



Waggoners Wells and Ludshott Common

Distance: 14½ km=9 miles or 10 km=6½ miles easy walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 30-sep-2010

Author: Botafuego

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Refreshments: picnic or later in Grayshott

Last update: 17-mar-2018

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Lakes, villages, woodland, heath

In Brief

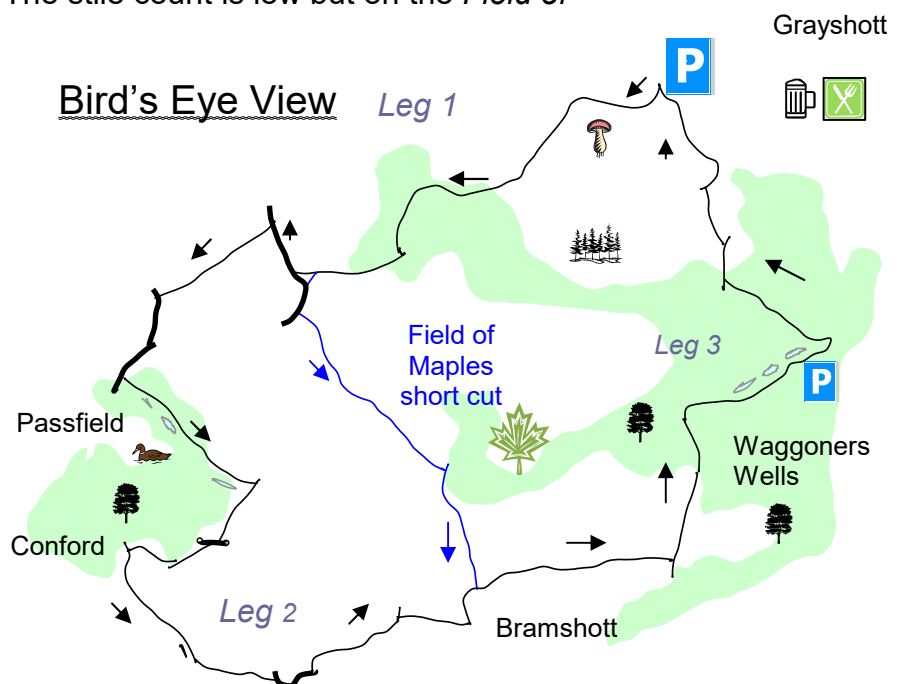
Lakes strung like a necklace; a glistening heath strewn with crimson toadstools in autumn; majestic limes and maples; three historic villages. There is no other walk quite like this quiet and peaceful wander.

This part of East Hampshire is easily accessible from the London area, being just south of Hindhead on the A3 road. Waggoners Wells is a famous beauty spot, popular with weekend families but large enough to absorb them all, whilst Ludshott Common is one of the largest areas of heathland in the South East.



The walk can be shortened by taking the **Field of Maples** short cut, although this omits the pretty villages.

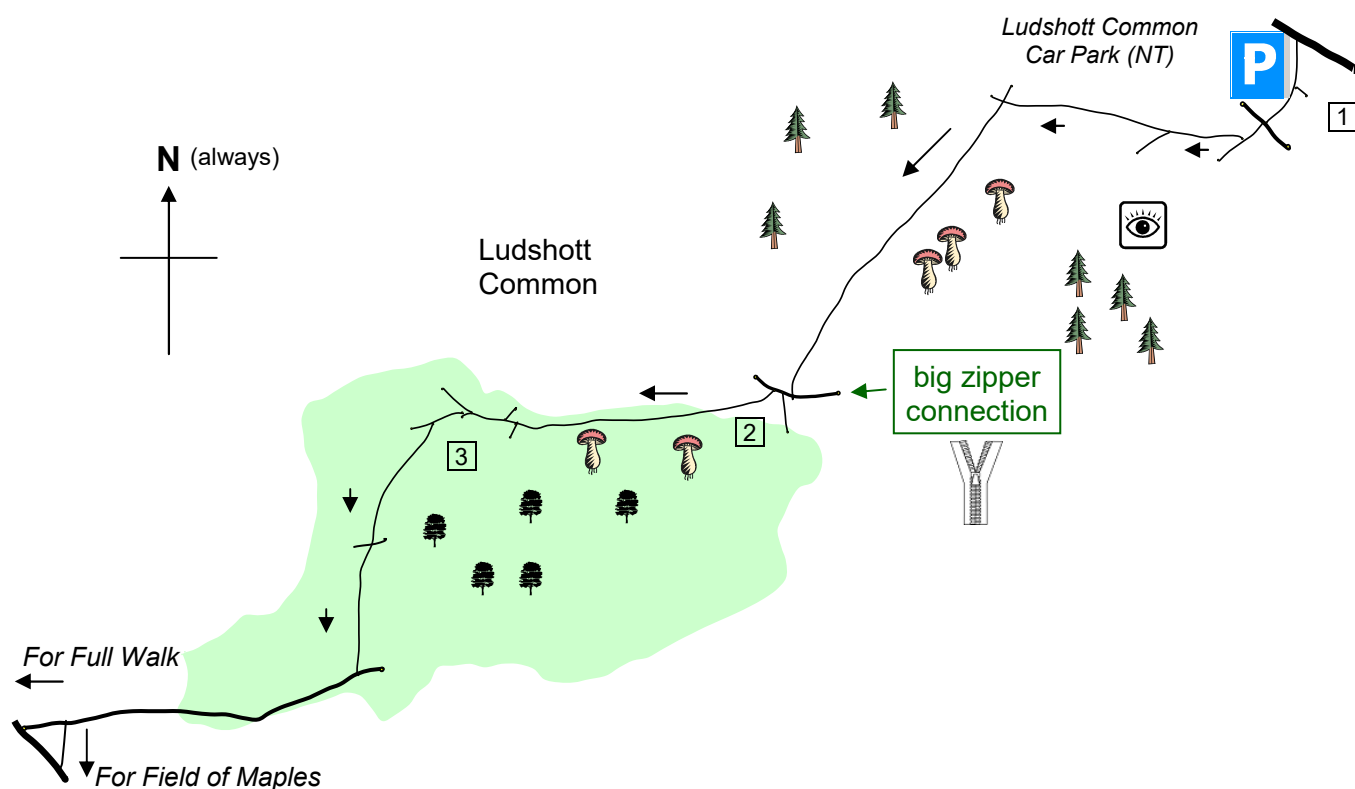
There is only one small patch of nettles on the short cut and the conditions underfoot are generally dry. The stile count is low but on the *Field of Maples* short cut there are some rickety stiles. Dogs are welcome as nearly all the stiles have a generous gap [2016: except for one just before Bramshott].



The walk begins at the **National Trust Ludshott Common** car park (grid ref 852358, **postcode GU26 6JG**) in Hampshire, off the B3002 road from Hindhead, Surrey. For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). Another possible starting point is the Waggoners Wells car park.

The Walk

Leg 1: Ludshott Common to Gentles Lane 3 km=2 miles



- 1 Leave from the back of the car park, past the noticeboard, on a broad sandy track. In 30m, you reach the heath by a rustic bench with terrific views south to Butser Hill (with the aerial) and beyond. Cross straight over the crossing track to another sandy track. In 20m, at a fork of two grassy paths, choose the **right** fork. In less than 100m, at another fork, take the **right** fork, really straight on. *In autumn the red toadstools (fly agaric) are found everywhere on the heath and you should see them aplenty.* The path descends to a crossing path. Turn **left** here, slightly downhill, avoiding the path ahead that goes up a slope. Keep to the fairly straight path avoiding all turnings off. *Parallel on the right you may observe an overgrown sunken, possibly ancient, track.* The path ends at a T-junction. Turn **right** at the T-junction.



The Waggoners Wells **Big Zipper** joins this walk here.

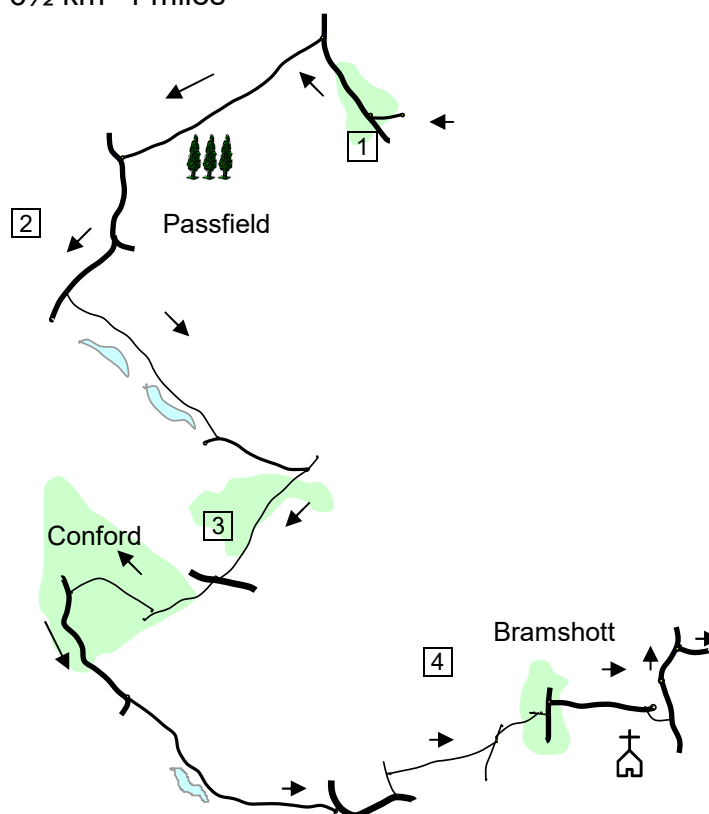
- 2 Ignore a wide path immediately left and, in 15m, fork **left** on a narrow level sandy path, thus leaving the main path that carries on uphill. (The paths on Ludshott Common are extremely complex and there are many possible routes. The route chosen here may not be the simplest, but it makes a virtue of keeping to level ground whilst showing you the very best features of the common.) You pass some beautiful occasional pine trees and reach a junction of paths by a marker post. Go straight ahead here over a crossing path. (According to some walkers, this is more like a right turn at a T-junction.) In 20m, fork **left**, following the orange

byway arrow, thus avoiding a rather steep path up a slope on the right. In 40m, turn **left** on a path that goes over a remnant of an old bridge or dam.

- 3 In 20m, at a grassy T-junction, turn **right**. In 10m, fork **left**, following some overhead wires uphill. In 80m, you reach a blue-topped post, one of several, indicating a rider's path. Here fork **left** away from the wires on a wide path through the woods. Stay on the main level path, avoiding minor side paths, until you reach another blue-topped post. Immediately veer **left** on a path coming from the right and, in 10m, turn **right** on a path uphill, thus regaining your original direction. As the path curves right, a narrow path joins from the left. The path ends at a T-junction with a very wide brideway. You have reached the far edge of the Common. Turn **right** on the brideway. This patch is often muddy, but you really need not worry because in just a few metres the mud will become more manageable. You have meadows on the left and soon on the right too. Nearly 500m after joining this path, you come to a major fork.

Decision point. If you would like to take a shorter route to Waggoners Wells, skip to the end of this text and follow the section called the **Field of Maples**. You will however miss the three attractive villages. For the **full walk**, continue with the next leg.

Leg 2: A Village Round 6½ km=4 miles



- 1 Turn **right** at the fork and continue until you join a lane (Gentles Lane) coming from the left. Follow the road past *High Hurlands Home* and, just after *Hurlands* itself, fork **left** on a narrow path through hollies and turn **left** at a T-junction on a brideway. Follow the track, first past entrances to *Harambee* and other properties, then past meadows and a line of poplars and finally down to a road by *Tilburys* with its well-groomed hedge. Turn **left** on the road, going past oast houses on your right. *Oast houses, used for drying hops, are mainly associated with Kent, but they do in fact appear in other home counties and as far north as Worcestershire.* At a road junction, veer **right** in the direction *Whitehill, Liphook*. Traverse the deceptively sleepy village of

Passfield, passing *The Old Forge*, *The Old Cricketers* and other witnesses to rural life.

- 2 Just before a bridge visible ahead, turn **left** on a bridleway (a sign says *No Fishing*). On your right is one of a line of lakes and water meadows that are a feature of this area. (Don't worry about the sign that says *Private Property Keep Out*: it refers to the water meadows, not the bridleway.) At a 4-way fingerpost by a house, keep straight on on a track. (As a small diversion, it is worth turning right a few paces down to the waterside where the water fowl, mallards, swans and coots, can be observed close up.) *Over on your right are the fine buildings of Passfield Manor*. At the end of the track, by a fence, turn sharp **right** on a track, crossing the Wey South via an old bridge and passing through woodland. The track eventually joins a drive and meets a lane. Turn **right** to come almost immediately to a T-junction with a main road.
- 3 (The path opposite is sometimes flooded in winter. If so, the solution is to turn **right** along this main road (B3004) for 350m and **left** down a lane towards Conford; keeping on this lane, you pass the village hall mentioned later in this section.) Go straight over the main road, a fraction right, onto a footpath by a National Trust sign for Passfield Common. In just over 100m, turn **right** before an oak tree across the luminous centre of the common. On the other side, you reach a tree line. Fork **left** here on a narrow path that skirts the trees and finally leads out to the hamlet of Conford.

Conford has an extraordinary history. It was settled by a small group of early "squatters" after the wars with Napoleon (the early 1800s). As they were deep in the woods, they managed to live here undetected and undisturbed. They had their own bakery, grocer and school, now all gone. Mary Tyfield's books "Conford from Domesday to Victoria" and "Conford from Victoria to the Millennium" are a social history of the hamlet. (Tel: 01428-751258/751433 for more details.) Conford Moor, where most of the houses are, is owned by the National Trust.

Turn **left** through the hamlet, passing the village hall (the old school). When the lane bends right after the last house, leave it by continuing straight ahead on a tarmac bridleway with the elegant stone *Conford House* up on your left. Ignore a footpath right at a fingerpost. Once again, you have a long lake and water meadows on your right. You pass Conford Park Barn, about 250 years old, usually with fluttering white doves. The bridleway leads through an iron gateway and ends at a tarmac drive. Turn **left** here, immediately meeting a main road, the B3004. Turn **right** on the road.

- 4 Go past houses, and continue to a right bend. Cross the road carefully and turn **left** on a footpath by a metal gate beside fields. After the first field on the right, turn **right** along its other edge. At the other side, officially, the path goes over an awkward stile by a metal gate into the farmyard of Bramshott Vale Farm. However, most walkers veer right and left over the grass in front of a barn to avoid the stile. Keep ahead on a concrete track, ignoring a footpath left. After a brick shed, go half-**left** across the grass, as signed, to meet a wonderful lime avenue. Cross the avenue and negotiate a stile [2016: now made awkward by a fence across it], the corner of a meadow, another stile and another meadow that is often the home to highland cattle and shetland ponies. After a metal gate, turn **right** on a drive (first glancing left to view the impressive house). Go over a bridge across a lively stream, go through a metal swing-gate and turn **left** on a lane. After a short distance, you meet a minor road, Church Lane. Turn **right** here. This deeply sunken lane takes you to steps where you can turn right up to the churchyard of Bramshott Church of St Mary the Virgin.



Bramshott is said to be the most haunted village in England. Ghosts include a long-dead cat, a black pig, a grey lady, a ghostly horseman, a milkmaid and the invisible yet clearly audible procession of a horse and carriage down darkened sunken lanes. Boris Karloff, who played the Frankenstein monster among other movie freaks, died in Bramshott. It's said his ghost too walks the lanes. (Well, someone would be bound to say that.)

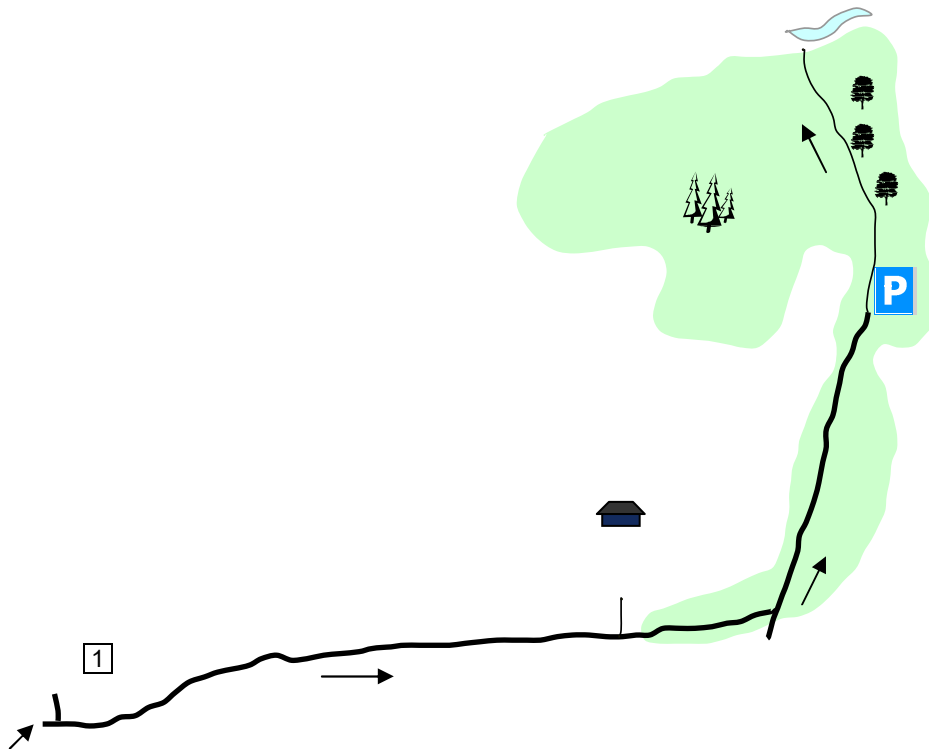
The church of St Mary's dates from AD 1220 and the chancel and tower are original. They are now in the centre of the church because the wide nave was added in 1872 at the western end. The church has many reminders of the Canadian Army who were based on nearby Bramshott Common during both World Wars and formed a close association with the village. In the churchyard are the graves of 318 Canadian servicemen and medical personnel who died here during the First World War, many from the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919.

Leaving Bramshott church on the right, turn **left** at the T-junction onto Rectory Lane and stay on this lane as it bends right, ignoring all minor lanes off.

[Here the Field of Maples short cut re-joins the main walk.](#)

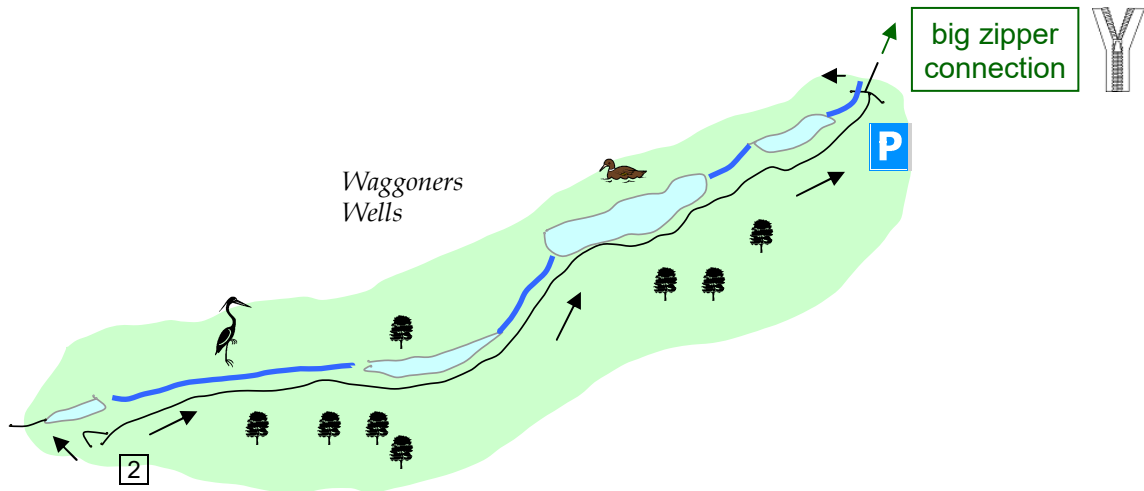
Leg 3: Return via Waggoners Wells 5 km=3 miles

- 1 [Mini-maps now appear after each stage.](#) Stay on this deeply sunken quiet lane for some distance. In about 900m, you pass the gatehouse of *Downlands House*. 250m further, you reach a T-junction. Turn **left**. In about 500m, the lane ends at a car park. Go straight through a metal barrier, keeping to the left side, on a woodland path downhill. Stay on the main, rather uneven, path. At the bottom of the hill, keep to the left of a steep slope. (You can also go right up the slope and find your way to the lakeside.) A rather muddy path takes you all the way down to the waterside where there is an MoD sign and a bridge.



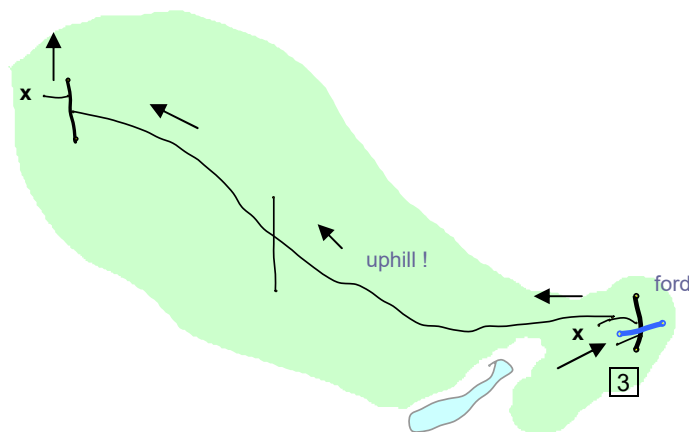
The ponds were created by damming the Cooper's Stream, a tributary of the River Wey, during the 1600s by the Hooke family of Bramshott and were originally called Wakeners Wells. Ponds like these served the iron industry as "hammer ponds" but there is no evidence that these ponds ever powered a forge.

- 2 There are several attractive walks around Waggoners Wells and you may prefer to find your own way and diverge from the text. Don't cross the bridge but keep right and walk parallel to the stream on your left, soon reaching the first lake. Stay on the right bank and, after a section of woodland, reach the second lake. After more woodland, you reach the third lake, which has an especially picturesque wooden bridge over the sluice. Stay on the right bank, soon to pass a noticeboard and, up on the right, a car park (an alternative start). On meeting a tarmac lane coming from the car park, turn **left** on it.

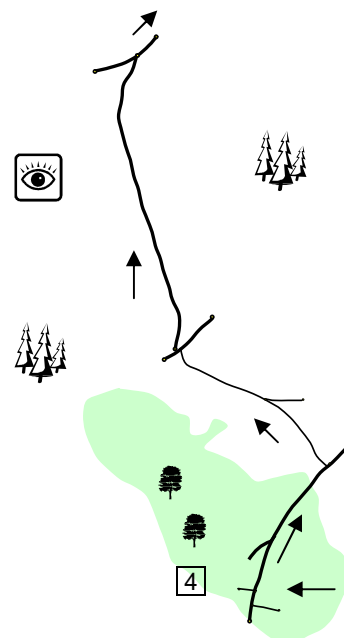


If you are doing the Waggoners Wells **Big Zipper**: shortly before a ford with a footbridge, at a fingerpost, turn **right** on a bridleway and switch to the other walk *Devil's Punch Bowl and Waggoners Wells*.

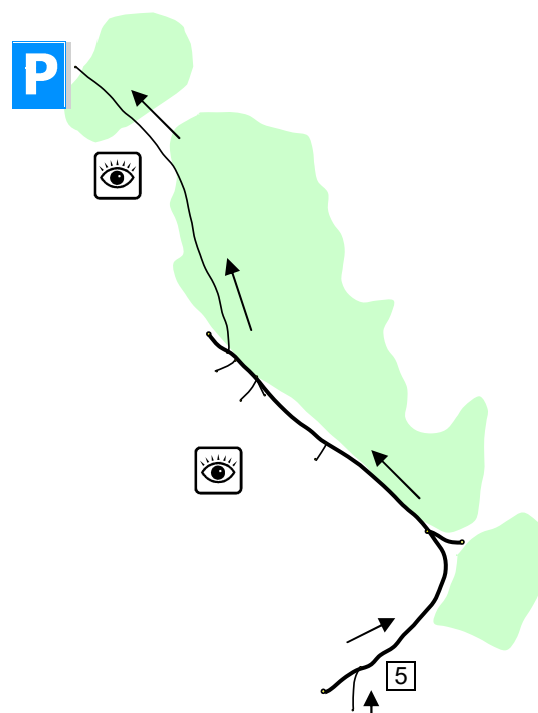
- 3 Cross a ford, or the footbridge beside it. Just 10m after the ford, turn **left** on a marked path and immediately fork **right** uphill on a bridleway, going past a stone memorial on your left. After a modest climb, the path flattens out and, in about 100m, goes over a crossing path. In about another 200m, the path goes under wires and, in a further 80m, meets a junction with a crossing track. Turn **right** on the crossing track, ignoring the path almost opposite.



- 4 Soon another track joins from the left. In another 60m, there is a wide gap in the birches lining the track on your left. Turn **left** here on a narrow grassy path that goes across an open area covered with tiny silver birch saplings. Another narrow path joins from the right. You come to a junction of wide paths. Cross over the first path but turn **right** on the **second** path. You are now on a high plain with views left to the Hampshire hills. The path descends to a T-junction. Turn **right** here.



- 5 Very shortly after, the path forks. Take the **left**-hand fork. The path curves left uphill. Stay next to the trees on your right, avoiding all turnings off. The path passes close to a bench seat and runs downhill for a bit passing minor paths off to the left and right until you come to a way-marker on the right. Immediately after it there is some broken down fencing. Immediately after the fencing, and just as the path begins to rise again, take a **right** fork on a wide path into the woods. The path soon runs clear of the trees and you have fine views again. About 250m from the fork, you finally reach the Ludshott Common car park where the walk began.



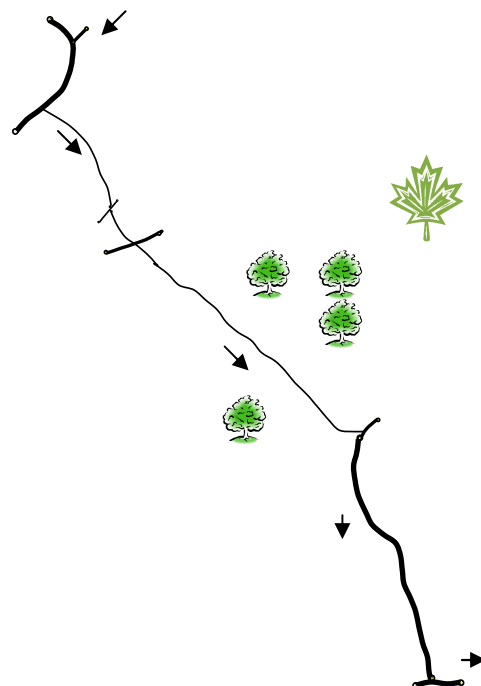
For final refreshments, the “Fox and Pelican” is a short distance away in Grayshott. It is a Fullers pub with a large garden and a comfortable interior.

The Field of Maples

This section is for walkers who want to shorten the walk after Ludshott Common and go by a more direct route to Waggoners Wells. There are some rickety stiles along the way and some awkward ladder stiles.

Turn **left** at the fork. [Feb 2014: very muddy here but bypassable using the bank.] In under 100m, continue along a lane, Gentles Lane. In 200m, go **left** over a stile and along the right-hand side of a meadow, followed by another stile and meadow. Go over a stile to a track. Turn **right** on the track and stay on it when, in just 15m, it bends **left** through an old coppice.

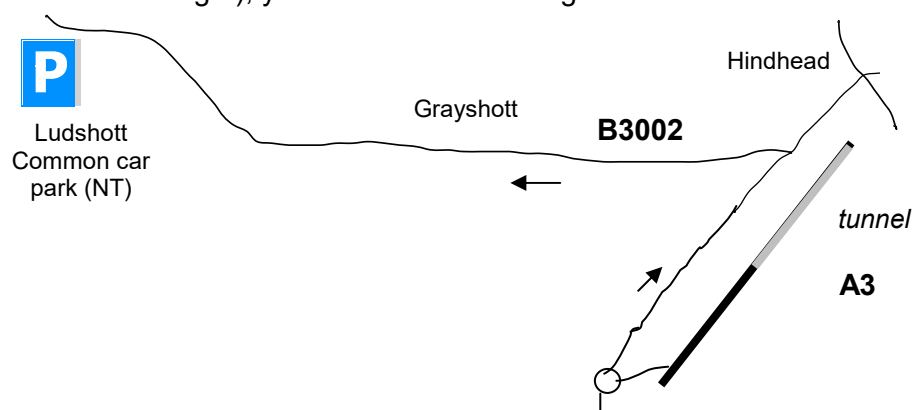
Go over a wide gravel track into a small meadow. You need to use the ladder stile [2016: care! - very unsteady] because the metal gate on the left is usually padlocked. Stay on the right, going over two stiles, and go along the left-hand side of a large meadow, keeping your direction across the centre. *These meadows are beautifully adorned with huge maple trees that lord it over the landscape, recalling the link this parish has with the Canadians.* At the corner of a fence, your path takes you over a ladder stile [2016: care! - wobbly handle] and along a flowery path between low fences. At the far side, go over a stile and down through a holly wood to a drive beside the sign for Ludshott Manor. Turn **right** here on a lane. This deeply sunken lane goes uphill and finishes at a T-junction opposite the driveway to *Bramshott Thatch*. Turn **left** on the lane, Rectory Lane (or, as a short diversion to visit the village and its church, turn right). Now join the main walk at **Leg 3**.



Getting there

By car: To get to the National Trust **Ludshott Common** car park, take the **A3** and turn off, just south of the tunnel, at a sign for **Hindhead**. Before reaching the village, just before a filling station, turn **sharp left** onto the **B3002**, signposted *Grayshott*. The road bends right and then left and passes the Grayshott Spa on the left. The car park is a little further on the left, a total of 3½ km=2 miles from Hindhead.

The Waggoners Wells car park is also accessible from the B3002 (at the point where the road bends right); you have to drive through a ford.



By bus/train: bus 18 runs between Aldershot and Haslemere. Check the timetables.

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