



Ladywell, Busbridge Lakes and Hydon Heath

Distance: 9½ km=6 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 28-mar-2014

Author: Scupar

Last update: 26-nov-2018

Refreshments: picnic or later in Godalming or Milford

Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford) (mainly) and 133 (Haslemere)
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.

Convent shrine & garden, lakes, meadows, hill and beauty spot

In Brief

This is a lovely picnic walk, best in the warmer months when the spring and summer flowers are on show. At the middle point, there is an exhilarating short climb to the top of Hydon's Ball.



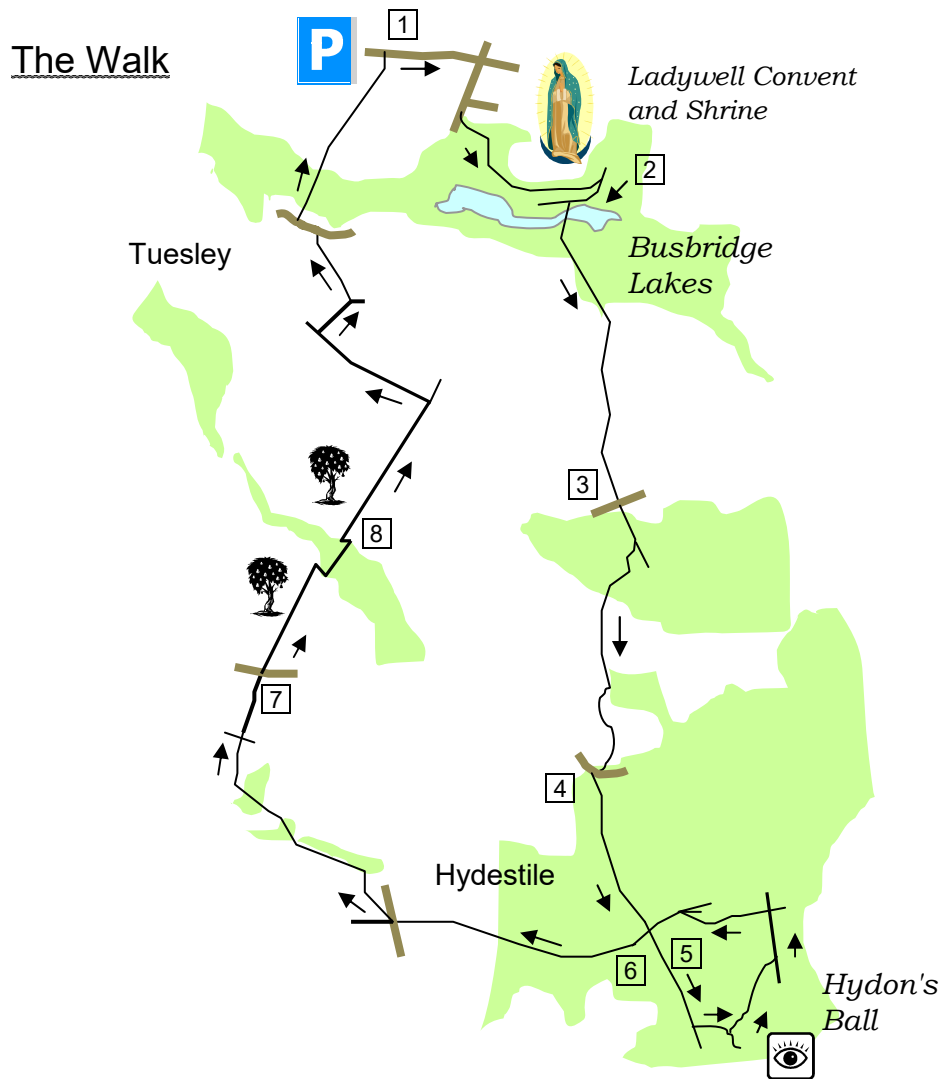
There are only two stiles on this walk, both dog friendly. There are one or two patches of nettles so shorts might be inadvisable. In wetter conditions, there are a few muddy sections, but mostly avoidable.

The walk begins in **Ashtead Lane** on the outskirts of **Godalming** Surrey, **postcode GU7 1SX**. It can also be reached by train via **Godalming station**, with an extra short hop each way. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

- See map overleaf.** Begin the walk by following the road ahead (now Ashstead Lane) to a T-junction, passing the entrance to Ladywell Convent (a retreat and spirituality centre) on your right. At the T-junction, turn **right** on Tuesley Lane and walk along the pavement on the left for 100m or so, till it ends at a second junction with Minster Road. Keep ahead on the narrow road for about 30m where on the left there is a field entrance with a wooden gate. This is a permissive footpath, as indicated by the sign for *Minster Field*. In the meadow turn **left** up a wide grassy strip towards a shrine erected by the Sisters on the footprint of the 7th-century church. (See notice board for details.) *The church was mentioned in the Domesday Book as the mother church or Minster.* Just before the shrine, turn **right** through the hedge into the small new wood and keep ahead through the trees. The path curves left and enters mature woodland. At the far side, swing **left** to a wooden gate in the fence. Go through the gate and follow the path through the trees. In about 250m, keep to the right of a large mound of earth and immediately go straight over a crossing path to reach the bottom of a slope and a T-junction.



- 2 Turn very sharp **right** and follow the path downhill alongside Busbridge Lake on the left where you may catch a glimpse of exotic waterfowl. When the path swings left at the bottom ignore a footpath on the right and continue over a bridge, between two lakes. Follow this path, first uphill then level with woods on your left and a fruit farm on your right, till the path emerges onto a gravel drive at Clock Barn Farm. As you continue ahead, the drive becomes tarmac with great views on your right and soon arrives at a road, Hambledon Road.
- 3 Cross the road and go up the driveway opposite. In 80m, ignore a bridleway on the left and a drive on the right for *Homewood House* and continue ahead past a white house, *Inwood Cottage*. About 30m further on a fingerpost directs you **left** through a laurel hedge. Follow the path alongside a high wooden fence on the right to a stile. Cross the stile. You are now in the grounds of *Hydon Nurseries*. This section is beautiful in spring when the rhododendrons and magnolias are out. Follow the yellow arrows carefully to avoid trespassing, soon along a narrow path beside a field on your right, to go over another stile. Shortly after this the path turns **right** around the back of a large outbuilding, and then **left** along its side. At the end of the outbuilding keep straight on beside a hedge. (The yellow arrow is not visible until you see a tree trunk on the right.) Follow the arrows round the garden of *Busbridge Copse Farmhouse* till you swing **left** to arrive at its driveway with a gate on the left. Turn **right** on the drive and shortly arrive at the road at Hydestile.

- 4 Turn **right** on the road and, in 20m, turn sharp **left** on a drive past houses on the opposite side by a fingerpost. [Oct 2018: important! the fingerpost was lying on the ground, almost invisible; don't make the mistake of taking the *second* turning left where there is *also* a fingerpost and now a notice saying this path is private]. (You may need to walk a little further to see round the bend in the road but don't make the mistake of taking a private dirt track through a wooden gate.) [2018: a walker reports a notice pinned by a landowner – possibly related to this private track?] Follow this path straight ahead past some houses and into a wood with coppiced chestnut trees on the right. This bit may be muddy in wet weather but is quite easy to negotiate. Continue ahead slightly uphill to a crossing of paths at the corner of a high wire fence.

Your route is now straight ahead to the top of Hydon's Ball. However, if you would like to shorten the walk by omitting Hydon's Ball, simply turn **right** at the crossing path and skip the next section.

- 5 Continue straight ahead over the crossing path and follow the wire fence on your right uphill. Your path goes up some wooden steps and over some paving stones, passing a private gate on the right. You meet a sandy uphill path on the left. Turn **left** up this path and follow it to the top of the hill where there is a large stone seat dedicated to Octavia Hill in whose memory the land was given to the National Trust. There is a fine view from here over to Blackdown.



Octavia Hill (1838-1912) was a social reformer who devoted her life to improving housing for the poor and saving open spaces for the enjoyment of all. Because of the collapse of her father's business, she had no formal education and was taken in by a co-operative guild as a glass painter and formed a lifelong friendship with the great art patron and reformer John Ruskin. In 1893, she and two others founded the National Trust. Her sister Miranda did similar good work (see the walk "Burnham Beeches" in the Chilterns section of this series). On her death, her family erected this stone seat on Hydon Heath. (The "ball" was possibly a signalling station or maybe simply the round summit.) Now Hydon Heath is both a plant conservation area and an arboretum, many oaks, chestnuts and non-native shrubs having been planted by that great garden designer Gertrude Jekyll.

After a breather on the hilltop, you can either retrace your steps and turn **left** at the crosspaths or take a small looping tour as follows. Directly behind the seat, take the **leftmost** path downhill. The path winds and levels out. At a T-junction at the bottom, turn **left** on a very wide track. In 150m, at a crossing path by a brick cairn, turn **left** on another wide path. After 300m or so, at a junction with blue marker posts, keep left, still on a wide path. In 50m keep straight on at a crossing path.

- 6 Continue ahead with the wire fence now on your left. Ignore all turn offs and follow the path downhill until it emerges from the wood and runs between fields to a road. Turn **right** on the road and in 15m ignore a broad bridleway on your left. Immediately after the bridleway, turn **left** up a bank on a signed footpath onto a golf course. Keep **right** at a post with a yellow arrow and follow the path across the course between two tees to a fingerpost visible at the other side by the tree line. Turn **left** at this fingerpost and follow the edge of the course. In 150m, another arrow directs you **right** into the trees. Turn immediately **left** again on a path through the trees. In 50m, fork **right** at another post with a yellow arrow. Your path emerges from the trees out onto the green, enters another wooded area and crosses a fairway (look left for flying balls!) in the direction of a yellow arrow. On the other side is a small wooden post with a yellow arrow amongst other signs.

Bear **right** here through the woods with the golf links on your right, going over a sandy path to join a gravel drive which shortly becomes tarmac and passes a tennis court and some houses on your right, reaching a road.

7 This road can be quite busy and the traffic tends to be fast so take care. Cross the road to a narrow footpath opposite and follow the path, with a fence on the right and a bank on the left, to a stile. Cross the stile into a field and follow the wide grassy track between hedges. Ignore the Community Footpaths left and right and follow the public footpath to the other side of the field. You are now on Tuesley Farm, one of the largest growers of soft fruits in the UK, suppliers to Sainsbury and Waitrose. At the other side of the field turn **right** and in about 30m go **left** through a wooden swing-gate into a bluebell wood. *The farm had positioned some beehives here and you may need to dodge a swarm.* Go through the wood on a raised path, over a bridge across a small stream, and exit through another wooden gate turning **left** as the fingerpost directs.

8 At the corner of the field you are in, turn **right** again following the fingerpost and walk between the fruit bushes on a wide bare path towards some green sheds and a water tank ahead. When you reach these, turn **left** at another fingerpost and continue for 400m to the next fingerpost. Turn **right** and in around 50m, at another post, just before the track turns right, turn **left** as directed alongside a pretty reservoir with rushes and perhaps ducks on it. At the end of the reservoir, continue straight on to reach some steep stone steps leading down to a road in the small village of Tuesley. Turn **left** and walk along the road till you come to a group of red tile-hung houses. Just before them, turn **right** at a fingerpost. Follow this path at first steeply downhill and then across a muddy section, over a stream, followed by some steep steps up with a handrail provided by Godalming Ramblers. Continue on this fine woodland path for about 200m, with the Convent buildings on your right, till you come out into Ashstead Lane where the walk started.

Getting there

By car: Getting there from London or Portsmouth: Leave the A3 at a sign for *Milford, Petworth, Haslemere* just after/before Guildford. Follow the signs for *Milford*, turn **left** at the traffic lights in Milford. Go ahead at the small roundabout and beware of speed traps (30mph) on the road into Godalming! Go under the railway bridge to reach a larger roundabout. Here turn **right** into Shackstead Lane. Continue up the hill to a small roundabout and turn **right** into Pullman Lane. Follow the road through the housing estate, curving left. After nearly ½ mile, you see playing fields ahead as Ashtead Lane (marked as a cul-de-sac) meets you from the right. Veer **left** here. Just before or after Admiral's Way on your left you can park by the roadside on the left with the grounds of Ladywell Convent on the right behind a high wooden fence.

By train: the walk is one mile from Godalming station. From the station, follow winding Station Road towards the centre of the town. On reaching the traffic lights with the main A3100, cross straight over up Holloway Hill. The road changes to Tuesley Lane. When you meet Shackstead Lane coming from the right, keep straight ahead, still on Tuesley Lane. Eventually you meet Ashtead Lane on your right. Now begin the walk from from the 3rd sentence of section 1.

fancy more free walks? www.fancyfreewalks.org