



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

Distance 16 km=10 miles, easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Surrey

Author: Schwebefuss

Refreshments: Shalford

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

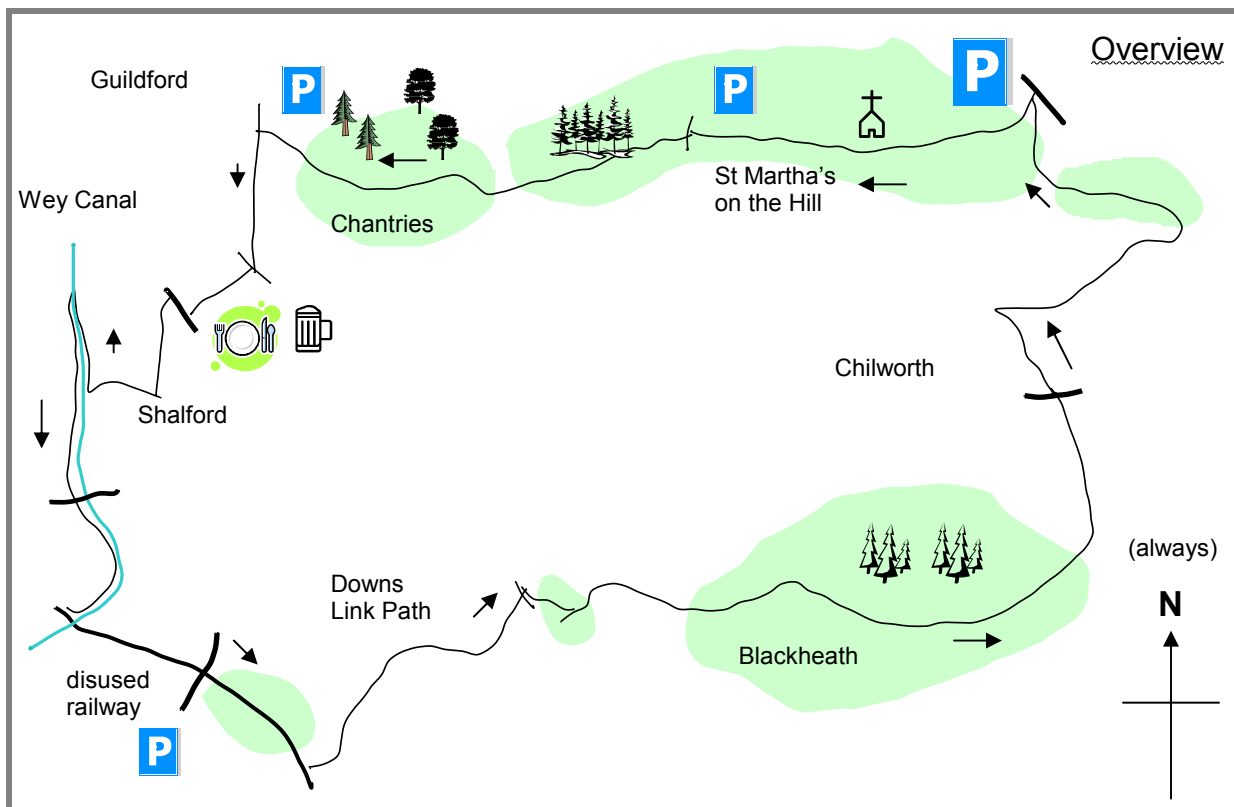
In Brief



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, post code GU5 9BQ), 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 Go through a 1-bar gate, immediately fork **left** and veer **right** to join a wide sandy horse track leading uphill with great views left. Ignore a bridleway on the left (marked *Downs Link*) and just after this join 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, soon to reach the church of *St Martha's on the Hill*.

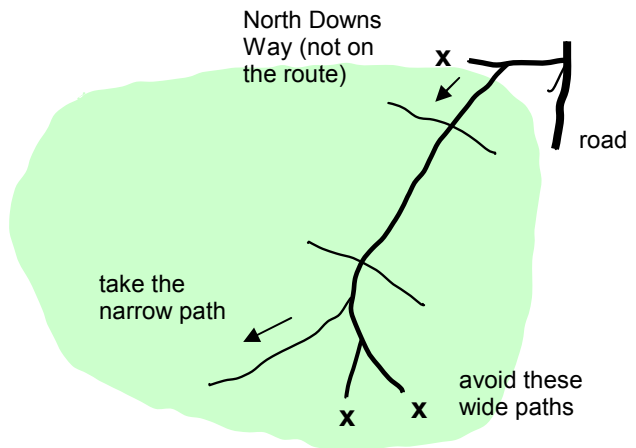


St Martha is a rare dedication for a church but this one is rare in many ways, not least because of its lofty situation. The present church was built in 1850 on the site of a Saxon church. On a clear day it is said you can see eight counties. The interior has a small plaque narrating part of the eventful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



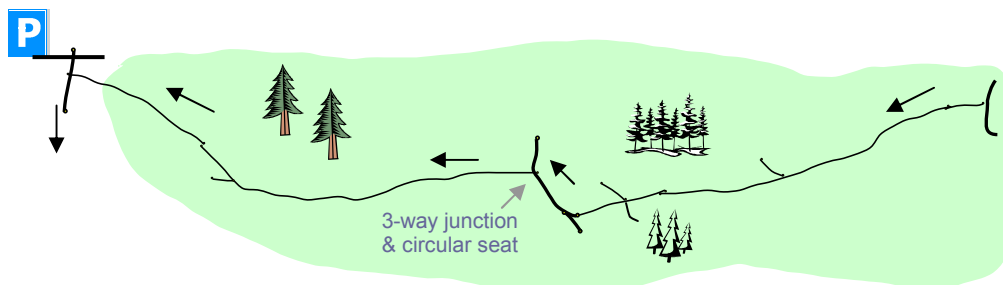
After the church, continue in the same direction downhill through pines, always keeping to the main track. Soon there is a fence on the left and an open grassy area on the right where you stay on the main track. Go straight over a driveway, following the white acorn sign that reminds you that you are on a national trail. Continue down to a road 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 following route is more interesting and satisfying. In just 15m, **leave** the NDW by forking **left** through a wooden gate on a wide path with a yellow arrow deep into beech and pine trees. In 40m, go over a crossing path. 90m further, go over another crossing path and, just 10m later, pause at a junction. The main path curves left towards the camp site. Another wide path zig-zags ahead. Avoid **both** paths and instead take a much narrower path, a right fork but in reality going straight ahead. This path will take you all the way to Chantry Lodge.



NB: this map is to a larger scale!

3 Carefully follow this winding path over the hilltop, eventually passing a railing and going down steps. Go up again the other side, ignoring a path right. 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 tree with a circular seat, 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.* Stay on the main path at all times, avoiding tempting side paths, following signs for the *Scholar's Trail*. At a multiple junction with a seat and steps down to the left, keep straight ahead on a level path, ignoring the steps. The path runs between railings and barriers, descends, and exits the nature reserve to a track by *Chantry Lodge*. There are a white cottage and a car park (alternative start) on the right. Do **not** turn right towards the car park however. Instead turn **left** on a narrow sunken dirt track with *Chantry Lodge* on your right. The track has white (for riders) and yellow arrows.



- 4 Follow the track as far as a residential road, opposite an architect-designed modern house. Keep straight ahead and take a footpath that runs parallel to the road. At the end, cross over a lane and go up steps, over a - for thin people - avoidable stile and go half **right** across a 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.



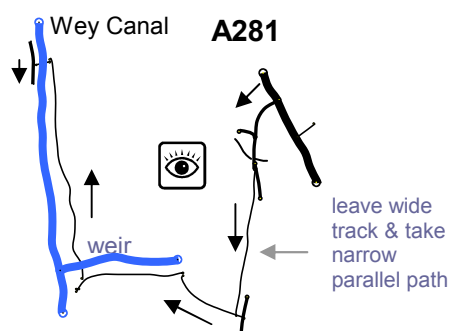
Shalford Mill (National Trust) is a large 18th-century timber-framed mill on the Tillingbourne. In fact, there was always a mill here from before written records. The present building was originally two separate mills. The mill is open to the public from April to October on Wednesdays and Sundays.



Go past the mill to the busy main road and turn **right**. *Opposite you is The Seahorse, a gastropub with an ambitious Italian-slanted menu.* Turn **left** just after the inn on a signposted track. *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.*

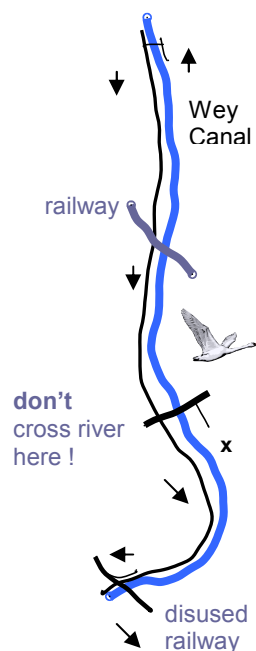
Leg 2: Shalford to Blackheath, 7 km (4½ miles)

- 1 At the end of the short track, at a fingerpost, keep **left**, signposted to *Godalming*. In 15m keep straight ahead but 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, which you ignore. In 300m, the path ends and there is a gate on the right with a yellow arrow. Turn **right** through the swing-gate and, at the bottom of some steps, continue straight ahead on a boardwalk. On reaching an arm of the river, turn **left** along the bank. The path crosses another boardwalk and 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, completely 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*

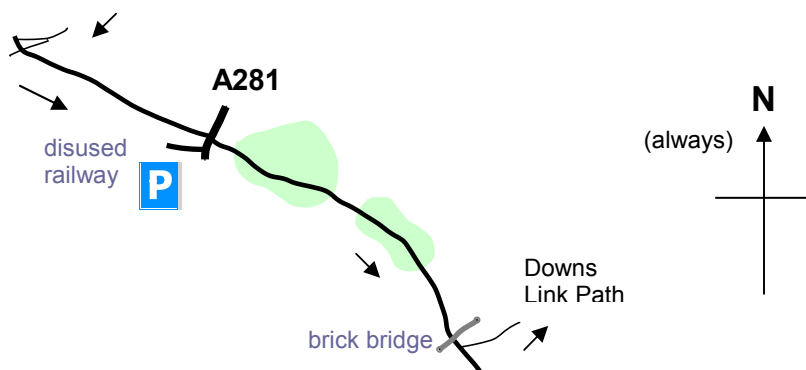


dragonflies. Turn **left** at St Catherine's lock, cross the canal and turn **left** on the other side.

- 2 Continue for some distance along the towpath, going under a railway bridge, and finally arriving at a narrow road 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, now on a National Trust path. 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 gate and take the rising path forking right and turn **left** on the track over the bridge.



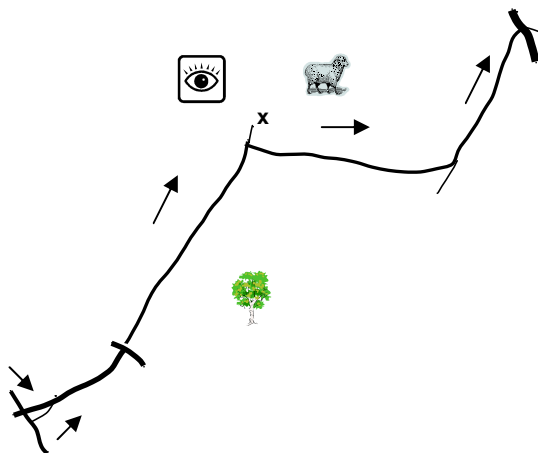
- 3 Follow the wide straight track all the way to a main road, the A281, close to Trunley Heath Road and a car park (alternative start). Cross the main road and continue on the track at the other side. The track follows its straight course over an arm of the canal, through woodland and eventually reaches a brick bridge. Go under the bridge to a 3-way fingerpost indicating that you have joined the *Downs Link* path. *The Downs Link path links the North Downs Way with the South Downs Way. It is 37 miles (60 kms) long and is also used by cyclists and horse riders.* Turn **left** in the direction of St Martha's. You will be following the Downs Link north almost all the way.



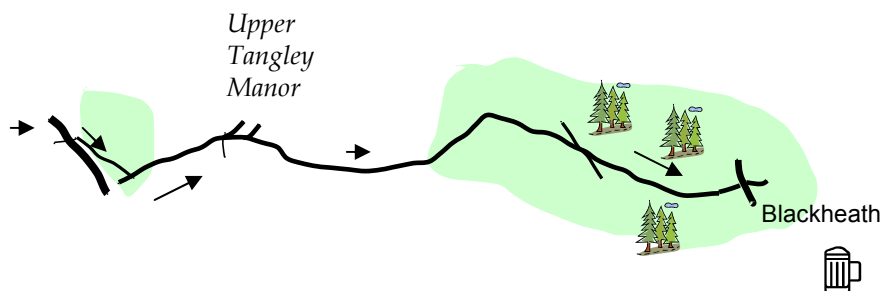
The will notice that you have also left the route of the old canal.

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.

- 4 The path continues along the lane and you can either walk on the lane or along the residents' track by the lane. Cross a major road and continue ahead on a track next to Southlands Stud. After some distance, 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. It eventually comes to a main road.

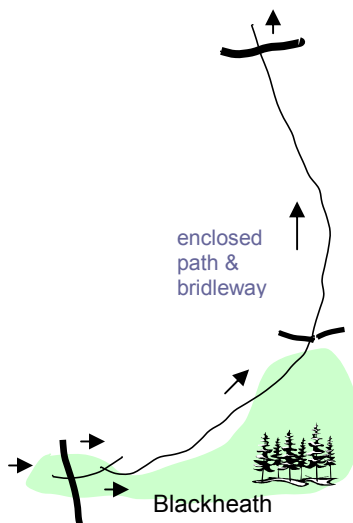


- 5 Cross the road to a track on the other side that goes half right. The track runs almost parallel to the road, gets swallowed up in the woodland, and comes to a T-junction with a drive. Turn **left** on the drive. The drive reaches the historic *Upper Tangley Manor* which is worth a look. However, the route here is straight on, avoiding two drives branching off left. After some distance 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. At a post with blue arrows, keep ahead on the main track. The track crosses over a road. Blackheath Village is on the right. However, the route is straight over on a track opposite.

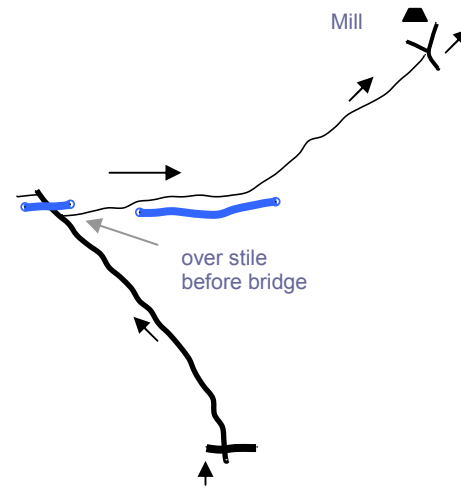


Leg 3: Blackheath to St Martha's Hill, 4 km (2½ miles)

- 1 In 20m, fork right between stumps as indicated by the fingerpost. Keep to the wide sandy track across the heath, avoiding all turnings off. (However, you can take a short cut left through the pines to avoid the wide sandy curve at the start.) Eventually the track goes across a drive near houses on 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 road, *Dorking Road Chilworth*.

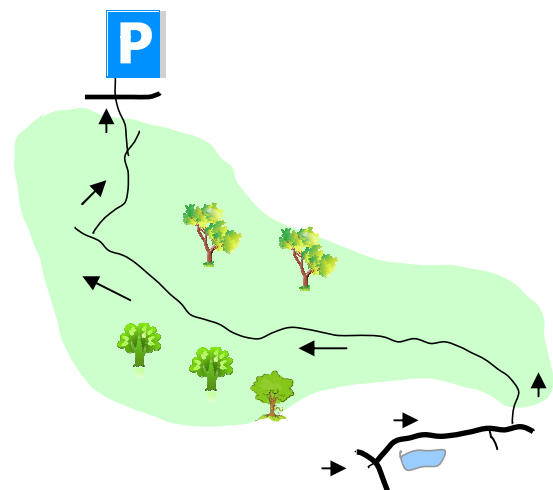


- 2 Cross the road to a farm lane opposite and follow it between meadows. On entering trees, before you reach a bridge the Tillingbourne, turn sharp **right** over a stile into a meadow. However, as a short diversion, over the bridge on the left, you can visit the Chilworth Gunpowder Mills, established by the East India Company in 1625 and in use until 1920. Go over another stile and veer left alongside a grassy stream, through another unneeded stile, along a narrow meadow, over another stile and a 2-plank bridge, then along an enclosed footpath. The path leads to a large 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.

- 3 Keep straight ahead on a lane with the water on your right. Eventually the lane bends left. Fork left by Millstream Cottage on a boardwalk and 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 bends right. It then bends left uphill. Keep going onwards up the steepest part of the hill to a fingerpost. The car park where the walk began is straight ahead a short distance.



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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. If coming from Guildford, use your map or navigator to take you via Warren Road to White Lane. The Pilgrims Way and Halfpenny Lane car parks in Guildford and the layby on the A281 at the Trunley Heath Road junction are alternative starting points.

By train: to Guildford station, then bus 22, 24 or 25 to Shalford, or walk along the River Wey. Chilworth station is also a possible start.

