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## Elstead and Frensham Ponds

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Distance: 24 km (15 miles) or 2 shorter walks of 14 km (9 miles)  
moderate walking

Region: Surrey

Revised Aug 2011

Author: Schwebefuss *comments please to feedback@fancyfreewalks.org*

Refreshments: Frensham Great Pond, Tilford

Maps: Explorer 145 (Guildford) and 133 (Haslemere) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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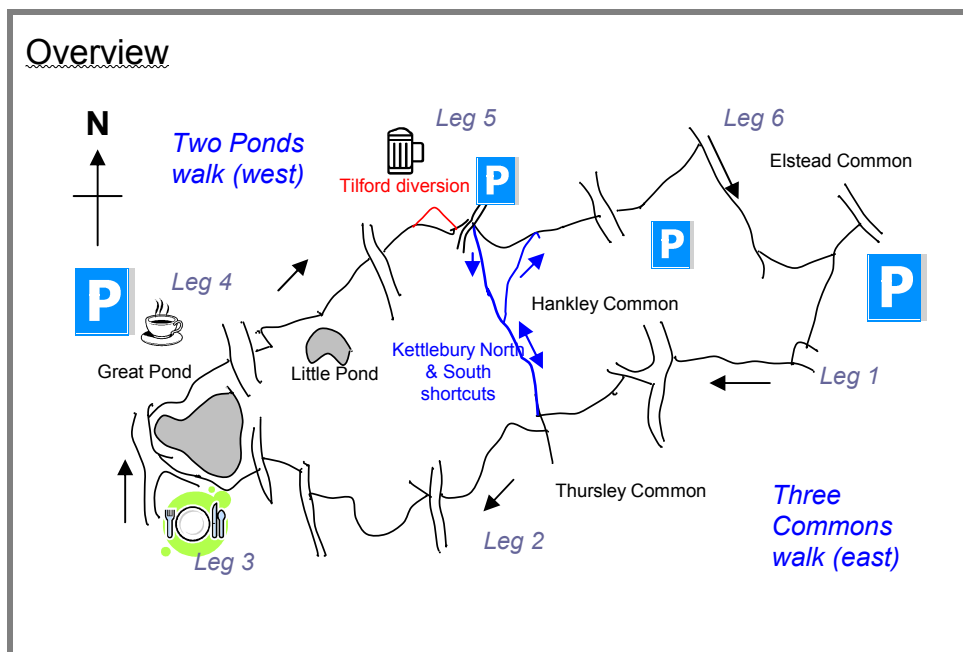
*Heath, moorland, lakes, birds, optional village*

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### In Brief

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This mighty circular walk takes you through the extraordinary austere and desolate landscape of Ockley, Thursley and Hankley Commons and then around the sandy expanse of Frensham Ponds. This is a demanding undertaking, not like the usual country walk. There are no pretty villages (unless you take the diversion to Tilford below), no lambkins or grassy meadows, not even any stiles. There is hardly any road walking, very few buildings, just unrelenting moorland, sandhills and lakes. The route will suddenly surprise you with several vast sweeping views, even though there are no steep ascents. It seems unbelievable that such landscapes exist on such a scale so close to London in South East England. Because of its luminosity and the predominance of evergreen trees, this walk is perfect for any season.



This walk can be done as two separate walks in figure-of-eight fashion as either the *Three Commons* half-walk or the *Two Ponds* half-walk, both 14km (9 miles). It could also be split into two days with an overnight in Frensham. It could even be *run* as a long half-marathon since the paths are mostly long and wide.



There are no nettles and any sensible clothing and footwear is fine. Your dog will enjoy the walk too.

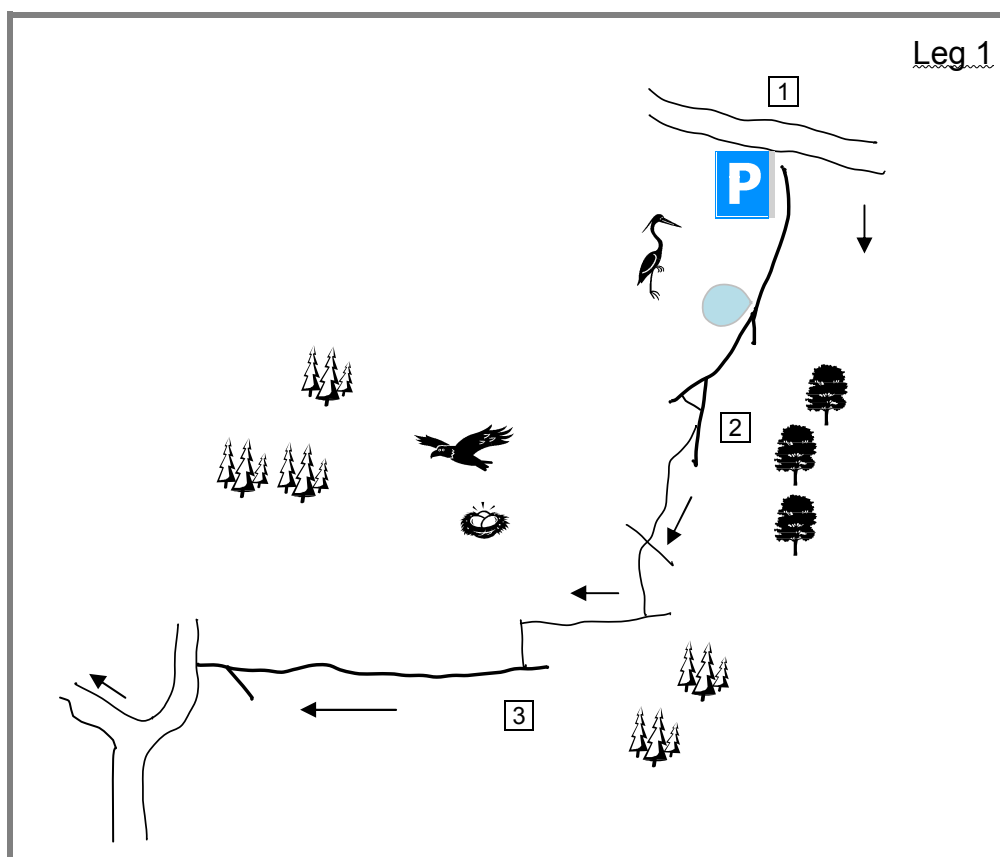
The route runs over Hankley & Ockley Commons which are a Managed Access training area for the military and they ask you to follow some restrictions. There is a very accessible [MoD](#) website with details.

The full walk and the **Three Commons** half-walk begin in the small car park off the B3001 road near Elstead (approximate postcode GU8 6HZ). The **Two Ponds** half-walk begins in the Frensham Great Pond car park (postcode GU10 2QD). For more detailed information, see **Getting There** at the end of this text.

## The Walk

Begin here if you are doing the full walk or the Three Commons half-walk. If you are doing the Two Ponds half-walk, begin at Leg 4, the Frensham Great Pond car park. You can also begin the full walk there, indeed at any point in the circuit.

### Leg 1: Elstead Road to Thursley Road, 4½ km=3 miles

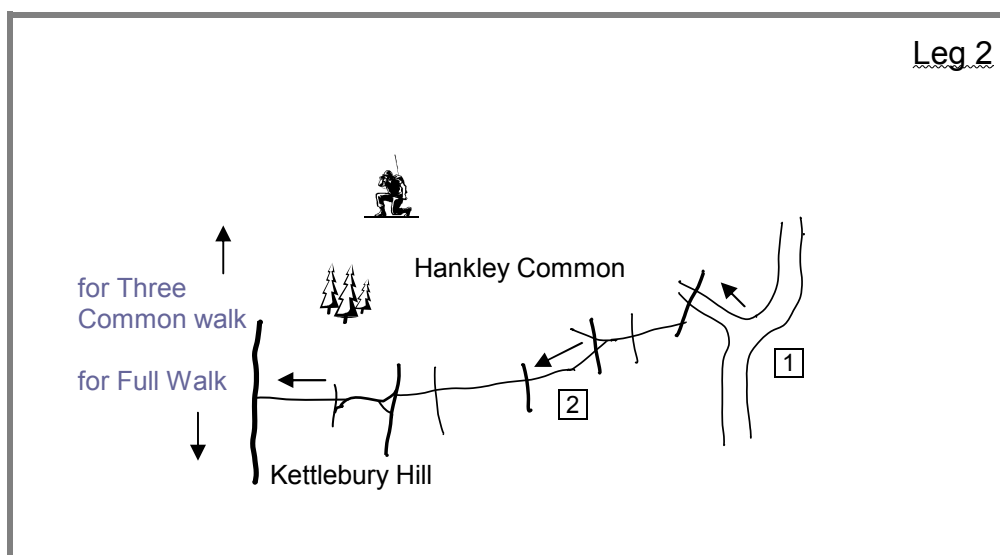


- 1 From the car park, go through a large wooden gate and take the excellent surfaced track across Ockley Common. In about 500m the track curves right by a pond on the right and, about 350m after, wheels left over a bridge meeting a field on the right. In 70m pass under wires and, about 70m further,

with the field still close by, take a major **left** fork marked by a blue arrow. *In many places there are signs warning you that this land is used for military exercises and that you should not touch any suspicious objects. If you have a dog, please keep it under close control as there are many ground nesting birds in the marshy areas as well as deer and other wild animals on the heath.*

- 2 The track is met by two more tracks coming from the right just before a ditch. Go past a Nature Reserve welcome sign for Thursley Common next to a MoD sign and ignore a left turn. In 30m, take a marked bridleway forking off **right** which goes across an area of open heath. Larks and other ground nesting birds can be observed here and the atmosphere is unforgettable. (If this area is too waterlogged, you can stay on the main path and, when you pass the corner of the open area on your right, take any decent path right to find the strip of pines described below. This is *not* a wet walk.) *The slopes of Thursley Common and the area around the Devil's Punch Bowl are visible ahead.* After 700m, the bridleway crosses a footpath at a marker post. (See the walk *Elstead, Ockley Common, Peper Harow* in this series.) It then wheels left towards pines and crosses a marshy area. Just after entering trees by a marker post, it meets a narrow path, 10m inside the treeline. Turn **right** here. The path runs through a wide strip of pines and emerges onto open heath. You pass a tiny pine-topped hillock. About 100m further, before a black marker post, turn **left** up a marked wide sandy track. In 150m, at a wide crossing track, turn **right** under wires, following the yellow arrow.
- 3 Stay on the wide track, going over another track at a post and ignoring all turnings off for some distance. Eventually your track passes a green noticeboard and a metal gate. The track joins another track coming from the left and reaches Thursley Road. (See the walk *Devil's Punchbowl, Lions Mouth, Thursley* in this series.)

### Leg 2: Thursley Road to Kettlebury Hill, 2km=1 mile



- 1 Turn **left** on the road for a short distance and turn **right** on a lane. In nearly 400m, where the meadow on the right ends, turn **left** on a marked crossing bridleway. In 200m, at power lines, turn **right** uphill on a track. This sandy track goes over another track and under power lines, levels out and goes over a crossing track. After 50m, you come to a fork just before another crossing track. On the other side, two paths diverge in widely different directions.

- 2 Take the **left** fork and hence the **left**-hand of the two paths on the other side of the track. *Suddenly spread out before you is the vast expanse of Kettlebury Hill, an overwhelming sight.* The path descends and in 170m crosses a track. At the bottom it crosses some narrow paths and then a very broad track. Continue directly over on a broad sandy track. In 20m, your track is met by another one coming in from the left. In another 20m, just 30m before the treeline, fork **right** towards the trees. Cross a track and take a narrow sandy path uphill with pines on the left and more open ground on the right. At the top of the hill you meet a very broad path – a popular ridge walk.

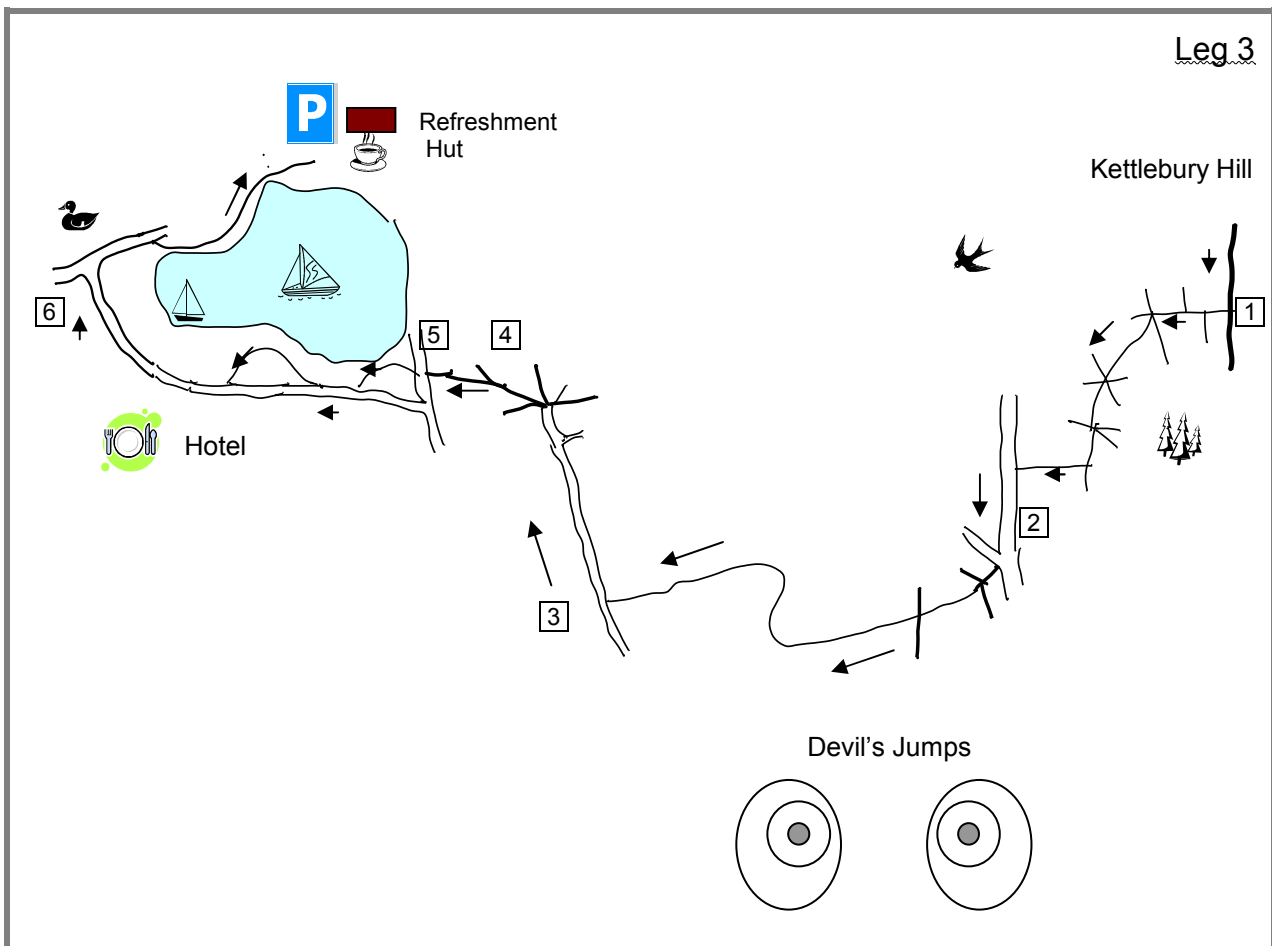


**Decision Point.** You have reached the centre of the figure-of-eight. If you are doing only the *Three Commons* half-walk, go to near the end of this text for the **Kettlebury North** shortcut.

For the **full walk**, turn **left** on the broad path at the top of Kettlebury Hill. In 50m look out for a narrow sandy path that descends steeply on the right between banks.

### Leg 3: Kettlebury Hill to the Great Pond, 5½ km=3½ miles

- 1 Turn **right** down the very steep sandy path. You pass paths on the left and the right and, after the path levels out, cross a wide track. Just 5m after the track, you meet another crossing track. Turn **left** here. At a six-path junction go straight ahead on a broad track. At a five-path junction with a MoD warning sign, go straight on following overhead wires. In about 150m, opposite another warning sign, between the remains of a wooden fence, turn **right**. The pond of an angling club is on the left, you pass a metal bar and continue to a road. Turn **left** on the road.



- 2 In a short distance, go past Sandy Lane on the right and immediately take the enclosed footpath on the **right**. At a junction at the corner of the fence, continue **straight ahead** on a sandy path uphill by a blue-topped post, ignoring a footpath left and a marked footpath right. *After the previous stretch, you might have expected a contrast to the open landscape, but here once again you are ringed by a horizon of wilderness.* Ahead of you are the curious round hills known as the Devil's Jumps. The route will run to the right of them. As you near a meadow on the left, a path meets you from the left and a wider track joins from the right: keep straight on, soon with the meadow and a fence on the left. Stay on the track as it eventually wheels right by wooden railings. This excellent well-defined track winds and curves left again. Stay on it at all times through pine woods until eventually you are on a permissive horse track and have farm buildings on your right (*Crosswater Farm*) and you come out to a quiet lane. Turn **right** on the lane.
- 3 The lane becomes sandy and passes *Crosswater* on the right and, as it begins to ascend, now a mere track, it passes *Harold's Hill* on the left. Finally you are in the wilds of Frensham Country Park and are faced with a bewildering choice of paths.
- 4 Ignoring the first path left that goes rather steeply upwards, take the **second** path from the **left**, marked as a bridleway, more gently uphill. At the top, the path curves left downhill. Stay on this main path, all the way to the main road, the A287 just outside Churt.
- 5 Cross straight over the main road to a path opposite and veer **left** alongside Frensham Great Pond. The route will do a clockwise circuit. *This is a favourite place for sailing and boats of all classes make a glorious sight.* The path meets a minor road. Turn **right** here, effectively continuing in the same direction. After a fence, the path resumes on the right, wheeling left on the pond side and re-joins the road. You cross a stream and pass Frensham Pond Sailing Club (*their excellent website [www.sailfrensham.org.uk](http://www.sailfrensham.org.uk) has a real-time weather display*). Soon you reach a sign warning drivers that ducks frequently walk in the middle of the road and a little bridge and island by the Frensham Pond Hotel (3\*) which boasts a good restaurant.
- 6 Turn **right** at a T-junction of roads and soon take a marked footpath on the **right**, returning to the waterside. Stay on this path more or less straight, with the lake on your right, all the way to a large hut that houses a snack bar, near a car park and amidst the first crowds that you will have encountered today. *There is a beach to the right which is popular for bathing and has a genuine seaside atmosphere. There are benches for picnics or bought food and drink.*



#### Leg 4: The Great Pond to the Little Pond, 2½ km=1½ miles

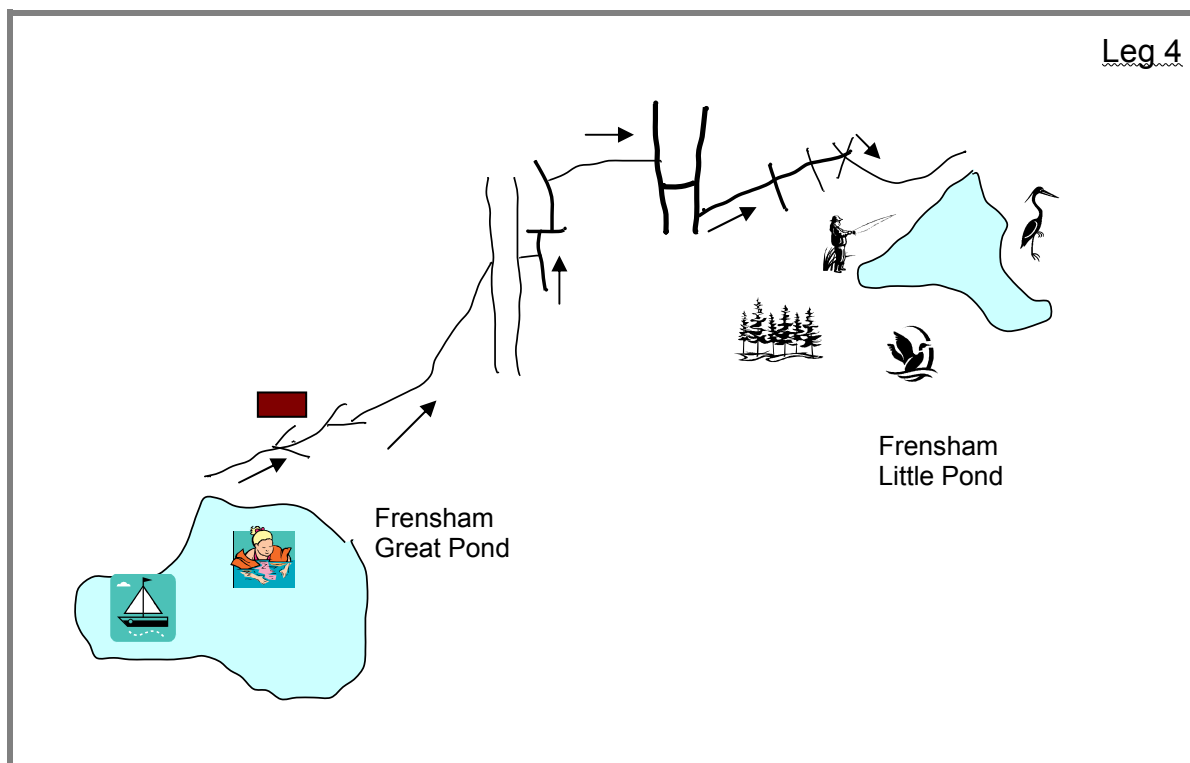
Begin here if you are doing the **Two Ponds** half-walk.

**See map overleaf.**

- 1 From the open area between the snack hut and the lake, facing the lake, turn **left** and shortly take a very sandy path ahead that has a long wooden railing on **each side**. Where the railings end, veer partially **right** across an area of grass and sand to a post with three coloured markers. Keep straight ahead at the post and shortly go through a gap in the hedge. Turn immediately **left** after the gap, on a path between gorse bushes, ignoring the path over on the

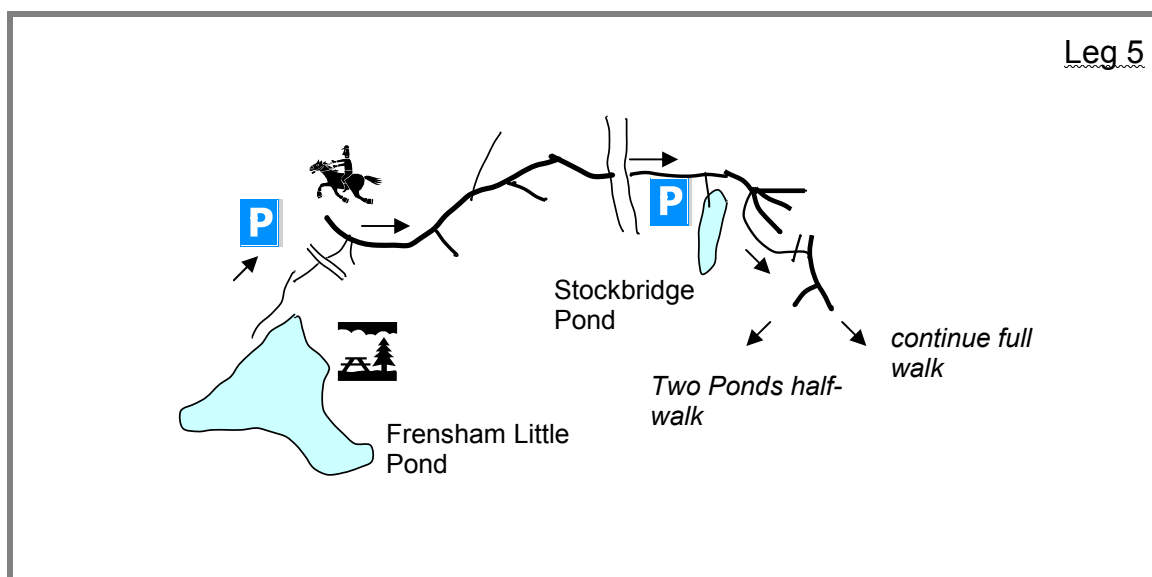
right with the notice *All Dogs This Way Please*. After a while, your stony path becomes tarmac. Keep straight on, gradually meeting the main road on the right.

- 2 Cross the road carefully over a bank to a very small path on the other side. Immediately turn **left** onto a wide sandy track running parallel to the main road. [Note the devastation from the fire of July 2010. Hopefully this will regenerate in time.] At a T-junction turn **right** and then immediately **left** on another track. In 100m where the main track wheels left around pines, turn **right** on a narrow path uphill. This path leads up to a broad track at the top of a ridge, a favourite promenade. Turn **right** here. There are railings here at a splendid viewpoint looking back over Frensham Great Pond.



- 3 In a few paces, turn **left** on a broad track and in a few more paces turn **right** on a second broad track running along the ridge. You now have a fine view on the other side, looking down to Frensham Little Pond. Turn sharp **left** downhill, heading for the Pond. At the bottom, go straight across a broad track and a little further on go straight across a narrow track. Next, at a junction of six paths, take the **second** path on the **right**, thus veering right from your original direction. This path leads down to the pleasant waterside.

## Leg 5: The Little Pond to Stockbridge Pond, 3km=2 miles



- 1 Continue along the bank with the Pond on your right. You eventually pass a waterside house. Keep to the right side of a grassy area and reach a road. Go straight over on a narrow unmarked path opposite. This path veers left twice and comes to a T-junction with a wide straight track. This track has red arrows and a stern notice about litter. It is an ancient byway used by horses, cycles and walkers. Turn **right** on the track. You now follow this excellent route for some distance. It runs up and down over dips and crosses a ford, where you have the use of a little bridge. Avoid a marked bridleway on the right. Soon there is a footpath branching off left.

**Decision Point.** If you would like a short diversion to visit the River Wey and the delightful village of Tilford, then go to the end of this text, resuming at stage [3](#) – highly recommended if this is the only opportunity for a visit. Otherwise continue straight on with the next stage.

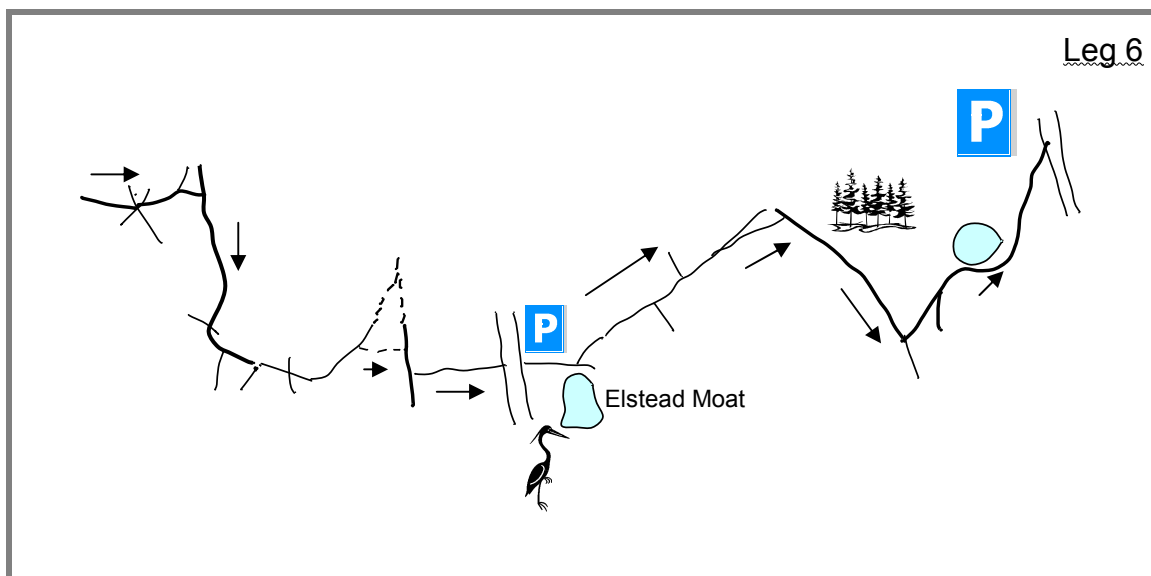
- 2 Continuing on the track, ignore a bridleway forking right and eventually reach a T-junction. Turn **right** here, reaching a road. Cross the road beside a car park.
- 3 Continue straight ahead on the stony track. *Crooksbury Hill is visible on your left.* Eventually you pass Stockbridge Pond on the right. Ignore a path on the right at the head of the pond and stay on the track, curving right past a metal gate. Ahead of you are three wide sunken paths, like three prongs of a fork.
- 4 Choose the **rightmost** of the three paths, but only briefly. In just 15m turn **right** on a path that runs to the right of a steep bank (not the path up the bank). Follow this distinct, rather winding, path through pines and in 150m go over a crossing path. At a T-junction with a wide track, turn **right**. After 20m you begin to emerge from the pines and meet a fork.

**Decision Point.** You have reached the centre of the figure-of-eight. If you are doing the *Two Ponds* walk, go to the end of this text and take the **Kettlebury South** shortcut. Otherwise, continue with the next leg.

## Leg 6: Stockbridge Pond to Elstead Road 7km=4 miles

See map overleaf.

- 1 Fork **left**, staying on the main path. You are now back on the open moorland of Hankley Common. Yagden Hill is visible ahead right. At a six-path crossing go straight on. At the next junction, veer **left** with the main track and stay with it as it wheels **right**. In about 70m, continue ahead on a straight sandy track going slightly uphill, ignoring a track that wheels left.
- 2 Later, at a major junction of paths, keep straight ahead. In about 50m, take the **left** fork, going over a pine-topped hill under power lines. As the path descends, you reach a 3-way junction. Turn **left**, avoiding the path that curves away right. Stay close to the tree-line, ignoring a path coming in from the left and another shortly forking off right into trees, and turn **left** at the next T-junction, beside another pinewood.



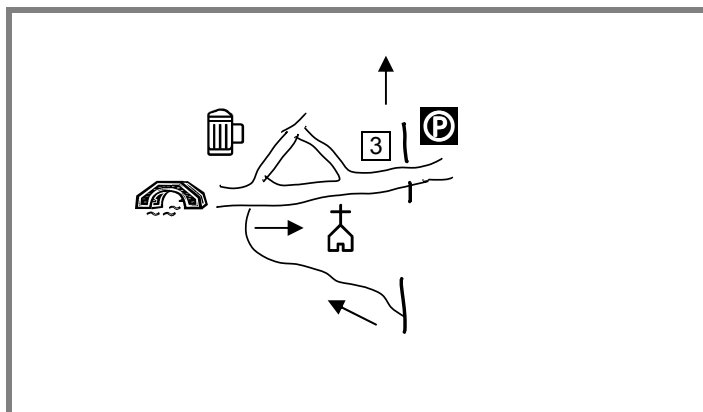
The *Three Commons* half-walk re-joins at this point

- 3 Go between some posts by a metal gate onto a fenced path. The orthodox route is onward to the next junction and then sharp right, but there is a shortcut: **Immediately** after the gate, turn **right** off the track into the trees. The path, if there is one, is very indistinct but all you need to do is keep within sight of the garden fences on your right, taking any easy route between the bushes and pine trees. Eventually you reach a drive. Turn **right** here, thus ending the shortcut. On reaching the imposing iron gates of Elstead Manor, turn **left** on a marked footpath. This path goes over a bridge over a marshy stream and between some mysterious iron gates and reaches the main road opposite Elstead Moat.
- 4 Cross the main road and go through the car park of the Elstead Moat Nature Reserve. Go forward past a noticeboard with the pond on your right, with posts marking the *Heath Trail*. In about 50m, with the pond still on your right, take the **left** fork on a broad path, thus prematurely leaving the Heath Trail. The path joins a path coming from the right under wires and continues over a marshy area. Later there is a board walk over the marsh giving you the chance to view dragonflies. You go past brideways on the right and then on the left after entering a section darkened by tall

pinetrees. Soon, where the path splits, keep **right** alongside a bank. Finally, you reach a T-junction with a wide track.

- 5 Turn **right** on this comfortable wide track and stay on it as it curves gently right. You follow this track for some distance across the beautiful Elstead & Ockley Commons until eventually you reach overhead power lines. Turn **left** here with the main track, quickly crossing another bridleway. You soon reach the turnoff point of the outward journey. Keep straight on along the surfaced track, eventually reaching the car parking area of the start of the walk.

### Diversion to Tilford



This is the optional diversion mentioned in Leg 5, not long after the Little Pond. It gives you a welcome relief from the austere landscape and the opportunity for refreshments.

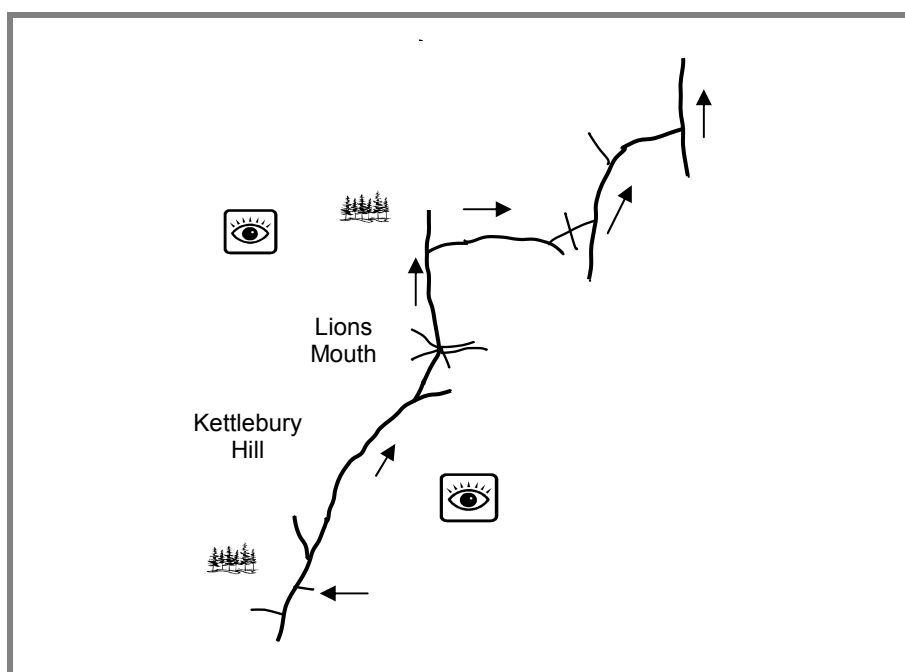
Take the footpath branching off **left**. This leads down through pleasant woodland, comes close to the river Wey, becomes fenced and passes between tall garden hedges before a final left-right zig-zag to the road at Tilford. The bridge is just on the left. *Although you do not cross it, it is worth having a look at the bridge, built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the monks of Waverley Abbey. The parallel new bridge was built to take the traffic.* Turn **right** to Tilford Green. *The Barley Mow on the Green is an excellent traditional pub. Note the comical sign. There is often a cricket match in progress if you come on a summer weekend. The shallow river basin here is popular with young families who love to dabble in the water. There is a foodstore past the pub and over the other bridge but it is closed Saturday pm and Sunday.* To rejoin the walk, keep right on the main road by the Green, signposted *Churt, Thursley, Hindhead*, and go past the church on the right. There is a footpath running parallel to the road beside a field on the left. Soon you come to a wide track and a car park on the left. Turn **left** on the track and resume at stage 3 of Leg 5.

## Kettlebury North, 2½ km=1½ miles

### See map overleaf.

Take this shortcut if you are doing only the *Three Commons* half-walk. It takes you on a shortcut from Kettlebury Hill to pick up the end of the return leg back to Elstead Common.

Turn **right** on the broad path at the top of Kettlebury Hill. After some distance you reach a major fork in the track by a post with blue arrows in the middle. Take the **right** fork. After more walking you reach a junction of paths with a line of wooden stumps across your path ahead. Take a track forking **left** downhill. This leads to a multiple junction in a sandy area known as the *Lion's Mouth*. Continue straight ahead through the stumps uphill on a sandy track.



At the top, stay on the high path for 100m and take a track forking **right**. At the bottom, where the track bends right, leave it by continuing straight ahead on a narrower track. Cross a sandy track and join a track coming in from the right. At a fork, keep **right**, staying close to the woods on your right. Follow the path as it curves right and, at a post marked 108 by the tree line, turn **left** on the main path. Ahead of you are some posts by a metal gate.

You walk now continues from Leg 6 stage 3.

## Kettlebury South, 3km=2 miles

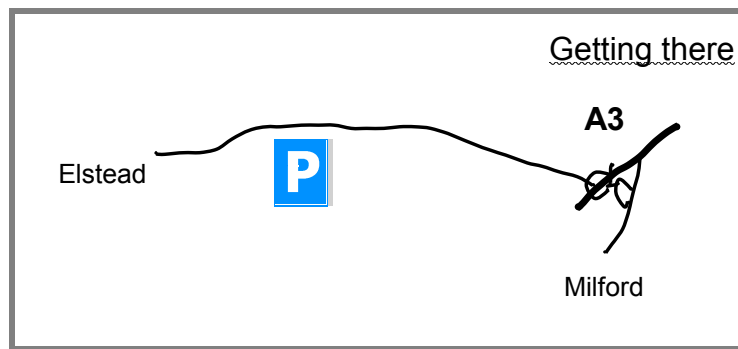
### See map overleaf.

Take this shortcut if you are doing only the *Two Ponds* half-walk. It takes you on a shortcut from the point where you re-enter the open heath after Stockbridge Pond to Kettlebury Hill to pick up the end of the return leg back to The Great Pond.

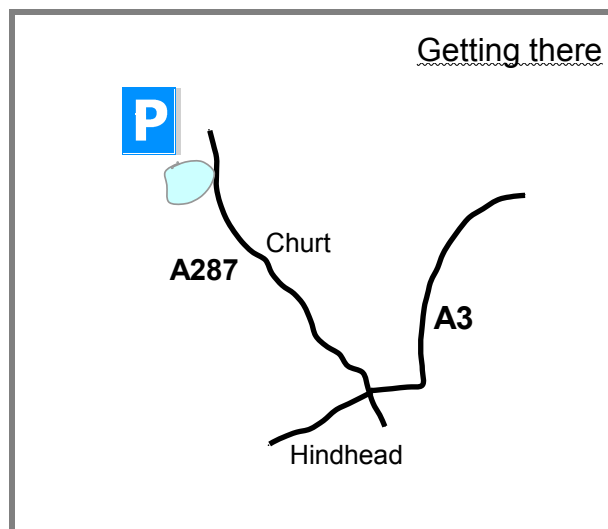


## Getting there

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To get to the small car park off the B3001 near Elstead, if coming from the north, take the A3 through Guildford and later turn off at the signpost for *Milford*, *Haslemere*, *Petworth*. Almost immediately, at the large roundabout, take the third exit, signposted *Guildford*, *London* and, at the next roundabout, take the first exit signposted *Elstead*. Follow this road for about 1 mile (1.5km). Soon after the road enters woodland, look out for an unmarked car parking area on the left, just after a pond, in front of a gate. It is about ½ mile (1km) before the centre of Elstead. If the car park is full, there is room for one or two cars beside the road.



To get to the Frensham Great Pond car park, take the A3 to Hindhead and then the A287 north signposted *Farnham*. The car park is about 6km (4 miles) on the left.

Alternative car parks are at Stockbridge Pond just outside Tilbury and at the Elstead Moat Nature Reserve.

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