

Lowland Heath

The Devil's Punch Bowl is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) as it contains one of Britain's rapidly disappearing habitats – Lowland Heath. Globally, this is rarer than the Amazonian Rainforest! It is home to rare bird species like the Dartford Warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark. Many other scarce species such as Silver-Studded Blue butterfly, Sand Lizard and Adder also live on the heath.

Heathland Restoration

Heathland is a man-made habitat dating back to the Bronze Age (3000 years ago). Ancient forests were cleared to graze the animals which provided man with food and clothing. Without fertilisers this constantly stripped the soil of nutrients so that nothing but hardy heathers and grasses grew. The Heath dramatically changed after the World Wars as few folk who used the commons were left. Without animal grazing, invasive trees and plants quickly overtook the heathers by shading them from sunlight. Over the past decade The National Trust has been trying to 'turn back the clock' by removing Birch and Pine and introducing grazing animals such as Exmoor ponies and traditional breeds of cattle. This process is needed to help conserve the threatened wildlife that depends on the heath to survive.

Woodland

Some areas within the Bowl are ancient woodland, which has been there for hundreds of years. They consist of tall Oaks and Beech with a rich shrub layer beneath, providing an ideal habitat for many birds, mammals and insects. Foresters worked this woodland to produce timber for building and fencing. Spot the old sawyer's pit, where two men used a dog-toothed saw to plank timber. One man worked in the cool, fresh air above (top dog) and the other in the hot, dusty pit below (under dog).

Archaeology

Within the valley are several small 18th century cottages once occupied by people who worked the heath. Originally Broom-squires, who made besom brooms from heather and birch, many for use at Windsor Castle and Hampton Court, lived here. George Mayes, the last broom-squire to live in the Devil's Punch Bowl, also delivered milk to Hindhead (pictured in 1918 on the front cover) until his death in 1939. He lived at the original Highcomb Farm situated on Sailors Lane (the ruins can be seen along the short cut). Gnome Cottage was a dairy farm around 1900 and Price's Cottages are now a Youth Hostel.

Geology & Geomorphology

A process called spring-sapping has, over time, created the Devil's Punch Bowl, with its long valley. Rainwater percolates through the permeable Lower Greensand (sandstone). When it meets the underlying impermeable Atherfield Clay, water travels horizontally and emerges on the hillside through the sandstone/clay join. The water gradually erodes the soft sand and clay soil, making a hollow. Thus the Bowl, has been (and is still being) created!

Hindhead and Haslemere Area

This area was described in an early visitor guide as the 'fashionable capital of the beautiful Surrey highlands' and now lies within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Much of the beautiful countryside around Haslemere and Hindhead is now owned by The National Trust. They bought Hindhead Commons (including The Devil's Punch Bowl) in 1906 by public subscription to The Hindhead Preservation Committee, to protect the land from development, as a result of a campaign led by Sir Robert Hunter, one of the original founders of The National Trust (who lived in Haslemere from 1883 until his death in 1913). It was one of the first large open stretches of countryside The National Trust acquired.

Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

In 1958 the Surrey Hills was one of the first areas in England to be designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty because of its diverse landscape rich in wildlife, woodland, attractive market towns and villages. The Surrey Hills AONB stretches across a quarter of Surrey. It includes the chalk slopes of the North Downs, from Farnham in the west to Oxted in the east, and it extends south to the deeply wooded Greensand Hills which rise around Haslemere. This nationally protected landscape of rolling chalk downs, flower rich grasslands, acid heaths and ancient woodlands also provides some of the best walking in Southern England.

For information on the Surrey Hills AONB please telephone 01372 220653 or visit www.surreyhills.org

The National Trust

For information on The National Trust please call 01428 683207 or visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Travel & Local Information

For information on Haslemere and the local area and other walks contact:

Haslemere Visitor & Local Information Centre
(Funded by Haslemere Town Council & Haslemere Initiative)

at Haslemere Museum,
78 High Street,
Haslemere
tel: 01428 645425
www.haslemere.com/vic

For local train and bus information call Travel Line South East on 08706 082608 or www.travelline.org.uk

Refreshments and accommodation are available in Hindhead and nearby Haslemere.

Devil's Punch Bowl Café (open all year except 25, 26 Dec & 1 Jan)
Tel: 01428 608771

The Devil's Punchbowl Hotel (3♦) Tel: 01428 606565

Devil's Punch Bowl Walk



*An interesting and
varied circular walk
from Hindhead, through
heath and wood.*

Compiled by: **Haslemere Visitor & Local
Information Centre**

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HASLEMERE
INITIATIVE

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Devil's Punch Bowl Walk

1 Take the main path diagonally off right as you look at the front of the Devil's Punch Bowl café, past the Surrey Hills totem pole to a junction of paths at the first viewpoint. Turn left on a level path towards 'Highcombe Edge'. Ignore any side paths and join a bridleway, continuing ahead with a fence on your left. At path junction turn right on bridleway, out onto the common.

Pass through a small unofficial carpark and gate beside cattlegrid. Continue to second viewpoint by seat (a lovely vista back into Devil's Punch Bowl is clear for the first time in a hundred years). At next, 3-way, junction turn right on a small path to the memorial with third viewpoint by seat (view of Highcombe Bottom and to Hog's Back). Continue and path rejoins bridleway. **FOR THE SHORT LEVEL EASIER WALK TURN LEFT AND RETURN THE WAY YOU CAME.**

— — — Main Route

..... Optional Route

This interesting circular walk is 4.8km (3 miles) long and takes approximately 1½-2 hours. It starts from the Devil's Punch Bowl Café (off A3) where you can park for a small charge and get refreshments. The route takes you through heathland and woodland and is covered by OS Explorer map 133. There are fine views of the Devil's Punch Bowl (a large heather-filled basin formed naturally by the action of many springs) and to the North Downs.

Much of the first part of the walk to the monument viewpoint is level and suitable for everyone. However, further parts of the walk go over uneven or hilly ground in places and there are several gates to negotiate. This part is therefore not recommended for pushchairs, wheelchairs or anyone with walking difficulties. There is a steep climb at the very end of the complete walk. During and/or after wet weather some areas can become particularly muddy, so please wear appropriate footwear.

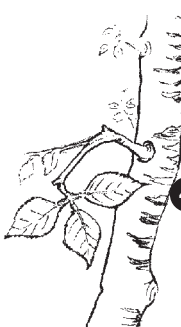
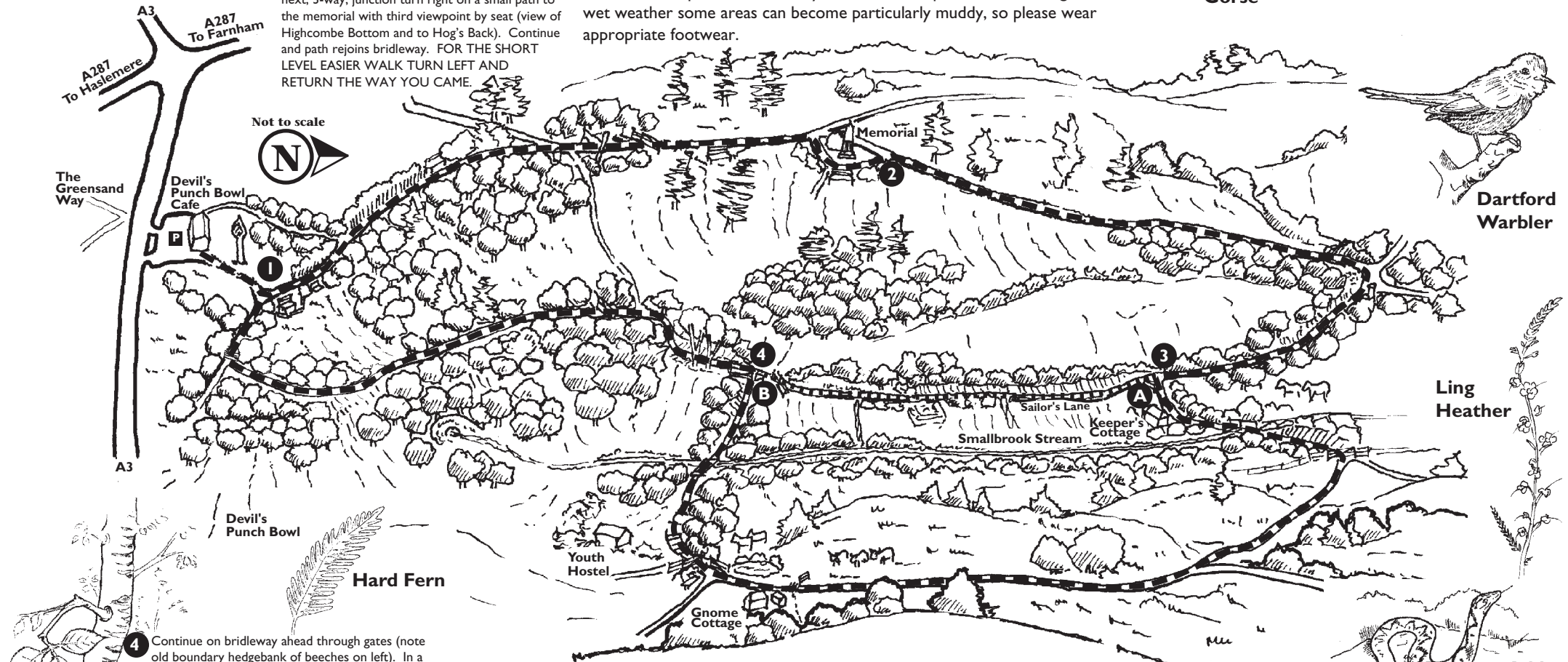


Gorse

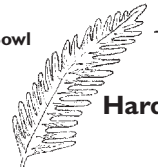
2 The path gently drops downhill and at crossing of paths bear right on bridleway on 'sunken lane' down into the woods (note signs of a medieval woodland pasture and field system – Lynchet banks, etc). Just before Keeper's Cottage (c.1650s) in the valley, you have a choice of route at (A). Continue on bridleway bearing left downhill for MAIN ROUTE or carry on ahead, on smaller bridleway, for SHORT CUT along Sailor's Lane (passing ruins of George Mayer's farm), rejoining main route at (B).



Dartford Warbler



Birch



Hard Fern



Ling Heather



Adder



Exmoor Pony

3 The main path passes the cottage, bending round and down to the stream. Cross at footbridge and continue up steep sandy dell opposite (note change in soil from clay to sand). Go through bridlegate and bear right onto the open common. Follow path uphill, turning right at track junction (these paths were cobbled during WW2 for bike and tank manoeuvres). Continue, ignoring any side paths (note the signs of many green valleys formed from springheads). Pass the bench, go through gate beside a cattlegrid and join another track, bearing right. Drop into a dell and up again (note pond on right and Gnome Cottage c.1730s on left). At junction before Highcombe Farm turn right through gate towards YHA. At next path junction by more gates, fork right on a footpath through the trees. Go down slight slope and steps to the stream. Cross at footbridge and continue up steep muddy dell opposite (note change in soil back to clay – several springs seep up here, note all the moisture-loving ferns). Go through kissing gate and turn left, joining the short cut and Sailor's Lane at (B).

Follow the Countryside Code Please

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.