



Six Ponds and a River Bank Esher West End and River Mole

Distance 5½km=3½ miles easy waking

Region: Surrey

written: 19/11/10

Author: Schwebefuss

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Refreshments: West End Village, Esher, Cobham

Map: Explorer 161 (London South) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

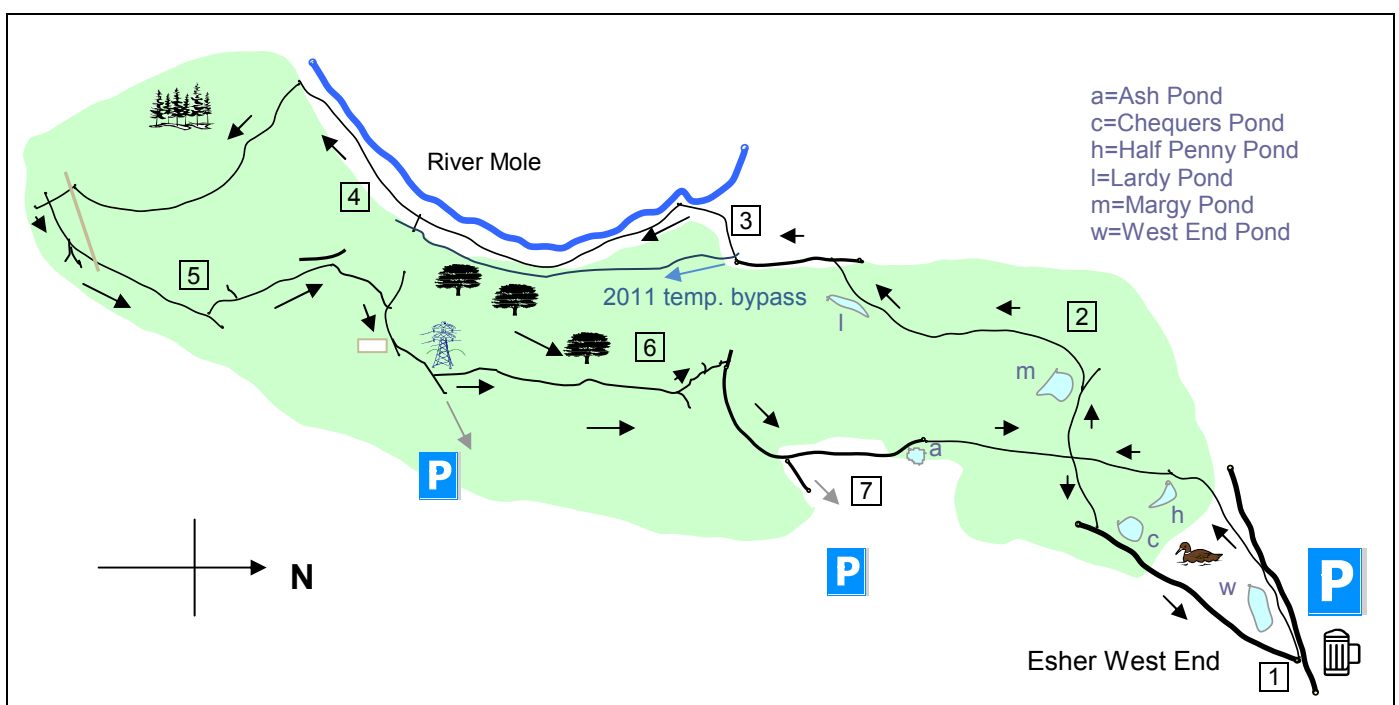
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Woodland, river, heath, ponds

In Brief

This woodland walk begins by a quiet village pond near Esher, Surrey and quickly develops into a wild ramble along the River Mole and then over beech- and pine-clad hills. It also takes in **all six** ponds of this part of Esher Common, some hidden deep in the woods. The woodland, river and ponds are attractive at any time of the year.

Part of the riverside footpath on this walk was closed by the local council pending repairs to the boardwalks. Until this problem is fixed, there is a good alternative which still includes a stretch by the riverside. See the **blue** text in section [3](#) below.



The walk begins beside the **West End Pond** (grid ref 129639, postcode KT10 8LJ). To get there from the A3, turn off for Cobham or Esher, take the A307 Portsmouth Road that runs between Esher and Cobham and turn onto Hawkshill Way or West End Lane to reach the village pond. Alternatively, if you know the area, take Lammas Lane from the centre of Esher. Park in Winterdown Road where there is plenty of off-road parking. Alternative starts are the West End Lane and Horseshoe Clump car parks and the parking space further up Winterdown Road, past the entrance to Garsons.



The route has a few steep sections with board walks where slipperiness can be a problem. Good solid waterproof footwear should be fine and there are no nettles or stiles. Dogs are very welcome.

The Walk

- 1 Head along the green next to Winterdown Road beside the **West End Pond** with its huge population of ducks, that sometimes roil around your feet hoping for bread. After the pond, diverge gradually away from Winterdown Road aiming for a bench seat visible at the treeline ahead and, as you begin to make out details, for a path going **left** into the woods by a large pond, 30m to the left of the seat. The pond on your left is the large **Half Penny Pond**, one of six in this area, all skimmed by dragonflies in summer and hosting numerous protected types of wildlife. Just after the pond, keep ahead through a wooden barrier on a very long straight path that runs between ditches on each side. Exactly 200m on, you reach a wide crossing path. Turn **right** here. In just 5m, ignore a minor path forking left and keep to the main path as it runs along the right-hand edge of a well-lit area of tall thin oak trees. Soon you have the filmy **Margy Pond** on your left.
- 2 Just after the pond, take the **left** fork and, in just 10m, turn **left** over a two-plank bridge. You now need to follow this winding path for some distance. Avoid all turnings off and just keep ahead always seeking out the main path. Eventually the path widens and becomes much clearer, taking you very shortly to the **Lardy Pond** on your left, another beautiful hidden-in-the-forest pond. After this pond, your path passes a bench seat and veers off right. At a junction, veer **left** and turn **left** on a wide track that runs along the edge of the Common, with fruit crop fields on the other side. Soon after, you pass a *No Horse Riding* sign. Keep straight on, going gently up a slope. Just at the edge of a meadow on the right, turn **right**.
- 3 The path leads up to a bench with a fine view of the River Mole below. Veer **left**, towards the wooden barriers and steps.

As from summer 2011, the steps and the riverside boardwalk are closed pending repairs. Some people still go through despite the warning notice and despite the dangerous broken bridges and this route is definitely **not** recommended. Option (a) below is a good alternative which gives you high views and still goes beside the river for a short stretch. Option (b) should only be used if the repairs have been made and the footpath reopened (in which case please email us).

(a) Turn **left** on a wide path, avoiding the steps down, staying on the high ground. The rising path runs beside a railing on your right with a steep drop and views over the River Mole below. You pass some unusual wooden benches, then a very steep bank, a pylon and another bench. 40m after the last bench, keep straight ahead avoiding a path left and, 30m later, reach a

wooden barrier on your right with steps down. You may see an official notice here saying that the footpath is closed, but you will be taking a different route. Go down the steps to the river and turn **left** along the bank.

(b) The steps are supported by railings and reach the bank of the river. From here you follow the river for some distance. You pass a bench and need to traverse steps and boardwalks. These may be slippery after wet weather, so special care is needed. The path runs under grid lines (possibly unseen above the trees) and reaches a fingerpost that points left to *steps and carpark*. Keep straight ahead along the riverside, ignoring the signpost.

- 4 The path goes over a sunken ditch and finally reaches another ditch with a fence and *Private* sign ahead. Turn **left** here. It now goes over a little bridge and climbs. This section may also be slippery. It then reaches a sloping beechwood. Go straight up the steepest part of the beechwood and continue through rhododendrons, reaching a fence. Keep the fence on your left, with a steep drop visible on your right. Finally, the path descends with the fence and goes over a little bridge with a railing. It passes some more fencing on your left and reaches a wide drive. Cross straight over the drive, a fraction right, and up a long wooded hillside with the sound of the busy A3 road becoming evident. Half way up the hillside, you come to a wider diagonal crossing path. Bear **left** on the crossing path. At the top of a hillock, you reach a junction of three paths. Take the **leftmost** path, avoiding the two little paths on the right.
- 5 At a fingerpost, keep straight ahead, in the direction *horse ride West End Common*, crossing the tarmac drive a second time. The path goes over another tarmac drive, curves left, goes over a stream and winds uphill, touching a drive to *Winterdown*. Veer **right** away from the drive, staying on the horse ride. The path reaches a crossing path where, on the right, is a large 1960s-style modern house. Turn **right** on the path going past the house. Soon you reach overhead grid wires. (The path straight ahead here leads to the Horseshoe Clump car park.) Immediately fork **left** on a sandy path leading uphill into trees. The path levels out and runs through beech woods with various branching paths.
- 6 About 300m after the grid wires, your path reaches a junction and suddenly curves away **left** down into the valley. Stay with the path, keeping ahead at a signpost, to reach a T-junction at the bottom by a wooden bench. Turn **right** here on a wide path. The path goes over a hump and gradually curves left, being joined by several paths coming down from the right, entering an open space. You reach a major fork. Take the **left** fork. (The right fork will take you to the West End Lane car park.)
- 7 Soon you reach a bench with steps down to the **Ash Pond**, now mainly dry and recognisable only from the meagre clumps of reeds. Continue on along a straight path running into the distance between two ditches. In about 200m, you reach a familiar wide crossing path. Turn **right** here. The path leads past the final pond, **Chequers Pond**, and reaches West End Lane just by the village green. Turn **left** on the green beside the road arriving back at the village where the walk began. At the end of the green, the *Prince of Wales* pub is a possible refreshment stop. *The Prince of Wales has an appealing Regency look with a view of the pond and the green. For food, perhaps Esher town centre or Cobham are better prospects.*



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