

WINDLESHAM WALKS

Walk No.3

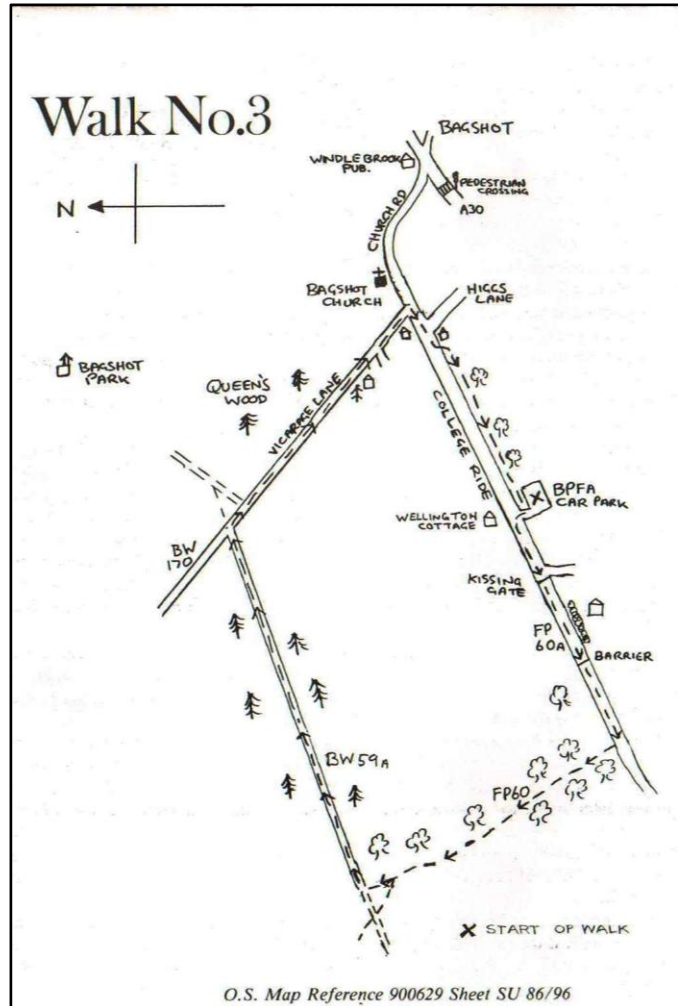
Start/Parking: Bagshot Playing Fields Association car park, top of College Ride, Bagshot
Distance: 3.25 km or 2 miles approx
Type of walk: Undulating, can be muddy in parts, mostly woodland. Two kissing gates

This walk takes you into the wood and heathland to the north of Bagshot, bordering Swinley Forest. It can feel quite remote and a long way from civilisation. Before starting off, take a look at the white-painted house, Wellington Cottage, almost opposite the entrance to the car park. This was once the Duke of Wellington beerhouse, leased in 1863 to Thomas Poulter Harris, head of the Staines brewery. In 1934 it was bought by Dame Annie Frances Elphinstone, the widow of Sir Howard Elphinstone who was appointed governor to Prince Arthur, later Duke of Connaught (reputed to be Queen Victoria's favourite son) when Arthur was eight and a half years old. The sale to Dame Annie was on condition that it should no longer be used as an inn or off-licence and it has been a private house ever since.



Turn left out of the car park and walk up College Ride through an iron gate (or use the kissing gate) just past the rear entrance to the Pennyhill Park Hotel complex and continue downhill on an unmade track (Footpath 60A) which is used by vehicles servicing the hotel. On the left is a long brick wall - the rear of the hotel's spa - where once stood what was reputed to be the highest holly hedge in Europe. A new hedge of holly and buddleia has been planted, presumably to try and mitigate the rather brutal effect of this long stretch of brickwork in a woodland location.

Pass through a barrier made of oil drums to prevent vehicle access and continue



along the track; ignore a gap in the wire fence on your right with a path beyond it, but a few yards further on look out for a waymark post on the left of the track with yellow arrows pointing ahead and to the right. Turn right here on to Footpath 60. The path runs slightly downhill, levels out, and meanders on bordered by gnarled and twisted chestnut trees, where a good harvest can often be gathered in autumn.

The path skirts around the foot of a hill and then the track is less clearly defined. Bear right through the trees towards a large stand of rhododendron bushes, keeping them on your left. The track rises to a gate in a livestock fence with a waymark sign pointing ahead. The land you are walking on forms part of Poors Allotments, charity land set aside in the early 19th century to provide fuel for the poor. The income from it is now distributed to mainly elderly parishioners to help with winter fuel bills. It is a Site of Special Scientific

Interest and Special Protection Area for Birds, and is being managed for the landowners by Surrey Wildlife Trust.

Soon the land opens out into wide, hilly areas of bracken and heather, a tapestry of gold, purple and brown in season. The landmark BT communications mast can be glimpsed through the trees to your left. Later a pillbox, a relic of WW2, appears on the skyline. Continue along this well-defined path until it meets Bridleway 59A, turn right and go through the metal gate. This bridleway was once a carriageway linking Bagshot Park to King's Ride, Camberley, when Bagshot Park was a royal hunting lodge



in the 17th century. It has the alternative name of Elphinstone Drive, after the aforementioned Sir Howard, who was later appointed aide-de-camp to Queen Victoria. Pinewood House was built for him about 1880 and Sir Howard and his family lived there, close to his former charge the Duke of Connaught, who lived at Bagshot Park, and who described Sir Howard as a "dear, valued and most devoted friend."

Follow the bridleway for some distance; it eventually ascends a hill, passing through pine plantations and through a log barrier to prevent vehicles gaining access. At the junction of tracks just beyond the barrier continue ahead to a T-junction with metal gates to your left and ahead. Turn right, you are now on Bridleway 170, once known as Oakingham Road as it was a main carting route between Bagshot and Wokingham. The railings on the left protect Queen's Wood, which will be explored in a later walk. Where there is a wide ride between the trees the turret of Bagshot Park could once be seen, now it is obscured by trees. The house was built in 1875 by Queen Victoria as a wedding present for the Duke of Connaught. After his death in 1942 it became the Royal Army Chaplains' Department until 1996, and now it is the home of the Earl and Countess of Wessex and their children.

The track continues over a stream, rises to a wooden barrier and becomes Vicarage Road. An unusually large and spreading pine tree in the garden of Willow End, which was formerly Bagshot's vicarage, is a distinctive landmark. Further on there is a welcome bench.

Follow the road to the junction with College Ride. The modern houses on the right of the junction occupy the site of Bagshot Hall, an imposing double-fronted villa built in the mid-19th century which had a Roman Catholic oratory in its grounds. This served as a centre



Entrance to Footpath 60

for Roman Catholic worship for the village until the Church of Christ the King was built in Guildford Road in 1954.

To return to the car park, turn right into College Ride, then cross over and go through the kissing gate to the right of No.2 on to what used to be the old carriage drive which once served Pennyhill Park (this is preferable to walking back along the road!). It will take you past the playing fields and back to the parking area.



Bridleway 59A was a carriageway linking Bagshot Park to Camberley

● First published in August 1982 by the Windlesham Society's footpaths and bridleways sub-committee with the help of Windlesham Parish Council. Revised 2012 by June Green. If you encounter any obstructions during this walk please notify the Clerk to Windlesham Parish Council.