

# Bramshill South and Eversley Church

## Forest rides, clearings and farmland with birds, dragonflies and a few extras

The best place to park is in the small car park at Bramshill on the north side of Bramshill Road. Cross the road carefully to the large metal gates and go around them. Walk along the main track in front of you with bramble, heather and flowers in summer, towards the forest. On my last visit two Sparrowhawks flew over my head here but with Buzzards and Red Kites they are likely anywhere on this walk, maybe a Hobby especially at the dragonfly spot! Expect to hear cuckoos in spring.

Carry on this track for almost half a mile, ignoring paths in and out until it bends left and then soon divides with a path angled to the left. Take that path into the woodland soon joining a harder surfaced track for almost a mile. The track sides have flowers and for some distance the Norway Spruce trees are substantial. When the track widens look for butterflies including more uncommon Graylings in August. A cleared area will be seen on the left, deer might appear here.

This track goes on for a long while, you ignore all the turnings. Soon, on the left, there is a 'stockade' place in the woodland used for the various motorised sports that occur on some of the tracks at weekends. Opposite the 'stockade' is a wonderful patch of open heath. This is worthy of exploration for dragonflies and butterflies in summer and for heathland birds, a small path leads into it about half way along the side.

Returning to the main track continue and you will see wider tracks appearing from all directions and on the right, a stone block about a meter high congratulating the owners on the restoration of the site after gravel extraction. Turn left off your main track here onto a smaller but still wide path running through some shorter trees and sparsely lined with heather and gorse. This path gets wider but soon reaches a point where it splits and you follow the public footpath sign angled to the left. Look for fungi in autumn as it appears on the edges of the path.

Here the path is a bit narrower and shadier, soon you find yourself emerging into deciduous woodland with a big truly disfigured oak tree on the right! Open fields are visible now. You arrive at some old cast iron gates and turn right onto the peaceful lane. This is a lovely quiet place where the native hedgerows will provide plenty of chances to find things of interest. The Old Rectory is an impressive house you pass on the way to Eversley Church where you enter the graveyard on the left.

This churchyard's claim to fame is that Charles Kingsley, a former priest here and author of *The Water Babies* and *Westward Ho!* is buried here – the clean gravestone is on the left-hand side. The church may be open, or can be if you ask, but we pass behind it on the tarmac path and exit through the 'hole' in the yew hedge.

Follow this path over the wooden footbridge through fields and through the gate at the end in the same direction. The path here is too close to the hedge and can get overgrown, if that

happens a gate part way along is often unlocked so you can walk along the ride for the horses, at the side of the field. On the right you will see and hear a large garden turned over to being something of a menagerie! Llamas and ducks and geese of every variety can be found here! At the end of the field leave by the gate into the woodland and soon you have a choice. There is a stile and a nice wide track just to your left or to the right a path running parallel going the same way. The advantage of going right is that, at the end, you have no stile to climb! Emerging here there is a four-way choice. You continue in the same direction on the public footpath which is the second from right, third from left path.

This is a very pleasant path varying through mature woodland then to a big junction - you carry straight on in the same direction. There is an open area on the left where there is a new plantation. This is probably a good place to spot Nightjars at dusk in summer. You follow this path in a straight line all the way to the original track. Here you turn right and very soon will reach the road and your car.