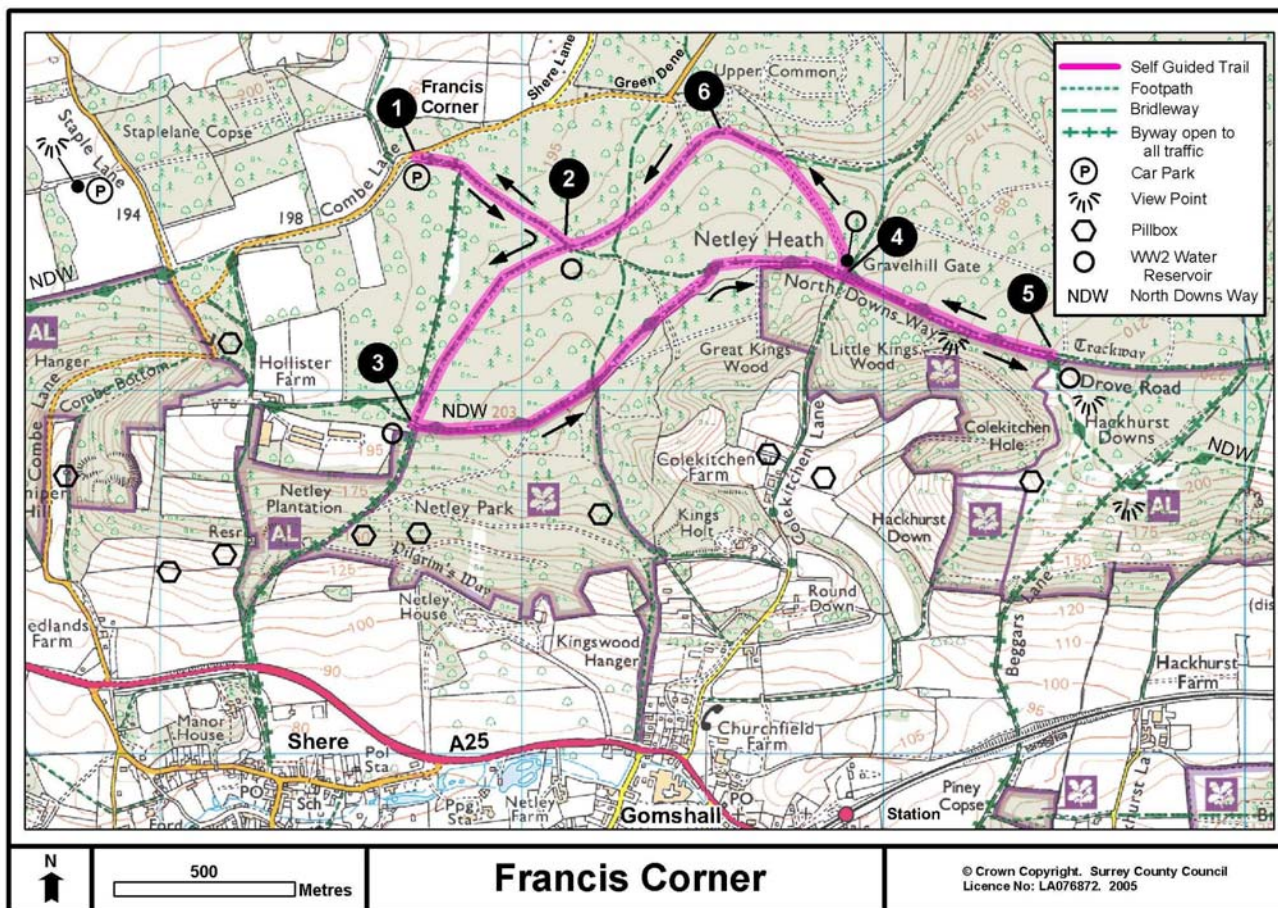


If you encounter any problems on public rights of way, please telephone the Contact Centre on: 08456 009 009 or alternatively email: rightsofway@surreycc.gov.uk



Countryside Division

FRANCIS CORNER

'EASY ACCESS ROUTE'

Self Guided Circular Trail

The route follows forestry tracks in a working woodland. The hard surfaced tracks can be muddy and rough in places, and there are some steep slopes.

Start point: Francis Corner car park, Combe Lane, Shere (Height restriction at entrance)

Grid ref: TQ 078 496

Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer 145 Guildford & Farnham

Distance: 5 ½ km (3 ½ miles)

Typical time: About 2 hours at an easy pace

This leaflet is one of a series of walks featured in a booklet called 'Easy Walks', available from the Contact Centre on 08456 009 009. The contents of the 'Easy Walks' booklet can also be viewed and downloaded from www.surreycc.gov.uk/easywalks

Details of other self guided walks, including maps and instructions can be downloaded for free from www.surreycc.gov.uk/selfguidedwalks

A selection of guided walks and events taking place can be found in 'Surrey Matters' - a free newspaper published by Surrey County Council. For a copy look in your local library or telephone 08456 009 009. To obtain a comprehensive 'Walks and Events' calendar, please telephone the Contact Centre on: 08456 009 009 or alternatively the calendar can be viewed on the Surrey County Council website.

Walk Directions:

1 From the car park pass the gate and keep ahead to a circular reservoir.

These concrete tracks were built during the Second World War by the Canadian Pioneer Corps, to enable the movement of large numbers of military personnel and equipment prior to D-Day 1944. The pillboxes were erected to fortify the natural barrier of the North Downs against possible ground attack on London and the South East.

Several circular concrete reservoirs will be passed along this trail. The first is the only one still to hold water and is a valuable habitat for aquatic insects and lilies.

2 Turn right at the reservoir and continue to reach cross tracks.

The concrete tracks are much used by forestry machinery, as the owners of the land - Tilhill Economic Forestry - manage the trees mainly for commercial soft wood production. The younger trees are used for paper pulp or stakes and the larger ones are the type used for fencing materials. Birch, recognisable by its 'silvery' bark, is used to produce broom handles and paper.

3 At cross tracks turn left towards Gravelhill Gate.

You are on the old 'Drove Road' originally used for driving livestock along the Downs. Today it is part of the North Downs Way, the 141mile

'National Trail' which links Farnham in Surrey with Dover in Kent.

The better quality beech trees on the left may be used in furniture production.

All along this stretch of the route, look out for the remaining magnificent mature beech trees, recognisable by their smooth grey bark and scattering of bristly nut cases on the ground.

Netley Park on the right is owned by the National Trust, and was once part of the Netley Estate owned by the Lomax family.

Further along on the right, notice the earth bank running parallel with the track. Behind this bank is **Great Kingswood**, which is owned and managed by the National Trust. It is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the valuable wildlife and flora.

This wood was enclosed and planted with oak in the 18th century. It was coppiced on a 25 year cycle, and the trees were used in the production of tan-bark to serve the leather tannery in Gomshall (which is now closed). Once the need for tan-bark declined, the coppiced trees were left to grow on to old age.

Great Kingswood was badly hit by the storms of 1987 and 1990. Since then many oaks and wild cherry trees have been planted by volunteers to ensure its future as a wood, while some fallen trees have been allowed to remain in order to provide shelter and good habitats for wildlife.

At Gravel Hill a gravel deposit was exploited in the past on a small scale, for use in Gomshall and Abinger.

Note the World War 2 reservoir.

4 Continue ahead towards Little Kingswood.

Little Kingswood is now a beech plantation but originally supplied coppiced timber for fuel. From the viewpoint here you can see the hills of the Greensand Ridge running parallel to the North Downs. To the right is St Martha's Hill, to the left is Leith Hill (the highest point in Surrey) and in the centre is Holmbury Hill. The area of Colekitchen below is a fine "ash-bed" from which ashwood was harvested for the making of hurdles and tool handles.

The surfaced track comes to an end at Hackhurst Down, a Local Nature Reserve managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust Countryside Service and the National Trust. The reserve contains a number of rare and interesting habitats including chalk grassland.

5 Now retrace your route back to Gravelhill Gate reservoir at point 4, then bear right downhill along track and follow track round to left to reach the first reservoir you passed at point 2. Take the surfaced track on the right to return to the Francis Corner car park.