



Frensham and Bourne Wood

Distance: 13 km=8 miles or 11 km=7 miles

easy walking with a few steep gradients

Region: Surrey

Date written: 30-nov-2014

Author: Schwebefuss

Date revised: 19-jan-2020

Refreshments:

Last update: 4-feb-2025

Shortfield Common, Little Pond, Pierrepont

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

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

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

Woodland, heath, lake, rivers, bird sanctuary, views

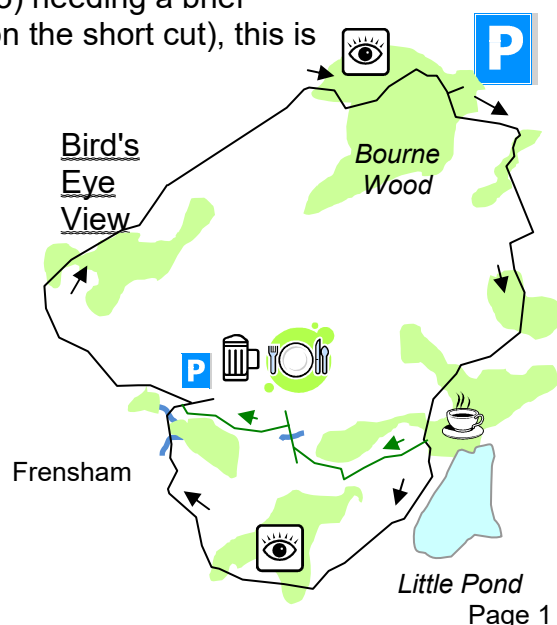
In Brief

This walk takes you on a remarkable hike through the isolated pine-clad sandy hills of western Surrey. It features a 4-mile stretch of almost unbroken woodland and heath. For a lunch stop, you have a welcoming pub, sometimes very busy, near Frensham village (for enquiries or to book ahead, ring the *Holly Bush* on 01252-447060). Because of the sandy terrain, the good wide paths and the leaf cover, this walk has long *dry* sections. So it is also a good winter walk, when views are enhanced.



There are no unavoidable nettles or brambles on this walk, so any kind of clothing is fine. The good terrain allows sensible shoes or trainers in dry weather if preferred to boots. But in rainy conditions there is some water flowing down the footpath after the pub and some splashing in the woodland after the school, enough to make ankle boots necessary. There is one section with uncleared fallen trees, still (in 2025) needing a brief scramble. With no main roads and *no stiles* (one on the short cut), this is a good walk for your dog.

The walk begins at the **Bourne Wood** car park, near **Farnham**, Surrey, nearest postcode **GU10 2BH**, www.w3w.co/nurses.knee.wager, grid ref SU 859 445. The car park is on the **Tilford Road**, about 2 miles south of Farnham and 1 mile north of Tilford. You can also start near the *Holly Bush* pub in Shortfield Common, postcode **GU10 3BJ**, www.w3w.co/stun.slimy.lawns, grid ref SU 843 423, where there is a car park near the playing fields 150 yds east of the pub. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



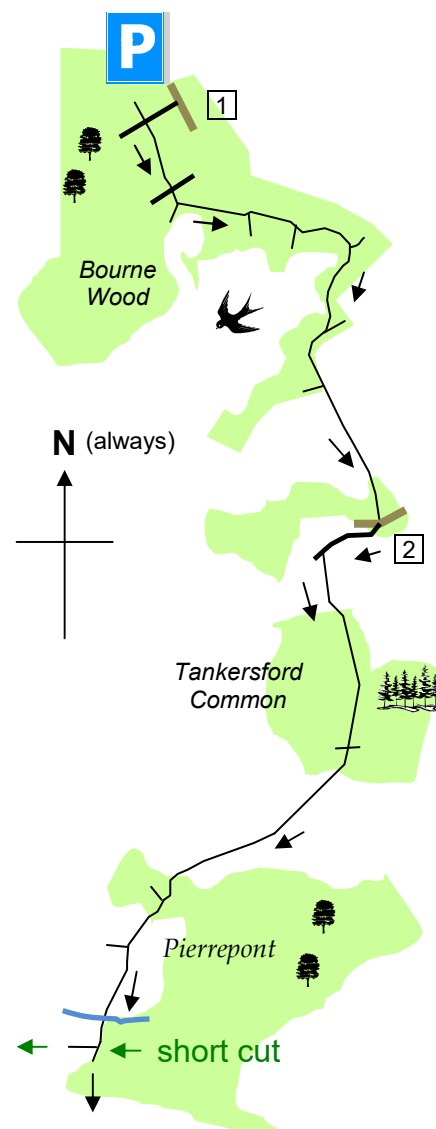
The Walk

This may be your first visit to the Forestry Commission's Bourne Wood but it's almost certain you've seen it before. The reason is the dozens of films and TV productions that have used the wood as a location, including Gladiator, several Harry Potters and Ridley Scott's Robin Hood. The name comes from a branch of the nearby River Wey whose source was known as the "Bourne".

Leg 1: Bourne Wood to Pierrepont 3½ km=2¼ miles

- 1 Enter Bourne Wood from the car park by the main track through a metal barrier. In 40m, at the first crossing, turn **left** on a good path. After 150m, at a 4-way fingerpost, keep straight on. In 15m you cross a wide sandy track by a RSPB post and descend for 30m to reach a marker post with three arrows. Turn **left** here, following the left-pointing arrow, on a very knobbly bridlemway uphill. In 80m, at a marker post beside a small metal gate, keep straight on. You will be staying just outside the enclosure, following the wire fence on your right, passing (regardless) several small gates in the fence, tempting you to visit the RSPB reserve. *The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds purchased this nature reserve and is restoring it for the benefit of scarce heathland species such as the nightjar, woodlark, Dartford warbler and tree pipit. (If you repeat this walk, you may like to find a short cut through the reserve. But you will see more of Bourne Wood on the return leg.)* Keep the fence on your right at all times as you follow the path uphill, curving right. A large green meadow appears ahead whilst your path veers right again at a T-junction beside the fence, passing another little gate. After an upward incline, the fence bends right at a sharp corner. Say goodbye to the fence here by keeping straight ahead through an area of restored coppices. 400m later, at a marker post, keep straight on to come down to The Reeds Road.

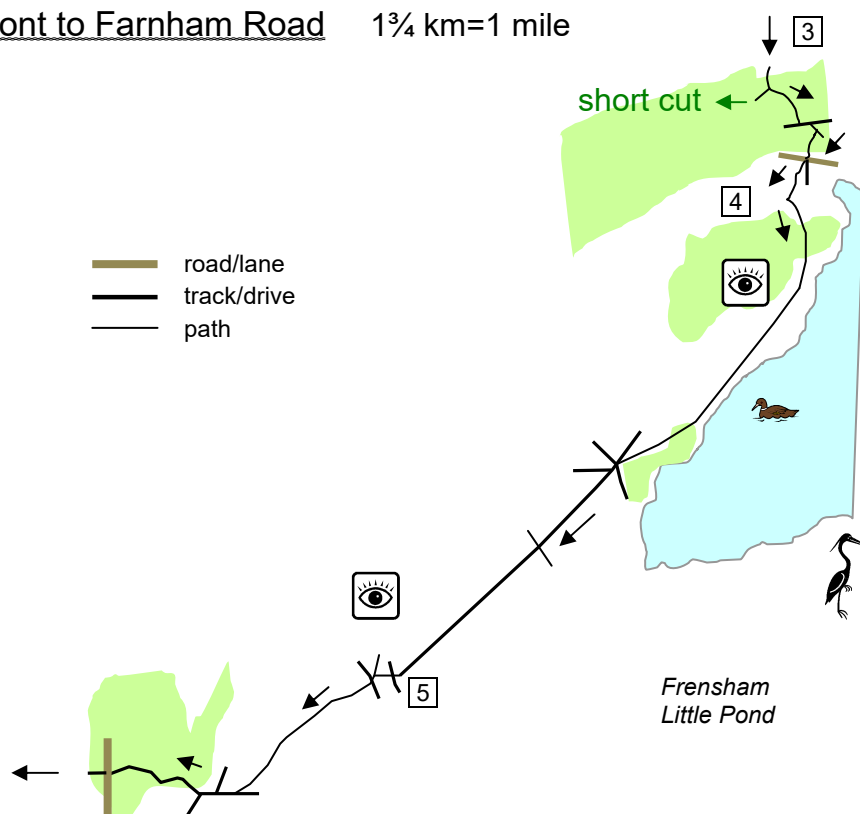
- 2 Cross straight over the road and veer **right** on a bridlemway opposite. In 150m, just before the entrance to a house, fork **left**, on a wide dirt track. Your track continues on a narrower course between fences in Reeds Farm and soon widens. You are now walking across the expansive heath of Tankersford Common with isolated trees and patches of woodland. After about 600m, your path descends between banks. Ignore a swing-gate (built by the "Pierrepont Wrinklies") and permissive path on your right. Just before farm buildings, down a short track on your **left** is the *Craft Brews Brewery and Taproom*. *This micro brewery is also a small alehouse with a terrace and tables where you can partake of the brews. They also serve coffee and small snacks. They are open all year 12-6 Fri, Sat, Sun.* Continue past the farm buildings. Pierrepont Farm is a living, working farm run by the Countryside Restoration Trust, a charity promoting farming friendly to wildlife. Keep **left** at the farm, passing *Cheese On The Wey*. *This cheesemaker began selling artisan cheese in July 2020, produced at the dairy using milk from Pierrepont Farm which you passed earlier.*



It's only a dozen steps to a viewing gallery where you can watch cheese being made. They are usually open for cheesemaking and selling at weekends. A grassy path leads between fences to the banks of the River Wey. Here, a long wooden bridge (now fully open after repairs in Spring 2020) takes you across the rushing river in a perfectly delightful spot. You pass water meadows and a cottage on your right. Almost immediately after the cottage, opposite a wooden gate and just before a slight upward incline, you will see on your right a marker post with a blue arrow (the right-pointing arrow being missing).

Decision point. There is a short cut now taking you direct to Shortfield Common for refreshments. If you wish to take it, omitting Frensham Little Pond, the church and some of the best heathland, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Shortfield Short Cut**. Otherwise continue with Leg 2 below.

Leg 2: Pierrepoint to Farnham Road 1¾ km=1 mile



- 3 Ignore the marker post and continue along the track regardless. (Care! some walkers find the next few turns tricky.) The track curves right to meet a very wide track. Turn sharp **left** on it. In only 10m, turn **right** on a narrow path and immediately fork **right** again on another narrow path. Cross straight over a tarmac lane, Priory Lane, onto a private drive but immediately go **right** at a marker post between wooden uprights onto a mossy open space. Veer **left**, aiming just to the left of a tall stand of pines. As you come over a hillock, you have a great view of Frensham Little Pond.

Frensham Little Pond, like its big brother, was built in the 1200s to supply the fish-loving Bishop of Winchester at Farnham Castle. He ordered the bondsmen to build a dam but they refused because this extra work was “not warranted by custom” (not tilling, harvesting etc.). This might have been the first recorded industrial dispute in English history. Eventually they settled for a small payment. The pond is now a nature sanctuary belonging to the National Trust.

The Tern Café, on your left, serves tea, coffee and snacks most days.



4 Follow the wide sandy path, staying near the shoreline, passing several wooden benches from where you can enjoy the watery serenity. Your path eventually veers away from the shoreline. After about ½ km total you come to a wide junction of six paths. Take the **second** path from the left, almost straight ahead (NB: it's easy to take the wrong path!), the one that you can see ascending the hill ahead. Along the way, your path crosses a wide track at a low barrier. Finally, at the top, you meet a wide crossing path by a bench.

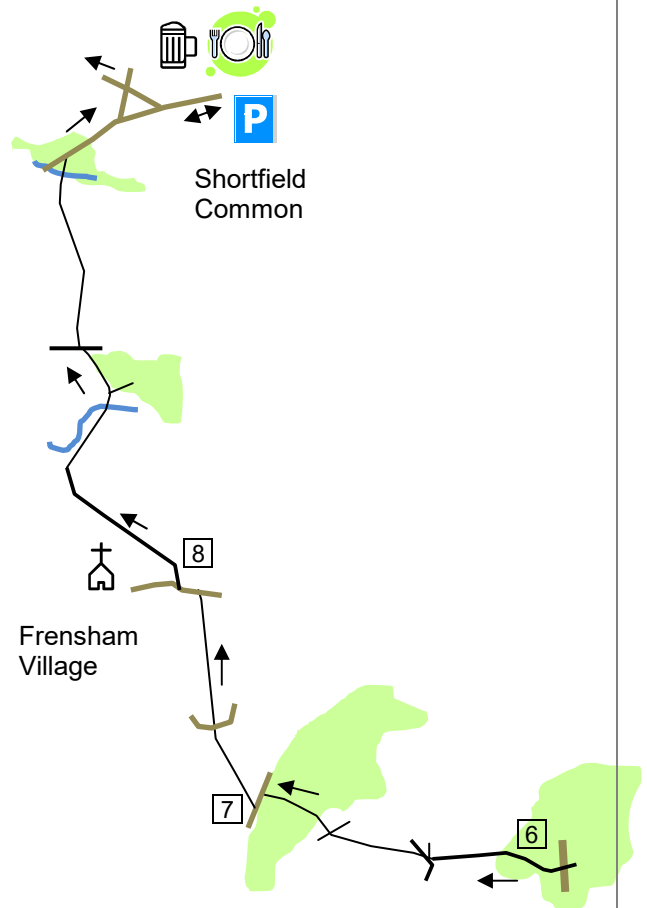
5 Cross the path, a fraction right, and go straight over the grass to another sandy path. Cross this second path to another wooden bench from where you have extensive views of the Great Pond (visited on two other walks in this series) and the surrounding country. Straight ahead, you can see the next part of your route: a narrow winding path below in the valley. Descend on this path, going steeply down a grassy slope. This path ends at an oblique T-junction with a wide sandy bridleway. Turn **right** on this bridleway and keep straight ahead, avoiding a path on your right and a path on your left, following blue arrows. The path leads through a large wooden gate to the main A287 Farnham Road.



Leg 3: Farnham Road to Shortfield Common 2¼ km=1½ miles

6 Cross the road carefully to a signposted bridleway on the other side, passing a low barrier. Follow this very wide sandy path uphill for over 200m to meet a marker post and a rather complex junction. Ignore narrow paths right and left and stay on the wide sandy path for another 10m to where the main path bends left. **Leave** the wide path here by keeping **right** on a narrower bridleway marked by a marker post with a blue arrow. In only 20m, at another marker post, fork **left up over a low bank**, on an even narrower footpath indicated by a yellow arrow [Feb 2021: arrow gone?]. Care! do not miss this vital left fork! This nice clear path runs through pines and gorse. In 150m, on reaching a lovely mossy diagonal crossing path running in a clearing, keep straight over, still following the yellow arrow. Your path twists and turns through more pines and birch and goes downhill to a road, Bacon Lane. Turn **left** on the road.

7 In 20m, go **right** at a fingerpost through a barrier on a footpath. Another barrier leads to a residential road. Cross it to a signposted enclosed footpath opposite. Garden fences are on your right and an adventure playground on your left. The path becomes a semi-tarmac lane, Lovers Lane, and leads out to a road in Frensham village. Turn **left** on the road towards the church. Your route is a track on the right just before the churchyard. But first, a visit to the church is an absolute must.



Frensham is shrouded in mystery. The name means "Frena's place" but who Frena was is uncertain. Frensham Church was "moved" in the year 1239 from some other place but no one knows from where. Most of the building is from

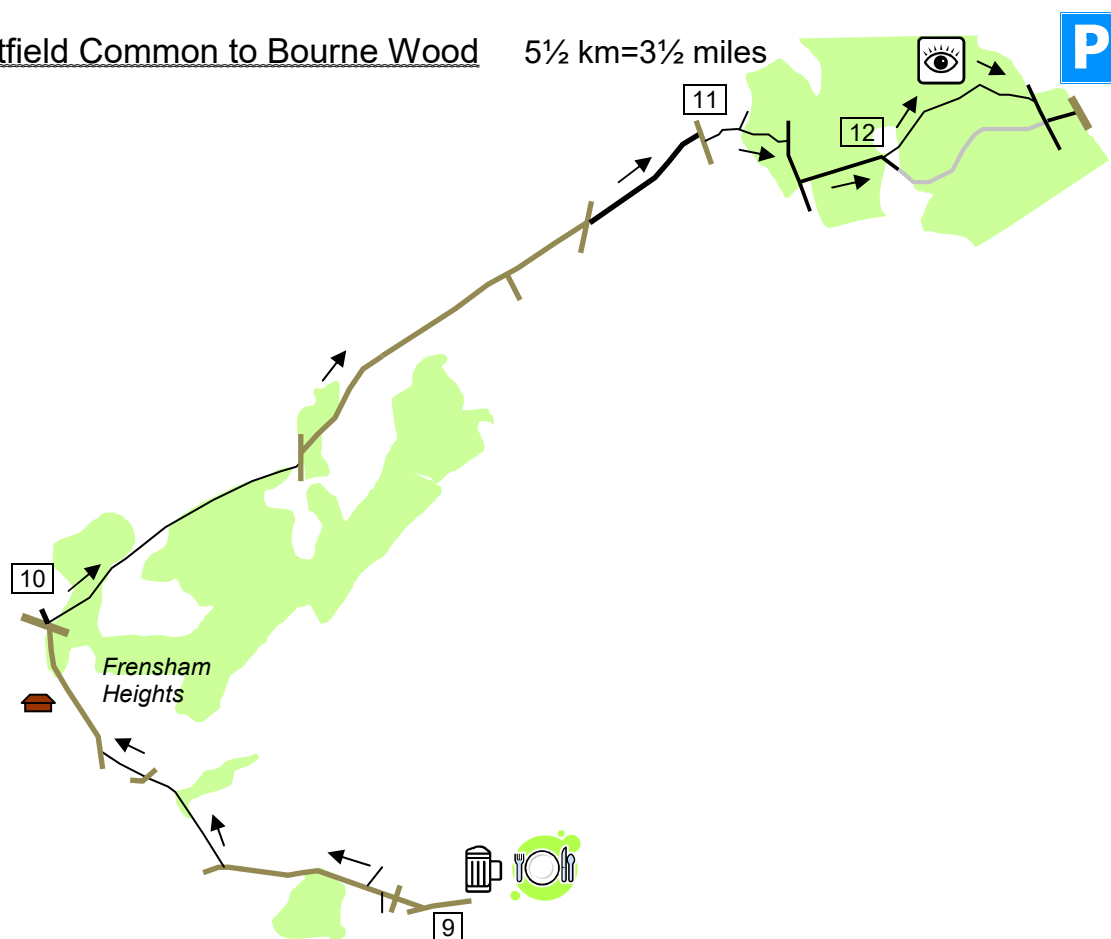
the 1300s, of local sandstone, the chancel (at the altar end) being the oldest part. The organ was paid for by a generous lady in the late 1800s, the music during the previous two centuries having been provided by the local band.

- 8 Follow the tarmac track to the right of the church, beside the cemetery, with water meadows on your right. At the end, veer **right** on a narrower path. Your path runs beside a river on your left and crosses it by a long bridge. After the bridge, stay on the main path, ignoring a little gate and footpath on your right. Very shortly you join a tarmac drive. At a T-junction with a wide drive, turn **left** and immediately **right** on a footpath. This narrow path runs between a hedge and a large field on your right. It leads past a derelict house, over a bridge across a stream to a road, Shortfield Common Road. Turn **right** on it, passing a road junction and quickly reaching the *Holly Bush*.



The Holly Bush was a characterful local but underwent a transformation a year or two ago. You may like the result, especially if food is a priority or if perhaps you are dropping in early to have breakfast. It opens at 8.30 a.m. (9.30 weekends) and is as much a coffee bar as a pub. Service is reported to be a bit over-relaxed, especially on a busy day, so you may need to holler.

Leg 4: Shortfield Common to Bourne Wood 5½ km=3½ miles



- 9 After your break, retrace your steps westwards along the road for 80m. (If you began the walk here, that's with the pub on your **right**.) Fork **right** on very quiet West End Lane, going straight over a crossroads shortly and ignoring footpaths right and left. *The clock on Crawford Cottage now shows the correct time only twice a day.* After 500m, as the lane curves left just after Downlands Farm, turn **right** past a metal barrier onto a narrow footpath. **This path may be quite wet at first where a stream shares the route but the pebbly surface keeps it fairly mud-free.** The path runs uphill between hedges and goes through another metal barrier to a tarmac lane. Cross the lane to a path opposite which runs beside a garden fence and leads to another lane. Turn **right** on

the lane uphill. Shortly you pass between buildings and playing fields of a well-known co-educational private school and sixth-form college.

Frensham Heights School was founded in 1925 along progressive lines. Famous former pupils include: Blue Peter presenter Valerie Singleton; many actors such as the Pertwees of Doctor Who and Dad's Army fame and Jim Sturgess (One Day, The Way Back, Cloud Atlas); Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason; firefighter, model and bounty huntress Domino Harvey (expelled); comedian Jack Dee; magician David Berglas; rave host and convicted fraudster Edward Ormus Sharrington (self-styled Lord) "Fast Eddie" Davenport.

Continue to a T-junction with a major road. Cross straight over the road to Switchback Lane but immediately turn **right** at a fingerpost on a footpath (*don't miss it! – the fingerpost is partially concealed by the hedge*).

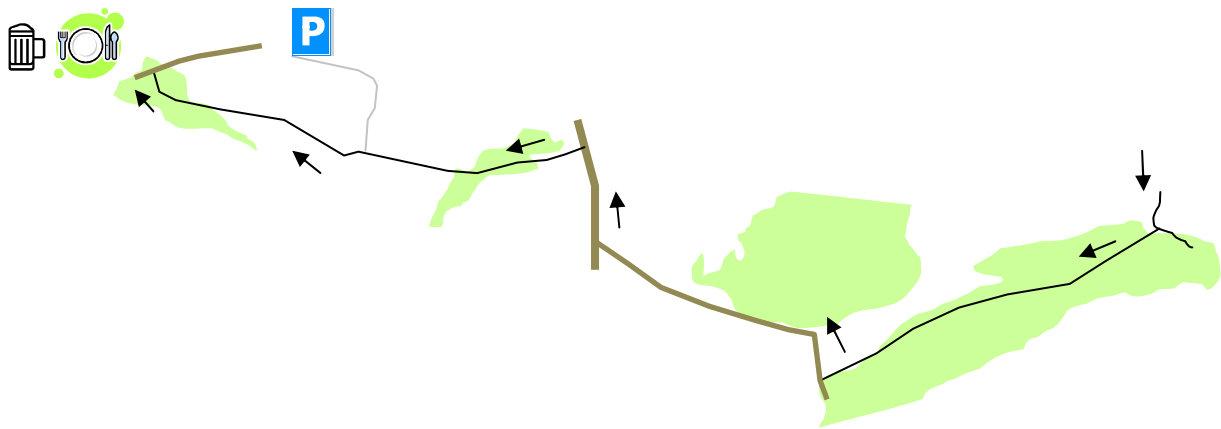
- 10 The footpath takes you past a garden on your left, over a wooden bridge and into woodland. There is a boardwalk and a 2-plank bridge as your path runs between a large meadow on your left and woodland and a stream on your right. [Mar 2022: two big trees had fallen across the path: walkers went round carefully over the wire fencing. Jan 2025: now worse and overgrown; some walkers went back to the road and followed tarmac as far as Frensham Vale below.] May be waterlogged in wet conditions! Take care: this section may be slippery! Finally you reach Gardener's Hill Road. Turn **left** and, in 30m, **right** on another road, Frensham Vale and follow it to its end in 1km. This road is sometimes quiet whilst on other days you can count the Range Rovers, all through a handsome pinetum of musky heath. At the end, with a footway, passing houses close and distant, you reach the A287 Frensham Road. Cross carefully straight over the road and take a tarmac lane opposite, Latchwood Lane, marked (to discourage through traffic) as a cul-de-sac. You pass a dell of bungalows and, in 400m, reach a tarmac lane, Old Frensham Road. Turn **right** and, in 15m, turn **left** into Sable Wood (identified by a flimsy laminated sign), the start of your final woodland trek. Sable Wood is privately owned and the owner is restoring it by culling invasive species and planting a mixture of native woodland species.
- 11 In 100m, at a marker post with yellow arrows, fork **right**. Your path passes a garden on your right and then goes up a long series of steps, followed by some natural steps. After a taxing ascent you reach a wide path at a T-junction. Turn **right** on this path. You are now in Bourne Wood. The path quickly levels out and, after 130m, you reach a marker post with an extremely wide path on your left. Turn **left** on this path, walking between two imposing lines of pine trees. In 250m, the path becomes surfaced and bends right. By following this surfaced path to the right, you would reach the car park in 500m but this guide takes you on a more interesting course keeping to the high ground a little longer.
- 12 Leave the surfaced path by continuing straight ahead, passing an open area on your left. Avoid a left fork downhill and keep close to the pines on your right. When you reach another open space (more grassy this time), keep straight ahead, with a steep drop on your right. Opposite the far corner of the grassy space, 10m before a bank, go **right** past tree stumps on a path which gently descends diagonally down the steep pine-clad valley side. As you descend, avoid turnings off and keep to the same general course, finding a narrow path through the undergrowth to meet a tarmac lane in the valley. Turn **left** on the lane and continue ahead until, in about 100m, you arrive back in the car park where the walk began.



For final refreshments, the "Barley Mow" in Tilford and the "Donkey" at Charles-hill (which you may have passed earlier by car) are your nearest good places.

Shortfield Short Cut 2¼ km=1½ miles

Take this short cut if you want to take the shortest route from Pierrepoint to the pub at Shortfield Common. However, you have a short stretch on a narrow road and you will miss the Pond and some beautiful heath with great views.

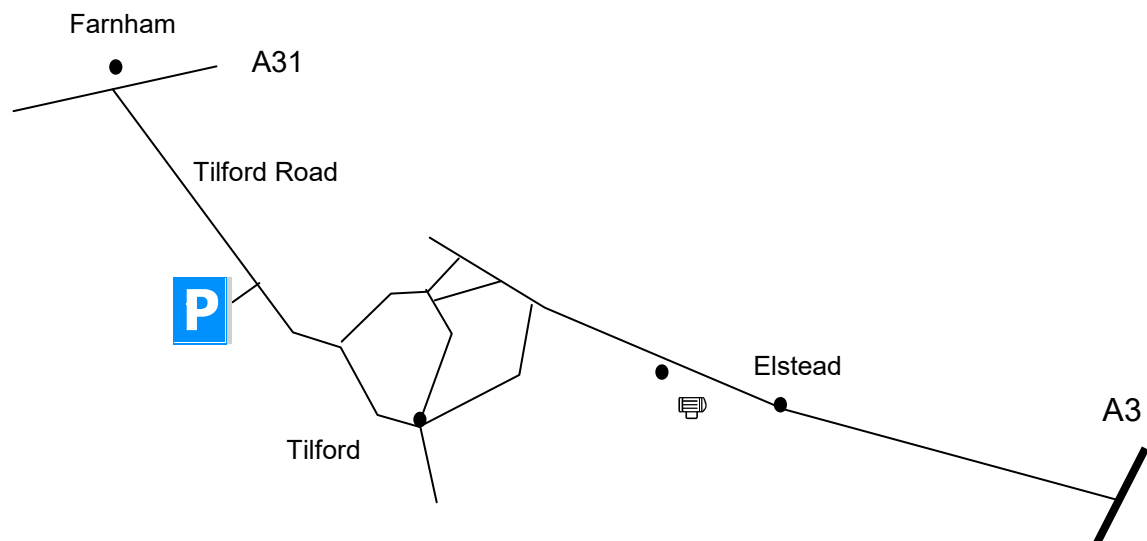


Turn **right** at the marker post on a narrow path into woods. Your path runs for 600m with a meadow visible on your right, to meet a tarmac lane, Priory Lane, where the smaller car park is just on your left. Turn **right** on the lane and follow it – carefully as it is rather narrow and carries frequent traffic – going found a left bend and passing some attractive cottages. Finally you reach the main A287 Farnham Road. Turn **right** on the road, going over a bridge across the river. Just after a bus stop, turn **left** through the entrance to a big house, *Millbridge Court*. Take a narrow path that runs along the right-hand side of the main house, close to the wall. The path runs between wooden and then wire fences and soon rises steeply, going through a modern kissing gate to the corner of some playing fields. Keep straight ahead along the grass with a wire fence and the playing fields on your right. Just before the end of the playing fields, there is a second kissing gate on your right. (You can go **right** through this gate, straight over, up a bank, round the cricket pitch, wheeling **left** to a car park and thence to the road just before the pub.) Keep **left** down a slope and veer **right** again with a grassy meadow on your left, going through a modern kissing gate. Continue along a high path through woods, near garden fences, with a wide grassy space down on your left. Your path takes you through a metal kissing-gate, veers right through holly and takes you out through a barrier to Shortfield Common Road. Turn **right** on the road, immediately reaching the *Holly Bush* pub.

Now resume the walk from the beginning of **Leg 4**.

Getting there

By car: the Bourne Wood car park, on the Tilford Road, can be reached either from Farnham and the A31 or from Elstead and the A3. From Farnham, just west of the town, turn off the A31 at the traffic lights, signposted *Hindhead*, *Frensham*, going over the railway crossing near the station. The car park is 1 $\frac{2}{3}$ miles on the right. If coming from the A3, leave it to go through Elstead. Keep straight on through the village in the direction *Farnham*. Exactly 1 mile after the (now closed) *Donkey* pub, take the **third** road on the left, Tilford Street, signposted *Tilford*. In $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, at a bend, turn **right** on Sheephatch Lane. Follow it for 1 mile and turn **right** at a T-junction on Tilford Road. The car park is 600m=700 yds on the left.



By bus/train: bus 19 runs between Haslemere and Farnham rail stations along the Farnham Road, not Sundays. Check the timetables.

fancy more free walks? www.fancyfreewalks.org