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## The Lovelace Bridges of Horsley

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Distance: 9 or 10 km=5½ or 6 miles    easy walking with one steep section

Region: Surrey

Date written: 17-jan-2010

Author: Schwebefuss

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Refreshments: East Horsley after the walk

Last update: 14-feb-2021

Maps: Explorer 145 (Guildford) & 146 (Dorking)

*but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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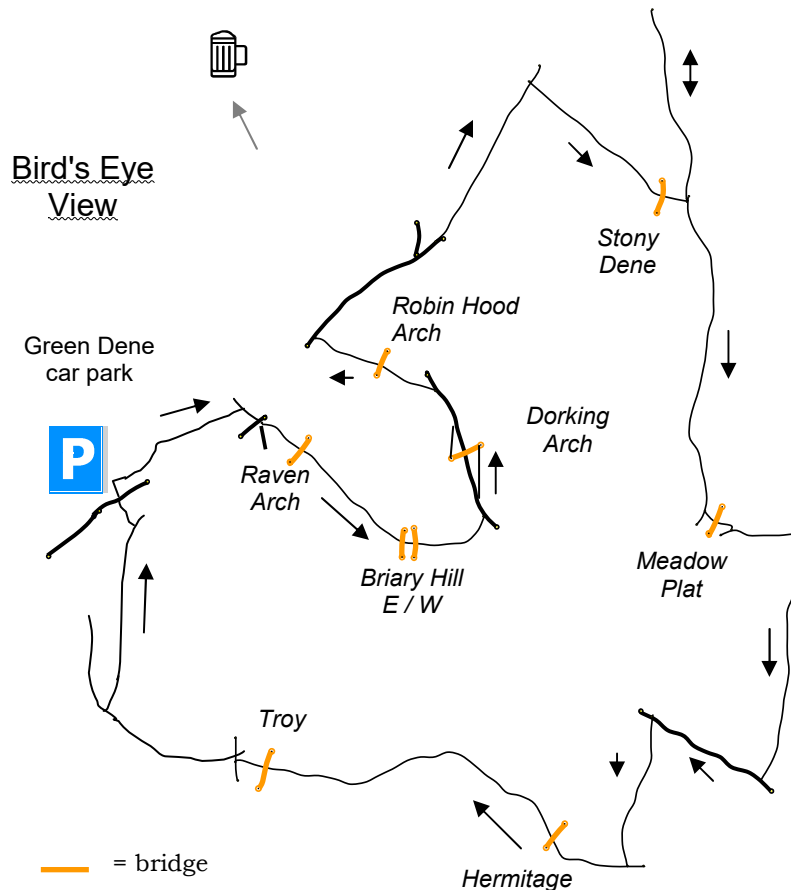
*Woodland, historic bridges*

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### In Brief

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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 in winter boots or wellingtons are advisable. You will encounter a lot of woodland debris strewn along the way. There are some brambles across the paths which make good clothing essential. You could certainly take your dog on this walk. Refreshments are available after the walk, in East Horsley.

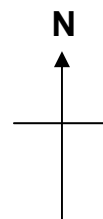
The walk begins at the **Sheepleas Green Dene car park** near East Horsley, 200m north of postcode **KT24 5TA**, grid ref TQ 090 510, [www.w3w.co/badly.gifted.secret](http://www.w3w.co/badly.gifted.secret). The White Down car park is 1½ km from the walk, making an attractive prelude/postlude. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Green Dene car park is now **open** again after completion of ash die-back clearance.

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 <https://www.hcps.online/>. Most of the bridges, including the lost bridges, have a plaque or noticeboard with historical details [**Aug 2020: four plaques and two stands now vanished: HCPS please note!**].

*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

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If you arrived by **bus**, get off at the **Salmons Road** stop. Walk on the main road, away from Salmons Road, using the footway, for just over ½ km to the junction with Dirtham Lane on your right. Continue another 20m, cross the road and take a signed footpath on the left, just after a gated drive, beside a post, passing a house. In about 150m, **ignore** a footpath on your right and continue straight ahead, beside a wire fence. In another 200m, look for the remains of an old bricks construction between banks. This is the lost **Pine Grove** bridge. Now continue for 500m to begin the walk at section **5**, going straight on at the crosspaths.

The main walk is described on the next page.



- 3 In only 50m, opposite a wide driveway and metal barrier on your left, turn **right** through a gap in the wooden fence on a narrow unsigned brideway into woods. In 250m you reach a crossing path with tall beeches on your right. Turn **left** on this narrow path soon passing over:

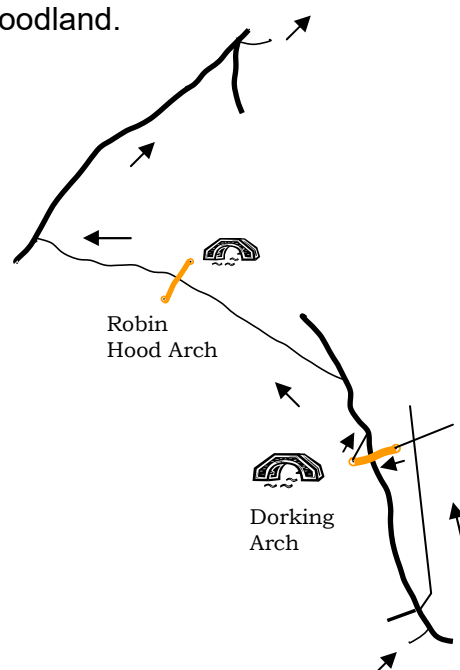
*Bridge No. 4: Dorking Arch.* This is the largest Lovelace bridge and the most elaborate. It has arrowslits in the parapets.

Immediately after the bridge go **right** steeply down the grass slope to join the road. (Care! very steep with deceptive footholds – at the bottom there's a gap giving you two steps down – but watch for traffic!)

Continue on the road for only 30m and, at a fingerpost, take a brideway 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.*

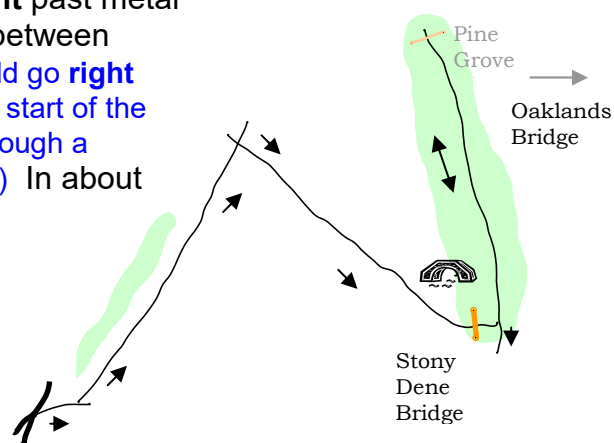
Continue downhill, back to the road Green Dene and turn **right** on it. In about 300m, you reach the junction with Crocknorth Road on the right. Do not turn sharp right into Crocknorth Road but cross it and take a **right** turn on a path into woodland.



- 4 Follow this path, passing a corrugated barn on your right, between a band of trees on the left and a meadow on the right. In about 500m, at a crossing path, turn **right** past metal gates on a rather rough brideway running uphill between meadows. (If the path is narrow and rutted, you could go **right** through a swing gate beside a large metal gate at the start of the path, up the left-hand side of the meadow and **left** through a wooden swing gate at the top to re-join the path.) 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 for 35m to a crosspaths with a marker post.



**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 200m go straight over an oblique crossing path. In another 150m you pass the site of the lost **Horse Close** bridge. The path passes through Oaklands Wood and Pump Pond Wood, going over crossing paths, and in about another 300m runs alongside meadows on the right. *Bluebells are plentiful in spring in the woods here.* On reaching the far corner of the meadows, avoid the path right that follows 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.

You meet a driveway coming from the right. Keep **left** on it, heading towards a house on your left. At the end of the driveway, turn **right** on a narrow bridleway. This path passes a house on the left, joins its driveway and continues for another 400m between fields to the road, **Crocknorth Road** again. Turn **right** on the road.

- 6 In 300m, after a dip, turn **left** on a wide signposted bridleway running beside a meadow on your left. In 450m, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a dirt drive called **Sheepwalk Lane**. The drive runs past *The Hermitage* and, soon after, 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 1 km through impressive woodland 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**.

