Chatley Heath and Mays Green

Distance: 8 km=5 miles  easy walking
Region: Surrey  Date written: 23-mar-2020
Author: Fusszweig
Refreshments: Ockham Bites
Maps: 145 (Guildford) & 146 (Dorking) but the map on page 2 should be enough

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Pinewoods, heath, historic tower, quiet lanes, meadows, woodland

In Brief

This walk may surprise seasoned walkers who know Wisley Common, because of its unusual route and its surprises along the way. The country is chiefly horse pastures, not far from the prosperous borough of Cobham. So there are hardly any ploughed fields and, as far as can be seen, no livestock larger than sheep. The route crosses the M25 motorway twice over pedestrian bridges, giving you an imperious feeling as you look down on the traffic, but the noise is not too obtrusive, making for a surprisingly peaceful ramble. An especially memorable aspect is the route across Chatley Heath, by an unusual approach, giving you some rare views.

There is very little undergrowth on this walk, so shorts are not a problem. Paths are mainly clear and well made, with one brief clumpy field and several sandy paths. There is very little road walking and the stiles should be manageable by your dog if he is not too large.

The walk begins at the Chatley Heath car park on Old Lane, just off the A3 trunk road. The Chatley Heath car park is the second car park on the left, shortly after the first (Boldermere) car park, nearest postcode KT11 1ND, what3words.com key: ///anyone.composers.idea. But you can equally well start at Boldermere, following the well-known signs to the Semaphore Tower and back across Chatley Heath, with the opportunity to have a snack at Ockham Bites. Both car parks levy a modest charge (no coins). You can park free on the roadside along the route, especially in Pointers Road where there are several dirt strips. However, please do not cut short your visit to Chatley Heath, because this walk gives you a wide-ranging introduction to this golden sandy heath. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ Getting There).
The Walk

Starting at the Chatley Heath car park, with your back to the road, near the entrance, turn **left** by a post for *Café and Toilets*, on a narrow path. In 30m, ignore a left turn for *Car Park*. But, if you are returning to the Boldermere car park, or if you would like the facilities, turn **left** here and follow the signs. In 150m, ignore a narrower right fork, and another later, keeping straight ahead at all times. 350m from the car park you meet a wide sandy horse path: cross straight over, now on a very narrow path through birches. In 40m, at another wide crossing path, turn **right**. This path will take you directly up to the Semaphore Tower. You pass a bench seat and a sign for the Tower, crossing a very wide sandy horse path. Your path runs between two benches and soon splits: keep to the **right** of the wire fence, on a narrow straight path uphill. You meet the horse path again and in no time you stand in front of the Semaphore Tower.

*The Semaphore Tower was one of a string of semaphore stations between Portsmouth and Whitehall. Naval orders and news of victories came this way before the invention of the telegraph. The existing 70ft high semaphore tower was built in 1822. The mast still works and there is an information centre inside but it is only open a handful of days a year. In 2019-20 it is being renovated.*

Pass the Tower on your left and leave it by a tarmac drive. Turn **left** with the drive, avoiding two bridleways to your right. Immediately ignore a bridleway that forks left (although you can use it as it leads to the same spot). The tarmac drive swings left and takes you across a bridge over the M25 motorway. You come past a large metal gate to reach an information board and Pointers Road. Turn **right** on this quiet cul-de-sac. (Pointers Road has long been cut off at the left end by the A3 trunk road.)
You pass *The Lodge* and a bluebell wood on your right. A historic house Pointers (or Poynters), built in the 1700s, overlooking the River Mole, is on your left behind the trees. At a bend, ignore a footpath on your left. You pass a dirt-strip layby and reach a T-junction. Turn right here on Ockham Lane and, in 100m, turn left on Chilbrook Road. In 400m the road elbows right by Chilbrook Farm. In a further 200m you pass a terrace of white houses. In 50m, turn right at a bridleway sign, going through a small wooden gate onto a tarmac drive. The drive bends right and approaches a house. Just before the gate to the house, turn left through a wooden gate onto a narrower bridleway signed with a blue arrow. In 50m you meet a 3-way fingerpost where the bridleway turns off right. Keep straight ahead here, now on a yellow-arrowed footpath.

At the end, go through a wooden swing-gate onto a concrete track which will take you over the M25 motorway, but with a couple of twists. Your route is right on the track, immediately left through a wooden swing-gate into a large meadow, immediately right through a modern kissing-gate and left on the roadway over the bridge. Go through a large metal gate and right on a peaty farm track. At a bend by some ‘phone masts, bear left on a grassy path, leaving the noisy traffic behind. In 200m your path ends at a T-junction in front of a line of trees. Turn left here on a grassy path. Your path takes you over a stile (care! rickety) and along the right-hand side of a horse pasture. A V-stile leads across a rough yard, over a low stile and beside another horse pasture.

Stick to the right-hand edge across a rather clumpy section and over a stile into a small sheep pasture. Another stile takes you into a large green meadow. Keep to the right-hand side of the meadow until, after 50m or so, you approach a corner of the woodland. Just before the corner, at a fingerpost, go right on a path into the wood. The path runs along the edge of the wood, taking you over a stile, round some mud and over woodland debris, until you emerge via a 2-plank bridge into a field. Go straight ahead across the centre of the field, passing on your left a lone oak tree. At the corner of a hedged garden, keep left at a yellow arrow. In 150m, just after a house, go right by a (squeezable) stile and left on a tarmac drive into the hamlet of Mays Green.

Just after two gravel driveways, turn right at a fingerpost, through a modern kissing-gate, and bear left across the grass (note the willow ringed by a pond). In the corner, go over a 3-plank bridge onto an extremely bendy path between high fences. As you emerge, over a stile, keep straight ahead on a path with a large meadow and good views on your right. A stile and a gravel drive lead to a junction of drives. Keep straight on along a wide tarmac drive. Where the main drive bends left, keep straight ahead on a track. You reach a junction by a cattery. Keep straight ahead here on a narrow path which finally debouches down steps to a road (Ockham Lane again).

Turn left on the road, passing the curious low pink *Flower Cottage*. Shortly after, at the top of a rise, go right on a tarmac drive, signed as a bridleway. You walk for ½ km between open fields heading for the woods of Chatley Heath. The great redbrick mansion over to your right is Hatchford Park, originally Jacobean but remodelled in 1850 by Francis Egerton, Earl of Ellesmere, after whom the Arctic Ellesmere Island is named; its mausoleum is passed on the “Wisley Common” walk in this series. On your left are Ockham Manor and the
neo-Jacobean *Halsey House*. Go straight over on a wide dirt path, between stumps, into the woods of Chatley Heath.

You pass a post with a yellow arrow and a crossing path with the remains of a wooden barrier on your right and, about 250m after entering the wood, you reach a very wide crossing bridleway and a 3-way fingerpost. *(It you did not start the walk at one of the car parks off Old Lane, you can turn right on the bridleway uphill as far as the Semaphore Tower and continue straight on to join the main walk. But you will miss the most inspiring part of this walk across the bleak Heath.)* Cross straight over the bridleway, a fraction right, onto a narrow path uphill. In less than 50m, just before a sign for the Tower, turn sharp **left** on a narrow path. Keep to the main path which runs in the open, skirting an expanse of heather on your right. After 150m, just before the path rises a little, go **left** at a sign for the car park. Follow this path for the best part of 1 km, over a crossing track, meeting a path from the left and another from the right, over a sandy horse path, through mature pines, finally reaching the Ockham and Chatley Heath car park where the walk began.

**Getting there**

By car: park in the **Ockham Common Chatley Heath** car park. To get there from the London area, go to the A3 / M25 junction and take the sliproad towards Guildford. *(If you come from the A3, you need to take the exit for the M25 and go straight on at the roundabout. If you come from the Guildford direction, you need to do an about-turn at the M25 roundabout.)* In about 100m, leave the sliproad by turning **left** onto a narrow road (Old Lane) signposted **Effingham** that runs through the forest beside the lake (**Boldermere**). The car park is 400 yds on the **left**.

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