



Esher Common, Fairmile and Two Ponds

Distance: 7 km= 4½ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 10-aug-2020

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Refreshments: picnic

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, large ponds, gorse heath, boardwalks, heather, silver birch

In Brief

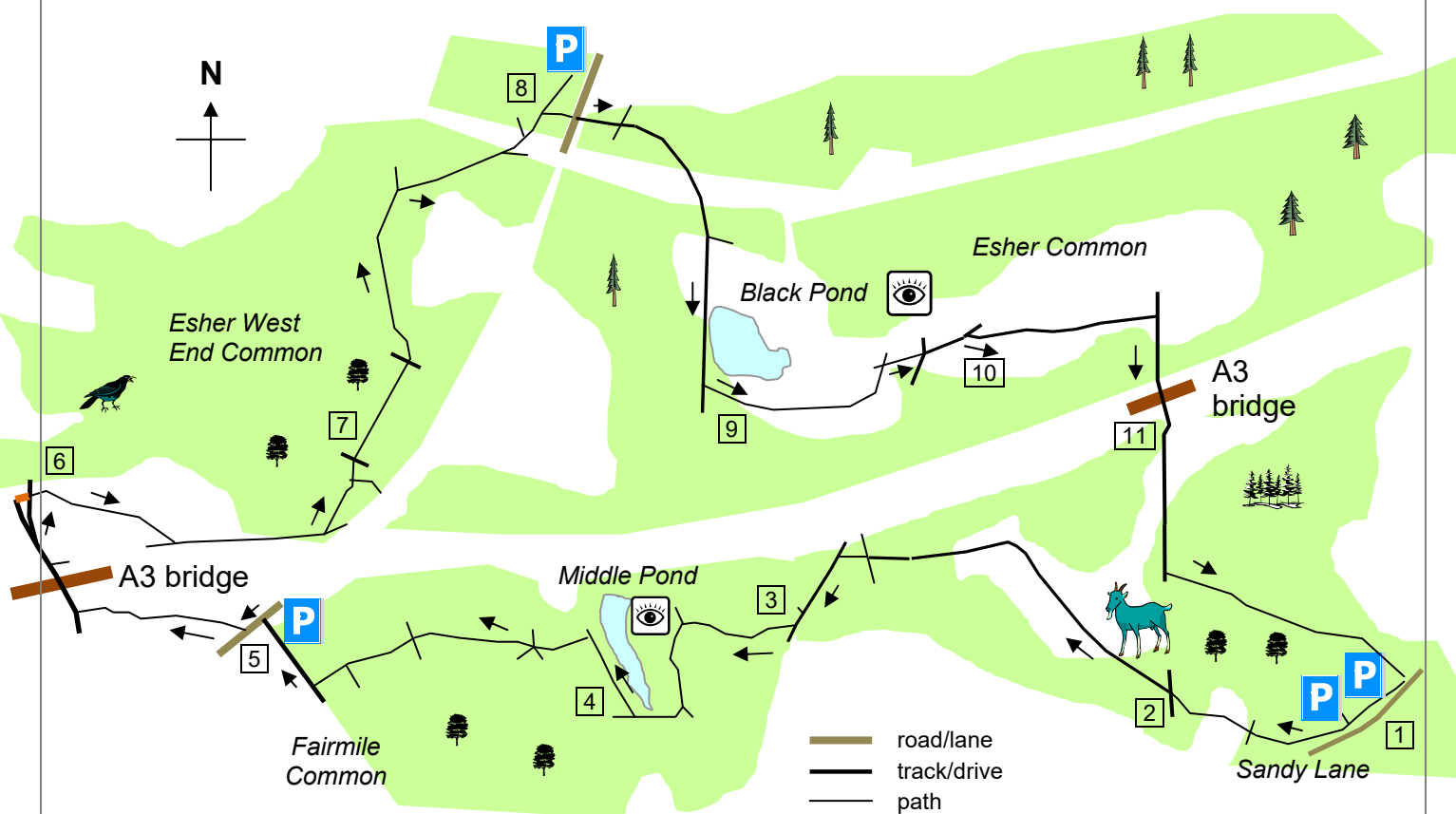
This walk is a paradise of glowing heather, birch forest, wilderness and dry sandy paths. It was written in a scorching summer but it is a perfect winter walk too because of the great expanses of heather and pine trees. You pass only two houses with a double crossing of only one road. There is just one downside: the constant hum of traffic from the A3 trunk road. Since the air is clean and you only see the traffic when you cross the A3 via two pedestrian bridges, this is hardly a drawback at all (but don't send feedback on this please!).



The terrain is almost entirely acidic pine forest, open gorse heath, and silver birch, with just a little deciduous forest, so there are no nettles or other undergrowth to worry you. Paths are dry but there are sections of pretty marshland which all have a boardwalk to take you across. Your dog will enjoy this walk too and will be in excellent company.

The walk begins at the first car park on the right off **Sandy Lane**, Oxshott, Surrey, approximate postcode KT22 0NZ, www.w3w.co/wink.save.bravo, grid ref TQ139617, or the second car park a short distance further down Sandy Lane, www.w3w.co/large.cheek.plan. You can also start at the **Lakewood** car park, www.w3w.co/rides.chair.jazz, which is on the Portsmouth Road near Cobham and has masses of spaces. Another good start is the Horseshoe Clump car park, www.w3w.co/silly.known.joke, also on the Portsmouth Road, near Esher. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 If you are starting in the *first* Sandy Lane car park, then, with the road on your left, take a wide path parallel to the road, quickly leading to the *second* Sandy Lane car park. Walk to the far corner, away from the road. (If you are starting in the *second* Sandy Lane car park, that's the left-hand corner, near the entrance, but away from the road.) There are *three* paths leading out from the corner. One narrow path is just to the left of the corner, another narrow twisty path is exactly in the corner (*this is your path*); a third straight and wider path leads off at right angles. Take that *middle* narrow path. It immediately widens and runs under tall pines. In 150m you come out of the pines, over a crossing path, into a lighter area of low birch and heather. A boardwalk with rail takes you over the marsh, back into woodland. You come over a bridge-with-rail to meet a junction of very wide tracks.
- 2 Cross straight over by a fingerpost in the direction *West Bridge, Portsmouth Road*. This wide path takes you across a beautiful open area of birch and heather. The space on your right is sometimes fenced off for a herd of grazing goats. After 400m the path elbows left and in 200m reaches a T-junction with a wide track by a single-finger signpost, with a bridge over the A3 road visible on your right. Cross straight over onto a narrow path opposite. It leads over a plank bridge and ends at a wider path. Turn **left**. In 100m you pass the corner of the fence of a large garden on your left. Ignore minor paths on your right here and continue ahead beside the garden fence. In a further 50m, just before the house, your path forks.
- 3 Take the **right** fork. Follow this wide path round several curves, avoiding minor paths at each turn. After 200m you meet another path coming from

the right, by a bench seat and a blue waymarker arrow. Keep straight ahead. In a short distance you reach a high point with a bench seat overlooking a deep hollow containing the Middle Pond. (The Middle Pond is hidden by foliage in summer but you will soon have a better view.) Your path bends left and runs beside the hollow, passing another seat. It then curves right to a 3-way fingerpost. Keep **right** here in the direction *Portsmouth Road*. The path leads down to a bridge which runs over the stream that feeds the pond, with two more seats.

- 4 30m after the bridge, take a **right** fork, a much narrower option. This path runs above the other side of the pond giving you good views of the water.



Stay on this high path until you meet the corner of a tall wire fence and a *No Fishing* sign. Turn **left** here away from the pond with the fence on your right. After 100m through a chestnut coppice, you reach a junction of many paths under tall pines. Crossing straight over, you have a choice of two good wide paths ahead. Take the **right** fork. (You may see a pile of sticks at the fork – not present in Jan 2022 – which are sometimes used to build a “tepee” and the path passes to the right of the pile.) Follow this wide path ignoring minor paths off. In 200m you come over a wide crossing path. In another 150m you reach a 2-way fingerpost. Keep straight ahead, ignoring the direction *Green Lane*. Your path ends at a wooden barrier and a T-junction with a dusty residential drive by some large houses in the swish locale of Fairmile Corner. Turn **right** to reach the Portsmouth Road and the big Lakewood car park.



- 5 Turn **left** on the main road for only 40m, using the tarmac footway. Just before a bus stop, cross the main road carefully and take a narrow unmarked footpath on the other side. This path goes between concrete bollards at first and runs across the heath of gorse and purple heather. At the end, the path zigzags a bit, passes a noticeboard and comes out onto a tarmac drive. Turn **right** on the drive which shortly takes you over the A3 trunk road. *At the end of this drive is the ACS International School, which offers an American curriculum to 1,500 students from over 60 countries.* Shortly after the bridge, *ignore* a signpost pointing right to West End Common (this path is too close to the A3). In 30m, keep **right** at a fork in the tarmac. In only a further 30m, you will see on your left a very short wide track lined with wooden posts. Opposite this track turn **right** on an unmarked path.

- 6 This path takes a beautiful route across the centre of the heath. In 300m, it merges with the official footpath you saw earlier and runs parallel to the A3 road, audible on your right. *Sometimes you may see an impressive wooden tepee that someone has constructed.* In 300m your path goes down a dip and forks. Take the **left** fork, the lower path. This path leads into the deep leaf woods of Esher West End Common (*explored more thoroughly in the walk “Esher West End” in this series*).

- 7 You arrive at a 2-way fingerpost. Ignore the right turn and keep straight on, across a drive between fence posts. The path runs through more woodland, with a view of a house on your left. At another tarmac drive, go straight over. Your path wheels left, crosses a bridge and rises, briefly touching the drive and turning away. On your right soon you can see a large white studio-style modern house, *The Homewood*. (*See the “Esher West End” walk for more info.*) At a wide crossing path, turn **right**. You pass the house and shortly come out into a lighter area with pylons. Keep straight on, under the power lines, ignoring a crossing path. You are now approaching the Horseshoe Clump car park. If you did not start the walk



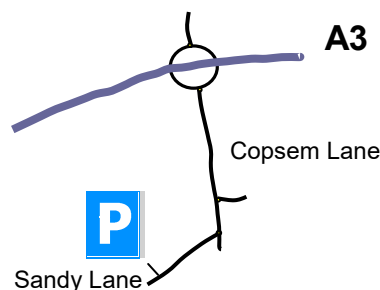
here, turn **right** on a crossing path 50m before the car park, and cross the main road carefully to a very small car park opposite.

- 8 (If you are beginning the walk in the Horseshoe Clump car park, turn **right** on the main road for 50m and cross it to a very small car park opposite.) The small car park is for disabled drivers. A signpost here points you through a gap in the fence, onto a wide footpath signed *Oxshott Heath*. At a 4-way signposted junction, keep straight on as for *Black Pond, Longy Down*. The path runs under power lines and reaches a junction with a seat. Keep straight on. The path soon runs through a wooden barrier and between raised planks and on your left is the Black Pond. *The Black Pond once served as a water supply for Claremont but now is an important wildlife reserve*. You pass several unusual seats and come through a wooden barrier on the other side.
- 9 Only 10m after the wooden barrier, **leave** the wide path by turning **left** on a side path close to the pond. (*Don't miss this turn!*) On your left (not on your route) is a little wooden bridge which leads to a seat giving you another view of the pond. The path runs through trees and comes out into the open. (If the path seems to be a string of puddles, there is usually a drier course immediately to your right.) A stretch of purple heather and a new boardwalk lead to a bench seat. Your path turns abruptly **left** over another boardwalk. Immediately after the boardwalk, turn **right** on a narrow crossing path. (But, for a pause with a view, an unusual-shaped seat is only a short way ahead on the hillside.) The narrow path shortly meets a junction of wide sandy paths. Continue straight over.
- 10 Your wide sandy path runs under an isolated group of pines. Immediately after the pines, avoid a path that forks off left, keeping **right** on the pristine sandy pathway, amidst more pink heather. In another 350m, you arrive at a major crossing. Turn **right** on this wide track. It leads over a bridge across the A3 trunk road.
- 11 Go straight ahead down the tarmac, on a wide track, past a bench and an info tablet about the reedy *A3 Pond*, and continue through the shade of tall pines. In a further 300m, look to your left for a new sand/cement surfaced timber-lined footpath. Turn **left** here and follow this excellent path, over a stream and through the dense woodland. In 400m the path ends at the Sandy Lane car park where the walk began.

Getting there

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

By bus: the people of Oxshott, Esher and Fairmile don't use buses!



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