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

Puttenham, Pilgrims Way, Compton
Watts Gallery and Artists' Village

Distance: 6½ km=4 miles + optional sightseeing easy walking

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

Author: Fusszweig Date revised: 25-jul-2024

Refreshments: Compton, Puttenham Last update: 16-oct-2026

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

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

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

Villages, woodland, meadows, views, craft village and gallery, chapel

In Brief

This walk takes you on an adventurous excursion from Puttenham, a delightful village with a church, cottages and at least one good pub. (The *Jolly Farmer* was renamed the *Pickled Pig*, but doesn't look like opening soon; the *Good Intent* is in Puttenham village; check the web!) The other big attraction is the *Watts Gallery and Artists' Village* in Compton where you can also visit the Studio via a woodland walk and enjoy good food in the licensed café/restaurant.

This walk was originally one half of the longer Guildford-Puttenham walk, which is now an extra "zipped up" walk combining 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, provided you have a short lead for the crossing of the A3 junction. There is one section across the golf course at Puttenham but it is short and easy.

The walk begins in the village of **Puttenham** Surrey, postcode **GU3 1AJ**, w3w:invite.disbelief.clots. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). Jan 2024: the car park opposite the *Pickled Pig* (currently also looking *very closed*) was **shut** because of fly tipping - maybe temporarily. There is limited parking in the village, on the right-hand side at the start of the lane into the village, or just past the *Good Intent* pub. You can also park at the overflow car park *(Limnerslease)* of the Watts Gallery, or elsewhere along the route.

The Walk

The **Haslemere-Guildford Monster** joins this walk here.

1 The walk begins near the village of Puttenham on the main road opposite (the remains of?) the *Pickled Pig* pub. Take the signed North Downs Way (NDW), a wide bridleway, avoiding the tarmac lane that forks right towards the golf club. *This is also part of the Pilgrims Way, that historic route used by pilgrims from Winchester to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury.* Your track goes between the clubhouse and the practice links. Just after Rare Breeds farm avoid a private right fork; at a junction avoid a track left and a footpath right, always staying on the main track. You pass a white bungalow, *Monksgrove*, on your right,followed by the "10th tee". Your track goes past a hamlet of cottages: here ignore a bridleway on the right, a footpath on the left and a track that forks right. Eventually you reach the last house on your left, called *Questors*. Soon your track enters woodland. As before, stay on the NDW straight through the woods, avoiding three bridleways leading off.

2 You are now in a woodland of mainly red oaks with, on your right, a nature reserve belonging to Loseley Park *(see the adjoining Guildford-Compton walk)*. Your track joins a tarmac drive, takes you under the A3 road and under an arch below a slip road. *The crosses mark the Pilgrims Way running underneath.* Straight ahead will lead to Down Lane and the Watts Gallery, but first there is an interesting diversion. In 50m or so, turn **left** on a track leading through a gate to an overflow car park used for Gallery visitors. Immediately turn **right** up a new zigzag path into the trees and rhododendrons. In a short distance, you come to a Celtic Cross and a carved seat. *The cross was built at Watts' request, depicting pilgrims, rich and poor. The seat was donated to Mrs Mary Watts in 1934 by the Potters Arts Guild.* The path on your left is a series of hairpins leading up to the *Watts Studio*, in the Watts's original home, *Limnerslease*, displaying many unfinished canvases and letters, including several of Mrs Watts. (*Limnerslease* is currently only open to guided tours: ring 01483-813593.) Now retrace your steps and turn **left** back to the road. (There is a short cut through the rhododendrons.) Your route now continues **right** along the road, unless you are going on to Guildford (at the link point below). But first turn **left** along the road to arrive in 50m at the Watts Gallery with its photo studio, resident artist(s), shop, loo and café/restaurant.

wc

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 restaurant.

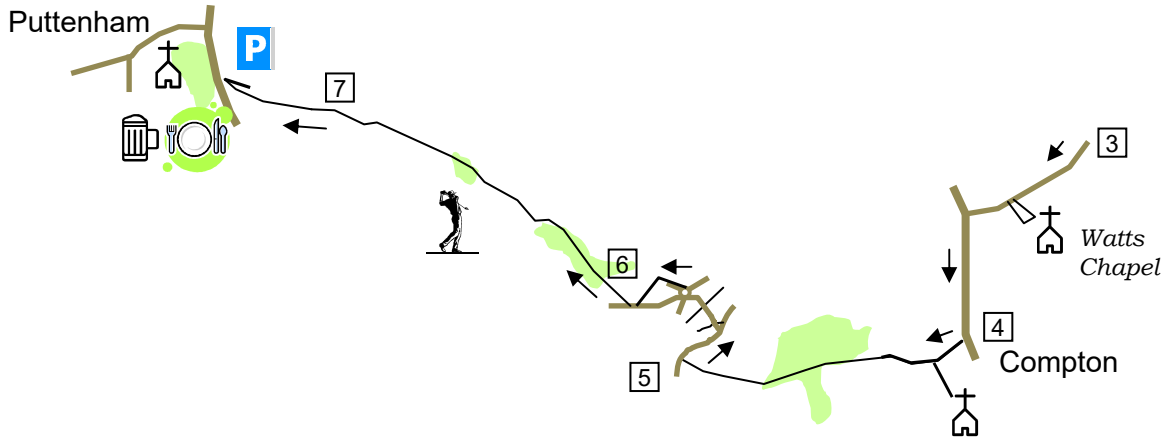
Decision point. If you are doing the longer "zipped up" 17 km=10½ mile Guildford-Puttenham walk, switch to the **Guildford-Compton** walk and join it at section 6. Otherwise …

3 After your visit, double back along Down Lane the way you came, passing a round knoll and Coneycroft Farm on your left. Soon you reach a spreading cedar and a gate on the left leading to the Watts Chapel and Cemetery. The chapel is unique and different from anything you may have seen before and absolutely worth the small climb.

The Watts Chapel and Cemetery were designed by G.F. Watts' wife Mary. The interior of the Chapel was moulded and painted in gesso (felt dipped in a mixture of plaster and glue) in Mary's Studio by a team of craftsmen. The cemetery contains the graves of the Watts and several local artists who assisted with the building. The writer Aldous Huxley, of "Brave New World" fame, is also buried here (see the "Puttenham and the Welcome Woods" walk in this series).

Continue along the road, finally reaching the main road, and turn **left** into the village of Compton.

Compton goes back to Saxon times, the name indicating a farmstead ("tun") in a hollow between hills ("cwm"). As you walk through, you have a strong feeling of soul and community stretching back the four hundred or so years of many of these venerable houses. Compton and its church were one of the places that the pilgrims visited on their way to Canterbury. Perhaps the only thing that mars the peace is the busy road running through the village.



In just over 200m, as the road bends left, your route is **right** on Eastbury Lane, signposted as a bridleway. However…

4 It is first worth going 100m or so further along the road and **right** for an unmissable chance for a quick excursion to visit the Church of St Nicholas. This is *not* just another village church: it is unique.

St Nicholas church is 500 years older than any of the other buildings in Compton. Inside the church you see Norman pillars and arches carved from chalk found on the nearby Hogs Back. The square tower dates from Norman times and the clock from 1688. In 1929 a tiny cell was discovered in the north wall which would have been home to an "Anchorite" or hermit who would have lived there voluntarily, from the date of incarceration until death, being fed via a small gap and eventually buried (often underneath the cell itself). In the same year the Sundial was also found, having been hidden for many centuries. It shows time in relation to church

services. The two-storey chancel is extremely rare and the second altar was probably made by passing pilgrims, as was the cubic painting on the walls. There are "graffiti" too: a Norman knight in the chancel arch. The stained glass trefoil window in the lower chapel also dates from the 1200s.

Continue along Eastbury Lane beside the wall of *Eastbury Manor* and stay on the lane as it veers right in front of the gates to *Westbury Manor*. Follow the grassy track as it curves left to a fingerpost. Take the **right** fork, uphill towards some tall trees. The path leads you through mature woodland, a clearing, and more trees, up to the top of the slope where there is a field on your right. Turn **right** here over a stile and along a fenced path between two pastures. Your path takes you between metal gates and then narrows as it crosses a brambly heath (perfect for blackberries in late summer). At the end, go past a redundant stile and down steps (care! slippery) to a road.

5 Turn **right** along the footway on the right-hand side of the road to reach a roundabout. Due to growth of vegetation, a much better way has been found to reach the next road, as follows. Stay on the footway till you have just passed the roundabout. Turn **left**, using the traffic island, to cross the two-way sliproad from Compton. Cross the road bridge over the A3 along the **right**-hand side. The footway ends at a patch of rough grass: keep straight on across the grass to reach the one-way sliproad for the A3 *London, Guildford*. Cross carefully to reach the line of bushes on the other side. Turn **left**, keeping close to the edge and keep **right** into a cul-de-sac called *Wanborough Common*. Keep **left** past a garage. Follow the tarmac drive to reach the Puttenham Heath Road. Turn **right** along the footway, keeping to the left of some concrete blocks. In 40m, just after *Summer Wood*, fork **right** through a wooden barrier on a signposted footpath.

6 The footpath runs between garden fences, beside a paling fence and out onto the links of Puttenham Golf Club. Keep straight ahead at all times, on the gravel path, close to the fence on your left. At the end of the gravel path, keep straight on over the fairway in the direction of a yellow arrow, watching out for golf balls. Head for a marker post with a yellow arrow visible ahead in a gap between some slender oaks. Keep straight on. The next marker post is in a mature wood. Keep to the edge of the wood on your left. The next marker post points you just to the left of a small clump of trees and along the left-hand side of a cricket pitch. The best way now is a fraction right, towards a mound ahead which has a flagpole on its top. This is Frowsbury Hill, a Bronze Age burial site. *Here Queen Victoria and Albert reviewed the mounted troops in 1858.*

7 Skirt around the left of Frowsbury Hill and pick up a sandy path, forking left soon to pass the clubhouse on your right (unbooted walkers are welcomed for drinks and nibbles), joining a tarmac driveway. *Note on your left a water jet boot cleaner, free for use by golfers, walkers tolerated.* Continue to meet the road again opposite the *(ex-?)Pickled Pig*, and thence to the village of Puttenham where the walk began.

As an interesting excursion, the village of Puttenham with its mixture of building styles is **right** and **left** shortly on a narrow road. The church of St John The Baptist is on your left and the (refurbished 2020) *Good Intent* pub on your right.

Getting there

By car: Puttenham lies 4 miles west of Guildford between the A3 trunk road and the A31 Farnham road. It is clearly signposted from both roads.

An alternative start is in the overflow car park *(Limnerslease)* at the Watts Gallery.

By bus/train: bus 65 from Guildford stops in Puttenham village. Check the timetables.

*fancy **more** free walks?* www.fancyfreewalks.org