



Godstone and Tilburstow Hill

Distance: 7 km=4½ miles

easy walking with some inclines

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Godstone

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

[Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)

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Village, water, woods, meadows, bluebells in spring

In Brief



This walk is full of delightful surprises and a few ghostly secrets from history along the way. Because of the good tracks and the sandy paths, it is a good walk at any time of the year, although the tracks in the woodland are drier in summer. In late spring, the forest floors are decked with bluebells.



There are no nettles, so shorts and any sensible clothing and footwear are fine, but in winter and early spring, boots are recommended. Your dog is welcome too.



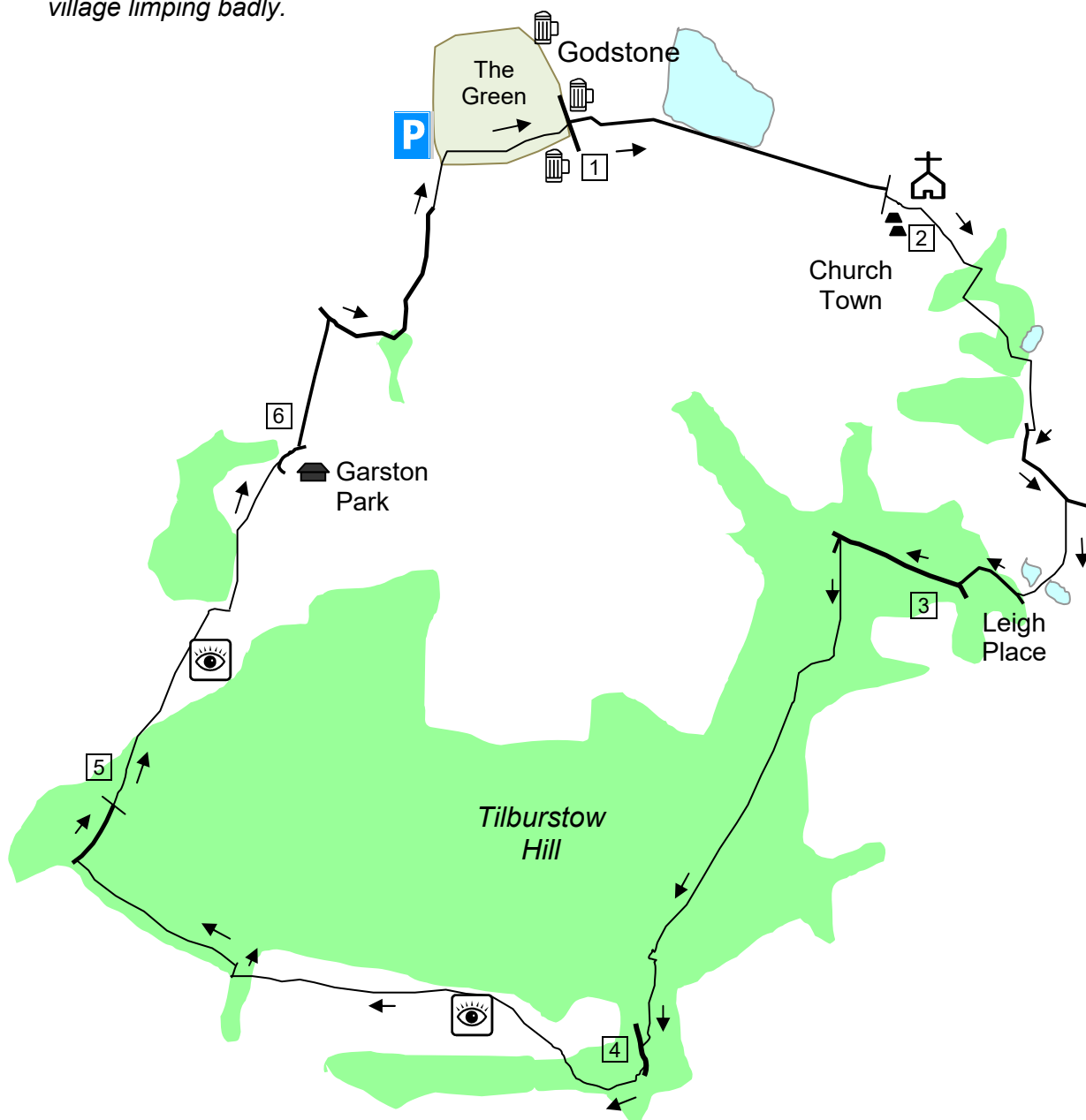
The walk begins at the Green in Godstone, Surrey, just off the M25, **postcode RH9 8DU**. If coming by car, park carefully anywhere round the Green. Note that the free Council car parks only allow three hours' parking. If every space is full, park on the west side of the Green (Bletchingley Road, then left on Ivy Mill Lane). For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

Godstone has three “pubs” although one, the *White Hart*, is a Beefeater and another, the *Bell*, is an upmarket bar-restaurant (albeit with an attractive garden and patio). The *Hare and Hounds*, at one corner of the Green, is a traditional pub, open all day every day, with one or two brews, including Adnams, and some food, with a nice seating area where you can watch life go by.

The Walk

Welcome to Walchnestead! Well, that was the original name of this village. But maybe the Normans couldn't pronounce it when they put it in the Domesday Book. The village was in the realm of King Ethelred the Unred, who married a daughter of the Duke of Normandy (no, not that one) and was father to King Edward the Confessor. Ethelred gave Walchnestead to his daughter Goda as a marriage portion. So the village was renamed as “Goda's place”. Godstone was nearly wiped off the map in 1349 by the Black Death: stroll over to Bullbeggars Lane and you will find “mensfield” and “womensfield” side-by-

side where the dead were buried thousands upon thousands. Godstone was always an important coach stop; the “Bell Inn” dates from 1393 and the defunct “Rose and Crown”, the “White Hart” and the “Hare and Hounds” from the 1500s. Also in the 1500s, Godstone played its part in arms manufacture: George Evelyn, grandfather of John Evelyn the diarist, obtained a formula for a saltpetre substitute from a refugee German captain for £300. Many notable figures came from Godstone; in 1554, during the reign of catholic counter-reformer Bloody Mary, two men, John Lauder and Thomas Iveson wished to stay loyal to the English Prayer Book and travelled to Brighton to attend a service using the illicit book but were betrayed and arrested in Godstone, brought to London for trial, sentenced by Bishop Bonner to death by burning and dubbed the “Godstone Martyrs” (see the walk “A Ring with a View: Chanctonbury & Steyning” in this series). Another personage was Polly Paine (or Pain), considered to be a witch who could turn herself into a cat or hare; according to legend, some hounds chased a hare to Polly Pain’s Cottage; it was savaged on the hind leg and disappeared; next day, Polly was seen in the village limping badly.



- 1 Locate the *White Hart* on the east side of the Green and go down a lane between the inn and the old butchers, now *Coughlans Artisan Bakers*. Go past the village hall and through a metal barrier onto a tarmac path going past the Bay Pond on your left. *The Bay Pond* was built (yes!) in 1588 to power

a gunpowder mill. It was dredged and restored by the Surrey Wildlife Trust and is now the territory of carp, terrapins and moorhens. Soon you reach a lane opposite the church with the St Mary's buildings on the right, this place being known as Church Town. The chapel is up the steps of the almshouses and **left** through the door ahead.

St Nicholas' church dates from the 1200s and 1300s with a south aisle added during a heavy restoration of the church 1872-3 by Sir George Gilbert Scott who also designed the St Mary's chapel and homes. The church is usually locked, so we won't dwell on the stained glass, ribbed and painted vaulted ceiling and the carvings. The wonderful late Victorian gothic St Mary's chapel alongside it is usually open and is a must-see. It was founded by Augusta Nona in memory of her only child Mabel Fanny. The other buildings are almshouses, surrounding the pretty central well.

In the churchyard, not far from the south (nearest) door, you may notice that one or two of the gravestones have a skull and crossbones carved in them. These were pirates and smugglers ambushed by customs officers in 1687, the most notorious of which was John Edward Trenchman. Running away to sea aged 12 and later brutally pillaging the Spanish colonies, Trenchman eventually returned home and switched to smuggling along the south-east coast. Within a year he was regularly bringing teams of horses laden with contraband to Croydon. One of his gang later turned King's evidence to save his neck and betrayed the rest of the gang. An ambush was laid, as you will discover during the walk, leading to Trenchman's death.

- 2 Continue through the churchyard, keeping to the **right** of the church, going past the entrance porch, on a tarmac footpath downhill. Go through a fence on a woodland path and over a dainty bridge with white criss-cross railings. The next bridge is similar but with a hump. On your left is Glebe Water, sometimes reduced to a reedy marsh. The path turns right by a fence. Avoid a wooden gate ahead and turn **left** uphill. Your path goes over a small meadow and reaches a large field. Turn **right** along the edge of the field. The path soon bends right to meet a driveway. Turn **left** on the driveway which bends left round a wall of *Leigh Place*. *This great estate is dominated by two large ponds, partly fed by the springs found in this area.* Go beside an automatic gate to reach a 3-way fingerpost. Go **right** here on a footpath, passing one of the ponds of *Leigh Place*. Ignore a footpath on the left and continue following the path between fences. At the end, go over a stile [2012: [now gone](#)], giving you a glimpse over the fence to the other pond. Keep **right** on a tarmac drive, soon arriving at a road. Turn **right** on the road.
- 3 You pass on your left the black timbered *Hythe Cottage* with its long red-brick façade, tile hung on its right. After 250m, turn **left** on a lane, The Enterdent, and immediately, at a signpost, turn **left** uphill going past *White Cottage*. *This cottage and its neighbour were once a tea room and hotel. The Enterdent is an old settlement along a road, previously known as Polly Pains Bottom after the witch mentioned above.* Go through a wooden barrier uphill into woodland. As the path veers right, ignore a signed footpath on the left and continue uphill. Keep to this ascending path through Tillburstowhill Common. As the gradient eases, your path crosses a bridleway. You finally arrive at the top of the hill by fallen trees at the edge of the sandstone ridge with views down the steep drop below.

It was in a clearing on this hill where Trenchman rode with his gang. The troops acting for the Customs Men, hidden in the trees, immediately opened fire. Trenchman was the only survivor and made a desperate bid to escape. Looking down at his blood-drenched clothing, he realised that he had stopped a bullet.

He staggered into a nearby inn but died from loss of blood some hours later. For some reason, the villagers took pity on him and buried him in an unmarked grave near Godstone church. Then strange things began to happen ...

Continue straight ahead ignoring the footpath to your left. Shortly there are some paling fencing on your left, with the road visible down on the right. When you reach the road, turn **left**.

- 4 In a few metres, just after a driveway on your left, go **right** through a metal barrier uphill on a track marked as a bridleway, part of the Greensand Way (GW). *This long-distance footpath follows the sandy ridge that you have been walking along all the way from Haslemere to near the Kent coast.* This wide path soon cuts through the sandy ridge. Avoid the gate to the left by forking **right** on a narrower path, going past some leylandii and along the edge of a long grassy meadow, often grazed by horses unaware of their beautiful surroundings with great views across the Weald to the South Downs. Tilburstow Hill still looms up on your right. *As you walk along the path you may notice on your right a bottom of a tree trunk which has been carved into a seat with a letter "K" on it.* You reach a large metal gate ahead on which the bars are partly broken (2017), so you can step over it. Ignore the (disused) stile ahead into the meadow (except to picnic perhaps) but turn **right**, as indicated by the blue arrow, and immediately **left** on a wide level path that continues through fine beechwoods. There is a hollow on your right amidst the tall beeches. Soon on your left you have a sight of a lone black-and-white timbered house. When you reach a lane, turn **right** uphill, thus leaving the GW.
- 5 You arrive at a T-junction by Snatts Hill and Raby's Heath. Cross straight over to a footpath opposite. Go over a stile into a glistening meadow (which may be slippery after rain) with a fence and wooded ravine on your right and an avenue of oaks up on your left. The North Downs make a fine sight ahead. Keep on to a stile which turns out to be redundant. Avoid a waymarked left fork here and continue ahead down the left-hand side of the meadow. The little green-topped spire of the old stable block of Garston Park comes into view. Keep right and go over a stile into a path between fences. You have a horse pasture on your right and a large wooded space on your left. Soon you meet a tarmac drive that services Garston Park. Keep straight ahead on the drive downhill.
- 6 Soon, where the tarmac drive forks, take the **left** fork. At the end of the driveway, go through a wooden swing-gate beside a larger gate and turn **right** on Mill Lane. As the lane bends left, there is a footpath on the left running above the lane. It rejoins the lane just as you re-enter Godstone. Keep ahead past houses. Soon there is a sidewalk on the right as you pass the village school and arrive at the Green. Cross diagonally to reach the main buildings and the *Hare and Hounds* or turn right along the edge of the Green to return to the *While Hart* where the walk began.

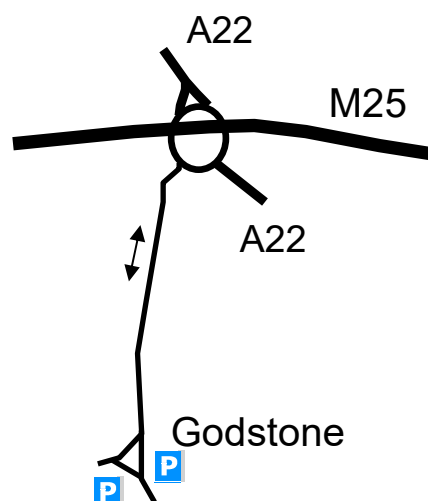
We left Trenchman dead and buried and that should be the end of the story. But, on the night of his burial, two grave diggers were surprised by a figure in seaman's clothing who suddenly sprang up from behind a headstone and pursued them through the churchyard. Soon after this, the marker stone that had been placed over Trenchman's grave was found smashed to smithereens. This happened again and again and the figure re-appeared. Fresh blood was found by the altar. Finally the pirate's body was reburied in a Christian service in the place you saw him, but with the skull and crossbones carved on the headstone. He has been at peace ever since.

Getting there

By car: Godstone has its own entry/exit road off the roundabout on the A22 at Junction 6 of the M25. Follow the sign for Godstone and take the road, Godstone Hill and later the High Street, into the village. For parking, see theW head of this document.

You can also arrive from the south, from the A22 or from Tilburstowhill Road.

By bus/train: bus 410 or 774* from Redhill Station (* not Sunday). Check the timetables. South Godstone station is nearly 2 km from the walk.



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