



Walk 15

A Circular Hike Rodborough Common & Frensham Little Pond

Maps: OS Explorer 145 Guildford & Farnham, OS Explorer 133 Haslemere & Petersfield

Start: Rodborough Common car park. Alternatives are Hankley Common or Frensham Little Pond car parks.

Grid Ref: SU938419

Distance: 16 miles

Refreshments: The Duke of Cambridge at Tilford, Tern Café at Frensham Little Pond, Three Horseshoes Thursley

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 at the far end on a wide track going downhill. At the bottom turn left onto the wide track coming in from the right and pass, on the left, the driveway to Moushill Corner. Continue on this bridleway, soon passing another house, Burchetts and a metal gateway across the bridleway (BW).

After some distance arrive at another metal barrier and soon the BW reaches the tarmac driveway to Borough Farm. Cross the drive and continue on the BW past a house Little Borough on the right and through a gate. The path goes over a stream, passes a farm gate on the left, narrows and arrives at another gate.

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 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. 26 species of dragonflies have been recorded. Plants such as bog asphodel and marsh orchid may be seen. Birds include woodlark, Dartford warbler, nightjar, stonechat and curlew. Reptiles include the rare sand lizard and smooth snake.

Go through the gate, turn left and after a short distance take the left fork with a large green barn in the trees on the left. Follow the path to the edge of the pond then, keeping the pond on your left continue round the edge. The pond becomes marshy and overgrown at the southern end but the path is not affected.

After leaving the pond emerge into open pinewoods and turn left on the sandy track. On the left hand side the path follows an earth bank topped by a deer fence. When you reach the cottages and barns turn right and shortly reach a sign at a crossroads 'Welcome to Thursley Common'. Now keep straight ahead on this wide sandy track ignoring all paths left and right for approximately one mile to reach a metal gate.

A boardwalk over wetland bog has been constructed approximately 0.5 mile to the north of the sandy track at this end of the common. The area is well known for the many varieties of dragonflies, damselflies and mayflies. It is popular with birdwatchers.

Go through the gate and keep to the same path which joins a wide track, coming in from the left, just before reaching a road. Turn left along the road and as the road bends sharp left cross over to the BW/MOD tarmac drive and continue on this, passing a car parking area on the left, to the top of the hill. (At the crossroads it is possible to avoid walking on the road by taking a few steps to the right and left onto a footpath parallel to the road and then re-join the road at the brow of the hill.)

This is Hankley Common which is largely owned by the MOD and used for military training. The area known as The Lions Mouth was one of the training sites for Operation Overlord, the invasion of France by allied forces in 1944. The remainder of the common is owned by Hankley Golf Club which opened in 1897.

The common has been used on several occasions for filming. It was used in three of the James Bond films and most recently for filming Macbeth.

Walk downhill on the road to the bend at the bottom. Ignore the wide path going right but leave the tarmac drive and go ahead uphill on the wide sandy track to reach a junction of six paths. This is the area known as 'The Lions Mouth'. Take the path that is a little to the right of straight ahead. (Stop and look for a post with a blue BW sign numbered 101 and a GW (Greensand Way) sign on the left of the path to be sure of the correct path).

Soon the path goes downhill to reach the golf course and keep straight ahead to cross the course on the marked bridleway. *It is a popular golf course so do take care.* After passing a car parking area amongst the trees go left on the bridleway at a fork. Continue through the golf course eventually joining a track coming in from the left. The track passes an area of wooden chalets on the left and then the clubhouse and its carpark on the right and arrives at a road junction. To the left is the Duke of Cambridge Pub.

Turn right and cross the road to the BW just beyond the post-box. When the path meets a wider track turn left and soon pass Meadow End Farm on the right. Keep to this path for approximately 0.75 mile eventually arriving at a road.

Frensham little pond car park is opposite. If refreshments are required go through the car park and bear left for the pond and café.

The pond was created in the 13th c when the Plantagenet King Henry 111 was on the throne. It was built for the Bishop of Winchester to provide fish when he visited Farnham Castle. A variety of birds are to be found on the common and the tree pipit and linnet are seen frequently. Dogs should be kept under tight control as there are rare ground nesting birds such as the woodlark and the nightjar. Rare winter visitors include the hen harrier and the great grey shrike. Ospreys can be seen for a brief two weeks in March. All six species of our native reptiles are present on the common. They are grass snakes, adders, slow worms, sand lizards, common lizard and the rare smooth snake.

Turn left along the road and before the bend take the footpath to the right of the road which skirts the pond following the yellow footpath (FP) signs. Continue over a sluice and pass memorial seats to Les and Grandma & Grandad. After passing a hide on the right reach a

fork and keep left still following the yellow arrows and with a fence on the left.

On reaching a further junction of tracks keep left still following the fence. When the fence turns left keep straight ahead. At a paddock on the left go through a metal barrier and then turn sharp right following the blue FP sign into the woods and continue to a road.

For a shorter walk turn left here and walk 0.75 mile down Sandy Lane to the main road at Rushmoor.

Turn right down the road, crossing a ford and turn left at the BW (blue post number 42), by Grey Walls. At a junction of paths keep to the main wide track which swings left. Continue on this path until you reach a multi junction of paths with a house ahead.

Leave BW 42 and turn left downhill to arrive at the Hamlet of Crosswater. Walk up the road and near the top of the hill turn left onto a permissive track and driveway for Tanglewood. The path leads to open common land. The path swings right and skirts below a hill, one of the three 'Devils Jumps'.

These three steep hills are in a line rising from an otherwise mostly level common land. The 'story' states that whenever the devil came to Surrey he jumped around on the hills and hence their name.

Keep to this path, ignoring paths off left, and reach a field on the right. Near the end of the field take the left fork and aim for the distinct sandy track ahead which goes uphill and note the house visible on the hill to the right. Ignore the steeper hill that shortly goes off to the right. At the brow of the hill the path goes down to a junction of paths. Keep ahead to reach a road at the junction with Sandy Lane (*Shorter walk joins here*).

Turn left along the main road, cross over and take the FP to the left of the fishing lakes. The path goes downhill to a metal barrier, crosses a stream and then uphill to a T junction. Turn left onto the wide track. On reaching a multi junction of paths leave the wide track and go right on a narrower path steeply uphill. Go down the other side, ignore all paths left and right and continue in the same direction to the very bottom of the hill. The path swings left goes uphill, dips and then continues uphill steeply to the ridge of Kettlebury Hill opposite a BW sign. This is Hankley common once more.

Turn right and walk along the ridge keeping right when the path forks. At a multi junction of paths keep on the same path very shortly reaching a marker post with a red trail arrow. Turn left here (leaving the BW which swings right) and then immediately right. After a short distance reach a wide crossing track with overhead lines and cross over the track going under the lines to a narrower slightly indistinct path through the pine trees. The path veers left and then descends downhill, steeply at first, and joins with a path coming in from the left. Continue downhill, ignoring paths off to the left and right, to reach a barrier before a metalled road.

Turn right on the road going over a stream and passing a house and garden on the right. On reaching the road at the top of the hill turn right and look for a footpath on the left just after Dye House. The footpath is strewn with tree roots and runs between a fence on the right and a laurel hedge on the left. It leads down to a bridge over a stream, passes a wooden gate and on to a field with a further stream meandering through. Exit the field by the stile to a lane and go left to reach a road.

Once more turn right, and as the road bends left follow the FP sign right and ignore the path that immediately goes off to the left. The path merges into a lane and after passing some interesting cottages arrives at Thursley village. Turn left and cross over the road to a BW by an early Lutyens House.

Edwin Lutyens, the architect, born 1869, the 11th child out of 14, grew up in Thursley.

After a few yards turn right at a crossroads of BW's and continue to yet another crossroads and keep ahead. At the next junction of paths again keep ahead still following the same BW. (*Turn right here for the village pub The Three Horsehoes*). Keep to the BW and note when it runs close to the road (*the road to the right is not visible but is audible*) and watch for when it swings left. Go left on the BW and ignore the narrower path which continues ahead.

There was a major fire on the common in 2006. The common has regenerated and without the trees there is a lovely view to the left.

The path goes downhill. Ignore the narrow path off to the right but when the path splits into two wide paths go right. On reaching a crossroads of paths go straight over and continue to a further junction of paths.

Straight ahead is the site of one of the three Hammer Ponds. The dam collapsed in early 2014 and all that remains is a stream running through. See walk 2 for the history of the ironworks here.

Turn left here on the wider path and arrive at the junction of paths by the Thursley Nature Reserve Board encountered on the outward journey. Turn right towards the cottages and then left along the deer fence. Keep straight on this main path, through the wood, joining the path coming in from the pond when you are level with 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, cross the drive and continue to the first metal barrier. Now, before the barrier, take the narrow path right uphill. At the top the path veers left goes down a dip and up the other side. Keep ahead along this path which dips down and up, ignoring all paths off to the left, to eventually arrive at the car park.

