

Tweseldown and Brock's Hill

A very easy walk around Brock's Hill heathland, then a loop around the old Tweseldown racecourse, now an equestrian centre and walking through its protected heath.

Start at the public (MOD) car park OS Map ref. SU827526. This is just north of The Forrester's pub (same side) on the Aldershot Road, pub postcode is GU52 9EP. (You could ask there and use their car park?) Directly across the road from the car park I suggest there is a narrow opening onto a path (Ignore all the major paths and tracks on the side where you park – they're for another day!) This path winds through some young willow trees and clumps of pendulous sedge. The path is obvious here so follow it past most of the woodland on your left until you reach a slightly hidden wooden kiss gate on your left. Enter Brock's Hill here. Follow the narrow path onto the heath, there is gorse, heather and flowers here and in season butterflies and dragonflies to be found.

This path soon reaches an angled T junction. Turn left and then take the path to the left which is less worn – it's not a big problem if you miss it. Either way after passing more heathland you meet a strong wide vehicle track. I suggest a short diversion turning left here to quietly check a small pond. You will soon see a ditch appear on your right and then a deep, narrow sandy coloured path on your right, well worn by animal traffic going to the pond. If you go too far on the track you meet a gate so just turn around. (Note: this gate is locked on occasions and leads to miles of heathland that could be explored. I have excluded it from this walk due to uncertainty about access dates and times). Have a quick look at the pond, there might be water birds, but few will use such a small amount of water, or look for flowering plants, dragonflies, butterflies and other birdlife in the trees and shrubs nearby. After this quick look turn back on the track and follow it keeping left around the foot of Brocks Hill. In October I found holly bushes full of redwings eating the berries. They may visit again but they can strip trees of berries very quickly! Soon the track reaches a stile and cattle grid so exit here and turn left.

This is nice and open but soon the woodland starts on the left and keep on the path that veers into it on the left keeping left of the Esso pipeline sign. After a short way you should see a metal kiss gate onto Tweseldown. You may encounter horses so keep dogs under close control. Turn left and follow the grass track all the way along the tree line to the corner and turn right. Now follow the grassy edge towards the gentle hill and look for some water features (ponds) on your right – you will also see a jump that is the closest to the edge of the grass area. You never know there might be some ducks resting on the ponds there. Turn right here and head in this general direction across the heathland. Be aware, horses are around doing equestrian activities and they pay for the privilege so keep your eyes open and wait for them to pass. This is a permissive route and not a public footpath. So, please take care.

There are many paths across the heath and you can take any that you like. If you keep just to the right of the tower at the top of the hill you should see some of the best of the heath. Linnets were in flocks in autumn and could be heard with their lovely twittering songs as they flew from place to place. Buzzards and Red Kites are also very likely to be seen and heard over the open ground.

After crossing the hill you will probably descend gently through the open woodland, possibly crossing the odd single string fence or two (there to identify jumping courses) to the border tree line below. Here you need to look for the metal kiss gate where you entered. There is only one kiss gate here so you can't go wrong. If you see a big propped up old oak tree trunk laying on its side, you will need to turn right and follow the woodland edge. The gate is found on your left after the hedgerow starts on the right of where you are walking.

Exit the gate, turn right and return the way you came but you keep the cattle grid on your right and go straight on. There are short routes into the woodland on the left if you still want to explore (fabulous for fungi) but just keep in the same direction and you will reach the pendulous sedge and the road. Now, its decision time to go to the pub or go home 😊