



Elstead, Ockley Common, Peper Harow

Distance: 17 km=10½ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 24-jan-2010

Author: Schwebefuss

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Refreshments: Elstead, Eashing

Last update: 30-jun-2018

Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Woodland, moorland, villages, ancient bridges

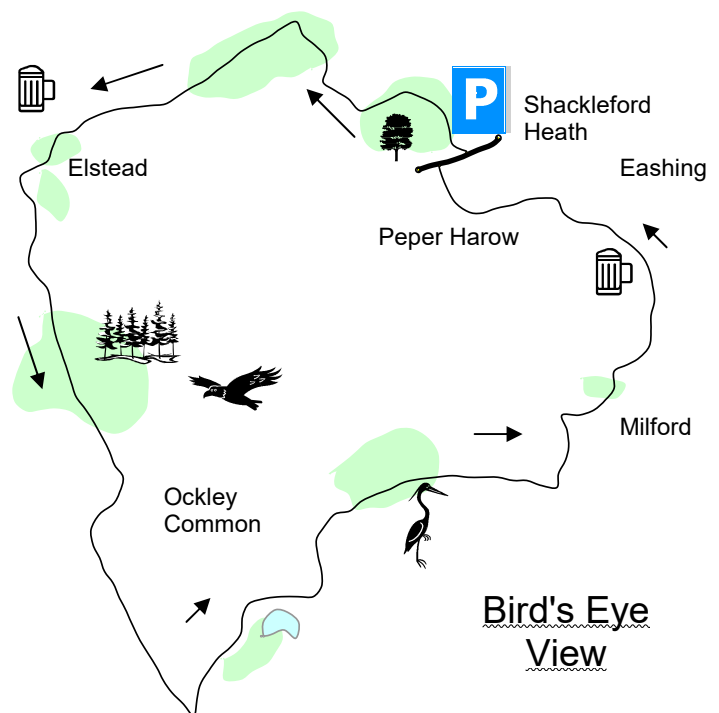
In Brief



This is a most interesting circular walk, suitable for all times of the year provided that conditions are not too wet. It passes through some marshy natural Surrey landscapes of unmatched beauty and after every turn there seems to be a surprise. There is some boggy ground which can generally be skirted round, but good ankle-length boots are needed to cope with two short very muddy sections. There are very few gradients, making this walk calming and relaxing. There are a few patches of nettles, so long trousers are preferable. This walk is fine for a dog but please be aware of the ground-nesting birds and the private grounds.

There are several excellent places for refreshment en route (for reservations at the *Stag on the River*, ring 01483-421-568).

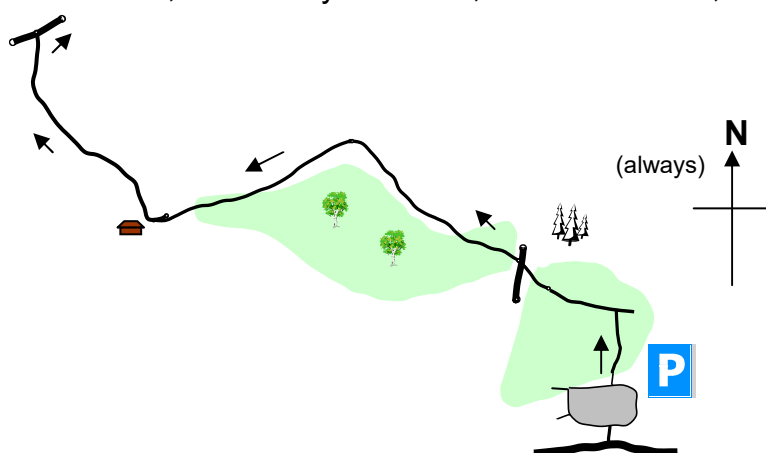
The walk starts at the **Shackleford Heath** car park, **postcode GU8 6AY**. **Warning! isolated car park: see Guidelines.** For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



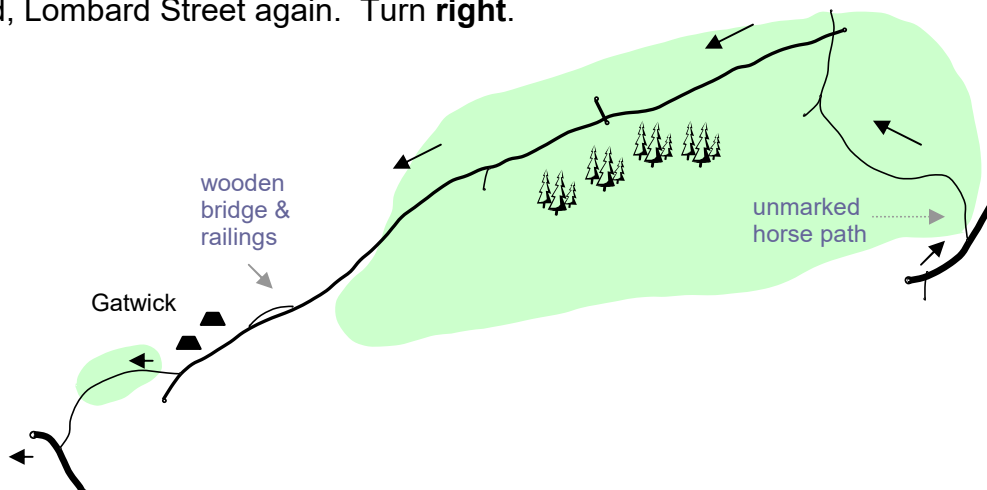
The Walk

Leg 1: Shackleford Heath to Elstead 6 km=3½ miles

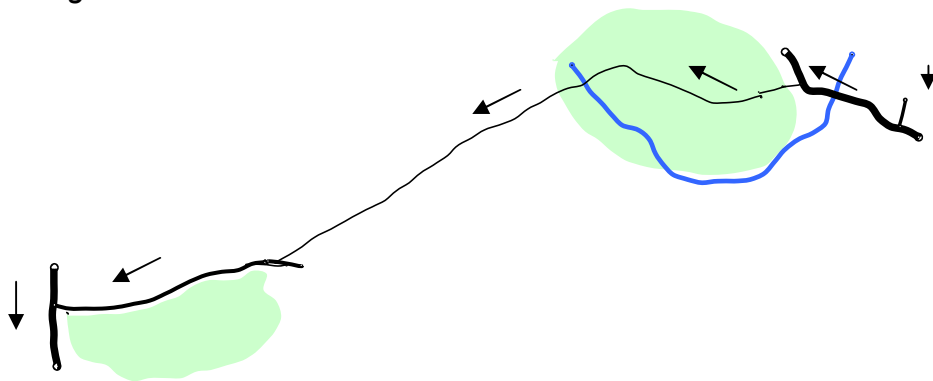
- 1 Away from the road, at the back of the car park towards the right, take a wide path that begins at two posts with a long horizontal metal bar (which might occasionally be removed for a forestry vehicle). Ignore minor paths that branch off left and stay on the main path as it veers right and then wheels left. It leads to a T-junction with a wide horse track by a rustic wooden bench. Turn **left** on this track and follow it until you come to a lane, Peper Harrow Lane. Cross straight over the lane to a bridleway. Stay on this track avoiding any horse tracks off to the left until, after 350m, the main bridleway curves left beside a ditch. Stay on the main track, avoiding a permissive path on your right which is used for drag hunting, until you reach *Warren Lodge*. Turn **right** here on a driveway and follow it, crossing the Shackleford Stream, all the way to a road, Lombard Street, and turn **right**.



- 2 In about 80m, at the start of woods on the left, turn **left** on an unsigned path uphill. In 20m or so, take the **left** fork (easier than the right fork: they quickly join up again). The path soon bends left into the wood and is later joined by a path from the left. 70m after this, you reach a major 4-way junction of tracks by a post with red arrows. Turn sharp **left** on a wide woodland track. In 300m, ignore a track right and later a path left, keeping straight ahead at all times until you see the first houses of the settlement of Gatwick (*pronounced "Gattick" to distinguish it from the airport*). At this point, you will see some wooden railings with a little bridge on the right and this is a rather charming way to avoid any mud on the horse track. Shortly, just past *Kingshott Cottage*, turn **right** on a path. This leads out via a drive to a road, Lombard Street again. Turn **right**.

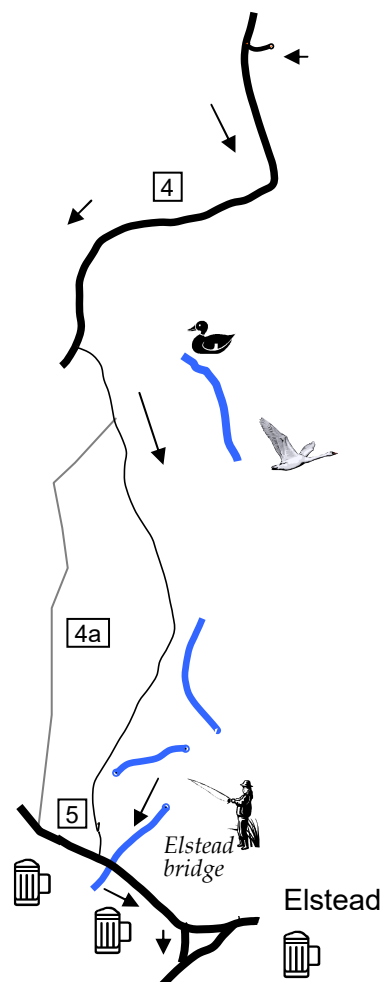


- 3 The road crosses the Cutmill Stream and bends right. Leave it here by continuing straight ahead on a signed brideway which winds through woodland and crosses a bridge. Go through a gate into a pasture and, keeping the same direction, cross the grass diagonally to a small metal gate on the other side. Turn **right** on a track. In 200m, at the end of the track, turn **left** on a road, Fulbrook Lane. *On the right soon is the entrance to Fulbrook House which Peter Sellers and his wife Brit Eklund bought and later sold to Beatle Ringo Starr.*



- 4 Just before a white house *Paulshott Cottage*, turn **left** through a wooden gate onto a signposted footpath, in 60m reaching a junction with a footpath branching off right. *After the floods of 2014, the path ahead was waterlogged. It was still closed in winter 2015 and, according to a notice placed here in 2016, it will be closed at least until May 2017 (and still closed in Mar 2017 although found to be perfectly walkable). If your route is affected in this way, use the alternative *dry route* in the next paragraph. [2018: the footpath was closed ahead by tall metal fencing so **4a below was the only choice.**]* Otherwise... Keep ahead on a path that leads over a stile and then runs beside the River Wey, going over more stiles and bridges, a favourite spot for anglers, and reaches a bridge.

- 4a *This is an alternative dry route to the waterlogged path in 4 above.* Turn **right** on a footpath going over a stile. Go straight across a small meadow and over a stile and 2-plank bridge on the other side. Immediately turn **left** to go over another 2-plank bridge, passing a post with a yellow arrow. Go over a bridge made of sleepers to the right of a metal gate onto a narrow path between fences. More sleepers and a stile lead into a large meadow. Keep ahead along the left-hand edge* aiming for the *Mill* pub, go over a stile there and turn **left** on the main road. (* But look out for a sign, almost at ground level, pointing **left** which takes you back to the original path, avoiding part of the road.)



- 5 The Mill pub (Fullers) on the right is worth considering for a pause with its lake, swans and waterwheel. It was occupied by Oliver Cromwell's roundheads in the Civil War and then burned down. Turn **left** at the road, passing over Elstead Bridge. Elstead Bridge was built in the 1300s, now reinforced to carry the westbound traffic. You will have crossed the Wey by the new bridge but it is worth crossing to the other side to get a good view of the remarkable sturdy old bridge. Continue past the Golden Fleece (which serves Thai food) and turn **right** at the Green past Forge Cottage and the general store, which is open on Sundays.

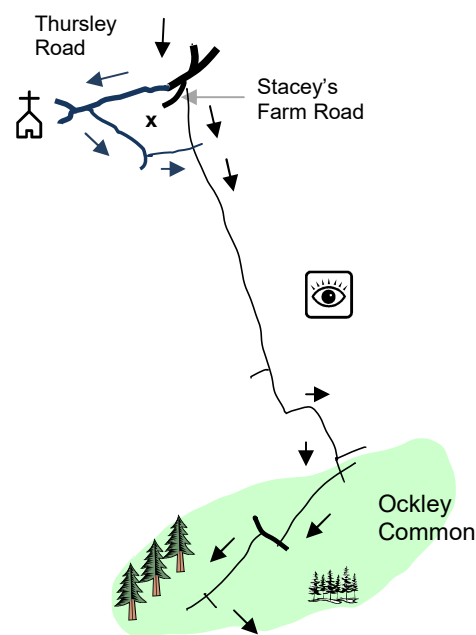


Elstead owes its historic importance to its vital position on the River Wey, with its ancient bridge. It has served as a billet for troops undergoing training on Hankley Common. A fascinating account of the town, including Gillian Drew's on-line book Elstead Village History will be found in www.elstead.org.uk/history. The "Woolpack" on the other side of the Green has fresh seafood daily, an "executive chef" and several real ales and is open all day at weekends. It also offers a "free sausage hour". The Little Barn café, just off the Thursley Road, offers tasty teas and snacks, closed Sun and Mon.

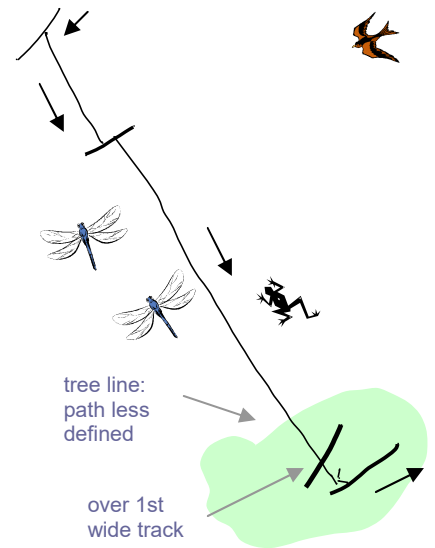
Leg 2: Elstead to Milford 7½ km=4½ miles

You are near **Elstead Church** which is definitely worth a small diversion. To get there, veer **right** on Thursley Road and follow it until you shortly meet a junction with West Hill on the left. The church is directly in front to the **right**. The Church of St James was built in 1138 and served by priests from nearby Waverley Abbey. When the Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII, the church became part of a chapelry in the care of the Rectors of the Parish of Farnham. The big cedar in the centre of the churchyard and the lime trees were planted in thanksgiving for the end of an epidemic of cholera in Elstead. After your visit, return to go down West Hill and, where the road turns right, turn **left** onto a footpath immediately before a gate. This footpath climbs to meet a crossing path. Turn **right** here and resume from point **[a]** below.

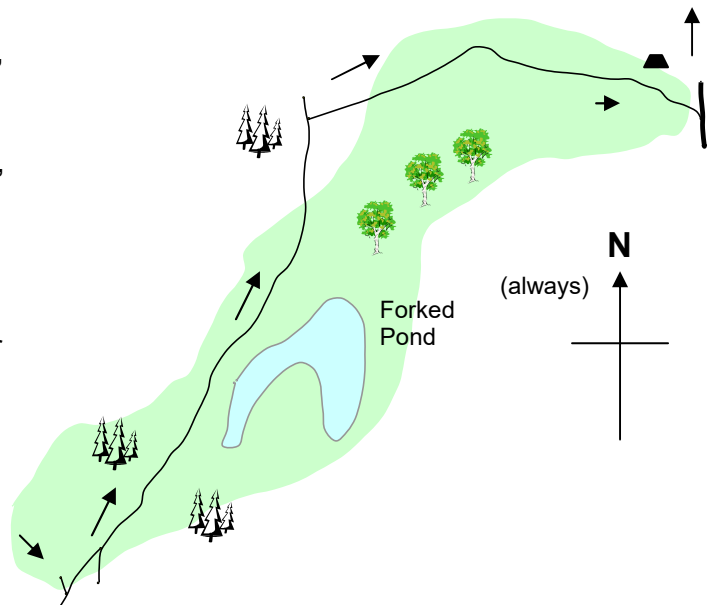
- 1 Veer **right** on Thursley Road. In just 30m, opposite Apple Tree Cottage, turn **left** into the start of Stacey's Farm Road but continue straight ahead on a footpath in the corner. Go through a metal swing gate into a high meadow with views all round, keeping to the left-hand perimeter to another swing gate, then left-right over a crossing path, now with the meadow and village on your left. **[a]** Follow this path for nearly 1 km between meadows until finally the path zigzags left then right between gates. Continue on an enclosed path to the corner of the field. Ignoring the path that goes left round the field, go through a wooden swing-gate to enter the birch and pine woodland ahead via a large metal gate (or over a stile). The sign informs you that you are entering an area used for army exercises. Turn immediately **right** under the oaks and pines. In 200m you cross a narrow path and reach a very wide track. Turn **right** on the track for 40m, then **left** at a post with blue arrows. In about 200m you come to another MoD notice-board [Mar 2016: vanished due to track widening] and post with blue arrows. Don't miss this junction! Turn **left** here on a narrow straight bridleway across the wispy marsh of Ockley Common.



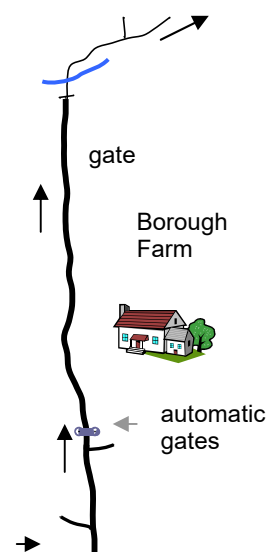
2 This walk runs the full length of this path in a generally straight line across the Common. *This marshy central area of Ockley Common is known for water-loving plants such as sundew, and many varieties of dragonfly and other insects, as well as several types of ground-nesting birds.* You need not worry about crossing this area because the path will take you safely over the marshes. If part of the path is waterlogged, you will always find patches of grass, even in the wettest season. Part way across, at a post, the path zigzags left-right across a wider track and becomes a foot-path, marked with a yellow arrow. Soon after, the path is blocked by gorse, which you can simply go round and then there is a boardwalk and a wooden plank bridge. On meeting the tree line, keep ahead on a less defined path in the same direction through the pines until you meet a wire mesh fence (ignoring a wide crossing tracking 50m before the fence).



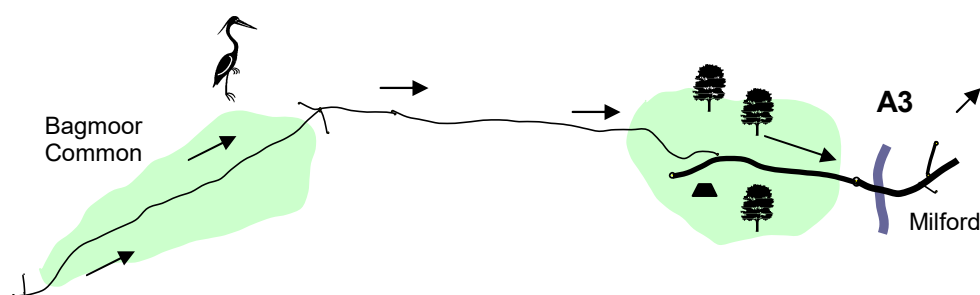
3 Turn **left** at the fence. Where the fence soon bends away to the right, keep straight ahead on the main path. Soon a lake, the *Forked Pond*, comes into view. If you wish, you can take the right fork that runs along the lakeside and re-joins the path before a house and a corrugated barn. Otherwise, keep to the main path. About 200m after the lake, at a post with arrows, turn **right** through a wooden gate. Follow this bridleway for some distance until finally you go through a gate next to *Little Borough*. Fork **left** to a T-junction and go **left** on a tarmac driveway.



4 Ahead of you are two fine iron gates. Don't turn aside looking for a tradesman's entrance. The footpath really *is* through the gates and, like any house guest, you need only press the button on the post and the gates will open for you. Follow the drive through the grounds past the impressive house of Borough Farm and other houses of the estate. Eventually your route goes round a gate, over a bridge by a ford and turns abruptly **right**. *In the winter the path here may be soggy but it will clear soon. (After the floods of 2014, we needed a hint to stay dry. The text has been hidden but can be brought back on demand.)* The track passes a bridge on the right where it runs straight ahead by the stream. Soon you reach Bagmoor Common a nature reserve of great charm, rich in wildlife.

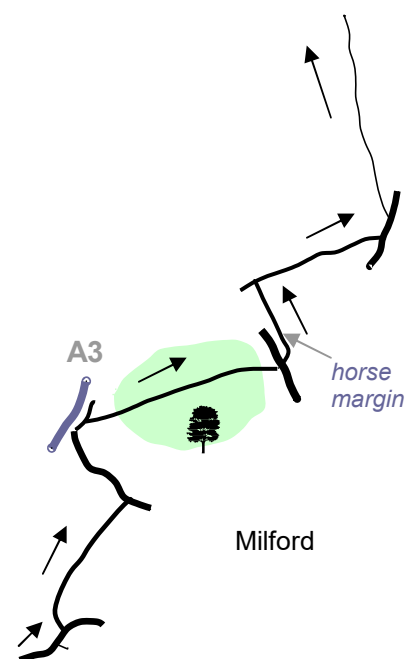


- 5 At a noticeboard, stay on the path as it bears round to the right, ignoring a left turn. Eventually the footpath runs under wires and across a grassy mossy area by a house. Veer **right** here over a bridge, across a water-meadow and by a stile, following a fenced path. [Mar 2015: the meadow was waterlogged but there was a gap between the hedge and a barbed wire fence on the left; previous walkers had broken down the barbed wire fence, by the double stile, making an easy exit. Mar-Apr 2017: more trouble with barbed wire to escape waterlogging, after farmer repaired the fence: please be careful and let us know of any developments.] The path goes over a double stile and through a pleasant grassy strip. Next, it passes a house, *Pucklands*, and goes over a stile. Take the first **left** turn, on a track which soon joins the driveway and goes over a bridge across the A3 trunk road. The driveway, now a lane, passes a beautifully restored house appropriately called *Chimneys*. Ignore a bridle path right and, 40m later, take a bridleway **left** [2018: missing its sign although a SW marker is painted blue at ground level].



Leg 3: Milford to Shackleford Heath 3½ km=2½ miles

- 1 The track passes a number of attractive farm buildings on the outskirts of Milford. At the end, turn **left** on a road. A bridleway runs beside the road, curves **right** and then **right** again through a wooden gate (*not* the metal gate into the meadow) and runs through woodland to a main road. Cross the road carefully to a path on the other side with a fingerpost indicating *horse margin*. The path bends left parallel to the road [jun 2018: soon hitting a very overgrown patch: walkers had to retreat and go round by the road] and meets a T-junction. Turn **right** here away from the road, following a path between fields. On reaching a road, turn **left** and in 50m turn **left** again on a path running diagonally across a field. Follow the direction of the fingerpost on a path that is a little unclear in the winter season. As a guide, you will pass a pile of stones with another fingerpost which, at the time of writing, is lying on its side. In high summer the path may be concealed under the high crops: just persevere. At other times, there may be lines of daisies. (If the crops are wet after rain, you could go round by the road.) The spire of Norney church is visible just to the left of your direction. Aim for a space between trees on the other side where there is a slope.



- 2 Descend on a path over an avoidable stile, down the steep slope to a stile and road and turn **left** beside the delectable *Style Cottage*. The road passes the *Stag on the River* pub. This is your last possible refreshment stop.



The Stag on the River is perfectly sited on the river bank and offers good fresh food. The ales are predictable. The Stag tends to get busy at weekends.

Next is Eashing Mill.

Eashing Mill was an important paper mill. There was a drying loft on the right and the mill house, rag house and a corn mill on the left. It was rebuilt as a machine paper mill in 1832 which closed in 1899 and is now offices.

A little further on, you reach Eashing Bridge.

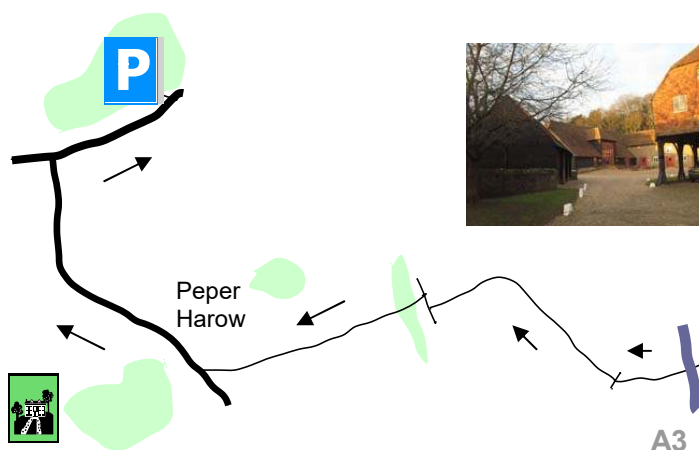
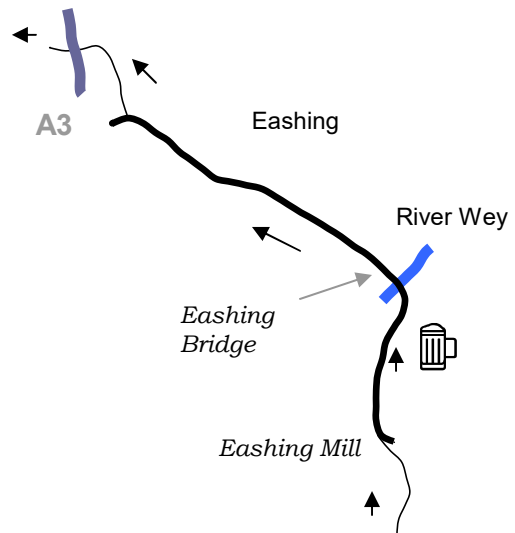
Eashing Bridge is another fine ancient bridge over the River Wey. It was built in the 1300s by monks of Waverley Abbey.

Cross the bridge into the village of Eashing.

Eashing is known by many only as a name seen from the A3 but it is in fact a perfect small village with mostly period houses, some very fine, some small and tranquil.

Opposite the filling station, turn **right** on a track uphill and turn **left** at the top over a bridge to cross the A3 road.

- 3 On the other side, go through a gate and veer **right** on a horse track, following the track as it veers left round the corner of the field. On reaching a line of pines, go **right** through a metal gate and in just 5m, at a crossing path, turn **left** through a wide belt of trees. Cross a stile into a meadow and go straight ahead across its centre into the village of Peper Harow.



Peper Harow is unique, a tiny tranquil village with fascinating and beautiful buildings. There has been a settlement here since Saxon times and it appears in the Domesday Book. The Saxon word "hearge" denoted a holy place, probably pagan. "Piper" (Pippa or Pipard) was a family name, recorded amongst those who fought at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Today the whole of Peper Harow is a private residential estate, a conservation area and home to 30 families. The Park, landscaped by Capability Brown, is the home to muntjac

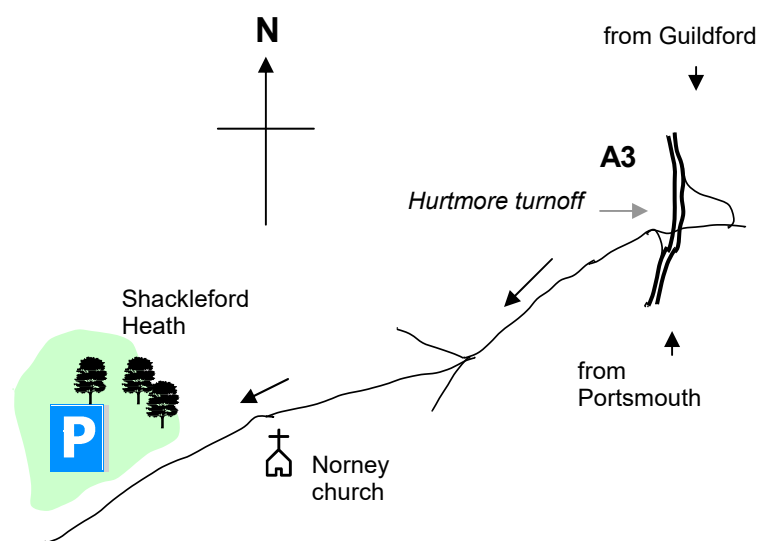
deer, rabbits, swans, ducks, snakes and frogs, and many birds. Peper Harow House and the Carriage House (with the turret) were designed by Sir William Chambers in 1765. The village is also home to an ancient cricket club. The church of St Nicholas, dating from 1301, has an ancient yew tree which has been dated back to at least 1,500 years. The church was badly damaged by fire in 2007 and has now been restored. Note the fine converted barns, one entirely on stilts, acting as a large car port. The Peper Harow residential community is famed for its pioneering work with abused and disturbed adolescents.

Follow the lane out of the village and at a junction turn **right** on the main road. In a short distance, you reach the Shackleford Heath car park on the left where the walk began.

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Getting there

By car: To get to the **Shackleford Heath** car park from the London area or the M25: take the A3 through Guildford and, about 2 miles after the turn off for *Compton*, exit at the sign for *Hurtmore, Norney*. Turn **right** under the A3. At a 3-way junction keep straight ahead following the sign for St Mary's Church. About 600m=700 yds after passing the church, look out for the woodland of Shackleford Heath on the right and park there under a wooden bar in the car park.



By bus: bus 46 from Guildford or Farnham station goes to Elstead Green and passes other points on the walk. (Milford station is of little use as it is over a mile from the walk.)