Fancy Free Walks

*point your feet on a new path*

# Tatsfield

Distance: 5 km=3 miles — easy walking

Region: Surrey — Date written: 21-may-2023

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Refreshments: Tatsfield

Map: Explorer 147 (Sevenoaks) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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*Green valleys, woodland, country highways, bluebells in season*

## In Brief

Tatsfield may be the tidiest - and the most secretive - village in Surrey. This appealing three-miler unlocks some of the village's best-guarded secrets. One of these is Park Wood an expanse of woodland covered end-to-end in bluebells if you walk it in April or early May. Another is Chestnut Avenue, a scenic driveway which holds its own little gems. The village sits high on the North Downs, giving you scenes of picturesque valleys and views.

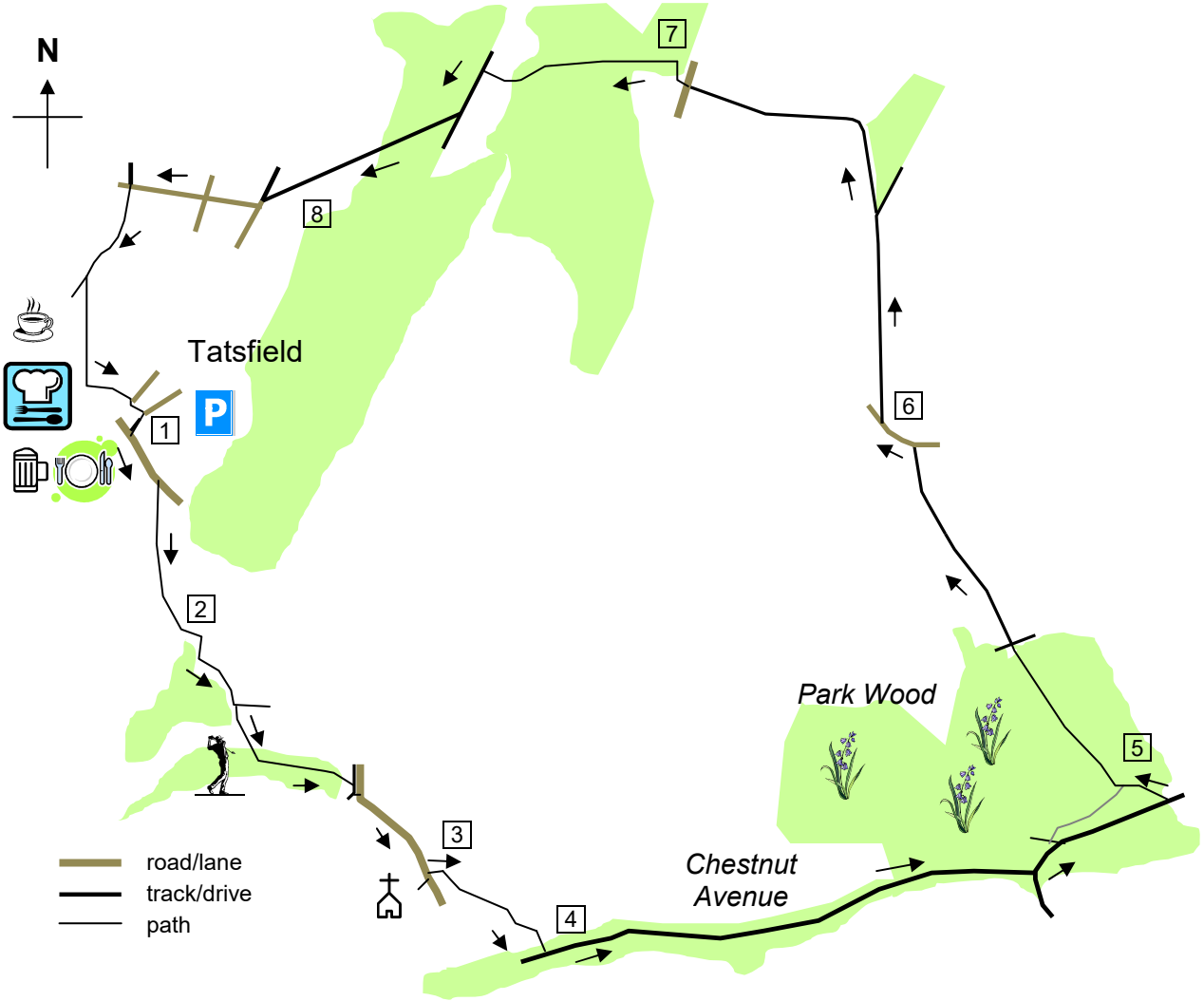
Tatsfield is a perfect spot for prandial refreshment, having its own restaurant, pub and tearoom. To enquiry at the *Bakery* restaurant, ring 01959-577605; for the *Old Ship* ring 01959-577311. There is also a *Sheree's Store and Tearoom*.

The walk is virtually free of nettles, although there is a short section near the start which may be quite overgrown in spring and summer. The terrain consists of grass, lanes, a wide forest trail and gravel driveways. Although this is one of the drier walks, you cannot completely escape the mud during an especially wet period (such as early-2024). There may be some muddy patches in the forest but with the wide path and trees, they would be easy to skirt around, making boots optional in the drier seasons. The walks is fine for your dog, but you would need a short lead in the early section which crosses a golf course.

The walk begins in the village of Tatsfield, Surrey, postcode **TN16 2AG**. Tatsfield is not used to visitors, so there is no obvious car park - not even for the fabulous Park Wood. So you can park discreetly in one of the residential roads. But if you intend to be a customer after this short walk, it would surely be fine to park in the generous car park beside the *Bakery* restaurant or the *Old Ship* inn. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

## The Walk

*Tatsfield appears in the Domesday Book as "Tatelefelle", which may mean a hilltop lookout (against the Danes), but no one is certain. Its assets then were ½ hide (only enough to sustain a small household). Around 1350, during the Hundred Years' War, Tatsfield was possessed by a Welsh prince who felt no loyalty to the English and went and fought for France, losing his hold on this tiny patch of England. The ancient Pilgrims' Way ran through Tatsfield and travellers to Canterbury would stop by at the church and possibly call at the inn. Tatsfield is one of the highest villages in Surrey at 255m (837 ft) above sea level. It keeps its rustic feel by leaving five miles of its roads as rough tracks rather than tarmac. Nowadays the village is kept spotless by an army of volunteers with bags and litter-picks. This, taken with the eccentric buildings, the little village green and pond, the hush away from the main roads, all make Tatsfield such an appealing place to visit.*




1 With the *Old Ship* inn on your left, walk to the main road and turn **left** on it. In around 50m you pass on your right the entrance to Tatsfield Primary School. Just after that, at a fingerpost, turn **right** through a kissing-gate onto a narrow footpath. The hillside on your right has been planted with oak saplings, foretelling a shady walk for those who take this route in a few years' time. A similar kissing-gate leads out onto a flowery hillside with horses grazing both sides of a valley. Go down the sloping pasture and through a small metal gate. Cross to a kissing-gate, going over a farm track and past an unneeded stile, to ascend the other side on a narrow fenced path between meadows.

2 At the top, your path bends right and left, and a fraction right, round the corner of a field. You are now in a corner where the original path bends left. Look now for a gap in the trees. Turn **right** through this gap onto the links of Park Wood Golf Course. Looking right for flying balls, cross the fairway a little to the left, aiming for a yellow post, into the band of trees on the other side. (The yellow post is not for walkers - it's a 150-yard fairway marker; but useful nonetheless.) Turn **left** through the trees, immediately passing a walker's marker post. Keep straight on through the trees parallel to the fairway you just crossed. (You can walk through the double line of trees or, for extra protection, along the grass space beyond.) In 80m you pass another marker post. Keep straight on until you reach the boundary hedge with the road beyond. Turn **right** here on a wide track. In only 20m or so, just before the track bends right, look for a hidden gap in the hedge. Go **left** here past an unneeded stile to the road and turn **right** on it.

3 In 150m, your route is **left** through a car park. But first it's well worth seeing St Mary's Church, just past it on the right. From the churchyard, you have a fine view westwards to Titsey Hill.

*Tatsfield Church of St Mary the Virgin was built during the 1100s but the tower only appeared in the mid-1800s. As well as being an Anglican church, it also serves the Roman Catholic parish of Tatsfield and hosts their services.*

Having turned left into the roadside car park (that is, right if coming back from the church), pass through bollards if necessary into the larger car parking area. Cross straight over the short side to find a rather hidden narrow path leading off through trees to the **right**. This path runs for 150m through dense trees and then bends right, going down fairly steeply to meet a tarmac drive.

4 This is Chestnut Avenue, a beautiful, deeply shaded country highway with only sparse local traffic, serving just a handful of detached properties. It is also part of the North Downs Way, that great long-distance path from Farnham to the Channel ports. Turn **left** on Chestnut Avenue and walk along the drive. You pass *Mole End* with its silhouettes of Ratty and Mole. After 700m, the drive finally ends at a 3-way junction with another tarmac drive. Turn **left** on the drive which is also named Chestnut Avenue. In 80m, opposite an entrance to *Compton Chase*, a fingerpost points to a footpath into Park Wood. Ignore this footpath as it is *not* part of your route. (However, curious walkers can enter here, turn **right** in 10m over a bank, turn **right** in 25m, and eventually turn **left** on the wide path mentioned below.) Go a further 150m, till you see fields ahead, with *Gamekeepers Lodge* on your right. Now turn **sharp left** on a wide unmarked path into Park Wood, immediately keeping left on the main path, deep into the wood. [July 2026: walkers found this part of the wood fenced off with notices about private land; access is possible by backtracking and taking the path described a few lines above. We know that Park Wood is privately owned but it has been used by locals (who do not all have a car) and by dog walkers. As a last resort, a public footpath is available 200m on the left.]

*Park Wood is a large area of private woodland which includes two footpaths but also generously allows free access to locals, families and walkers. Its eastern edge forms the border with Kent. With very little signage on the ground or on maps, and with no car parking, Park Wood is a secret gem enjoyed by the local people. Bluebells here seem to persist till late May and they cover the entire wood.*

5 Keep straight ahead at all times, avoiding all tempting paths leading off, In about 200m your path descends to a luminous space with tall beeches. In a further 100m you reach a 4-way crossing with farm sheds visible ahead and a small pasture to your right. A footpath joins here from your right and on the left is another unexplored wide woodland path. Go straight ahead, passing a redundant stile, on a narrow path between wire fences. As you near the first house, on your left you will find a seat containing a generous-spirited welcome message. There is also a water pump for a dog. Continue on the dusty drive, passing more well-kept houses. You come out to a lane, Rag Hill (unnamed at this point). Turn **left** on it.

6 In only 50m, at a fingerpost, fork **right** by a red postbox on a drive marked as Avenue Road. There is wide view to the right across a shallow valley of sheep pastures and horse paddocks. After 300m the drive divides opposite a group of large gates. Take the drive on the **left**, uphill. Follow this gravelly driveway (Manor Road, as you discover at the end), passing several house entrances, soon bending left, all the way to the main road.

7 Cross the road and straight over the grass to a narrow path into the woods marked by a red doggy bin. This path bypasses a stile and runs down into woodland. As you come down to a junction, keep straight ahead on a narrow path, through a wooden swing-gate. *(Note that you are on part of the Biggin Hill Circular Walk, a 9-miler, which takes in Downe - see that walk in this series - and Cudham.)* The path runs by a garden hedge and ends at a tarmac drive. Turn **left**. In 70m, at a multiple junction of drives, take the **right** fork uphill, marked as a bridleway (John's Road, unmarked here).

8 The drive levels out, passes more houses, and in 300m ends at a residential road. Cross straight over onto Crossways. In 80m cross over Westmore Road. In a further 100m, at the corner of unmade road called Greenway, turn **left** by a 3-way fingerpost onto a footpath. The path continues beside a fence and through a wooden barrier, leading onto the green in Tatsfield. For the village centre, keep to the **left**-hand side, past a kiddies' play area and turn **left**, back to little green, the pond and facilities, where the walk began.

## Getting there

By car: Tatsfield lies just off the main A233 road between Bromley and Westerham. People who live in the more western locations prefer to take the M25 and the A25 to Westerham and then the Croydon Road (B2024) from where there is a turn-off for Tatsfield, right, after 3 miles.

By bus/train: bus 464 runs from New Addington tram stop to Tatsfield. Check the timetables.

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