Fancy Free Walks

point your feet on a new path

Farley Heath, Peaslake, Albury Heath

Distance: 13 km=8 miles or 8½ km=5½ miles easy walking

Region: Surrey Date written: 12-mar-2017

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Refreshments: Little London, Peaslake

Map: Explorer 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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Heath, riding centre, country byways, views, woodland, village, bluebells

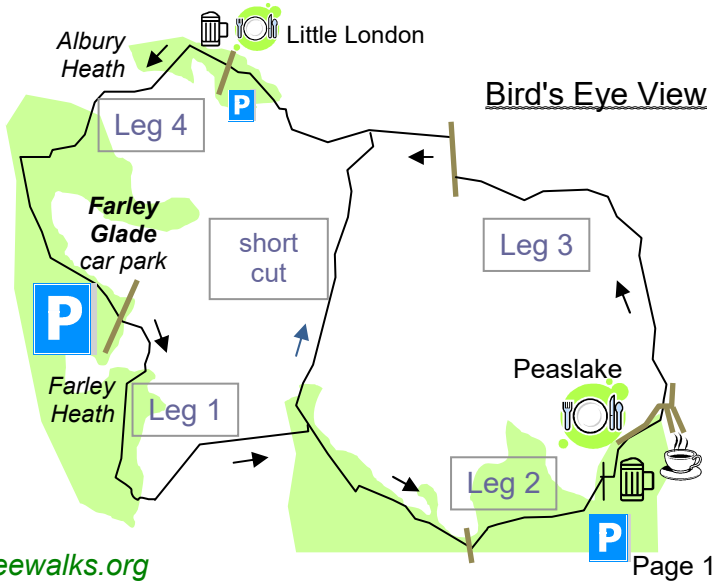
In Brief

This walk shows you everything about the inexhaustible variety of the Surrey countryside. Many of these paths will be unfamiliar to even the most experienced Surrey ramblers, yet they have a matchless beauty which never flags throughout the route. You visit three heaths (Albury, Farley and Blackheath) and two great forests (Winterfold and the Hurtwood). In between, you visit horse riding land and quite lovely open country with unexpected turns, country houses and great views.

A short cut is available, reducing the walk to 8½ km=5½ miles, but it misses the best woodland, a charming village and some delightful views. (By reversing the short cut, you could do the eastern half as a separate walk.)

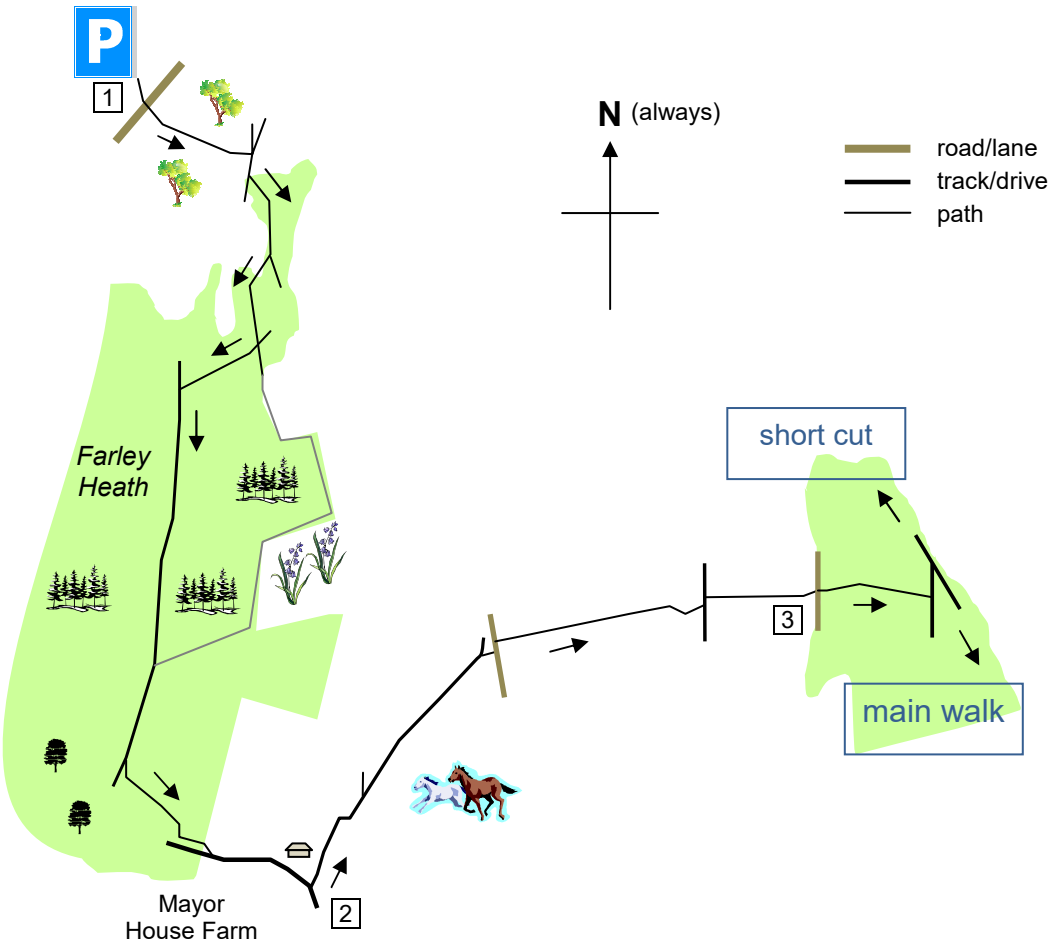
This is mostly non-agricultural land, so there are very few nettles or brambles along the route. Most paths are sandy although in the wetter months you will find one or two damp patches in the woods, but the unfenced paths usually provide a bypass. So boots are always recommended. This walk should be fine for your dog too.

The walk begins at the **Farley Glade** car park (Hurtwood Control No. 15), about 600m=650 yds south west of the village of Farley Green in Surrey. This car park is just off the Farley Heath Road. *Don't* confuse it with the much larger *Farley Heath* car park (Hurtwood Control No. 8) which is another ½ km = 550 yds further along the road. The postcode for Farley Green is **GU5 9DN**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Farley Glade to Ponds Lane 2½ km=1½ miles



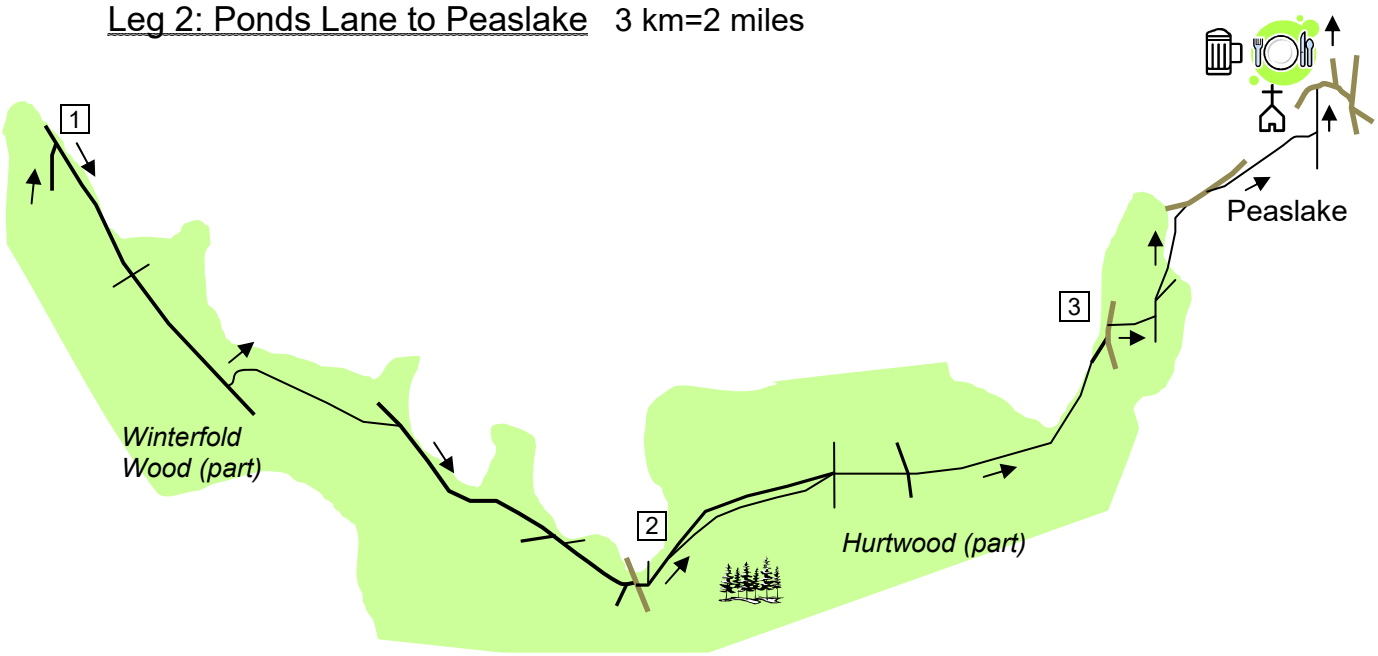
1 Beginning at the Farley Glade car park, go out to the road and cross straight over to a narrow path on the other side, leading across the heath. In 150m or so, your path is joined by a couple of minor paths from the left as it turns **right**. In just 20m, fork **left** on a narrower path bearing a sign *Footpath Only* (but you will notice many hoof prints along the way!). Ignore side paths, keeping to the **right** of a plantation of firs. About 300m from that last right turn, as the trees allow you a closer view of the green meadow on your left, you meet a diagonally crossing path. Veer **right** on this crossing path, keeping to the right of the conifers and thereby avoiding a path straight ahead into trees over a bank. (In the spring season, the path ahead leads to an attractive bluebell walk along the edge of the meadow and pinewoods, marked in faint lines on the mini-map.) In 120m, at a marker post with a yellow arrow, veer **left** at a junction on a sandy path running between conifer plantations. In 200m or so, ignore a path on the left and, in another 250m, ignore another path on your left by an anti-horse barrier. In another 100m, your path forks. Take the **left** fork, following the yellow arrow. Soon you approach a tarmac drive. Just before the drive, turn **left** on a parallel path which soon joins the drive, taking you to a cluster of farm buildings. *This is Mayor House Farm, a huge livery yard and riding centre with fifteen immaculate stables and parcelled grazing land.*

2 Immediately after a pond and the white farmhouse, turn **left** through the main stable yard. *There will always be a bustle of activity here as riders prepare or dismount and you may have to weave your way between visiting Land Rovers.* Continue ahead past a very inventive and colourful showjumping arena and immediately fork **right** on a track leading diagonally across the middle of the farmland, passing between various paddocks. In 250m, where the track suddenly turns left, **leave** the track to continue a short distance across the grass to a very awkward stile, taking you steeply down to a sunken track. Cross straight over, up a steep bank and over a stile, and continue straight ahead between a large lawn and a meadow. Your path finally zigzags past the garden and cottage of Shophouse Farm and, via a stile, to a tarmac lane.

3 Turn **left** on the lane and, almost immediately, **right** over a stile on a path between pastures. You emerge through a gap in a broken stile onto another wide track. Cross straight over and keep right on a dirt drive leading past some chalets. Keep ahead by a yellow arrow on a narrow path leading downhill, aided by steps. You come over a 2-plank bridge into an open area with a wide crossing path leading into the woods of Winterfold on your right with a stone cottage up ahead. Turn **left** on this path to reach a 3-way junction in 30m.

Decision point. If you are doing the shorter 8½ km=5½ mile walk, omitting Peaslake, skip to near the end of this guide and do the section called **Ponds Lane Amble**. Otherwise …

Leg 2: Ponds Lane to Peaslake 3 km=2 miles



1 Turn sharp **right** at the junction, passing the cottage on your right, and follow the wide path ahead with a sloping meadow on your left. In 200m, opposite a house on your left, you meet a rather precipitous crossing path with a marker post. Ignore this crossing and continue ahead. Your path starts to rise by a drainage channel and then descends again to run level. Just 50m later, you will notice a wooden barrier on your left, Most of the barrier is lying on the ground (2017) but there is a yellow arrow on the remaining part. Turn **left** here on a narrower path which curves right and rises gradually. In late spring, the bluebells here are at their most spectacular. After 300m, at the end of a climb, you meet a tarmac drive. Turn **right** on

the level drive, passing a splendid entrance gate and a tiny cottage. After 300m or so along this driveway, a signed bridleway joins you from the right. Ignore a footpath on the left here and stay on the drive which continues 100m, meets another bridleway and bends left to meet a road.

2 Cross straight over the road to a track opposite, ignoring some steps on your left. The track quickly enters the wide forest of the Hurtwood. Your route is always straight ahead, without drifting into any of the large private properties on your left, but it is best to take a **right** fork as soon as you enter the forest. This narrow path runs parallel to the track on your left, but it is generally pleasanter and arguably more mud-free. Either way, you come down to a valley bottom with a marker post. Ignore a yellow arrow and footpath on your left here and follow the stony track ahead uphill. (It's best to use the rooty path along the bank on the left. For most of the following route you will find a drier parallel path that keeps you out of any mud.) At a wide crossing path, go straight over regardless. Your path runs along the left-hand edge of the wood, close to a large white building, *Peaslake House*, once a mental asylum, now one of the boarding houses of Hurtwood House school. Keep left to emerge on a driveway coming from the house and hence out to a road near Peaslake.

3 Turn **left** on the road for 15m and go **right** on a narrow path down into woodland. In 50m, you meet a steeply descending path. Turn **left** on it and, in 20m, fork **left** to reach the Hurtwood Walking Bottom Car Park 2, an alternate start, by a tempting bench seat. Turn **left** through the car park and keep right to veer **right** on the road. Immediately fork **right** on a path that runs parallel to the road. This path rises high above the road to a vantage point near the church where you have a view of the entire village. Turn **left** on a tarmac drive to reach the village centre opposite the Hurtwood Inn.

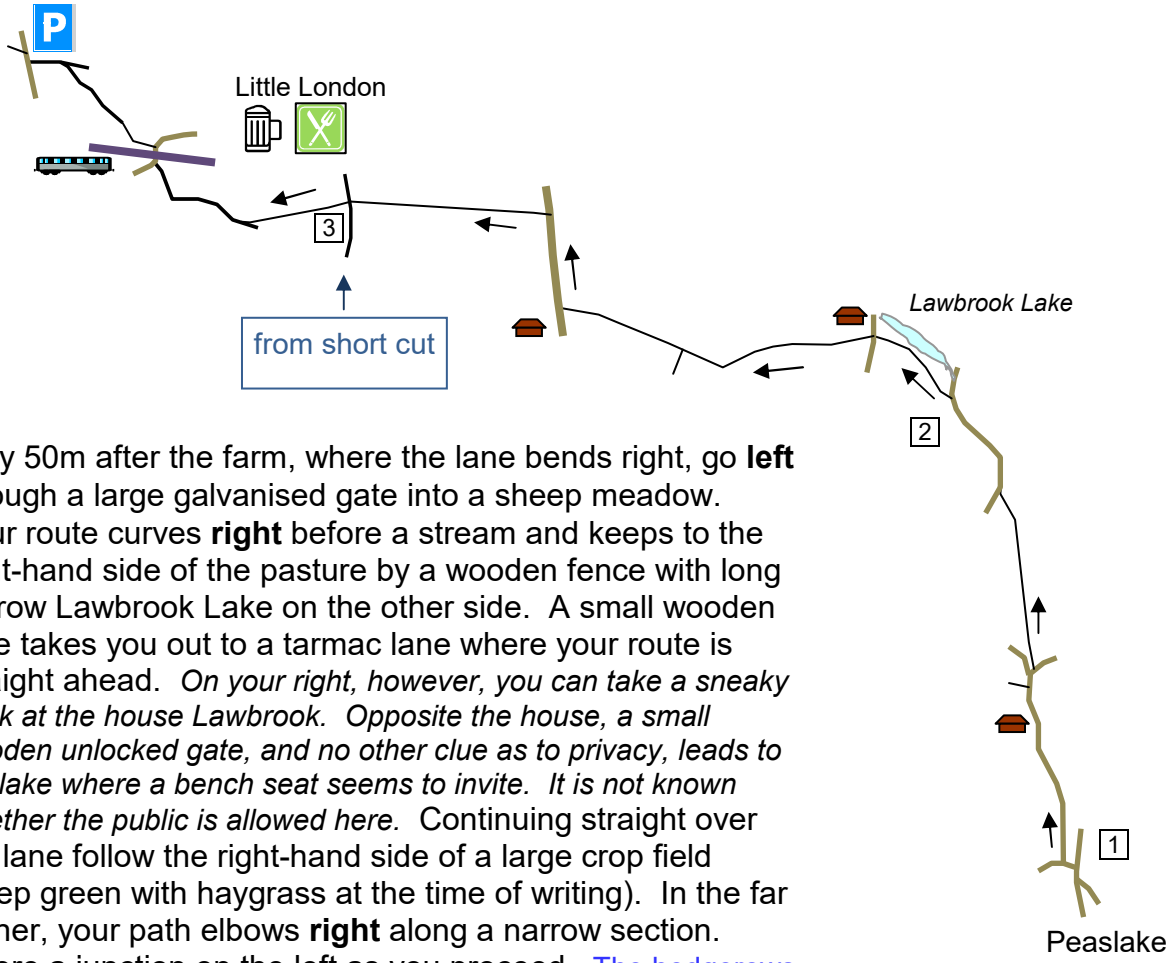
The Hurtwood Inn is run by Italians Robi and Lorenzo who imported some more Italian staff to run this perfectly-sited large restaurant and bar. There's an extensive pub menu offering bruschetta and pizza, probably enough for ramblers who might have too little time to do justice to the rather pricey à-la-carte menu of Venetian standards. The hotel is part of the same building but apparently run as a separate business. In fact it is hard to imagine a better weekend than one spent doing this walk plus the "Holmbury and Pitch Hill" walk with an overnight stay here.

Apart from at weekends when mountain bikers swarm, Peaslake is one of Surrey's quietest villages. The village is spread out, with only a small cluster of houses in the centre. The name comes from the source nearby, originally called "Pise Lacu". The local Peaslake Village Stores also serves tea and coffee, and excellent sausage rolls.

Leg 3: Peaslake to Albury Heath 4 km=2½ miles

1 **See the mini-map overleaf.** Take the minor road, Pond Lane, which runs at the side of the *Hurtwood Inn*, passing a car park on your left and some houses, before the road curves uphill and comes out beside a large sheep field opposite the stunning Georgian *Hazel Hall*. Ignore a footpath on your left and continue a little further to where the road divides with Burchets Hollow on the right. Here, go dead straight across through a wooden swing-gate and take a footpath down the centre of the field. *You immediately have one of the best views of the North Downs with the mound of St Martha's hill on the far left, stretching in a line to the east. Lawbrook and*

Cotterells Farm (both on your route) are just to the left. At the bottom of the field, your path veers left by a line of trees, then right, coming down past a large metal gate to a tarmac lane. Veer **right** to join the lane, immediately avoiding a footpath on your right, passing Oak Farm on your left.

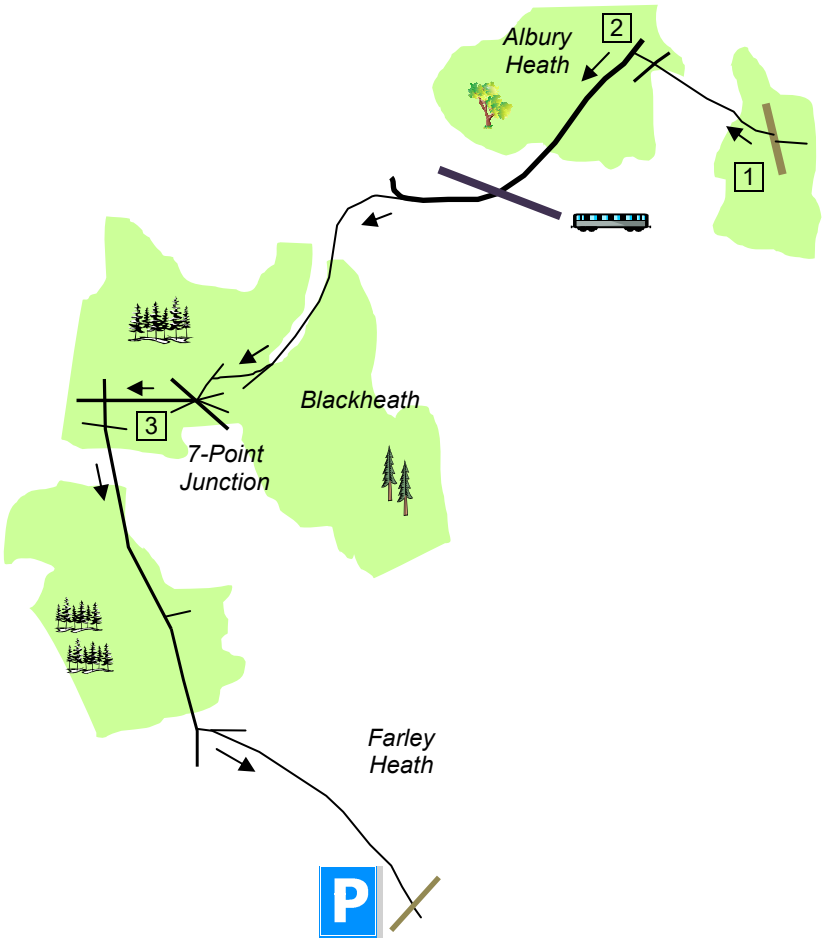


2 Only 50m after the farm, where the lane bends right, go **left** through a large galvanised gate into a sheep meadow. Your route curves **right** before a stream and keeps to the right-hand side of the pasture by a wooden fence with long narrow Lawbrook Lake on the other side. A small wooden gate takes you out to a tarmac lane where your route is straight ahead. *On your right, however, you can take a sneaky peek at the house Lawbrook. Opposite the house, a small wooden unlocked gate, and no other clue as to privacy, leads to the lake where a bench seat seems to invite. It is not known whether the public is allowed here.* Continuing straight over the lane follow the right-hand side of a large crop field (deep green with haygrass at the time of writing). In the far corner, your path elbows **right** along a narrow section. Ignore a junction on the left as you proceed. The hedgerows here resound with birdsong in spring. The path leads down to a road (Hound House) with *Cotterells House* just on your left. Turn **right** on the road and follow it past several farm buildings and rustic dwellings. Just after the last building (a black wooden barn), go **left** through a small wooden gate beside a large one into a pasture. Keep straight ahead, following the line of the slightly higher ground. The cattle here are of the gentle belted Galloway breed. Albury Heath is in view ahead. At the far side, go through a small wooden gate, cross over a wide track and take a narrow path straight ahead.

The Ponds Lane Amble short cut re-joins the main walk here.

3 Your path follows a wall on your right and leads over a stile to the drive coming from Ponds Farm. *The little dovecotes on your left are home to a flock of white doves.* In nearly ½ km, this drive (Ponds Lane) leads out to a road, Brook Lane, near a railway bridge. Turn **right** under the bridge and immediately **left** at a fingerpost on a narrow footpath. However, by continuing a short distance along the road, Little London, you will reach the *William IV*, a picturesque country pub with a memorable atmosphere. The path winds its way up onto Albury Heath. Keep straight ahead on a dirt drive, passing a side path and a brick shed on your right. At a T-junction, turn **left** on a wide track, passing several car parking spaces (alternate starting point).

Leg 4: Albury Heath to Farley Glade 3½ km=2 miles



1 Follow the track out to a road. Turn **right** on the road for just 5m and then **left** on a narrow path across Albury Heath. Your path becomes a sandy path across the open heath with wide views, often populated by sporting events. *Over on your right, the wooden sculpture is "An Image of Albury" by Friedel Buecking.* Your path goes over a crossing path opposite the sculpture, enters a birch wood and meets a wide driveway. Cross straight over the driveway onto a narrow path (*not* the sunken path at a sharp angle further left). This winding path, marked by numerous hoof prints, leads in only 30m to a tarmac drive. Turn **left** on the drive.

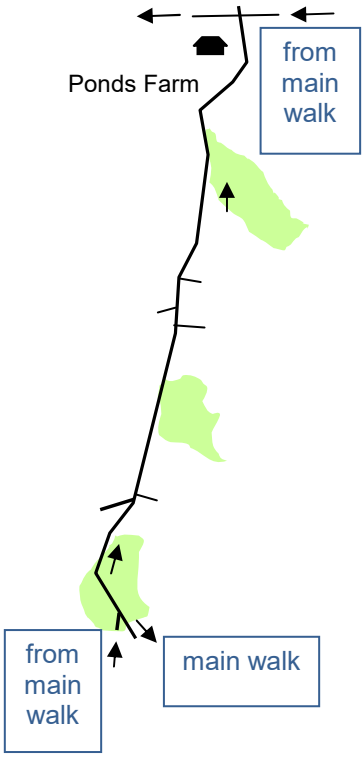
2 The drive goes down a deep cutting, under a high railway arch, and out into open country with views of Blackheath. Where the drive bends right towards Ford Farm and the old cress beds, leave it by continuing straight ahead on a sandy path, going over a lively stream. The path leads up between pines with bluebells much in evidence in late spring. (You can take a dry parallel path up a bank on the left but you need to be careful to re-join the path at the next junction to avoid curving away to the left.) At a marker post with a blue arrow, **leave** the muddy sunken path by diverting **right** up a bank and follow a dry path which runs in the same general direction as the sunken path but later curves away to the right and meets a track. Turn **left** on the track, quickly arriving at a well-known spot on Blackheath called the **seven-point junction**. (Your original sunken path is immediately on your left.)

3 Avoid the first very wide track on your right and take the **second** wide track on your **right**. Follow the track for more than 150m to come out into a wide open space (cleared of alien trees and de-rooted in 2016-7). Immediately turn **left** on a wide crossing track which runs along the edge of the cleared area. In 50m your track crosses another wide track by a marker post and then crosses several minor paths in a particularly beautiful section of the heath. You are now on a very distinct sandy horse track with swathes of mossy green on the sides. The track now sinks down, with a more comfortable high path on your left. You cross a rather muddy area with *Lipscombe Cottage* visible across a small meadow on your left. (There is a drier path on the right.) Finally, almost 700m since you joined this track, you meet a wide crossing path. Turn **left** here and immediately take the **right** fork, a wide sandy straight horse path, gently rising. The deep sand may be a little uncomfortable but it is relatively dry. In 100m you go over a crossing path under wires, then another 200m or so later. You come over a diagonal horse path soon after. Finally, after another 150m, you reach the Farley Glade car park where the walk began.

Ponds Lane Amble 2 km=1¼ miles

Follow this section if you are doing the shorter 8½ km=5½ mile walk, omitting Peaslake.

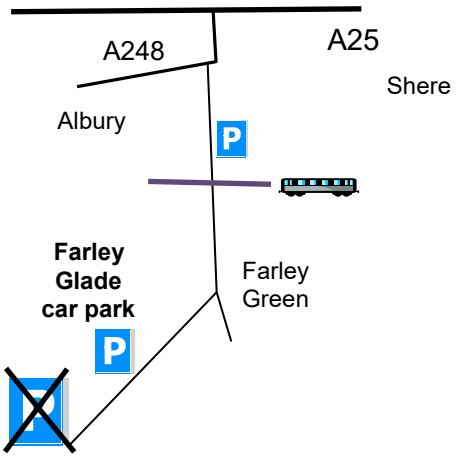
Keep straight on at the 3-way junction. After 150m, at a marker post, fork **right** on a narrower path. This path meets the main track again near the entrance to Lockhurst Hatch Farm. Keep straight ahead, avoiding the farm on your right. You now have a very straightforward saunter along this wide byway, a historic cross-country green trackway between the best of Surrey's farmland. On your left soon you pass *Cherryman's Brook*. Where the surfaced track bends off to your right, keep straight on past a heavy metal barrier. Ignore a stile on your left and several footpaths on your right, staying on this easy track all the way (about 1½ km) to Ponds Farm which is unmissable on your left. Just after the farmyard, you meet a crossing path with a small wooden gate on your right. Turn **left** on this narrow footpath.



You have re-joined the main walk. Resume it now at section 3 of Leg 3.

Getting there

By car: **Farley Glade** car park 15 is reached from the A25 Shere Road by turning off as for *Albury* onto the A248. In 500m, at a bend, turn **left** in the direction *Albury Heath, Farley Green*. In 2½ km, at the village of Farley Green, take the **right** fork, the major road. The Farley Glade car park is another 600m=650 yds on the right. If you discover a huge car park on your right, you have come too far and need to backtrack ½ km=550 yds.



Other possible starts are: (a) **Albury Heath**, just off New Road, unmarked on the left (if coming from the north), 230m=250 yds before the railway crossing, nearest postcode **GU5 9DB** (b) Peaslake Hurtwood Control car park 2 (Walking Bottom), nearest postcode **GU5 9RR**, grid ref TQ 083 446, just outside the village (c) Peaslake village car park, behind the *Hurtwood Inn*, postcode **GU5 9RR**.

By bus/train: bus 25 from Guildford runs to Peaslake, Mon-Fri. Check the timetables.

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