If travelling via Guildford you will need to specifically purchase a 'via Guildford' off-peak day return for £17.80 (£8.90 child, £11.75 railcard). These will cover you for your journey home from Dorking onwards (where all trains from Holmwood stop), so you will also need to purchase a Holmwood - Dorking anytime single for £3.10 (£1.55 child, £2.05 railcard).</p>	
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Route description

- If arriving at Gomshall from the Guildford direction, cross the lines by the foot crossing at the western end of the platform -checking that your departing train is not obscuring a train approaching on the other line. Arriving from Redhill, simply turn right at the end of the platform. Pass through a white footgate to drop down a track to the busy A25 at the bottom.
- Cross with care (there is poor visibility here) and turn right along the pavement to a railway bridge. Immediately before the bridge, turn left on Wonham Way (footpath sign). The track leads through the garlic-scented woods of Gomshall Marsh, before swinging left by Twiga Lodge, climbing gently through meadows.
- At a corner by Southbrooks Farmhouse, take the track left (following a bridleway waymark), veering right to leave the track and keep above The Barn, ignoring the footpath waymarked to the right.
- The path drops slightly and keep SA onto a concrete path which crosses a stream, keeping ahead past pair of semi-detached houses to return to the A25, opposite picturesque Hunters Moon Farm. Turn R along pavement into Abinger Hammer. Just beyond Abinger Arms, note the unusual clock structure ahead, then cross with care and take dead-end road L (signed as cycle route to Dorking).

Abinger Hammer's unusual name comes from the 'hammer pond' formed by the damming of the River Tillingbourne, to provide power for a hammer mill, part of Surrey's sizeable iron industry which developed in the 16th century. The pond, beyond the village, is now a watercress farm. Today, Abinger Hammer and its fine village green is a popular local beauty spot, overlooked by the early 20th century Hammer Clock. The blacksmith figure (known as Jack) strikes the bell with his hammer every hour. The motto on the clock reads "By me you know how fast to go".

- Beyond the cottages, the road curves up hill through a wooded cutting. At the top, head right at a bridleway sign. The fenced path leads across a low hilltop, with the North Downs escarpment to the left. Through a gate, you enter the open National Trust land of Broomy Downs, keeping to the track climbing ahead.
- From the top of the rise, the track drops gently through the woods to reach a small clearing. Here, leave the main track and take the grassy path veering R along the edge of the clearing. Keep straight ahead (there is a footpath waymark post hidden under an oak tree to the left).
- The path veers right as it re-enters the woods, before dropping steeply through the bracken. It exits the woods at a stile and cuts across a large meadow. From the end of the meadow, a clear path wanders through the woods around the boundary of a large garden, before joining a short drive and reaching the A25 for the final time.
- Cross with care (visibility is again very poor) and take the footpath opposite. This cuts across the field beyond to reach little Raikes Lane, with fine early-17th century Crossways Farm (dominated by its huge chimneys) to your left.
- Turn right, and keep straight ahead at a road junction. Past the large group of mainly hidden houses at The Dean, the road climbs gently. Where it flattens out and just after a curve to left, keep an eye out for a footpath sign to the left and follow it.

- A clear path climbs very gently beside a fence, before dropping rightwards into a dry valley, then continuing to climb towards Abinger Common's stubby church spire on the hilltop ahead. The faint track twists uphill for around 500m.
- At the top you join another track (with a fine view back to the Downs) and head left through a kissing gate. A short distance along, a gap in the right hand hedge gives you a glimpse of a fine motte and bailey, the most still watered and part of someone's garden.

This is Abinger Manor Motte, an 11th century construction built by William fitz Ansculf, 15 foot in height and 120 foot in diameter. By the 13th century it would have had a stone tower, surrounded by a wooden palisade. There is no evidence of any occupation of the site after this period.

- The path passes through Abinger Common's churchyard, through the lych gate and out onto the village green, with its stocks intact, opposite the pretty Abinger Hatch pub. Turn right on the road and after about 20m take the unsigned narrow road left (noticing the archaic cast iron 'locomotives prohibited' sign).

Abinger Common is probably the oldest of the three villages making up the parish of Abinger. The church of St James dates from the 11th century, with the existing nave being from that period - the church, remarkably, was bombed during World War 2.

- The road drops steeply to Glebe House and around 200m beyond, reaches a larger, busy road. Turn right and after a short distance follow the bridleway sign to the left along a sunken path through the woods (this path can be very muddy after wet weather, so you may want to continue straight ahead for another 200m, then take the minor road towards Friday Street to the left instead).
- From the top of a rise, the path drops gently to a minor road, where you head left. Keep to this road as it passes through the spindly woodland and past a car park, before dropping steeply to the mill pond at Friday Street.

Friday Street is a tiny hamlet, mainly situated just to the south of this large artificial pond, likely to have been a hammer pond for a nearby ironworks - the road straight ahead runs across the top of the sizeable dam. It has been claimed that Friday Street was the birth place of Stephan Langton, a 13th century Archbishop of Canterbury, who was influential in forcing King John to sign the Magna Carta. There is absolutely no evidence for this, and is likely to be a myth created by a 19th century entrepreneur, but the hamlet's pub now bears Langton's name.

- Turn right on the road beside pond, to reach the group of cottages clustered around the pretty Stephan Langton inn. Beyond the inn, the road quickly narrows and soon becomes a bridleway leading through the woods along the valley bottom.
- Shortly after passing a rather spectacular footbridge, you reach a small road by a cottage. Head left before very soon following a footpath sign to the left. The first few paces are often a little overgrown but you are soon on a clear path climbing up the wooded valley side.

- On reaching a track, you follow the footpath sign along the left-hand fork. Take the path climbing to the left of the house at the bottom of the drive. The path then continues straight along the field edges ahead to eventually reach a small road.
- Turn right, past the attractive Jacobean-style house at Leylands. Opposite Wotton Barn, immediately after Leylands, head left on a gravel track (bridleway sign). Where the main track hairpins to the left, head right at a bridleway sign on a broad path climbing gently up the wooded valley.
- For the next kilometre, you should ignore all paths to left or right and continue straight ahead along the valley. Eventually, you pull out of the valley and the path flattens briefly. On reaching a fork where the right hand path drops away slightly, keep left (there is no sign here).
- This small path wanders through the delightful woodland, still climbing gently. On reaching an area with a lot of paths branching off, keep broadly straight ahead, dropping slightly through the rhododendrons. You soon join a larger path, which soon brings you to the tower on top of Leith Hill, with stunning views in all directions.

Leith Hill, 294m high, is the highest point on the Greensand ridge, a range of sandstone hills running from Romney Marsh on the Channel coast through Kent, Surrey and northern Sussex. It is also the second highest point in the South East region, 3m lower than Walbury Hill in Berkshire - though the tower on Leith Hill exceeds that height. The hill is at the heart of a huge expanse of woodland and heathland making up an Area of Natural Beauty. It is thought that Leith Hill was the site of a 9th century battle Æthelwulf of Wessex defeated the Danes, who fresh from sacking Canterbury and London, were en route for the Wessex capital at Winchester.

The 20m tall tower was built in 1766 by the owner of Leith Hall, just below the hill. The views from the top on a clear day extend to the Channel coast and the London skyline, with Gatwick Airport in the near distance. It is open most weekends and on weekdays in the summer - tickets are sold at the servery in the tower side, which also sells tea, coffee and excellent cakes.

- From the tower, take the broad path straight ahead, marked as the Coldharbour Common Walk (CCW). The path drops steeply to a large path junction. Keep straight ahead through a gate (still following CCW signs).
- The path climbs up onto an area of heathland, which you follow the blue bridleway waymarks across. Where you get a choice of routes, at the head of a valley, keep straight ahead, leaving the CCW.
- Pass through a gate, back into woodland, and pass a rather isolated cricket pitch and pavilion, with a fine view. Here you join a by-way and keep straight ahead, descending through the trees to emerge in the pretty hamlet of Coldharbour by the Plough Inn.
- Turn right on the road, then almost immediately left on a signed footpath hidden past the first cottage. A stile leads you out into a field, keeping by the left-hand boundary to another stile leading into the wood. A faint path leads below Anstiebury banks then downhill through trees. This can be a bit squelchy as you descend.
- Coming to a drive by Kitlands house, turn left. Where the tarmac ends, ignore the path to the right and keep straight ahead on a grassy track. Where the track forks, keep left into a field. Follow the left hand boundary to a minor road.

- Turn right, downhill past East Lodge. Just beyond, take a track left - marked with a rather unnecessary dead end sign. Join another track and swing left, downhill between hedgerows to a small stream valley. Beyond, the track becomes more substantial and eventually tarmaced as it drops past Moorhurst into a second small valley.
- Keep straight ahead at the road junction at the bottom of the hill. Past the gateway to Capel Layse, you get a final set of fine views across the lowlands to the south east.
- Where the road swings sharply left, keep ahead through a kissing gate onto a narrow path between hedges. This soon brings you out onto the old main road in Holmwood - now by-passed - where you turn right. The station entrance is about 100m along the road, just past the bus stop.