



Blindley Heath: *Red Barn* pub walk

Distance: 5½ km=3½ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 6-jan-2020

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Last update: 27-feb-2023

Refreshments: Red Barn

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Green pastures, nature reserve, river, historic house, iconic pub

In Brief

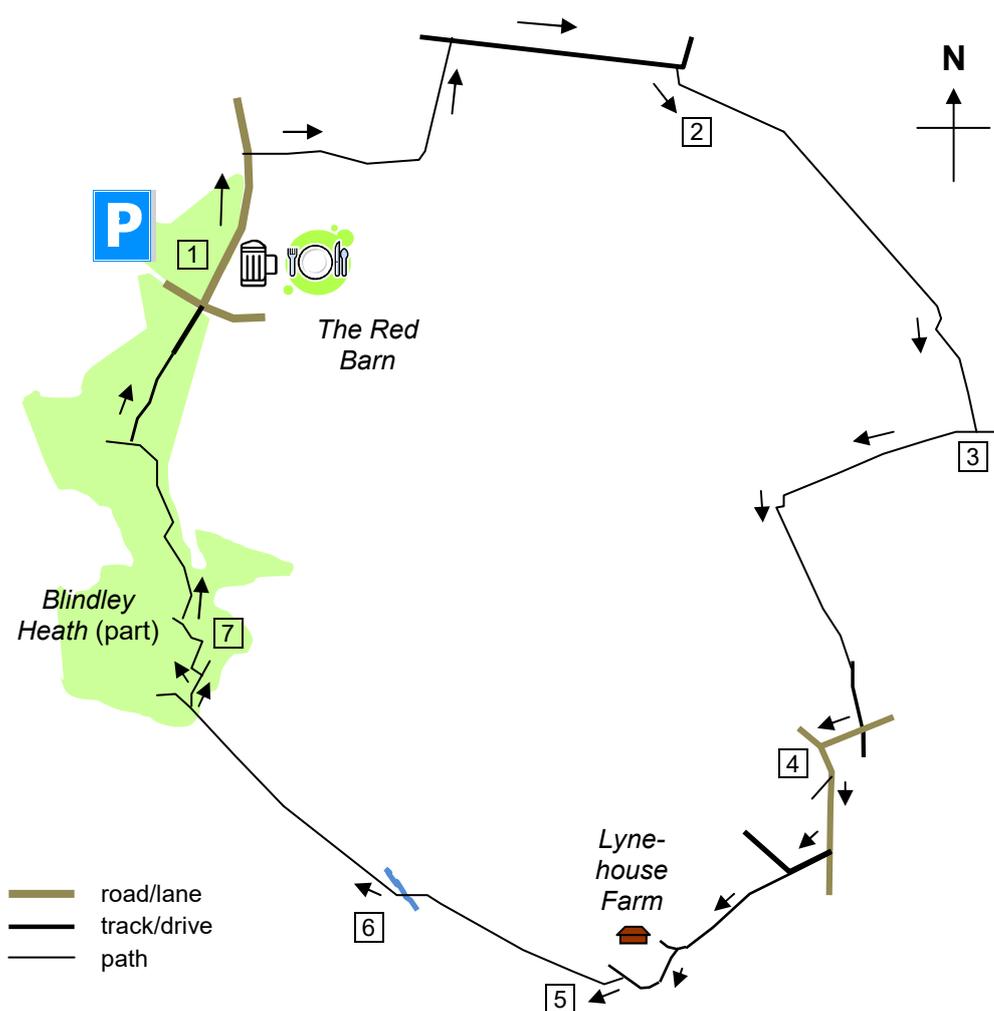
The original barn in the name of this suave country inn dates from the 1500s and the beamed interior has been retained with a wall of books and some plush seating. Much of the clientele come from the Lingfield racing set and from couples getting hitched, and the *Red Barn* is advertised as in Lingfield. But in fact the local village of Blindley Heath (named after the nature reserve, of which more later) is in the parish of Godstone. Beer is *Youngs*, including *Proper Job*, plus an array of gassy alternatives. The food may be worth trying, especially as there is always a chef's special is chalked up behind the long bar.



This walk is a gentle saunter through horse-riding country, with open green terrain and no ploughed fields. There were very few nettles and little undergrowth when this walk was researched in January, so shorts should be wearable. Boots are recommended, essential in winter, because of the patches of coarse terrain in the nature reserve. Unfortunately this walk is not suitable for your dog because of several dog-proof stiles and some sensitive farm land.

The walk begins near the *Red Barn* pub, in Blindley Heath, near Lingfield, Surrey, postcode **RH7 6LL**. Because of the moderate length, it is best to park just *outside* the pub: there is an off-road parking space just before the pub. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1** Beginning at the off-road parking space near the *Red Barn*, walk along the road, passing the pub on your right. *Note the warning sign “Swans Crossing” and “Tippywychett”, possibly the smallest house in the county.* After 200m beside the road, at a fingerpost, turn **right** over a 2-plank bridge and stile into a meadow. Follow a fence, then a hedge, on your left. When you reach a wire fence across your route, turn **left** over a stile into a sheep pasture. Go straight across the centre, heading for what appears to be a large wooden gate but is really a hurdle, on the other side. Go over a stile in the hurdle and turn **right** on a tarmac drive. You walk between some antique bollards and pass *Ardenrun Stables* on your left, complete with clock tower and bothy. Next on your left is historic *Moat Farm* with its lake and swans. Just before the drive bends left, go **right** over an unusual stile into a long wide belt of grass.
- 2** Turn **left** in the belt of grass and follow a line of newly-planted birches on your right. In 200m, go ahead over a stile into a large sheep pasture. Your route is now diagonally **right**, crossing the centre of the pasture midway. Aim for the right-hand end of a hedge in the distance. Go over a stile here into another meadow and turn **right** along the edge. Just before the corner, go **right** through a gap and keep **left** along the edge of the next pasture. Your path shortly diverges to the right across the centre, heading

for a large metal gate under some tall trees. Go through this heavy metal gate, over a concrete bridge and **right-left** on a narrow footpath. Shortly, you reach a 3-way fingerpost.

3 Turn **right** at the fingerpost through a small metal gate onto a narrow path between fenced meadows. After 350m this path ends at a junction of fields. Keep straight ahead here over a stile and turn **left** in the adjoining meadow. Your path is fenced off along the left-hand side of a horse pasture. (You may need to lift two insulated hooks: but they are not electric!) After a low metal gate, you come over a stile onto a fenced path near a horse exercise area. Sheds and cottages lead you to a dirt drive which leads out to a road. Ignoring a footpath straight ahead, turn **right** on the road to reach a T-junction very shortly.

4 Turn **left** at the T-junction and cross to a footway on the right-hand side. In 50m, ignore a footpath on your right. (It leads to a broken stile.) After less than 200m beside the road, turn **right** on Godstone Road, really a minor tarmac drive. Where the tarmac bends right, keep straight ahead on a concrete drive. You pass an angler's pond on your left and more ponds on your right as you approach the historic Tudor Grade-2-listed *Lynhouse Farm*. Before the concrete drive curves towards the house, take a **left** fork and follow a wide path which curves around the boundary of the property. In 120m, turn **left** over a stile.

5 You emerge through a modern kissing-gate into a large meadow, soon with great views ahead. Keep to the right-hand edge, following a tall wire fence on your right which conceals the large gardens of those new houses. After the last house and garden, your path continues dead straight towards a line of trees on the other side. In the far corner, you will find a 3-plank bridge leading to a stile. (In winter, you need to hop over a muddy stream, possibly aided by branches laid by previous walkers.) The stile leads into a large rough meadow.

6 Keep to the right-hand edge of the meadow. A long gated bridge leads into another meadow. The path now runs along the left-hand side to the far corner. Go over another stile beside a large metal gate onto a wide footpath. Almost immediately, just as the wide path begins to curve away to the left, leave the footpath by going **right** through a modern kissing-gate by a notice informing you that you are in the Blindley Heath Nature Reserve.

Blindley Heath is a rare example of damp grassland on Weald clay. It is termed "relict", meaning an ancient survivor from a once-greater expanse. It supports a number of rare plants and invertebrates, as well as protected species of reptiles, amphibians and (now scarce) nightingales. The reserve consists of an open area of grassland with a small area woodland, a brook and several ponds.

7 The route through the Heath is a little tricky and you may need to concentrate a little more for the next km or so. In only 30m, step to your **left** through a gap in the hedge over a tree trunk and keep **right** on a path in a grassy open space, parallel to the path you were on. (This is no longer necessary as the thorn trees that were blocking the path have been cut back: the path through the open space is still used by local walkers, but you can now stay on the original path.) Follow this winding path through tufty grass. (It may be a bit squelchy and you can straddle the worst of it if you have long legs.) Always keep in the same general direction. At the other side of the Nature Reserve, you pass under electricity lines and see a stile ahead under an oak tree. **Avoid** the stile and continue a little further till you see a modern

kissing-gate. Go **right** through this gate and keep **left** on a woodland path. (There is some mud here, again easy to straddle, but the terrain soon improves.) You pass a filmy pond on your right and reach a water trough. Here your path wheels left and reaches a junction with a concrete bridge on your right. Go **right** over a stile and over the bridge, on a wide path, passing the redbrick *Clacks*, following its dirt drive out to the road. The side road with the pub is straight over, passing the parking area where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Blindley Heath is on the A22 trunk road, between Godstone and East Grinstead. If coming from the London or M25 area, after going under the railway arch in Godstone South, go a further 2 miles till you meet traffic lights. Go **left** here, in the direction *Lingfield* (or **right** if coming from East Grinstead). In $\frac{1}{3}$ mile, turn **left** on Tandridge Lane and immediately park in a dirt strip on your right (right angles to the road, please!).

By bus/train: bus 315 from East Grinstead stops in Blindley Heath, close to the route. Check the timetables.

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