



Waggoners Wells and Ludshott Common

Distance 14½km=9 miles or 10km=6½ miles easy walking

Region: Hampshire

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Refreshments: picnic or later in Grayshott

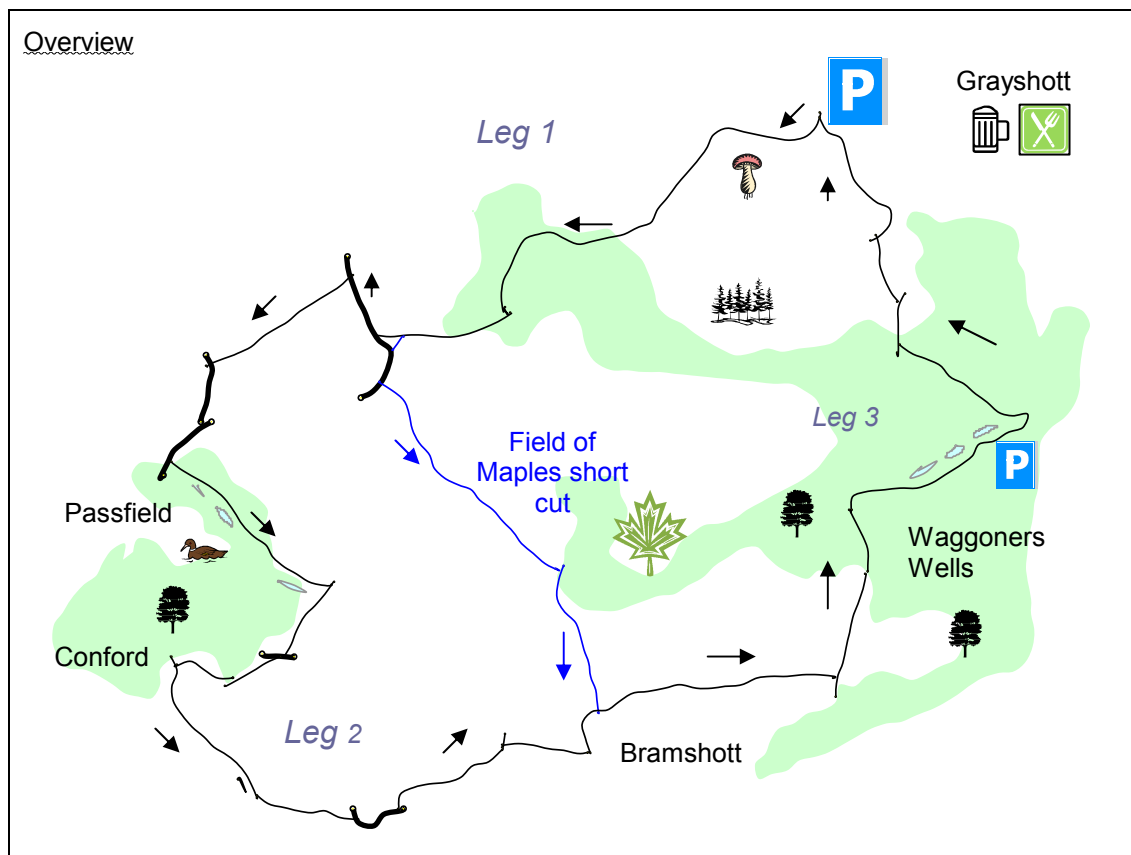
Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere)

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Lakes, villages, woodland, heath

In Brief

Lakes strung like a necklace; a glistening heath strewn with crimson toadstools in autumn; majestic limes and maples; three historic villages. There is no other walk quite like this.



This part of East Hampshire is easily accessible from the London area, being just south of Hindhead on the A3 road. Waggoners Wells is a famous beauty spot, popular with weekend families but large enough to absorb them all, whilst Ludshott Common is one of the largest areas of heathland in the South East.



The walk can be shortened by taking the **Field of Maples** short cut, although this omits the pretty villages.



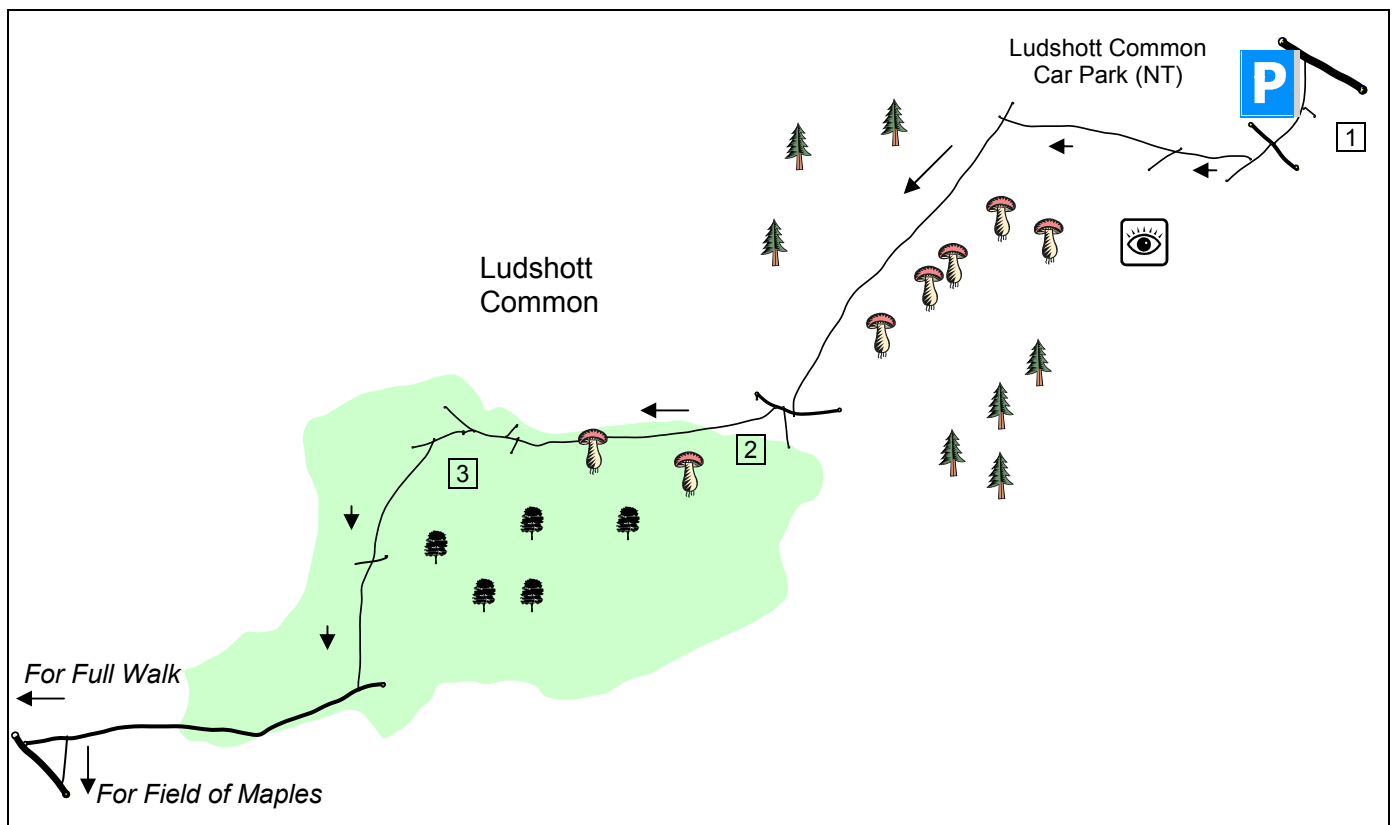
There are no nettles and the conditions underfoot are generally dry. Dogs are welcome. The stile count is low.



The walk begins at the **National Trust Ludshott Common** car park (grid ref 852358, postcode GU26 6JG) in Hampshire, off the B3002 road from Hindhead, Surrey. For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). Another possible starting point is the Waggoner's Wells car park.

The Walk

Leg 1: Ludshott Common to Gentles Lane 3km=2 miles



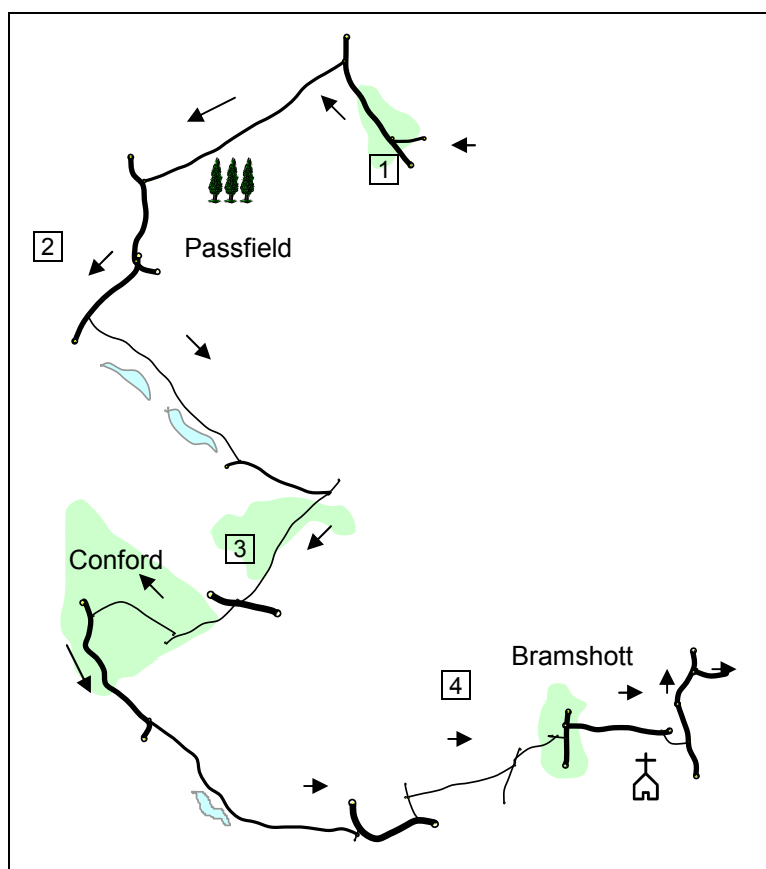
- 1 Leave by the back of the car park past the noticeboard on a broad sandy track. In 30m, you reach the heath by a rustic bench with terrific views south to Butser Hill (with the aerial) and beyond. Cross straight over the crossing track to another sandy track. In 20m, at a fork of two grassy paths, choose the **right** fork. In less than 100m, at another fork, take the **right** fork, really straight on. *In autumn the red toadstools (fly agaric) are found everywhere on the heath and you should see them aplenty.* The path descends to a crossing path. Turn **left** here, slightly downhill, avoiding the path ahead that goes up the slope. Keep to the fairly straight path avoiding all turnings off. *Parallel on the right you may observe an overgrown sunken, possibly ancient, track.* The path ends at a T-junction. Turn **right** at the T-junction and ignore a wide path immediately left.
- 2 In 15m, fork **left** on a narrow level sandy path, thus leaving the main path that carries on uphill. (The paths on Ludshott Common are extremely complex and there are many possible routes. The route chosen here may

not be the simplest, but it makes a virtue of keeping to level ground whilst showing you the very best features of the common.) You pass some beautiful occasional pine trees and reach a junction of paths. Go straight ahead here over a crossing path. In 20m, fork **left**, thus avoiding a rather steep path up a slope on the right. In 40m, turn **left** on a path that goes over a remnant of an old bridge or dam.

- 3 In 20m, at a grassy T-junction, turn **right**. In 10m, fork **left**, following some overhead wires uphill. In 80m, you reach a blue-topped post, one of several indicating a rider's path. Here fork **left** away from the wires on a wide path through the woods. Stay on the main level path, avoiding minor side paths, until you reach another blue-topped post. Immediately veer **left** on a path coming from the right and, in 10m, turn **right** on a path uphill, thus regaining your original direction. As the path curves right, a narrow path joins from the left. The path ends at a T-junction with a very wide bridleway. You have reached the far edge of the Common. Turn **right** on the bridleway. This patch is often muddy, but you really need not worry because in just a few metres the mud will clear completely. You have meadows on the left and soon on the right too. Nearly 500m after joining this path, you come to a major fork.

Decision point. If you would like to take a shorter route to Waggoners Wells, go to near the end of the text and follow the section called the **Field of Maples**. You will however miss the three attractive villages. For the **full walk**, continue with the next leg.

Leg 2: A Village Round 6½km=4 miles



- 1 Turn **right** at the fork and continue until you join a lane (Gentles Lane) coming from the left. Follow the road past High Hurlands Home and, just

after *Hurlands* itself, turn sharp **left** on a bridleway marked *Harambee*. Follow the track, first past entrances to properties, then past meadows and a line of poplars and finally down to a road by *Tilburys* with its well-groomed hedge. Turn **left** on the road, going past oasthouses on your right. *Oast houses, used for drying hops, are mainly associated with Kent, but they do in fact appear in other home counties and as far north as Worcestershire.* At a road junction, veer **right** in the direction *Whitehill, Liphook*. Traverse the deceptively sleepy village of Passfield, passing *The Old Forge* and other witnesses to rural life.

- 2 Just before a bridge visible ahead, turn **left** on a bridleway (a sign says *No Fishing*). On your right is one of a line of lakes and water meadows that are a feature of this area. (Don't worry about the sign that says *Private Property Keep Out*: it refers to the meadows, not the bridleway.) At a 4-way fingerpost by a house, go straight on. (As a small diversion, it is worth turning right a few paces down to the waterside where the water fowl, mallards, swans and coots, can be observed close up.) *Over on your right are the fine buildings of Passfield Manor.* Continue along a lovely tree-lined drive. At the end of the drive, by a fence, turn sharp **right** on a track, crossing the stream via an old bridge and passing through woodland. The track eventually joins a drive and meets a lane. Turn **right** and almost immediately come to a T-junction with a main road.

- 3 Go straight over the main road, a fraction right, onto a footpath by a National Trust sign for Passfield Common. In just over 100m, turn **right** before an oak tree across the luminous centre of the common. On the other side, you reach a tree line. Fork left here on a narrow path that skirts the trees and finally leads out to the hamlet of Conford.

Conford has an extraordinary history. It was settled by a small group of early "squatters" after the wars with Napoleon (the early 1800s). As they were deep in the woods, they managed to live here undetected and undisturbed. They had their own bakery, grocer and school, now all gone. Mary Tyfield's books "Conford from Domesday to Victoria" and "Conford from Victoria to the Millennium" are a social history of the hamlet. (Tel: 01428-751258/751433 for more details.) Conford Moor, where most of the houses are, is owned by the National Trust.

Turn left through the hamlet, passing the village hall (the old school). When the lane bends right after the last house, leave it by continuing straight ahead on a tarmac bridleway. Ignore a footpath right at a fingerpost. Once again, you have a long lake and water meadows on your right. You pass Conford Park Barn, about 250 years old, usually with fluttering white doves. The bridleway ends at a tarmac drive. Turn **left** here, immediately meeting a main road, the B3004. Turn **right** on the road.

- 4 Go past houses, and continue to a right bend. Cross the road carefully and turn **left** on a footpath by a metal gate beside fields. After the first field on the right, turn **right** along its other edge. Officially, the path goes over a stile by a metal gate into a farmyard. However, most walkers veer right and left over the grass in front of a barn to avoid the stile. Keep ahead on a concrete track, ignoring a footpath left. After a brick shed, go half-**left** across the grass, as signed, to meet a wonderful lime avenue. Cross the avenue and negotiate a stile, the corner of a meadow, another stile, another meadow that is often the home to highland cattle and shetland ponies, and a metal gate where you turn **right** on a drive. Go over a bridge across a lively stream, go through a metal swing-gate and turn **left** on a

lane. After a short distance, you meet a minor road, Church Lane. Turn **right** here. This deeply sunken lane takes you to steps where you can turn right up to the churchyard of Bramshott Church of St Mary the Virgin.

Bramshott is said to be the most haunted village in England. Ghosts include a long-dead cat, a black pig, a grey lady, a ghostly horseman, a milkmaid and the invisible yet clearly audible procession of a horse and carriage down darkened sunken lanes. Boris Karloff, who played the Frankenstein monster among other movie freaks, died in Bramshott. It's said his ghost too walks the lanes. (Well, someone would be bound to say that.)

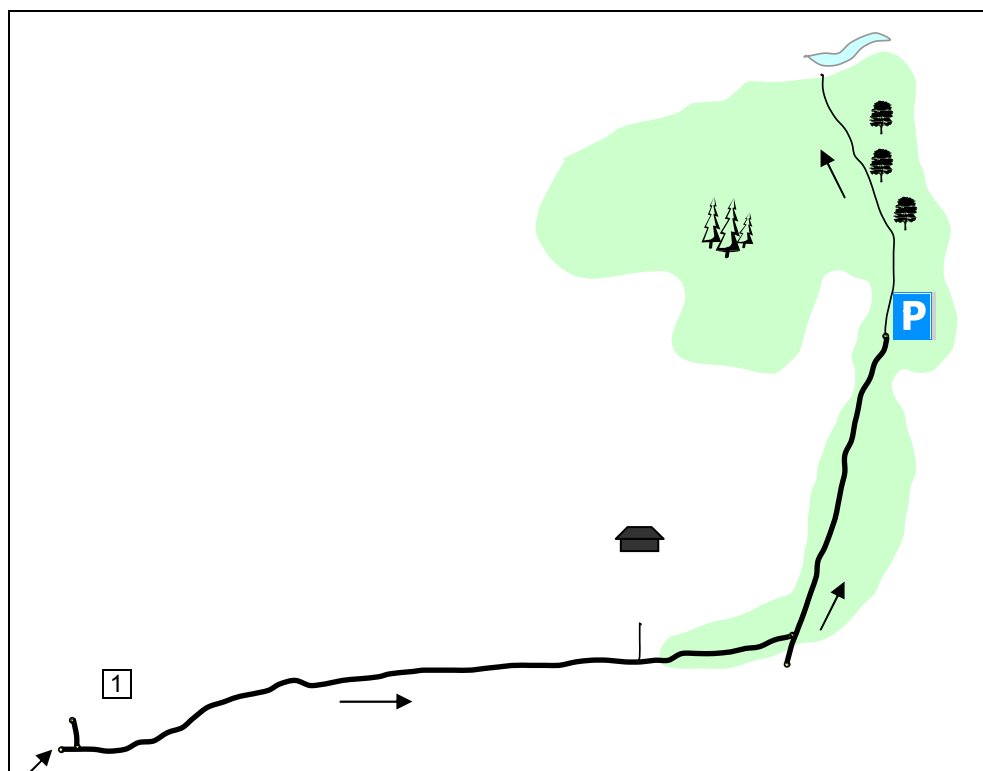
The church of St Mary's dates from AD 1220 and the chancel and tower are original. They are now in the centre of the church because the wide nave was added in 1872 at the western end. The church has many reminders of the Canadian Army who were based on nearby Bramshott Common during both World Wars and formed a close association with the village. In the churchyard are the graves of 318 Canadian servicemen and medical personnel who died here during the First World War, many from the influenza epidemic of 1918.

After the church, turn **left** on Rectory lane and stay on this lane as it bends right, ignoring all minor lanes off.

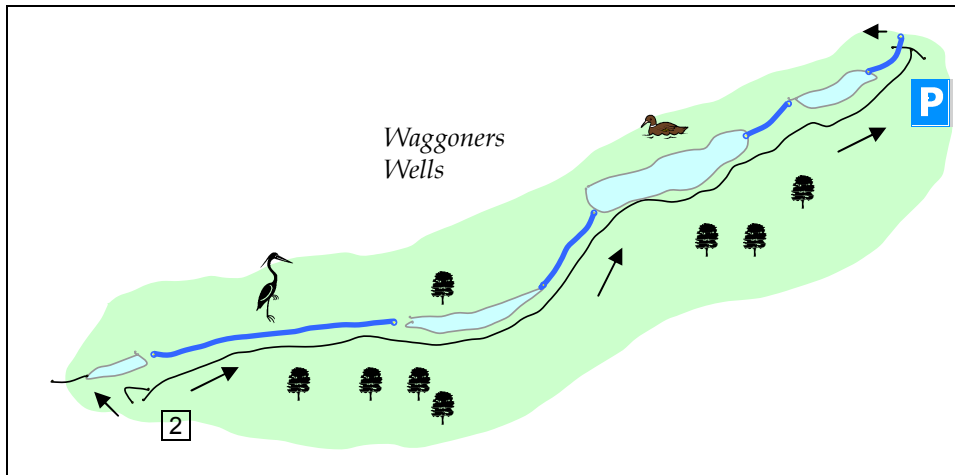
Here the Field of Maples short cut re-joins the main walk.

Leg 3: Return via Waggoners Wells 5km=3 miles

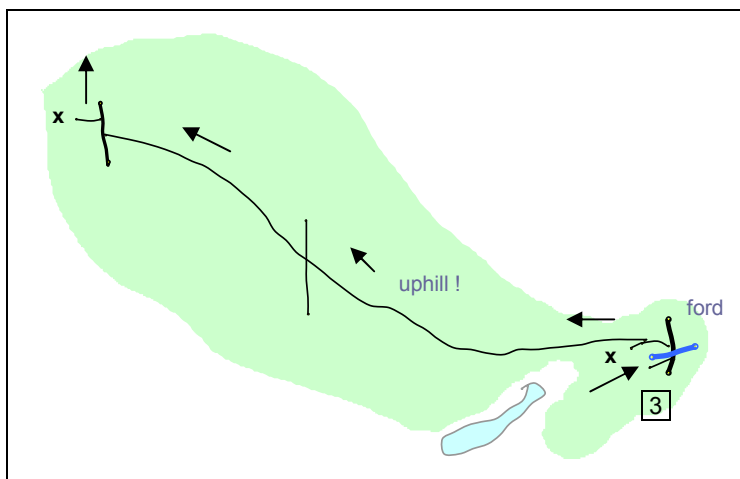
- 1 (Mini-maps now appear *after* each stage.) Stay on this deeply sunken lane for some distance. In about 900m, you pass the gatehouse of *Downlands House*. 250m further, you reach a T-junction. Turn **left**. In about 500m, you come to a car park. Go straight on through a metal barrier on a woodland path downhill. Keep to the main rather uneven path all the way down to the waterside where there is an MoD sign and a bridge.



- 2 There are several attractive walks around Waggoners Wells and you may prefer to find your own way and diverge from the text. Don't cross the bridge but turn sharp **right** up the bank, then immediately **left** at a fingerpost, so that you are walking parallel to the stream on your left. The path reaches the first lake. Stay on the right bank and, after a section of woodland, reach the second lake. After more woodland, you reach the third lake. This has an especially picturesque wooden bridge over the sluice. Stay on the right bank and soon pass a noticeboard and, up on the right, a car park (an alternative start).



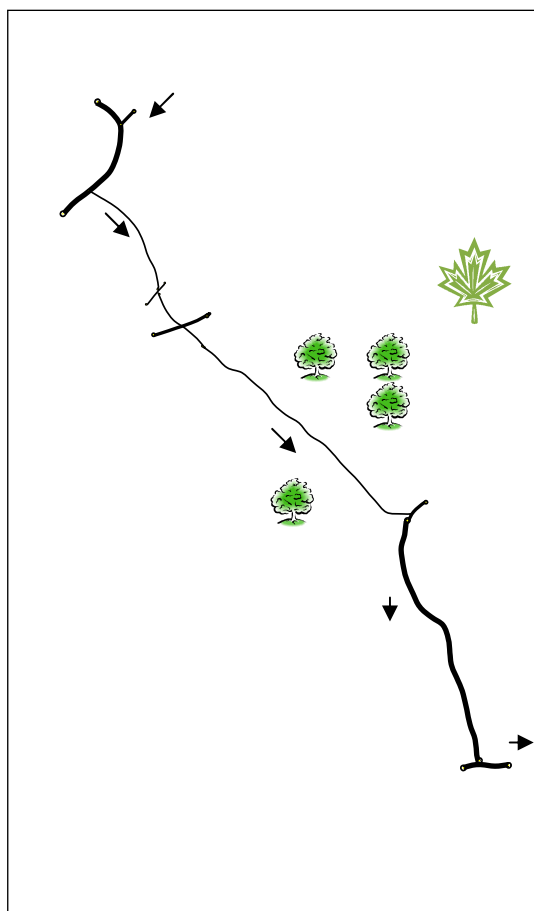
- 3 On meeting a tarmac lane coming from the car park, turn **left** on it and cross a ford, or the footbridge beside it. Just 10m after the ford, turn **left** on a marked path and immediately fork **right** uphill on a bridleway, going past a stone memorial on your left. After a modest climb, the path flattens out and, in about 100m, goes over a crossing path. In about another 200m, the path goes under wires and, in a further 80m, meets a junction with a crossing track. Turn **right** on the crossing track, ignoring the path immediately left.



The Field of Maples

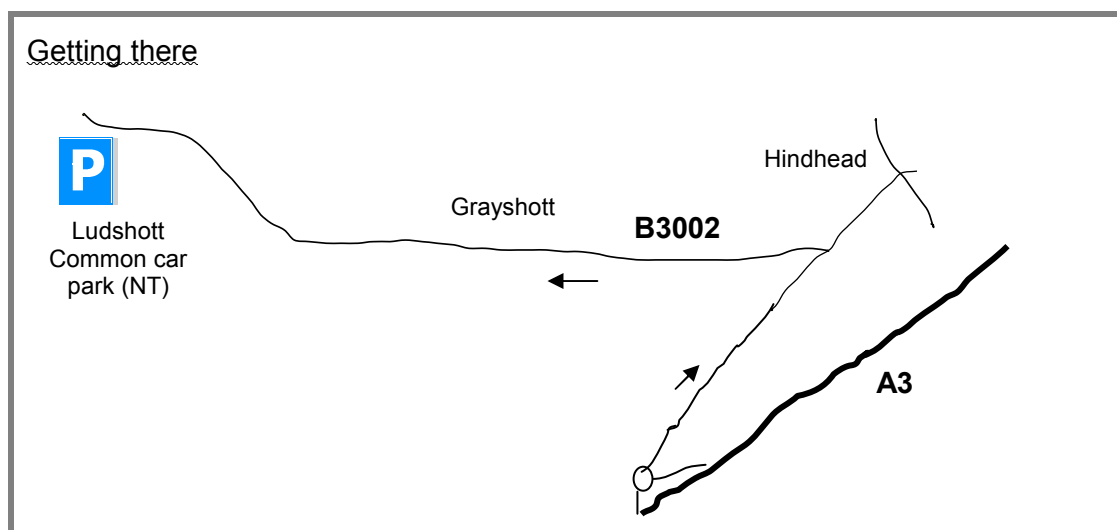
This section is for walkers who want to shorten the walk after Ludshott Common and go by a more direct route to Waggoners Wells.

Turn **left** at the fork. In under 100m, continue along a lane, Gentles Lane. In 200m, go **left** over a stile and along the right-hand side of a meadow, followed by another stile and meadow. Go over a stile to a track. Turn **right** on the track for just 15m before it bends left through an old coppice. Go over a wide gravel track into a small meadow. There is a ladder stile which is thankfully unneeded because there is a metal gate on the left. Stay on the right, going over two stiles, and then go along the left-hand side of a large meadow. *These meadows are beautifully adorned with huge maple trees that lord it over the landscape, recalling the link this parish has with the Canadians.* On the other side, go over a stile and down through a holly wood to a drive beside the sign for Ludshott Manor. Turn **right** here on a lane. This deeply sunken lane goes uphill and finishes at a T-junction opposite the driveway to *Bramshott Thatch*. Turn **left** on the lane, Rectory Lane (or, as a short diversion to visit the village and its church, turn right). You now join the main walk at **Leg 3**.



Getting there

To get to the National Trust **Ludshott Common** car park, take the **A3** and turn off, just south of the tunnel, at a sign for **Hindhead**. Before reaching the village, just before a filling station, turn **sharp left** onto the **B3002**, signposted *Grayshott*. The road bends right and then left and passes the Grayshott Spa on the left. The car park is a little further on the left, a total of 3½ km=2 miles from Hindhead.



By bus/train: bus 18 runs between Aldershot and Haslemere. Check the timetables.

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