



Ladywell, Busbridge Lakes and Hydon Heath

Distance: 9½ km=6 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

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picnic or later in Godalming or Milford

Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford) (mainly) and 133 (Haslemere)
but the map in this guide should be sufficient

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

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Convent shrine & garden, lakes, meadows, hill and beauty spot

In Brief

This is a lovely picnic walk, best in the warmer months when the spring and summer flowers are on show. At the middle point, there is an exhilarating short climb to the top of Hydon's Ball.



There are only two stiles on this walk, both dog friendly. There are one or two patches of nettles so shorts might be inadvisable. In wetter conditions, there are a few muddy sections, but mostly avoidable.



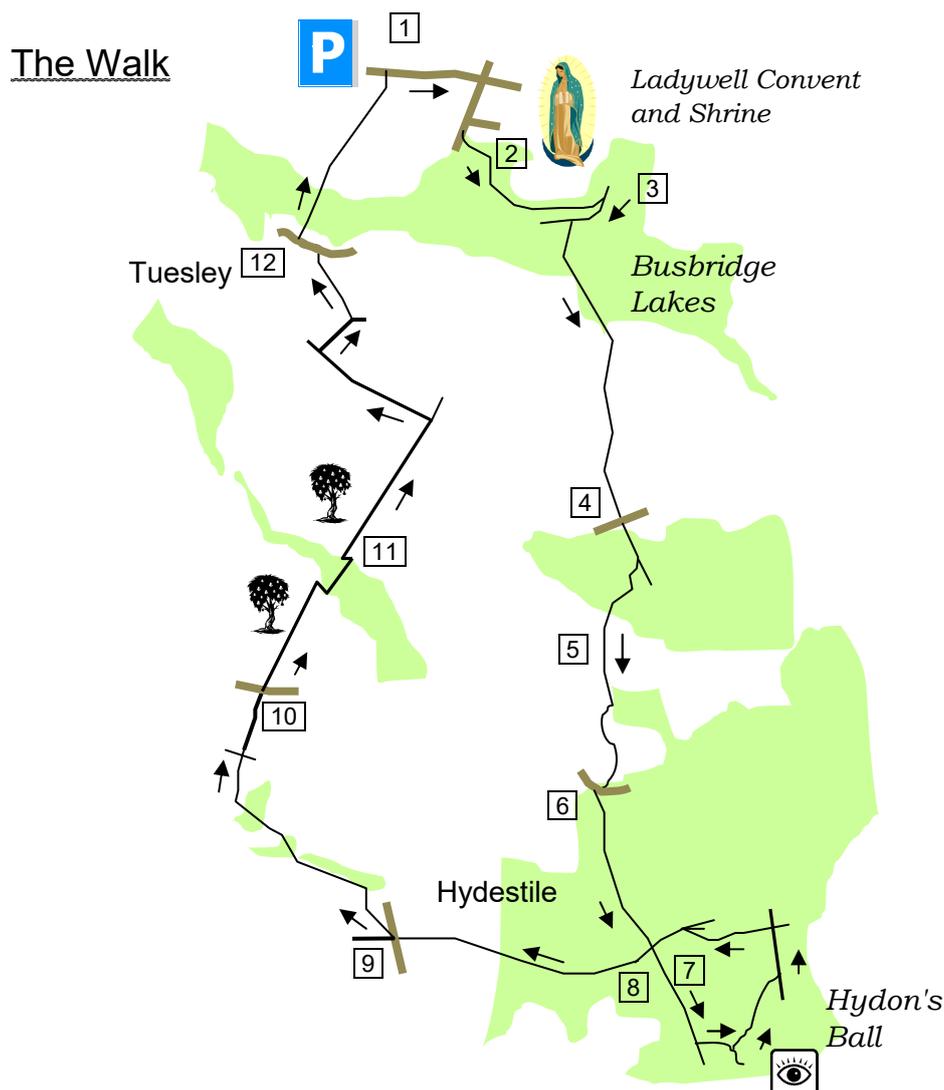
The walk begins in **Ashtead Lane** on the outskirts of **Godalming** Surrey, postcode **GU7 1SX**, www.w3w.co/curry.ranks.wanted. It can also be reached by train via **Godalming station**, with an extra short hop each way. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

- 1 See map overleaf.** Begin the walk by following the road ahead (now Ashstead Lane) to a T-junction, passing the entrance to Ladywell Convent (a retreat and spirituality centre) on your right. At the T-junction, turn **right** on Tuesley Lane and walk along the pavement on the left for 100m or so, till it ends at a second junction with Minster Road. Keep ahead on the narrow road for about 30m where on the left there is a field entrance with a wooden gate. This is a permissive footpath, as indicated by the sign for *Minster Field*. In the meadow turn **left** up a wide grassy strip towards a shrine erected by the Sisters on the footprint of the 7th-century church. (See notice board for details.) *The church was mentioned in the Domesday Book as the mother church or Minster.*
- 2** Just before the shrine, turn **right** through the hedge into the small new wood and keep ahead through the trees and ignoring a minor path immediately on your left. The path curves left and enters mature woodland. At the far side, your path veers left to a wooden gate in the fence. Go through the gate and follow the path through the trees. In about 250m,

keep to the right of a large mound of earth and immediately go straight over a crossing path to reach the bottom of a slope and a T-junction.



- 3 Turn very sharp **right** and follow the path downhill between stone walls alongside Busbridge Lake on the left where you may catch a glimpse of exotic waterfowl. Where the path swings left at the bottom **ignore** a yellow arrow and footpath on the right and continue along a fenced path which bridges the two lakes, mostly hidden by the foliage. Follow this path, first uphill then level with woods on your left and a fruit farm on your right. After more than ½ km, your path emerges onto a gravel drive at Clock Barn Farm. As you continue ahead, the drive becomes tarmac with great views on your right and soon arrives at a road, Hambledon Road.
- 4 Cross the road and go up the driveway opposite. In 80m, ignore a bridleway on the left and an entrance on the right for *Homewood House* and continue ahead past a white house, *Inwood Cottage*. 30m after the cottage you arrive at large wooden gates. Take the path immediately to the **left** of the gates through the laurel hedge. Follow the path staying close to a high wooden fence on your right, ending at a bypassable stile. You are now in the grounds of *Hydon Nurseries*.
- 5 This section is beautiful in spring when the rhododendrons and magnolias are out. Follow the yellow arrows, along a narrow path beside a horse paddock on your right, to go by another bypassable stile. Shortly after this

the path turns **right** around the back of a large outbuilding, and then **left** along its side across a lawn. At the end of the outbuilding keep straight on beside a hedge. On your right is the garden of *Busbridge Copse Farmhouse*. Finally your path arrives at a driveway with a gate on the left. Veer **right** on the drive, shortly arriving at the road at Hydestile.

- 6 Turn **right** on the road. In only 20m, turn **left** at a fingerpost, immediately after a house, onto a drive signed to *Hydon Rough*. (Care! this is on a blind bend and you will need to slip to the right for about 15m to check the traffic, but don't cross to the wrong path – there's another fingerpost 15m to the right of intended one.) Follow this path past some houses and straight ahead into a wood with coppiced chestnut trees on the right. This bit may be muddy in wet weather but is quite easy to negotiate. You are in *The Hydons*, a privately run area of chestnut woodland. The contradictory signs on your right seem to tell you that you can explore provided that you acknowledge the owner's rights (but this walk uses the public footpath). Continue ahead slightly uphill to a crossing of paths at the corner of a high wire fence.

Your route is now straight ahead to the top of Hydon's Ball. However, if you would like to shorten the walk by omitting Hydon's Ball, simply turn **right** at the crossing path, skip the whole of section 7 and continue from section 8 below.

- 7 Continue straight ahead over the crossing path and follow the wire fence on your right uphill. Your path goes up some wooden steps and over some paving stones, passing a private gate on the right. As the path levels out opposite a marker post, you meet a sandy uphill path on the left. Turn **left** up this path and follow, passing a reservoir cap, it to the top of the hill where there is a large stone seat dedicated to Octavia Hill in whose memory the land was given to the National Trust. There is a fine view from here over to Blackdown.



Octavia Hill (1838-1912) was a social reformer who devoted her life to improving housing for the poor and saving open spaces for the enjoyment of all. Because of the collapse of her father's business, she had no formal education and was taken in by a co-operative guild as a glass painter and formed a lifelong friendship with the great art patron and reformer John Ruskin. In 1893, she and two others founded the National Trust. Her sister Miranda did similar good work (see the walk "Burnham Beeches" in the Chilterns section of this series). On her death, her family erected this stone seat on Hydon Heath. (The "ball" was possibly a signalling station or maybe simply the round summit.) Now Hydon Heath is both a plant conservation area and an arboretum, many oaks, chestnuts and non-native shrubs having been planted by that great garden designer Gertrude Jekyll.

After a breather on the hilltop, you can either retrace your steps and turn **left** at the crosspaths or take a small looping tour as follows. Directly behind the seat, take the **leftmost** narrow path downhill. The path winds and levels out. At a T-junction at the bottom, turn **left** on a very wide track. In 150m, at a crossing path by a brick cairn, turn **left** on another wide path. After 300m or so, at a junction with blue marker posts and a 3-way fingerpost, keep **left**, still on a wide path. In 50m keep straight on at a crossing path.

- 8 Continue ahead with a wire fence now on your left. Ignore all turn offs and follow the path downhill until, after 500m, it emerges from the wood and runs between fields to a road. Turn **right** on the road and in 15m ignore a broad bridleway on your left. Immediately after the bridleway, turn **left** up a bank on a signed footpath onto a golf course.

- 9 Care! there is a new permissive path and the markers are not too clear: you need to concentrate during this section to find your way across the golf course. Keep **right** at a post with a yellow arrow and follow the path across the course passing several golf tees on each side (all bearing the number "7" in different colours). Now take the shortest possible route across the green, parallel to the (invisible) road on your right, to the woods on the other side. Here take a path into the trees, shortly passing a yellow-arrowed sign indicating a *permissive path* (the sign was leaning and may fall over). In 25m, by an electricity transformer, turn **left** on a path that runs through the band of trees. You will be staying in the trees for 300m, over a plank bridge, sometimes almost emerging onto the golf course, only to veer back into the trees. After 150m or so you meet a post with a yellow arrow [Jul 2022: grounded] where the official footpath joins. In a further 25m, your path veers **right** into trees, as directed by another arrow. In about 30m, turn **left** again. You emerge from the trees out onto the green. Cross a golfer's gravel track diagonally to a narrow green path which runs to the right of a tall bank. Now keep the same direction, heading for a marker post just visible on the edge of some woodland. Follow a path through the woodland to emerge onto another fairway (look left for flying balls!). Cross straight over to a gap on the other side. Here you will find a small wooden post with a yellow arrow. Turn **right** here through the woods, staying close to the golf links on your right. You go over a sandy path to join a gravel drive which shortly becomes tarmac and passes a tennis court and a house, *Enton End*, on your right, reaching a road.
- 10 Cross this busy road carefully, up a bank, to a narrow footpath opposite and follow the path, with a fence on the right and a bank on the left, to a stile. Cross the stile and follow a wide grassy track between hedges. Ignore the Community Footpaths left and right and follow the public footpath to the other side of the field. You are now on Tuesley Farm, one of the largest growers of soft fruits in the UK, suppliers to Sainsbury and Waitrose. At the other side of the field turn **right** and in about 30m go **left** through a wooden swing-gate into a bluebell wood where there is a seat for repose. Go through the wood on a raised path, over a bridge across a small stream, and exit through another wooden gate turning **left** as the fingerpost directs.
- 11 In 30m, at a field corner, turn **right** on a wide track with plantations on each side. In 500m, just before a green shipping container (possibly covered in a black tarpaulin), at a fingerpost, turn **left** on a major side track with a hedge on your left. Continue for 400m and turn **right** on a signed track, just before a large wooden building with a curved roof. In around 50m, at another post, just before the track turns right, turn **left** as directed alongside a small lake with rushes and perhaps some resident ducks. At the end of the lake, continue straight on to a small gate leading down some steep stone steps down to a road in the small village of Tuesley.
- 12 Turn **left** and walk along the road for 100m till you come to a group of red tile-hung houses. Just before them, turn **right** at a fingerpost. Follow this path at first steeply downhill and then across a muddy section, over a stream, followed by some steep steps up with a handrail provided by Godalming Ramblers. Continue on this fine woodland path for about 200m, with the Convent buildings on your right, till you come out into Ashstead Lane where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Getting there from London or Portsmouth: Leave the A3 at a sign for *Milford, Petworth, Haslemere* just after/before Guildford. Follow the signs for *Milford*, turn **left** at the traffic lights in Milford. Go ahead at the small roundabout and beware of speed traps (30mph) on the road into Godalming! Go under the railway bridge to reach a larger roundabout. Here turn **right** into Shackstead Lane. Continue up the hill to a small roundabout and turn **right** into Pullman Lane. Follow the road through the housing estate, curving left. After nearly ½ mile, you see playing fields ahead as Ashtead Lane (marked as a cul-de-sac) meets you from the right. Veer **left** here. Just before or after Admiral's Way on your left you can park by the roadside on the left with the grounds of Ladywell Convent on the right behind a high wooden fence.

By train: the walk is one mile from Godalming station. From the station, follow winding Station Road towards the centre of the town. On reaching the traffic lights with the main A3100, cross straight over up Holloway Hill. The road changes to Tuesley Lane. When you meet Shackstead Lane coming from the right, keep straight ahead, still on Tuesley Lane. Eventually you meet Ashtead Lane on your right. Now begin the walk from from the 3rd sentence of section 1.

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