



## Devil's Punchbowl, Lion's Mouth, Thursley

Distance 16½ km=10 miles, moderate walking

Region: Surrey

Author: Schwebefuss

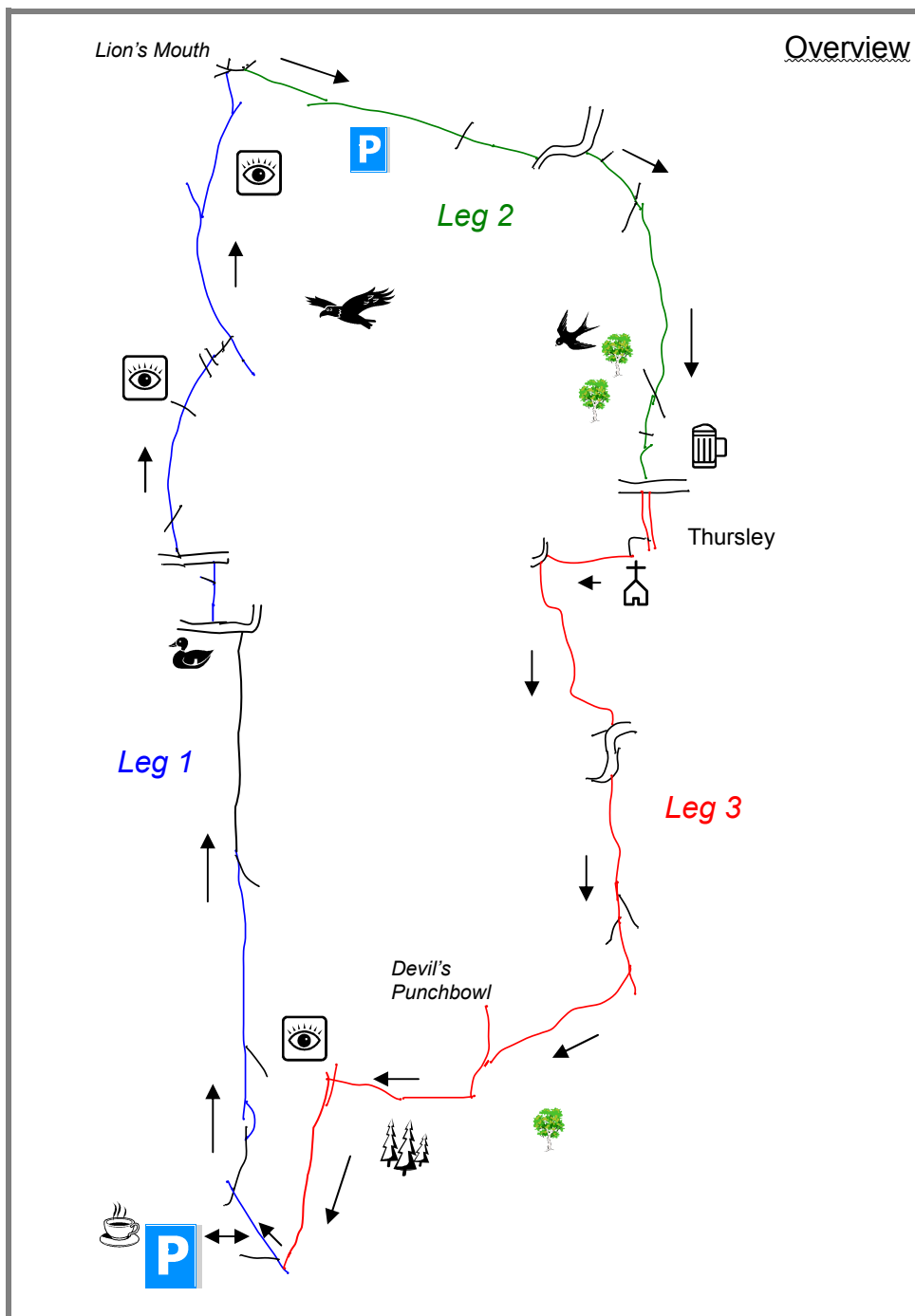
comments please to [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)

Refreshments: Thursley

Maps: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) & 145 (Guildford) *hopefully not needed*

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*Dramatic hills, villages, extensive heath*



## In Brief



This walk takes you from the Devil's Punchbowl over the remarkably desolate landscape of Kettlebury Hill and back through the pretty village of Thursley, giving you on the return leg an intimate view of the Punchbowl from its gentle depths. There is one long descent and one long ascent, near the start and finish, and a few easy ups and downs. The ground is mainly sandy or dry, making the walk pleasant underfoot. There are no nettles and the route seems fine for a dog too, provided you keep him on a tight lead in the sheep pastures and in the Punchbowl area where the highland cattle run free.

The walk starts at the **National Trust Punchbowl** car park: see map and guide at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

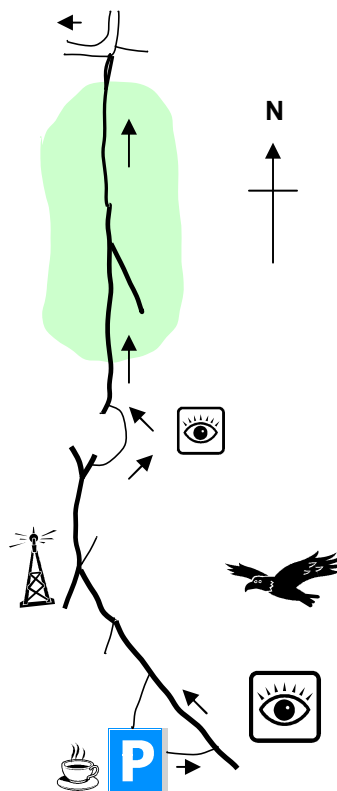
## The Walk

### Leg 1: Punchbowl to Lion's Mouth, 7½ km (4½ miles)

- 1 From the back of the car park, go past the noticeboard and the Surrey Hills pole to the famous viewpoint over the Devil's Punchbowl. Turn **left** along the wide level path that runs along the rim of the valley. After some distance with fine views, you reach a junction of tracks near a prominent relay mast. Bear slightly **right** past a noticeboard. In 100m, just after a seat, fork right on a narrower path that rejoins the main track while giving better views of the Punchbowl. A little further on, fork **right** with the main track but immediately fork **right** again on a lesser path that leads to a seat and a memorial to the bequeathal of Highcombe Copse to the National Trust.

*Highcombe Copse is one of several pieces of donated land that make up the Devil's Punchbowl. Historically, the Punchbowl was regarded with fear and superstition as a dark malevolent province of smugglers and deadly spirits and few people dared to set foot there.*

Continue onwards to rejoin the main track. After some distance the main track curves sharp right by a post with blue arrows to descend into the Punchbowl. Leave it here by continuing straight ahead on a broad path. Stay on this path as it narrows and becomes sunken, passing through a gate. It becomes even more sunken but later gets easier. Finally, it joins a farm track and leads out to a lane at a bend.



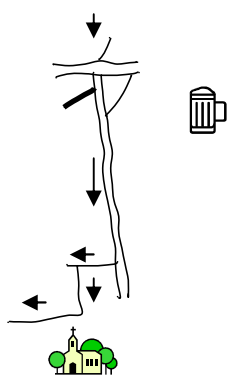




*Thursley takes its name ultimately from the nordic god Thor, as seen on the village sign on the green. Historically it was important as a staging post on the Portsmouth Road. Its industries were glass-blowing and iron making but it lost its iron industry to the North of England when coal began to be used. The architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, who designed New Delhi, Castle Drogo and Hampton Court Bridge amongst other places, grew up in the village. The Three Horseshoes pub is a short distance on the left along the road. As well as a good range of real ales, it offers homemade pizzas.*

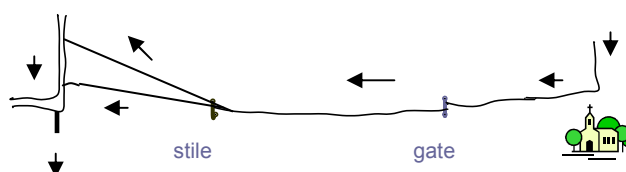
**Leg 3: Thursley to Punchbowl, 6 km (3½ miles)**

- 1 Cross over the main road, past the triangular green and the colourful village sign, to The Street, passing The Lane on the right. (Thursley people do not seem to go in for swanky names.) The Street passes some charming buildings, beginning with a fine cottage on the right. Just after Wild Goose Cottage, turn **right** at a signpost and, at the end of the track, turn **left** up some steps to the church.



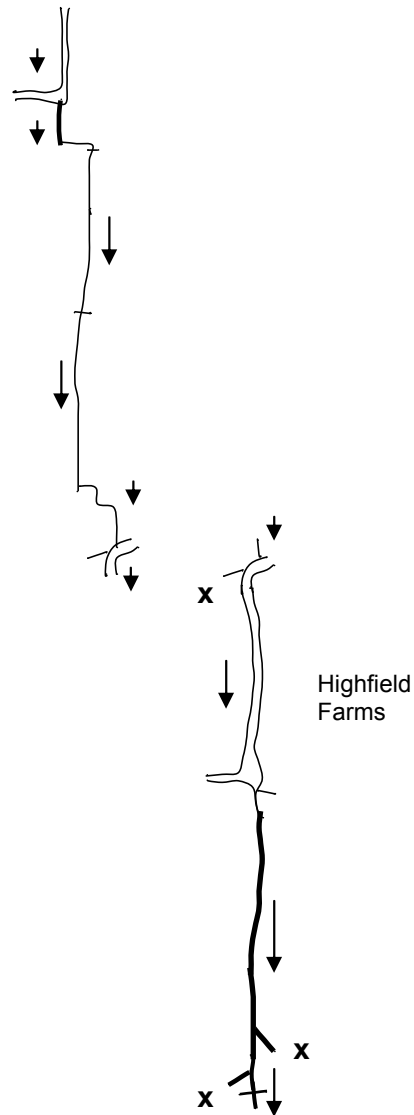
*The Church of St Michael and All Angels is of Saxon origin. It dates from the time that Godwin, Earl of Wessex, ruled the territory. He was father to King Harold who was killed at the Battle of Hastings. Inside it has some perfect timber-framed Saxon windows. Its unusual timber shingled spire is positioned centrally.*

- 2 Turn **right** beside the church. (If you would like to visit it, you need to go left round to the other side.) Follow the path as it runs close to a brick wall and fence on the left. *Note that this route is part of the long-distance footpath the Greensand Way that you come across in so many walks.* The route goes through a wooden gate on an enclosed footpath which offers a good harvest from the brambles in late summer. The path reaches an unneeded stile and gate into a meadow. There is now a choice of two paths, lined with low wire fences. The right-hand path is the official path leading to *Smallbrook Barn and Studio*. The left-hand path goes past a welcome circular wooden seat. Either way, you reach a lane and turn **left** uphill.



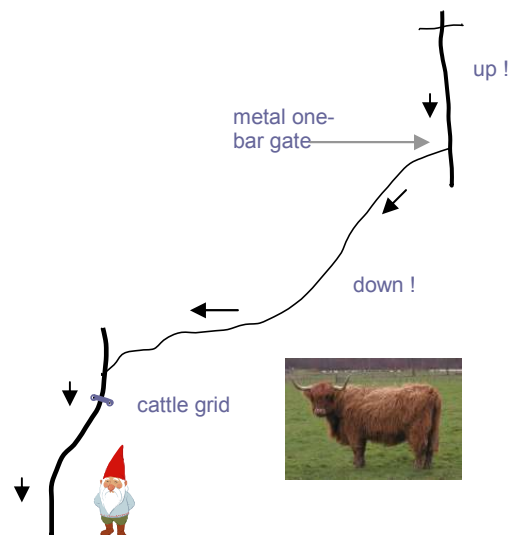
3 At the top, the road turns right to a gate. Leave it here by continuing straight ahead on a wide path. The path bends left between fences and then right by the first of several stiles, some unneeded like this one. The path runs between fields, turns left and right, over yet another stile, left and right again, reaching a lane.

4 Turn **right** on the lane. In 20m, ignore a signed footpath on the right. The lane passes Lower Highfield Farm on the left and arrives at a small settlement by little triangular green. Keep **left** here on a very rough tarmac track that will soon deteriorate. *Note the ironic road sign indicating that 60 mph is allowed.* After 650m, the track forks by a National Trust sign. Take the **right** fork. Less than 100m further, via a cattle grid or gate, the track forks again. This time takes the **left** fork. Go straight ahead over a crossing track on a stony path that rises towards the rim of the Punchbowl.



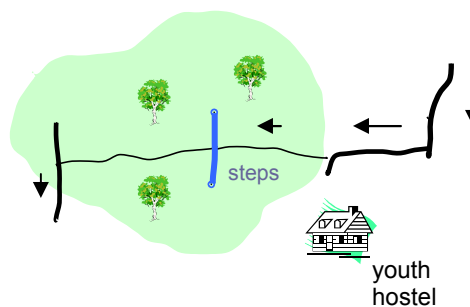
*The next stretch takes you down into the Punchbowl and shows you its wondrous beauty and variety. You will see that, contrary to the superstitions of the past, this is not a deadly morass but an enchanting mélange of sunlit glades, meadows, light woodland and rare plants, trees and birds. There is just one steep ascent, almost at the end of the walk.*

5 Near the top, look for a metal one-bar gate on the right. Turn **right** here on a path that curves slightly left down into the valley. *On a sunny late afternoon, the green of the valley and the heather and woodland around it make an unforgettable picture.* The path curves right, goes over a small ridge and runs alongside a meadow on the right. Sometimes you will see highland cattle in this area. They are gentle animals despite their forbidding horns. At a T-junction with a track, turn **left** over a cattle grid (or through the adjoining gate). The track curves left, descends into a dell and

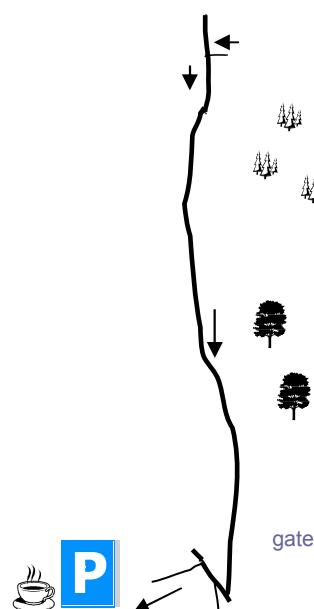


shortly passes *Gnome Cottage* on the left that somehow seems so aptly-named.

- 6 Ignore a wooden five-bar gate on the right that leads into Two Oaks Field and continue to the next junction where there is a YHA (Youth Hostel) sign. Turn **right** here. The track leads to the picturesque Youth Hostel with its front meadow on the left. Keep **right** here between stumps on a woodland path. The path soon descends via steps with wooden rails to a bridge over a brook. It then goes up the other side on a sunken path. At the top, go through a swing gate and turn **left** on a wider path.



- 7 This broad path winds left around a forested area of pines, many of which are currently harvested with stumps remaining. At a junction, ignore a narrow path right and continue straight on at all times past the *Pedestrian Path* sign and through a wooden gate. The path runs for some distance through beautiful beechwoods. Later it begins to rise and this section can be a bit long and arduous except for knowing that this is the *last* bit. On gaining the top, turn **right** through a wooden gate and avoid a path sharp left. The first path **left** takes you back to the car park.



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## Getting there

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To get to the **National Trust Punchbowl car park**, take the A3 and turn off, just south of the tunnel, at a sign for **Hindhead**. Go through the traffic lights in Hindhead into a cul-de-sac. The car park is on the left. Refreshments are available in the Punchbowl café.

