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## Holmwood to Reigate

### Via Leigh, Surrey

**Length** 16.0 km (10 miles). Four hours walking time. For the whole outing including trains and meals allow 8 hours.

**Maps** OS Landranger Map No 187. Explorer Map No 146. Holmwood, map ref TQ 175438 is in Surrey, 6 km south of Dorking. Reigate is in Surrey near Redhill.

**Toughness** 2 out of 10.

### Features

This walk in the Low Weald of Surrey in the Mole Valley provides broad paths through gently undulating country with glimpses of the North Downs ridge to the North. In the morning, the walk passes through Hammond's Copse Nature Reserve, an ancient semi-natural woodland, with a wide variety of bird-life. The lunch stop is in the attractive village of Leigh with its village green, pub and church. In the afternoon, the walk crosses the Mole at Flanchford Bridge and then rises on the Greensand Ridge near Reigate Priory to give extensive views of the North Downs and on a clear day down to the South Downs near the Devil's Dyke.

### Shortening the walk

You could order a taxi at the Plough in Leigh and go to Reigate or Dorking Station. There is a No. 22 bus on weekdays at 11:57, 13:57 and 16:52 from the Plough in Leigh to Dorking Station. *There are no buses on Saturday or Sunday.*

### Saturday Walkers Club

Take the train nearest **9.30 am** (before or after) from Victoria Station to **Horsham via Dorking to Holmwood**. Trains back from **Reigate** run twice an hour, via **Redhill**. *There are no trains or buses to Holmwood on Sundays so this is definitely a Saturday or weekday walk.*

**Lunch** The recommended lunchtime pub is the **Plough** in Leigh, (8.5km from the start) which has an attractive patio and serves excellent home-cooked food. Large groups are advised to phone ahead and book (01306 611348).

**Tea** The suggested tea place is Monty Bojangles 57 High Street Reigate 01737 242344 (open until 5:30 on Saturday and 6:00 pm weekdays). There are many alternatives in Reigate including Café Rouge, 1 Church Street 01737 223700, which offers tea, cakes and light meals. The station is a 15-minute walk from Monty Bojangles.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

### Holmwood to Ewood Farm

1. Coming off the train from London, walk up the steps at the London end of the platform to the road and turn right. In 60m cross the road and turn left towards Bregsell's Farm, your direction 45deg.
2. After 150m pass underneath the A24, then after a further 150m bear left by the entrance to Bregsell's Farm. In a further 20m ignore a footpath to the left and bear right between farm buildings until you reach a gate to the right of a metal field gate.
3. Pass through this gate into a field, your direction 60deg with the railway on the left-hand side and a hedge on your right.
4. In 100m pass through another gate and in a further 200m pass through another gate and immediately right over a stile following a yellow footpath sign, your direction 130deg, towards an electricity pole on the horizon.
5. The footpath is not clearly defined. Bear slightly to the right of the power pylon and on the far side of the field, go over a stile and turn left through a metal field gate, your direction 110deg. (This area can be muddy in winter).
6. Cross the field towards a footpath sign and a gap in the hedge and turn half-left to follow the field edge with the hedge on your left-hand side your direction 80deg.
7. After 100m *[and 100m before the end of the field!]* go through a kissing gate on your left-hand side and turn right to continue in the same direction as before with the hedge now on your right-hand side.
8. Just before the road go through a kissing gate and cross the footbridge over the ditch. Turn left at the road and in 70m turn right on to a public footpath, go through a metal field-gate and proceed with the hedge on your left-hand side, your direction 70deg.
9. After 125m ignore a stile on your left-hand side and continue into the next field, your direction now 110deg. Follow the meandering field boundary for 500m keeping the hedge and ditch on your left-hand side.
10. After several fields, you come to a wooded area (Brook Copse). Go through a gap in the hedge with a large oak tree on your right-hand side, follow the path round to the right and in 10m you come to a redundant stile and signpost where you turn left, your direction 70deg.
11. Follow the path as it meanders through the copse, your direction 80deg. This area is used for police dog training and there are many paths off to the left and right. After 100m cross a sandy track with a wooden barrier (a dog jump?) to your left, continue ahead in the same direction along the path for a further 200m.
12. At a 'T' junction with a hedge in front of you turn right and in 15m turn left to emerge from the copse into an open field, carry straight on, your direction 50deg, with the field boundary on your left-hand side. At a footpath post follow the path turning half left, your direction 350deg.

13. After 120m ignore a wide farm track half-left and bear half-right to cross over a stream on a concrete bridge. Once over the bridge go through a metal field gate and continue ahead with the field boundary on your left-hand side ignoring a gate on the left, your direction 80deg. In 450m as you approach Ewood Farm stay on the main track.

### **Ewood Farm to Parkhouse Farm**

14. Once past the farm buildings, turn half-right on the tarred lane, your direction 110deg.
15. Follow the road for 700m, then at the end of the lane by a post box on a post turn right into Mill Lane, your direction 190deg, and then after 100m turn left on to a bridleway, your direction 110deg.
16. After 300m on the bridleway in an avenue of trees, emerge on to a private driveway and continue in the same direction. At the road, cross over, go slightly to your left, and through the gate into Hammond's Copse. The copse is a nature reserve with bluebells in spring and migrant chiffchaffs and blackcaps. There is an information board on your left as you enter the copse.
17. Follow the main path straight ahead, your direction initially 110deg, ignoring ways off to your right, unless you wish to fully explore this interesting woodland.
18. After 550m you come to the edge of the copse where you proceed through a gate following the blue bridleway sign round to the right, your direction 120deg.
19. In 250m you come to Parkhouse Farm where you turn left on to the concrete farm road, your direction 30deg.

### **Parkhouse Farm to Leigh**

20. Follow the farm road for 900m and then at a cross track with farm buildings ahead on the left, turn left to cross over a stile just to the right of the entrance to Herons Head farm. Head towards another stile to the left of an oak tree, your direction 320deg. Cross the stile and over a farm track and immediately cross over an electric fence protected by a blue plastic pipe. Cross the field heading just to the right of the first large oak tree in the middle, your direction 360deg.
21. At this large tree bear a little to the right to cross over another electric fence protected by a blue plastic pipe. Once over the fence bear a little to the left towards a sign post in front of a hedge. Turn half-left at the sign post, your direction north. At the top right-hand corner of the field, cross the stile and follow the broad track into the woods.
22. Follow the track as it descends to a dip and starts to rise. The next section of this track can be very muddy / overgrown. About 50m after the bottom of the dip it is possible to enter the woods on the right by a three-way sign post. Then 10m inside the woods turn left on a dry, unofficial path just inside the wood parallel to the muddy / overgrown track for 150m, your direction 340deg.
23. The unofficial path emerges into an open field with woods on your left-hand side. Continue ahead and after 250m at the edge of the field go straight on through a gap in the hedge ignoring a footpath off to your right.
24. In a further 100m turn left and follow the rather indistinct path across the field, your direction 290deg. At the edge of a field follow a footpath sign into a wood with a tumbledown building on your left-hand side.
25. Cross over a stile and over the remains of the old Hammer Bridge. In 150m go through gates to cross a gallop and in 150m at the road turn right. Follow the road for 900m to the green with Plough Inn on the far side, the recommended lunch stop. *[The bus-stop on your left will take you to Dorking - weekdays only]*

## Leigh to Lime Kiln

26. Coming out of the pub, cross over the road, turn half left, and enter the churchyard by the footpath sign, following the footpath around through the churchyard to the right of the church. Leave the churchyard and walk along a path with a fence on your right-hand side.
27. Go through a kissing gate and walk across the middle of a field, your direction 120deg. Cross over a footbridge, and in 30m cross over a stile, and ignore the obvious path across the field and walk along the right-hand side of the field with the hedge on your right-hand side, your direction 120deg.
28. After 275m cross an **easily missed** stile in the hedge on your right and turn left to join a broad track, your direction 90deg. Pass through a wooden gate and continue straight on, following the blue bridleway sign.
29. After 30m ignore a footpath half right and continue with the field boundary on your left-hand side. Pass through a metal gate and continue with a wood on your right-hand side, your direction 80deg. On your left, there are distant views to the North Downs.
30. Continue through an avenue of poplar trees following the path to a broad earth track where you turn left, your direction 320deg. *(If instead of turning left you go right for 50m you will find the remains of a lime kiln in the hedge to the left of a very old oak. This was used to make lime to fertilise the fields and probably used chalk from the nearby Betchworth Quarry.)*

## Limekiln to Park Lane

31. The earth track soon becomes a concrete farm road. Continue through a metal field gate, with a stile on the left-hand side and continue along the road for 500m passing a long brick-built cottage on your left-hand side. Just after the long brick building and looking back on your left-hand side you can see Bury's Court School, built by the Charrington family.
32. Just after the long brick building, the road veers round to the left. Leave the road, to cross an **easily missed** stile in the hedge on the right to follow the footpath.
33. The river Mole is visible through the trees down to your right. After 120m pass through a gap in the hedge and turn half right.
34. Cross over the stream on a footbridge and continue straight on. Leave the field to the right of a large oak tree, cross over a stile, and at the road turn right. Cross over the river Mole on Flanchford Bridge and in 20m turn right on to a wide farm track.
35. After 90m turn left by a public footpath sign and cross the corner of a field, your direction 45deg.
36. Continue on a farm track with a pond and farm buildings on your left-hand side for 250m, then cross over a farm track and continue in the same direction into the next field, with the field boundary on your left-hand side.
37. After 350m, follow the path to the left of the cottage and at the road turn left. Where the road bears left, turn right into Clayhall Lane.
38. After 200m turn left and go through a gate into a field by a public footpath sign, your direction 20deg. At the end of the first field continue straight on through a gap in the hedge into the next field and towards a footpath sign.
39. At the end of this field go through a wooden kissing gate and continue in more or less the same direction up a gravel driveway with a house on your right-hand side and a lawn on your left-hand side.

40. Turn right at Quince Cottage and walk past a garage on your left-hand side and immediately through the remains of a gate to a footpath which leads uphill, your direction 30deg. Just before the road go through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate.

### **Park Lane to Reigate Station**

41. At the road, turn left and in 100m turn right up a steep path with wooden steps by the Greensand Way marker. At the top of the steps turn left to ascend steeply up a narrow path through the trees to the top of the hill, your direction 90deg.
42. At the top of the hill, by a Greensand Way marker post, emerge for the woods and continue in the same direction on a broad green ridge for 400m.
43. Where there is a slight dip in the ridge turn left off the ridge to go down a very steep unsigned path to the woods below. Continue down crossing another path until you reach the playing fields.
44. Once in the open turn half-left towards the pond, your direction 300deg. Near the pond turn right on to a gravel path and follow this round to the left over a small hump-backed bridge to a place where you can feed the ducks.
45. Once you have seen the ducks retrace your steps towards hump-backed bridge and just before the bridge walk across the grass towards the town, your direction 45deg. Follow the boundary fence on your left as it veers left and leave the park on a tarmac drive between two brick piers with pineapples on top. Turn right at the road and right again at the traffic lights into the High Street.
46. The recommended tea stop, Monty Bojangles at 57 High Street is 60m along the High Street on the right-hand side. It is about 800m to the station from the tea room, so allow 15 minutes to catch your train
47. Coming out of Monty Bojangles turn right and continue along the High Street for 200m to pass the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Old Town Hall and Market House. In a further 50m turn left into Tunnel Street with Café Rouge on your right-hand side. Go through the pedestrian tunnel under the grounds of Reigate Castle.
48. Continue towards the roundabout and cross over two pedestrian crossings past Dame Margot Fonteyn's statue to continue north towards the rail station. Take the path to the right just before the railway line for the station. Trains to Redhill and London Victoria can depart from either Platforms 1 or 2. A subway under the tracks connects the platforms.
49. Take the first train towards Redhill. You may need to change at Redhill for London Bridge.

## History

Part of the ancient Manor of Dorking, **Holmwood Common** was owned by King Harold before the Norman Conquest. After Harold's death, it passed to William the Conqueror. After the Norman Conquest, farming became established in the surrounding areas but Holmwood Common was too swampy. It was not enclosed but left to become wild and inaccessible. In 1755, a toll road was built across the common, linking Horsham and Dorking. Despite this improvement, the area remained notorious for sheep-stealing, smuggling, thieving and highwaymen.

**St Bartholomew's, Leigh** is a 15C church built on the site of an earlier church dating back to 1121 AD.

Remains of a **lime kiln** can be seen similar to the larger lime kiln works at Brockham where the chalk was burned to produce quick-lime, used to make mortar and fertilisers.

**Bury's Court** was completed in 1876 as a home for Edward and Georgiana Charrington. The successful **Charrington** brewery in the East End of London had made Edward a very wealthy man. He designed the traditional Victorian front of the building and Georgiana designed the gable-ended section at the rear.

In 1930, a Miss Sheard founded Bury's Court Girls' School with the motto 'Learn to Live'. In 1939 it was taken over by Lloyds Insurance, then in 1946 Bury's Court opened as a hotel. In 1952 it was sold out of the family for the first time, to Kenneth Farnsworth, who opened **Bury's Court Preparatory School for Boys** in September of that year.

**Reigate Priory**, a Grade I listed building, is set in 65 acres of open parkland, with gardens, lake and waterfowl and playing fields. The Priory was originally founded before 1200 and was converted to a mansion in Tudor times following the Dissolution of the Monasteries. In June 1541 Henry VIII granted the Manor and Priory of Reigate to Lord William Howard, uncle of Catherine Howard, Henry's fifth wife. Today the buildings contain a school and a small museum open Easter to October 2.00–4.30 pm Wednesday and Saturday.