



Greensand Hills from the South

Distance: 19 or 20 km=12 or 12½ miles moderate walking
with two shorter options of 13 km=8 miles each

Region: Surrey

Date written: 18-sep-2009

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Refreshments: Forest Green, Ewhurst

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Maps: Explorer 145 (Guildford) & 146 (Dorking) (*if required*)

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Hills, woodland, views, sudden vistas, fine houses

In Brief

This radiant circular walk takes you over the Greensand Hills (Pitch Hill and Holmbury Hill), then south to the villages on the edge of the Weald and back again. This walk involves several gradients as well as the distance but the fine views and the green forest and meadows are so gratifying that your legs will feel as light as a feather.

There is a short cut that can be taken in either direction to divide the walk into two shorter walks of 13 km=8 miles.



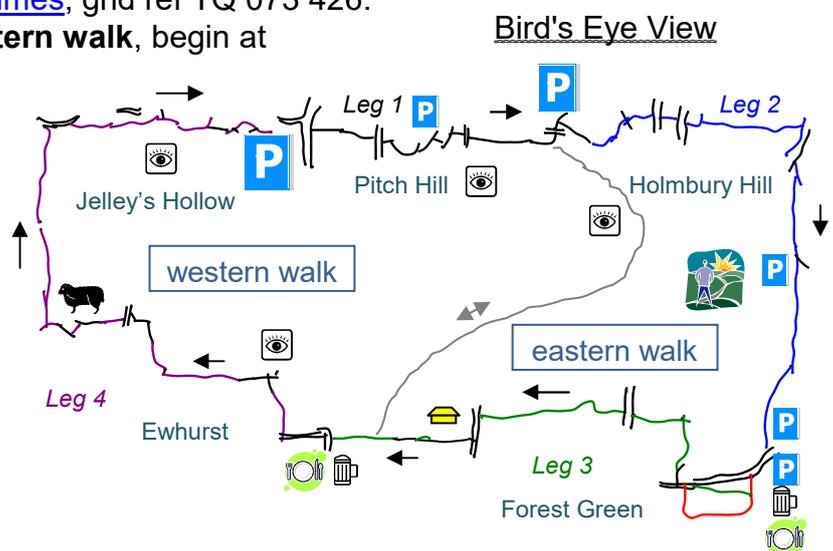
Boots are recommended because of the distance and the occasional muddy patch. There are no nettles but in high summer there will be some high undergrowth in a few places which can be damp after rain. The route seems fine for a dog too.

The **full walk** and the shorter **western walk** begin at the **Hurtwood Car Park 4** on Greensand Lane between Ewhurst Windmill and Reynards Hill, nearest postcode **GU6 7NJ**, www.w3w.co/shunted.waltz.times, grid ref TQ 073 426.

If you are doing the shorter **eastern walk**, begin at

Holmbury Hill (also known as Hurtwood Car Park No. 1), nearest postcode **GU6 7NT**, www.w3w.co/mole.soon.human, grid ref TQ 097 432, or in Forest Green. Another good starting point is the NT *Rhododendon Wood* car park off Tanhurst Lane (approx post-code **RH5 6LU**) (with an optional donation as 2017).

For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

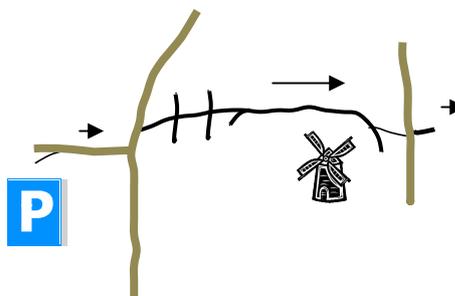


The Walk

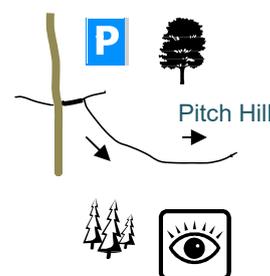
Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **eastern walk**, skip forward to **Leg 2**.

Leg 1: Winterfold to Holmbury Hill 4 km=2½ miles

- 1 From the Hurtwood Control car park, go out to the road, turn **right** along it for a few metres to a T-junction with another road. Cross the road to a track marked as a footpath and as part of the Greensand Way. The path goes over two crossing tracks and joins a track coming from a house on the right. Keep straight ahead, close to the properties on your right. A little later, your path runs close to Ewhurst Windmill on the right. *Ewhurst Windmill is now a converted private house.* Turn **right** on a tarmac track and in a few paces at *Four Winds* take a narrow path **left**, soon going down steps, to a driveway and a road.



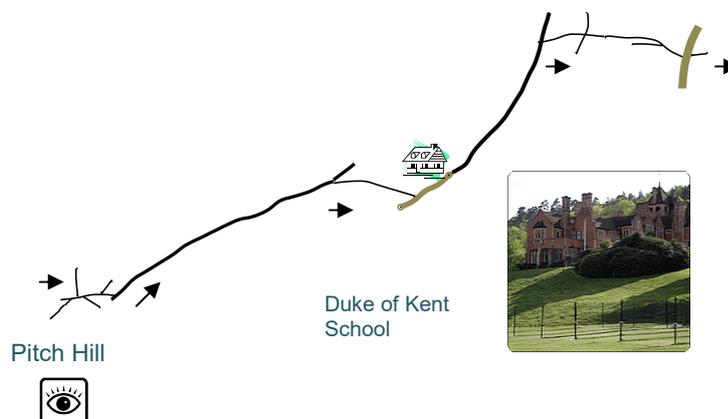
- 2 Cross the road, with Hurtwood Control car park No. 3 on your left, and turn immediately **right** on a track that rises rather steeply at first with a quarry (now disused and reclaimed by nature) on your left. Stay on this track on the edge of the hill. Eventually you come to the open area of Pitch Hill with its concrete pillars and seat. A quick diversion of 80m to the promontory gives you the best views.



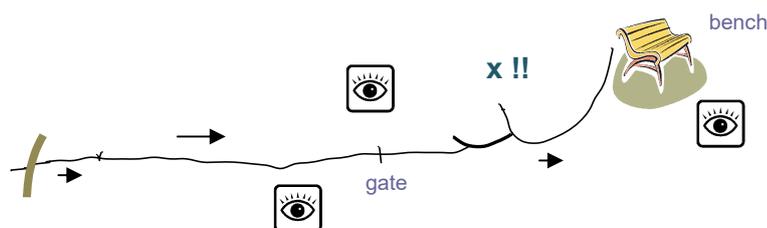
At 257m=843 feet, Pitch Hill (sometimes called Coneyhurst Hill) is the fifth highest point in Surrey and the views from here over the Sussex Weald are magnificent. Nearest on the right is Hascombe Hill with Gibbet Hill behind it; the long outline of Blackdown is to its left; Ewhurst is in the valley to the left.

- 3 After admiring the view, resume your original direction, going down a sandy track between posts and continuing alongside railings, always staying on the edge of the hill. You are joined by a path from the left. Look for the next metal seat on the right. About 50m after the seat, there is a junction with a blue marker [2014: gone?]. Fork **right** here downhill, still on the GW. At the bottom turn **left** on a tarmac drive past a house and continue past a single-bar barrier on a track. After about 100m there is a clear path on the right but this is not part of the GW and must be ignored. 250m after the house, turn **right** on a path marked with the

[2014:faded] GW sign. The path winds downhill and crosses another path whilst going down steps. Your path now descends steeply into the grounds of the Duke of Kent School. *This beautifully-sited school offers independent co-education from age 3 to GCSE.* The path joins the main driveway and exits to a road.



- 4 Continue straight over the road, a fraction left, on a signposted footpath between fences. The path crosses a (bypassable) stile and ascends between fields with a fine vista in all directions. At a field boundary it continues between larger fields. *On your left is Coverwood and its outbuildings and farm. Coverwood Lakes and Gardens are open several days in the year. The gardens are famous for their rhododendrons in late spring. The site also hosts several concerts and other events.* The path goes through another gate, labelled *The Mc Kinney Gate*, and is joined by a track from the left, passing a large metal gate. At a T-junction turn **right**, thus temporarily **leaving** the Greensand Way. This path leads round to an exquisite spot with a metal seat and one of the best views in the area. *The perfectly planted pines and the nearby green hillock combine with receding views of Ewhurst, the Weald and South Downs to frame a memorable picture.*



Continue to a road and turn **right**.

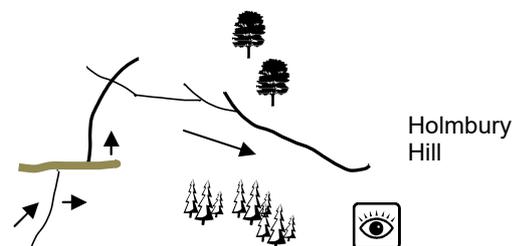
Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **western walk**, omitting Holmbury Hill and Forest Green, skip to near the end of this text and do the **School Run (South)**.

- 5 In 30m, turn **left** by a little car parking area on a recently widened, sandy bridleway uphill. The path shortly levels a bit and curves right under the trees and, about 100m from the road, reaches a narrow crossing path. Here, go up a bank on the **right** marked *wheelchair access* thus re-joining the GW.

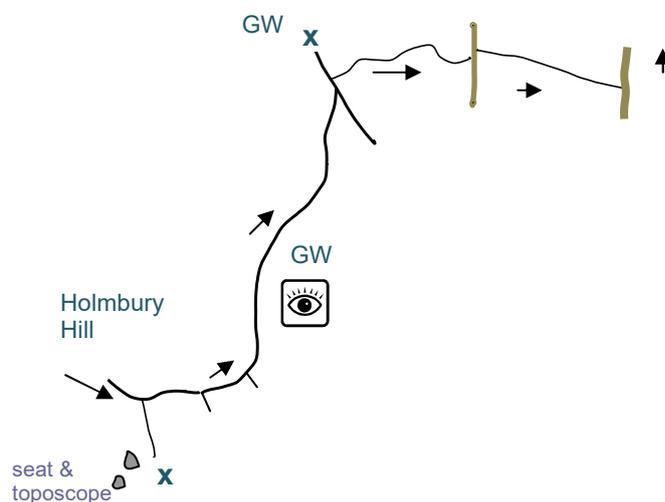
Leg 2: Holmbury Hill to Forest Green 5 km=3½ miles

If you are doing the shorter **eastern walk**, or if you are starting in the Holmbury Hill car park for any reason, begin as follows. Walking with the road on your right, go to the end of the car park to find a narrow path, marked as the Green-sand Way (GW), crossing over a deeply sunken path with steps on both sides.

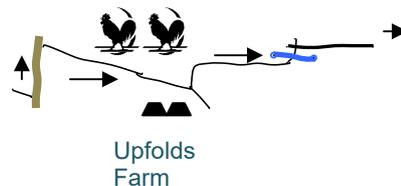
- 1 Your path crosses a stony circular track with benches on your right and twice goes through posts, joining a path coming from the left. Stay on the edge of the hill until you reach a wide sandy crossing path on the open area of Holmbury Hill. Your route will continue straight over the crossing path, veering a fraction **left**. But first you will want visit the round seat and toposcope on your right to enjoy the view. At 261m=857 feet, Holmbury Hill is the fourth highest point in Surrey. (See the walk "Holmbury and Pitch Hills" in this series.)



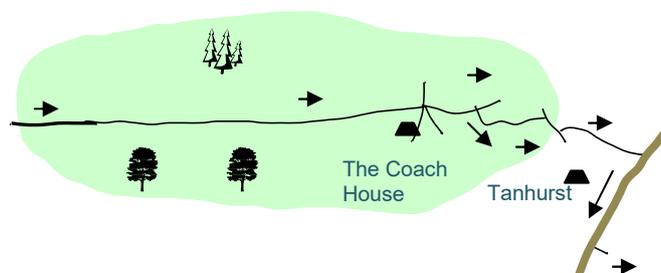
- 2 Continue straight over the wide crossing path, as stated, with the round seat on your right, on a descending sandy path, passing a post with a black and yellow "GW" symbol. Stay on the main level path, avoiding minor paths branching off on your right and keep straight on past a wooden barrier. In 100m your path bends left, runs straight, winds a bit, goes down a bank or two and up again. (Avoid a "GW" marker post pointing right here.) In another 200m or so, your path descends to another wooden barrier. 50m later, it reaches a waymarked 3-way junction. Keep straight ahead here, still on the GW. **But** in only 40m turn **right** on a narrow unsigned path. The path goes under wires and descends steeply following the wires to reach a road after 300m total. Cross the road over a stile on a footpath beside a garden meadow on the right, over a stout footbridge and, via a stile, out to a road. Turn **left** on the road.



- 3 In 80m turn **right** on a signposted driveway. You pass small fields leading to Upfolds Farm, usually with some fancy hens pecking away on the left. The bridleway signs direct you **left** and **right** around the fine old wooden farm buildings and onto a path with woods on the left and a field on your right. Eventually the path zigzags left-right over a bridge by two gates to continue on a wide track.

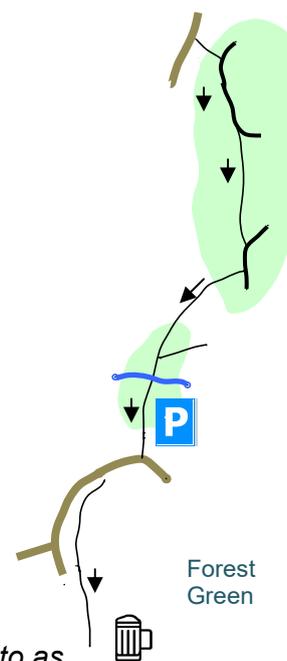


- 4 The track now ascends gently for about 500m through forest. Eventually you come to a major junction by *The Coach House*. Continue straight ahead uphill, but only for 30m. Turn **right** on a narrower path marked with an arrow and follow a very winding path. It bends to the left and turns sharply to the **right** (NB!) through woodland for some distance, finally reaching wooden steps. Go down the steps to a sunken track and turn **right**. In 50m, just before a garden of a house, turn **left** up more steps. The fenced path runs along the side of *Tanhurst* and eventually reaches a road. Turn sharp **right** on the road. In 150m or so, turn **left** at a sign for *Leith Hill Place*.



The house Leith Hill Place (not on the route) was built about 1600 and was the home of the Wedgwood family and the composer Vaughan Williams at various times. The woods and gardens are owned by the National Trust and are famous for their azaleas and rhododendrons. This walk only sees one corner of the estate which is worth another visit.

- 5 Go downhill on the path, passing one orange-topped post, and, at a junction with another orange-topped post, keep **straight ahead** on a narrower path through a wooden barrier, thus leaving the Woodland Trail. (Or you can *stay* on the Woodland Trail for a slightly longer but satisfying walk.) The path descends through another wooden barrier with a track joining from the left at a mauve-topped post. In another 40m, you come to another mauve-topped post. Turn **right** here on a beautiful grassy path. The path runs for about 300m to join another grassy path coming from the left and shortly goes over a wide wooden bridge. It then continues through woodland for another 250m and finally comes to a small parking area with a noticeboard (an alternative starting point) reaching a main road via a one-bar gate. Turn **right** along the road, past Collins Farm and shortly reaching Forest Green. Cross the road to the left-hand side and go ahead on the wide grass verge. In 100m, you reach the Parrot Inn.



Forest Green appears in the records from 1580 when it was referred to as "Folles Green" but the oldest surviving cottage, Tillies Cottage (see 1a below), dates from the 1400s. The Green itself is roughly triangular and covers approximately 10 hectares=26 acres. On the north side of the Green is the old Smithy. The Mill (see below) was acquired by Marylebone Grammar School in 1908 for summer adventures and the young visitors, known locally as the "Mill Boys", worked on many improvements.

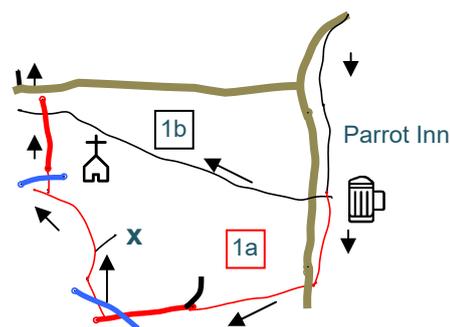
The Parrot Inn, about 300 years old, is now a notable gastropub. The pub has a number of real ales poured direct from casks on the counter. The restaurant is eclectic with a modern touch and it uses the home-grown produce in its dishes. Some walkers have found the service a bit gruff. Next to the Parrot is the Butcher's Hall and Country Grocer, a quality deli where you can pick out a very decent 3-course takeaway meal at a bargain price and sit outside at the tables to eat it. One speciality of theirs is "real mince" pies, i.e. old-fashioned generous sweet-and-savoury pies containing beef !

Leg 3: Forest Green to Ewhurst 5 km=3 miles or 5½ km=3½ miles

1a **The little circuit** (red lines on mini-map).

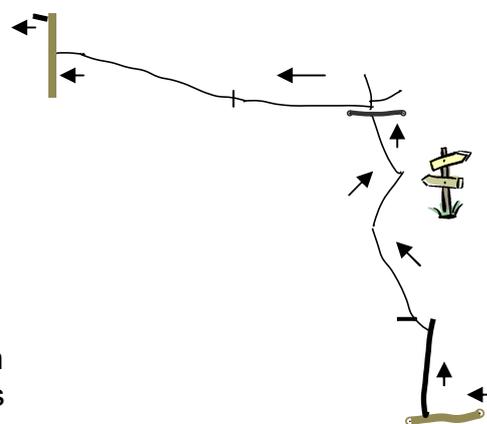
*This is an **optional loop**, slightly longer than the route straight over the green, below.*

Continue in the same direction from the *Parrot Inn* beside the road. Soon you pass *Tillies Cottage* on the left, still with its old slate roof. Continue until you pass the Old Police House on the right and take a signposted footpath on the **right** that leads to a stile into a meadow. Continue to another stile into the next meadow. Go across the centre to a stile in the hedge and bear **left** on a concrete drive. Cross a bridge and, *immediately* before a barn, turn **right** on a path that goes over a footbridge and over another stile into a sheep meadow. Keep to the right-hand side of the meadow and in 20m avoid a stile on the right. Continue for another 100m and cross the next stile **right**, in the corner. Go over a bridge, up a bank and along a drive which has a multitude of different tree species to the main road. Turn **left** on the road for a few metres.

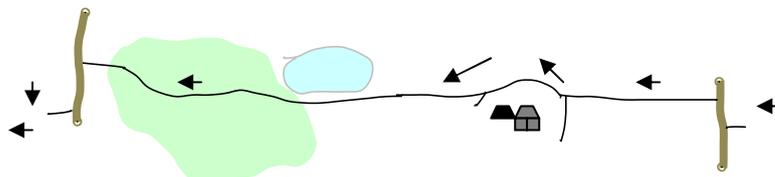


1b *This is a shorter option, avoiding stiles but also missing some attractive bridges.* (Same map as **1a**.) Turn **right** in front of the *Parrot Inn*, cross a minor road and take a path across the grass, in the direction of some cottages on the edge of the green. Keep in a dead straight line all the way, crossing several tracks and drives, gradually getting closer to the main road on the right. You pass on the left the interesting late Victorian church of the Holy Trinity. *The church was built by Charles and Christina Hensley as a memorial to their son who was born on Trinity Sunday. He was accidentally shot by his cousin while rabbit shooting in 1892.* Reach the roadside and soon ignore a driveway on the left marked as a footpath.

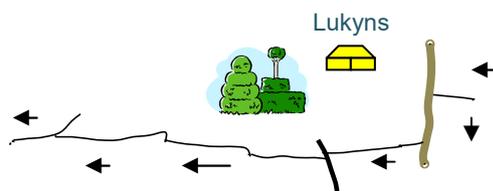
2 Cross the road and go down Mill Lane on the **right**. After a good 200m, opposite *Park Cottages*, just before the mill (now owned by the William Ellis School), fork **left** on a footpath. In 30m, avoid a track left leading to a farm and continue ahead. The path goes over a stile (or through the adjoining metal gate) into a meadow and runs along its right-hand side, bearing right at the end to a fingerpost at the corner. Here, veer **right** as indicated and continue to another fingerpost [hidden in the hedge]. Turn **left** here and head for the farm on a grooved farm track carved by the wheels of a tractor, through a gap (where a gate may have been in the past) to a fence with a 4-way fingerpost [Aug 2020: completely crumbled]. Cross over the stile here and turn immediately **left** along the left-hand side of the meadow. In the corner, go over a stile and continue straight across the centre of the next meadow, heading towards the buildings visible in the gap in the trees, to a metal gate and out, over a stile, to a road. Turn **right** on the road.



- 3 In just 30m, turn **left** on a driveway leading gently uphill to Tyndrum and Holmbury Farms. On reaching the farm buildings, veer **right** around them. The footpath curves left, passing on your right some new properties, joining a driveway to curve left downhill alongside a fence. You pass a small lake on the right (opposite some decrepit steps, unfortunately not a right of way) and after some distance reach a road. Turn **left** on the road.

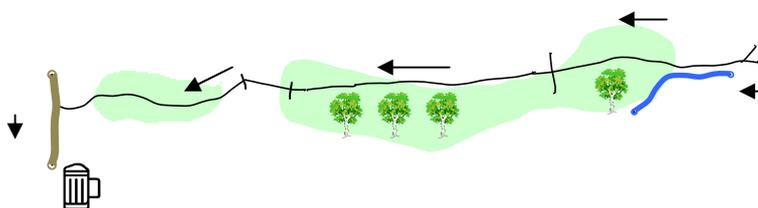


- 4 After 100m, turn **right** over a stile on a footpath passing some fine topiary with the house *Lukyns* and its lawn and gardens on the right. *Lukyns was the residence of Sir Kenneth Lee, the first and last of the Surrey branch of the Lee Baronetcy.* On reaching a small wooden gate, cross straight over a driveway, go through a gate by a duck pond on your right and along the edge of the meadow. The path goes over a stile in the corner and zigzags over a stile beside a metal gate on a path between fields. Later, the path zigzags again and gets narrower, eventually coming out to a junction of paths.



Decision point. If you are doing only the **eastern walk**, omitting Ewhurst and Pitch Hill, go to near the end of this text and do the **School Run (North)**.

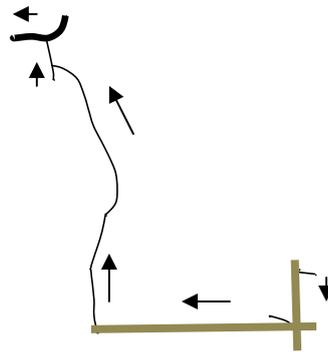
- 5 Go straight ahead at the junction, over a concrete bridge, along a grassy path between a stream on your left and a fence and continue ahead finally through a gate into woodland. After some distance in woodland, the path comes to a junction of paths, where it continues ahead, and runs close to a field on the right. Soon, ignore a footpath right going between fields. The path then runs downhill through a modern kissing-gate, over a footbridge and along the right-hand side of the next field. You now cross another stile and go along a woodland path that finally comes out to a road at Ewhurst. Turn **left** along the road to a small roundabout by the *Bulls Head* pub.



Ewhurst is a village and a parish on the edge of the Weald at the foot of Pitch and Holmbury hills. It is well-known for its cricket club and has some notable residents, such as Eric Clapton. During the war it was a billet for a number of servicemen with the surrounding country a refuge for evacuees who often witnessed the war in the air being fought near the village and over the hills. The Bulls Head (closed 2021 but due to re-open later in 2022) is a quiet one-bar pub with a skittle alley which also offers simple accommodation. See also the "Ewhurst" and "Ewhurst Green" walks in this series.

Leg 4: Ewhurst to Winterfold 5 km=3 miles

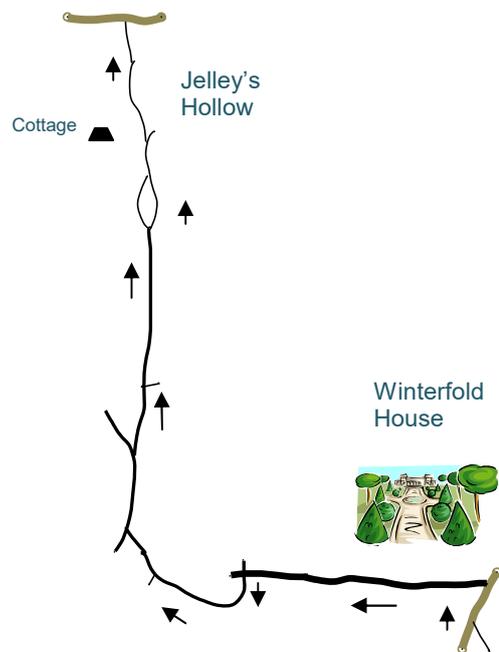
- 1 Turn **right** at the roundabout onto Wykehurst Lane. About 80m after the last house, turn **right** on a track uphill, past a metal gate, through woods. In 100m follow a path between fields, stepping over a 3-bar fence (a degenerate stile). *Note the touching tribute ("who(m) I love") on the bench at a zigzag in the path.* Pitch Hill is now visible straight ahead. Finally, the path curves left and reaches a gravel drive opposite a colourful workshop. Turn **right** here. At the end of the drive, turn **left** along the lane.



- 2 Continue along the lane until you reach the entrance to Wykehurst Farm where the route continues ahead on a bridleway. At a junction with several wooden gates and a choice of three possible routes, veer **right** next to a farm entrance. *First though, it is hard to drag oneself away from the view over the gate straight ahead, with the shapely green valley in the foreground and the hills of the South in the distance.* Stay on the bridleway, ignoring a bridleway branching off left and turning right with the path until it goes over a bridge. 30m after the bridge, pass a green gate on the right and, 20m after the gate, take a small path on the **right**, up a bank. (If you miss this turning, just continue to the road.) Turn **left** alongside a fence, keep to the right in a small meadow and come out to a road. Turn **right** along the road.



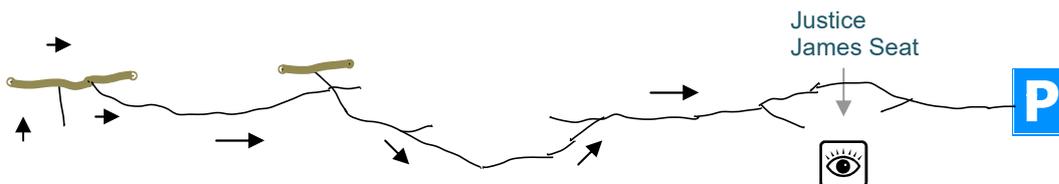
- 3 In 100m, turn **left** on a marked bridleway. The track goes past the magnificent house and garden of Winterfold House on the right. In 250m, before the gateposts of Colman's farmhouse, turn **left** with the track. Bear **right** with the track where another track joins you from the left and continue past the entrance to the farm on your right. 30m later, at a marker post with blue arrows, take the **right** fork. The track runs alongside a fence and begins to ascend. After some distance, at a fork, take the **right-hand** higher path. Soon Jelleys Hollow Cottage is on the left and the path ascends steeply up through Jelleys Hollow and reaches a road. Turn **right** just before the road for just a few paces.



- 4 Branch **right** on a footpath marked as the Greensand Way that initially runs parallel to the road. The path comes close again to the road at a junction of paths. Turn half **right** here; then, at a fork, stay **right**, slightly downhill, on a wide path. (You can keep following the GW signs if you like, but the rather tricky route given here has the best views, so ...)



Ignore the left fork marked GW, always staying on the edge of the hill with fine views to the right where the trees permit. *Watch out for mountain bikes!* Later, the path joins a wider path coming in from the left. Not long after, the Greensand Way forks **left** and passes a viewpoint known (for unclear reasons) as *Lord Justice James' seat*. The new seat is an imaginative vortex sculpture made from recycled plastic by artist Russell Jakubowski. Shortly after this, the path descends to the Hurtwood Control Car Park 4 where the walk began.



Tillies
Cottage

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The School Run (South) 2 km=1¼ miles

Take this short cut if you want to do only the **western walk**, omitting Holmbury Hill and Forest Green.

- 1 Ignore a bridleway left by a little parking space and continue on the lane through woodland. The lane curves right downhill and you pass two entrances to Hurtwood House School, a private sixth-form college, on your right. Avoid a road junction and a footpath on your left. 120m after the road junction, you will see another entrance to the school. Turn **right** here on a bridleway that runs past a long cottage on your left, used as an arts studio. At a fingerpost, fork **left**, avoiding the private driveway which leads to the school. You pass a tennis court on your right.
- 2 Follow this bridleway through pleasant country, with meadows on your left and trees and occasional thicker woodland on your right. After about 800m, about half way along the edge of a grassy meadow, at a fingerpost, turn **left** over a 2-plank bridge and stile into the meadow. In the opposite corner, go over a stile (or through a metal gate) near farm buildings, turn **left** on a farm track and immediately **right** over a stile onto a narrow path that runs round the edge of the field on your left. You pass a pond on your right and reach a junction of paths. Turn **right** on a wide path. **Your walk now continues from Leg 3 section 5**, going over the concrete bridge as indicated.



The School Run (North) 2 km=1¼ miles

Take this short cut if you want to do only the **eastern walk**, omitting Ewhurst and Pitch Hill.

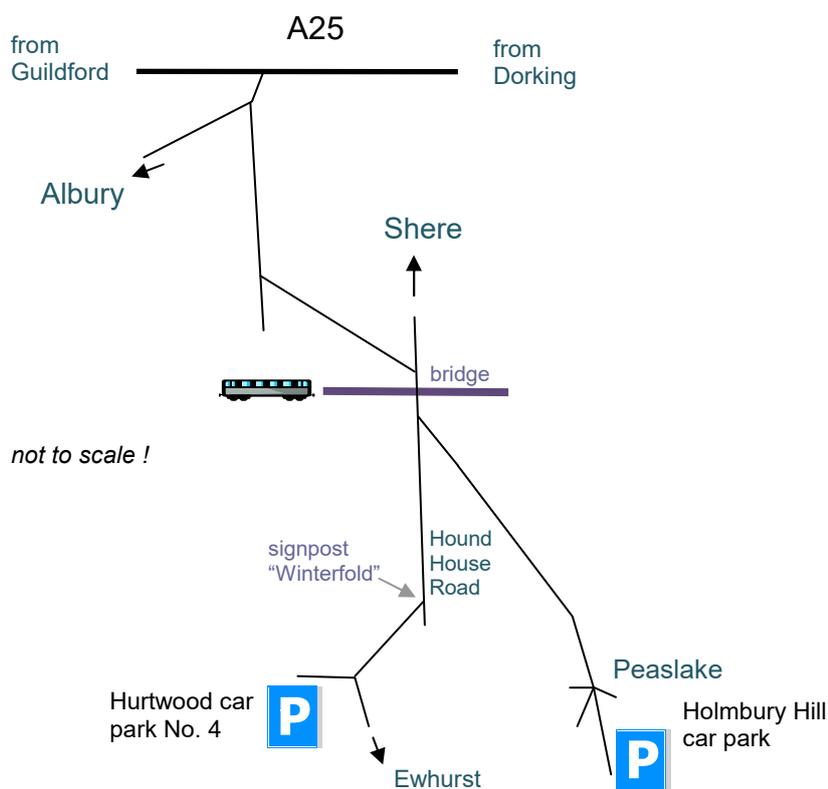
- 1 Take the **second** of two paths on the **right**: not the path that goes into the field but the one that goes around the edge. You pass a pond on your left with a fence on your right and eventually go over a stile. Turn **left** on a farm track near farm buildings and immediately go **right** over a stile (or through a metal gate) into a meadow. Cross the centre of the meadow, aiming for a fingerpost visible ahead. There, go over a stile and a 2-plank bridge and turn right on a bridleway. Follow this bridleway through pleasant country, with meadows on your right and trees and occasional thicker woodland on your left. The bridleway begins to wind uphill. About 800m after joining this bridleway, ignore paths on the left as you pass a tennis court and a house.
- 2 You emerge on a driveway coming from Hurtwood House School, a private sixth-form college, on your left. Continue straight ahead passing a long cottage used as an arts studio. The drive leads out to a tarmac lane, Holmbury Road. Turn **left** uphill. As you go, avoid a footpath and a road junction on your right. The lane, now Radnor Road, curves left through woodland, passing more entrances to the school. ½ km after the road junction, you will see on your right a little parking space, immediately before a house on your left. Turn **right** here on a narrow stony, sometimes overgrown, bridleway uphill. The path shortly levels a bit and curves right under the trees and, about 100m from the road, reaches a narrow crossing path. **If you began the walk at the Holmbury Hill car park**, turn **left** here up

a bank where your walk is finished. Otherwise, go up a bank on your **right**, thus re-joining the GW, and resume the main walk at **Leg 2** section **1**.

Getting there

By car: to get to the **Hurtwood Control car park** from the London area, take the A25 road and turn onto the B2127 past **Shere** (preferably bypassing it via Albury Heath). At a road junction by a railway bridge, keep straight ahead for Ewhurst, avoiding the left turn to Peaslake. About 2½ miles=4 km further on, after an interesting drive through deep cuttings, turn **right** at a signpost for **Winterfold** (don't miss this turning!). About ½ mile=600m further, turn **right** on a minor road and immediately **left** into the car park.

For the **Holmbury Hill car park**, do as above but, after the railway bridge, fork **left** to go through Peaslake. Keep straight on through the village and find the car park 2 km later on the left.



Alternative starting points are (1) the small National Trust car park in the south west corner of Leith Hill Place near Forest Green (2) the car park behind the *Parrot* pub in Forest Green (it does not seem to be restricted to patrons of the pub) (3) the Pitch Hill car park (reached via Peaslake).