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

Chatley Heath and Mays Green

Distance: 8 km=5 miles — easy walking

Region: Surrey — Date written: 23-mar-2020

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Refreshments: Ockham Bites

Maps:145 (Guildford) & 146 (Dorking) *but the map on page 2 should be enough*

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

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Pinewoods, heath, historic tower, quiet lanes, meadows, woodland

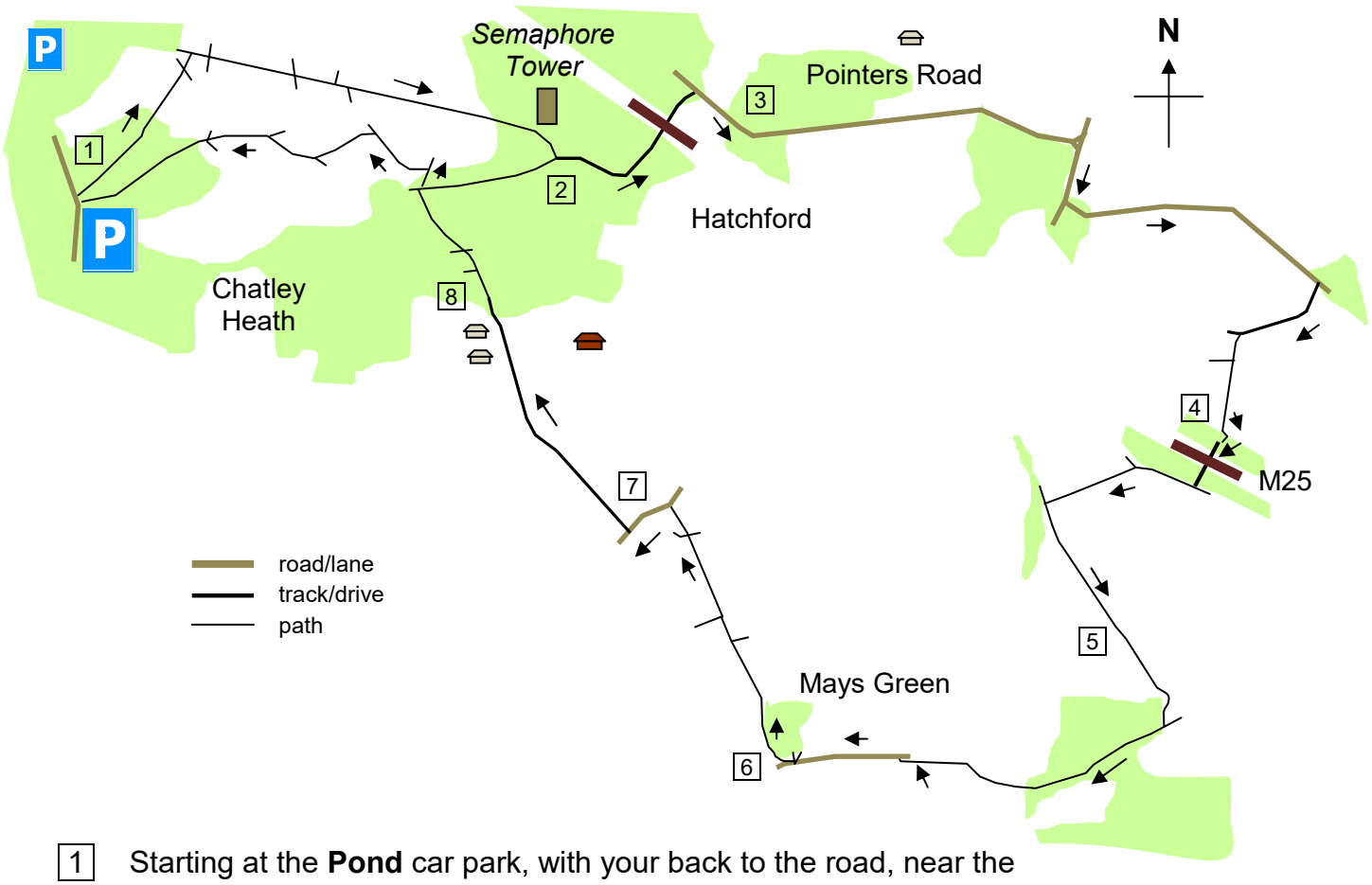
In Brief

This walk may surprise seasoned walkers who know Wisley Common, because of the unusual route and a few eye-openers along the way. The surrounding countryside is chiefly horse pastures, not far from the prosperous borough of Cobham. So there are hardly any ploughed fields and, as far as can be seen, no livestock larger than sheep. The route crosses the M25 motorway twice over pedestrian bridges, giving you an imperious feeling as you look down on the traffic, but considering how close you are sometimes to the bustling motorway, this is a surprisingly peaceful ramble. An especially memorable aspect is the route across Chatley Heath, by an unusual approach, giving you some rare views.

There is at least one section with undergrowth in summer, causing a possible problem if you are wearing shorts. In summer there is a section of woodland where the undergrowth can be a challenge, and a stout stick is recommended. The other paths are mostly clear and well made, with one brief clumpy field and several sandy paths. There is no busy road walking but the abundant stiles would present a problem for a large dog.

The walk begins at the free **Wisley and Ockham Commons Pond** car park on Old Lane, just off the A3 trunk road (we'll refer to it hereafter as the **Pond** car park). The Pond car park is the ***second*** car park on the left, shortly after the first (Boldermere) car park, nearest postcode **KT11 1ND**, w3w:anyone.composers.idea. But you can equally well start at Boldermere, following the well-known signs to the Semaphore Tower and back across Chatley Heath, with the opportunity to have a snack at *Ockham Bites*. Both car parks are free, with optional donation to a worthy cause. You can park on the roadside along the route, especially in Pointers Road where there are several dirt strips. However, please do not cut short your visit to Chatley Heath, because this walk gives you a wide-ranging introduction to this golden sandy heath. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



1 Starting at the **Pond** car park, with your back to the road, near the entrance, turn **left** by a post for *Café and Toilets*, on a narrow path. In 30m, ignore a left turn for *Car Park*. But, if you are returning to the Boldermere car park, or if you would like the facilities, turn **left** here and follow the signs. In 150m, ignore a narrower right fork, and another later, keeping straight ahead at all times. 350m from the car park you meet a wide sandy horse path: cross straight over, now on a path through a recently-cleared area. In 40m, at another wide crossing path, turn **right**. This path will take you directly up to the Semaphore Tower. You pass a bench seat and a sign for the Tower, crossing a very wide sandy horse path. Your path runs between two benches and soon splits: keep to the **right** of the wooden fence, on a narrow straight path uphill. You meet the horse path again and in no time you stand in front of the Semaphore Tower.

The Semaphore Tower was one of a string of semaphore stations between Portsmouth and Whitehall. Naval orders and news of victories came this way before the invention of the telegraph. The existing 70ft high semaphore tower was built in 1822. The mast still works and there is an information centre inside but it is only open a handful of days a year. In 2021 it has been sympathetically restored and should be open to visitors on Heritage Open Days.

2 Pass the Tower on your left and leave it by a tarmac drive. Turn **left** with the drive, avoiding two bridleways to your right. Immediately ignore a bridleway that forks left (although you can use it as it leads to the same spot). The tarmac drive swings left and takes you across a bridge over the M25 motorway. You come past an information board and a large metal gate to reach Pointers Road. Turn **right** on this quiet cul-de-sac. (Pointers Road has long been cut off at the left end by the A3 trunk road.)

3 You pass *The Lodge* and a bluebell wood on your right. *A historic house Pointers (or Poynters), built in the 1700s, overlooking the River Mole, is on your left behind the trees.* At a bend, ignore a footpath on your left. You pass a dirt-strip layby and reach a T-junction. Turn **right** here on Ockham Lane and, in 100m, turn **left** on Chilbrook Road. In 400m the road elbows right by Chilbrook Farm. In a further 200m you pass a terrace of white houses. In 50m, turn **right** at a bridleway sign, going through a small wooden gate onto a tarmac drive. The drive bends right and approaches a house. Just before the gate to the house, turn **left** through a wooden gate onto a narrower bridleway signed with a blue arrow. In 50m you meet a 3-way fingerpost where the bridleway turns off right. Keep straight ahead here, now on a yellow-arrowed footpath.

4 At the end, go through a wooden swing-gate onto a concrete track which will take you over the M25 motorway, but with a couple of twists. Your route is **right** on the track, immediately **left** through a wooden swing-gate into a large meadow, immediately **right** through a modern kissing-gate and **left** on the roadway over the bridge. Go through a large metal gate and **right** on a peaty farm track. At a bend by some 'phone masts, bear **left** on a grassy path, leaving the noisy traffic behind. In 200m your path ends at a T-junction in front of a line of trees. Turn **left** here on a grassy path. Your path takes you over a stile (care! rickety) and a V-stile, then along the right-hand side of a horse pasture. A V-stile leads you past a small solar-panel farm on your left and then over a low stile into another horse pasture.

5 Stick to the right-hand edge across a rather clumpy section and over a stile into a small sheep pasture. Another stile takes you into a large green meadow. Keep to the **right**-hand side of the meadow until, after 50m or so, you approach a corner of the woodland. Just before the corner, at a fingerpost, go **right** on a path into the wood. The path runs along the edge of the wood, taking you over a stile, round some mud and over woodland debris [Jul 2026: due to summery conditions, now very overgrown with brambles and ferns: please do some swishing to help clear the path], until you emerge via a 2-plank bridge into a field. Go straight ahead across the centre of the field, passing on your left a lone oak tree. At the corner of a hedged garden, keep **left** at a yellow arrow. In 150m, just after a house, go **right** by a (squeezable) stile and **left** on a tarmac drive into the hamlet of Mays Green.

6 Just after two gravel driveways, turn **right** at a fingerpost, through a modern kissing-gate, and bear **left** across the grass (note the willow ringed by a pond). In the corner, go over a 4-plank bridge onto an extremely bendy path between high fences. You emerge, over a stile [May 2022: still half broken but you can hop over the barbed wire]. Keep straight ahead on a path with a large meadow and good views on your right. A stile and a gravel drive lead to a junction of drives. Keep straight on along a wide tarmac drive. Where the main drive bends left, keep straight ahead on a track. You reach a junction by a cattery. Keep straight ahead here on a narrow path which finally debouches through an old kissing-gate, down steps to a road (Ockham Lane again).

7 Turn **left** on the road, passing the curious low pink *Flower Cottage*. Shortly after, at the top of a rise, go **right** on a tarmac drive, signed as a bridleway. You walk for ½ km between open fields heading for the woods of Chatley Heath. *The great redbrick mansion over to your right is Hatchford Park, originally Jacobean but remodelled in 1850 by Francis Egerton, Earl of Ellesmere, after*

whom the Arctic Ellesmere Island is named; its mausoleum is passed on the "Wisley Common" walk in this series. On your left are *Ockham Manor* and the neo-Jacobean *Halsey House*. Go straight over on a wide dirt path, between stumps, into the woods of Chatley Heath.

8 You pass a post with a yellow arrow and a crossing path with the remains of a wooden barrier on your right and, about 250m after entering the wood, you reach a very wide crossing bridleway and a 3-way fingerpost. (It you did not start the walk at one of the car parks off Old Lane, you can turn **right** on the bridleway uphill as far as the Semaphore Tower and continue straight on to join the main walk. But you will miss the most inspiring part of this walk across the bleak heath.) Cross straight over the bridleway, a fraction to the right of the fingerpost, and then take a narrow path uphill. In less than 50m, just before a sign for the Tower, turn sharp **left** on a narrow path. Keep to the main path which runs in the open, skirting an expanse of heather on your right. After 150m, just before the path rises a little, go **left** at a sign for the car park. Follow this path for the best part of 1 km, over a crossing track, meeting a path from the left and another from the right, over a sandy horse path, through mature pines, finally reaching the Pond car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: park in the **Wisely and Ockham Commons Pond** car park. To get there from the London area, go to the A3 / M25 junction and take the sliproad towards Guildford. (If you come from the A3, you need to take the exit as if for the M25 but go straight on at the roundabout. If you come from the Guildford direction, you need to do an about-turn at the M25 roundabout.) In about 100m, leave the sliproad by turning **left** onto a narrow road (Old Lane) sign-posted *Effingham* that runs through the forest beside the lake (*Boldermere*). The car park is 400 yds on the **left**.

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