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## Friday Street, Coldharbour, Leith Hill

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Distance: 10½ km=6½ miles

easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 24-apr-2009

Author: Schwebefuss

Date revised: 27-sep-2014

Refreshments: Coldharbour, Leith Hill, Friday Street

Last update: 15-aug-2017

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Woodland, water meadows, high hills, lake, tower, pub*

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### In Brief

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This is an unforgettable walk from a tranquil lake to the highest of the Surrey hills, taking in water meadows, magical forest and an ancient track, perfect for all seasons. There are no nettles and good sensible shoes should be fine. There is one short but steep descent that can be tricky in wet conditions. This walk is ideal for your dog too.

The walk starts at the Friday Street car park, **postcode RH5 6JR**: see map and guide at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

This walk is also the start  
of the **Surrey Greensand Monster**.



### The Walk

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- See map overleaf.** From the car park, facing the road where you came in, go **right** and proceed along the narrow path that runs above the road by some railings and joins it after about 50m, reaching the lake shortly after. Leave the road here by turning **left** just before the lake down a tarmac track. This leads past a cottage that usually has jam and relishes for sale, over a ford with a little bridge and past picturesque Yew Tree Cottage with its scarecrow family, eventually reaching a crossing path before a gate. To the left is a beautiful old weir bridge with the Tillingbourne and water meadows on each side, but your route is **right** through a smart new kissing gate, up a steep path. Keep to the main path and, after some distance where it twists left, avoid all turnings off and "Private" signs. Where the wire fence on the left bends left, at the corner of a mature wood with a large meadow on your right, by a new 4-way fingerpost, keep straight on between the wood and the meadow, ignoring the main path that curves to the left. This path takes you through a wooden swing gate [2017: [broken off its mountings](#)] to a narrow lane. Cross straight over the lane through another wooden swing gate opposite and continue straight ahead on a grassy path that soon begins to descend.



- [2] Soon your path becomes narrower and winding. The descent now becomes very steep and you need to take very great care in wet or icy conditions. Follow the path over a stile, along the left-hand side of water meadows, across another stream and eventually up two steps to another stile onto a T-junction. Turn **left** (NB!) on a wide path. *This is part of the Greensand Way that runs from Haslemere to East Kent.* In about 100m turn **right** over a stile at a 3-way fingerpost [2017: missing] on a fenced path that runs up the right-hand side of a pasture. This leads up onto a very broad sandy trackway at the top of a ridge. Turn **right** on the trackway which is known as Wolvens Lane. (You can stay on the narrow winding path above the sunken track because it eventually merges with the track itself.)
- [3] You will be following this ancient trackway for about 2 km all the way to the village of Coldharbour. There are many turnings off which you ignore. After about 15 minutes' walk, you pass a junction with double signposts [2017: missing]. More than 100m after the junction, you pass a 2-way signpost [2017: missing]. (If you are tired of the sand, you can take the right fork, a much narrower path, which re-joins the main path later. Because of changes to this path, if you meet a T-junction in about 300m, turn **left** and **right** back on the

main path.) Just after half way there is a house *Wolven Cottage Stables* on your left. Stay on the main track, avoiding all side turnings. At *Coldharbour* you are greeted by a red phonebox, a pub and probably a bunch of cyclists.



*Coldharbour was long regarded with fear and superstition by the inhabitants of Dorking as a dark and dangerous habitat of smugglers. The Plough Inn (renovated in 2016) has a big garden in the back, offers accommodation and runs a good kitchen with a range of burgers and some of the best pub chips. (But Leith Hill tower, half an hour away, is ok for light snacks.) It has a good selection of real ales, including those from its own Leith Hill Brewery (currently named Tickety-Boo, Crooked Furrow, Beautiful South and Tallywhacker).*



*2016: The Plough has opened a little shop selling teas, proper coffee, warm very yummy sausage rolls and other bites.*

- 4 Turn immediately **right** uphill along an unmade road past some cottages on your left. Fork **right** after about 50m to avoid going into a private entrance. The road becomes a track and leads upwards towards Leith Hill. Ignore all footpaths leading off, staying on the main track. Half way up, there is a bench with fine views south for a welcome pause. Finally the trees on your left give way to a clearing, with a cricket pitch (the highest in Surrey) and pavilion ahead on your right. *There are views left here on a clear day to Gatwick Airport.* **Leave** the track here by forking **left** on a path across the grass. Follow this path into the woods and through a wooden barrier. There is a green-topped post here indicating that you are on the Heathland Trail Walk.
- 5 Follow these green-topped posts through woods for nearly 1 km. Basically, they lead you straight on, parallel to the edge of the hill, with good views to your left where the trees permit and soon a bench seat. There are one or two unexpected turns, so watch out for those posts – or you can simply keep to the edge of the hill. Eventually you see a sign for the Tower carved on the back of a sign for the car park. The walk now curves **right** on a much wider track, descends deep into the woods, and later reaches a deep hollow on your left. Leave the green-topped route here and instead follow the sign for the Tower, going **left** steeply uphill on a broad path frequented by daredevil cyclists, also part of the Greensand Way. (You can avoid the steep ascent by forking **right** at a blue marker post after 40m. You will soon see the tower on your left and can take any path in that direction.) In 100m or so you reach *Leith Hill Tower*.



This part of the **Surrey Greensand Monster** walk ends here.



*The tower was built in 1766 to raise the height of Leith Hill to a symbolic 1000 feet. It later fell into disuse until 1864 when the side-tower staircase was built and was fully restored by the National Trust in 1984. The café in the tower serves refreshments and nice homemade cakes. This was extended to **daily** opening (apart from Christmas Day) in 2013. You can ascend the tower where there is a view all round with miles of seeming wilderness.*

- 6 Continue in the same direction down a very broad path past an information board. **Careful!** you need to concentrate here so as not to miss the next turning. Only 30m after the board, you pass an orange-topped post. In another 80m, opposite a picnic table and some sculpture on your left, you pass a large fallen tree trunk on your right. Turn **right** here on a very obvious wide path into the woods. Keep to the **left**-hand side of a large space full of pines and sandhills, a maze of paths much used by mountain bikers. In about 120m there is a forest of tall straight conifers ahead to your left. Do

*not* follow the main path up into the forest of conifers. Instead, keeping the same general direction, zigzag a fraction **right-left**, on a broad sandy path running between bracken, with the forest of conifers immediately on your **left**. You will be following this path for about 1 km as it becomes stony and sandy again. In 650m, you meet a signpost at a crossing path: continue straight on. You finally come out to a road at a junction with a minor road on your right.

7 Cross the minor road and veer **right** on the major road, signposted *Abinger Common, Wotton*. Continue along the road for 70m and take a signposted, slightly hidden, footpath diagonally **right**. This path crosses a drive and takes you down through beautiful woodland. Follow it straight on for about 1 km where you reach a broken gate and the hamlet of Abinger Bottom.

8 The path is reinforced by a tarmac road coming from the right which it follows through the hamlet. Ignore footpaths on your left and right and shortly after them, just past the last house, take a broad path diagonally **right**. The path follows a magical route through more forest with wooden stepped bridges on your right. (You can take a higher path on the bank to the right for most of the way, also giving you a sight of the gurgling stream. When the path starts to descend over a fallen tree you immediately reach a fork, if you want to visit the *Stephen Langton* take the **left** fork, which takes you over a wooden stepped bridge to a T-junction, and turn **right** past a wooden gate. If you want to go directly to the pond, continue downwards veering slightly to the right.) After about 1 km you reach houses and a pub, the *Stefan Langton*. This pub is open all day at weekends and offers an impressive menu plus several real ales. *Stephen Langton* (c. 1150 – July 9, 1228) was Archbishop of Canterbury between 1207 and his death in 1228 and was a central figure in the dispute between King John of England and Pope Innocent III, which ultimately led to the issuing of *Magna Carta* in 1215. Keep straight on to reach the lake on your right and the road, familiar from the outward journey. Turn **left**, looking out for steps on your left that take you back to the car park where the walk began.



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## Getting there

By car: To get to Friday Street: go to the Dorking-Guildford (A25) road and, 3 miles=5 km west of Dorking, turn **south** on a road marked *Abinger Common, Friday Street, Leith Hill*. After passing houses on the right, going through a rather dramatic cutting, passing a road junction on the right, a footpath on the left and reaching a large house on the right, take an extremely sharp **left** turn signposted *Friday Street*. The signpost is somewhat hidden in the trees and this turn is very easy to miss. After about 400m, look out for the car park on the right, before the lake.

