Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Dragonflies and a Church-on-the-Hill
Chantries, Shalford, Blackheath

Distance: 16 km=10 miles — easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey — Date written: 31-jan-2010

Author: Schwebefuss — Date revised: 27-oct-2013

Refreshments: Shalford — Last update: 1-nov-2026

Map: Explorer 145 (Guildford) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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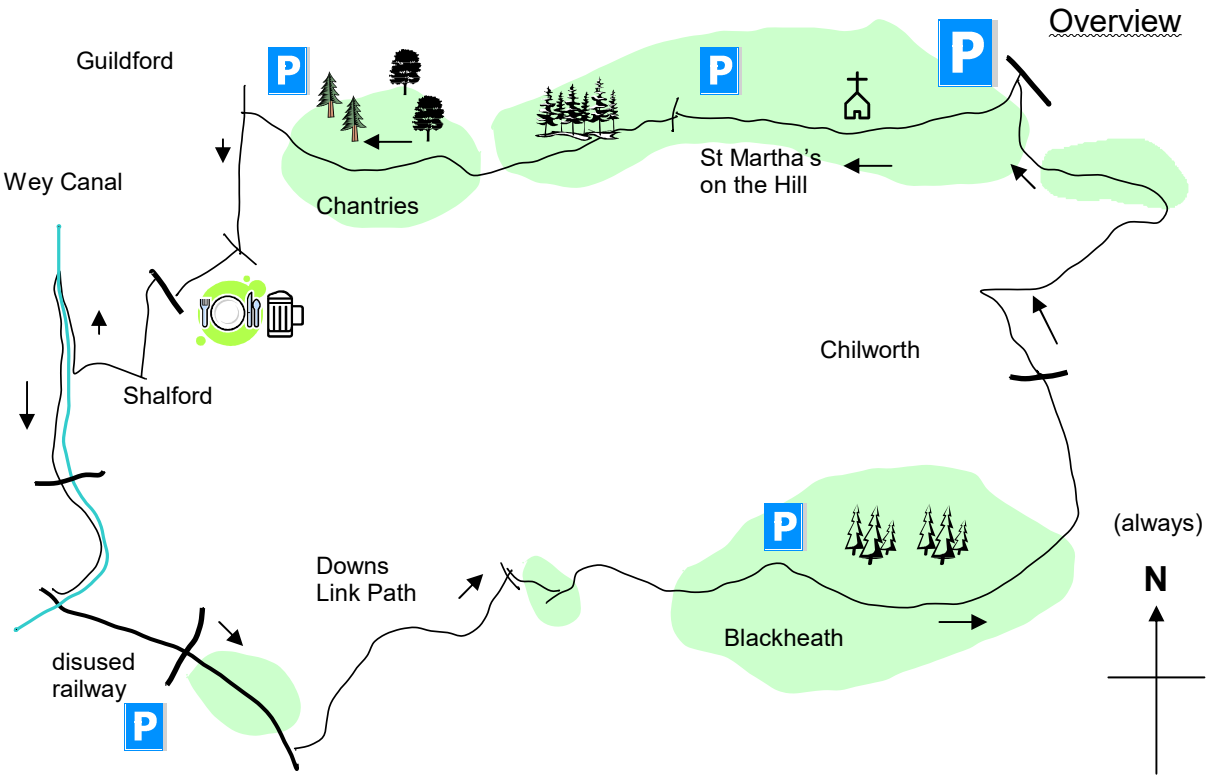
Pinewoods, river, heath, hills

In Brief

This is a vigorous circular walk with huge variety, ideal for winter as well as summer because of the fine evergreens of the Chantries and the gentle meanders of the river.

The woodland and heath sections are always dry but you may find some mud on the towpath, so good footwear is helpful. The only nettles are a tiny patch at the very end. This walk seems to be ok for a well-managed dog too. The stile-count is low.

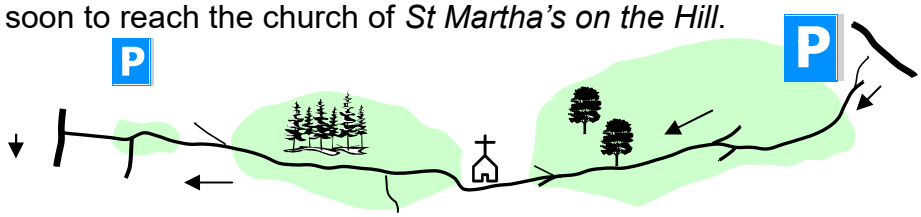


The walk starts at the **St Martha's Hill** car park off Guildford Lane (grid ref 034484, postcode **GU5 9BQ**), w3w:wicked.honey.agent, but with several alternatives, including bus or train. For further details, see **Getting There** at the end of this text.

The Walk

Leg 1: St Martha's Hill to Shalford 5½ km=3 miles

1 From the St Martha's Hill car park, go past a 1-bar gate, immediately fork **left** and veer **right** to join a wide sandy horse track leading uphill, soon with great views left. In about 250m, ignore a bridleway on the left (marked *Downs Link*). Just afterwards, your path joins the North Downs Way at a fingerpost. At the next fingerpost, fork **right** on a wide path uphill. At the next junction keep left on the open hillside, with great views, soon to reach the church of *St Martha's on the Hill*.

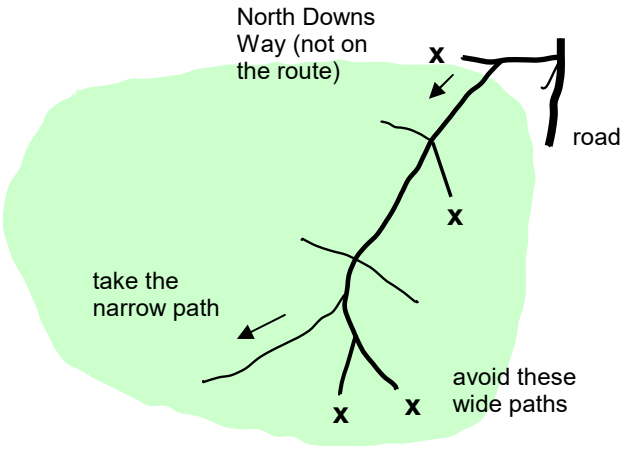


St Martha's on the Hill

St Martha is a rare dedication for a church but this one is rare in many ways, not least because of its lofty situation. The present church was built in 1850 on the site of a Saxon church. On a clear day it is said you can see eight counties. The interior has a small plaque narrating part of the eventful life of Martha of Provence to whom the church may be dedicated.

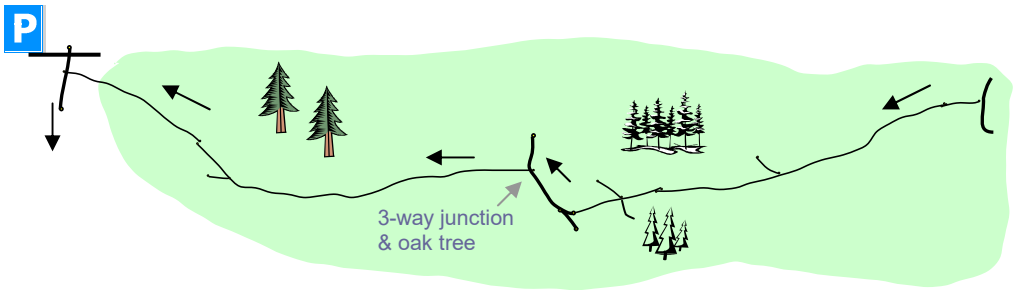
Go round either side of the church and continue in the same direction downhill through pines, always keeping to the main track, going straight over a crossing path. Soon there is a fence on the left and an open grassy area on the right where your route stays on the main track. Go straight over a driveway, with the Halfpenny Lane car park visible over to your right, with a wooden fence on your left, following the white acorn sign which reminds you that you are on a national trail. Continue beside a fence down to a road (rather suddenly – dog owners beware!) and turn **left** on it.

2 After just 30m turn **right** on a wide track beside a *Private Camp Site* notice. This main track is the North Downs Way (NDW) but the route used in this guide is much more interesting and satisfying. In just 15m, **leave** the NDW by forking **left** between a set of steel posts on a wide path going deep into the wood of beech and pine trees. In 40m, ignore a wide path that forks away left and keep straight ahead on the main path. In another 90m, go over another crossing path. Just 10m later, you reach another junction of paths. **Ignore** the wide path that curves left towards the camp site. **Ignore** another wide path that zig-zags ahead. **Instead** take a much narrower path, a **right** fork but in reality going straight ahead. This path will lead you for 2 km all the way to *Chantry Lodge*.

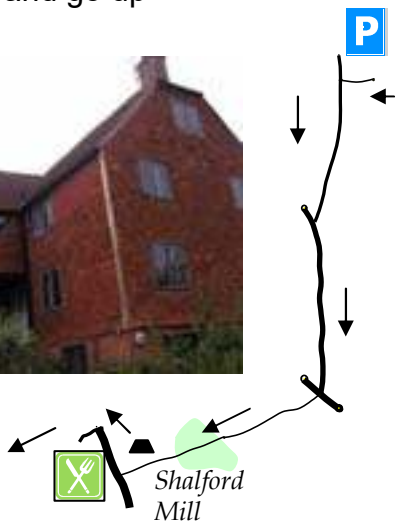


NB: this map is to a larger scale!

3 Carefully follow this winding path over the hilltop, ignoring a left fork by a yellow arrow in 25m. Eventually the path takes you down some steps. At the bottom of the slope, by a wooden post, ignore a path right and keep on upwards. At the top, the path is joined by a wider one from the left. At the bottom of the next slope, at a junction, again ignore paths right and left and continue straight ahead on a wide track. At a 3-way junction where there is a large oak with evidence of recent forestry work, veer **left**. You are now in the grandest part of the Chantries with a fine mix of scots pines, larch, and various cedars, all thoughtfully planted by previous generations. In spring the area is also full of bluebells. Soon a break in the trees on your right affords a sight of Guildford Cathedral. Stay on the main path at all times, avoiding tempting side paths, following an occasional sign for the *Scholar's Trail*. At a multiple junction with a bench seat and steps down to the left, keep straight ahead on a level path, ignoring the steps. The path descends and exits the nature reserve at a clearing with multiple buildings and two paths leading off. Avoid these paths and walk towards three metal posts opposite. On the right is the car park (alternative start), and on the **left** is *Chantry Lodge* with a narrow path next to it. Take this path.



4 Follow the track as far as a residential road, opposite an architect-designed modern house. Bear **left** on the road and take a (rather overgrown) foot-path that runs parallel to the road. At the end, cross over a lane and go up steps, through a new metal kissing-gate, and go diagonally **right** across a floral meadow. *The spire of Shalford church is visible right.* At the opposite corner, go through a new metal gate, down steps and along an enclosed footpath leading to Shalford Mill.

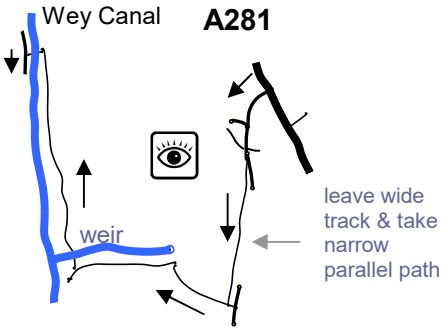


Shalford Mill is a timber-framed undershot mill, the last on the Tillingbourne before it flows into the Wey. A mill stood here for centuries before written records and the present one was built in 1720 as two adjoining mills. It ceased to work in 1890 and in 1914 it was rescued from being converted into a dwelling by a society of well-to-do college ladies and given to the National Trust in 1932. The first tenant from 1932 still lives there. One side is now perfectly preserved with all the original workings and conducted tours with an expert guide are available. The mill is open to the public from April to October on Wednesdays and Sundays.

Go past the mill to the busy main road and turn **right**. *Opposite you is The Seahorse (dating from 1711), a gastropub with an ambitious Italian-slanted menu.* Turn **left** just after the inn's car park, using the crossing lights, onto a signposted public bridleway, passing *Beech House*. *Worth a quick visit as a small diversion, by continuing along the road, you reach Shalford Church with its elegant spire, the lane outside complete with wooden stocks.*

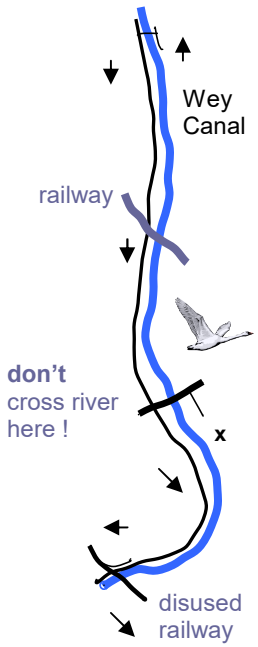
Leg 2: Shalford to Blackheath 7 km=4½ miles

5 Care! Some walkers go wrong in this section. At the end of the short track you arrive at a large wooden gate adjoining a new metal kissing gate. Turn **left** here. In only 15m take the **right** fork, a much narrower path that runs parallel to the wide track. This path gives good views soon of the River Wey below on the right. There are small paths right down to the riverside, used mainly by anglers, not on your route. In 250m the path goes through a new metal kissing-gate, soon followed by another. Turn **right** through this gate and, at the bottom of some steps, continue straight ahead on a boardwalk*. (*In case of flooding, see the alternative below.) On reaching an arm of the river, turn **left** along the bank. The path soon arrives at a weir on the right. Turn **right** here, cross the river over a bridge over the weir and turn **right** along the bank of the Wey Canal, almost reversing your direction. This pleasant diversion is necessary to cross the canal. The banks here abound with various plants, birds and insects, including vivid-coloured dragonflies. Turn **left** at St Catherine's lock, cross both arms of the canal and turn **left** on the other side.



* If the path down to the river is flooded, you can do as follows. Ignore the right turn at the gate and continue straight on, through trees, over a railway bridge, past houses, curving right, across a green, **left** on a short driveway and **right** on Broadford Road. It leads to the Broadford Bridge in the next section.

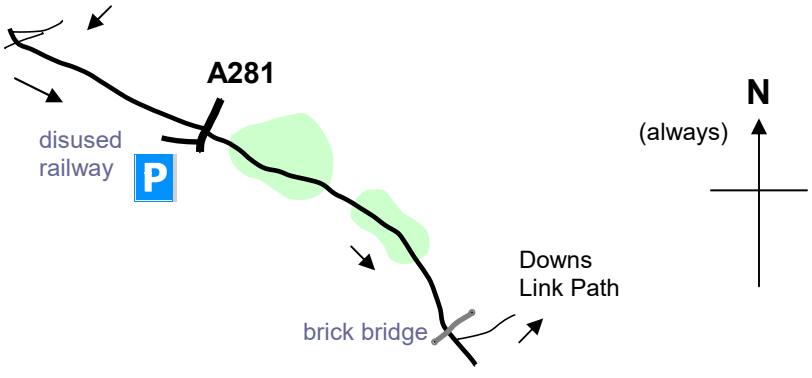
6 Continue for some distance along the towpath, going under a railway bridge, and finally arriving at a narrow road over Broadford Bridge, where you need to take care because of the traffic. Cross the road directly over and continue along the **same** side of the canal. You are now on a National Trust path, part of the *Wey Navigation*. The path gradually bends right with the canal and reaches a large black metal bridge. This is part of the *disused railway* which is now a fine straight walking track. Go through a wooden swing-gate and take the rising path forking right and turn **left** on the track over the bridge.



7 Follow the wide straight track all the way to a main road, the A281, close to Trunley Heath Road and a car park (alternative start). Cross the main road and continue on the track at the other side. The track follows its straight course over an arm of the canal, through woodland. *On your right soon is a memorial pier with picnic tables.*

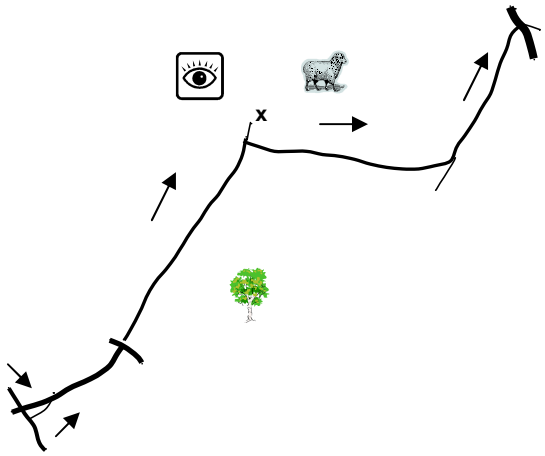
The Wey-Arun Canal joined those two navigable rivers, providing an access to the English Channel from the west of London during the 1800s. It fell into disuse and was sold off, much of it remaining as a weed-filled trench. It has now been restored along much of its length for leisure purposes and the locks and other features have been repaired and are in full use.

In 700m you reach a brick bridge. Go under the bridge and take an **immediate left** turn *(don't miss!)*, following a narrow semi-tarmacked path, ignoring a signpost with a yellow arrow on your right. You emerge onto Tannery Lane, facing the *Tannery and Meadow View Business Park*. Turn **right** and follow Tannery Lane until it meets Chinthurst Lane.

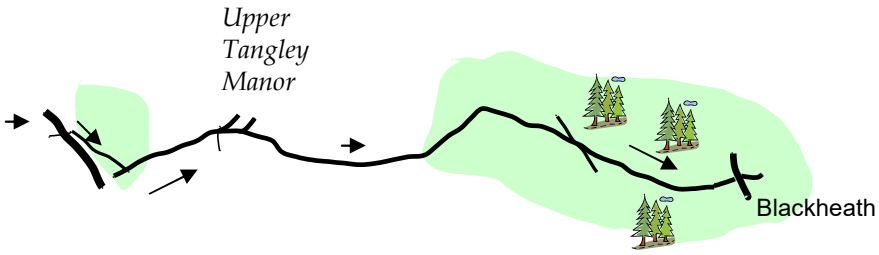


You have left the Wey-Arun Canal and joined the (37 miles=60 km long) Downs Link path linking the North Downs Way with the South Downs Way. You will be following it north almost all the way.

8 Cross Chinthurst Lane and continue straight ahead on a (sometimes rather squelchy) track next to *Southlands Stud*. In 450m, the track comes to a bend with a stile ahead. Ignore the stile and follow the bend **right**. St Martha's Hill is now clearly visible on the left. The track bends **left** when it meets a path from the right coming from Chinthurst Hill (see the walk *Blackheath and Shamley Green*). In another 300m it comes to a main road.

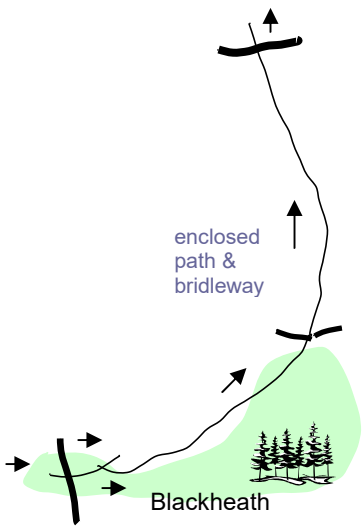


9 Cross the road to a track on the other side that goes diagonally right. The track runs almost parallel to the road, gets swallowed up in the woodland, and comes to a T-junction with a tarmac drive. Turn **left** on the drive. The drive passes a house and reaches the historic *Great Tangley Manor* which is worth a look. However, the route here is straight on on a narrower path, avoiding two drives branching off left. After about 800m through fine woodland, at a diagonal crossing track, keep straight ahead. You are now entering Blackheath a wonderful ancient area of heathland, home to rare species and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Shortly after a house, at a post with blue arrows, keep ahead on the main track, which is joined by a farm track coming from the left and, in 100m, meets a narrow tarmac road. Blackheath Village is on the right. However, your route is straight over the road on a broad track opposite.

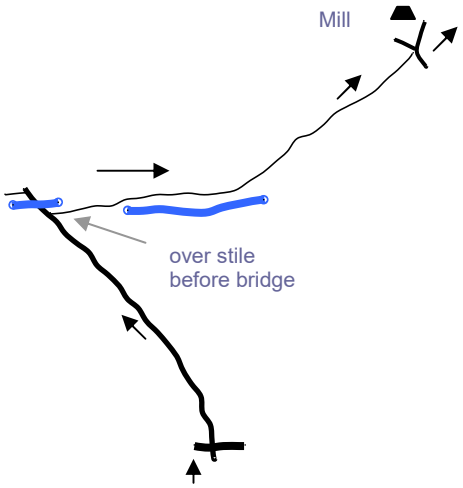


Leg 3: Blackheath to St Martha's Hill 4 km=2½ miles

10 In 20m, fork **right** between stumps as indicated by the fingerpost. Keep to the wide sandy track across the heath, avoiding all turnings off and always keeping straight on. (However, you can take a short cut left through the scots pines to avoid the wide sandy curve at the start.) The war memorial is visible on your right. Soon you have a handrail on your right as you traverse the heath. After a scenic 350m, the track goes across a drive near houses onto an enclosed path. After a house, there is a footpath on the left running parallel to the bridleway so you can stay out of any mud. Follow the long path all the way to a railway bridge and cross it to a main road, Dorking Road, Chilworth.

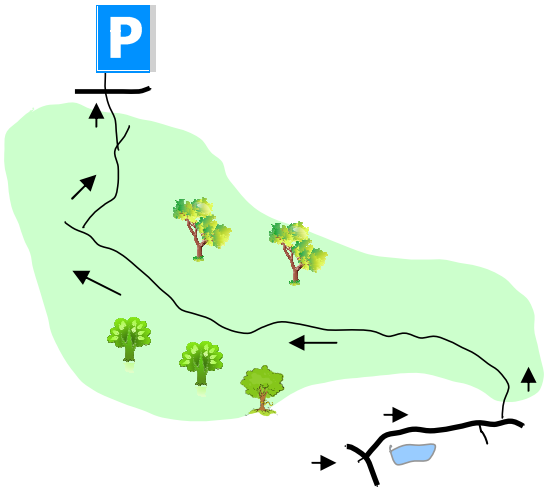


11 Cross the road to a farm lane opposite and follow it between meadows with St Martha's church visible straight ahead. On entering trees, before you reach a bridge over the Tillingbourne, turn sharp **right** over a stile into a meadow. However, as a short diversion, over the bridge on the left, you can visit the Chilworth Gunpowder Mills, established by the East India Company in 1625 and in use until 1920. (See the walk *Gunpowder and Deep Silence* in this series.) Cross the centre of the meadow, go over another stile and keep straight on alongside a grassy stream (now dammed half way and more like a ditch), along a narrow meadow, over another stile and a 2-plank bridge, then along an enclosed footpath, soon passing a large pond on your left. The path leads, via a redundant stile, to another large pond, the Postford Pond, by Albury Mill on the Tillingbourne river.



It was known as Albury Mill & Paper-Mould Manufactory, closed in 1810 and later used for a neo-Tudor laundry with water-powered equipment. It is now an attractive residence.

12 Bear left on a lane with the pond on your right. Stay on the lane as it later bends left by another pond, Waterloo Pond. When you reach *Millstream Cottage*, turn **left** at a junction of paths, going over a short boardwalk and through a barrier. Continue alongside a fence with the garden of the cottage down on your left. You are now on a wonderful path under tall beeches with the Tillingbourne valley on the left and wooded slopes on the right. After some distance the path begins to ascend. It reaches a meadow on the left and turns right. It then bends left uphill. Keep going onwards, following a yellow arrow, on a narrow path up the steepest part of the hill to a fingerpost. Keep straight ahead a short distance to reach the St Martha's Hill car park where the walk began.



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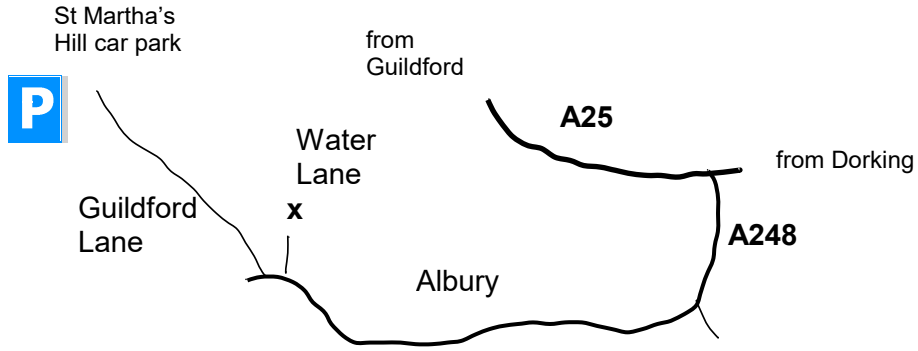
Getting there

By car: Park in the **St Martha's Hill** car park. To get there from the London area take the A25 Dorking-to-Guildford road to the A248 turn-off for Albury. Follow the road through Albury until just outside the village there is a double bend. Ignore the cul-de-sac *Water Lane* on the right but take the next road right, *Guildford Lane*, immediately after. Follow this narrow lane for about 0.8 mile (1.3 km) until you reach the car park on the left. It is also possible to reach the car park from the Guildford area, via the A246, Tangier Road, Warren Road, One Tree Hill Road and White Lane.



Alternative starting points are:

- **Blackheath village**, postcode **GU4 8RB**, giving you a refreshment break at the ½-way and ⅔-way points around Shalford: park in the car park at the end of the tarmac; to begin the walk, facing the entrance to the car park, turn **left** at the start of a drive marked *Private No Through Road* **but** immediately fork **left** over a little bridge with handrails, keep straight on over the heath heading for the War Memorial (a tall cross), continue straight ahead for another 50m and turn **right** on a very wide sandy path, join the walk in Leg 3, in middle of Section 10 where the War Memorial is mentioned.
- the **Pilgrims Way** and **Halfpenny Lane** car parks in Guildford (begin Leg 1, end of Section 3).
- the layby on the A281 at the **Trunley Heath** Road junction (begin Leg 2, start of Section 7.

By train: to Guildford station, then bus 24, 32, 53 or 63 to Shalford, or walk along the River Wey. (The 32 bus also goes to Chilworth.) Shalford Station is a good start. Chilworth station is also a possible start, although trains are less frequent.