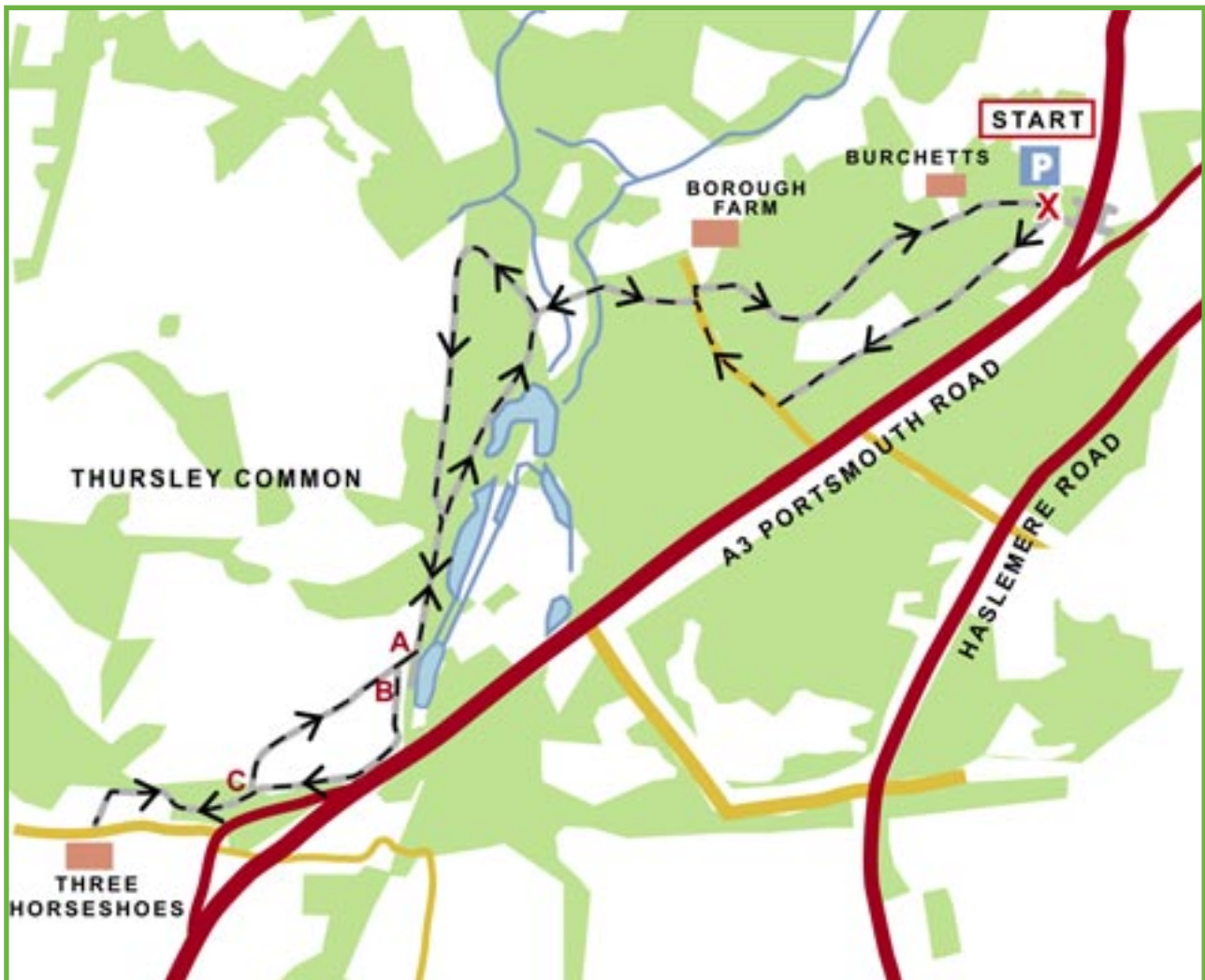




Rodborough Common to Thursley

This walk has been designed for Trampers,
off road cyclists and walkers



Map: OS Explorer 145 Guildford & Farnham

Start: Rodborough Common car park.

Grid Ref: SU938419

Distance: 8.25 miles

Refreshments: The Three Horseshoes Thursley



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Rodborough Common is managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust. It is home to many reptiles including Common Lizards, Slow Worms, Grass Snakes and Adders. Butterflies include the Silver Studded Blue.

Directions

Leave the car park by the first path on the left with a barrier across it (there is room for the scooter to pass) and walk south over an open space parallel with the A3. Ignore a grassy path to the right, and shortly after when the path forks go right. At a junction of paths, with a wide one coming in from the right and a narrow one going left, keep ahead. Now watch for when the path next starts to dip down as there is a very rough patch ahead. To avoid this on a cycle/ mobility scooter, keep above off to the left of the path or to take the path on the right and then left to re-join the path. The path now ascends and over to the right is a clear rectangular grassy space.

It is here that there is a colony of the rare Silver Studded Blue butterfly which emerges in June/July. The male is blue and the female a less spectacular brown.

Continue on the path until just before it enters a small wooded area and then take the path right, which goes down and then up, and stop to admire the view at the top.

The flat topped skyline is known as The Hogs Back and is the A31 linking Guildford and Farnham.

Turn left towards the seat and then in front of it turn right on the narrow path which leads out to a road. (This little used road is Borough Farm road and serves only three properties.) Go right downhill to the bottom and turn left onto the bridle way (BW) just before the gate to Borough Farm. On the right pass a house 'Little Borough' and then go through the gate (which can be nudged open). The BW is fenced, it goes over a stream where the path is often muddy, narrows and arrives at another gate (again it is not latched).

This is part of an earth bank marking the parish boundary between Witley and Thursley. You are now entering Thursley Common National Nature Reserve. The reserve contains one of the largest surviving remnants of the great heath which once stretched almost unbroken from west London to Hampshire. The best time to visit the reserve is between May and September. Butterflies include large populations of grayling and purple emperor and also the silver studded blue. Birds include woodlark, Dartford warbler, nightjar, stonechat and curlew. Reptiles include the rare sand lizard and smooth snake.

Turn right and keep right following the parish boundary. At a notice board on the right 'Welcome to Thursley National Nature Reserve' and a MOD board ahead on the left turn left. On reaching a T junction at another MOD board turn left onto a wide sandy track. Continue on the track for 0.6 mile to arrive at a crossroads by another Welcome to Thursley board and to the left is a track leading to cottages and a sign A3 gap closed ahead (point **A**). Keep ahead continuing in the same direction until a junction of paths with a second sign on the left 'A3 gap closed ahead' is reached.

This is the site of the Upper Hammer Pond and over two hundred years ago an iron industry was located here. The dam collapsed here in early 2014 and all that remains is a stream running through.

Turn right on a wide track uphill and shortly after the top, ignore a narrow crossing path, and after 70 yards, at a crossroads of wide tracks, (point **B**) turn left. On reaching a further crossroads turn right at a blue BW sign. Keep on this path, going uphill, until you join a wide sandy track coming from the right and turn left onto it.

In the summer of 2006 there was a massive heath fire on the common lasting for almost four days causing a deep burn due to the combination of the flammable peat and gorse. By 2010 the common was beginning to regenerate and now when the heather is blooming it is glorious to behold.

On arriving at the T junction (point **C**) turn right. The path now runs parallel to the road into Thursley although the road is not visible. After approximately 600 yards look for a BW sign pointing left to a wooden gate. Go through the gate and past holly bushes to reach the road at Thursley with the pub visible to the right.

Thursley was originally part of Witley Parish. The architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, one of fourteen children, grew up in the village where some of his earliest work is to be found. The unknown sailor, murdered in 1786, is commemorated by a tombstone with a bas-relief of the act in the churchyard.

For the return journey retrace your steps through the holly trees, past the gate and turn right. Stay on this BW, still retracing your steps along the top of the common parallel to the road until you reach point C. Stay on the BW as it swings left and admire the view as you follow it down ignoring the path on the right that you came up on. (If cycling or on mobility scooter watch out for two wooden poles across the track to prevent erosion. These require care to negotiate on a mobility scooter and if unsure go back and retrace your steps on the path you came up on to point B.) When the path splits into two wide paths go right to reach the crossroads (point B) and keep ahead until the drained pond junction is reached.

Turn left at this point on the narrow path next to the dilapidated fence to reach the cottages and, to the left, a junction of paths encountered on the outward journey.

The suggested return route below is bumpy over tree roots and is not recommended for a scooter. It takes you past the attractive, particularly when the water lilies are out, Forked Pond. The alternative is to now retrace your steps to the Parish Boundary gate. Turn left to the notice board and then right. Continue straight on until you reach the MOD notice board. Turn right, keep left as the path forks, and reach another MOD board. Turn right following the parish boundary watching out for the gate on the left.

For the suggested route, keep ahead at the cottages passing on the right a bank with a deer fence on top.

In this area, Sir Robert Moore of Loseley and Henry Bell of Rake, Witley set up a rabbit warren in 1618 and built a house for the warrener.

Keep straight on this main path, through the wood, pausing to look at the pond when it comes into view. A small path comes in from the pond when you are level with a green barn visible in the trees. Shortly afterwards reach the gate at the parish boundary on the right. Go through the gate and retrace your steps to Borough Farm. Now cross over Borough Farm Road and continue on the BW and shortly pass a barrier. Keep straight on the BW and eventually pass by a gate just before a house Burchetts on the left. Soon arrive at another house on the right, Moushill Corner. Now leave the main track which swings left and go ahead uphill which leads back to the carpark.

