

A HERITAGE WALK AROUND HORSELL VILLAGE CENTRE and HORSELL BIRCH



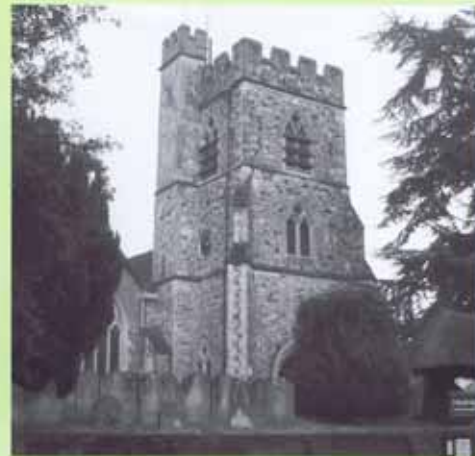
This walk should take up two hours as a gentle afternoon or evening stroll, and although Horsell Birch and Viggory Lane often have large puddles in the winter, the walk is accessible all year round. Please follow the Countryside Code, respect the privacy of the owners and occupiers of the properties listed and enjoy your walk.

For a copy of the current programme of guided Heritage Walks, please send a S.A.E. to the publisher, or e-mail heritage.walks@ntlworld.com

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HORSELL

A SELF-GUIDED HERITAGE WALK AROUND THE VILLAGE CENTRE and HORSELL BIRCH



WITH NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS ON THE HISTORY OF THE AREA

By Iain Wakeford
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Introduction

Horsell, as a name, was first recorded in the early 13th century as 'Horsell' - the name probably deriving from the Old English words 'Hors' meaning 'foul or dirty' and 'Scyll' (a ledge or shelf). The name obviously refers to the ledge or hill upon which the church stands. Horsell was a scattered community, with farms and cottages on the edge of the heath. Even in relatively modern times, fields and nursery grounds could be found along the High Street. It was the piecemeal development of these that gave Horsell its pattern of streets - the old field boundaries showing up along the back gardens of the houses of the village.

The Walk

This walk starts at the shops in the village centre.

From here you need to head east along the High Street (towards the church), passing Bensteads Cottage. The Crown Inn and Horsell School on your right and the Parish Hall & Institute, The Red Lion and the Old Vicarage on your left.

Bensteads Cottage

The house on the corner with Bury Lane was once a garage (and previously a cycle shop) - run by Archie Benstead. Before that, the building was used as the village Post

Bensteads Cottage



Office, run by Miss Sarah Spooner. The house dates from the early 19th century and is a locally listed building.



The Parish Hall & Institute

Horsell Parish Hall was built in 1907 at a cost of £2,000, with accommodation for 200 people and a room below for 'Men's Society' meetings.



The house (behind the War Memorial) was presented to the parish by Mrs. Back in 1897 for use as a 'Parish Institute'.



The Crown
It appears that 'The Crown' was first established in the 18th century, although the present building is Victorian (with obvious modern additions to the left and rear).

The Red Lion

The Red Lion
Although the present public house dates only from the 18th century (at the earliest), there has been a pub on this site since at least the mid-16th century. On 17th September, 1566, Edward Roke applied for a licence

to open an ale house here. In later years the pub apparently sold rose bushes grown in the nearby Cobbett's Nursery.



Horsell Church School.
The first school in Horsell apparently opened in the early part of the 19th century, a record of 1818 showing that there were 165 pupils on the register. It was one of the first schools in the area and in 1833 thirty-eight of the 209 children attending the school came from Pyrford, whilst 91 came from Woking. The school was rebuilt in 1851 by the National Society and with schools opening at Pyrford, Westfield and Church Street, (Old) Woking, the number of children on the register was reduced to just 81.



Horsell School in the early 20th century.

It was not long, however, before the development of the village meant an increase in accommodation at the school and in 1882 the school was enlarged to cater for 240. The following year an area of land was given to the school by the Vicar - the Rev. Back - for use as a playground.

The entrance to Horsell First School.



Further enlargements of the school took place in 1899, with the infant school being added in 1912 at a cost of £1,200 and a further enlargement two years later at a cost of £2,000. By 1916 there were 107 infants, with 248 at the mixed school.

The Vicarage
The Vicarage dates from Victorian times, although there is some evidence that the Victorian façade hides an earlier building.

At the top of Church Hill, carefully cross the road to the Lych Gate of St. Mary's Church.



Horsell Church

Horsell Church
The earliest part of St. Mary's Church - a few small parts of masonry at the western end of the Nave - dates from the mid 12th century. In about 1340 major alterations were made when the tower was added, but by the mid-15th century the chapel was described as ruinous and in need of repair. The place was rebuilt and in the late 15th century the South Aisle was added.

The old Vicarage

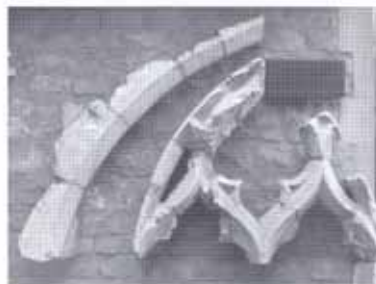
The chapel remained almost unaltered for the next 350 years until in Victorian times the church was 'restored' by W.F. Unsworth (who lived at Woodhambury in Woodham Lane). The early 20th century saw the addition of the North Aisle and Vestry in 1909 and the Trinity Chapel in 1910.

The Churchyard
The earliest recorded burials in the church yard date from 1485 - one of which, to Thomas Rooke, shows the longevity of the family in the area.



As if to prove the point, one of the oldest surviving graves in the church yard is the tomb of Henry Rooke dated 1758. It is a Grade II listed building, one of two in the churchyard, the other dating from 1789 to Ann Rooke!

One of the Rooke tombs (by the South Aisle).



Some pieces of 14th- and 15th-century windows from the original north wall of the Nave. Now on the side of the Ropistry.



Bowness, on the corner with Waldens Park Road.

Having looked around the church and churchyard, return to Church Hill through the Lych Gate and again carefully cross the road. Turn left and head down the hill.

Church Hill

Although Church Hill is a Conservation Area, there are only three nationally listed buildings in it – the church and the two Roake tombs. There are, however, a number of old and interesting cottages on the hill, one of which is Bowness (also once known as The Shrubbery's) on the corner of Waldens Park Road and Church Hill. The house is of unknown origin, but it possibly dates from the 18th

century – although the front is obviously Victorian. 'The Cottage', further down the hill, is probably the oldest house on the hill, possibly dating from the 17th century or very early 18th century. Another 18th century cottage is Kalmia (on the opposite side of the road to Bowness). It was originally two cottages,

The Cottage



Kalmia

but was later converted into one – at one time being the home of some of the Cobbett family. The antique centre, just down the road, was once the stable block and sheds of Kalmia.

At the bottom of the hill turn right into Arthurs Bridge Road and then right again into Kirby Road.

Around the corner turn left into St. Mary's Road and then right at the end of the road on to Well Lane.

Soon, on the left, you will see the entrance to Holyoake Crescent.

The entrance to Holyoake Crescent



Sign on the side of the shop – once the fourth branch of the Woking Co-operative Society.

used it first as allotments and paddocks for the Society's horses. Later, plans were drawn up by Mr. H. Clapham Lander for a 30-house estate of 'workers' cottages and a new branch store. Work began in 1912 and was completed in June 1914 at a cost of over £9,000. The branch store, in Well Lane, has the initial 'WH&D Co-operative Society' on the side, although there is some doubt whether the Society ever officially changed its name to the 'Woking, Horsell & District Co-operative Society'.

Continue along Well Lane to the roundabout, taking the first turning – Bullbeggars Lane. Almost as soon as you enter the lane, look across the road to Well Farm.

Well Farm

When Well Farm was up for sale in early 2001 the estate agents' blurb proudly described it as 'A charming Grade II listed former farmhouse believed to date from the 14th century.' The Department of the Environment 'listing'

states that it is 15th century, with 20th century additions! Unfortunately these additions are to the front, so that from the road there is little to see of one of Horsell's oldest homes. Inside are exposed timbers and an inglenook fireplace.

Continue along Bullbeggars Lane, past Rosehill Avenue to the entrance to the Lakeview Estate and Goldsworth Park. Here you should cross the road to Whapshott Farm.



Well Farm – rear view.

Well Farm from the street



Holyoake Crescent

Some people wonder why Holyoake Crescent is a conservation area. True, some of the houses are quite nice, but they are nothing special. Well, for Woking (and Horsell) they are, because they were the first (if not the only) development in our area based on the 'garden suburb' design of the Edwardian period. The raised brickwork on the side of No 2, reads 'WCS Garden Suburb – 1912' and stands for the Woking Co-operative Society, whose scheme it was.

They bought the land (then known as 'Newbrookes') in 1908-9 from James Fenn and

Whapshott Farm

The name 'Whapshott' was first recorded in the 7th century as 'Wopshete' (weeping corner), although it should be noted that this was the area of 'Whapshott House' to the north of Horsell Common (near Mimbridge). How the farm in Bullbeggars Lane became so called is unclear, although one story is that some past owner of the farm had once lived at the original Whapshott and brought the name with them. Indeed, the story goes further, claiming that the previous owners of the 'farm' had moved to Church Hill, to a house



now called 'Bullbeggars'. All in all, very confusing! Whapshott Farm is a Grade II listed building dating from the 16th century, but with a 19th century extension on the front.

Whapshott Farm from the street.

Bullbeggars Lane

In ancient times a 'Bullbeggar' was a mythical creature, very much like an evil goblin. According to local legend, Bullbeggars used to occupy the barns that once stood at the entrance to what is now the Lakeview Estate. At night they would come out and start terrorising the neighbourhood – getting up to all sorts of mischief. It is not known when the Bullbeggars were last seen in the area.



Whapshott Farm – rear view.

Continue along Bullbeggars Lane to the junction with the High Street. Across the road is Birch Cottage, with Birch Farm on the left. Turn left to Horsell Birch.

Birch Cottage

This little cottage in the High Street dates from the 17th century. Although it is a timber-framed building, the timbers you see on the outside of the house are apparently not part of the framing, but have been added later for effect. Birch Cottage is a Grade II listed building.

Birch Farm

The core of this building is thought to date from the 16th century and is timber-framed, but much of the outside of the house has been added in later centuries, notably the 19th century and early 20th century. Like Birch Cottage, Birch Farm is a Grade II listed building.



Birch Cottage.

Where the High Street opens out on to the common is where Horsell Birch begins. On the left is 'The Cricketers', but our route takes us to the right, past Birch House and Elm and Ivy Cottages to Viggory Lane.



Birch Farm.



The Cricketers Inn
The oldest part of the present building dates from the 16th century and is timber-framed, although it was later encased in brick – possibly during the 18th century when the front part of the building was added.

At various times the building has apparently been used as the village lock-up and a general store, before becoming an inn. Although an old building, it is not the oldest public house in the village – the 'Red Lion' claiming that distinction.

The Cricketers.

Birch House

Hidden behind a tall hedge, just off Horsell High Street, is this 17th-century timber-framed listed building. Some of the framing is still visible inside, although on the outside it has been entirely encased in brick.

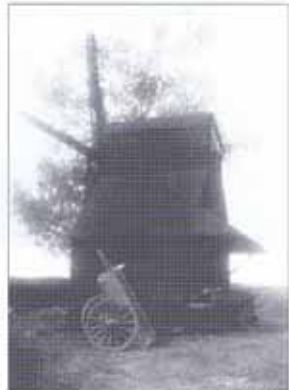
Birch House.



Horsell Birch Windmill

From the mid-19th century until the late 1920s, Horsell Birch was the home of one of the most unusual industrial features in this area – a windmill.

The mill was apparently built by the Steer family, who lived and worked as carpenters in the Horsell area for many years. James and John Steer were recorded in 1845 as carpenters and Luke Steer was the owner of the land upon which the mill was built at about the same time. An Isaac Steer (aged 42) was recorded in this area as a 'Master Carpenter' in 1851, along with his son Raeben (17). They may have been good carpenters, but as mill-builders they do not appear to have been too clever. By all accounts it seems that the mill was originally a 'post mill' (i.e. it turned on a central post to face the wind), but at some stage the Steers added two lean-to structures to house their



The windmill at Horsell shortly before it was demolished.

workbench and saw. These prevented the mill from turning, so that if the wind was not blowing in the right direction, the mill could not work! The sails faced north-west and just in case the wind became too strong, they were hinged so that they could 'fold' shut to prevent any damage. The mill was replaced by the house 'Mill End' in 1927.



Elm & Ivy Cottage
These two cottages have both been extended in recent years, but the central part of the two is believed to date from the 18th century.

Elm & Ivy Cottages.

'Viggery' in 1807. The stream can still be traced from the footbridge of Viggory Lane across the common to Mimbridge.

Viggory
The name 'Viggory' is a corruption of 'Wygery', which itself comes from the Old English name 'Wicca'. 'Wygery' was first recorded in 1412 when the bridge over the 'Viggory Brook' was recorded as 'Wygerythregege'. Later records call it 'Wygrethe' (1474), 'Wiggary' (1619) and

The sign at the junction of Horsell Birch and Viggory Lane.



Horsell Birch eventually joins Viggory Lane. Here you need to turn right and follow the lane (sign-posted Viggory Lane to South Road)



The Plat.

The Plat
The Plat was built in 1861 by Henry Cobbett and given as a wedding present to his son (also called Henry) when he married Mary Ann Bidwell.

until you see a footpath on the right into a modern group of houses. Take this path out to Russell Road.

Oakwood House
With Escairs on one side and The Plat on the other, many people look at Oakwood House as being the oldest of the three. In fact it is the youngest timber-framed house in the village. Despite appearances it was actually built in 1965 – surely one of the best pieces of 1960s architecture in the area!



The path off Viggory Lane towards Russell Road.

Oakwood House.

At Russell Road turn left and then right into South Road. At the end of South Road turn left (heading towards the village centre).



Escairs from the entrance to Oakwood House.

Escairs
The oldest house in the village is probably Escairs, built in the late 15th or early 16th century.

The oldest part of the property is at the back, with the central part dating from the 16th century and the gabled brick front being added in the early 18th century. The chimney is 17th century.

The house was at one time known as 'Eastgaize'.

Continue along the High Street to the start of the walk.

