



Farleigh

Distance: 8½ km=5½ miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Farleigh

Map: Explorer 161 (Croydon) and a small part of 146 (Dorking)
but the map in this guide should be sufficient

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

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Long woodland trails, church, views, nature reserves

In Brief

This is a mainly woodland walk in the eye-opening wild countryside just east of Warlingham. Along the way you see one of the oldest churches in the county. The walk comes close to several nature reserves and protected forests. There is easy access to the walk by car, bus or tram.



For refreshments, an excellent country inn is close to the walk* and, for this reason, the principal starting point is near the inn itself where there is plenty of roadside parking, with a short hop in either direction to join the main loop. For a lunchtime break, you could begin at another point along the route, such as Court Wood Lane or Farleigh Dean Crescent. (*For booking or enquiries, ring 01883-627565.)



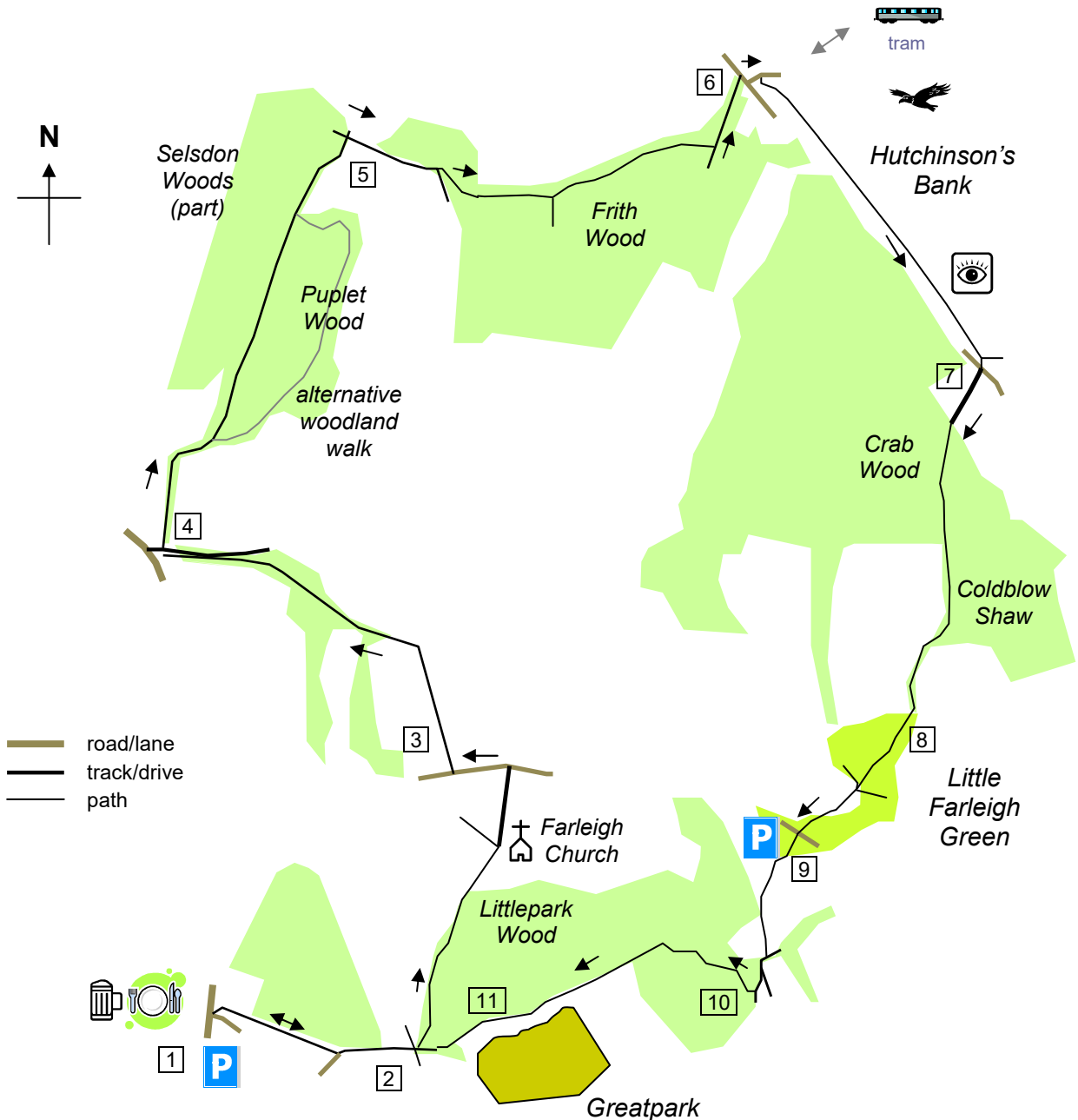
There were no nettles on this walk in February and very little undergrowth to worry your legs but this can be significantly worse in summer when long'uns would be much preferred. There were some fairly short muddy sections, making boots a recommendation. With no stiles and no main roads, this walk should be ideal for your dog.



The walk begins near the *Harrow Inn*, Farleigh Rd, Warlingham, postcode **CR6 9EL**, www.w3w.co/jokes.causes.jolly. There is ample roadside parking opposite the pub. There is also a small car park at Little Farleigh Green on the Farleigh Court Road with a *very approximate* postcode of **CR6 9PX**, www.w3w.co/fans.chase.shine (start at Section 9). You also begin the walk at **New Addington Tram Stop**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

- 1 This section begins near the *Harrow* in Farleigh. Opposite the pub, just to the left of the residential road, Harrow Road, at a fingerpost, take a bridleway which runs just behind the back gardens of Harrow Road. Keep straight on for 300m or so and, at a junction keep ahead, veering a fraction left between two wooden posts, with a white Coal-Tax post to your left. In nearly 200m, you reach a complex junction with a 5-way fingerpost. Your next path is the **second left**, so ignore the small wooden gate into the field on the left but take the adjacent bridleway that runs slightly uphill into woods.



- 2 Your path runs just inside Littlepark Wood, with a green meadow in view on your left. As you come out of the wood, an open stretch leads to a small parking area beside the ancient Church of St Mary the Virgin,




This tiny church, with its simple rectangular nave and chancel, and shingled west tower is mainly Norman, dating from the late 1000s, and among the

earliest Surrey churches still in use. The chancel was extended in the 1200s century and the endearing west timber porch was added the 1500s. Even the Victorian restoration work did not alter its character. Inside, a small brass effigy shows John Brock (d. 1495) in his long merchant's gown (he was a poulterer) with his wife, four sons and a daughter.

Go straight across the parking area, past a large metal gate and along a tarmac lane to meet a T-junction. Ignoring a footpath directly opposite, turn **left** on the lane for 150m to a crossing track and turn **right** here on a bridleway marked VGW, a section of the Vanguard Way, a long-distance path running from Croydon to the sea at Newhaven.

- 3 The bridleway runs between meadows on your left and golf links. In 300m or so, the route bends left. Keep **left** here on a narrow woodland path. The path runs through the fringe of the woods, and up a gentle slope, finally coming out into the open, parallel to the driveway on your right. (Some walkers use the driveway to avoid any mud.) You pass the entry gates of the Farleigh Golf Club, shortly before a main road ahead. Turn **right before** the road, going past a green metal barrier, onto a woodland bridleway, part of the *Capital Ring*, and still on the VGW. *The Capital Ring is a 78-mile (126-km) walking route encircling London, split into 15 sections.*

 *The bridleway through this section is known locally as "Baker Boy Lane". The name is said to originate from the untimely death of a baker's boy delivering his loaves who was set upon and hacked to death, the axe being left at the scene. His ghost is said to roam the area. Motorists on Old Farleigh Road, at the top of Baker Boy Lane, in the dark and the mist, have allegedly seen the axeman wandering the area. Much of the detail, such as the date, is vague, so the story may be treated as just that - a story.*

- 4 The woodland here is Puplet Wood, part of an extensive historic wooded area which includes the nature reserve of Selsdon Wood. After 300m the bridleway splits. The author kept straight on but you have a choice: the right fork is a longer diversion, adding at least ½ mile, which curves its way around the right-hand section of the wood and re-joins the main path. After 500m on the main path through this dense wood, the diversion re-joins the main path. Finally you see new houses ahead, indicating the end of the path, and you reach a junction. Ignore a path left which leads to the nature reserve, thus leaving the VGW, and instead turn **right** at a fingerpost onto a footpath.
- 5 The path can be quite muddy but it will soon improve, becoming a chalky path running uphill. In just over 200m you reach a Y-junction where a narrower path forks off to the **left** uphill. This is your path – *don't miss it!* Follow this path up through trees shortly meeting a wire fence. The path veers right and runs close to the fence on your left. After 300m threading your way past trees and shrubs, a bridleway meets you from the right as you pass a large expanse of Frith Wood. Close by, on your left, are the golf links of Addington Court, until your path dives down into the woods again. The path ends at a T-junction. Turn **left** here on a woodland bridleway.

- 6 In 200m the bridleway ends at a road, Turn **right** on the road and in 30m **left** on a residential road, Farleigh Dean Crescent. In only 25m, turn **right** into trees on a horse path which soon runs along a narrow meadow. **You soon pass a small wooden gate on your left: it marks one of several paths leading up to Hutchinson's Bank, a hillside nature reserve and bird habitat – not part of this walk, but well worth exploring.** After 250m, **ignore** a path on your right



leading to a swing-gate and stay on the path. You pass more wildflower meadows on your left. After a sheep pasture on your left, your path finally enters a section through trees. After nearly 150m in this wood, you reach a junction where the path you are on bends a fraction left uphill. **Leave** the path here* by turning **right** to the road. [* Feb 2023: the gate was locked to prevent fly tipping; walkers kept straight ahead into the wood and found their way right, through undergrowth, to reach the road.]

7 Cross the road and take a semi-tarmac track ahead leading past a house, *Pear Tree Farm Cottage*. At the end of the track, passing a large depot on your left, continue straight ahead on a narrower path up through woodland. The path runs gently uphill through the old coppice of Crab Wood. After 300m, near the top, your path runs through a well-named section called Coldblow Shaw and on your right you can see a field. 200m later, your path runs through a narrow band of trees between fields. The next section of the path is through a protected area of woodland known as Little Farleigh Green.

8 The route becomes quite twisty with a number of side paths which try to divert you away from the obvious main path. You come out of the wood onto an open green with a large white house, *Little Farleigh Green Farm*, over to your right. In the centre of the green you meet a 3-way fingerpost [Aug 2022: broken and stapped to a support post]. Avoid the path on your left here and keep straight on. As you walk across the grass, stay close to the driveway on your right, soon passing the gate of Hazelwood Stud. Now divert a fraction away from the drive through trees, heading for a tarmac lane and parking area visible ahead. You have reached Little Farleigh Green car park. *If you began the walk here, today's adventure is ended.*

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9 From the Little Farleigh Green car park on the Farleigh Court Road, stay on this side of the road and walk across the grassy space, in the direction of a yellow arrow [Oct 2022: care! the marker was not seen and may have gone]. In 50m, under some trees, your path winds right and left and along the edge of a meadow. You pass the remains of a stile which leads through the centre of a rough pasture with a barbed wire fence either side. You pass another redundant stile and immediately meet a crossing path: go straight ahead. Head for the gap in the hedge ahead and immediately turn **right** at a T-junction to join a wider woodland path. Your path forks with the left fork signed as part of the *National Cycle Network* (as well as a popular rider's path). Instead, take the yellow-arrowed **right** fork. In 30m you meet another marker post with yellow arrows.

10 Turn **right** here on a path through the middle of the woods. Your path passes two redundant stiles and becomes very twisty. In 300m or so, you can see the buildings and water tower of Greatpark, the old Warlingham Park Hospital. (If you see a footpath on the other side of the fence on your left, you haven't gone wrong – this path is *inside* the estate for the use of residents.) Soon you are out of the wood, next to the buildings and on your right you will see a plaque for the Croydon Mental Hospital, Warlingham Park Hospital and Great Park Wood Cemetery. The hospital, closed in 1999, is now the up-market housing development you see.

Warlingham Park Hospital was a game changer – the first UK mental hospital. Up till then, these places were called “asylums”. Back in Hogarth's time (see the Chiswick walk), visitors would pay to gawk at the “lunatics”. Croydon Mental Hospital, as it then was, changed all that. The new approach was

psychosurgery. Mind you, even then treatment was pretty daunting: lobotomies, brain needles and electroconvulsive shocks. It wasn't until 1961 and that famous speech by Enoch Powell (no less) making a case for the winding down of mental hospitals in favour of what later became Care in the Community in 1983 (see the Coulsdon walk). The best well-proven remedy? – country walking!! (and maybe a very modest tippie at the Harrow – “better a bottle in front of me than a frontal lobotomy”).

- 11 Soon there is a garden fence on your left and, after some more woodland, the path leads down through a wooden barrier to a complex 5-way junction.

Decision point. If you did *not* begin the walk at the *Harrow* pub/restaurant and you do *not* want to take a break there for refreshments, turn sharp **right** on a bridleway which runs slightly uphill into woods and re-wind to section 2. Otherwise ...

Veer **left** to a 5-way fingerpost and fork **right** past it. In nearly 200m, at a junction, go straight over past a blue-arrowed marker post, passing back gardens on your left. You come out after 300m opposite the pub where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Farleigh is easy to reach from Croydon. Follow signs for South Croydon, Purley (A236) and then Selsdon (B275). Continue straight ahead through Selsdon. Farleigh and the *Harrow* pub are 1¼ miles after that. You can also reach Farleigh from the M25, e.g. from the A22, via Warlingham.

By bus/train: bus 433 from East Croydon goes to Farleigh and also to Featherbed Lane at the other side of the walk. Check the timetables.

By tram: **New Addington Tram Terminus** is only 600m from the walk, using a footpath leading off N Downs Road, just to the left of the *Fishers Farm* Recycling Centre. *Feedback is welcome to provide more precise directions.*

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