



Sweetwater and the Holy Well Witley Station, Hambledon, Chiddingfold

Distance: 17½ km=11 miles

easy walking

Region: Surrey

Date written: 28-feb-2009

Author: Schwebefuss

Date revised: 16-oct-2014

Refreshments: Hambledon, Chiddingfold

Last update: 9-apr-2021

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) *but the maps 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.

Lake, churches, villages, woodland, water meadows, peace

In Brief

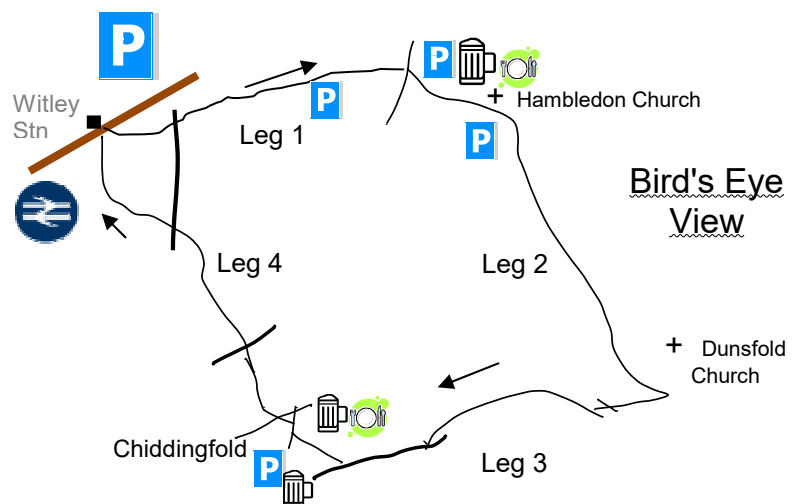
This is a circular walk through some of the remotest sections of South West Surrey. Along the way, you visit a placid lake, some heathland and, as if by chance a precious holy well.



There are no steep ascents on this walk and the going underfoot is usually pleasant with sandy soil in many places. In wet wintry conditions, there are stubborn boggy spots near Sweetwater and from Buss's Common to the pub, making good waterproof boots essential. There are no ploughed fields to cross but just a few patches of nettles and, in high summer, brambles and other undergrowth, when a hiking pole may be useful to help keep the path clear. Shorts are not advisable in any season. Some walkers measure this route as a little longer than the given distance. Your dog is welcome but only if he is light enough to be lifted over some of the stiles.

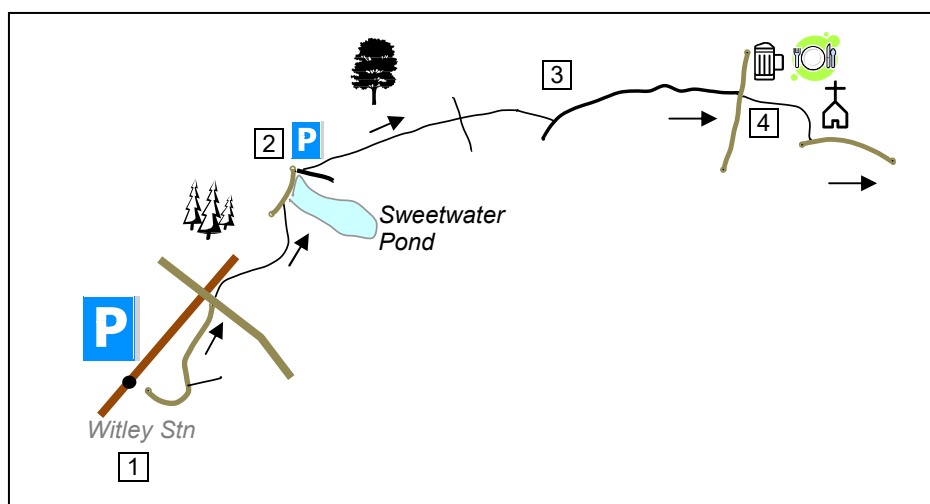


The walk starts at **Witley Station**, by train or by car (**postcode GU8 5TB**). There is a daily charge for parking, in which case an alternative location can easily be found for parking, such as the Sweetwater Pond, **postcode GU8 5SR**, Hambledon Church, **postcode GU8 4DS**, the *Merry Harriers* (free car park) near Hambledon, **postcode GU8 4DR**, or Chiddingfold, **postcode GU8 4TU** or at a "walker's suggestion" (see below). For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

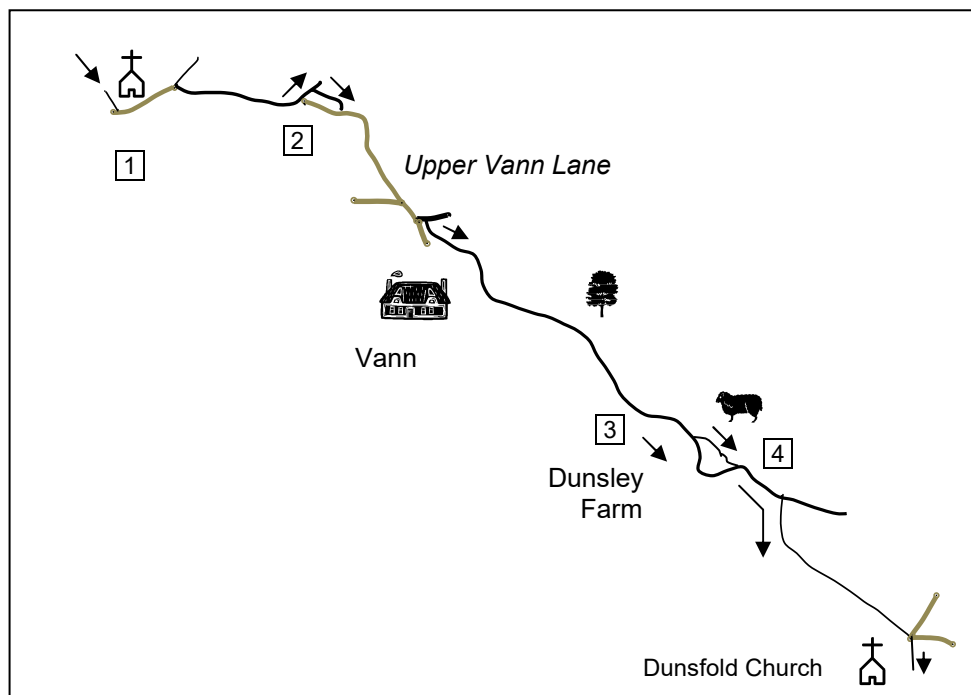
Leg 1: Witley Station to Hambledon Church 3 km=2 miles



- 1** With your back to the main station building, turn **left** along the station approach to a minor road and turn **left** again uphill, ignoring a footpath directly ahead. Eventually, on reaching the main road, cross slightly left to a wide track marked as a footpath. In 125m, after some houses, follow a yellow arrow [Jul 2020: gone] diagonally **right** into woods. (As a guide, this is after the first group of houses but 100m before another house you can see in the distance.) In 40m, fork **left** alongside the fence, as indicated by a yellow arrow, passing a house and garden and crossing a stile. Immediately go over a crossing path and stay on the main winding path ahead through the woods [2014:under a fallen tree], avoiding a right fork and all other turnings off, until the path runs between fences, through an old kissing-gate, and soon reaches a minor road (Culmer Lane) with the Sweetwater Pond on the right.
- 2** Turn **right** along the road for 80m and then, just after the pond, ignore a bridleway on the right and take a footpath just beyond it, through a small car park (an alternative start). Follow the footpath, past a golf course, with *Enton Hall* visible up on the left, if summer foliage permits. On reaching woods, continue in the same direction on a broad path through pines. After nearly 300m, on passing some posts by the corner of a new fence, continue straight on (forking slightly right) across Buss's Common on a broad path which is soon joined by a path coming in from the right. Keep straight on through holly trees ignoring several paths that veer off left and right.
- 3** Soon after, you reach a bridleway at a T-junction. Turn **left** here on the bridleway. There are duckboards over a rather muddy area (but you may need to be agile to use the bank on the right). Then continue along the wide path with meadows on either side (sometimes alpacas grazing on your right) and hills on the left until, after less than 1 km, you reach the road at Hambledon with the *Merry Harriers* pub (Friary Meux) on the right. *This pub used to have a famous humorous sign "warm beer, lousy food". Of course, the food and drink are anything but that. One speciality is its "15 Mile Menu". It occasionally holds a mini beer festival.*
- 4** Take the footpath opposite, just to the right of the car park through an old kissing-gate. This path leads uphill through a wooden gate and eventually via a grassy track to a tarmac lane. Turn **left** passing Hambledon Church. *Hambledon Church is worth a visit, if it is not locked. The churchyard contain a*

large old yew tree and the local legend states that the spirit of an old witch resides in the tree and if you walk round the interior three times you will see her.

Leg 2: Hambledon Church to Dunsfold Church 4½ km=3 miles

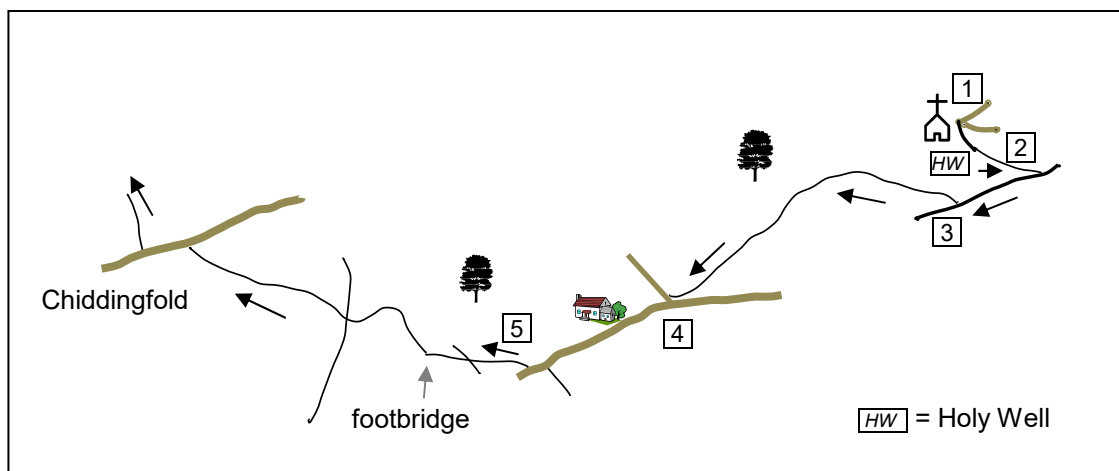


- 1 At the end of the lane ignore the footpath that goes straight on over fields towards Hydon's Ball (see the walk *Hascombe and Hydon's Ball* in this series) and take the **right** fork, through a small car park, marked with a **GW** (*Greensand Way*). Follow this wide sandy path between fields for about 700m to a junction with a house on the left. Turn sharp **right** downhill but, in only 20m, take a footpath **left** still marked **GW** which keeps to the high ground of Burgate Hanger. After 100m, ignore a path left into a field and continue **right downhill**, still on the **GW**. [Care! you have to **descend** down to the **right** to meet a narrow lane at the bottom, in only 250m.] It passes close to Upper Vann Lane on the right. **Leave** the **GW** at a gap by a fingerpost and join the tarmac lane.
- 2 This quiet lane passes houses, including the timbered *Hydon Barn*, and yards and straightens, with fine views of Blackdown ahead. *The banks teem with primroses in the spring.* After about 1 km, a road joins you from the right. In 40m, ignore a bridleway on the left and take a signed footpath that veers **left** across the grass. This path goes through a large wooden gate and turns along the right hand side of a field, passing the back of *Vann House*. *The grounds are open several days a year in the National Gardens Scheme. Vann is owned by a city gentleman and enthusiastic gardener who had the good sense not to try to restore it excessively. It was used in the BBC mini-series Howards End.* Soon Hascombe Hill is visible on the left (see the walk *Round Hascombe Hill* in this series). The path descends by an unneeded stile through the beautiful Prest Wood, crosses a stream and continues with the stream on your right. After a long memorable walk, it emerges through a small metal gate into a pleasant meadow.

- 3 Follow the fenced path beside a meadow. In 200m, ignore a private footbridge on the right and, 30m later, go **right** through a small gate and diagonally up across the centre of a meadow. After a small metal gate beside a large one, veer **left** onto a bridleway which joins you from the right. In 100m or so, at a blue arrow, veer **left** by a barn to pass through venerable Dunsley Farm, passing a large metal gate. [According to the map, there should be a footpath right just after the last building but this seems to have vanished in favour of the trackway.](#) The track curves downhill to go over a bridge. Soon after the bridge, go over a stile on the **left** and diagonally over the hill to the right of a big house, go over another stile and immediately turn **left** on the original track passing the gates of the farmhouse and its pond, now on tarmac.
- 4 After about 200m, you pass two gates on either side of the path. Here take a signed footpath **right** just after them, over a stile. This footpath leads round two right-hand sides of a meadow with Dunsfold Church visible below. After negotiating a stile and a small wooden gate in the corner, follow the path down the right-hand side of the field ahead, turning left at the bottom of the field before joining the track ahead. Go out to the road via a wooden gate and turn **right**.

The delightful Dunsfold Church was built between 1270 and 1290 and has been left almost entirely unchanged. This site was old Saxon burial ground and a Norman chapel stood here previously. Pilgrims came to Dunsfold to visit the Holy Well. The church has a wallpainting and many points of interest. Its nave pews are said to be the oldest in Britain.

Leg 3: Dunsfold Church to Chiddingfold 5 km=3 miles



- 1 Passing the church entrance, take the broad track downhill, through a gate or over a stile, to the Holy Well. *The Holy Well is a magical spot with the shrine of the wooden Madonna and river flowing behind it.*
- 2 Continue across the right-hand side of a gentle meadow with the river on the right (a tributary of the Arun), go through a metal gate, cross a concrete bridge, and turn **right** on a tarmac lane. Turn **right** again in front of a house uphill on a broad track. In about 250m, just after passing *Hawthorn Cottage* on the right, turn **right** on a wide marked footpath into Mill Hanger.
- 3 In 50m, avoid a track on your left and, 50m later, before a newly-built chalet-style house, *Millhanger House*, fork **right** on a narrower path. Keep straight on at all times down down through the woods of Duns Copse [\[now partly](#)

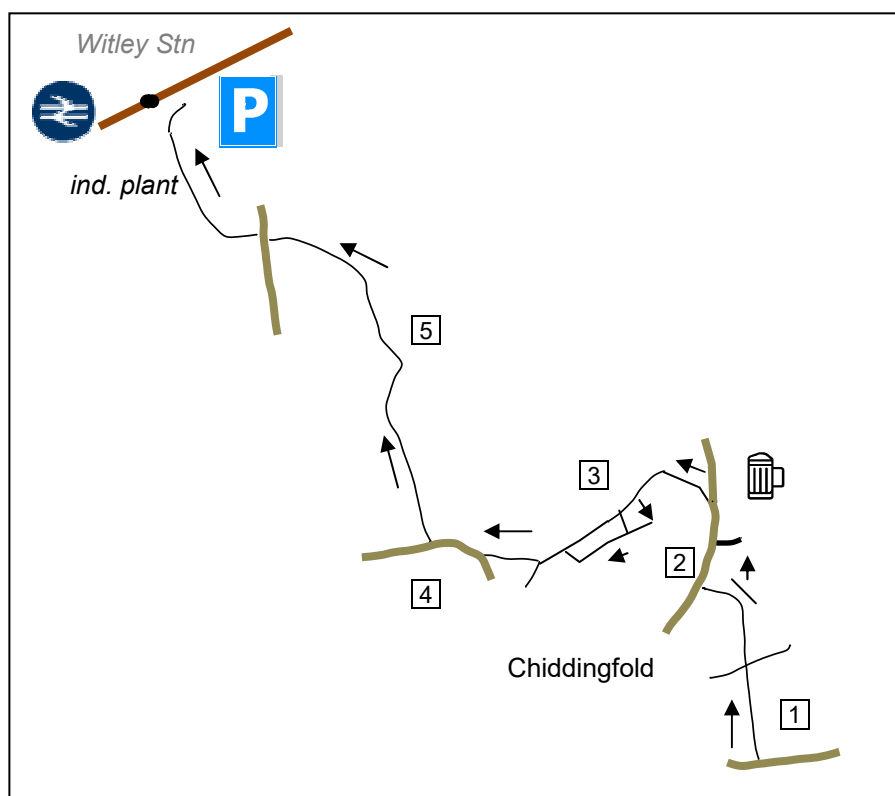
infested with balsam]. At several points the path comes close to the riverbank on the right and widens where it enters Pignuts Copse. After a final encounter with the river, the path rises steadily and finally meets a fence with a forestry track running beside it. Veer **right** on this grassy level track and stay on it as it curves gently left. Eventually your path reaches a junction of a minor road White Beech Lane with a major road.

4 Ignoring the minor road, turn **right** on the major road (High Street Green) and follow it for about 700m. On your left is a sign for *Dunsfold Ryse Farm* (look at the amazing tree carving). You pass on the right an utterly charming half-timbered brick house *Oakapple Cottage* and its garden, perfectly compensating for the short road walk. You then pass on your right *Quince House* with its box hedge and *Willow Tree Cottage*, followed by *Watlands* on your left. Now turn **right** on a signposted footpath. *Don't miss this turn!*

5 The footpath passes gardens and goes through fine woodland, later passing a fingerpost, always straight on, finally descending to a stream with a bridge on the **right**. Cross the bridge and turn **left** then **right** up the right-hand side of the field. At the top corner of the field, turn **left**. Immediately ignore the first wide gap, continue half way along the edge and look out for a narrow gap in the hedge on the **right** just after a slight bend. Go through the gap and follow a path diagonally **left** across a field, then through a gap in a band of trees, across another field, through a dense wide band of woodland with a bridge across a stream and across a field, through a swing-gate and a small pasture, reaching a swing-gate and a road, Pockford Road. Turn **left** on the road, ignoring a bridleway on your left. You have reached Chiddingfold. *The village green, with the **Crown** and **Swan** Inns and a little shop, is about 400m further on, from which the walk can be re-joined; but the route given here has another good pub in under 1 km.* To continue this walk, take a footpath 40m on the **right**.



Leg 4: Chiddingfold to Witley Station 4 km=2½ miles



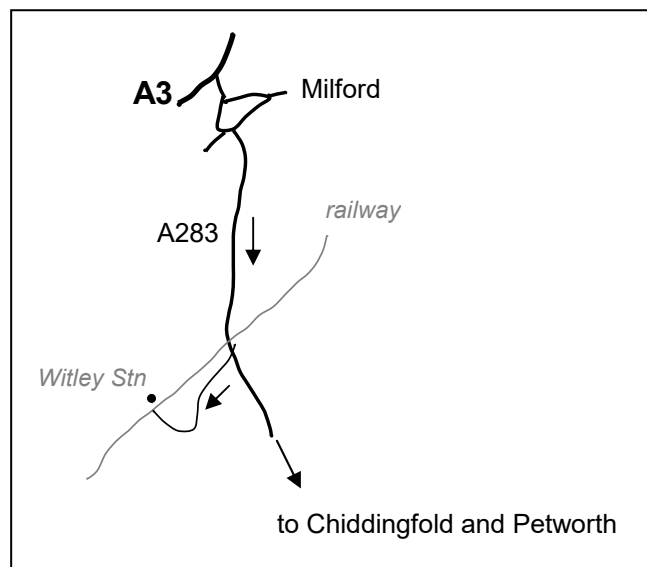
- 1 Your footpath goes by a metal gate and along the right-hand side of a large field. At the corner, continue straight ahead across the centre. When, after 300m in total, you reach the far side of the field, veer **left** into woodland. Ignore a fenced footpath here on the left and continue across a small grassy meadow, over a stile and along the right-hand side of the next meadow. Go through a metal gate and follow a grassy path down to a road, Petworth Road. Turn **right** on the road.
- 2 The road has a good footpath on both sides. Ignore a signed footpath on your left and continue to the *Winterton Arms*. *This pub has excellent food and several real ales.* Immediately opposite the pub, go **left** over a stile onto a wide footpath. Your path runs beside a garden on your right and a stream on your left before entering woodland. You pass an unneeded stile and go over a round brick bridge. 15m after the bridge, turn **left** at a junction of paths and, in 10m, turn **right** again. *(This sideways manoeuvre avoids the balsam that has infested this area.)*
- 3 In 50m, your path goes straight up a bank and continues not far from a fence and a horse pasture visible on your left. 40m after the end of the fence, go **right** and shortly **left** again to re-join the main path. Keep straight on until you meet two small bridges. Cross the **right**-hand bridge, go through a metal kissing gate and turn **right** into a green meadow that seems to yield springwater underfoot. Veer **left** across the meadow and go through a metal swing-gate at the other side onto an enclosed path, with a tall fence on the left and woods on the right, eventually emerging at a minor road.
- 4 Turn **right** along the road and in 40m, just after the first road on your right (Hartsgrove), go **right** at a fingerpost on a footpath. *[Jul 2020: there was a notice saying the path was "closed due to a collapsed culvert"; walkers who were physically capable of stepping over a 12-inch "collapsed culvert" continued regardless with absolutely no problem, and one pinned up a humorous notice,] This is the last stretch before Witley Station but the walk still has some delights in reserve; you need to keep alert for yellow arrows and stiles at all times through a very varied terrain.* The path runs by a fence, through two wide kissing gates, along the left-hand side of a field, through two more kissing gates and down into the holly woods of Hartsgrove Hanger. After some distance, your path takes you over a stream, followed by another *[the "culvert"]* and a stile, across a small meadow and through a large metal gate. The path now climbs the lower side of a small hillock to the left of a small gully and passes a house on the left, *Noddings Farm*.
- 5 *In case you think the course has been too easy up to now, there are eight stiles in this section: after that, you can look back in triumph. Gradually, stiles are being replaced by metal gates: a welcome trend.* Go over a stile in the hedge ahead, down two wooden steps, and turn **left** on a wide grassy track. Go diagonally **right**, over a stile in a hedge, diagonally across a sheep pasture, over a long stout bridge *[2020: care! damaged slats]*, over another stile and across the centre of another sheep pasture. Your path leads over a stile in the corner, through an oak wood, eventually over another stile, across a small meadow and stile to a road. Cross the road, turning sharp **right** over a stile and across a horse pasture; the path goes over a narrow stile, between a fine industrial development on the left and new houses on the right and then returns to nature. Continue straight on at all times till you reach the pretty *Lilac Cottage* on your right. The path runs through the garden of the cottage and close to its front door. Keep right and, after a last gate, unexpectedly you reach the station car park where the walk began.



Getting there

By train: get off at Witley station.

By car: park in the car park of Witley station.



Take the A3 to Milford and then take the Petworth Road. Witley station is marked on the right on entering the village of Wormley, after passing King Edward's School. For Chiddingfold, simply continue on the A283 and park near the Green, starting the walk from Leg 4.

A walker's suggestion for free parking: Drive out of the station car park, turning left on the road and proceed back to the junction with the main A283 road. Turn left, proceed for a very short distance and turn immediately left by King Edward's School. Proceed for about 400m where there is free road parking on the left-hand side by the "Care Home of Distinction" sign. Walk a further 100m past the care home and follow the footpath sign on the left down to Witley station. The path leads to the station, where you can cross the foot bridge where you will be at the starting point of the walk.

fancy more free walks? www.fancyfreewalks.org