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

Guildford, River Wey, Watts Gallery
Loseley Park, Artists' Village

Distance: 10½ km=7 miles + optional sightseeing easy walking

Region: Surrey Date written: 14-dec-2013 / 27-nov-2019

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Refreshments: Compton, St Catherine's Village

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

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

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Villages, parkland, woodland, river, pubs, craft village & gallery

In Brief

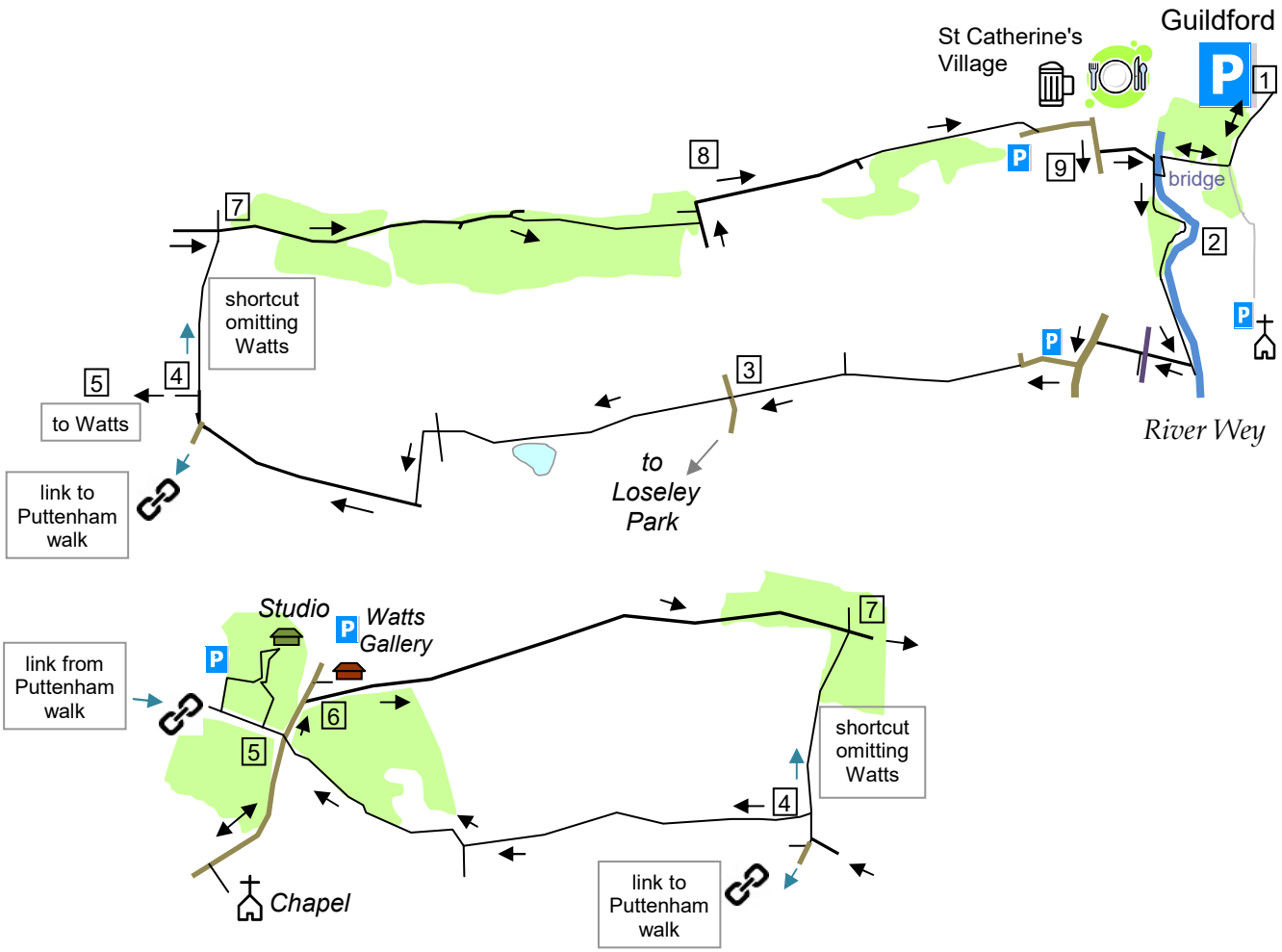
This walk takes you on an adventurous excursion from near the centre of the city of Guildford, far out into the country to visit the *Watts Gallery* and *Artists' Village* (NB **closed Mon,Tue**) where you can also visit the Studio via a woodland walk and enjoy good food in the licensed café/restaurant. The walk includes a section along the bank of the River Wey near Guildford, and the historic *Loseley Estate* with an optional detour to visit the remarkable gardens and house (at a modest charge).

This walk was originally one "half" of the longer Guildford-Puttenham walk, which is now a "zipped up" walk joining the two shorter options.

There are some patches of nettles and brambles on this walk but the going is fairly dry, even in the winter months. So long trousers and any reasonable footwear should be fine. Your dog could come too.

The walk begins, nominally, in the **Shalford Park** car park, nearest postcode **GU4 8AA**, w3w:hoping.movie.flash, near **Guildford**, Surrey, or in one of a number of alternative places along the way. It is also easy to begin at Guildford Station, with an extra 1¾ km=1 mile each way. A good route from the station to the start of the walk by the river will be found in the walk *Guildford Station to the Church-on-the-Hill*. For a list of possible parking places and for more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



1 Starting at the Shalford Park car park, from the far end of the car park, furthest from the road, cross the grass and veer **left** along the edge of the playing fields with woods on your right. In 150m, on your right, there is a gap. Turn **right** here into the trees, going past an information tablet. Follow this good path for 200m to the river-side. Turn **left** along the banks of the River Wey for 40m, passing another information tablet, and cross the river by the wooden footbridge to the opposite bank. Continue in the same direction (upstream) with the river on your left.

2 The river bends sharp left and right again. Ignore a footpath and railway tunnel on the right. Soon you reach St Catherine's Lock. Turn **right** here on a cinder path. After an arch under the railway, continue straight ahead, ignoring a footpath on your left, to reach the main road in the village of Artington. Turn **left** on the road and, in 80m, turn **right** on a narrow road, The Ridges, with a signpost for the *Surrey Police HQ*. At the end of the road, keep ahead on a narrow footpath beside the blue gates of the HQ. This path soon gives you some good open views, with the swanky police sports grounds on your right and views left to Chinthurst and other Surrey hills. *(See the walk in this series "Blackheath and Shamley Green".)* At a junction, keep ahead, ignoring a footpath on your right. Your path joins a track from a house on your left and runs past cottages to Littleton Lane by *Tudor Pillarbox Cottage*. (As a diversion, turning **left** on this lane for 600m, then **right**, would take you to *Loseley Park and House* in case you wish to make a very worthwhile visit – see below.)

3 Cross straight over the lane on a track opposite and keep ahead through a modern kissing-gate across a large meadow on a clear path. At the far side, keep ahead beside a lake on your left. Beyond it is *Loseley Park and House*.

Loseley Park has been owned by the same More-Molyneux family since Sir William More extended and renovated it to persuade Queen Elizabeth I that it was now "adequate to her needs" for a short visit. Part of the stone came from Waverley Abbey. (See the walk "Puttenham Common, Waverley Abbey & Tilford".) Inside, the wood panelling in the hall is thought to have come from Henry VIII's defunct Nonsuch Palace. Sir William's granddaughter Ann eloped with the poet John Donne. (See the pub walk "The Anchor, Pyrford Lock".) The house contains some really eye-opening fixtures and furniture, whilst the garden is divided between walls into "rooms" each of which has flowers of one colour, spectacular in late May and June. The House is open from May to August and the gardens one month longer.

At the other side of the lake, keep ahead along the **left**-hand side of a meadow. At the far side, go past a redundant stile, over a track and continue ahead on another track. In 40m the track turns left and, in 180m, it reaches a tree-lined drive coming from *Loseley House*. Go through a kissing-gate and turn **right** on the drive, to continue, passing *Polsted Lodge*. *On your left, the tip of Charterhouse School is just visible.* In a further 400m, you reach a multiple junction of paths and drives next to *Little Polsted*.

Decision point. If you are doing the longer "zipped up" 17 km=10½ mile Guildford-Puttenham walk, turn **left** on the tarmac of Polsted Lane and switch back to the main document. You will have the chance to visit the *Watts Gallery and Artists' Village* on the return leg. Otherwise …

Turn **right** past a fingerpost on a narrow footpath between hedges. In only 50m, you will see some steps on your left next to a yellow arrow.

Decision point. If you prefer to take a short cut, omitting the Watts Artists' Village and a chance for refreshment, skip forward in this text and do the section called **West Warren Express**. Otherwise …

4 Turn **left**, up the steps, on a narrow path between fences. On your right soon is a field and a farm driveway. After about 350m, this path leads through a wooden gate into a wild meadow. Follow a fenced-off snaking path through the meadow, keeping generally to the right-hand side. After 300m in this meadow, you come out to a junction of paths. Go **right** through a metal gate and quickly turn **left** in the corner on a concrete track. Just before a large shed, leave the track by turning **right** as indicated and **left** through a small wooden gate. Follow this narrow path through bracken and up under hollies, past a garden fence, eventually reaching a narrow road in Compton village.

5 There are **three** possible directions of interest from this point.

1. Turn **left** on this quiet road for just over 250m to see the remarkable pre-Raphaelite *Watts Chapel (open again summer 2020 after refurbishment)*, returning the same way.

   The Watts Chapel and Cemetery are described and illustrated in the pub walk "Compton, Surrey: The Withies Inn".

2. Cross straight over the road from the point where you emerged and turn **right** past the overflow car park and follow the visitor's trail to the stone cross and up to the Studio.

3. Turn **right** on the road for 100m, and turn **right** into the *Watts Gallery*, from where this walk continues.

George Frederic Watts was a Victorian painter, famous now for his allegorical works (such as "Hope" and "Fata Morgana") but also hugely successful in his time for his radiant portraits of the rich and famous and their families. He moved to Compton later in his life and built the gallery to house his paintings and sculpture. The Gallery was refurbished thanks to the Lottery Fund and the BBC "Restoration" programme. It is open 11am - 5pm (from 1pm on Sunday and Bank Holidays), closed Monday (except Bank Holidays). The site also houses a photo studio, an "artist in residence", a shop and a café/restaurant.

6 After your sojourn, fork **right** on a wide sandy track that runs to the right of the gallery, part of the North Downs Way. There are fields and meadows on each side and you pass a farm as you go up into woodland. 250m after the farm, you meet a fingerpost and a 4-way junction. Keep straight ahead.

The West Warren Express short cut re-joins the main walk here.

7 The path through West Warren is dominated by oak and beech. Your path descends and, in 700m, joins a track from the right. Where the track curves left after 60m, leave it to continue straight ahead through the woods of East Warren, thus temporarily leaving the NDW. In about 700m, you descend to a lane near a junction. Turn **left** on the lane, going past a sign for Piccards Farm and ignoring a bridleway on your left, thus re-joining the NDW. Before a metal gate, your route bends smartly right and becomes tarmac again.

7 You pass farm buildings and workshops. Where the track bends right after about 500m, keep straight ahead on a narrower path. You now have steep woods on your right and small meadows on your left. Finally your path runs between fences and meets a road, Sandy Lane. Turn **left** on the road, descending to the main Portsmouth Road (A3100) in front of *Ye Olde Ship Inn* in St Catherine's near Guildford.

Ye Olde Ship is the best loved traditional pub in the Guildford area, dating from the time of the Pilgrims in 1556. It has had various names in past years and in the 1920s was also a garage and a piano workshop. The nearby St Catherine's Hill (subject of a painting by Turner) has held an annual fair since the 1300s and the Ship in past times was allowed to sell unlicensed beer there. Now-adays, several real ales still flow. The lunch menu is famous for homemade pizzas and the luxury fish pie. The pub sometimes fields a cricket team and plays the nearby College of Law. (By the way, the word "ye" in the name is pronounced as "the": it's just an old spelling.)

9 Turn **right** on the main road and, in 50m, turn **left** on Ferry Lane. Avoid the track uphill (which would take you to St Catherine's Hill and the ruined chapel) and keep **left** on the tarmac lane. Follow the drive over a railway bridge and keep ahead on a tarmac drive, marked as a footpath, passing *Ferry Cottage*. At the bottom of Ferry Lane, you meet the wide River Wey. *Note the spewing stream here, the little rock bridge and seat and the poem.*

The **Haslemere-Guildford Monster** leaves this walk here, turning **left** along the bank.

Turn **right** along the bank. If you did not begin the walk at Shalford Park, now simply continue along the bank and resume the walk from section 2.

In 50m, cross the river by the footbridge. Keep **left** along the opposite bank with the river on your left. In 40m, turn **right** on the main path, away from the river. In 200m your path goes through a gap in the trees and past an information tablet, familiar from your outward journey. Turn **left** beside the playing fields to reach the Shalford Park car park where the walk began.

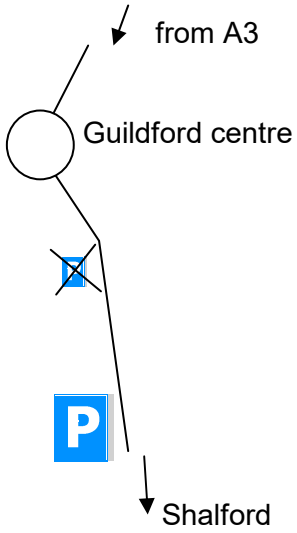
West Warren Express

Take this short cut if you are keen to return to Guildford and do not mind omitting the Watts Gallery and Artists' Village.

Ignoring the yellow arrow and steps, continue ahead on the narrow footpath. This brackeny path runs beside a cereal field and later rises gently under tree branches. At the top, after 300m or so on this path, you meet a 4-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here on a wide footpath, part of the North Downs Way.

Your walk now joins the main route, at section 6.

Getting there



By car: **(1)** On **weekdays**, the walk can begin at the **Shalford Park** car park, nearest **postcode GU4 8BL**, grid ref SU 997 485, next to a low redbrick sports pavilion. This car park is about ¾ mile south of Guildford city centre on the Shalford Road (see map). The parking charge is £3.20 (as 2017). It also has a loo. This car park is **closed** to the public **at weekends** because of matches (although there are some free spaces before the gate).

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(2) by **Shalford Church**, **postcode GU4 8BP**, either on Church Close or by the water works (start the walk by going north on a tarmac path and keeping left round the playing fields);

(3) in **Sandy Lane** opposite the *Olde Ship* Inn, just after the *Zone Ends* sign, **postcode GU3 1HQ**;

(4) in **The Ridges** near the Surrey Police Headquarters, **postcode GU3 1LH**;

(5) Artington park-and-ride, usable if someone in your party prefers to go shopping, closed on Sunday and not open till 10 am;

(6) Chantry Wood car park, postcode GU4 8AD. ½ km off the route and rather small, but free. Walk down the road "Pilgrims Way";

(7) Watts Gallery (or overflow) car park, postcode GU3 1DQ.

By bus/train: from Guildford station, many buses run along the Shalford Road, e.g. no. 24. Check the timetables. On foot from Guildford Station, the distance is just under a mile.

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