

Walks Around Givons Grove

Walk 3 – 3 walks starting at Abinger Hammer (about 10 miles for the longest and about 6 miles for the other 2).

Recommended by Nick Holloway

Introduction

This walk is really three walks in one. All start at Abinger Roughts National Trust car park off White Down Lane about one mile east of Abinger Hammer. The walks have wonderful views looking south from the North Downs and north from gentle northern slopes of the Greensand hills. They also feature the dramatic differences in vegetation and terrain between the alkaline chalk soils of the North Downs and the acidic, sandy soils of the Greensand. You will need OS Explorer series 1:25,000 scale sheets 145 and 146 (the walk straddles the boundary between the sheets!)

The full walk is about 10 miles in length and includes quite a long, stiff climb up the North Downs escarpment. The two half walks are both about 6 miles; the northern one also includes the aforementioned stiff climb.

In winter and wet weather in any season, I recommend walking boots as some parts can be pretty muddy.

The southern section of the walk goes past two pubs offering lunch stop options if your timing is right!

Walk description

Head west from the car park and follow the beautiful track through the mature woods of beech and oak and through open spaces. After about half a mile you reach **Point A** where you keep right (essentially straight ahead). The left fork here marks the return of the southern loop of the walk.

Continue due west through woods then open country and back into woods at Piney Copse (NT property). The path drops down to a track here where you turn right at **Point B**. Here keep left and, in less than 100 metres, pass under a railway bridge (Dorking to Guilford line) after which the track passes from the Greensand to the Chalk and climbs increasingly steeply up the North Downs escarpment. In about half a mile and a climb of about 110 metres (360 ft) you reach the intersection with the North Downs Way (NDW) at **Point C**. Turn right here and start one of the most magnificent sections of the walk. As you emerge from the woods onto Blatchford Down (NT), you start to get extensive views to the south towards the Greensand hills (Leith, Holmbury, Pitch etc.) and to the east along the escarpment towards Dorking. As you go further, the views to the west open up behind you revealing St Martha's Hill (and chapel) in the middle distance and Hindhead in the far distance. At some point along the way on a clear day, Chanctonbury Ring on the South

Downs can be glimpsed in a gap in the Greensand hills. The views are particularly fine either side of **Point D**, the highest point on the walk (215 m/705 ft asl). A little beyond **D**, you see the first of several World War II pill boxes. These would have formed the final line of defence for London should the Germans ever have invaded.

About two thirds of a mile beyond **D**, the NDW descends to cross White Down Lane at **Point E**. Take care as you cross the lane and head downhill on the road about 20 yds until the NDW takes off again on the left (clearly signed). From here the path climbs gently up again reaching **Point F** after about another two thirds of a mile. Here you leave the NDW and turn down to the right keeping another pill box on your left. Here there are lovely views along the escarpment towards Dorking, Box Hill and Reigate Hill. Rather than following the main trackway down the hill, take a parallel grassy path to the left. After following this for about 100 yds, turn about 30 degrees to the left and go straight down the hill towards a hedge and the railway line. You will find a gate through the hedge and a bridge over the railway. Keep going straight leaving the chalk downs behind and passing back onto the Greensand through open fields (these can be very muddy as you are now on the Gault Clay). You now reach **Point G** as you enter typical Greensand pine woods.

At **Point G**, you can leave the main walk and turn right (west) onto the track towards Park Farm. This allows you to complete the northern loop and continue back to Abinger Roughs car park. At Park Farm, bear left between the farmhouse and the barn. Keep following the path along the edge of the pine woods until you reach White Down Lane again. Cross the lane and take the track ahead of you. After about 300 yds, you will come to an open space with a monument to Bishop Wilberforce. Here, make a right-angled left turn, head up the hill, into the woods and back to the car park just behind.

If you wish to do the southern loop of the walk only, start from the car park leaving on the north side facing the North Downs escarpment and following the above instructions in reverse to make your way to **Point G**.

Resuming the full walk at **Point G**, continue straight ahead through the pine woods and descend to Vale Farm. Here, angle slightly to your right across a gravel turning area and cross the style to right of a five-bar gate. Beyond the style, follow the grassy track gently uphill past two ponds and passing St John's Church, Wotton on the hill to your right. At the top of the path, a gate takes you onto the church driveway. This you then follow up to the A25 where you will see the Wotton Hatch pub across the road opposite you. Cross the road to the pub at **Point H**.

Unless you're stopping here for lunch, walk through the car park to a gate just to the left of the Parish Hall. Beyond the gate, follow the grassy path diagonally across the field to the far right-hand corner. Here the path goes through another gate and descends to the fast flowing River Tillingbourne, a very pretty spot! Continue up the hill on the far side. Again, you are in typical Greensand pine woods. Crest the hill keeping straight ahead and descend to reach a main trackway at **Point I** that eventually leads up to Friday Street. However, this walk turns to the right across a bridge at **Point J**. After about 100 yds, this path reaches a driveway down to an isolated house. Turn left up this driveway climbing steadily uphill until you reach a lane at **Point K**. Here, watch out for another path that angles to the right off the road. This path runs parallel to the road for a short distance then bears away to the right and up a hill. Follow this path up the hill continuing to bear slowly to the right. This section can be muddy!

Crest the top of the hill and follow path down to meet a road, Hollow Lane. Turn right onto the road and follow it downhill for about 150 yds then turn left onto another, much narrower, lane. Follow this lane until it reaches a T-junction with a larger road. Turn right and you reach the Abinger Hatch pub at **Point L**, another lunch option.

Cross the road from the pub to the church opposite and walk straight through the church yard to the gate at the far end. Pass through the gate and follow the path bearing first to the right and then to the left. At a fork in the path, keep left and head towards Raikes Farm. There are fine views from here looking north towards the North Downs.

As you approach the farm don't go into the farm yard but bear slightly left between two tall hedges. Where the hedges end (**Point M**), make a right turn. This will bring you amongst the farm buildings where you turn about 45 degrees to the left and pass between the farmhouse and an outbuilding. Here you will find a gate which takes you onto Raikes Lane. Turn right onto the road and pick up the path on the other side after about 20 yds. You now diagonally cross a large field, which can be muddy, to **Point N**. Here there is a fork in the path and you should take the right fork passing to the right of two large oak trees. This path gently descends towards Paddington Farm. Bear left through the farm yard then follow the exit road past a pond to reach the A25. Cross here and take the track straight ahead of you and climb gently through woods until you reach a gate at the top. Go through the gate into an open field and you are now back in the Abinger Roughs NT property. Follow the path around to the right and you have a lovely outlook towards the south. Join the outgoing route at **Point A** and make your way back to the car park making sure you fork right in the dip and climb up gently passing the "Witch's Broom" Tree on your right.

N.B. Nick Holloway has provided some photos to illustrate the walk