

Lightwater Country Park, High Curley and Brentmoor Heath

Although this walk has some roadside walking it includes a lovely mix of views and habitats on generally excellent paths. The only drawback for some may be the short, steep hill up to High Curley but it's worth it for the views from the top!

Enter Lightwater Country Park, Postcode GU18 5RG

<https://w3w.co/jeering.princes.backtrack> via The Avenue and pass the pond, and café/visitor centre on your right then turn right and find a parking space. There are toilets nearby.

1. Return to the park entrance on foot via the café and woodland or the road to the pond. The pond always has birds on it, from ducks to geese and black-headed gulls or lesser black-backed gull. Take the path nearest to the entrance along the edge of the pond, it's broad and very well used. Carry on through the trees without turning and take a look at the end of the second pond as you can expect some water birds to be present there. Coot, moorhen and mallard are very likely. After looking here take the path to the left
2. This path leads to the bigger Hammond's Pond, much less disturbed and more natural than the others. There will be yellow water-lilies in the summer months, dragonflies, butterflies and birds in the trees and on the water. Skirt the pond a little but head out of the back, on the main path, beyond the fishing platforms and it leads to a fenced path where you should turn right. Now, on your left is an enclosure used for the goats that graze on the heath and help manage the unwanted growth. If successful they will allow the heather to flourish. At the end of this path turn left. Along here there will be flowers, butterflies and birds singing at the right time of year. Listen and look for birds all year though, robins, dunnocks, wrens and blackbirds are always there, maybe chaffinch, bullfinch and chiffchaff will be seen. The path opens out into the heath, to the sound of the motorway on your right. If you block out the sound this is a pleasant walk along the edge of the heath. Pass the hole on the right that used to be a bridge heading over to Bagshot. (Hopefully, this will be replaced before long). The heath gets better in quality as you go and you are along a mainly silver birch lined path. As the wide path turns into the heath continue on this. I spent some time looking at butterflies along this path, mainly holly blue but on the heath you may find silver-studded blue in June or July. Keep on the same path until you meet a crossroads.
3. Cross over heading in the same direction and start to climb the slope which soon becomes a hill. Go up the steps on the left to High Curley. Enjoy the views and the sign to point out the places you can see on a clear day. Ascot racecourse is one of the easiest to spot. Next, turn around and walk out along the straight path in front of you. After the gorse on your left, trees mainly oak and scots pine line the path. Continue past some short posts in the ground and signs of the military training area. This is a public bridle way. Reach the gravel surface and the path splits. Take the widest one which is the right hand option. Continue on the same path past a metal sign post with no sign. You soon cross a wide vehicle track but do not lose faith and continue on the same path through the trees. Soon reach a short signpost with bridleway signs surrounded by small stones.

4. Turn sharp left along the bridlepath still between the trees. Cross another vehicle track and then after that angle left on the path. There will be a few bridleway signs appearing as you wind through the trees and reach another vehicle track. Cross the track at the bridleway sign and follow the path down the hill. This path is lined with bracken and small trees of a variety of species and tall trees leading to a crossroads. Cross straight over and just after the crossroads you may see a benchmark stone. These stones are placed where heights above sea level have been determined and are used for measuring the elevation of topographical points. The last part of this walk to the Red Road is straight ahead with a tiny diversion onto a footpath (actually a vehicle track) until you reach the road.
5. At Red Road look across for a wooden gate on the other side. Cross when safe. Follow this path now turning quickly left at the first path junction. Over to your right past the pylons is the area known as Purbright Ranges. Miles of relatively undisturbed heathland used by the military. Continue on your path and stay in the same direction despite small paths leading you in other ways. You will pass through a tunnel of tall gorse, then you will see bracken and open heath on your right. Watch for birds like stonechats that perch up on the gorse. You will meet a wide track, recently dug up and relaid for the Southampton to London Esso pipeline. Turn left and continue on this track, parallel with the road and then bending to the right. To your right is Folly Bog, a place where Surrey Wildlife Trust banded galloway cattle may be seen when put there for grazing. Pass a cattle grid and another benchmark stone heading along the track, with a scattering of bluebells and primroses when I passed in April, keeping straight on to a T junction.
6. Turn right and ascend the gentle slope to the top. A gate in the fence on the right is just after a bridleway sign pointing left. Follow this bridleway. It passes through part of Brentmoor Heath a Special Protection Area heath (like Lightwater Country Park). Keep straight on in this nice open stretch where, in summer you may find nightjars at dusk, until you will find a large stone on your left with a sign 'No Digging' and a noticeboard. This tells you about a 4000 year old cemetery found here. Keep left where the path splits and on meeting the road turn right until you see the bridleway sign.
7. Turn left and cross the Red Road to another path just slightly to your left. This path now takes you straight across Turfhill Park, another heathland site, sadly the damage from wild fires shows on the burnt bark of the trees. Stay on this path until it splits, a dry looking route to the right to the trees and a greener more open route to the left. Take the left route and follow the path until it emerges onto Guildford Road.
8. Cross to the other side and turn left. Follow this roadside path until you pass a mini roundabout and it runs out. Cross to the left hand side and now, with a few roads to cross, you walk through the village of Lightwater past shops and Randall's cafe. Continue through Lightwater on the same roadside path. You will pass the Post Office on the other side. After crossing MacDonald Road then Catena Rise take the next narrow track on the left. This becomes a footpath and cuts the corner to The Avenue. Turn left at the end of the footpath and you will soon be back at Lightwater Country Park and your car.