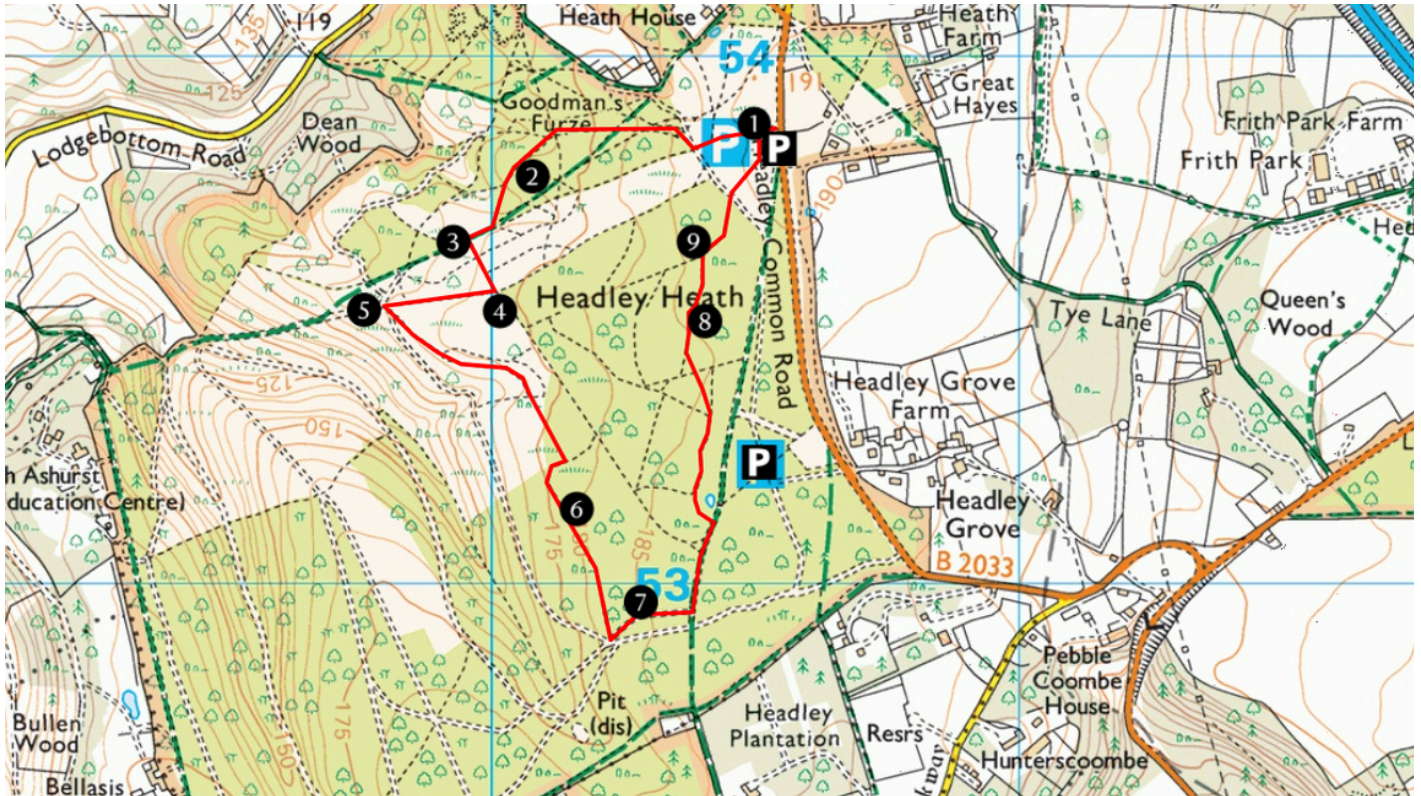


SURREY

Headley Heath military history trail

Take this circular walk over the heath to discover Headley Heath's military past and how it has shaped the landscape today. This circular trail follows white-topped posts and black directional arrows and takes around an hour to complete. Along the route you'll find a series of QR codes — scan these with your phone to hear short audio clips that explain each site's significance.



Information

Address: Headley Heath main car park, Headley Common Road, Headley Heath KT18 6NN.

Activity: Walking

Moderate

Not suitable for dogs: Dogs are welcome, but please keep them on a lead around cattle and during ground-nesting bird season.

Full trail: Miles: 2 miles (km: NaN)

Duration:

Terrain

This is a moderate walk over some uneven terrain of open heathland, woodland and chalk downland with several slopes. Some of the paths can become very muddy in wet weather.

Total stages: 9

Start point: Headley Heath main car park, KT18 6NN

1. You'll find the first QR code in the grassy area right by the car park. Scan this for an introduction to the trail. Then follow the arrow away from the road, straight across the grassy area. In front of you will be a gate. Don't go through this one, but turn right and pass through the next gate ahead on your left. Almost immediately, you'll come to a fork, bear left following the trail arrows. Continue down a gentle slope and where the paths cross, continue straight ahead. Bear left, down the slope and up the other side continuing to follow the arrows. At the top turn left to reach the second QR code.
2. You're now standing at the location of a former zig-zag trench system, the outline of which can be seen if you look closely. It's likely that rookie soldiers were taught the basics here and told to head off elsewhere on the heath and practice digging what they'd learned. Scan the QR code to find out more. Now, retrace your steps back to the previous post and continue left, into a dip and up the other side, to join a main path. Turn left at the next arrow in front of an oak tree. You'll find yourself at the third QR code.
3. This area is dominated by a series of earthworks which now show as humps and dips in the landscape, as the soldiers were learning how to dig different trench systems. Can you see the flat area? This is known as the Pyramids because barrels of fuel were stored here in pyramidal mounds. It was the name given to the area by the boys who used to play on it during the war and the name has stuck ever since. Now, continue straight ahead, about 50m until you come to the next post with the fourth QR code.
4. You're now at the junction of two roads built by the Canadian soldiers. The roads have been constructed using techniques very similar to those used by Romans thousands of years ago - a raised hardened centre with drainage ditches at either side. Follow the arrow and turn right, walking down the main road with the woodland on your left. When you reach the views across the valley, you'll find the fifth QR code.

5. These deep, dry valleys that you can see from this point were formed just after the last Ice Age. At this point too the geology changes, from acidic heathland containing sand and stones to chalk grassland with a much richer layer of flora. This gave the Canadian soldiers the chance to use their machines on steeply sloping land. Continue to follow the arrows and take the left hand path along the top of the ridge. As you come to the next junction in the woods, continue straight on and then at the next junction turn right, following the arrows. Follow the path through the heathland until you reach the sixth QR code.
6. This area is called Canada Heath to remember the soldiers who trained here. During clearance work by volunteers and staff, we unearthed deep parallel trenches. These could have been anti-invasion features which would have made landing light aircraft very difficult. Continue to follow the arrows. At the next junction, where six paths meet, take the first path on the left, following the arrow. Shortly, you'll find the seventh QR code on your left.
7. Can you see part of a circular embankment? This was dug to encircle a large gun and its crew. We think this was for training purposes - there are three more similar features on the heath. Continue to follow the arrows, bearing left at the next junction and continuing along the wide path. This can get very muddy during wet weather. At the next junction turn left, following the arrows. The pond, protected by a dead-hedge, will be on your right. Continue along the grassy path until you reach the eighth QR code.
8. On this spot was a small fenced-off compound which was staffed by the Royal Air Force. There was a Pundit Beacon here and also a shed for the operators to shelter in. Continue to follow the arrows straight ahead, turning right at the next junction to find the ninth QR code.
9. Close to this site in the early hours of 2 September, 1941 a Wellington bomber crash landed after returning from a raid over Germany. Fortunately, all the crew survived. Incidentally, the crew were discovered by Sir Malcolm Campbell, who lived at nearby Headley Hall. This is the last point on the trail. To return to the starting point, follow the arrows taking the main path until you reach the gate which leads to the main car park.

End point: Headley Heath main car park, grid ref: TQ193546
