



Chobham Common

Distance: 9½ km=6 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 15-nov-2012

Author: Botafuego

Date revised: 15-nov-2016

Refreshments: *Four Horseshoes* (pub), *Eastern & Oriental* (Chinese)

Map: Explorer 160 (Windsor) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

Heath, views, woodland, meadows, lake

In Brief

This is a stunning walk over the high pine-topped heath of Chobham Common, with a short more open section around the nearby verdant farm paddocks.

There is at least one good place for refreshments along the walk, but on a Sunday you *must* reserve early if you want lunch at the *Four Horseshoes* (ring 01276-856257).



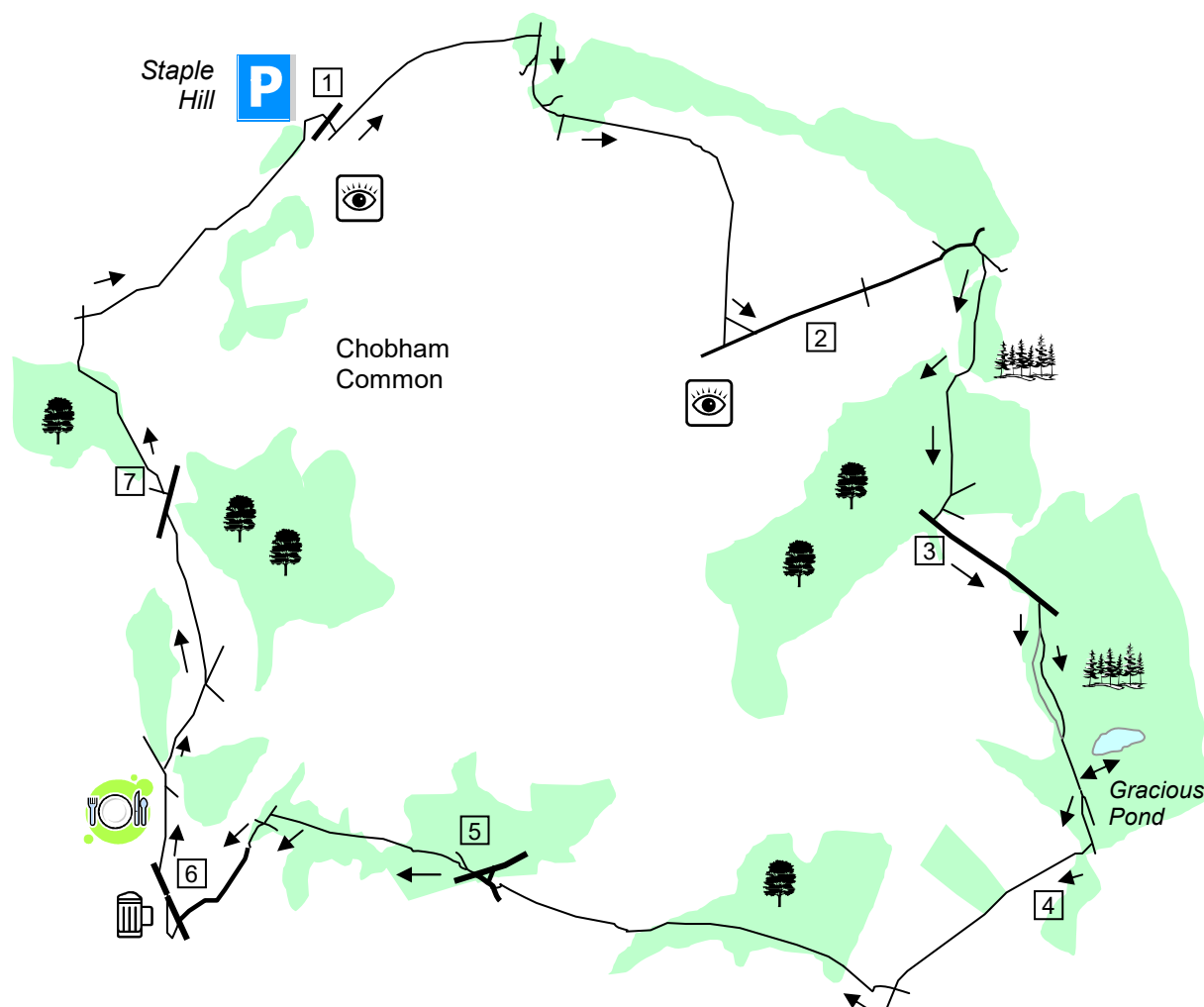
There are no nettles to trouble bare legs. In the wetter seasons there may be quite a bit of mud on some of the paths, so boots are a comfort, as always. Although there is a series of stiles around the farm, there are wide gaps in the fences for a dog to get through so he can come too and will thrive on this walk, although he must be on a lead from March to September.

The walk begins at the **Staple Hill Car Park**, near Chobham, Woking, Surrey. There are no buildings nearby but one *very approximate* postcode is **GU24 8TP**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

- See map overleaf.** Leave the car park by the entrance and cross the road, going past a post with a white arrow onto a narrow path. In 30m, at more posts, turn **left** on a sandy horse path. After 500m, your path enters trees and you come to a T-junction with a wide path. On your left is the small Longcross car park (an alternative start) but your route is **right** on the wide path. In 40m, take the **left** fork, a rising path. This path curves left and, after 120m, reaches another junction and a marker post. *The next stretch takes you over the wildest part of the common, slightly longer but more interesting than the bridleway which clings to the trees.* Keep straight ahead, avoiding the blue-arrowed bridleway that forks away to the left. In 50m, at another post, avoid a path that forks away to the right, staying with your path, marked as a *horse ride*. You have great views to the right. *This area is a favourite for model aeroplane enthusiasts and you may see them flying on any fair weekend.* You reach a pine-covered hillock, after which the path

descends, aided by shallow steps. *Here you have a feeling of the great open space all around.* As you near some overhead power lines, as a short cut, take a smaller path that forks **left** and shortly veer **left** on a major sandy bridgeway that runs parallel to the power lines.



- [2] Your path goes over a crossing path, marked by yellow arrows and eventually meets a bridgeway coming from the left, as it runs into trees and between some wooden railings. At a T-junction by a marker post, turn **right**. In only 40m, just before you go under the overhead power lines, fork **right** on a narrower unmarked path. This path soon widens and runs through pines. Soon your path comes over the brow of a hill. Keep to the path now as it veers **right** downhill, going past a post marked **J15** on the other side. Keep to this wide path as it runs through a dense pine forest. Eventually the foliage changes to birch. Veer **right** as you come to a junction with a yellow-arrowed footpath coming in from the left. Continue straight on to a metal barrier and a notice board and straight ahead on a driveway to a road.
- [3] Turn **left** on this quiet road, going past *Gracious Pond House*, ignoring a bridgeway on your left. After 300m, go **right** at a metal barrier on a signed bridgeway. Very soon, at a post, take the **left** fork, the bridgeway. (You can also fork right on the footpath but the bridgeway is considered more attractive.) After 300m, the bridgeway is joined again by the footpath at a wooden barrier. 60m after this point, look out for a narrow path on your left between hollies and through a wooden barrier. [2016: hidden by a fallen birch: go 20m further and turn sharp left.] This is a short diversion to Gracious Pond. Even if you are in a hurry, this lovely spot is on no account to be missed.

The 1308 Chertsey Abbey Cartulary (a kind of medieval legal tome) lists Gracious Pond as being constructed by the Abbot Rutherwyk to power a mill. It was formed at the valley bottom by damming one end. It was then called Cratchettes Pond and the name underwent several variations. It also provided water for nearby Chobham Park as well as providing fish for the abbey monks. In 1535, two years before the dissolution of Chertsey Abbey, the manor house was purchased by Henry VIII (why does he pop up in every historical account?) and remained the property of the Crown until sold by Queen Mary in 1558. It deteriorated and in 1771 was “choaked with weeds”. Now restored, it is a reserve run by the Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Returning to the main bridleway, go about another 70m and, after a left bend, fork **right** on a narrow path, marked with a yellow arrow shortly visible ahead. Go past the yellow arrow and a wooden barrier and, at a fork, go **right** over a stile (avoidable by ducking under a wire) into a meadow.

4 The meadow is used by the Pony Club and it is a pleasant contrast, after so much woodland, to be walking in the open with views. Follow the left edge. At the corner, ignore a footpath on the right into woodland and continue straight ahead with the wood on your right. The path leads over a stile, alongside two horse pastures and through a metal gate (easier than the stile). As you near the buildings of Chobham Park Farm, at the start of a tarmac drive, turn **right** at a 4-way fingerpost. This path takes you over a stile, across a fine green meadow, **left** over a bridge, **right** along a grassy path, over a stile and along a woodland path. After a while, the path goes through a wooden swing-gate. *On the right is a small piggery dedicated to the Oxford Sandy and Black breed, notable from their blotchy skin (not always in residence unfortunately).* After another swing-gate, the path joins a tarmac drive and passes a white gate, out to a road, Mincing Lane. Turn **right** on the road and follow it round, ignoring a junction on the right, quickly reaching a major road, Red Lion Road.

5 Cross the road to a footpath directly opposite between posts. In 60m, fork **left** on a narrower unmarked path. Keep to this path for some distance, avoiding all minor turn-offs. In 150m or so, at a fork in the path, take the **right** fork, shortly going over a crossing path. When you reach a stand of very tall straight pines, keep to the right of them, as your path widens. As you finally approach a T-junction, ignore a path branching left and turn **left** at the T-junction on a wide horse path. In 20m, at another T-junction, turn **right** on a wide path. In only 10m, fork **left** at a marker post onto a narrow path marked by yellow and blue arrows and veer **left** before a fence on a track, shortly going between concrete bollards, with a transformer station on your right. Continue straight ahead on a tarmac lane, Gorse Lane. Follow the lane all the way to the main road. The *Four Horseshoes* pub is directly opposite, beside the small Burrow Hill Green. *This pub is on the “up”, with more brews and some tempting food offers. It’s leased by Marstons (not E.P. as the signs say). The attractive setting and cosy interior are now attracting crowds.*



In case this pub is over-booked, you can try the Red Lion which serves excellent food with friendly staff and a winsome garden. They also serve Sunday roast but in small perfectly adequate portions. To get there, turn left on the main road and after 130m turn left on Red Lion Road; the pub is 300m along the road on the left.



6 After refreshment, turn **left** out of the pub, cross the road and turn **left** (that is, **right** if you didn’t visit the pub), using the raised footpath. You pass a superior restaurant *Stovells* on your left, then a row of cottages and, in 200m or so, the *Eastern & Oriental* restaurant boasting “true flavours and a Feng-Shui décor”. Just after the restaurant you pass the *White House*.





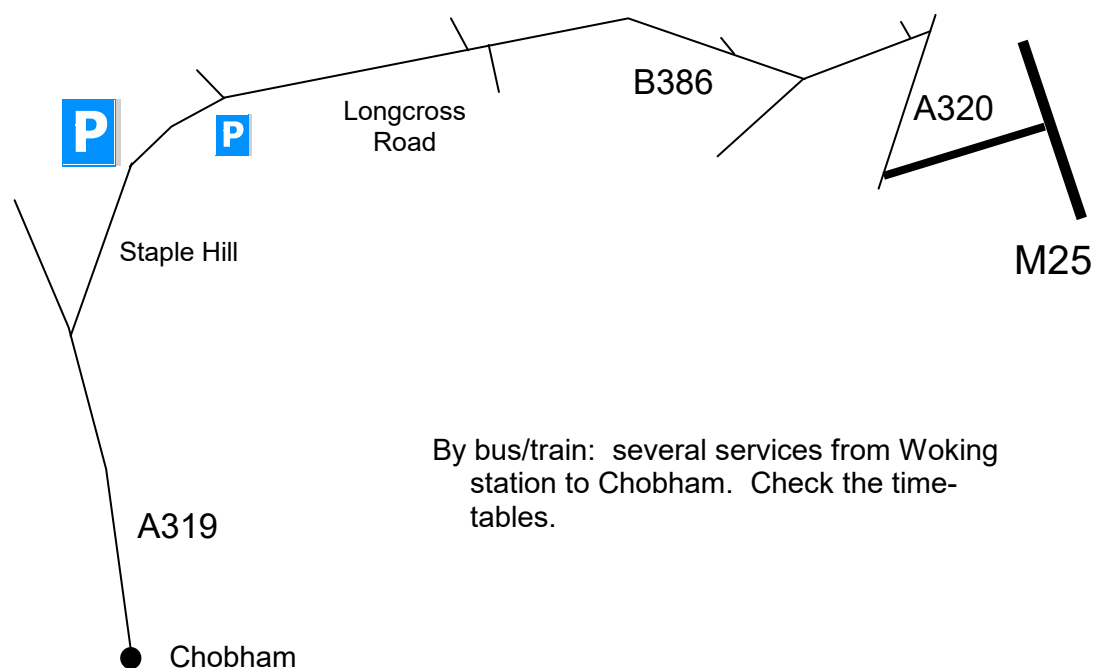
Immediately afterwards at a fingerpost turn **right** and take the narrow path that twists its way through woodland and reaches open heath. About 250m from the start of the footpath, you meet a bridleway coming from the right. Veer **left** on the bridleway, ignoring a signed right fork, and continue, immediately going under power lines. In 75m, at a wide crossing path, go straight over, now on a much narrower path. This takes you in 300m to a road, Staple Hill.

- 7 Turn **right** on the road for only 20m and go **left** at a post with yellow and blue arrows. Almost immediately, take the **right** fork, the bridleway. You go under the chestnuts and birches of Chickabiddy Hill. [Sep 2015: after the wet summer, there was extensive flooding in this area; if this persists, you may need to backtrack to the road, turn **left** and follow the road to the parking area mentioned below.] You reach open heath where heather is abundant. Keep going until your path veers left under wires, veers right away from them and finally meets a very definite crossing path, surrounded by gorse, with blue arrows and "J7" on a post. Turn **right** on this path and follow it until it crosses a redundant parking area beside the road. Continue on a narrow path parallel to the road, through heather and gorse, with great views to your right, until you come to the Staple Hill Car Park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: the easiest way is from the M25. Come off at junction 11, *Woking*. Follow signs for *Woking A320, Chobham (A319)*. At the end of the dual carriageway, at a roundabout, go **right**, in the direction of *Chertsey, Staines* (not Chobham) on the A320. After ½ mile turn **left** on the B386, signposted *Windlesham*. Ignore a junction on the right and in over ½ mile, at a fork, keep **right** on the B386 signposted *Windlesham, Longcross*. Follow the Longcross Road for more than 2½ miles until the road divides near a small car park. Keep **left** here, signposted *Chobham*. The Staple Hill car park is another ½ mile on the right.

You can also go north on the A319 through Chobham village and in 1 mile fork **right** on Staple Hill, signposted *Longcross*.



fancy more free walks? www.fancyfreewalks.org