

## Odiham Society Walks

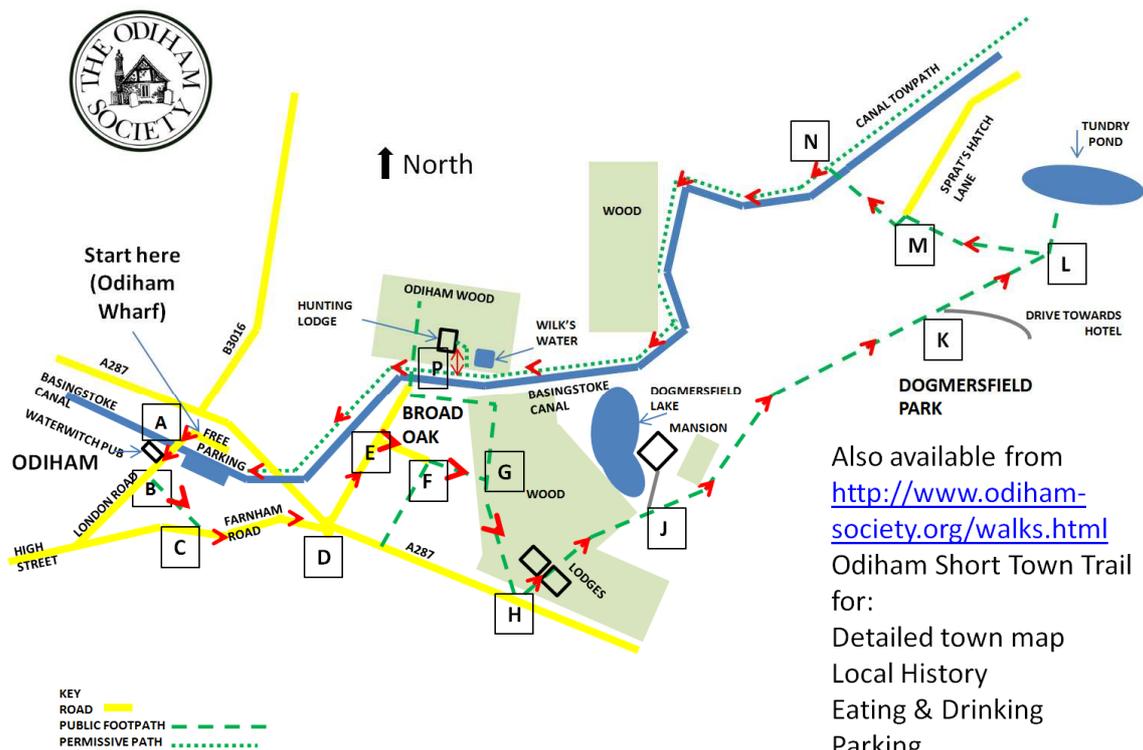
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### Walk via Dogmersfield Park

**Distance:** 5 miles, around 2.5 hours

**Description:** Circular walk from Odiham canal basin through Broad Oak hamlet and across the farmland of Dogmersfield Park estate, returning by canal towpath.

**Difficulty:** Moderate: gentle hills with some stiles. Paths across fields on this route are normally well-used & easy to see.



### Directions

[To reach start by car: from eastern end of Odiham High Street, turn down London Road and keep straight ahead until you cross canal bridge. Road then bears right to reach free parking].

From car park, walk back to canal and the wide canal basin at Odiham Wharf.

*The Basingstoke Canal opened in 1794, running from Basingstoke to the Wey Navigation for links to the Thames & London. It was not a commercial success (except during the building of Aldershot barracks and, its nemesis, the local railways) and became increasingly derelict from 1950 until it was restored by volunteers and re-opened as far as the collapsed Greywell tunnel in 1991.*

Climb up path to canal bridge, point A on map, where you turn left and cross the bridge. Follow the pavement past the Waterwitch Pub (Chef & Brewer with canalside garden, open all day @ March 2012) & continue for 150m until you see a red post box on the right, point B. Cross the road here and walk up the steepish tarmac drive to reach the footpath ahead (to the right of the house).

Follow the footpath uphill until you finally emerge through a kissing gate onto a road, point C, where

you turn left and walk along the pavement downhill to the roundabout. At the roundabout, point D, cross the busy A287 carefully – underpass available for safe crossing – and walk up the lane opposite (signposted Broad Oak). After a couple of bends the lane reaches the open expanse of Broad Oak common. After 100m of common you'll see a postbox on your left and a noticeboard on your right, point E, and here you turn right into lane (following footpath sign). Keep directly ahead down lane until, after 100m, it becomes a footpath leading to a footbridge and stile at point F. Cross the stile and look for the stile in the treeline opposite – not quite straight ahead but slightly to the right – and cross the open field (usually with horses) to reach the stile at point G. Cross the stile and footbridge to enter the wood and after 10m turn right to follow the path through the wood. The footpath emerges at point H onto a drive which passes between 2 lodges, formerly gatehouses to the Dogmersfield Park estate.

Turn left onto this drive and walk between the lodges. Keep ahead on this drive until it forks left through a gateway, point J, towards a redbrick lakeside mansion. Leave the driveway at this fork and walk straight ahead, following the grassy track, then footpath, up the hill. After a kissing gate, keep straight ahead on track over top of hill and down again towards Tundry Pond in distance.

*As you get towards the bottom of the hill you'll be able to see the redbrick buildings of the 5\* Four Seasons hotel & spa up on your right, built on the site of the former Dogmersfield House, built by the St John-Mildmays in 1727 but later destroyed by fire.*

Pass through some black wrought-iron gates, point K, and after 10m fork left onto a signposted public footpath. Follow this grass footpath until it ends at a driveway, point L, where you turn left onto the driveway and follow it until it reaches gates where you fork right onto a short footpath towards some houses at point M.

At point M, go through the kissing gate and turn left onto the public bridleway which soon bends right. After the bend, keep straight ahead towards the trees. When you reach the trees, point N, cross the canal bridge & turn immediately left down the slope to reach the canal towpath (a permissive path).

*Here is a lovely unspoilt stretch of the canal - thanks to the owner of Dogmersfield Park who refused to let the canal pass through his land, forcing a long looping detour round the edge of the estate, now providing gentle walking through peaceful rural scenery.*

Follow the towpath and after almost a mile you'll pass an open field on your right with a redbrick house visible across the field. Stay on the towpath and after the field is a wood which encloses a pond – Wilk's Water. After the towpath crosses the feed channel between the canal and the pond, point P, turn immediately right and walk to the far end of the pond.

*Here, to your left, are the 3 gables of the lovely National Trust-owned 'King Henry's' Hunting Lodge, in fact a folly built in 1740 by the owners of the Dogmersfield Park estate with the ornate facade hiding a cottage-style dwelling behind. The property is not open to the public, but walk up to the white gates to see the delightful garden.*

Now retrace your steps to the canal at point P where you turn right and continue along the towpath until you reach your start point at Odiham Wharf.