Woodland, heathland, parkland & farmland set in the Surrey Hills

Walk in a historic rural estate of arboretums and rhododendron woods, complete with a gothic hilltop tower. Giant beech hedges line the holloways through ancient woodland. Perfumes from the woodland bluebells mix with scented azaleas. Evenings on the heath light-up with the eerie sound of churring Nightjars. The Tower crowns the highest point in South East England with sweeping views across a landscape of outstanding natural beauty.
Leith Hill Tower

Leith Hill’s majestic tower rises above the Hill to display sweeping views across fourteen counties. London landmarks to the north and the English Channel to the south are all visible through the telescope at the top.

This Georgian folly was built by Richard Hull of Leith Hill Place in the style of a gothic tower from the middle ages. Large amounts of sandstone were used for local track and wall construction and the many hollows on the nearby slopes are evidence that material was quarried on site.

Spectacular views seen from Leith Hill’s treeless summit made it a popular spot for Victorian picnics. Large numbers of day-trippers were ferried up the Hill by horse and carriage to feast around the Tower.

Richard Hull was buried beneath the Tower and his remains were found during a recent excavation of the Towers foundations.

The Tower became a National Trust property in 1923 and still attracts visitors from across the country. It is also a focal point for events and activities enjoyed by groups and families.

Leith Hill Place

This 17th-century Georgian house sits quietly among the rolling parkland and beautiful woodland.

Created by General John Folliot, the lower Leith Hill Estate grew to become a landscape of natural splendour and includes a Ha-Ha, Lime Avenue and extensive tree planting.

The country’s most influential families have lived at Leith Hill Place. Their lineage includes the names Wedgwood and Vaughan Williams that are now woven into the property’s history.

A close relative of the Wedgwood family, Charles Darwin frequently stayed at Leith Hill Place. While at the property, he conducted research around the estate and his ‘worm-stone’ still sits within the grounds today.

The composer, Ralph Vaughan Williams was the last of the family to live here. He gave the property to the National Trust in 1944.

Leith Hill Place can be seen along the route of the circular woodland trail. Included on this trail are General Folliot’s parkland and Darwin’s ‘worm-stone’.

Central London    Canary Wharf    Reigate masts    Gatwick Airport

Leith Hill Tower 360° Panorama The view from the battlements
Rhododendron Wood

This beautiful shaded, formally planted landscape provides a tranquil place for people to relax among the scented blooms.

Created by Caroline Wedgwood, the sister of naturalist Charles Darwin, the Wood provides a colourful vista when seen from Leith Hill Place.

The collection of towering specimen trees include Redwoods to provide the shade needed for the Rhododendrons and Azaleas that line the serpentine paths. It may also contain some of the first rhododendrons introduced into the country.

Sadly some of the trees and shrubs were lost during The Great Storm in 1987. Extensive replanting, thinning and aftercare has now restored the damaged parts of the Wood to their former glory.

Open throughout the year, the Wood has blooms that are at their best from early spring to summer. The Rhododendron Wood can also be seen as part of the self-guided, woodland trail.

Habitat and wildlife

A sea of bluebells and stunning rhododendron displays announce the start of the year. Animal activity builds until a glimpse of nesting birds, a Roe Deer fawn or a Badger cub says it’s spring.

Snakes slither and dragonflies hover around the bilberry, gorse and heather on the sandy heathland. The Yellowhammer sings in the hedgerows and summer Swallows return to make nests around the farm. Woodland fungi burst into life. Crossbills fly high above the trees searching out conifer cones to raid for seed as Barn Owls hunt at night, across the grassland, listening for life beneath the autumn leaf litter.

Eventually, snow tops the hill and covers the surrounding landscape. Mixed flocks of birds search for food alongside fresh winter arrivals, the Roe Deer herd together and the Badgers rest securely in their setts. There are marked, circular trails to guide you through the variety of habitats at Leith Hill. Take time to visit the ponds, springs, quarries and coppices also to be found on your walk.
Events
A broad range of events for people of all ages, will keep you entertained throughout the year. Why not try your hand at greenwood crafts, walk with the rangers or bring your children to a teddy bears’ picnic.

For a list of current and future events at Leith Hill, please visit our website.

Activities
- Walk the Greensand Way
- Cycle and ride the many bridleways
- Watch out for wildlife
- Relax in the Rhododendron Wood
- Picnic at the Tower

Join in
There are hundreds of ways you can join in, including practical conservation, surveying, assisting with educational visits or leading guided walks.

If you are interested in volunteering or want to find out how you can join in, please contact the Leith Hill office.

Learning
We provide exceptional opportunities to learn and play in safe but exciting surroundings that can support the teaching of the national curriculum for all ages. From a children’s bee garden to a teenage ramble, if you are interested in our educational opportunities, please contact the Leith Hill office.

Henman Bunkhouse
Located in Broadmoor, Henman Bunkhouse provides residential accommodation for National Trust volunteers, corporate groups, recreational groups and family holidays. It is fully equipped and can sleep 16 people. For more information contact the office or visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk

(Clockwise from top) Teddy Bears’ Picnic, archive image of Victorian day-trippers, outdoor classroom, Henman Bunkhouse
Finding your way around the Leith Hill Estate

Leith Hill is crossed by a number of footpaths and bridleways that allow you to explore the surrounding landscape. Ordinance Survey Map ‘OS Explorers Map: 146 – Dorking, Box Hill & Reigate’ and ‘OS Landranger Map: 187 – Dorking, Reigate & Crawley’ will show all the available routes in the area.

If you prefer, here are 4 waymarked nature trails that pass through or near several car parks:

- **The Woodland Trail** (orange)
The woodland trail offers a lovely walk at all times of year with autumn being particularly stunning due to the turning colours of the trees. Graded as ‘easy’, the 2.5 miles long route does have some steep parts and should take up to 2 hours. It is our longest trail and will take you through parts of the original estate and woodland.

- **The Etherley Farm Loop** (purple)
The loop will add an additional 1.5 miles to the woodland trail, taking you across a landscape of farmland and parkland. This hour long walk is graded as ‘easy’ but can become very muddy underfoot, if wet.

- **The Heathland Trail** (green)
The heathland trail takes you on a journey through the high, sandy, open heath, but deforestation after the first world war changed the area to an open landscape of heather, bracken, bilberry, gorse, pine and birch.

- **Frank’s Walk** (pink)
This walk guides you to the historic arboretum, through the conifer avenue and into Frank’s Wood with its spectacular spring display of bluebells. Graded as ‘easy’ the walk is our shortest at 1 mile long and should take around an hour to complete. The trail will take you through a landscape of heather, bracken, bilberry, gorse, pine and birch.

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**Greensand Way**
The Greensand Way is a long distance walking route that starts in Haslemere, Surrey and ends at Hamstreet, Kent. It follows the Greensand Ridge along the Surrey Hills and crosses Leith Hill. If you would like to know more and download maps, please visit Surrey County Council’s website.

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**What to look out for**

- **Greensand Way**
An extensive formal garden was once a notable feature of the estate. A decorative Lime Avenue and a walled garden which provided a plentiful supply of fruit and vegetables for Leith Hill Place.

- **Hazard coppice**
As well as providing pea and bean sticks, the cut shoots of the hazel are split then woven into fencing panels lesson as hedges. The hazel groves are cut on a six to seven year cycle, providing a diverse range of habitats for a variety of wildlife.

- **Etherley Farm**
Sympathetic management of the farmland provides a pastoral landscape that is perfect for wildlife. Animals graze the fields, hedgerows have been replanted and hay meadows have been reinstated to encourage farmland birds such as Skylarks and Barn Owls.

- **Parkland**
Mature parkland trees provide a home for a rich variety of native wildlife, including Little Owls, bats, rare lichens and many deadwood insects such as Stag Bealts.

- **Darwin’s wormstone**
Here lies one of Charles Darwin’s worm stones. The famous naturalist made numerous trips to Leith Hill conducting research around its source with his son, Frank. Darwin studied how worm casts eventually harden into stones that lie on the surface of the ground.

- **Tillingbourne source**
Natural spring rises from the Tillingbourne Stream that flows towards Albury, on through Gomshall to Albury and joins the River Way at Guildford. It’s flow was harnessed in past centuries to power local industry such as Shalford Mill.

- **Heathland**
Duke’s Warren was once part of the extensive woodland that surrounds the heath, but deforestation after the first world war changed the area to an open landscape of heather, bracken, bilberry and gorse with stands of pine and birch.

The Warren now supports communities of Nightjars, Woodparks and other heathland specialists.

- **Boundary banks**
Boundaries banks hold many of the holloways in the surrounding landscape. Originally planted to protect plantations from deer and grazing livestock, they were abandoned for many decades and have since grown to an enormous size.

- **Coldharbour Cricket Pitch**
Located below the summit of Leith Hill, Coldharbour Cricket Pitch is thought to be the highest cricket pitch in south-east England. The trees that form the wicket were transplanted from the original pitch in the heart of Coldharbour during the 1940s.

- **Stone pits**
A large sandstone was used in the area to build boundary walls and surface tracks. Quarree sandstone until the early part of the last century has left the woodland around Leith Hill pitted with hollows and gullies.

- **Dakota crash**
In winter 1944, four US airforce Douglas Dakota aircraft crashed into the hillsides above Mouses Wood, with no survivors. The first crash saw two aircraft hit the ridge whilst a third belly-flopped onto Duke’s Warren. A few weeks later, tragedy struck again when another Dakota crashed in almost exactly the same place.

- **Piggot-Brown gate**
Moses Wood was given to the National Trust by Lady Piggot-Brown in memory of her son who was killed in action on Christmas Day, 1942. A plaque attached to the gate commemorates his life.

- **Frank’s Wood**
Named after National Trust woodsman, Frank Longhurst, the oak trees were planted in 1949. He planted these access for each hole. One for the price. One to fail, and, one to give into a beautiful task. In spring the woodland floor is covered with bluebells.
How to get there?

By road: Leith Hill is sign posted from the A25 at Wotton and from the A29 at Ockley.

There are 5 main car parks located at the foot of Leith Hill:

- **Starveall Corner** (non NT) on Leith Hill Lane (Grid ref. TQ131433) is about 20 minutes walk from the Tower, with slight gradient.

- **Rhododendron Wood** (NT) off Tanhurst Lane (Grid ref. TQ132428) is about 30 minutes walk from the Tower, with some steeper slopes.

- **Windy Gap** (NT and non NT) on Abinger Lane (Grid ref. TQ139429) is about 10 minutes walk from the Tower, with a very steep climb up steps.

- **Landslip** (NT) on Abinger Lane (Grid ref. TQ147433) is about 30 minutes walk from the Tower, with some steep slopes.

- **Etherley Copse** (NT) on Forest Green Road (Grid ref. TQ126416) for access to the southern lower wooded slopes, some steep paths.

The route between each car park and the Tower is clearly signposted.

Due to rough footpaths, steps and hilly terrain most of Leith Hill is unsuitable for wheelchair access. However, there is limited access to the upper parts of the Rhododendron Wood. Contact the office for more information and help about disabled access.

The Leith Hill Office

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