Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Elstead, Ockley Common, Peper Harow

Distance: 17 km=10½ miles — easy walking
Region: Surrey — Date written: 24-jan-2010
Author: Schwebefuss — Date revised: 27-feb-2014
Refreshments: Elstead, Easing — Last update: 9-aug-2026
Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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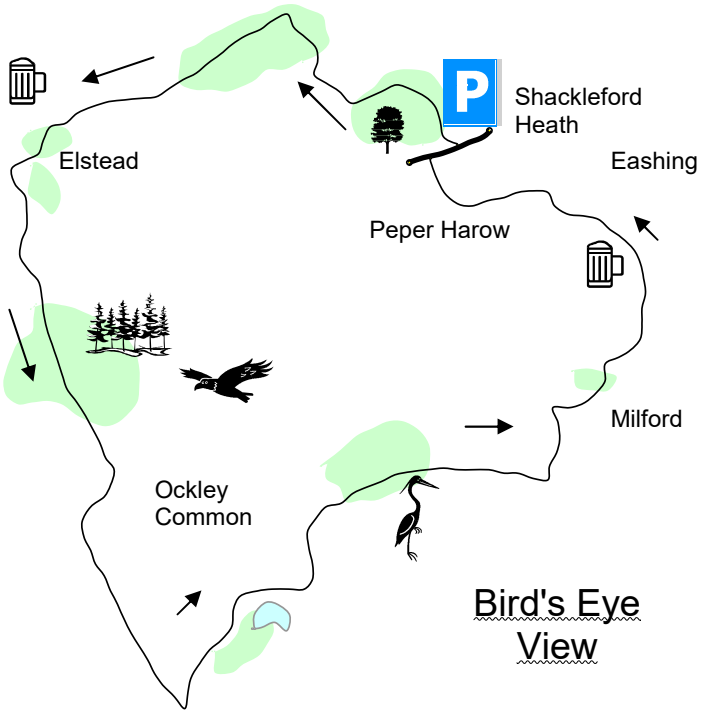
Woodland, moorland, villages, ancient bridges

In Brief

This is a most interesting circular walk, suitable for all times of the year provided that conditions are not too wet. It passes through some marshy natural Surrey landscapes of unmatched beauty and after every turn there seems to be a surprise. There is some boggy ground which can generally be skirted round or crossed on a fine new boardwalk, but good ankle-length boots (and in winter even wellies) are needed to cope with one or two short very muddy sections. There are very few gradients, making this walk calming and relaxing. There are a few patches of nettles, so long trousers are preferable. This walk is fine for a dog* but please be aware of the ground-nesting birds and private grounds. [* 2020: new mesh fencing around some stiles is now a problem for a dog that can't easily be lifted.]

There are several excellent places for refreshment en route (for reservations at the *Stag on the River*, ring 01483-421-568).

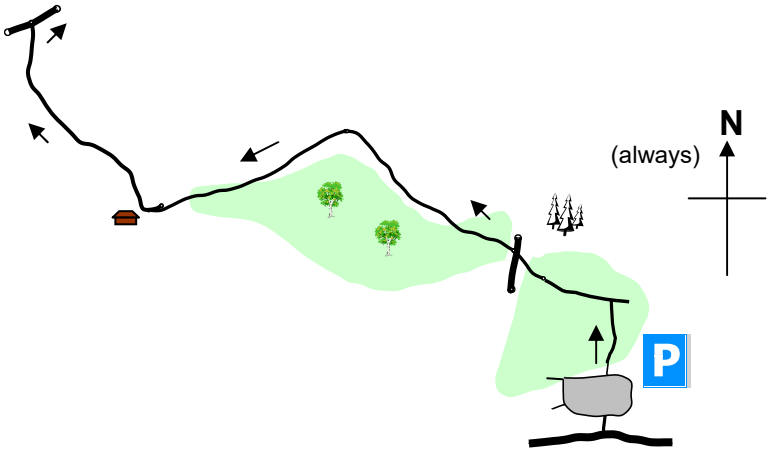
The walk starts at the **Shackleford Heath** car park, w3w:maybe.brave.triangles, post-code **GU8 6AY.** Warning! isolated car park: see Guidelines. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



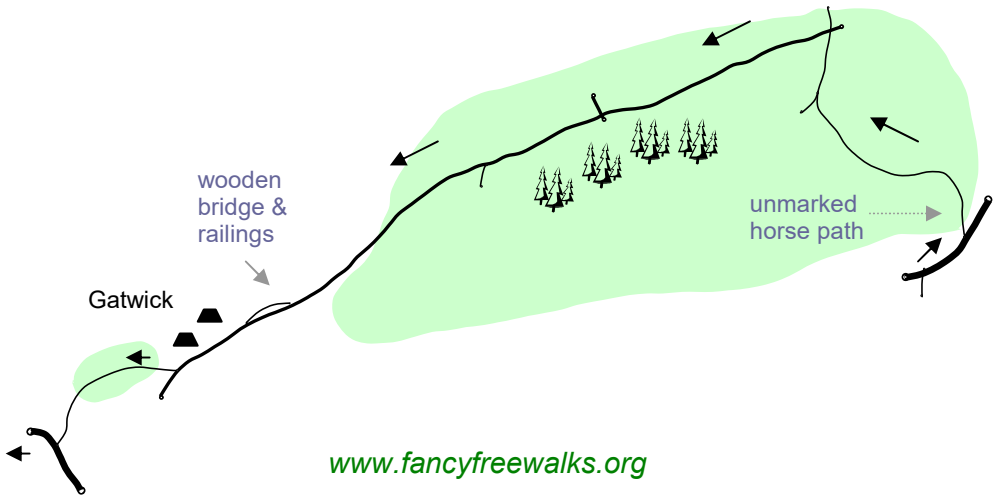
The Walk

Leg 1: Shackleford Heath to Elstead 6 km=3½ miles

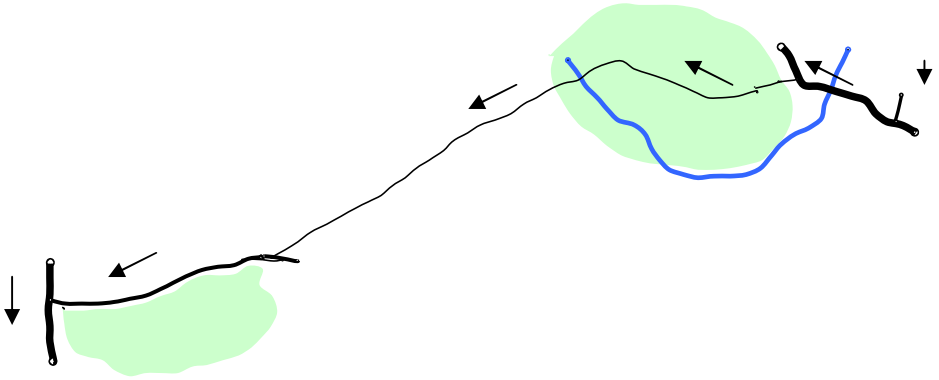
1 Away from the road, at the back of the car park towards the right, take a wide path that begins at two posts with a long horizontal metal bar (which might occasionally be removed for a forestry vehicle). Ignore minor paths that branch off left and stay on the main path as it veers right and then wheels left. It leads to a T-junction with a wide horse track by a rustic wooden bench. Turn **left** on this track and follow it until you come to a lane, Peper Harrow Lane. Cross straight over the lane to a bridleway. Stay on this track avoiding any horse tracks off to the left until, after 350m, the main bridleway curves left beside a ditch. Stay on the main track, avoiding a permissive path on your right which is used for drag hunting, until you reach *Warren Lodge*. Turn **right** here on a driveway and follow it, crossing the Shackleford Stream, all the way to a road, Lombard Street, and turn **right**.



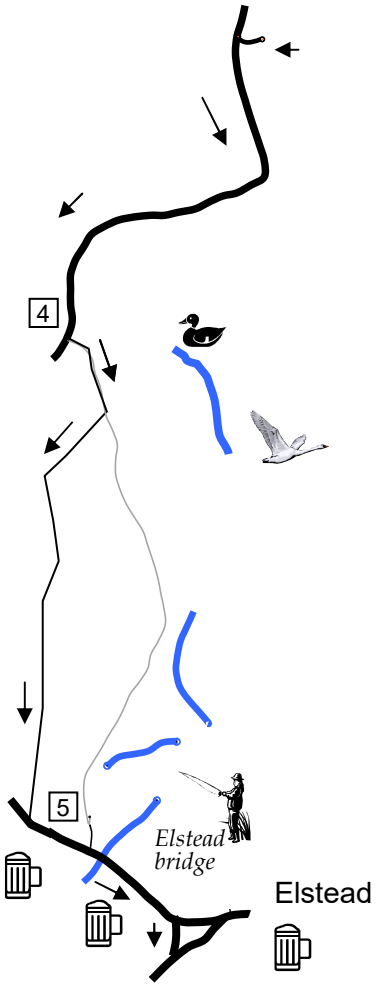
2 In about 80m, at the start of woods on the left, turn **left** on an unsigned path uphill. In 20m or so, take the **left** fork (easier than the right fork: they quickly join up again). The path soon bends left into the wood and is later joined by a path from the left. 70m after this, you reach a major 4-way junction of tracks. Ignore the fingerpost above you to the right and immediately turn **left** on a downward path between trees. In 300m, ignore a track right and later a path left, keeping straight ahead at all times until you see the first houses of the settlement of Gatwick *(pronounced "Gattick" to distinguish it from the airport)*. At this point, you will see some wooden railings with a little bridge on the right and this is a rather charming (and often necessary!) way to avoid mud churned up by horses. Shortly, just past *Kingshott Cottage*, turn **right** on a path. This leads out via a drive to a road, Lombard Street again. Turn **right**.



3 The road crosses the Cutmill Stream and bends right. Leave it here by continuing straight ahead on a signed bridleway which winds through woodland and crosses a bridge. Go through a gate into a pasture and, keeping the same direction, cross the grass diagonally to a small metal gate on the other side. Turn **right** on a track. In 200m, at the end of the track, turn **left** on a road, Fulbrook Lane. *On the right soon is the entrance to Fulbrook House which Peter Sellers and his wife Brit Ekland bought and later sold to Beatle Ringo Starr*.



4 Just before a white house *Paulshott Cottage*, turn **left** through a wooden gate onto a signposted footpath, disregarding any "closed" or "diversion" notices. (2018-20: the original riverside path (grey in the mini-map), which has often been waterlogged since 2015, is now permanently closed because of a collapse of the river bank; this walk follows the new official path.) In 40m your path bears **right** past an unneeded stile (overgrown in summer) and continues across a small meadow and into trees. Go over a 2-plank bridge, passing a post with a yellow arrow. Cross a bridge made of sleepers to the right of a metal gate onto a narrow path between fences. More sleepers and a stile lead into a large meadow. Keep ahead along the left-hand edge* aiming for the *Mill* pub, go over a stile there and turn **left** on the main road. (* If you would like to avoid some of the main road, look out here for a sign, almost at ground level, pointing **left** which takes you back to the original footpath.)



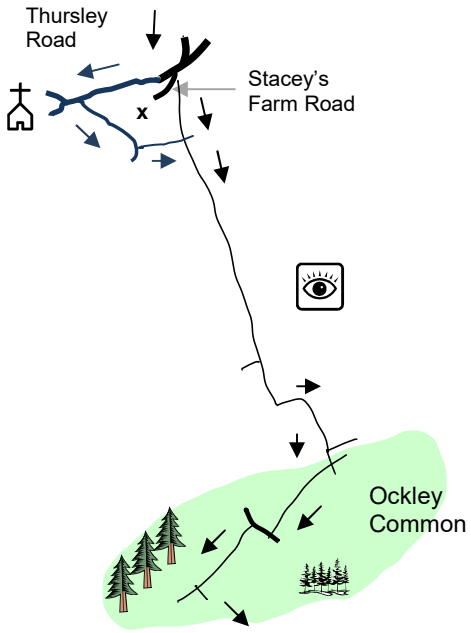
5 *The Mill pub (Fullers) on the right is worth considering for a pause with its lake, swans and waterwheel. It was occupied by Oliver Cromwell's roundheads in the Civil War and then burned down.* Turn **left** at the road, passing over Elstead Bridge. *Elstead Bridge was built in the 1300s, now reinforced to carry the westbound traffic. You will have crossed the Wey by the new bridge but it is worth crossing to the other side to get a good view of the remarkable sturdy old bridge.* Continue past the *Golden Fleece* (which serves Thai food) and turn **right** at the Green past *Forge Cottage* and the general store, which is open on Sundays.

Elstead owes its historic importance to its vital position on the River Wey, with its ancient bridge. It has served as a billet for troops undergoing training on Hankley Common. A fascinating account of the town, including Gillian Drew's on-line book Elstead Village History *will be found in www.elstead.org.uk/history. The "Woolpack" on the other side of the Green has fresh seafood daily, an "executive chef" and several real ales and is open all day at weekends. It also offers a "free sausage hour". The Little Barn café, just off the Thursley Road, offers tasty teas and snacks, closed Sun and Mon.*

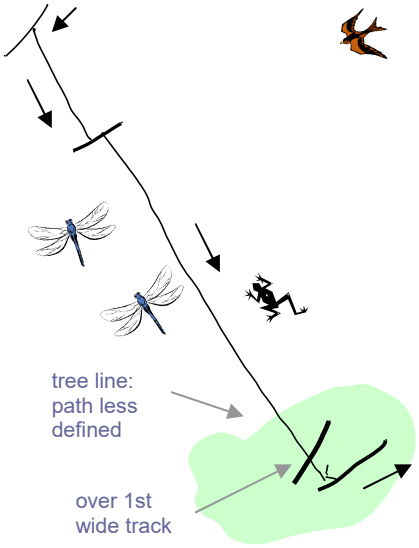
Leg 2: Elstead to Milford 7½ km=4½ miles

You are near **Elstead Church** which is definitely worth a small diversion. To get there, veer **right** on Thursley Road and follow it until you shortly meet a junction with West Hill on the left. The church is directly in front to the **right**. *The Church of St James was built in 1138 and served by priests from nearby Waverley Abbey. When the Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII, the church became part of a chapelry in the care of the Rectors of the Parish of Farnham. The big cedar in the centre of the churchyard and the lime trees were planted in thanksgiving for the end of an epidemic of cholera in Elstead.* After your visit, return to go down West Hill and, where the road turns right, turn **left** onto a footpath immediately before a gate. This footpath climbs to meet a crossing path. Turn **right** here and resume from point a below.

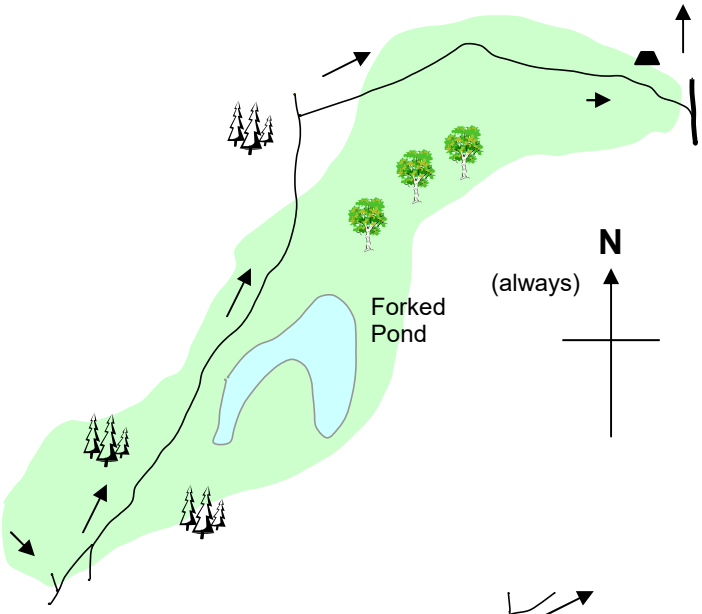
6 Veer **right** on Thursley Road. In just 30m, opposite *Apple Tree Cottage*, turn **left** into the start of Stacey's Farm Road but continue straight ahead on a footpath in the corner. Go through a metal swing gate into a high meadow with views all round, keeping to the left-hand perimeter to another swing gate, then left-right over a crossing path, now with the meadow and village on your left. a Follow this path for nearly 1 km between meadows until finally the path zigzags left then right between gates. Continue on an enclosed path to the corner of the field. Ignoring the path that goes left round the field, go through a wooden swing-gate to enter the birch and pine woodland ahead via a large metal gate (or over a stile). The sign informs you that you are entering an area used for army exercises. Turn immediately **right** under the oaks and pines. In 200m you reach a very wide track. Turn **right** on the track for nearly 40m, then **left** at a post with blue arrows. In about 200m you come to another post with blue arrows. Turn **left** here on a narrow straight bridleway across the wispy marsh of Ockley Common.



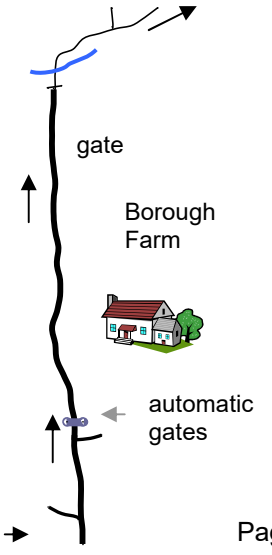
7 This walk runs the full length of this path in a generally straight line across the Common. *This marshy central area of Ockley Common is known for water-loving plants such as sundew, and many varieties of dragonfly and other insects, as well as several types of ground-nesting birds.* You need not worry about crossing this area because the path will take you safely over the marshes. If part of the path is waterlogged, you will always find patches of grass, even in the wettest season. Part way across, at a post, the path zigzags left-right across a wider track and becomes a foot-path, marked with a yellow arrow. Soon after, the path does a chicane round a gorse bush and continues on a fine new boardwalk [Aug 2026: walker did not find the new boardwalk but found the wire mesh fence]. (The old boardwalk was destroyed in a wildfire in 2020; the new one was opened by Jeremy Hunt in April 2023.) On meeting the tree line, keep ahead on a less defined path in the same direction through the pines until you meet a wire mesh fence (ignoring a wide crossing tracking 50m before the fence).



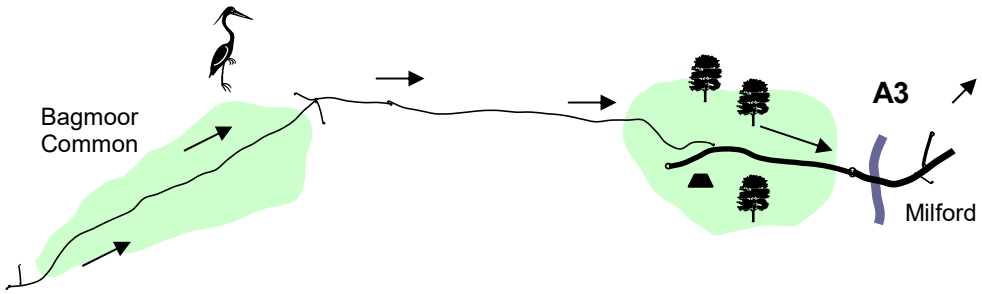
8 Turn **left** at the fence. Where the fence soon bends away to the right, keep straight ahead on the main path. Soon a lake, the *Forked Pond*, comes into view. If you wish, you can take the right fork that runs along the lakeside and re-joins the path before a house and a corrugated barn. Otherwise, keep to the main path. About 200m after the lake, at a post with arrows, turn **right** through a wooden gate. Follow this bridleway for some distance until finally you go through a gate next to *Little Borough*. Continue ahead to a tarmac driveway and turn **left** onto it.



9 Ahead of you are two fine iron gates of Borough Farm. Don't turn aside looking for a tradesman's entrance. The footpath really *is* through the gates and, like any house guest, you need only press the button on the post and the gates will open for you. (2020: Sometimes they are open.) Follow the drive through the grounds past the impressive house of Borough Farm and other houses of the estate. Eventually your route goes round a gate, over a bridge by a ford and turns abruptly **right**. The track passes a bridge on the right where it runs straight ahead by the stream. Soon you reach Bagmoor Common a nature reserve of great charm, rich in wildlife.

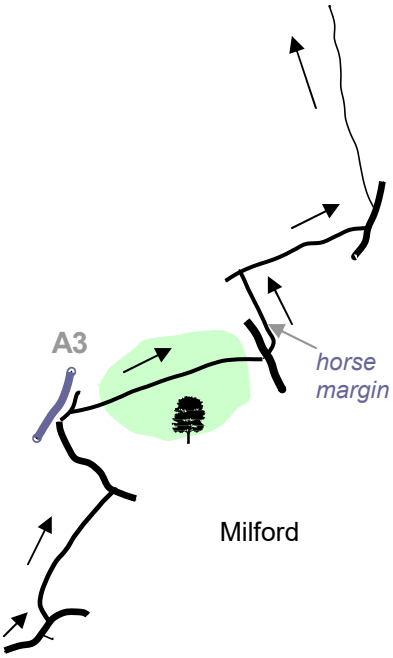


10 At a Surrey Wildlife Trust information board, stay on the path as it bears round to the right, ignoring a left turn. Eventually the footpath runs under wires and across a grassy mossy area by a house. Veer **right** here over a bridge, across a watermeadow and by a stile, following a fenced path [Feb 2022: care! sometimes very muddy]. The path goes over a double stile and through a pleasant grassy strip. Next, it passes a house, *Pucklands*, and goes over a stile. Take the first **left** turn, on a track which soon joins the driveway and goes over a bridge across the A3 trunk road. The driveway, now a lane, passes a beautifully restored house appropriately called *Chimneys*. Ignore a bridle path right and, 40m later, take a bridleway **left**.

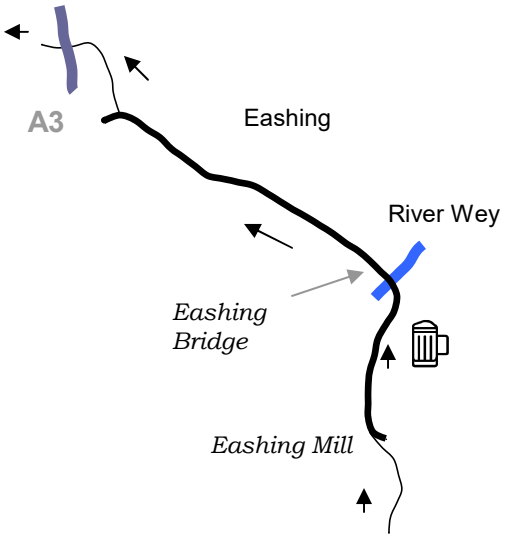


Leg 3: Milford to Shackleford Heath 3½ km=2½ miles

11 The track passes a number of attractive farm buildings on the outskirts of Milford. At the end, turn **left** on a road. A bridleway runs beside the road, curves **right** and then **right** again through a wooden gate (*not* the metal gate into the meadow) and runs through woodland to a main road. Cross the road carefully to a path on the other side with a fingerpost indicating *horse margin*. The path bends **left** parallel to the road. You soon arrive at a crosspaths with two new kissing-gates either side. Turn **left** here into a large field and then turn immediately **right**. Continue around the right-hand edge of the field. Keep close to the right-hand boundary, ignoring any mown paths leading away to the left. In about 200m, after passing a metal five-bar gate and a metal kissing gate, you reach a second kissing gate where the path leads down to a road. Do not go through the kissing gate but turn your back on it and take a path that leads diagonally across the field, heading for a kissing gate next to a tall marker post. Go through the kissing gate and continue ahead in a straight line. Follow the direction of the fingerpost on a path that is a sometimes very unclear, especially in the winter season. As a guide, you will pass near a pile of stones with another fingerpost which, at the time of writing, was lying on its side. In high summer the path may be concealed under the high crops: just persevere! At other times, there may be lines of daisies. (If the crops are wet after rain or if the path is too obscure, you could go round by the road.) *The spire of Norney church is visible just to the left of your direction.* Aim for a space between trees on the other side where there is a slope.



12 Descend on a path over an avoidable stile, down the steep slope to a stile [Sep 2021: collapsed, but you can go through the adjacent wooden gate] and road and turn **left** beside the delectable *Style Cottage*. The road passes the *Stag on the River* pub. This is your last possible refreshment stop.



The Stag on the River is perfectly sited on the river bank and offers good fresh food. The ales are predictable. The Stag tends to get busy at weekends.

Next is Eashing Mill.

Eashing Mill was an important paper mill. There was a drying loft on the right and the mill house, rag house and a corn mill on the left. It was rebuilt as a machine paper mill in 1832 which closed in 1899 and is now offices.

A little further on, you reach Eashing Bridge.

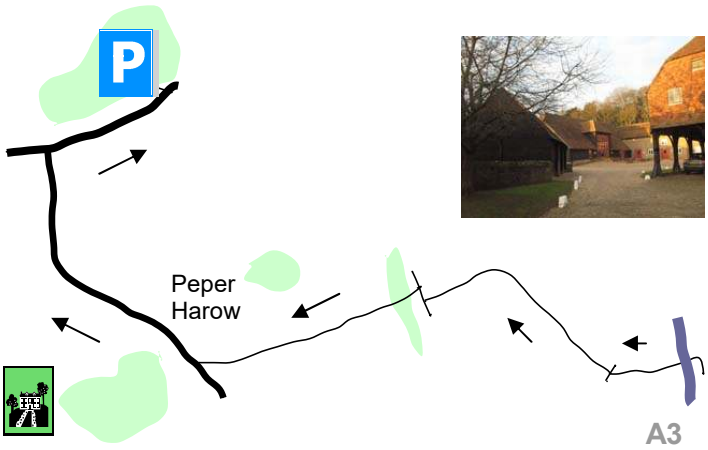
Eashing Bridge is another fine ancient bridge over the River Wey. It was built in the 1300s by monks of Waverley Abbey.

Cross the bridge into the village of Eashing.

Eashing is known by many only as a name seen from the A3 but it is in fact a perfect small village with mostly period houses, some very fine, some small and tranquil. Eashing was one of the fortified "Burghs" built by King Alfred.

Opposite the filling station, turn **right** on a track uphill and turn **left** at the top over a bridge to cross the A3 road.

13 On the other side, go through a gate and veer **right** on a horse track, following the track as it veers left round the corner of the field. On reaching a line of pines, go **right** through a metal gate and in just 5m, at a crossing path, turn **left** through a wide belt of trees. Go through a metal kissing-gate into a meadow and go straight ahead across its centre into the village of Peper Harow.



Peper Harow is unique, a tiny tranquil village with fascinating and beautiful buildings. There has been a settlement here since Saxon times and it appears in the Domesday Book. The Saxon word "hearge" denoted a holy place, probably pagan. "Piper" (Pippa or Pipard) was a family name, recorded

amongst those who fought at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Today the whole of Peper Harow is a private residential estate, a conservation area and home to 30 families. The Park, landscaped by Capability Brown, is the home to muntjac deer, rabbits, swans, ducks, snakes and frogs, and many birds. Peper Harow House and the Carriage House (with the turret) were designed by Sir William Chambers in 1765. The village is also home to an ancient cricket club. The church of St Nicholas, dating from 1301, has an ancient yew tree which has been dated back to at least 1,500 years. The church was badly damaged by fire in 2007 and has now been restored. Note the fine converted barns, one entirely on stilts, acting as a large car port. The Peper Harow residential community is famed for its pioneering work with abused and disturbed adolescents.

Follow the lane out of the village and at a junction turn **right** on the main road. In a short distance, you reach the Shackleford Heath car park on the left where the walk began.

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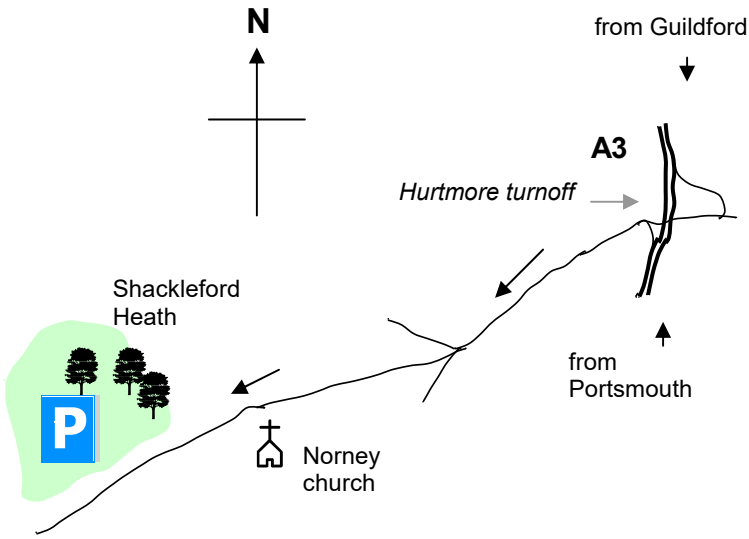
Getting there

By car: To get to the **Shackleford Heath** car park from the London area or the M25: take the A3 through Guildford and, about 2 miles after the turn off for *Compton*, exit at the sign for *Hurtmore, Norney*. Turn **right** under the A3. At a 3-way junction keep straight ahead following the sign for St Mary's Church. About 600m=700 yds after passing the church, look out for the woodland of Shackleford Heath on the right and park there under a wooden bar in the car park.



By bus: bus 46 from Guildford or Farnham station goes to Elstead Green and passes other points on the walk. (Milford station is of little use as it is over a mile from the walk.)