



The Lovelace Bridges of Horsley

Distance: 9 or 10 km=5½ or 6 miles, easy walking

Region: Surrey

Written: 17/01/2010

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Refreshments: East Horsley after the walk

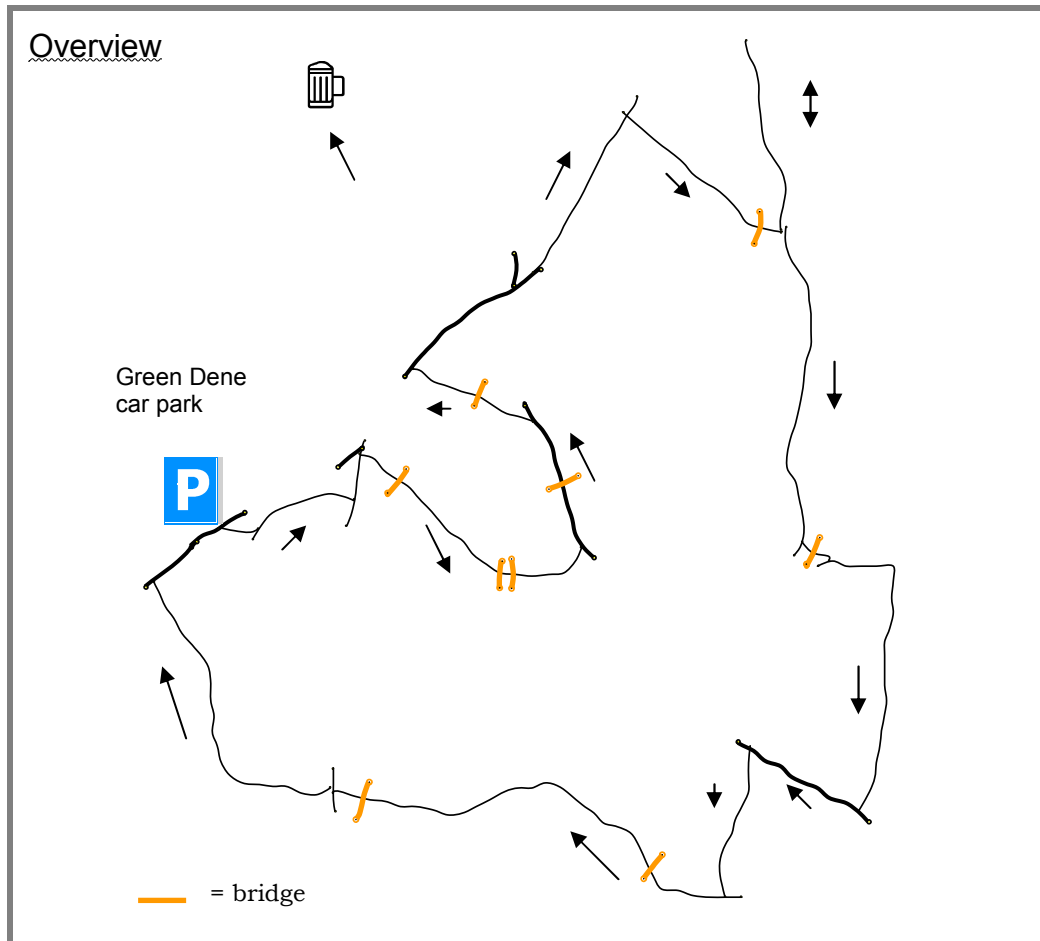
Maps: Explorer 145 (Guildford) and 146 (Dorking)
but the maps in this guide should be sufficient

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Woodland, historic bridges

In Brief

The Earl of Lovelace built these notable bridges in the woods around Horsley to facilitate the transport of timber by horsecart from his forests to the depot. Of the original fifteen bridges, ten are still intact. This walk takes in the nine bridges on public view in an attractive circular route.





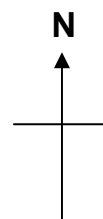
There is a fair amount of mud on this route, except after a dry spell, so boots or wellingtons are advisable. You could certainly take your dog on this walk but, if the purpose is to exercise the dog, then next-door Sheepleas is a much better area. Refreshments are available after the walk, in East Horsley.

The walk begins at the **Green Dene car park** near East Horsley. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Horsley Countryside Preservation Society's Lovelace Bridges Conservation Project has undertaken the restoration and preservation of the existing bridges. More details are on their website at <http://surreycommunity.info/hcps/>. Most of the bridges, including the lost bridges, have a plaque or noticeboard with historical details.

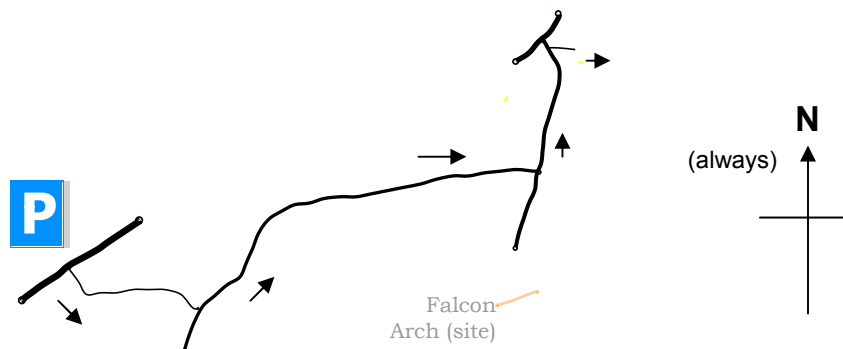
William King, first Earl of Lovelace (1805-1893), was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Surrey in 1840. He bought the East Horsley estate in 1840, gradually moving there from Ockham Park. He married the poet Byron's only (legitimate) daughter Ada (after whom a US Defense computer language is named) and named their first son "Byron". He built a vast number of buildings in Horsley using every architectural style. Not content with rough-and-ready crossings for his timber wagons, he had the bridges of Horsley meticulously shaped and designed in the Moorish manner, built from local flint and bricks, emblazoned with heraldry and finished with parapets.

Note on the maps. Each mini-map below is accurate but not all the maps are to the same scale. North is always up.



The Walk

- 1 Near the road there is a plaque showing the entire area of the Bridges with routes and a suggested Lovelace Bridges Trail. This walk follows it with some variations. Cross the road by the plaque and take a narrow path opposite. The path rises and curves left. Eventually, near the top, it meets a wide forestry track. Turn **left** on the track. The track soon descends by a house to a one-bar gate and nameboard for Mountain Wood and reaches a lane *Honeysuckle Bottom*. As an optional diversion, if you turn right on the lane, you will reach in about 200m the site of one of the lost bridges *Falcon Arch*, together with a plaque recounting much of the history of the bridges. The route however is **left** on the lane. Soon you reach the junction with Green Dene.



- 2 Do not re-join Green Dene but turn **right** by the corner of the junction on a narrow bridleway that goes up past houses on the left into woods and shortly goes under ...

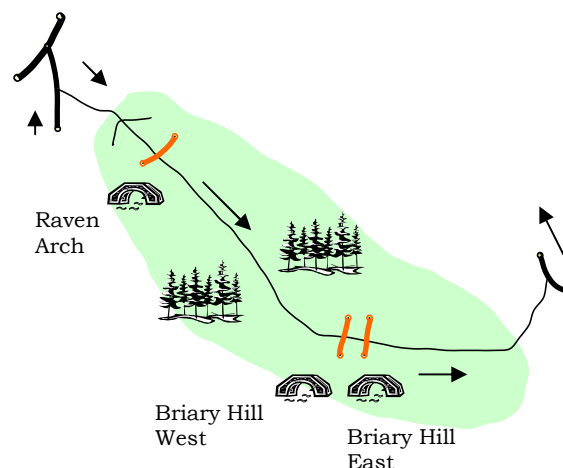
Bridge No. 1: *Raven Arch*, a single-parapet bridge

At a junction, continue straight ahead, ignoring forestry tracks on each side. After some distance, you reach ...

Bridge No. 2: *Briary Hill West*, a typical Lovelace bridge with flint walls, brick facings and horseshoe-shaped arches with rounded tiled tops.

Bridge No. 3: *Briary Hill East*, similar, after 100m and a crossing track

Continue on the path until you reach a farmhouse. Turn **left** to a road, *Crocknorth Road* and turn **left** on it.



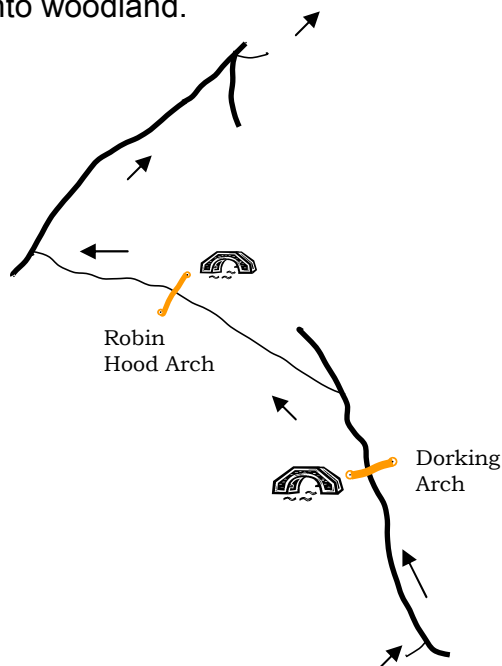
3 In about 300m the road passes under...

Bridge No. 4: [Dorking Arch](#). This is the largest Lovelace bridge and the most elaborate. It has arrowslits in the parapets.

Continue on the road for about 150m and take a signposted bridleway forking off **left**. This has a fence on the right and runs through Round Wood. After about 300m downhill, you pass under...

Bridge No. 5: [Robin Hood Arch](#).

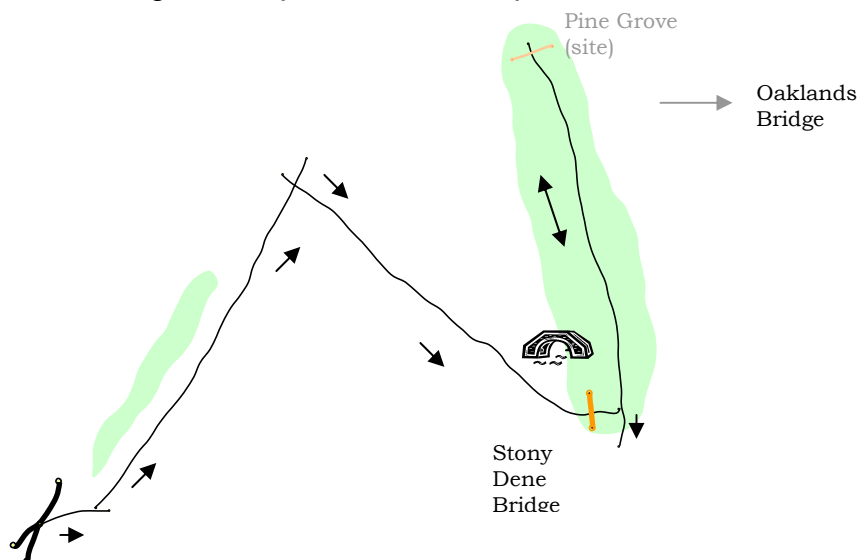
Continue downhill, back to the road Green Dene and turn **right** on it. In about 300m, you reach the junction with Crocknorth Road on the right. Do not turn sharp right into Crocknorth Road but cross it and take a **right** turn on a path into woodland.



4 Soon, at a barn, veer **left** on a path between a band of trees on the left and a meadow on the right. In about 500m, by some metal gates, turn **right** on a bridleway running uphill between meadows. In about 500m, you enter trees and reach...

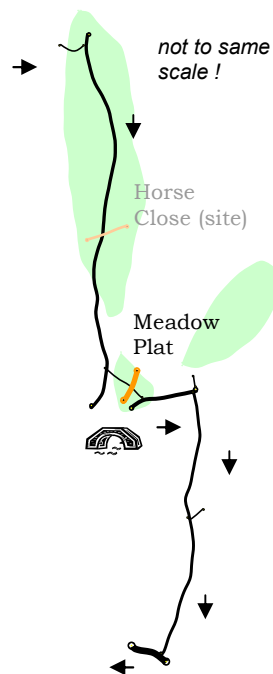
Bridge No. 6: [Stony Dene Bridge](#). This was the first bridge to be restored. The wooden noticeboard beside it gives an account.

Continue after the bridge a few paces to a crosspaths.



Decision point. The site of **Pine Grove**, one of the lost bridges, is a short distance from here. To visit it, turn **left** at the crosspaths and proceed for about 500m. The site is in a slight dip in the path and some of the brickwork can be seen. Another existing bridge **Oaklands Bridge** is near here but it is on private land and cannot be visited. You now need to retrace your steps back to the crosspaths.

- 5 Turn right at the crosspaths. (If you made the optional trip to the Pine Grove site, continue straight on at the crosspaths.) In about 500m you pass the site of the lost **Horse Close** bridge. The path passes through Oaklands Wood and Pump Pond Wood and in about another 300m runs alongside a meadow on the right. *Bluebells are plentiful in spring in the woods here.* On reaching the corner of the meadow, avoid the path right following the fence and veer **left** away from the meadow into trees and downhill, very soon passing under...



Bridge No. 7: Meadow Plat Bridge. This is the narrowest of the Lovelace bridges.

Join a driveway coming from the right. At the end of the driveway, turn **right** on an enclosed brideway. This passes a house on the left, joins its driveway and continues for some distance between fields to the road, *Crocknorth Road* again. Turn **right** on the road.

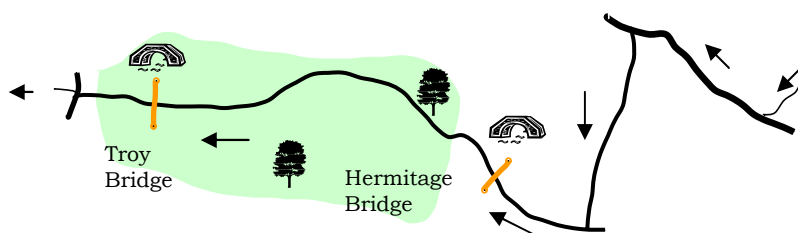
- 6 In 350m, after a dip, turn **left** on a wide brideway. In 450m, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a lane, *Sheepwalk Lane*. The lane runs past *The Hermitage* and, soon after, the lane passes under...

Bridge No. 8: Hermitage Bridge. This bridge is in a rather dark part of the lane. A private road runs over it.

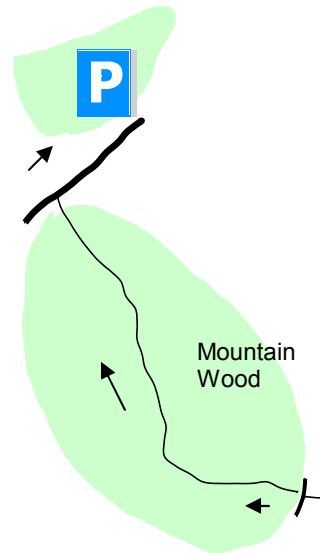
Continue along Sheepwalk Lane for nearly another 1km to pass under...

Bridge No. 9: Troy Bridge. This is one of the larger bridges and is in rather a state of disrepair.

Continue for a short distance further and reach a major crossing track, the left track leading to a timberyard and the right track being *Honeysuckle Bottom*.



- 7 Continue straight over the crossing to a footpath opposite. The path rises steeply at first and soon levels out and runs over an attractive part of Mountain Wood, before descending to the road *Green Dene*. Turn **right** along the road reaching the car park in a short distance.



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Getting there

To get the Green Dene car park from the London area, take the Leatherhead-Dorking Road, the A246. After the junction with traffic lights at Effingham, go over 1km (nearly 1 mile) towards Guildford, till you pass the sign for East Horsley and the road widens. Here look out for a signpost on the left to *Green Dene, Sheep-leas and Shere*. This is Green Dene Lane. (If coming from the Guildford direction, this will be on the *right*.) Follow this lane, later taking the main right fork, still in the direction of Shere. Ignore further turnings off for about another 1½ km (1 mile) until you see the Green Dene car park on the right.

