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Whyteleafe to Hayes

Length: 16km (10 miles)

Toughness: 4/10

Transport

The stations for this walk are within Zones 5 and 6, so the walk can be done with any travelcard that covers Zone 6. The walk can be started from either of two stations, Upper Warlingham and Whyteleafe, which are on different lines but are within 3 minutes walk of each other. Trains to both stations run from Victoria or London Bridge via East Croydon. The service to Upper Warlingham is slightly faster, but the service to Whyteleafe is more frequent. Hayes is the terminus of the mid-Kent line that runs into London Bridge, Charing Cross and Cannon Street

The novelty of a tram ride can be enjoyed by those who choose either of the short options, which involve starting or finishing at New Addington, a terminus of the Croydon Tramlink service that connects at East Croydon and West Croydon with frequent trains to Victoria and London Bridge.

Suggested train: Catch the train nearest to 9.45am from Victoria to Upper Warlingham. If you just miss that train, take the next train to Whyteleafe, to start the walk 10 to 15 minutes late. Alternatively, you can start later by taking a tram to New Addington to follow short walk option 1, which will get you to the lunchtime pub at about the same time as those doing the main walk.

Maps: OS Explorer 146, 147, 161 & 162; OS Landranger 177 & 187

Walk notes

Despite its proximity to London, this walk is surprisingly rural in character, passing through fields, woods and quiet valleys, often along shady bridleways. The second half of the walk is entirely within a London borough, though it does not feel like it. Although there are few noteworthy features, the gently rolling countryside provides some fine vistas, and the lunchtime pub is a real gem.

Shortening the walk

You can reduce the morning section to 3.5km (total walk 11.7km) by starting at New Addington, which can be reached by frequent trams from West Croydon or East Croydon stations. For directions, see Short Walk option 1 at the end of the main walk directions.

After lunch, the walk can be shortened by heading for New Addington, a huge, mainly post-war, council estate built to house the expanding population of Croydon. The after-lunch distance is only 3.6km, and this cuts the total length of the walk to 11.4km (7.2 miles). For directions, see Short Walk option 2 at the end of the main walk directions.

The two short walk options can be combined to form an alternative walk of 7.2km (4.5 miles) – **New Addington Circular**

LUNCH AND TEA PLACES

The White Bear, Fickleshole, (01959 573166) (www.the-whitebear.com) 7.8km (4.9 miles) into the walk, is a very attractive oak-timbered 16th century pub, formed from a small terrace of cottages. It has a number of small rooms and alcoves for dining inside and a large surrounding garden with lots of tables outside. Good quality, reasonably priced, food is served all day.

Sponge Kitchens, 38 Station Approach, Hayes (020 8650 0062) is a bakers and cake shop with a small seating area, where teas, scones and cakes are served. It closes at 4.30pm, but please ring ahead if a group of you expect to arrive after 4.00pm, since they are unaccustomed to a sudden influx of customers at that time. Closed on Sundays.

Hayes Café, 48 Station Approach, Hayes, is a fairly basic café, serving all-day fry-ups. which can provide a simple cheap tea. It's very close to the station and closes at 5.00pm.

The New Inn, Hayes, is a large **Harvester** pub/restaurant, almost opposite Hayes station, which is open all day and serves tea and coffee as well as the usual range of pub drinks and meals.

WALK DIRECTIONS

[A] Starting from Upper Warlingham station

From platform 2, go up steps to a footbridge, turn right, and go up some more steps to come out on Westhall Road. Turn left, downhill, and in 180m turn right at the T-junction, on to Hillbury Road (B270). In 80m, turn left into the car park of Whyteleafe Recreation Ground **[1]**

[B] Starting from Whyteleafe station

Exit platform 2 by a short passage at the front of the platform, and turn sharp left at the level crossing. In 100m, at a roundabout, cross the A22 and go up the B270 (Hillbury Road) towards Warlingham. Pass under a railway bridge and in 80m turn left into the car park of Whyteleafe Recreation Ground **[1]**.

At the end of the car park, turn half-right (direction 40°) to go past a small brick sports pavilion, heading just to the left of some tennis courts. Continue in the same direction on a clear path which soon goes steeply uphill and bends to the right up steps cut into the hillside. The path enters woodland and soon levels out in a clearing. Continue straight ahead for 120m to cross a stile and turn right on a road.

In 120m, cross the road and fork left up a lane which soon starts to descend close to the road on your right. In 200m fork left up a signposted bridleway through woodland. After 250m the bridleway leaves the wood and continues on an enclosed path between two fields, with a transmitter mast visible off to the left. In 350m, come out to a road (B269) which you cross, to continue on a residential street opposite (Crewes Lane). In 200m, next to no. 30, turn left past metal barriers on to an alleyway between houses. In 70m cross a road and continue through another alley that leads, in 80m, to a recreation ground. Go forward through the car park and follow a tarmac path round the edge of the ground to a children's play area in the far corner. [If there are no games in progress, you can cut off a corner by heading diagonally across the sports ground to arrive at the same point.]

Pass to the left of the play area and bear left on an enclosed footpath with a sports ground on the left and an open field on the right. In 300m, by a isolated house on the left, turn right on to a bridleway leading through trees, passing field gates on both sides at the start of the path. [If the bridleway is muddy, use the parallel footpath 10m to the left, which merges with the bridleway after 120m]. Follow the path for 1.1km as it descends into a valley and then climbs again to emerge on to a road that crosses Farleigh Common. [Here you have the option of turning right along the road for 300m to reach the **Harrow Inn**, a possible early lunch stop.]

To continue on the main walk, cross the road and go straight across the common for 150m, heading east, aiming just to the right of a large cream-coloured house. Enter the woods ahead, following a public footpath sign past a stile. In 20m ignore a path to the left, and in 120m emerge from the wood into a large field, past a large fallen tree. Turn right and follow the edge of the wood for 300m, ignoring a cross path half way along. Then follow the path as it bears half-left (direction 130°) away from the wood, cutting off a corner of the field.

In 140m the path enters Greatpark Wood. In 15m turn left and then immediately right, through a wooden barrier, following a public footpath sign, with a wooden fence to the right. The path continues along the edge of the wood for 600m, soon coming to the Greatpark gated residential estate spread out on the right, with its prominent tall red brick clock tower. This was formerly the site of Warlingham Park Hospital and Croydon Mental Hospital, as noted on a plaque attached to iron gates on the left of the path. After passing the estate, the path enters the wood ahead, and soon bears right, meeting a wire fence on the right after 150m and continuing parallel to it (direction 110°). In 250m, cross a stile, with an open field ahead to the left, and turn right to continue through the wood (direction 160°) for 70m to a second stile. 20m beyond the stile you come to a T-junction where you turn left, joining a path from the right in 40m. In 10m the path bends right and after 250m you go through a metal gate and out to a lane.

Turn right along the lane, following the sign for Route 21 of the National Cycle Network towards Greenwich and New Addington. In 100m turn left through a metal gate onto a bridleway through a narrow strip of woodland, still following the cycle route sign. In 400m ignore a low level footpath sign on the left **[2]**. The path then

descends into a valley and climbs steeply up the other side. Pass through a metal gate onto a car-wide earth track, with stables on the left. In 90m, pass round a metal gate and come out to a road, where you turn left. Just 120m ahead is the lunchtime pub, **The White Bear**, at **Ficklehole**. [To shorten the walk, see *Walk Option* at the end of the directions.]

Coming out of the pub, turn left on the road signposted to Addington and Biggin Hill, and in 30m fork left up a drive to Fairchildes Farm. In 25m follow a footpath sign pointing right, through a wooden gate, and in 30m cross a barbed wire fence through a gap secured by ropes. Cross a stile into a field and turn half-left (direction 50°) towards another stile 100m away. Cross this stile, bearing slightly left and in 100m cross a set of three successive stiles. Head for a hidden stile on the right-hand side of the next field (direction 20°), passing to the right of two large oak trees. Cross the stile and follow an overgrown footpath for 150m. Go straight on, past a rusty metal gate, rejoining cycle route 21 on a tarmac path coming from the right **[3]**. In 200m, the path ends at a road, which you cross and bear slightly right to take the bridleway opposite, signposted to Keston Church. At this point the route enters the London Borough of Bromley, but the surroundings will remain predominantly rural for the rest of the walk.

Follow the path beside a fence to the left and then between two open fields for 300m, to enter Jewels Wood. Here the path veers slightly left and winds for 350m through the wood, where deer may sometimes be seen. The path comes out to a road, opposite the entrance to **Highams Farm**, where a sign announces that boot sales are held in the nearest field on Sundays. Cross the road and go down the car-wide earth track for 220m. Pass to the left of the house ahead, ignoring a footpath on the right to Leaves Green, and follow a shady bridleway which gradually descends, with fine views over the valley to the right. In 1km, where the path divides in a wood (Furze Bottom), fork right, passing a stile on the right. Continue for a further 1.2km, ignoring cross paths, gradually climbing with distant views of the Canary Wharf towers and then of the City of London away to the left. Eventually the path descends slightly to emerge on to a gravel car-wide track with cottages on the right. In 100m the track comes out to a road (Blackness Lane) where you turn left, following the Leaves Green Circular Walk sign.

In 90m you reach a T-junction, where Church Road, Keston meets Jackass Lane. For the next 3km, follow signs for the Nash Circular Walk. Turn left on Jackass Lane, and in 250m, turn left through a metal squeeze stile on to an enclosed footpath that bends right and descends for 600m between fields. The path eventually turns right and follows the bottom of a shallow valley for 350m before turning left and then left again around the bottom corner of a field to arrive after 100m at a car-wide earth track with a field gate to the left. Turn right and climb the track for 250m, presently passing a horse exercise yard and stables to the left. Where the track ends, cross a stile slightly to the left and go along a short fenced passage to pass the entrance to Fortune Bank Farm and arrive in the hamlet of **Nash**, with Nash Cottage on your right.

Turn right on the road (Nash Lane), and immediately left on to North Pole Lane. In 150m, cross a stile on the right and go up the right-hand edge of a field for 200m. At a four-way path junction turn right to continue along the right-hand edge of the next field (direction 15°). In the field corner, turn right past a redundant stile, and then immediately left to go past a wooden barrier into **Well Wood**. In 40m fork right along a footpath that winds along the edge of the wood close to a field on the right.

In 280m, at a path T-junction, turn right to continue along the edge of the wood for a further 200m, to emerge from the wood past a wooden barrier, where a residential road (Queensway) from the left meets the unmade drive leading to Rouse Farm on the right. Continue straight across, bearing slightly right, and follow an enclosed bridleway for 400m, presently turning left and later right, to come out on to Gates Green Road, on the fringes of **Coney Hall**. Cross the road and turn right. In 180m, where houses on the left give way to a field, ignore a footpath on the left, and continue for a further 180m, to take the next footpath on the left, beside a gas reducing station. The path climbs for 320m, with views over the valley to the right, and emerges on the entrance drive to **Hast Hill House**.

Cross the road ahead and enter Hayes Common by taking the footpath opposite into a wood, soon forking left to emerge in 120m at the junction of West Common Road and the busy Croydon Road (A232). Cross Croydon Road with care, keeping to the left of West Common Road, and follow a footpath into woodland (direction 320°). After 450m, fork right at a Three Commons Walk signpost and continue on a winding path for 350m, ignoring all turn-offs, presently with tall wooden fencing to your right, until you come to a road, which you cross. Continue on the path opposite, and in 60m emerge into a clearing with houses visible ahead. Continue forwards and in 120m leave Hayes Common beside a metal barrier with an information display board nearby.

Cross Warren Road and go down Station Hill opposite, turning left in 120m at its junction with The Ridgeway. In 80m pass The New Inn (a possible tea place) and turn right into Station Approach. Cross the road to **Hayes Station** opposite. Two other tea places, Hayes Café and Sponge Kitchens, can be found just past the station, and there is a cluster of takeaway food outlets (fish and chips, burgers, Chinese, etc) on the corner parade of shops next to the station.

Short Walk - option 1

To shorten the morning section of the walk, or if you miss the train to Whyteleafe, you could start the walk from **New Addington**, at the terminus of the Croydon Tramlink line 3. Trams to New Addington run frequently from East Croydon and West Croydon stations.

From the rear of the tram platform, turn left to cross the road and pass through a menagerie of animal sculptures to take the path signposted to North Downs Road. Keep to the left side of the green and in 180m at a T-junction, cross the road and turn left. In 40m turn right on to a tarmac footpath next to the entrance to Fishers Farm Recycling Centre.

In 120m turn left between the first two trees on an indistinct earth footpath leading downhill into woodland. After 350m the path drops down to the right for 20m and then turns left to continue contouring along the hillside. Ignore all side paths and after 250m fork right through a gap in a fence to continue on a level path along the open hillside with views over the valley to the right. In 220m pass through another gap and in a further 100m, at a T-junction, turn right and immediately fork right downhill, soon passing a rustic wooden bench and descending more steeply. At the foot of the slope, turn right, then in 30m left, and cross a road to take the lane opposite past Pear Tree Farm Cottage.

In 100m, just past the entrance to a huge recycling centre on the left, take the footpath straight ahead, climbing into woodland. In 500m fork right on the main path as it emerges from the wood and continues between two fields. In 150m the path re-enters a wood, soon coming to a clearing with cottages ahead on the right. Just past the white house, turn sharp left, direction 95°, on a faint path across a lightly wooded area. In 150m cross a stile beside a white coal post and a metal field gate. Go straight across a field, direction 115°, for 180m to cross a stile and turn left, rejoining the main walk directions at point **[2]**.

Short Walk - option 2

To shorten the walk after lunch, follow the main walk directions to point **[3]**. Go straight on for 170m, then before reaching the road ahead, turn left, following a CR21 sign along a wide path with a playing field and iron railings to the left. In 500m, you reach a road where you turn left, soon passing the entrance to Addington High School. Stay on the tarmac path as it curves left along Fairchild's Avenue, presently passing Fairchild's Primary school. In 250m, where the road bends right, bear left on a path into the wood, with a wooden fence on the right.

In 80m the path bends right before dropping down to the left and then turning right to contour along the hillside, where you enter Hutchinsons Bank Nature Reserve (unsigned). Stay more or less on the same contour as you head northwards, taking the left-hand path at a fence corner and continuing along the hillside for 400m before bearing right uphill at a fork. In 10m the path turns left, and then resumes a level course through the wood, eventually starting to climb, with a residential estate visible to the right. At a T-junction turn right on to a tarmac path and follow it for 200m until it emerges on to a residential road beside the entrance to Fishers Farm recycling centre. Turn left and then right to reach **New Addington** tram stop in 120m.

Trams to East Croydon and Wimbledon run every 7-8 minutes from Monday to Saturday and every 15 minutes on Sunday. Buses to Croydon and Biggin Hill also run from this point.

Alternative Walk – New Addington Circular - 7.2km (4.5 miles)

Follow short walk option 1, then the main walk directions between points [2] and [3], followed by short walk option 2. You reach the lunchtime pub, the White Bear at Fickleshole, approximately halfway round the walk.