



Oxshott and Esher Commons

Distance: 11 km=7 miles easy walking
or shorter walks of 8 km=5 miles, 6¼ km=4 miles & 5 km=3¼ miles
add 1 km=0.6 mile for Prince's Coverts

Region: Surrey

Date written: 1-jul-2011

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Last update: 4-may-2022

Refreshments: Oxshott, Esher or Claygate, after the finish

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

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

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Woodland, lakes, heath, country houses

In Brief

This woodland walk takes you over Esher and Oxshott Commons in Surrey through surprisingly wild and lonely country, considering its proximity to London and the hum of the A3 trunk road.

The walk can be divided into two different shorter walks, one mainly in Esher Common and one in Oxshott Common.



The terrain is easy, so any good footwear is fine and there are no nettles or stiles. However, in the wet seasons, you will find boots essential. Your dog is welcome on the 3-mile option.

Winter-Spring 2020 and during the wet summer of 2021: the path under the railway in section **3** was flooded; walkers could not pass through and diverted via Claygate, using the new perfectly pleasant *Claygate Loop* (see at bottom). End-March: the path was negotiable *very carefully* using planks; the Water Company is working on it, but (2021) there is little sign of progress. In winter 2022, it was "just about passable".

The walk begins at the first **Sandy Lane car park** (*approximate postcode **KT22 0NZ***, grid ref TQ 139 617). To get there from the A3, turn south on the A244 (*Oxshott, Leatherhead*) and take the **first road right**, Sandy Lane. The car park is only about 150m on the **right**. Don't confuse this car park with the little Oxshott Common car park which is further up the A244 near the sand pit. You can also begin the main walk or the 3-mile walk at **Oxshott Railway Station**. For a map see → *Getting There*.

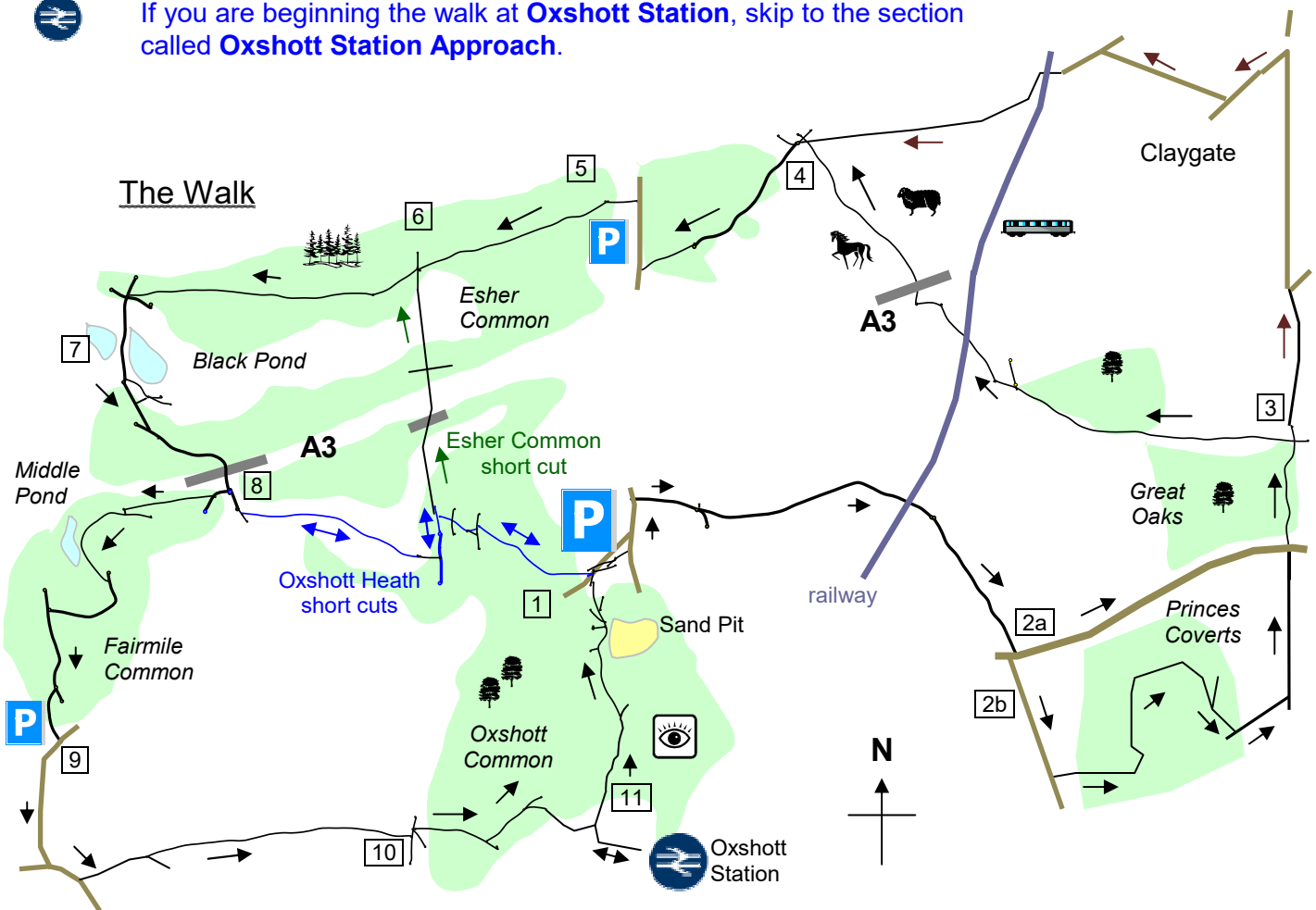


The Walk

Decision Point. If you are doing the shorter 3¼ or 4 miles walks, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Oxshott Heath Westbound** section.



If you are beginning the walk at **Oxshott Station**, skip to the section called **Oxshott Station Approach**.



- 1 Go through the car park parallel to Sandy Lane on your right, leaving by a path that soon joins Sandy Lane and emerge at the junction with the main A244. Cross the main road, turn **left** on it and, in 100m, turn **right** on Queens Drive. Where Queens Drive curves right, keep ahead on Stokesheath Road North which becomes a fine country lane with superior properties on the right and open fields on the left. Continue through a gate beside a wooden gate and over the railway, after which there are houses on both sides, especially the imposing *Stoke House*. You reach a T-junction with busy Fair oak Lane.

Previously, all walks directed you along the busy road here where there is a thin verge but no footway. An alternative is now available which takes you on a longer circuit through the beautiful woodland of Prince's Coverts, avoiding all traffic. Because this alternative route (**2b** below) uses a private road, it is believed to be unsuitable for large groups. Singles, pairs and families with children will find it useful. If you have any doubts or you are a large group, use the road (**2a**).

- 2a Road route.** Turn **left** on Fair oak Lane. You can use the footway on the other side, but eventually it disappears and there is only a narrow grassy bank. This small section of road walking is unavoidable. After about 750m total on this road you reach a small red house. Turn **left** here at a

fingerpost, past a metal barrier, into the woodland of *Great Oaks*, part of the Crown Estate.

- 2b Woodland route.** Turn **right** on Fair oak Lane and immediately **left** on Prince's Drive, using the pedestrian gate on the right of the metal barrier. This is a private road, the most exclusive of all Surrey residential communities, so you must be quiet and considerate. After 350m, just as you see the road 100m ahead curving right, look to your left for a small wooden gate beside a large wooden gate. Go **left** through the gate, past a sign *Crown Estate, Welcome to Prince's Coverts*. *Prince's Coverts* is a huge area of woodland with marked trails, protected but open to walkers (see the walk in this series "*Claygate, Ashted Common, Prince's Coverts*"). The track goes through a small clearing, narrowing as it goes through an oak wood with a garden fence on your left. Keep ahead on the main path which soon elbows left. Shortly, the path zigzags left-right over a ditch and you have a wire fence on your right. In 150m, the wire fence bends right. Turn **right** here on a wide path with the fence still on your right. In 100m or so, at the next corner, turn **right** again, still following the fence. In 150m you come out into a more open and mature part of the wood with tall pines. Ignore a path sharp left here and continue ahead to a junction with a very wide surfaced track. Turn **left** on the track to meet a similar track in 150m at a T-junction. Turn **left** and keep straight on along an avenue of tall thin poplars. It leads in 300m to a barrier. Go through a large metal kissing gate and continue on a driveway past a house to meet the main road, Fair oak Lane. Cross carefully straight over, past a metal barrier, into the woodland of *Great Oaks*, also part of the Crown Estate.
- 3** After 300m you reach a crosspaths at the corner of a meadow. Turn **left** here. [Mar 2020: see note in intro about the flooded underpass: you have the option of following the Claygate Loop at the end.] Soon you pass a white coal tax post, one of several you may have seen today. *The posts were erected in the mid-1800s by the City of London at points where tax was payable by people bringing coal and other commodities into the city. About 200 have survived and are now preserved.* The path passes a gate and meadow on the left. Soon after, take the **left** fork, going under a railway bridge. *The horse-head sculpture in the cattle pasture is by Nic Fiddian-Green; it is called "Serenity" for a calming influence on drivers.* The path, now a track, winds left and right under the busy A3 road. It then runs between meadows of sheep and horses before briefly entering woods and reaching a junction. Here turn **left** at a 4-way fingerpost.
- 4** Ignore a path branching off right at another fingerpost and follow the track past a gate and a cottage. By the entrance to Arbrook Farm, keep ahead through a barrier. The path is now narrow, running through a holly wood and over a bridge. After 100m, go straight over an oblique crossing path and over another after 50m, always staying on this very narrow woodland path. Soon you reach the main Copsem Lane near the roundabout with the A3. Turn **right** on this road, and shortly cross it carefully, turning **left** into the Copsem Lane car park.
- 5** Go to the noticeboard and take the **left** of the three paths in front of you. After 20m, go over a 4-plank bridge across a ditch, now keeping the ditch on the right. After another 40m, cross the ditch again and follow the path with the ditch now on the left. Head for the pine-clad hill visible ahead, passing on your way a playful wooden sculpture. Your path goes up a series of flights of steps taking you to a raised plateau with lines of large leaf trees. Follow these trees, always keeping to the high ground. In 300m

or so, you meet a wide sandy crossing path near a two-way fingerpost. Continue straight over.

- 6 Your path goes past several benches and, after 200m, up and down a dip. You are still on a high path, under chestnuts and pines. When you meet a wooden railing, keep ahead over a wide diagonally crossing path and pick up a clear but narrower path directly opposite. This path snakes its way over high ground, crosses a wider path diagonally, goes over a pine-crowned hill, with more benches, and descends to a junction of several paths with wooden railings. Avoid a path sharp left but take the **second** wide path on the **left**.
- 7 The path runs over a causeway with the Black Pond on your left, passing sculpted bench seats. *Black Pond is the largest on Esher Common. It once served as a water supply for Claremont but now is a haven for dragonflies, toads and wildlife that thrives in the reeds.* **Either** continue past a wooden barrier. **Or**, just as the water ends, turn **left** over a wooden ramp, taking this chance to observe the surrounding watery world, go over a bridge, fork **right** over another long bridge, turn **right** and **left**, back on the original wide path. In 50m or so, veer **left** on a wide crossing track. In 200m, the track becomes tarmac and goes up a rise. Turn **right** over a bridge across the busy A3 road, reaching a fingerpost on the other side.

Decision Point. If you would like to go back to the Sandy Lane car park by a shorter, but attractive, route of 8 km=5 miles, omitting Fairmile and Oxshott Commons, skip to near the end of this text and follow the section **Oxshott Heath Eastbound**.

Turn **right** after the bridge on a wide track in the direction of *Sandy Lane*, as marked by the fingerpost [[Apr 2022: gone!](#)].

- 8 In just 30m, leave the track by forking **right** on a narrow path that runs through a cleared area near the A3 road. *This patch used to be a forest of tall pines but they were cleared in 2015 to provide a margin to protect the road from fallen trees.* The path goes over two 2-plank bridges and then turns left, up two steps to a T-junction. Turn **right** here on a wider path. The path reaches a high bank with a marker post bearing a blue arrow indicating a “permissive horse ride”. Ignore the blue arrow but veer **left** immediately behind the marker post, up the bank, to obtain a view of the Middle Pond below. Keep ahead, always on the high ground, with the Pond down on your right and keep going round till eventually your path bends left by a bench seat and you reach that permissive bridleway again. Turn **right** on the bridleway. Follow the path as it curves right downhill, ignoring a junction on the left at a fingerpost, and continue between two seats over a bridge. In 20m, avoid a minor path that forks right and follow the main path up into Fairmile Common. On reaching a junction and a fingerpost, turn **left** on a wide horse path following a wire fence on your left (in places hidden by vegetation). Continue straight on along this narrow path, ignoring left and right forks, passing blue arrows, for 250m, to the Fairmile Common car park on Sandy Lane.
- 9 Turn **right** on Sandy Lane, using a woodland path opposite that acts as a footway. The woodland path is replaced by some finely mown front lawns. In 250m you reach a T-junction. Turn **left** here on Miles Lane and in about 100m, at a pillar box, turn **left** on Fairmile Park Road, following the footway on the left. You pass cottages, including a thatch and *Compton House*, once home of aviation pioneer Sir Thomas Sopwith. Where the road bends right, keep ahead on a path* which runs parallel to a residential road on

your left (Fairmile Park Copse) and later becomes fenced. *Reed's School, an independent school originally founded in East London, is on your left, then on both sides.* Cross a drive, then a road, finally reaching the trees of Oxshott Common. (* In high summer, the footpath ahead may be overgrown and difficult to walk on. You can instead take the residential road on your left, only about 100m to its end, where there is a path to the right which re-joins the expected footpath. By then it is wide and clear.)

- 10 Keep on dead straight, taking a wide path ahead, slightly uphill. In 150m or so, at a major junction at the top of a rise by a seat, turn **left**. The path follows high ground with an open valley on the right. Avoid minor paths into the woods on the left. At a junction where several paths fan out under a solitary tall thin pine, take the **rightmost** path through trees which gradually reveals views on your right across the valley. (If you are finishing the walk at **Oxshott Railway Station**, skip to the 'End' section of the **Oxshott Station Approach**. Otherwise ...) Your path bends left, passing three seats.
- 11 Soon you pass more seats and a War Memorial on your left. Turn **left** here at a post with a white arrow on a wide path that leads, in 200m or so, to a big sandpit. Veer **left** at the sandpit, still following a faded white arrow on a post, with the sandpit on your right. At the next white and yellow arrows, keep **right** as indicated, staying beside the sandpit. Ignore the next (rather hidden) white arrow pointing sharp left and continue for just 5m to a post with a yellow arrow. Fork **left** here, away from the sandpit, on a narrow path into the woods. In 30m, at a T-junction, turn **left** on a slightly wider path. In 20m, cross straight over a diagonal crossing path, towards a yellow arrow visible ahead. When you reach it, instead of forking right in the direction of the arrow, choose the **left** fork. This path leads to Sandy Lane opposite the car park where the walk began.



*For final refreshments, there are several places in Esher and Oxshott. The **Swan Inn in Claygate** (postcode **KT10 9BS**) is also very near and has parking and an open aspect onto the Green.*

Oxshott Heath Westbound

Take this short cut at the start of the walk if you would like to take the **shorter** options, omitting Great Oaks.

Starting in the middle of the Sandy Lane car park, almost opposite the entrance and just to the right of a noticeboard, take a clear path into the woods. You are in an attractive forest of pine and birch, always on a clear path. After 250m, your path goes over a crossing path. In another 70m, you go over another crossing path as your path descends to go over a long 2-plank bridge. Continue straight on over a diagonal crossing path. [Winter 2014: if you encounter a water-filled ditch, you can skip around it to the right.] You quickly meet a wide track. You have two options:

Via Esher Common Heights (for the 4 mile walk)

Turn **right** on the track. In 300m, as the track becomes tarmac, you pass a pond on your right and cross the A3 trunk road by a bridge onto the sandy pine plains of Esher Common. In 100m, go over a crossing track, next to a bench seat, heading for the pine-topped ridge ahead. Your path rises to meet a crossing path at the start of the woods. Turn **left** on this path.

Now join the main walk at section **6**.

Direct to The Middle Pond (for the 3¼ mile walk)

Turn **left** on the track using the little parallel side path if you like. In 130m, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn sharp **right** in the direction *West Bridge, Portsmouth Road*. This nice easy well-surfaced track twists its way across the beautiful open heath. After 600m and a patch of woodland, you reach a T-junction with another wide track. Turn **right** on the track towards a bridge but, just before the bridge, turn **left** on a wide track in the direction of Sandy Lane, as marked by the fingerpost. [Apr 2022: gone!]

Now join the main walk at section 8.

Oxshott Heath Eastbound

Use this short cut if you would like to go back to the Sandy Lane car park after the A3 bridge at section 6 by a shorter but attractive route.

Ignore the right turn after the footbridge and continue ahead, signposted *horse ride Oxshott Heath*. In 20m, turn **left** on a wide straight path. Follow this bridleway, avoiding lesser paths off, as it twists and turns and crosses a beautiful open heath. Eventually the path reaches a T-junction with a 3-way fingerpost, Turn sharp **left** on a wide track. In 60m, fork right on a narrow path that runs parallel to the main track. This path goes over a little bridge and nearly touches the main track again. In another 20m, the path once more comes close to the main track. In another 10m, turn sharp **right** on a narrow but clear path into the woods. The path crosses another path diagonally and runs over a long plank bridge. Immediately after the bridge, zigzag smartly **left** between pines and **right** again, cross straight over a crossing path and continue ahead on a pleasant wide woodland path. Soon you reach the Sandy Lane car park where the walk began.



Oxshott Station Approach

Follow these directions if you are starting the walk at **Oxshott Railway Station**.

Start: exit the station through the main building. Cross the approach road and take a narrow tarmac footpath, immediately opposite the entrance door, on the left of an advertising hoarding. Keep straight ahead past a small noticeboard on a very wide gravel path. The path rises gently and reaches a 4-way fingerpost. Turn sharp **right** uphill on a stepped path. At the top, keep ahead, passing some seats. Join the walk at section 10.

End: where the path bends left towards some seats, turn sharp **right** on a path that goes down steps. At a 4-way fingerpost, turn **left** on a wide gravel path. Keep straight ahead past a small noticeboard on a narrow tarmac path leading back to the Station.

Claygate Loop

Use this route if the path under the railway in Section 3 is flooded or if you would like to extend the walk slightly through Claygate (see map).

Keep straight on at the crosspaths and follow the wide woodland track until it takes you over a bridge across the A3 road to come past a noticeboard and a metal barrier to a junction of residential roads. Continue straight ahead on Coverts Road. In 600m, at a junction, turn sharp **left** on Vale Road. In 150m or so, turn **right** on swankier Beaconsfield Road. At the

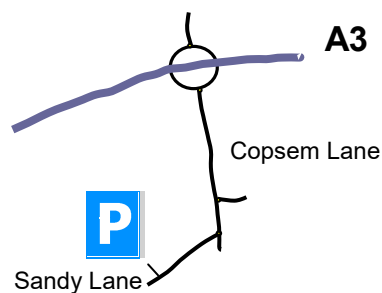
end, as the road curves right, turn **left** on Claremont Road. Continue through a barrier and over a railway bridge on a footpath which bends left by a hedge and then veers right under tall trees. You come over a bridge with rails and, after more walking between fields, you come past a wooden barrier gate into woodland. Keep straight ahead at a fingerpost and continue through the woods to another barrier and a fingerpost where a path joins from the left.

Now re-join the main walk at Section [4](#).

Getting there

By train: begin the walk at **Oxshott Station**, just 250m from the walk across Oxshott Common (see the text).

By car: Come off the A3 road onto the A244, signposted *Leatherhead*. Follow the sign for *Oxshott*. In ½ km=0.3 miles, turn **right** on Sandy Lane. The car park is just over 100m on the **right**.



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