



Friday Street, Leith Hill, Holmbury Hill

Distance: 13½ km=8 miles
less 1½ km=1 mile omitting Holmbury Hill

easy-to-moderate walking
Date written: 27-oct-2011

Region: Surrey

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Author: Schwebefuss

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Refreshments: Leith Hill, Holmbury-St-Mary, Friday Street

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

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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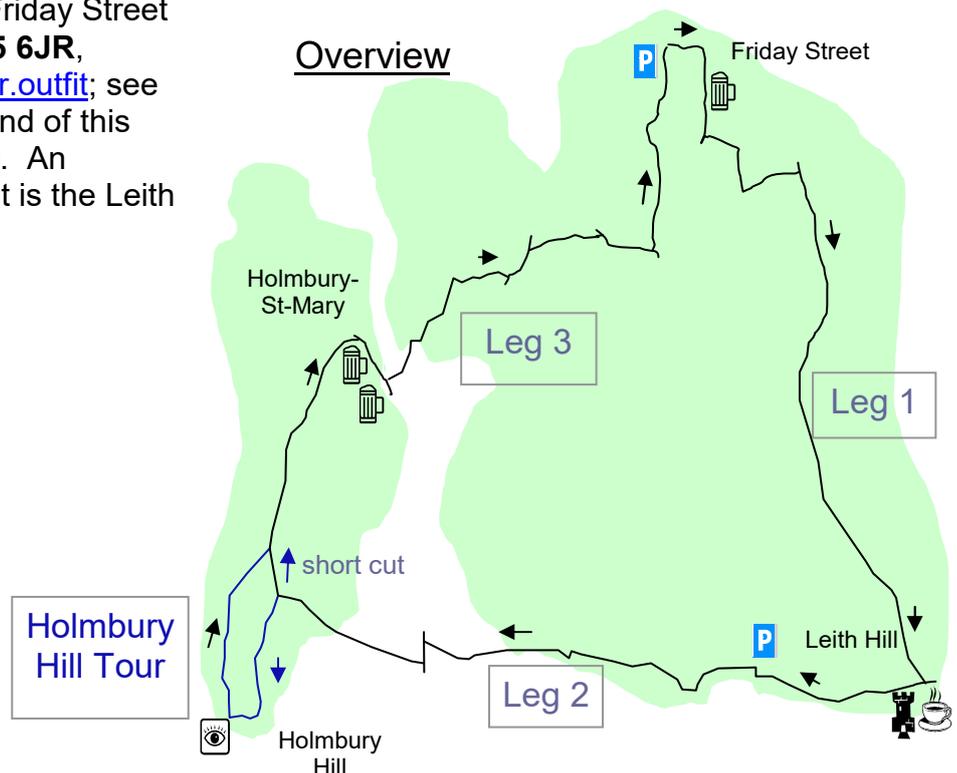
Lake, woodland, hidden paths, hills, views

In Brief



This is a walk through the noble Greensand hills of Surrey, with several fascinating twists and unexpected encounters. There is one short climb and some gentler gradients, so this walk will seem longer than its 12 km (7 miles). There are only 4 stiles, all in one short stretch; they would be a problem for all but a small dog, but a diversion* is available in Leg 2. **Walkers have warned about bringing a dog through Upfolds Farm where the resident dogs are territorial.** The going is easy and mainly dry underfoot because of the sand.

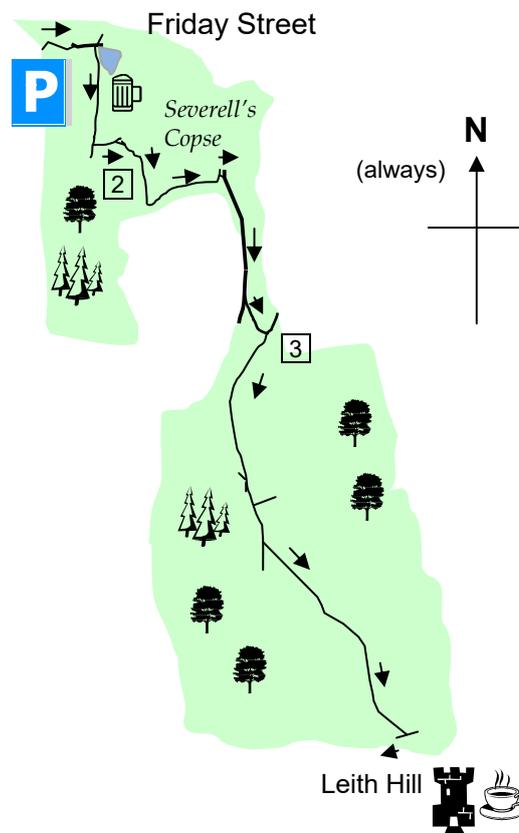
The walk starts at the Friday Street car park, postcode **RH5 6JR**, www.w3w.co/cheeks.cigar.outfit; see map and guide at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). An alternative starting point is the Leith Hill Starveall car park.



The Walk

Leg 1: Friday Street to Leith Hill 3¾ km=2½ miles

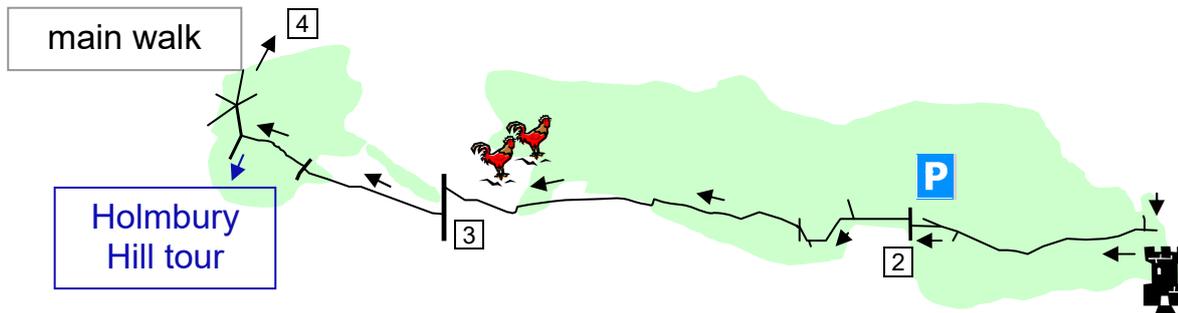
- 1 From the car park, facing the road where you came in, go **right** and proceed along the narrow path that runs above the road by some railings and joins it after about 50m, reaching the lake shortly after. Turn **right** on a wide track beside the lake. After some cottages, you reach the *Stephan Langton* pub [sadly now closed (2020-21)]. For more details, see the "Friday Street pub walk" in this series. Continue along the lane and go past a barrier onto a wide path through woodland. After roughly 100m, look for a gap in the bank on your left, leading to a little wooden bridge with a rail. Turn **left** here and go over the little bridge and past a National Trust sign for *Severell's Copse*.
- 2 In 80m or so, turn **right** uphill towards the pines. (You can do this in two stages by forking **right** in 50m on a rising path under beeches and then, in 30m, bearing **right** at a T-junction.) **Keep straight ahead**, all the way up to the top. About half way up you cross over a track. You then quickly pass through an avenue of majestic pines, then beeches, some young, some old and twisted. After around 200m, just 10m before a field, turn **left** on a narrow path. Follow the path, with the field on your right, for 300m to a tarmac lane and turn **right** on it. (If there's no opening onto the lane, turn **left** in the corner for 5m and go **right** over a bank.) In 200m, you pass fingerposts, two on the left, one on the right. Continue past *Leylands* and, opposite *Wooton Barn*, fork **left** at a fingerpost on a shingle drive marked as a bridleway.
- 3 The drive comes to a hairpin and a 3-way fingerpost. Leave the drive here by turning **right** on a wide path, regaining your original direction. Keep ahead on the path at all times, very gently uphill, avoiding all paths branching off, some signposted. After around 500m on this path, you pass a junction of paths with a wooden barrier on your left. After a further 350m you reach a major fork in the track. Take the **left** fork, the slightly narrower and stonier of the two tracks. This route will take you, after some distance through varied terrain, to the top of Leith Hill. If you find mud, you can bypass it on the banks left or right. Near the end, it is joined by two tracks coming from the right and ascends more steeply. In each case, keep to your general uphill direction. Finally, you reach Leith Hill Tower with its fine views south over the Sussex Weald. *The servery has refreshments and nice homemade cakes, now open daily, closing at 5, or 3 weekdays. You can ascend the tower where there is a view all round with miles of seeming wilderness. The tower was built in 1766 to raise the height of Leith Hill to the 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 Weald is the area between the North and South Downs, its name coming from the Saxon word for forest.*





A part of the **Surrey Greensand Monster** walk resumes here.

Leg 2: Leith Hill to Holmbury-St-Mary 5 km=3 miles



1 At the Tower, turn **right** downhill and continue past a noticeboard on the main wide track, signed to the Starveall car park. There are parallel footpaths, first on the left, then on the right, to avoid the mountain bikes, marked with a sign *footpath to car park*. Immediately after the footpath finally rejoins the track, you come to a major fork. Yours is the **left** fork, but there are several parallel paths, so you need to look for the Greensand Way (GW) waymark which is easy to miss. (If you take the right fork you will come to the car park.) The track comes out to a road. Cross over the road, slightly right, to a bridleway opposite.

2 This wide path passes a gate with views on your left opposite a junction. Shortly after, by another gate, there is a signpost pointing right for the GW. Keep straight ahead, thus leaving the GW. In late spring bluebells are abundant. Not long after, the path begins to descend and curves right, passes a footpath marker on the left [Nov 2020: broken and propped up against a tree on your right] and comes down to a 4-way junction by *The Coach House*. Keep straight ahead across the junction. This sandy path descends through an area rich in varied plant life, until you meet a large metal gate ahead. Turn **left** here over a bridge and continue **right**, beside a field on your left. Ahead of you, Holmbury Hill is now visible. Soon you reach the historic Upfolds Farm. Keep **left** round the shed as indicated, then **right** on a drive, going past a poultry field, with fancy hens pecking away, and reaching a road. Turn **left** on the road.

3 In 80m, go **right** over a stile* onto a signed footpath. (* If you have a dog that can't be lifted, you should take the *cyclists' diversion*: go a further 130m along the road and turn **right** on a signposted bridleway which leads up through woods to a lane; turn **right** on the lane for 60m to rejoin the walk.) This narrow path goes beside a sheep pasture on your left, then beside a supersize lawn belonging to *Piper's Lea*, zigzagging over a small bridge. Finally it goes over a stile to a short tarmac drive and a lane. Cross the lane to a narrow signposted path opposite. Welcome to the Hurtwood! Follow the path very steeply uphill under wires. Where the gradient gets thankfully easier, you need to keep going: the path continues to climb slightly and you're not yet at the top. Finally the path flattens out. Turn **left** now on a rather indistinct path and immediately fork **right** to reach a T-junction with a wide path on part of Holmbury Hill.

There are **two** routes now down to Holmbury-St-Mary for refreshment and a return to the start. To descend immediately to the village, turn **right** at the T-junction and, when you reach a 5-way junction, take the **second *** descending path (* or **first more level path - see below →**), on the **right**. However, the main walk includes a pleasant excursion taking in the top of Holmbury Hill with fine views. If you would like to do this, choose the **Holmbury Hill Tour** in the next paragraph. For the short cut, skip the rest of this numbered section.



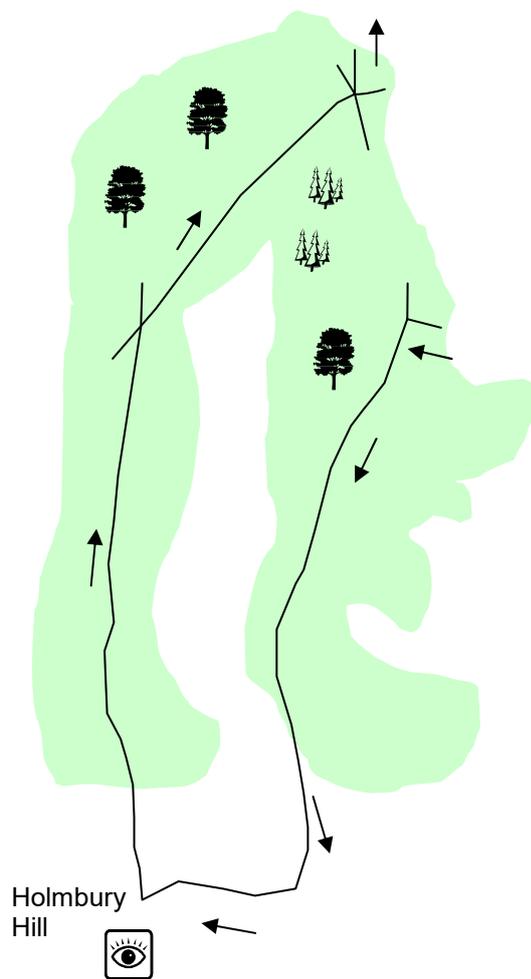
For the **Surrey Greensand Monster** walk, do this section.

Holmbury Hill Tour. 1½ km=1 mile. Turn **left** at the T-junction. Immediately, at a fork, keep **right**. You are back on the GW. Your path goes through a wooden barrier and gradually rises and winds before levelling out. Parallel on your right is a sunken sandy path much used by mountain bikers. Your path descends a little to a junction by a GW post. Keep straight ahead on a narrow undulating path which gets wider, rises again and curves right towards the top of Holmbury Hill. Keep to the edge of the hill as your path goes through a wooden barrier and continues uphill, soon reaching the cairn at the top.



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

At 261 metres, Holmbury Hill is the fourth highest point in Surrey. From here you can see Chanctonbury Ring, Bignor Hill and Black Down (all West Sussex walks from this site) and back to the London City and Canary Wharf tall buildings (see the “City Skyscrapers” walk in the “London” series). It is the site of earthworks of an Iron Age fort, possibly used by the Druids in Celtic times. This area is one of the remotest and wildest in the county. Smugglers, sheep stealers and poachers often took refuge in these hills and stowed their booty in the cellars of remote cottages. At the foot of Holmbury Hill is UCL’s Mullard Space Science Laboratory, a research group of world renown.



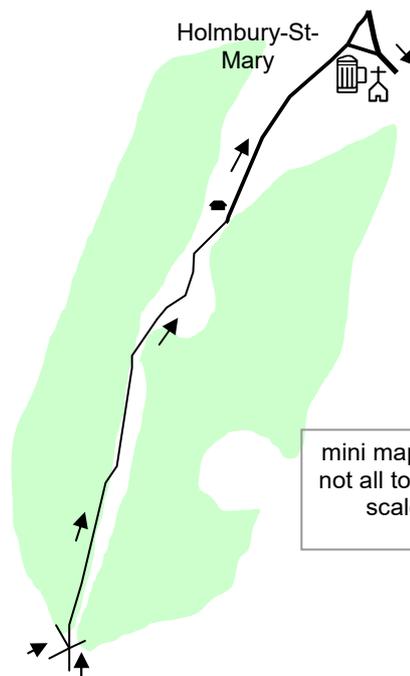
After admiring the view, turn **right** away from the view, past a slanting information tablet and keep **right** on the main wide path. After about 500m, you meet a very wide diagonal crossing path. Turn **right** here. In 300m, you come to a 5-way junction. Take the **second *** path on the **left**, almost straight ahead and going downhill (* or the **third more level path - see next**).



* For the *King’s Head* pub (recommended by walkers, re-opened in 2017, open in 2019), take a more level wider path, one more path to the right at the junction. In 300m, you pass a cricket pitch on your left. After 80m, take the right fork and, in under 50m, take a waymarked path up a bank on your right, through shrubbery, down a bank, across a track, up a bank, down steps, **left** on a road and immediately **left** at a fork on a narrow tarmac lane by a 30 mph sign. Afterwards, continue in the same direction to the main road and, keeping left, to the village well.

- 4 In 500m or so, your wide path reaches the village hall on the outskirts of the village. Shift **left** a little and go past a metal gate to merge with a driveway coming from the village hall. The drive becomes a residential road going past some houses of the village. On your right is the church (worth a visit), known for its Westminster chimes. Immediately, at the junction, you reach the *Royal Oak* pub.

Welcome to "heaven's gate"! This is what George Edmund Street, the eminent Victorian architect (of the London Law Courts among other things), called it when he visited the tiny valley settlement of scattered cottages and decided to set up home here and built St Mary's church in 1879, just before he died. Holmbury-St-Mary is a Victorian concept. It was originally called "Felday". The village was renamed after the church and the nearby hill and soon attracted new well-heeled settlers from London. Holmbury-St-Mary may be the model for the fictional village of Summer Street in E.M. Forster's "A Room With A View".



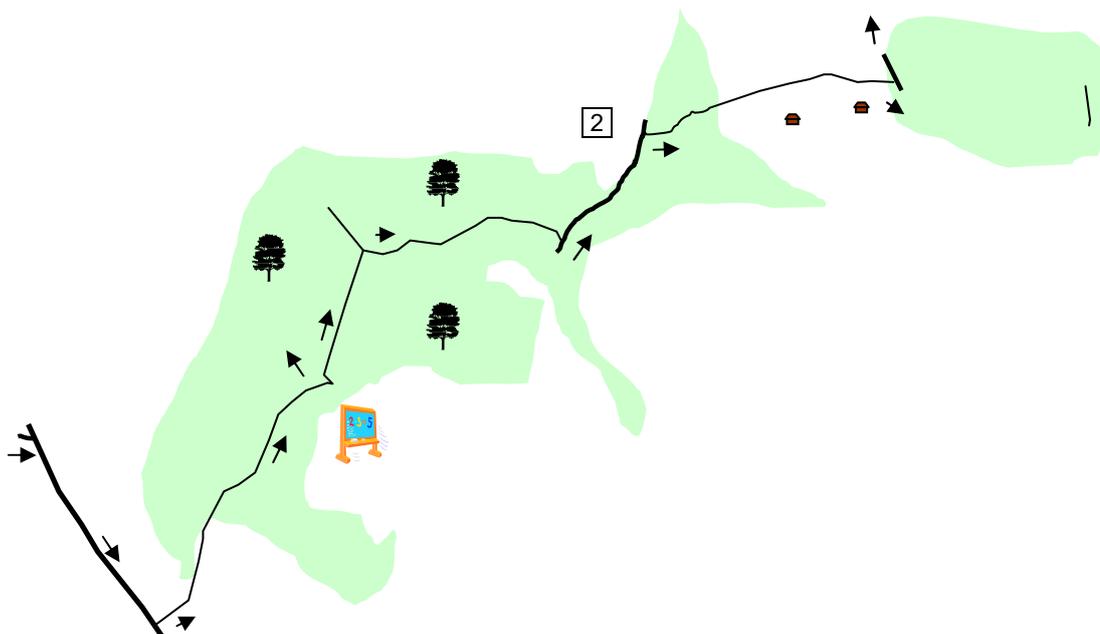
mini maps are not all to same scale!

*2015-16: The "Royal Oak" re-opened and closed again and is proving unreliable. The "King's Head", under new ownership since 2016, is a **very good** alternative below, providing a "wonderful welcome and food", now our first recommendation. The "King's Head" is in Pitland Street (**right** on the main road and fork **right** after 250m).*



The "Royal Oak" is a very welcoming unassuming local with good food. Its great asset is the attractive lawn in front of the pub with numerous tables from where you can watch village life pass by. Beer is Youngs, plus one other brew.

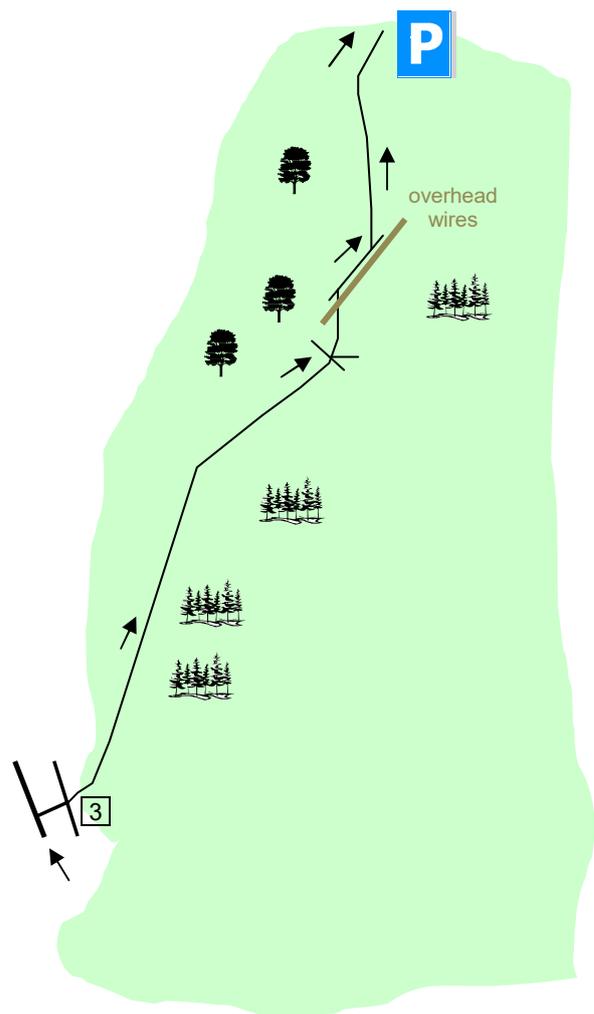
Leg 3: Holmbury-St-Mary to Friday Street 3 km=2 miles



1 Fork **right** at the green in front of the *Royal Oak* and turn **right** on the main road. In just over 200m, just before the old thatched village well, turn **left** on a driveway which is also a signed bridleway. Go through a wooden gate and, at a 3-way fingerpost, fork **right** past a wooden gate and follow the wide path up through woodland. In 150m or so, your path approaches a wooden fence at the corner of a parking area for Leith Hill School. At the top turn sharp **left** as directed by a new *Leith Hill School* sign. Now simply follow the directions given by the numerous new school signs, turning **right** after about 50m. Eventually you pass a mountain bike track on your left, after which your path becomes sunken and curves right uphill. Go straight on past a fence with a garden on your right. Your route bears **right** where it meets a signposted bridleway coming from the left and runs between fences and hedges to a lane, Pasture Wood Road. Turn **left** on the lane with fine views of the tall pines in the plantation to your left.

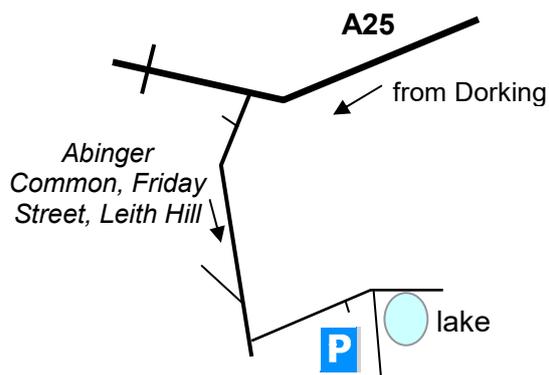
2 In 200m, just before the lane completes its left curve, go **right** at a hidden signpost onto a fenced footpath which is easy to miss. Your footpath zigzags past some large gardens and past the wall of *Park House Farm*. It then goes through a brick archway under the grounds of *Parkhurst* and comes out by a small redundant metal gate to a road, Leith Hill Road. Turn **left** on the road. In 200m you approach a small group of houses. Turn squarely **right** here, crossing a drive for *Spindles House*, on a narrow tarmac drive between hedges, signed *Sunnyside*.

3 Cross over a tarmac lane, a fraction left, onto a lovely woodland path, signed as a bridleway. In 200m your path zigzags over humps and meets a 4-way fingerpost. Cross straight over onto a beautiful woodland path running between low banks, with terrific views to your left. In a further 250m, you come out onto a clearing with five paths leading off. Avoid an ascending path straight ahead and instead take the **next** path to its **left**, a narrower, more level path. This path runs through some quite dense birch scrub. In about 50m you are walking under some double wires. Stay on the main narrow path, heading for tall trees, keeping left to avoid some overgrown paths, leaving the wires. Your path widens as it enters the trees. Within 150m you are back at the Friday Street car park where the walk began.



Getting there

By car: To get to Friday Street: go to Dorking, take the main Guildford road and after 3 miles=5 km take a left turn 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 is very easy to miss. After about 400m, look out for the car park on the right, before the lake.



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