



Abinger and Wotton

Distance 15 km=9 miles, easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey

Written: 19/07/2009

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Revised: 21/04/2012

Refreshments: Abinger, Sutton Abinger, Friday Street, Wotton

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) and 145 (Guildford)
but the maps in this guide should be sufficient

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

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Woodland trails, villages, hills, pubs, variety

In Brief



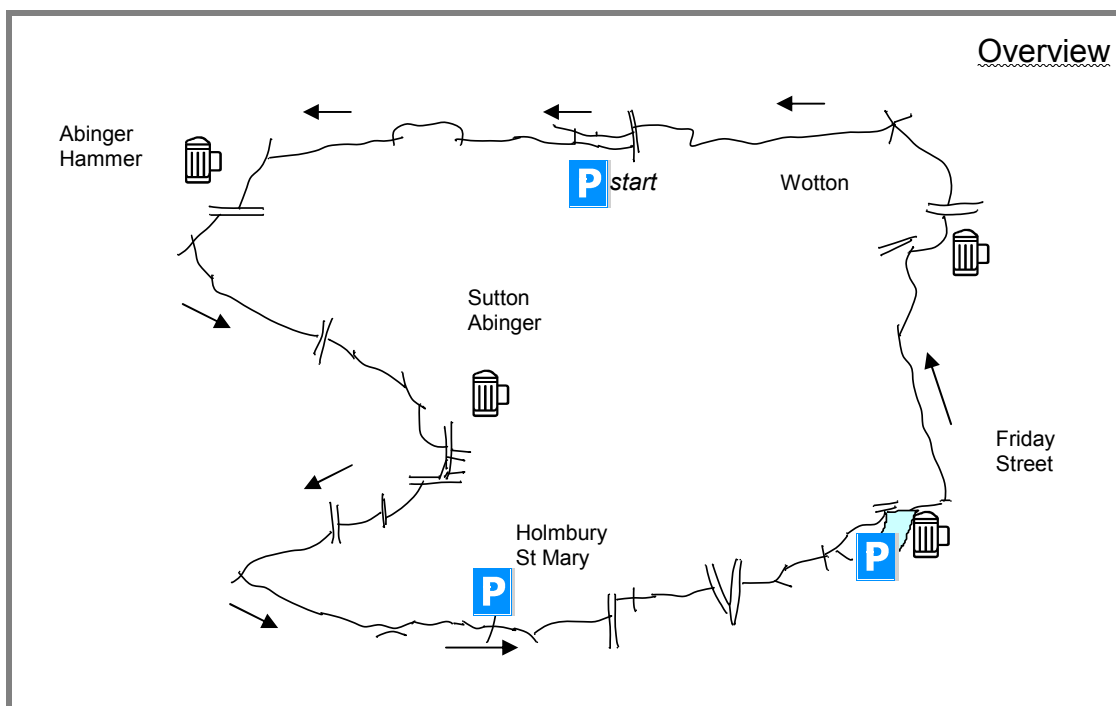
This is a walk of extraordinary variety showing you many different aspects of the Surrey countryside between Dorking and Guildford.



There are just a few nettles around the stiles but little mud and the route seems fine for a dog. The stile count is moderate.

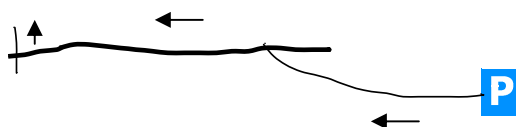


The walk begins in the **Abinger Roughs National Trust** car park, grid ref TQ111480. For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

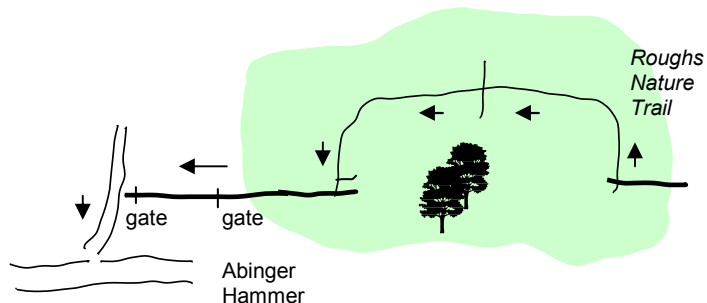


The Walk

- 1 At the far end of the car park go through an unneeded gate next to a large single-bar gate. Continue on a fine grassy path that gradually descends to join a wider track coming from the right and continue straight ahead. In a short distance, the gravel track begins to rise and passes close to a wooden gate and a field on the right. About 30m further up the track, look out for a post with a blue arrow at a crossing path. Turn **right** here.



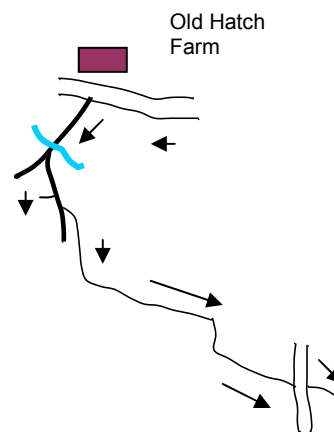
- 2 You are now on part of the Roughts Nature Trail. In 60m the path forks at another post. Take the **left** fork, the higher of the two options. The path curves left, goes past a bench and through rhododendrons. Follow the path all the way to a sunken crossing path. Continue straight over on a narrow path. The path widens, passes another post and curves left by a fence. On reaching a wide gravel track, turn **right**. Follow the track to a gate and continue ahead on a fenced path. *The uncut grass in the meadow on the right has encouraged a large number of skylarks to nest.* The path takes you through another gate and down to a lane. Turn **left** arriving shortly past cottages into the village of Abinger Hammer.



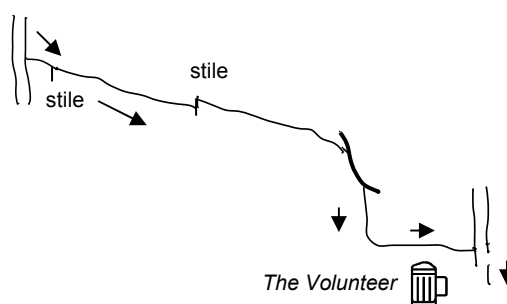
Abinger is the name of a group of villages and a civil parish. It is referred to in the Domesday Book as Abinceborne. The parish is agricultural, but at Abinger Hammer, on the Tillingbourne river, was an iron forge, hence the name. Everyone passing on the busy road knows the village from the clock with the Jack-the-blacksmith figure striking the hour with his hammer. Abinger Hammer has one of the best cricket pitches in the county and you will often see a match in progress if you walk of a summer weekend. The Abinger Arms pub is just on the right.



3 Cross the busy road and turn **right** by the antique shop. *In a few metres, opposite is one of the gems of Surrey, the house of Old Hatch Farm, with its ancient walls and roof, looking untouched by the last two centuries.* Turn **left** opposite the house on a track that leads over the Tillingbourne. Before the last house, the track ends at a fork of two sunken brideways next to a gate. Take the **left** fork. The path soon goes past the remains of a stile on the right. 60m further, turn **left** through an unneeded stile. The path runs at first parallel to the brideway. Then, at a signpost, it turns left across the field. There are fine views left to the North Downs. At the end, the path goes over a rugged stile (now unneeded) and turns right by a fence and then left and down, with a field on the right, to a road.



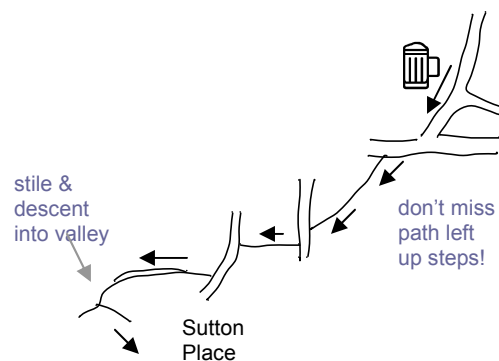
4 Cross the road carefully over a stile opposite and over a bridge on an ascending fenced path. *Oxmoor Copse on the right (not on the route) belongs to the Woodland Trust.* Go over another stile and follow a clear path across the field. Your path takes you over a stile and across a narrow field, soon following some overhead wires. On reaching a T-junction with a three-way signpost, turn **right**, effectively straight ahead, passing a two-way signpost. At the next three-way signpost, do *not* go through the wide gap ahead but turn **right** on a path with a field on the right, following the wires. The path becomes sunken and darkened by holly trees on either side. *Note the stone sculpture in the garden on the right belonging to the house "Sheiling".* The path passes the garden of the pub and leads down to a road. Turn right, arriving immediately at the Volunteer pub.



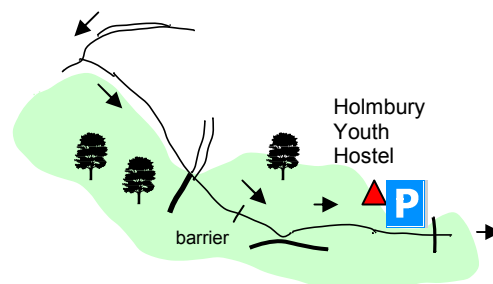
The Volunteer (Hall & Woodhouse) is one of the great outdoor pubs. Its setting is perfect, especially as you will see from the hill later, and its very isolation makes it an irresistible destination. The poem on the wall is not remarkable.



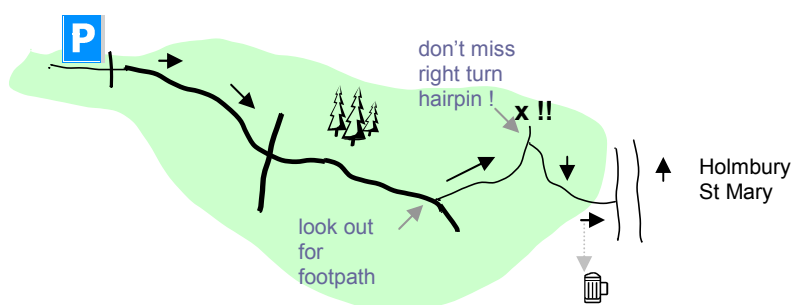
- 4 From the pub, continue along the road, ignoring a road on the left, past the charming cottages of Sutton ("south settlement") Abinger. At a T-junction, turn **right**. In 50m, turn **left** on a footpath up some steps. As you proceed, it is worth glancing back at the merry sight of the *Volunteer* snug in the valley. At the top, turn **left** on a lane. In 20m, turn **right** through a barrier on a footpath. At the end of the footpath, go over a stile and turn **left** on a road heading towards the exclusive settlement of Sutton Place. Just after a side turning, turn **right** on a footpath alongside a fence. The path runs between houses and gardens and reaches a residential lane where it goes straight ahead and continues later on a grassy path down to a stile. Go down to the bottom of the valley and at the end of a fence, still in the valley, turn **left** at a crossing path, indicated by a yellow arrow on a post.



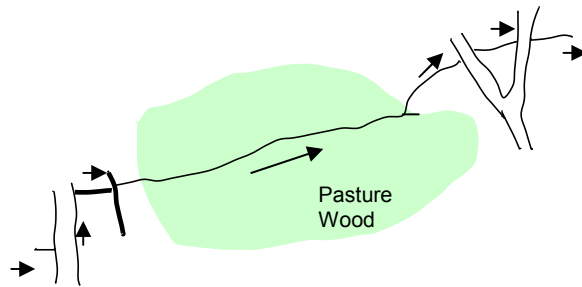
- 5 The path runs along the pleasant valley. At the end, go over a stile or through a gate, cross a tarmac drive and continue straight ahead on a narrow path. There are houses and gardens on the left and deep woods on the right. The path enters woodland proper via a wooden barrier. It soon approaches a sandy track on the right. Avoid the sandy track by continuing on the woodland path ahead. Soon you reach the public car park by Holmbury Youth Hostel. (See the note in the other walk *Holmbury & Pitch Hills*.)



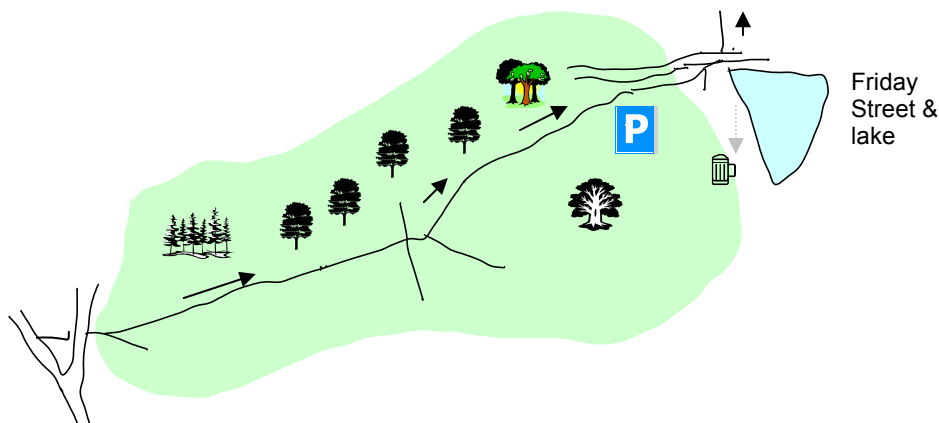
- 6 With the car park on your left, keep straight ahead and immediately avoid several smaller crossing paths. After about 200m, at a junction, ignore paths left and right and continue ahead steeply downhill. At the bottom, go over a very wide forestry track and continue up the other side. The path flattens out at the top of the hill in a pinewood. Immediately before the path begins to descend, take a footpath on the **left** by a wooden barrier leading into distant trees. (This turning may be unmarked. Do *not* take the footpath straight ahead 40m down the hill.) Follow the winding path downhill. After a short level section along the wooded hillside, the path turns **sharp right** round a hairpin steeply downhill. (It is easy to miss this turn as there is also a minor path straight on through rhododendrons. Do *not* go that way.) The path descends to a road. Welcome to Holmbury St Mary! There is a pub *The Royal Oak* a little way along the road to the right but the route is **left** along the road.



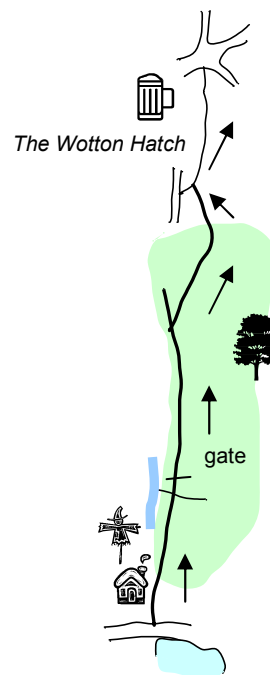
- 7 Go past cottages, turn **right** on a signposted bridleway and continue on a stony path with a hedge and pond on its right. Go straight ahead through a wooden gate on a footpath up steps. There are larches left and greenwood right. The path rises quite steeply but soon levels out in a pleasant area of silver birches of Pasture Wood. Soon, ignore a wide path right. Later, the path becomes more sunken and enters deeper woodland. When a meadow ahead comes into view, go over a crossing path and veer **left** on the far side of some wooden rails. Later the path runs by a fence beside a garden. The path comes down to the road at Abinger Common. Cross the road and go beside a triangular green with the St James's well visible over on the right. Shortly cross another road and continue straight over to a signposted footpath opposite.



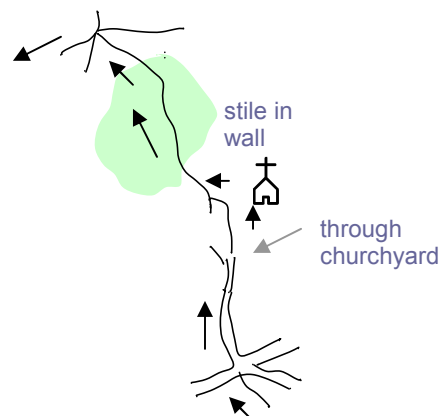
- 8 In 30m you come to a fork in the path. Take the **left** fork. (2010: the path has been cleared and widened for forestry.) In about 300m the path descends and goes under wires at a crossing path. On the other side of the crossing path are two paths leaving at an angle. Take the **left**-hand path uphill. The path flattens and runs through twisted young oaks and birch, eventually arriving at the Friday Street car park. Turn **right** through the car park and follow a path with wooden rails running above the road. This path leads down to the road and lakeside at the beauty spot of Friday Street. The *Stephan Langton* pub will be found a short distance on the right round the lakeside but you will need to retrace your steps to rejoin the walk.



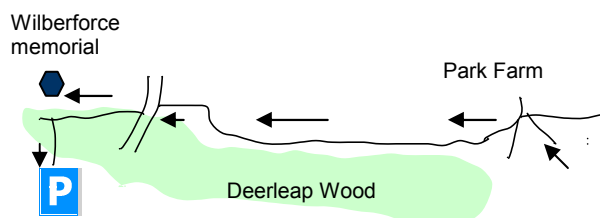
9 Turn **left** just before the lake along a broad path by Pond Cottage, which usually has jam and relishes for sale. This leads over a ford with a little bridge and past picturesque Yew Tree Cottage with its scarecrow, eventually reaching a crossing path before a large wooden gate. On its left is a beautiful old weir bridge with the Tillingbourne and water meadows on each side. Go through the gate and continue ahead with water meadows of the Tillingbourne on show on your left. After some distance the broad path comes to a signposted fork. Fork **right** going uphill. The path flattens and eventually descends to cross a water meadow. *In spring there are copious bluebells here.* It then curves right by a fence to a stile leading into a field. Go ahead, slightly right, aiming to the right of a brown hut and another stile. The track leads out to the main A25 road by the *Wotton Hatch*. *The Wotton Hatch is an old coaching inn, now well restored, also a stylish eating place with numerous alcoves inside and a large garden.*



10 Go straight over the main road and down a lane, ignoring a footpath right, to the church of St John The Evangelist, Wotton. *The hamlet of Wotton is very scattered so it is not surprising that the church stands alone, overlooking a broad sweep of the North Downs. The church is originally Saxon though much restored in Victorian times, but there are still original features, such as unusual carved heads beside the internal porch door including those of King John and Archbishop Stephan Langton. The church also holds the tomb of the diarist John Evelyn.* Go through the church yard, ignoring the footpath left. After passing the church on your right, go over a stile in the wall on the **left** and turn **right** to rejoin the fenced footpath, now running between fields. After a hazel hedge the path passes through a wood of beeches, larches and scots pines (more bluebells in spring), goes through a gate and across a field, usually of oats. At the other side, at a junction of tracks, turn **left** on a bridleway.



- 11 Fork **right** on the bridleway towards the large ancient barn of Park Farm, with the bright cream coloured farm house on your right, and pass between the venerable buildings. The path goes beside a field, round the field corner and reaches a road. Cross the road, slightly left, to a marked bridleway opposite. Follow the bridleway, shortly arriving at the *Wilberforce Monument* which commemorates the death of Bishop Wilberforce.



Samuel Wilberforce was a son of the abolitionist William Wilberforce. He was a noted public speaker and nicknamed "Soapy Sam" for his alleged saponaceousness. It was he who opposed Darwin's theory of evolution and engaged in the famous debate with Thomas Henry Huxley, "Darwin's bulldog", asking him whether it was through his grandfather or his grandmother that he claimed his descent from a monkey. He was killed here in July 1873 after a fall from his horse whilst riding with Lord Granville. Ironically, Charles Darwin stayed at Abinger Hall and often strolled in this woodland.

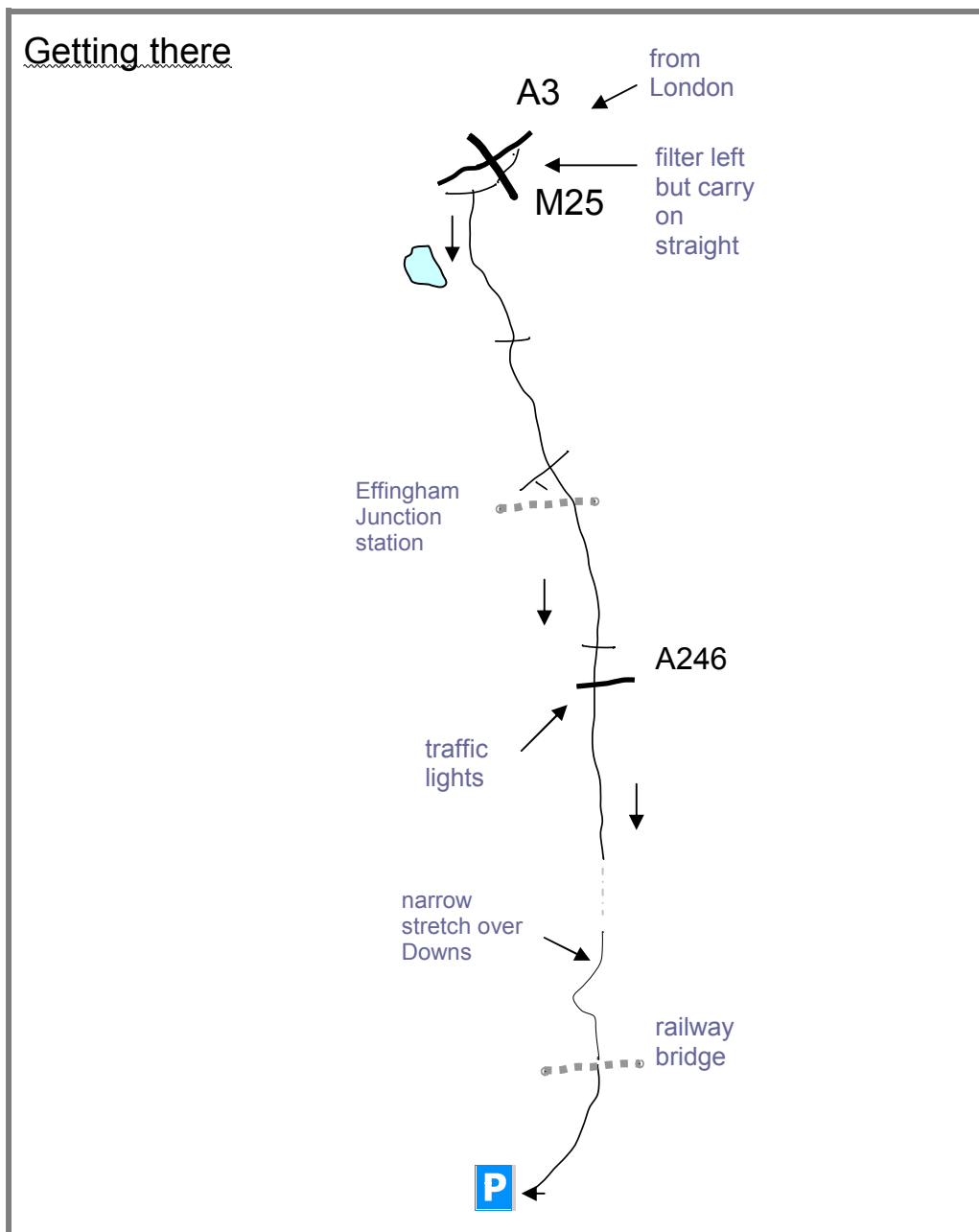
From the monument, turn **left** uphill back to the car park.

Getting there **see map overleaf**

To get to the Abinger Roughs *National Trust* car park from London, you can **either** take the A25 to Dorking and turn right after about 6km (4 miles) **or** take the following more pastoral route:

Take the A3 to the M25 junction and leave the A3 there by the slip road, taking the middle lane. At the roundabout, go **straight ahead**, signposted *Guildford*, as though you had changed your mind and wanted to re-join the A3. In about 100m, leave the slip road by turning **left** onto a narrow road signposted *Effingham* that runs through the forest by a lake on the right. Follow the road all the way to a T-junction. Turn **right and immediately left** over a humpback bridge and past Effingham Junction station. Follow the road all the way to Bookham and Effingham villages, going straight ahead at two mini-roundabouts. Go over traffic lights over the main A246 and follow a rather narrow road that runs past some fine properties, down a valley and up again, and straightens and narrows even more to a crossroads where you must **give way**. Go straight over, passing White Downs car park on the right as you enter thick forest. The road crosses the Downs and narrows in parts rather dramatically to a single lane where you hope not to meet another vehicle. The lane twists and goes over a railway bridge. After the bridge, you need to look out for the entrance to the car park on the right after about 300m (350 yds). The entrance is not signed from the road so it is easy to miss.

Getting there



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