

Attenborough's Fields and Merryhill, Bushey

This walk, in the far south of Hertfordshire, explores Attenborough's Fields and Merryhill. A little under 5 miles. Some up and down hill, no stiles. The Red Lion pub and other eating places are near. Bushey Museum is a little further down Rudolph Road on the right (open Thursday to Sunday 11 am – 4 pm, free).

The Fields are owned by the County Rural Estates, with full public access on foot. Merryhill is owned by the Woodland Trust, again public foot access and with a Greenway (bridleway) near its northern edge. Ramblers affiliate Bushey and District Footpath Association (BADFA) and the Friends of Attenborough's Fields have together built well over 20 structures on these fields: gates (replacing stiles), benches and steps. Good views to the North across Watford, and to the South and West to Harrow Weald and beyond.

*Walk provided by BADFA. Description by **Chris Beney**. Queries to 01923 211 113.*

Start at the public car park in Bushey High Street opposite the Red Lion pub. TQ131952 WD23 1BD (free parking) [A]. L at Red Lion to the pond and Green outside St James' church. Take Bushey 19 on R of Lych Gate. This gate was rebuilt after a bomb fell on it during World War 2, killing two RAF people. At the bottom of the churchyard Birch Walk lies straight ahead (see pre WW2 picture) and has been spoilt by development. Turn R at point [B]. At the road cross carefully to a pair of kissing gates and follow the visible path. At [C] there is a bridge with pond on your left and a brick built sluice on your right. Don't cross the bridge but carry on down the R side of the hedge to [D]. There is a 'swallow' or 'sink' hole here where the stream goes underground. It can be overgrown, and it is fenced off and can be hard to see. Turn L across the unmarked Bushey-Watford border and cut up to a kissing gate at [E] then up some steps to Oxhey Green. The green was once a brick clay pit. Turn L at top of steps and follow round the children's play area to a kissing gate on top L corner of the green. Keep to the top of the field to [F] close to where BADFA's first ever kissing gate was installed, because someone in a wheelchair wanted to see the view. You are now back in Bushey. At [G] a gate and kissing gate give access to a small field. This gate area, normally dry, can get muddy; attempts to cure it have failed but others are in hand. It can be bypassed if necessary by going to the next field and turning right. The field beyond [G] was a land-swap between County and the Woodland Trust so as to allow the Greenway to be built. At [H] turn R. This part is a 23 metre wide definitive footpath, the whole area between hedges is footpath. BADFA and BHS were mainly responsible. At [I] you join the Greenway, the first in Hertfordshire, and follow it to just before a triangular field [J]. Turn L and follow the track beside and through the wooded area, then the open area round to [K]. Now aim for the gap in the hedge [L] then up the hill to [M]. Turn round on this stretch for good views to the north. Cut across and down to gate [N]. Half way down from there you can turn L then R to a track the other side of the hedge **or** you can carry straight down and turn L on a narrower way to the same track.

You will now see the Jubilee Bridge (see photo). Cross the bridge (you can turn L to [Q] as a short cut here) bear R, cross small second bridge and turn L at field boundary [O] following boundary near a stream to [P] and then [Q]. Stand on the bridge at [Q], observe which way the water is flowing and wonder how it can flow uphill!

From [Q] aim slightly L for point [R]: Puddingstone Millennium Cairn (photo below). The flint pebbles and their surrounding silica matrix were formed over 50 million years ago and are found mainly, but not exclusively, in Hertfordshire. We plan to erect a new one in year 3000.



From the cairn take the narrow way north to [S], crossing a wider (E-W) way. If you find yourself on a hardened track at [Z] by mistake you can cut into the Fruit Field from there. From [S] go up some steps to the Fruit Field, leased to Woodland Trust by Hertsmere for a peppercorn rent. Two ladies, Woodland Trust stakeholder members, look after this field and are encouraging fruit trees to grow in difficult soil. Cross a small stream [T] and on up to [U] and turn L and soon through a kissing gate, along the top of the field to another kissing gate on the right [V]. Good view from here south to Grim's Dyke where Gilbert (of G&S) lived and died, and to the west. From near here Windsor Castle is allegedly visible, but the writer has never seen it. Go through this kissing gate and follow the track to [K]. Bear R at [K] and go diagonally across the field. There is a small

pond on the left and a living hut on the right (which has not been entirely successful). At [W] you meet the Greenway again, bear right and follow it to a gate and stile and kissing gate on the L [X] where there is more puddingstone, but of a rather poorer quality. Go straight down field and turn R onto normally visible walked track at [Y]. If time, just to NW of [Y] and circled on the map is a flower meadow area left ungrazed and a neglected small walled garden with tiles and a covered well. From [Y] cross the road and take the path (Birch Walk) at [Z], straight on down and then up the churchyard to the High Street, turn R for the car park, pub, museum, shops.

The Millennium Cairn and the Jubilee Bridge and in the area of point [M] can be quite good picnic stops. Cattle are sometimes kept in the field south of [M] and horses may be seen from [C] to [I]. The area can be muddy following rain; summer is best, but you don't have to stick to the paths, all being open access on foot.

