



Godstone South and Crowhurst

Distance: 10½ km=6½ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Godstone South

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

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Green pastures, woodland, remote country church and village, views

In Brief

This peaceful walk in immaculate green countryside can be walked as a kind of pilgrimage to the tiny village of Crowhurst with its historic church and its 4000-year-old yew tree. Along the way, you will see sheep meadows and the occasional wood, with blackberries in abundance in late summer.

There is hardly any road walking, until right at the end where there is 850m along a road which is quieter than the main road but *can* carry speeding traffic at times - and without a footway.



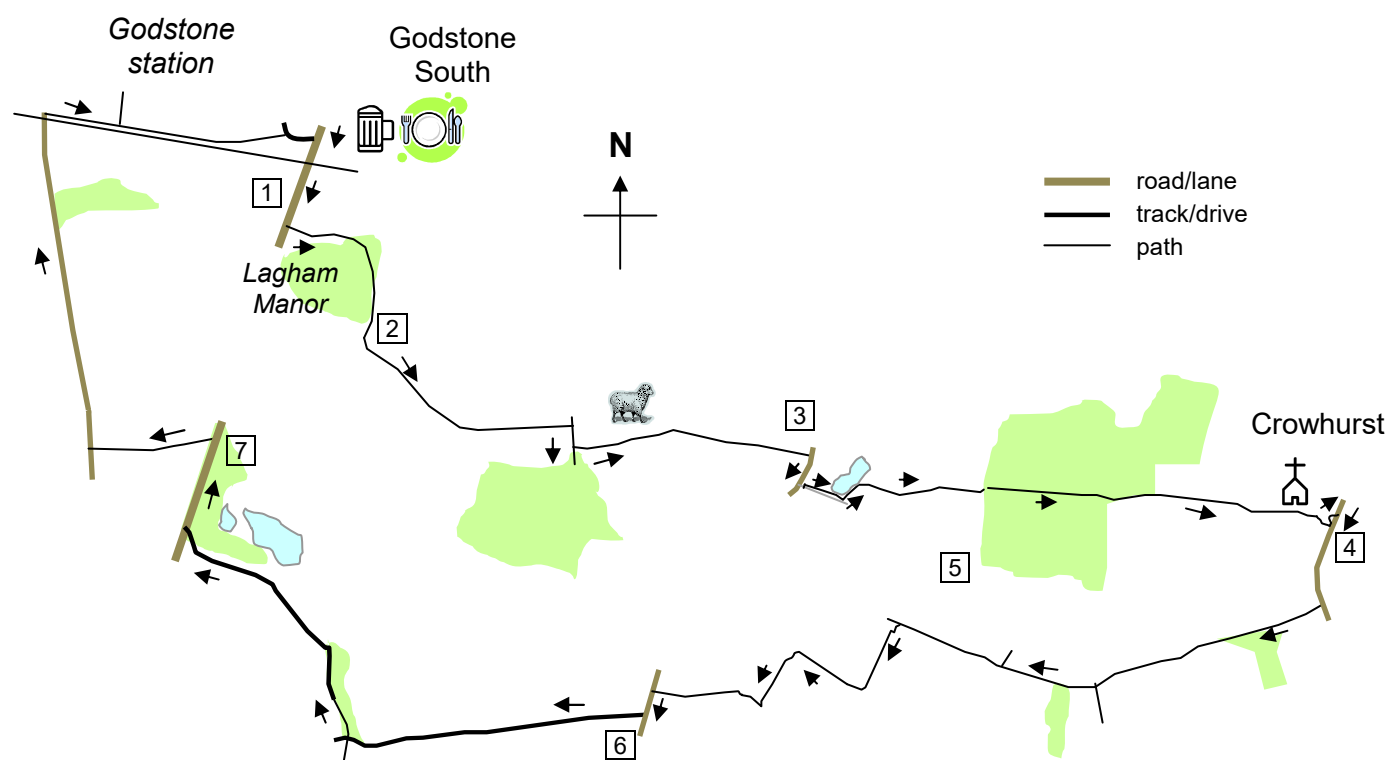
For refreshments, apart from the filling station, the *Lagham* is both an Indian *and* a Chinese eatery and also a (rather downmarket) pub.

There were no nettles to speak of on this walk and no thick undergrowth. Most of the walk is on good trackways, with just a couple of sections round the side of a field. So, in a dryish season, shorts and trainers should be adequate. Your dog can come on this walk.



The walk begins at **Godstone Station** (free parking on Sundays) or in the village of Godstone South, postcode **RH9 8EZ**. Remember, this location is 2½ miles south of Godstone village. Parking in Crowhurst is possible but difficult with just a few spaces on the roadside. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 If you are starting at or near Godstone Station, follow the main road under the railway arch, and immediately ignore an obscure footpath beside the railway on your left. In 150m or so, cross the main road carefully to turn **left** on a tarmac drive signed as a bridlway. Keep straight on through a large gate, going past stables, and keep ahead through a large metal gate, passing cattle sheds. The bridlway shortly forks right up a gentle slope. On your right, hidden beyond the deep woods, lies Lagham Manor.

Lagham (Anglosaxon "home in the flood") was a vast moated refuge until in 1262 the Norman Sir Roger de St. John, with a permit from King Henry III, built a fortified house. He joined battle with Simon de Montfort's rebels and was killed at Evesham in 1265. The current house dates from 1622, Jacobean in style but built from those typical small Tudor bricks. In the mid-1700s the house was enlarged into a comfortable dwelling, complete with deer park which is just discernible on the OS map. The estate is now an archaeologist's paradise with a thousand years of history buried in the moat or under the floors.

- 2 Your path leads through a metal farm gate into a meadow. Keep ahead through another metal farm gate into a horse pasture. Your path veers **left** up a slope and runs beside bushes on your right. Keep going in the same, slightly leftward, direction. Your destination is a gap in the hedge, after which your path runs beside a wire fence on your right. You come through a small metal gate onto a path between fences and are confronted by a farm gate with a large sheep pasture beyond. Avoid this gate and instead turn **right**. In 50m go **left**, ignoring a narrow path straight ahead, and go through a small metal gate into an adjoining sheep pasture. Keep straight ahead along the left-hand side, soon ignoring an arrow pointing right. You come through a large metal gate onto a wide path between a fence and a hedge. A large metal gate leads you onwards, following a driveway past buildings of Lagham Lodge farm, leading to a tarmac road. Turn **right** on the road.

- 3 In 50m turn **left** on a drive and immediately keep **left** over a stile. Your path runs parallel to the drive, leads over another stile past an angler's lake and curves **left** round the lake. Half way along, go **right** over a bridge and stile and straight on into a pasture. Keep straight ahead with a wooden fence on your right. Your path soon diverges away from the fence to take you over a stile in the middle of the opposite fence (avoidable through an open gate on the left) heading for the woodland of the Ashen Plantations ahead. Go over the stile into the wood and very shortly ignore a footpath on the right. At the other side, go over a stile into a green meadow. Keep straight ahead along the left-hand side, taking in two more avoidable stiles, and across two more meadows. All the time, the steeple of Crowhurst church beckons. A stile or a large metal gate takes you into the next pasture with great views. A modern kissing gate leads into the churchyard.



Crowhurst is one of the smallest villages in the county, with just a handful of scattered houses, dominated by the great Tudor mansion house and, a little way out of the village, by Crowhurst Place. Saint George's Church is usually open and is definitely worth visiting. The church stands on a probable pagan site at the top of the hill. The famous Crowhurst Yew is 4,000 years old. The building was damaged in a skirmish during the Civil War and a cannon ball, which can still be seen, was fished out of the Yew tree. The porch stonework bears furrows: these were caused by bowmen sharpening their arrow heads. The steeple is "modern" a consequence of a fire in 1947. Inside, the wonderful gilded figures on the altar wall were a gift from a local family. The font dates from the 1200s and carries medieval graffiti: these were intended to ward off evil spirits, or as a homage to the Virgin Mary.

- 4 After visiting the church, exit the churchyard **left** to avoid steps. Turn **right** on the road. Note that you are on the Greenwich Meridian Trail (see also the Danehill walk in this series). Just after a house on the bend (Little Hayden Farm), turn **right** on a signposted tarmac drive, marked as a footpath. Ignore narrow footpaths on your left and on your right and follow this lovely easy wide tarmac drive into open country. *Historic Crowhurst Place on the outskirts of the village, although not visited on this walk, is visible on your left.* At a three-way finger post, ignore a left turn and stay on the drive as it curves right. You come through Stocks and Kingwood Farm. Keep **wc** ahead through the farm, ignoring a footpath on your right. *This is a complex farm with several artisan and industrial units - it even has a loo!*

- 5 Your path forks **right** on a wide tarmac drive, past an open metal gate. You pass an orchard and an automatic gate. Shortly after, beside a track, go **left** over a stile, or through the adjoining small wooden gate. In 15m, go **right** over a stile into a field. Your path, according to the notice, "goes diagonally" across to the far left corner but, at the time of writing, it was ploughed up, so the author kept **left** (passing the beautifully converted *Larch Barn*) and **right** around the edge, which was fine, thanks to the deep leaf cover and the grass verge. In the far corner, turn **left** and keep **right** over a stile (avoidable using a field round to your left), keeping right through a chalky gap in the hedge over a drainage channel, out into a large field. Follow the left-hand side of the field and cut straight ahead across the final section (or keep left round the edge if the field is deeply ploughed). Go over a (rather too short) stile in the hedge and a stone bridge. Turn **right** in the horse pasture to cross another stone bridge and reach a stile (mostly gone, but easy to duck under). Continue in the next pasture. Finally you come over a good stile onto a grass path, leading over another stile to a road, Tandridge Lane.

- 6 Turn **left** passing the entrance to Buttons Mead Farm. Turn **right** on a drive by a sign for Comforts Place farmhouse, going past a large metal gate onto a wide grassy track which soon becomes a splendid wide green highway. After $\frac{3}{4}$ km, the track bends right, passing a large metal gate, and you come to the buildings of Oak Tree Farm and a crossing of tracks. Turn sharp **right** on a wide dirt path through woodland notable for tree fungus. You come out shortly to a dirt drive beside some cottages. The drive soon leads across a bridge over a pond and finally comes out to the main road. Cross the road very carefully and turn **right** on the footway opposite. [This is the busy A22 Eastbourne Road again, but you will soon switch to a relatively quiet road. \[Jul 2020: not so "quiet" due to heavy trucks: walkers preferred to stay on the A22 which is busy sometimes but does at least have a footway.\]](#)
- 7 In 250m, go **left** through a rather restrictive wooden swing-gate into a green meadow. Follow the right-hand edge and keep dead straight on into the next meadow, keeping a line of oaks on your right. A wooden swing-gate and a short steep bank take you up to a road. Turn **right** on this much quieter minor road (Tilburstow Hill Road). You pass on your right *Kings Farm House* looking sadly dilapidated. On your left is the *Grand Chêne* (previously *La Bonne Auberge*), although the ancient oak in the name is now very splayed away from its classic shape. After finally going under the railway arch, turn immediately **right** on a footpath, shortly ignoring a broken stile on your left. The path runs beside the railway embankment on your right and finally comes out through a metal barrier to a residential road and hence out to the main road with the station entrance on your right where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Godstone South is on the main A22 Eastbourne Road, easily accessible from the M25. There is plenty of parking in residential roads on the left, just before the railway arch.

By train or bus: train to **Godstone Station**, good daily service. Or bus 409 or 410 from Caterham, Oxford, or Redhill, not Sunday. Check the timetables.

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