

THE STORY OF THE HORSLEY JUBILEE TRAIL

By Brian Austin

I first had the idea for the Jubilee Trail in late 2001 when a friend of my wife came to lunch and said she had seen several footpath signs but did not want to get lost following them. We had returned to our house in West Horsley after being abroad and I had been exploring local walks. I was also involved with a volunteer work party clearing rhododendron in Great Ridings Wood which East Horsley Parish Council (EHPC) had purchased through community fundraising in 1997. Through the work party I had got to know the late Des Hollier, a remarkable man who was Chairman of both EHPC and the Horsley Countryside Preservation Society (HCPS).

At the time HCPS was campaigning to raise funds to buy the Forest. It struck me that with the purchase of the Forest it would be possible to plan a circular route linking up the publicly owned lands round the Horsleys using existing footpaths and bridleways.

With the Queen's Golden Jubilee coming up there was publicity about local initiatives to mark the occasion with the criteria that they should not be expensive, they should be for everybody, and they should offer lasting benefit.

I tried out various routes, all starting and finishing at the railway station, as all good rambles should. I wanted a route that would be at some point only half a mile away from most people living in the Horsleys, so instead of getting in a car to go for a walk one could start walking from one's front door. I also wanted to take in varied country and some of the historic sites in the Horsleys. I settled on roughly the present route and walked it myself on 6 February 2002, the 50th anniversary of the Queen's accession. I called it simply the Horsley Jubilee Trail so it would be appropriate for the future.

I then asked Des Hollier if he would like to take it up as a local project. (I knew that if Des took something up then it would happen). I gave Des the route and he walked it himself, enjoyed it and had the grace to say that living in East Horsley he had never walked in West Horsley before and had been surprised how attractive and rural it was. Since the trail covered both parishes he decided it should be a Jubilee project for the HCPS.

I wrote an article for the summer 2002 edition of 'Around and About Horsley' describing the route. I also put in simple markers, just sticks with the tops painted yellow at key points.

With experience Des and I tweaked the route to make it easier, and with the purchase of the Forest completed we planned and cut the present route through the Forest instead of going along The Drift. Des also got in touch with Surrey Hills and they agreed to back the Trail, and with HCPS, provided funding for the design and printing of the map and for proper markers, which Des and I installed. Des also organised with Surrey Hills an official opening party at the Barley Mow attended by the Lord Lieutenant.

For the Diamond Jubilee Peter Hattersley did a lot of work to get the trail upgraded to be more accessible for disabled ramblers, and we made a permissive shortcut in West Horsley to avoid two crossings of the road, (though it misses out the historic village oak and old houses). On his Diamond Jubilee visit to the Horsleys, the Duke of Gloucester visited the trail, unveiling a memorial notice at Stony Dene bridge.

The walk is approximately 9 miles. Full details of the trail can be found on the Surrey Hills website at [Horsley Jubilee Trail | Surrey Hills](#).