



Abinger Common and Friday Street

Distance: 6¼ km=4 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Abinger Common, Friday Street

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Winding woodland trails, lake, pubs, hamlets

In Brief

This walk is a sampler of some of the most glorious paths through the woods of the Surrey hills. These paths will already be familiar to walkers who have done some of the longer walks on this site, but this route is a perfect introduction for people who would like to take up some modest walking, with the emphasis on the beauty of the landscape.

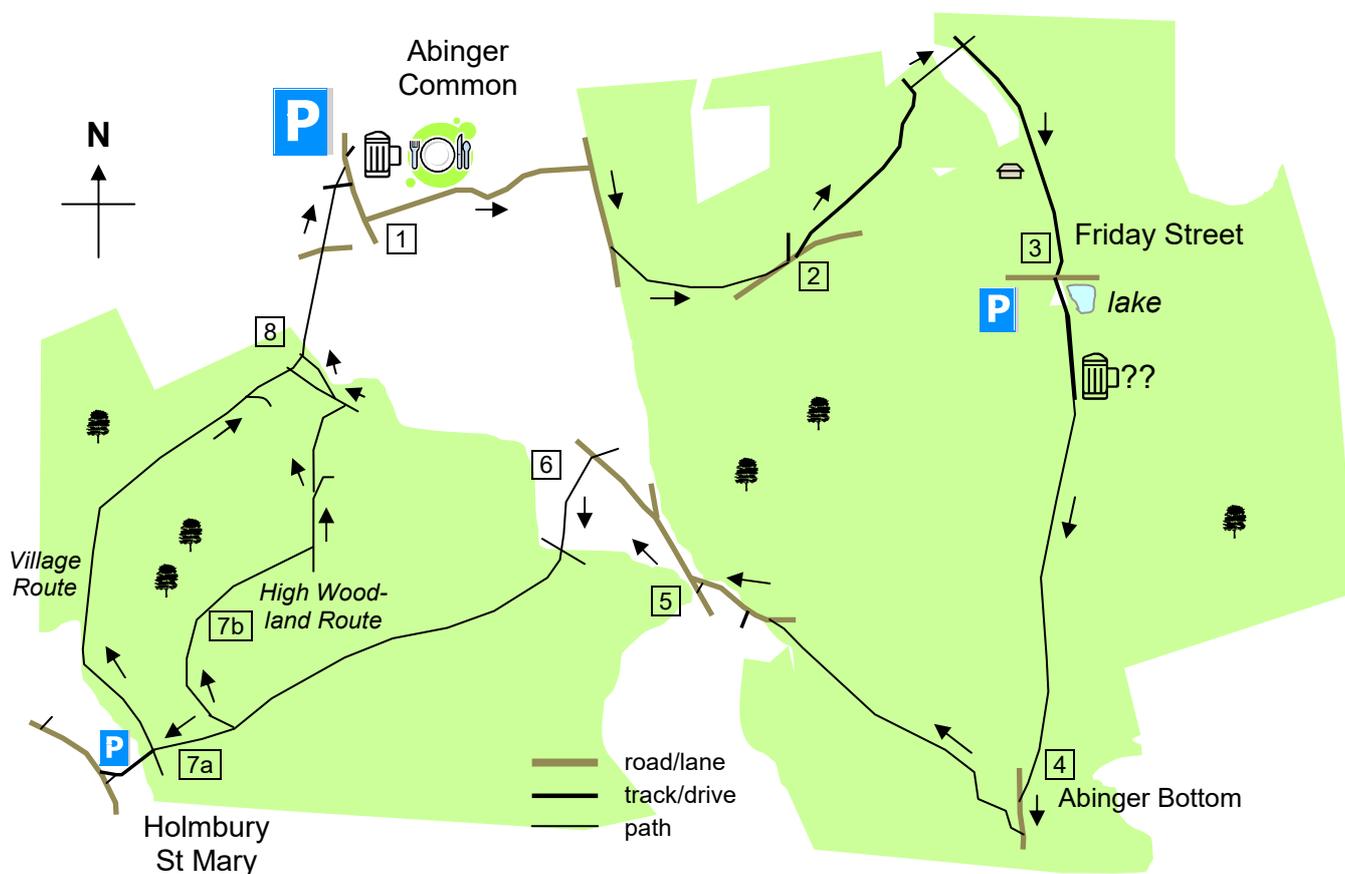


The paths on this walk are generally well-defined and well-marked with very little undergrowth and no nettles to speak of; so shorts are wearable. Mud is not a serious issue, except in wintry or wet weather, or during forestry work, when boots are an essential option. There is an optional steep descent on this walk, making it a good plan to take a hiking pole if you choose the "Village Route". This walk is ideal for your dog.

The walk begins at the car park opposite the *Abinger Hatch* pub, **Abinger Common**, near Dorking, Surrey, www.w3w.co/stores.elaborate.coffee, postcode **RH5 6HZ**. The car park is about 10m from the pub, on the opposite side of the road, under a horizontal bar. Another possible start is **Friday Street**, postcode **RH5 6JR**, with a short hop to and from the car park to the lake (turning **right** towards the pub). Do *not* park at the *Stephan Langton*! It is possible to park at Holmbury St Mary, just off the main road, beside the track and the little patch of grass by *Tralee Lodge* (the track is not private but the spaces are often taken up by nearby residents). For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

For more information about the starting village, its church and its inn, see the neighbouring walk, "Abinger Common: a woodland round".



- 1 With the *Abinger Hatch* pub on your left, walk along the road for 50m and turn **left** on a narrow tarmac lane (called *Donkey Lane* but there's no sign). The lane takes you past *Glebe House* and down to a T-junction with *Hollow Lane* which is well-named. Turn **right** and follow the lane for 150m passing the remains of an old manor gate. 30m after the gateposts, fork **left** on a signposted bridleway into woods. Keep to the left-hand side all the time, gradually merging with a tarmac lane from your right. Just after joining the lane, ignore a track on your left but immediately fork **left** on a semi-tarmac drive signed *Pugs Corner*, marked as a footpath.
- 2 The drive zigzags its way towards a house. Just after a large wooden gate on your right, turn **right** on a fingerposted footpath. The path takes you through a swing-gate and over a weir bridge across the *Tillingbourne Stream*. This is a delightful spot where the gentle stream flows over a sluice and down between green pastures. Immediately, at a 4-way junction, turn **right** on a wide path. After *Yew Tree Cottage* with its scarecrow family, keep right to go over a ford (or the footbridge), passing *Pond Cottage* which usually has jams and relishes for sale and reaching the lane in *Friday Street* with its lake. This was once a place of poverty, the word "Friday" indicating a down-at-heel place. The *Friday Street* car park is on your right, up a raised path.
- 3 Cross straight over the lane onto a tarmac driveway, with the lake on your left. Soon you pass buildings of the hamlet and, on your left, the *Stephan Langton* inn [2020-23: still closed, future new tenants sought].

Stephan (or Stephen) Langton (1150-1228) was Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of King John and represented the Pope during the dispute with the barons which resulted in the Magna Carta (see the Windsor and Runnymede walk in this series). He also reputedly was the first person to organise the Bible into its main "books". The pub that bears his name, now sadly closed, sold beers from the Tillingbourne Brewery and had a well thought-out menu which included afternoon teas. Let's hope someone will buy it and keep it running as a pub. (* The connection is not clear: there's no record of the Archbishop buying a pint here.)*

Continue through the hamlet, passing a 1-bar wooden barrier, once again on a natural surface. This woodland walk has a sunken path but most walkers take the high winding knobbly path on the left which also gives you a view of the stream. After about 800m, you come to a T-junction with a tarmac lane in the hamlet of Abinger Bottom.

- 4 Turn **left** through the hamlet and follow the lane until *just before* the point where the lane bends away left. (As a guide this is just *before* a red letterbox set into the wall – *do not miss this vital turning!*) **Avoid** the wide path straight ahead and instead turn squarely **right** here, beside a fingerpost, on a narrow footpath. This woodland path runs uphill and soon levels out. After about 250m, you come to a junction with forestry tracks. (In 2022-23 heavy vehicles left some deep rutted tracks.) Cross straight over the tracks and keep generally straight on along the narrower path, soon following a 2-way fingerpost. Finally you pass a house on your left and come out to a tarmac lane. Veer **left** on the lane and continue straight on, ignoring side lanes, to a junction with a major road.
- 5 Turn **right** on the road. *On your left is an ancient barn and field, preserved by the Landmark Trust who also provide holiday accommodation in Abinger Common.* Fork **left** on the road in the direction *Abinger Common*, passing the old village pump on your right. Opposite the end of the triangular green, just before a house, *Pasturewood Cottage*, turn **left** on a narrow signposted footpath. *Don't miss this hidden turning!*
- 6 At first there is a garden fence on your right as you descend into the wooded valley. At the end, the path takes a right bend and meets a crossing path. Cross straight over onto a sunken path which soon runs uphill into the open. (After forestry work in 2022-23, everyone takes the high path just to the left.) Go straight over a forestry track. You now have pinewoods on your right and pristine forest on your left as the path gets greener. It becomes wider where it is joined by a forestry track from the left. In 150m, ignore a forest path on your right and continue a further 150m where you can see your path narrowing and descending steeply straight ahead. On your right, immediately before the steep section, is a level path.

Here you have a choice. The *Village Route* uses only statutory paths, leading down close to the village of Holmbury St Mary with a longer walk through the woods. The *High Woodland Route* stays in the forest on unmarked paths, giving you a gentler descent at the end, but needing some precise navigation.

- 7a **Village Route.** Ignore the level path on your right and continue straight ahead downhill. This section is steep and stony: you need to take your time and be very careful, especially in damp conditions. At the bottom, you come through a wooden swing-gate to a 4-way junction. The track straight ahead leads to the road in Holmbury St Mary, but your route is **right**. Having turned **right** at the crossing path, go through a (bypassable) swing-gate and follow



this fine wide woodland track. In late spring, bluebells are abundant here. Where the wide track suddenly bends right, keep straight on along a narrower path. Soon the path forks at a marker post. Take the **left** fork, as indicated, the more level option. Your path goes steeply up to a stile.

- 7b **High Woodland Route.** Turn **right** on the level path, avoiding the steep descent ahead. Pines are followed by broadleaf as your path gradually curves right. Follow this path for 500m, as it very gradually makes a full right turn, staying on the main path at all times and avoiding turn-offs. At the end of this path, you meet a very clear path coming from the right. Veer **left** on this level path, avoiding a downhill path on your immediate left. In 150m your path curves away to the right. **Leave** the main path here by keeping straight ahead on a sunken path downhill. Soon the path curves right and, in around 100m, reaches the bottom where it breaks up into smaller paths. Turn sharp **left** here to meet a wider crossing path which runs along the valley bottom beneath overhead wires. Cross straight over this valley path, onto a narrow path leading uphill into a bluebell wood. At the top, veer **right** to a stile.

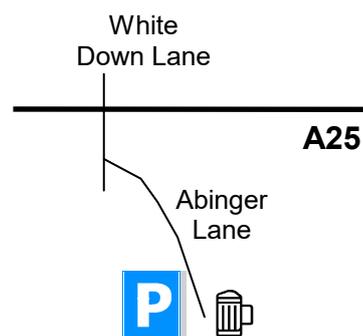
- 8 Cross the stile and take a path straight across a crop field. Go over another stile and down steps to a lane (*care!*). Cross to a green by a kiddies' playground. The churchyard is through a gate on your left; or you can veer right to the corner for the *Abinger Hatch* pub; or you can keep left beside the green to the lichgate, stocks (!) and the car park where the walk began.



The Abinger Hatch, a freehouse, has recently installed a massive double-linked Tee-pee in the garden to facilitate the crowds over the winter and it has been a novel attraction with the younger folk. Hence the roads and car park are greatly congested now, especially at the weekends. The Hatch has an extensive menu of pub favourites, plus some more unusual offerings, such as local pheasant and the exotic Buddha Bowl.

Getting there

By car: Abinger Common can be reached from the A25 (Dorking-Guildford) road. Look for a minor crossroads about a mile west of Wotton and turn in the direction *Abinger Common*. Shortly take the **left** fork, also signed *Abinger Common*. The inn and the car park are in one mile.



By bus/train: bus 32 from Dorking. Check the timetables.

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