



Puttenham Common, Waverley Abbey & Tilford

Distance: 17½ km=11 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 9-sep-2013

Author: Schwebefuss

Date revised: 15-aug-2019

Refreshments: Tilford, Charleshill

Last update: 8-jan-2022

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

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.

Woodland, views, village, river, hills, historic locations

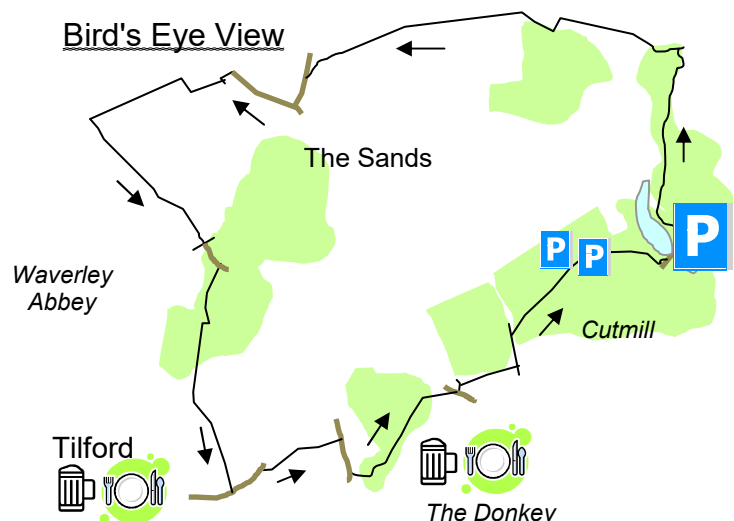
In Brief

This is an absolutely classic walk, a favourite, definitely *not* unique to this site but, I hope, told in my own unique style and with just a couple of FFW twists. En route you will find historical locations going back to the middle ages, one of the most charming of Surrey villages, divine birch and pine forests and two great places to take refreshment.



In the wetter seasons there are some muddy patches along the path *into* Tilford but otherwise this is a dry walk. In summer there are some nettles on the path *out of* Tilford. Apart from this, any sensible clothing should be fine. There are **no stiles**. Your dog is very welcome to come too.

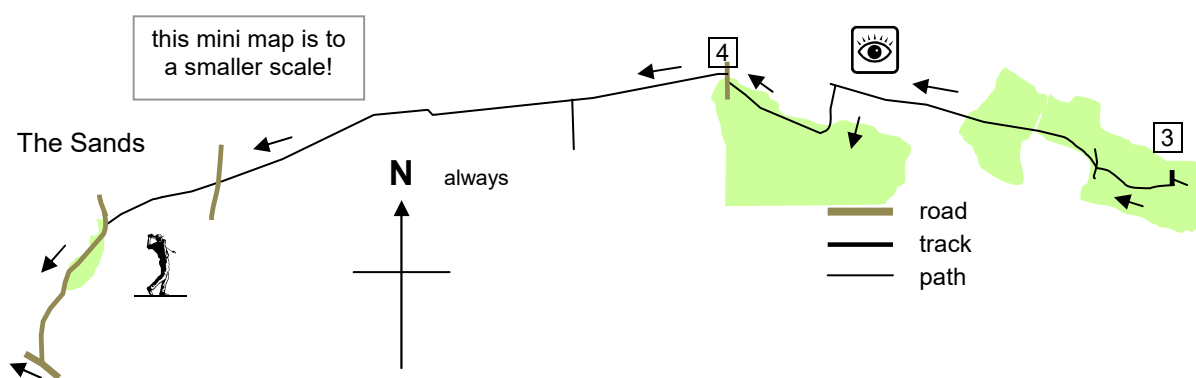
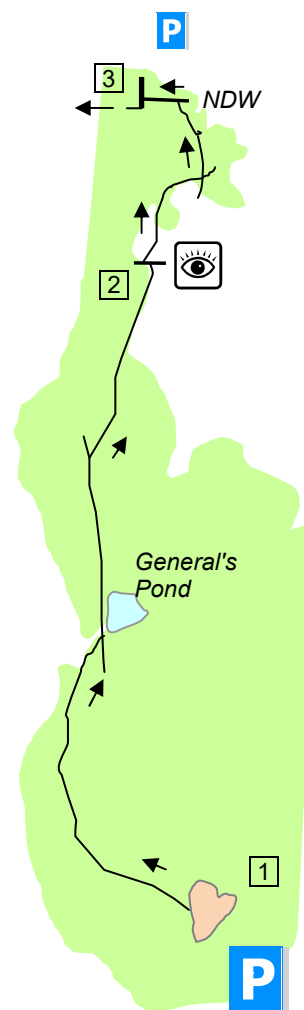
The walk begins at the Puttenham Common **Middle** Car Park in Suffield Lane, nearest postcode **GU3 1BG**, grid ref SU 911 459. Other possible starts are the Puttenham Common Tarn Car Park, approximate postcode **GU10 1JH**, grid ref SU 909 456, and the Britty Wood car park, postcode **GU10 1JJ**, grid ref SU 904 457, both off Littleworth Road. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Puttenham Common to The Sands 5½ km=3½ miles

- 1 Take the main footpath in the far left corner of the Middle Car Park just to the right of a noticeboard, going past a post with coloured arrows which you will be following for some way. This woodland path takes you across a low wide bridge over a marshy stream after which a path joins you from the left. Wooden boards take you to the General's Pond, one of six ponds on the Common, once much larger, probably built as a fish pond. Stay on the main path with the pond on your right. Ignore a path forking right up a bank 20m after the pond. 150m later, you reach a fork with two marker posts. Take the **right** fork. After a long but easy climb, near the top, bear **left** at a marker post to reach a wide crossing path at a major sandy junction.
- 2 Turn **left** for only 5m and **right** again at a purple arrow, also a purple arrow for the self-guided trail, to maintain your original direction. Your path veers slightly right across an open space with great views ahead to the Hog's Back. After 200m, avoiding a path straight ahead, veer **left** on a wider sandy crossing track coming down from your right, still following the small purple arrow. After 250m, fork **left** at a marker post. In another 150m, after a winding route through trees, you eventually reach a T-junction with a major path by a tiny car park by a fence and stream. This is the North Downs Way (NDW), a well-known long-distance path. Turn **left** on the NDW, between paling fences to a lane by a cottage. Turn **left** on the lane.



- 3 In 10m, turn **right** at a signpost on a footpath. The path rises through Totford Wood to reach an open field. Bear **left** here, staying on the way-marked NDW, along a fine green path with occasional pines and a conifer plantation on the right. The path crosses a gravel drive and later crosses a wide ditch, passing through a swing-gate into a long grassy meadow, with another swing-gate after 50m, giving you more views right to the Hog's Back. Just before the end of the meadow, ignore a small wooden gate which is for horses only, go another 100m into the corner, and turn **left** through a swing-gate, as indicated by the arrow. The path runs

next to the gates of the house where there is a slanting information tablet about the house and Heritage Trail and soon, on the left, its musty cellar.

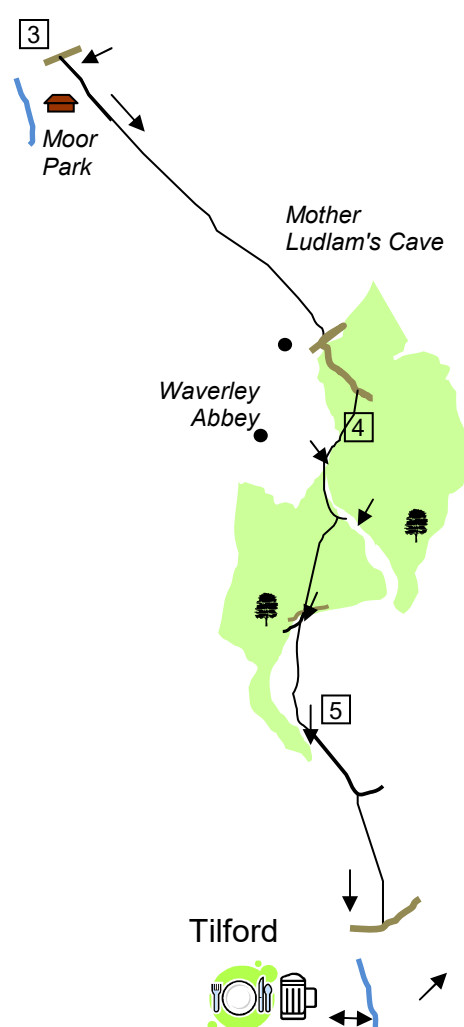
Moor Park is a Grade II listed house set in 24 ha (60 acres). An older house stood here from 1307 but the present house was built in 1630 and developed by its most celebrated owner, diplomat and essayist Sir William Temple in the 1680s. He employed a young Jonathan Swift (who later wrote Gulliver's Travels) as his secretary and the house played host to such notables as King William (of Orange), John Dryden, Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. In Victorian times, the house was used as a hydrotherapy centre and Charles Darwin was one visitor who benefited. One of the practitioners was the handsome Edinburgh doctor Dr Lane whose scandalous affair with Isabella Robinson ended here, giving rise to the account by Kate Summerscale in her novel "Mrs Robinson's Disgrace". In the 1890s the then owner chained up the lodge gates to keep out the public; this resulted in the "Battle of Moor Park" in which a crowd of nearly 500 local people forced the gates open. The grounds leading down from the footpath to the River Wey are a Nature Reserve, managed by the Surrey Wildlife Trust, a rare area of wet woodland and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) noted for its alders, waterbirds (including kingfishers) and rare plants.

- 3 Follow the surfaced drive, going through a small wooden gate, after which becomes a rough wide track. After 700m, you pass some wartime defences with another information tablet. The path soon runs along beeches and mixed woodland above the valley of the River Wey on your right. In 400m or so, you pass Mother Ludlam's Cave on your left.

Mother Ludlam was the white witch of Waverley, a herbalist and helper of the poor. Anyone who needed a cooking utensil or piece of furniture would visit the cave at midnight, turn around three times repeating the words "Pray Mother Ludlam, lend me ... and I will return it in two days". The next morning the item would be at the cave entrance. All went well until a large copper cauldron was not returned on time. Mother Ludlam was so annoyed that she refused to take the cauldron back and refused to lend anything else again. The cauldron was taken to Waverley Abbey and, after the dissolution, to Frensham Church where it can still be seen. Another legend links Mother Ludlam with the Devil and the hills of the Devil's Jumps. (See the walk in this series [Frensham Little Pond](#), [Devil's Jumps](#), [Sculpture Park](#).) A spring used to rise in the cave, giving a water supply for Waverley Abbey (see below) in the early middle ages. The cave was made into a grotto in Victorian times but it has languished recently.

Your path goes through a modern kissing-gate and a house and out to a road. Turn **right** on the road. As a worthwhile diversion, staying on the road Waverley Lane now leads to a mill pond, the River Wey and the entrance to the ruins of Waverley Abbey, with free entry to all visitors.

Waverley was the first monastery in Britain for the Cistercians, the self-sufficient "white friars". It was founded in 1128 by William Giffard, Bishop of Winchester who brought over twelve monks and an abbot from Aumone in



France. The abbey grew over time but, because of its closeness to the river, suffered badly from floods. The monks and lay brothers farmed the land, raised sheep for their wool and provided shelter and an infirmary for travellers.

4 Immediately, at a road junction, turn **left** on a major road (or right if you are coming back from visiting the abbey). *Traffic runs very speedily along this stretch, so you need to be careful, particularly if children and dogs are present.* In 200m, just before a left curve, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a wide track, signed as a byway, running between fences. Your track rises through pine woods and, about 500m from the road, reaches a 3-way junction beside a large metal gate. Turn **right** here on the main sunken track uphill, following the red arrow. Your track comes out, in another 400m, to a lane opposite Sheephatch Farm and its converted barn.

5 Cross straight over the lane onto a wide track. In 30m, fork **left** at a markerpost going beside farm buildings, between gates and meadows, always keeping to the level path. 400m from the lane, a footpath joins you from the right at a markerpost. Soon you pass *Tilhill House* and its outbuildings and box hedges, now nicely redeveloped. You have great views now ahead and to your right to the Wey valley. At a junction with a fingerpost, leave the surfaced track by forking **right**, immediately ignoring a stile on your left. This path leads beside meadows to the road in Tilford.

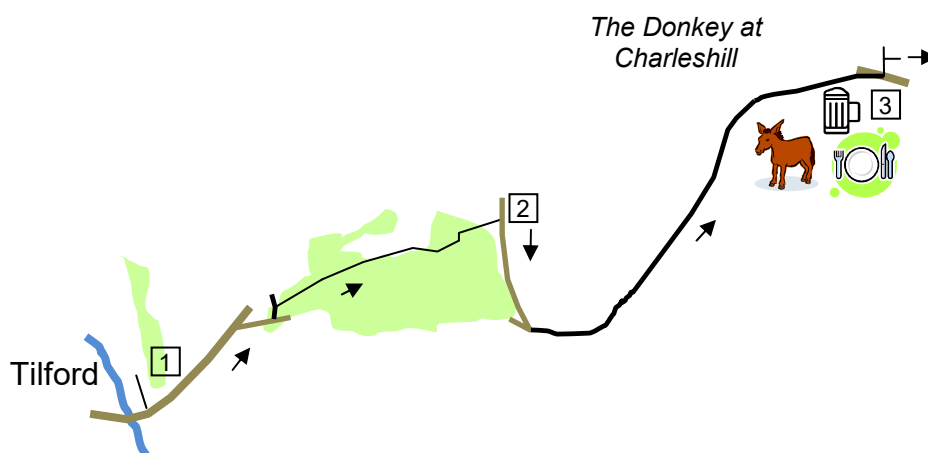


Your route is now **left** on the road, where you will also find the tea room (which now serves hot lunches) and shop (open every day, including weekends, till 7pm). But first you will want to turn right over the ancient Wey bridge to the village green with its happy crowds and the *Barley Mow* pub.



The bridge you have just come over is an ancient monument! The river is shallow here and the ford, after which "Tila's Ford" is named is still used by riders. There is another ancient bridge over another branch of the Wey on the other side of the green. The Barley Mow pub, built in about 1763, contains a tribute to Mike Hawthorn the racing driver who was killed in 1959 on the Guildford bypass and who regularly drank here. It has a predictable range of ales and reliable food but its great asset is the beautiful location. The old and very wide Tilford Oak, just past the pub on the right, now hobbled with age, was described by William Cobbett in 1822 as "by far the finest tree that I ever saw in my life".

Leg 3: Tilford to Puttenham Common 6 km=4 miles



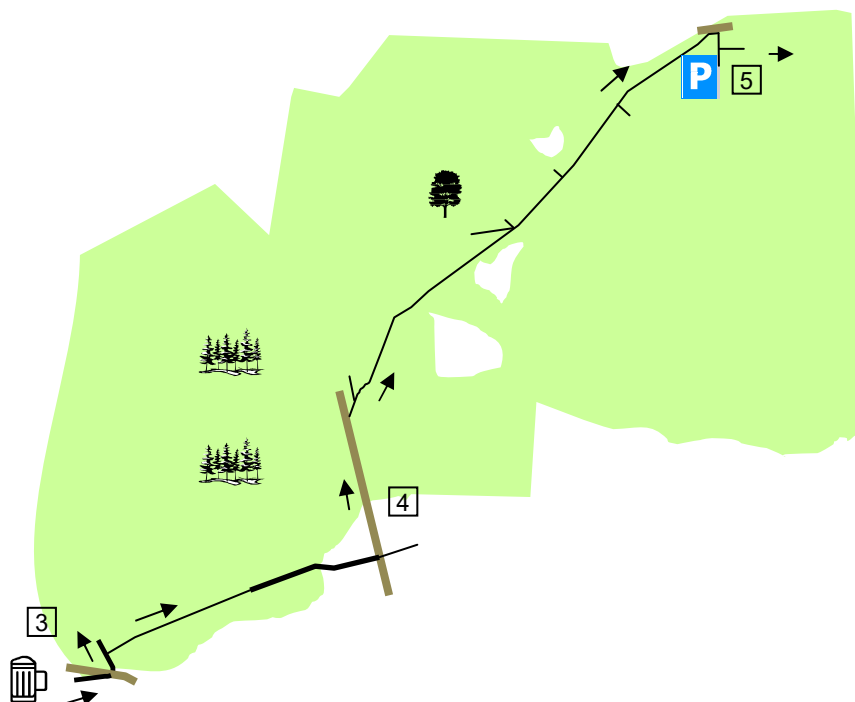
The Haslemere-Guildford Monster joins this walk here.

1 Crossing the ancient bridge (or turning left on the road if you did not visit the village), pass the village shop and, in 250m, fork **right** on a minor road Whitmead Lane. In 100m, turn **left** at a rough junction and, in 20m, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a tarmac drive which soon becomes gravel. Where the drive curves left just before the gates of *Archers Hill*, fork **right** by a markerpost on a narrow path through woodland. The path runs beside a meadow (*note the tree house by the house ahead*) with steep woods down on your right. After more meadows and gardens, your path zigzags left-right by a gate before a house and runs between fences to reach a tarmac lane opposite *Highmead*.

2 Ignoring the footpath straight ahead, turn **right** on the lane until, in 300m, you reach a hairpin and a house *Whitmead*. Turn **left** here on a signposted track, just before the house. After more than 1 km along this wide winding woodland track you pass a large house *Ravenswing* and reach a fingerpost. Ignore both tracks on the left here and veer right to reach the *Donkey* pub. (A small track on the right here gives you a view of the garden and the donkey pasture.)



The “Donkey” at Charleshill is named after its inhabitants. At the back of the garden is the field of two donkeys with their comfortable shed and their fodder brought by the dedicated landlady. Good fodder is also served to the human visitors, including their famous donkey burgers which – please note – are made from beef. This family- and dog-friendly pub inhabits one of the typical stone cottages of this area, cosily converted inside and with a large patio with wooden tables looking out onto the donkey yard and the country beyond.



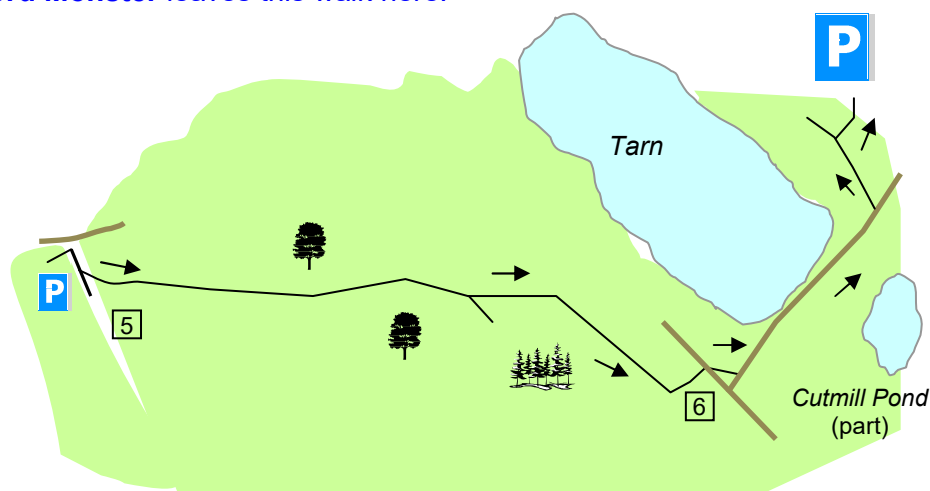
3 Continue past the pub on a short slip road leading to a main road, the B3001. Cross straight over and take a signposted drive opposite, just to the left of the gate of *Foxhill*. In 30m, turn **right** at a 3-way fingerpost on a narrow path that goes up through rhododendrons, gorse and bracken. At the top, beside a superior piggery, keep ahead on an elegant tarmac drive. At the end, beside the impressive iron gates of *Three Barrows* at Amina Heights, veer **left** on a drive lined with silver birch and exit to a road between eagle-crested pillars.

- 4 Avoiding the signposted track straight ahead, turn **left** on the road, passing a house *Speedwell*. After 300m on the road, just after a very small layby, fork **right** on a footpath into the woods, by a fingerpost. Ignoring a path that forks left parallel to the road, take the main **right** fork,. This beautiful woodland path has a variety of trees, especially rowan with their red berries in late summer. Avoid all lesser paths branching off. Your path curves left and right under wires, joining a path coming from the left. The path is now wider and straighter. Follow it through pine and birch woods, passing several side paths. A distant house *Whitefield* is visible on the left. Finally a wooden barrier takes you into the Britty Wood car park near a road.



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

- 5 Turn **right** into the car park. Avoid the wide path that leads out of the back of the car park under wires but take a very narrow path in the **left** corner. Your path curves left over a bank and across a marvellous area of silver birches. In 100m avoid a lesser path that forks right and generally keep to the main twisty path. 300m from the car park, as you approach a fir wood, ignore a path that forks off right and keep to the narrow path straight ahead. In 130m a minor path forks off left: avoid it and veer **right** on the main path. (The left fork leads out to the road at the “wrong” end of the Tarn car park.) In 150m further, you reach a markerpost with a green arrow. [Aug 2019: it was grounded and the author dug it out and propped it up, where it still remains in 2021.] (The markerpost is next to a thick post with the remains of a flat board on top.) Turn abruptly **left** here on the main path, coming out to the road opposite the Puttenham Common Tarn car park.



- 6 Turn **right** and immediately **left** on Suffield Lane, using a woodland path beside the car park as a pleasant way to avoid the tarmac. Follow the lane between the lakes: the big Tarn on your left and the Cutmill Pond on your right (see the other walk in this series: [Puttenham and the Welcome Woods](#)). Immediately after the Tarn, turn **left** at a small clearing and take a very narrow path on the right-hand side of the clearing, up a very steep bank and **right** on a path at a T-junction. This leads immediately to the Puttenham Common Middle Car Park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: the Puttenham Common Middle Car Park is reached from Puttenham village, either from the Hog's Back (Farnham road) or from the A3 via the B3000 Compton Puttenham turn-off. Turn into Puttenham village. Pass the church on the left and, just before the pub on the right, turn **left** on a road signposted *Elstead, Cutmill*. After about 1.3 miles = 2 km, **ignore** a car park on right (this is the Top Car Park) and continue for over 0.5 mile (nearly 1 km) further. The Middle Car Park is on the right, under a wooden bar.

By bus/train: Stagecoach bus 46 from Farnham or Godalming to Charleshill. Check the timetables.

fancy more free walks? www.fancyfreewalks.org