



Brockham, Deepdene and Betchworth Castle

Distance: 6 km=3¾ miles up to 10¼ km=6½ miles easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Brockham

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

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

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Village, pubs, woodland, romantic ruins, country estate, garden, views

In Brief

This is an unusual circular walk beginning from one of Surrey's best-kept villages, with two adventurous excursions. One is to the romantic ruin of **Betchworth Castle** with its high coign of vantage looking over the river Mole. The other is to the "lost" country house of **Deepdene**, now a landscaped estate with a garden and adventure trails. This walk takes an unusual approach by placing you high up at the start of the long broad terrace with terrific views.



There are no nettles or brambles on this walk, so any kind of attire is fine.



Trainers or sensible walking shoes are adequate in most seasons. Despite the persistent rain in early 2024, walkers found this walk surprisingly dry.



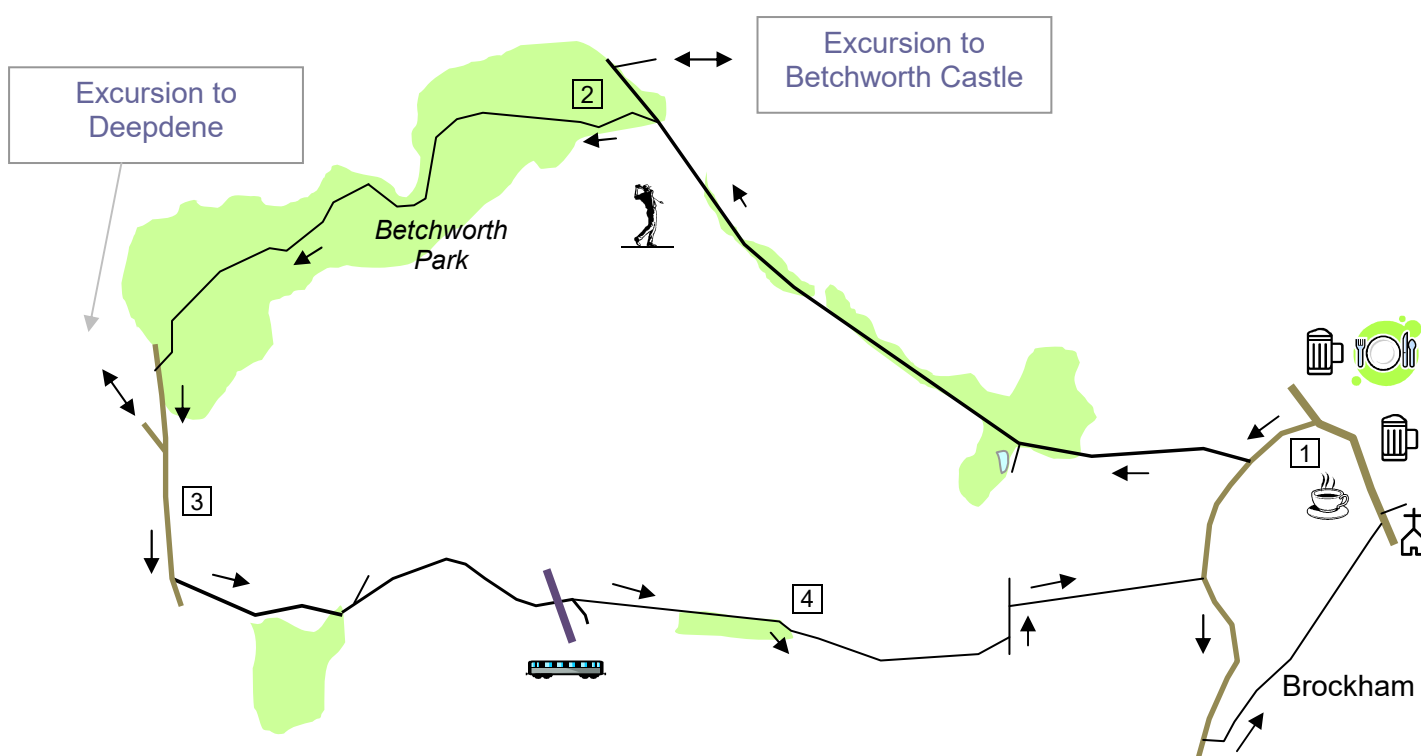
Your dog is welcome.


The walk begins in the village of **Brockham**, near Dorking, Surrey, postcode **RH3 7JS**. There is usually plenty of parking on the roads that criss-cross the Green. There are a few parking spaces just off Punchbowl Lane, opposite Ladyegate Road and also just off the A25 at the entrance to Betchworth Park Golf Club, a short way along on the left of the dirt track. It is possible (but not recommended) to start at Dorking Golf Club, off Deepdene Avenue, postcode **RH5 4BX** (they allow visitors to Deepdene). You can also start at (either) **Dorking station**, with a short walk to Deepdene. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



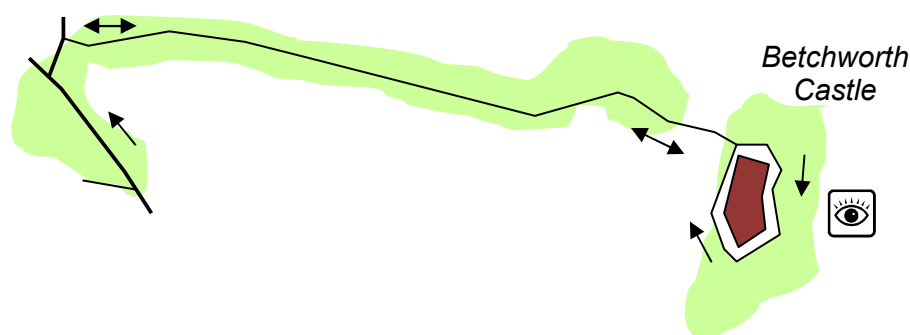
The Walk

*Brockham was originally called "Brook Ham" and was just a small hamlet for centuries, a stop-off for travellers between Dorking and Reigate. Its inhabitants were farm workers and servants to the many large houses in the area, also workers for the nearby limeworks and brickworks. New roads spurred growth in the 1920s and, despite the 1980s housing boom, Brockham has retained its small rural charm. **Brockham church**, with its distinctive spire, is relatively new, the architect being Benjamin Ferris, an associate of Augustus Pugin who designed the Houses of Parliament. A circuit of the Green will show you the many different architectural styles that were installed by the prosperous settlers at various stages, most made from local materials. Around the Green there are the **Royal Oak pub**, the **Inn on the Green** which incorporates the **Grumpy Mole restaurant**, the **Village Hall** which is also a coffee-and-cakes eatery, and the village shop which never seems to close. Brockham is famous throughout the county for its annual Guy Fawkes Night.*



-  Starting in Brockham village, opposite the *Royal Oak*, by the historic old well, take a side road, Old School Lane. Just after a bridge (a tributary of the Mole), fork **right** on a bridleway, also signposted as part of the Green-sand Way (GW). Keep straight ahead on this wide dirt drive, passing a footpath and pond on your left. You come past a large metal gate and now there are golf links on both sides, although mainly well hidden by the trees that line the drive. **Ahead of you is one of the best views of the North Downs.** As you draw level with the Betchworth Golf Club's car park and clubhouse, your route is a **left** fork, just after the entrance, on a signed footpath. But first you will want to take the first optional excursion, to Betchworth Castle.

Excursion No. 1: Betchworth Castle max 2 km (total)



Ignore the left fork, for now, and stay on the drive. Just before you reach the main road, take a path sharp **right**, by a wooden gate, signposted **Betchworth Castle**. (There is space here for 4-5 cars.) A good wide dirt track leads between links and through trees to reach the Castle ruin. The site is surrounded by a metal fence but the gaps are wide enough to allow you to imagine the house in its earlier magnificence and take a few snaps.

Betchworth Castle was a fortified manor house. As a hillfort, it appears in the Domesday Book, but the first stone house appeared in 1397, made into a comfortable fortified home in 1448 by Sir Thomas Browne, Sheriff of Kent. (Compare Bodiam Castle in the E. Sussex section of these walks.) During the 1700s, great alterations came about, one of the architects being Sir John Soane (of Bank of England fame). In Victorian times, the house fell into ruin and was pillaged for its stone, some of which went to Deepdene. The new owner, who bought the Castle in 2011 for £1, has undertaken to safeguard the ruin and make it more accessible. One problem is that some of the walls are propped up by a huge oak tree.

Be careful not to come at night. Legend has it that a black dog prowls here, seen as a portent of imminent death. Another legend relates to one of the Hope family who owned the Castle. He pursued an escaped prisoner, spotted a figure and ran it through with his sword, only to discover it was his own son. The father's ghost still lurks, wringing its hands in despair.



By turning **left** at the fence, you can do a short circuit round the site. On the far side is a terrace giving views of the Mole river and lake, plus the spire of Brockham church. Keep **right** through bushes to complete the circuit. Your return is by the same route, back to the golf club entrance.

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Take the **left** fork just after the entrance to the golf club (that's sharp **right** if you are returning from the Castle). This good wide path runs through woodland of Betchworth Park. In 300m it makes a wide arc round a valley.



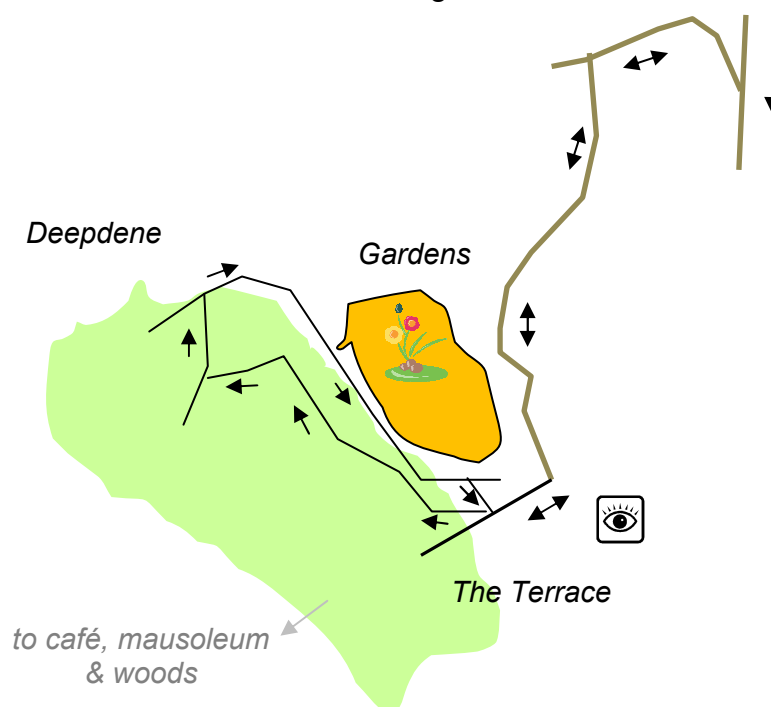
There's a seat here from where you can enjoy the view of Box Hill. After a wooden fence, your path gets much wider. Eventually you come past a large wooden gate and arrive at a small car park (alternative start) and a notice board.

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Keep straight on, following a yellow arrow, on a semi-tarmac drive. The drive leads down to a quiet tarmac road, Punchbowl Lane. Turn **left** here. After 200m on the lane, just before a biscuit-coloured house, there is a residential road, Deepdene Wood, sharp right, also marked as part of the GW. Here is your second optional excursion, to Deepdene.

Excursion No. 2: Deepdene 2 km (including visit)

Turn **right** on Deepdene Wood. In under 200m, at a junction with a (broken) marker post, turn **left** on another residential lane, also called Deepdene Wood. Follow this prosperous winding lane, taking care in 350m to keep **right** by the private entrance to *Oldway*. In a further 100m, suddenly you reach a junction at the top of the hill, with a private entrance on your left. Turn **right** here, past a wooden barrier, onto Deepdene Terrace. Welcome to the Deepdene Estate! You have stolen a march on other visitors because this is the highest point, from which you can simply stroll on the level path enjoying the views or explore the garden, woods, monuments and other buildings.



Deepdene was once the greatest house in Dorking, situated further down on the southeastern edge of the town, where there are now houses. Its gardens and estate stretched up the hill to the Terrace where you now stand. There were also woodlands and other buildings and the present-day A24, Deepdene Avenue, runs through the middle of the estate. The heyday of the house was in the Regency period, when it was rebuilt for a true British eccentric. Enter Thomas Hope, banker, art collector, interior decorator, author, philosopher and orientalist. The Hopes were Scottish bankers in Amsterdam (owners of the "Hope Diamond"). Thomas was noted for his snobbery and ugliness ("disagreeable" "a little ill-looking man...with an effeminate face and manner" runs one account). The French painter Antoine Dubost painted him with his wife as "Beauty And The Beast", resulting in a public scandal and mutilation of the painting by his wife's brother. Driven out by the French, he travelled through Asia and Africa and finally settled in London. He designed and decorated each room in his large house in the style of the countries seen on his "grand tour". Another scandal erupted in 1810 when Hope took up with a beautiful young Greek sailor, named "Aide", in full view of London society. He thought it best to move to the country; and here Deepdene House enters the scene. Thomas had the house rebuilt in bravura fashion and spun out the rest of his days, writing the Byronic novel "Anastasius". In the next century, Deepdene was Victorianised in massive style. It saw its last days as a hotel and suffered the ultimate indignity of being demolished by British Rail.



From the Terrace, you have a wide choice. If you have time, you can continue across the grass to the circular seat and keep **left** down steps towards the road. Here you will find the Golf Club café which gives a friendly welcome to non-golfers. There is a circular walk here to the Mausoleum where the Hope family were laid to rest. The Glory Woods and a Bronze Age Barrow are on the other side of the main road (visited by another walk in this series: “*Dorking and The Nower*”). *Deepdene is under development and you will constantly discover new things.*

Here is a suggestion for a quick interesting loop. Go 40m along the Terrace to where there are steps down towards the Gardens. Turn **right** down the **first** flight of eleven steps and take a rather unclear path on the **left** into trees. The path soon curves right through rhododendrons and becomes clearer. *There are various obstacles, including tank traps.* Your path bends left by a small brick structure. *This little building is in fact the head of a long spiral staircase (closed to visitors!) leading down to a subterranean wartime bunker.* Soon after, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a good path. (Turning **left** leads back to the Terrace.) At the bottom, turn **right** on a wider path, signed to the Gardens. It leads to the bottom of the stairs you saw earlier, giving you a chance to visit the gardens on your left. Return up the 114 stairs, turning **left** to exit the Estate.

After your visit, return by the way you came, all the way back to Punchbowl Lane (although downhill this time), and turn **right** to resume your walk.

- 3 Continue along the quiet Punchbowl Lane for another 150m till a meadow opens out on your left. At a fingerpost turn **left** on a driveway to *Park Farm*. *(The Private sign is not directed at walkers!)* A small wooden gate avoids the animal grid. In 300m you pass, on your right, a new construction on the site of the historic barns of Park Farm. Avoid the left fork to the house and keep ahead on a cinder drive, passing a pond on your right, still on the GW. Your track curves right and takes you under the railway *[care! it may be waterlogged after heavy rain]*. As the track immediately bends right, leave it by keeping straight ahead along the right-hand side of a field with a ditch on your right.
- 4 Just before the end of the crops, at a fingerpost, go **right** and **left**, over a stile, and continue, now on the other side of the hedge. Keep ahead over a stile beside a large metal gate. *Brockham Church is now clearly visible.* Go over a stile-and-bridge and immediately **left** in a field. Go over a stile beside the old barn of Pondtail Farm and turn **right** on the semi-tarmac drive. At the end, turn **right** on School Lane. *(You can instead, turn left, back to the village, but the route given here is interesting.)* You pass *Wits End* and *Bumble Cottage* and the lane curves its way through open country. Just 100m after you pass a 40-mph sign, turn **left** on a hidden footpath, taking you over a bridge and stile. Turn **left** along the edge of a field, through a modern kissing-gate and then go straight ahead for 20m to cross a large wooden bridge with a wooden step-over at each end. Continue straight ahead across the centre of a crop field towards the church. A final stile takes you to the road in Brockham, near the Green, where the walk began.

Getting there



By car: Brockham is signed off the A25, 1½ miles east of Dorking, in the Reigate direction.



By bus/train: bus 32 from (either) Dorking Station to Brockham. Check the timetables.



By train: You could also walk ½ mile from Dorking stations to the entrance to Deepdene, next to the Golf Club.

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