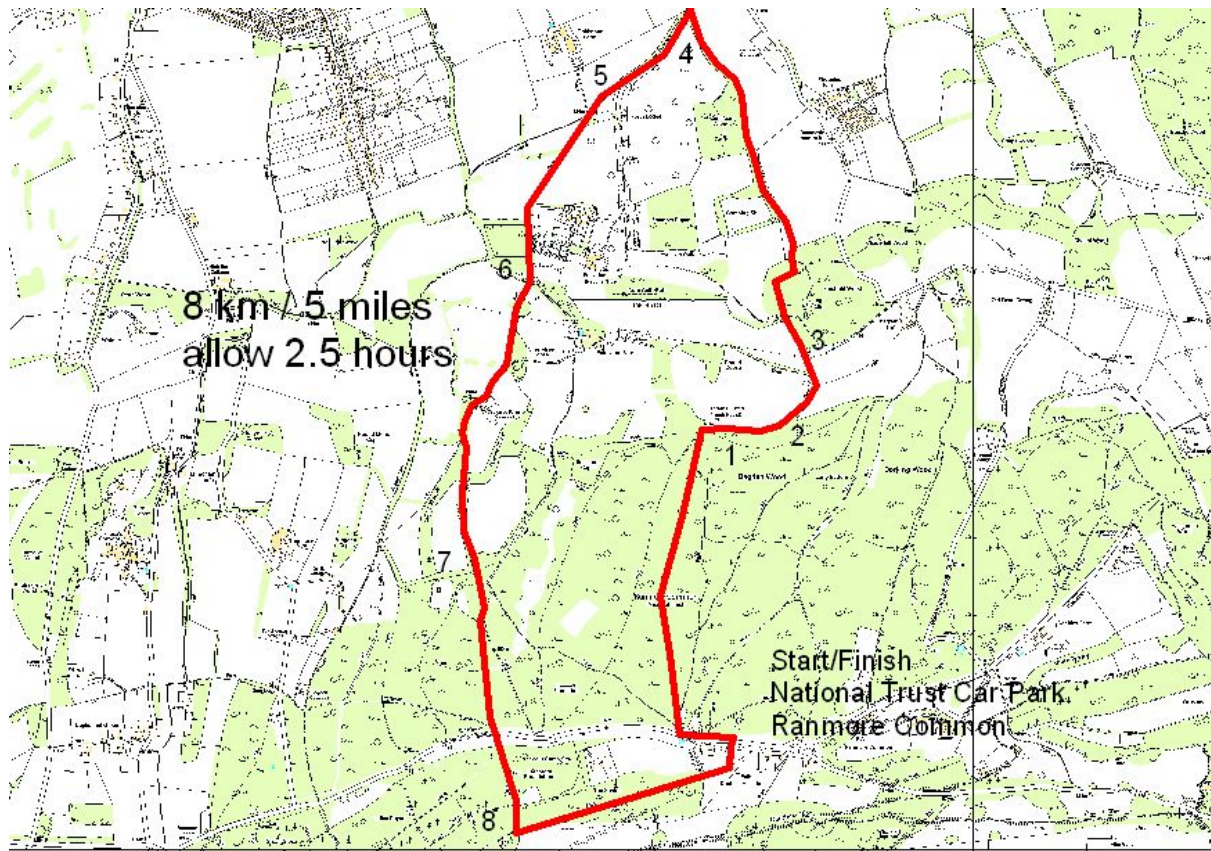


# NORTH DOWNS WAY WALKS

## *Prospects of Polesden*



The Polesden Lacey Estate and parts of Ranmore Common and Denbies Hillside are owned by the National Trust. This walk follows public rights of way over private and National Trust Land. Use of the link path up Denbies Hillside is by courtesy of The National Trust. Please respect National Trust bylaws and keep dogs under control.

### Start

The trail starts from the National Trust car park off Ranmore Common Road near Dorking. From the car park cross over the road with care and turn left along wide grass verge. Turn right on track past the tile-hung Fox Cottages. In 40m take the left fork following YHA signs and continue straight on through the woods.

*The woodland here is a mixture of oak, beech and yew. Where the land slopes downhill and enters the Polesden Estate young beech have been planted. The estate woodlands are managed to preserve their important landscape feature when viewed from the gardens of Polesden Lacey House.*

1. In 1100m swing right to pass Tanners Hatch Youth Hostel on left.

*Tanners Hatch, an old estate cottage, was restored and renovated by members of the Youth Hostels Association during the second World War. Across the valley the long wall of Sheridan's Walk can be glimpsed through the trees. Richard Brinsley Sheridan, dramatist and politician, bought the Polesden Lacey Estate in 1797. He described the old house as a 'ruin' but his ambitious plans to rebuild it were not realised and the only visible legacy of his ownership is this long terraced walk which is still one of the most impressive features of the garden.*

2. Follow track down into the valley bottom and swing left uphill and after 100m fork left to reach an ornamental stone bridge.

*This bridge, known as the Italian bridge, bears the inscription CD 1903. It was built for Sir Clinton Edward Dawkins who owned the estate at that time.*

3. Continue along the track for 1200m to reach road. Note view of Mole gap on right.

4. Cross road and turn left along wide grass verge to reach entrance drive to Polesden Lacey.

*To visit the house and gardens, turn left down the drive. Opening times are displayed by the memorial arch designed by Sir Hugh Casson and erected in 1958. To the right, the City of London can be seen on a clear day. When he bought Polesden, Sheridan wrote to his wife, "We shall have the nicest place within a prudent distance from town, in England".*

5. At the Polesden drive fork right and keep ahead for 140m. Swing left with main track to go over hill through a cutting and under a thatched bridge after 500m.

*The cutting was constructed in 1861 to enable vehicles to use this estate road without being seen from the gardens. The excavated material was used to make a causeway for the yew lined lane ahead.*

6. Where track turns left, continue ahead along causeway. At T-junction in 300m turn right uphill on track, pause and look back to Polesden. Pass Yew Tree Farm on left and continue along track for 700m

*From this track there is a lovely view back towards Polesden Lacey. The present house was built as a Grecian Villa in 1824 by Joseph Bonsor to a design by Thomas Cubitt. It has been added to by several owners since. Bonsor planted many of the avenues and woods on the estate. The house became a focus of Edwardian society and political leaders of the time. In 1923 the then Duke and Duchess of York, later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, spent part of their honeymoon there. When Mrs Greville dies in 1942 she bequeathed the estate to the National Trust as a memorial to her father.*

7. Pass byway across track, go over cross track and in 150m bear right off main track down bridleway. Over crossroads continue ahead through woods to reach road after 450m. Cross with care to go along track opposite. In 350m a short way down hill turn left through barriers to go along North Downs Way marked by the acorn waymark.

8. Continue straight ahead through woods. In 700m cross stile into a large field, note view of Westcott. Head towards St Barnabus' Church spire, then, half-way across field, bear left. Cross stile into car park.

In 1850 Denbies, an elaborate, now demolished house, was designed and built by Thomas Cubitt the well known builder and architect of the oldest part of Polesden Lacey House. St Barnabus' Church, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, was built near Denbies by Cubitt's son George, later Lord Ashcombe, in 1859. The National Trust acquired 99 hectares (245 acres) of the Denbies hillside in 1960 and manage it to conserve the chalk grassland.

**Remember to wear appropriate clothing and footwear and please follow the Country Code**

**This walk can be found on OS Explorer 137 starting at GR TQ 142 504**