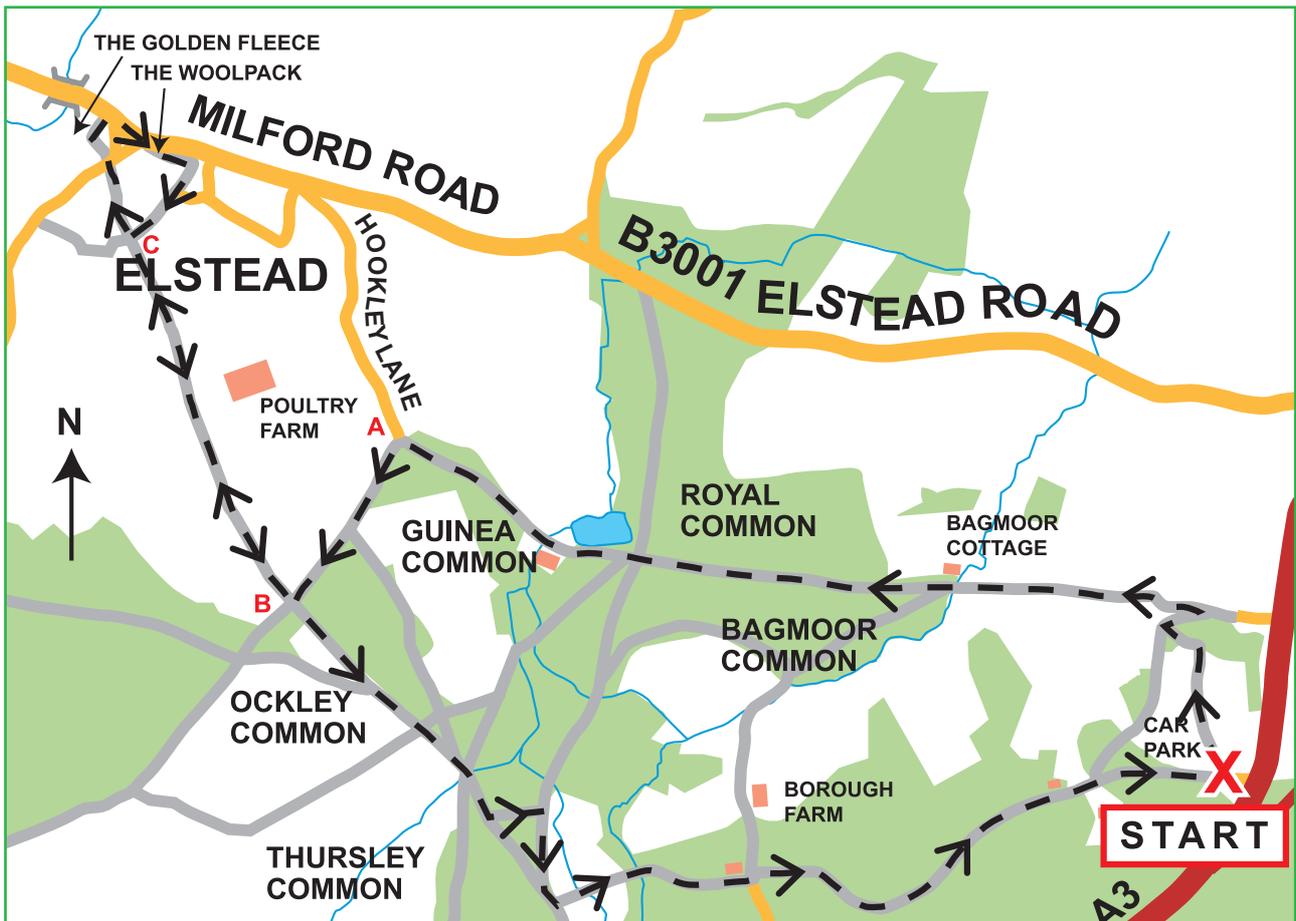




Walk 9

Rodborough Common to Elstead via Bagmoor, Royal, Ockley & Thursley Commons



Map: O.S Explorer Map 145 – Guildford & Farnham

Start: Rodborough Common car park, Milford

Grid Ref: SU 938419

Distance: 6 miles

Terrain: Almost flat but some stiles.

Refreshments: The Woolpack, The Golden Fleece (serving Thai food) and The Mill – all at Elstead.



Walk 9

Rodborough Common to Elstead via Bagmoor, Royal, Ockley & Thursley Commons

This is a good walk if you wish to include a pub lunch. Dogs are not allowed on Bagmoor Nature Reserve. Drainage ditches have recently been cut at Bagmoor which have considerably improved the terrain. Previously it was very boggy in wet weather.

Leave the car park by a footpath on the right hand side beyond the notice board and between gorse bushes. Continue across the common, ignoring the path off to the left at a marker post, to reach two benches amongst trees with a view to the west. A little further on join a way-marked path coming in from the left and turn right onto it. Keep on this path, again ignoring a path right at a marker post, and go downhill to reach a residential bridle way. Turn right and after a few yards pass the driveway to Riddens on the left and then go down left, past entrances to two houses Onet and Pucklands, to a stile.

Go over the stile and follow the path ahead, beside the house, to reach a double stile. Cross and then walk through a fir tree plantation to reach yet another stile. The path now goes across the marsh at Bagmoor to reach a further stile and wooden bridge over a stream.

This is Bagmoor Path, an old track that goes to Bagmoor and Royal Commons and on to Elstead. Bagmoor Cottage dates from the 17th C.

Beyond the bridge there is an open space in front of a house and garden. At the bridge there is a three way footpath sign. Ignore the footpath signed to the left and follow the finger post pointing straight ahead to a footpath to the right of the pylons. This is Bagmoor Nature Reserve.

Bagmoor Common is owned and managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust. It is an area of special scientific interest. Woodland butterflies, notably the White Admiral and The Purple Emperor are a feature of this reserve. Kingfishers, Woodpeckers and Tits, including the Willow Tit, are present.

Now continue along this narrow footpath broadly following the higher overhead lines. Watch out for when the path divides and take the left turn which goes between two silver birch trees. *(It is easy to miss this fork, see note below.)* After passing a yellow way-mark sign and reaching a gap in a small bank, straddling the path, you have arrived at the Parish boundary. At this point, further along on the bank about 30 yards to the right is a notice board. *(If you missed the point where the path divided you will be at the bank by the notice board – cross over to the intended path 30 yards to your left.)* You are now leaving Bagmoor Common and entering Royal Common.

All these commons have been part of the history of the area for centuries. Over the last 250 years nearly 90% of UK heathland has been lost, so commons like these are precious. They can only survive for people and wildlife if they are actively managed.

After the bank, for a very short distance, the path can be indistinct but becomes clearer. It crosses three ditches by plank bridges which can be slippery at times. The path emerges at a junction of paths and ahead is a metal track.

Cross over the metal track and take the footpath ahead, which runs beside a deep pond to the right. After a short distance reach a house and garden, West Pond Cottage. Go through the garden in front of the house and out of the driveway to a metalled road. This leads eventually to a residential road, Hookley Lane, at a road-sign Guinea Common.

Alternatively at this point (A on the map) you may continue down the road until it reaches the B3001 and turn left along it to arrive at the green at Elstead. As you go down the lane look out for 16C Hookley Cottage.

Turn immediately left onto a bridleway and continue on to reach a MOD training sign. Ignore the path left and keep ahead to a wooden fenced field on the right and woods to the left. The path goes ahead and then sharp right *(point B on the map)* round the field edge and go through the wooden kissing gate.

The walk returns to this point later and so it is possible to shorten the walk here.

Continue on the clear path round the field edges. Eventually the path becomes lined with oak trees on the left and climbs to a kissing gate and then on to a junction of paths. *(point C on the map).*

Go through The Ramblers kissing gate ahead, keep to the field edge on the right to a another kissing gate and take the footpath down the hill to the road. Turn right to reach the green at Elstead. Fork left at the green for the Golden Fleece and The Mill, which is the other side of the bridge. Fork right for The Woolpack.

Elstead has prospered in the past due to its mill, the C1300 bridge over the River Wey, sheep farming and carrots. The mill is currently a public house and restaurant. The woollen industry is recalled in the names of The Woolpack and The Golden Fleece public houses.

To make the return journey take the small lane (Back Lane) behind the Woolpack and, just before you reach a road, take a path/driveway on the right, which leads up to a metal barrier. Pass between two high hedges to reach another road. Go straight ahead up the hill signposted Hillcrest and then on to the bridleway. At the top of the hill is the junction of paths (C) reached on your outward walk.

Stop to admire the view and then retrace your steps to point (B). Do not go left round the field edge, but instead cross the stile and enter the MOD training area. Take the path ahead and go over a crossing track to reach Ockley Common. Ignore a path off to the right and keep ahead until the path merges with a made up track coming in from the right.

This track is very popular for families with young children for cycling.

Shortly when the track swings sharp left at a FP post take the footpath ahead. It widens to a sandy track and another track comes in from the left. Go over a small stream and soon reach a junction of paths with MOD signs on the left and a board ahead 'Welcome to Thursley Common'.

Turn left here and keep on this path, ignoring the path that forks right, until a T junction is reached at further MOD and Thursley Common signs. Turn right here and the path is now following the parish boundary on the left. After merging with a FP coming in from the right, look for a bridleway sign on the right pointing left to a gate. Go through the gate and follow this fenced path which shortly becomes a track. It crosses a couple of streams and eventually leads to a gate beside a house, Little Borough. Cross the tarmac road ahead leading to Borough Farm and continue on the bridleway. On reaching a barrier saying no through road to motorcycles, keep ahead on this wide sandy track to eventually arrive at another barrier beside a white house on the left hand side.

A short distance further on, another house, Moushill Corner, is on the right hand side. At this point where the main track turns left, go straight on uphill back to the car park.

