



Pitch Hill. Photo: Gordon Jackson.

Our Natural Health Service

The Surrey Hills: Nature's Prescription for Health

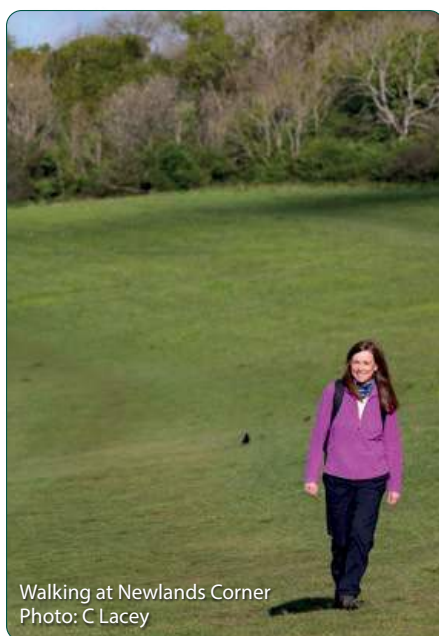
The tranquillity and beauty of the Surrey Hills provides an escape from daily stresses and has a positive impact on our mental well-being. The opportunity for outdoor physical activity is one of the evident benefits of the extensive network of public paths and self-guided trails that cater to all levels of fitness.

Immersing ourselves in this natural environment allows us to slow down and reconnect with ourselves. The calming effect of nature reduces stress, anxiety, and symptoms of depression. Programmes such as guided walks and outdoor therapy sessions harness the healing power of nature, recognising it as a vital component in promoting health and well-being – our 'Natural Health Service'. In this issue we explore the opportunities for shorter walks as well as some alternative activities outdoors – see page 3.

If you love a view, why not explore the Inspiring Views walks and iconic sculptural benches developed by Surrey Hills Arts in partnership with the Surrey Hills Society and the National Landscape Board – see pages 4-5.

There are many long-distance walks to choose from. Whether you're a seasoned hiker or a casual walker, the long-distance walking routes in the Surrey Hills National Landscape offer something for everyone.

One of the most popular routes is the North Downs Way, a 153 mile-long trail that stretches



Walking at Newlands Corner
Photo: C Lacey

from Farnham in Surrey to Dover in Kent. This route can easily be broken down into manageable sections and takes walkers through breathtaking landscapes, including ancient woodlands, chalk grasslands, and historic sites such as St Martha's Church above Chilworth. Along the way, walkers can enjoy stunning views of the surrounding countryside and encounter an array of wildlife,

from butterflies and wildflowers to deer and birds of prey.

A slightly shorter but equally rewarding route is the Greensand Way – a 108 mile-long trail that starts in Haslemere and winds through the Surrey Hills and Kent Downs to Hamstreet, just short of the Kent Coast. This route follows a geological feature known as the Greensand Ridge and takes walkers through heathlands, sandy hills and dense forests, offering a diverse range of landscapes to explore. Along the way, walkers can discover charming villages, historic churches and even the famous Leith Hill Tower, which provides panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

Gordon Jackson



View from Leith Hill
Photo: Gordon Jackson

Chairman's Views

Exciting Developments in the Surrey Hills AONB Boundary Review

I am delighted that we have had the results of the latest stage of the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (AONB) Boundary Review. Natural England has recently released its detailed report on the first consultation, and I'm glad to say that it is generally extremely positive with over 90% of all responses being in favour of the initial proposal that suggested a 25% extension to the existing boundaries.

As a result of the consultation, Natural England is proposing some further additions and some minor deletions, see map. Further details can be found by searching DEFRA's Consultation Hub on the Internet.

The most substantial addition is that of the Beddlestead Valley which was considered borderline in the previous evaluation work. Natural England has now concluded that this area should be included in the proposed Extension Area of the Woldingham Valleys.

A further area of particular significance has been the request from some respondents to consider land in the Dockenfield area within East Hampshire. This requires a new Evaluation Area to be defined and a detailed assessment to be undertaken.

Due to the additional areas that are now being proposed, Natural England will hold a second round of statutory consultation (looking only at the modifications), which is expected to

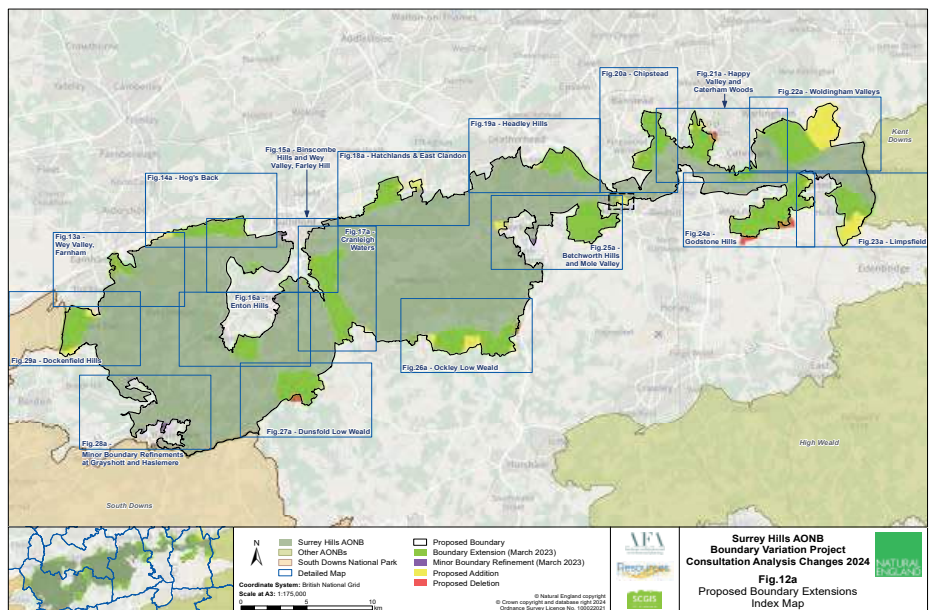
commence in September and to last 12 weeks.

However, there is still a way to go before any changes become law. Once Natural England has finalised its recommendations these will be submitted to DEFRA. The Secretary of State may choose to confirm the Order, confirm with amendments, or reject the Order. It is not possible to say how long their decision will take. They may also call a Public Inquiry to assist in their decision making, although it is to

be hoped that the significant support received so far will influence a speedy decision.

Gordon Jackson

**Although all AONBs have now been redesignated as National Landscapes the legislation still refers to AONBs so this term is still used for technical purposes.*



New Surrey Hills Society Trustee

We are delighted to welcome Claire Harris as a new trustee of the Society, continuing our long and valuable collaboration with Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT). Claire has a senior position at SWT and has worked in the environmental sector for over 17 years. Here, Claire tells us a little bit more about her background and her love of nature.

From a young age, my love for the natural world was a defining part of who I am. Growing up in South Devon, I have fond memories of pond dipping in the river near my childhood home, exploring the countryside, often on my bike, and marvelling at the wildlife around us. These early experiences sparked a lifelong commitment to protect and nurture our environment. Today, I am privileged to work with many wonderful like-minded people both at the Surrey Hills Society and through my role at Surrey Wildlife Trust. As Community Programme Manager at the Trust, I focus on connecting people with nature, collaborating with local communities to take meaningful action and I work alongside incredible volunteers.

In the Surrey Hills, we are fortunate to have habitats rich in diversity, but these habitats are threatened

by fragmentation, reflecting a broader national trend. Sadly, our wildlife is at serious risk, with one-third of species in Surrey either lost or in decline, as highlighted in the Surrey Nature Partnership's report on the State of Surrey's Nature. However, we can be part of the solution. Our gardens, allotments, churchyards, parks, and verges can create a green corridor across the county, that supports local wildlife. With around 728,000 hectares of private gardens in the UK, every garden, regardless of size, can contribute to this network. As a wildlife gardening enthusiast, I have witnessed first-hand the positive impact of these spaces. Simple actions such as planting for pollinators, leaving patches of long grass, avoiding pesticide use, or building a pond can make a significant impact in restoring our precious wildlife.

I am constantly inspired by the many individuals throughout the Surrey Hills who are taking steps to care for the local environment. I am excited to be a part of the Surrey Hills Society and hope to encourage more people to discover and enjoy this wonderful landscape.



Claire Harris – Our new trustee

"I don't do walking!"

Do you find yourself saying, "I don't do walking" when someone suggests going for a walk? Many people associate walking with merely counting steps or covering a certain distance. However, most people are already "doing walking" without even realising it? Surprisingly, we often walk considerable distances during our daily routines, whether it's navigating the aisles of a supermarket, moving around the house, or strolling through the office. So, most of us have the capability to do short walks.

The challenge is to find other ways of walking that produce greater health benefits – and here we are very lucky. Across Surrey we have groups that specialise in shorter walks with different aims. Surrey County Council's Walking in Surrey's countryside webpages have a



Short walk amongst the Newlands Corner Yews



Baby buggy walk

'Walking for Health groups' page with walks from ten minutes upwards. There is also an 'Easy walks around Surrey' page specifically for wheelchairs or young children in buggies.

Various local charities, church groups etc. have their own walks programmes targeting specific sectors – for example getting young mums with prams socialising again (QE Park Centre, Guildford) or mental health walks (We Power On, Epsom).

In the annual Guildford Walkfest programme some of the most popular are the walks led by the Town Guides. The walks may only be a mile or less but they are full of information about many aspects of the town.

And, of course, Surrey Hills Society events include walks and visits. Some are quite short but they are always full of opportunities to enjoy our countryside and its green spaces – so important for our well-being.

Ken Bare

Mindful Movement Some Alternative Activities



Nordic walking

offer more of an incentive to embrace the great outdoors even as temperatures drop. Why not try something new?

Nordic Walking is gaining in popularity among all ages. It's a low-impact walking technique that uses poles to work both upper body and legs giving a good workout that doesn't actually feel like one! It also reduces the impact on knees and joints along with relieving tension in necks and shoulders. It's a fun and social activity whatever your age offering a host of benefits that can be enjoyed in open countryside throughout the year.

Yoga was traditionally practiced outside, in forests, by streams or in the hills. More classes are taking place outside again, weather permitting, enabling participants to connect with nature and improve their well-being. Less well known is Tai Chi, originating in ancient China, it helps maintain strength, flexibility and balance through a mix of exercise and

meditation and is far more beneficial in the open air. Even less familiar is Qigong, another ancient Chinese practice, which lowers stress and anxiety and improves balance and flexibility.

However, for anyone seeking a real challenge what about ever popular wild swimming? The benefits of dipping into ice cold water include improving our immune system as well as our mental health.



A Tai Chi demonstration class

There is an incredible choice of classes to join wherever you live in the Surrey Hills. A quick google will show what's on offer.

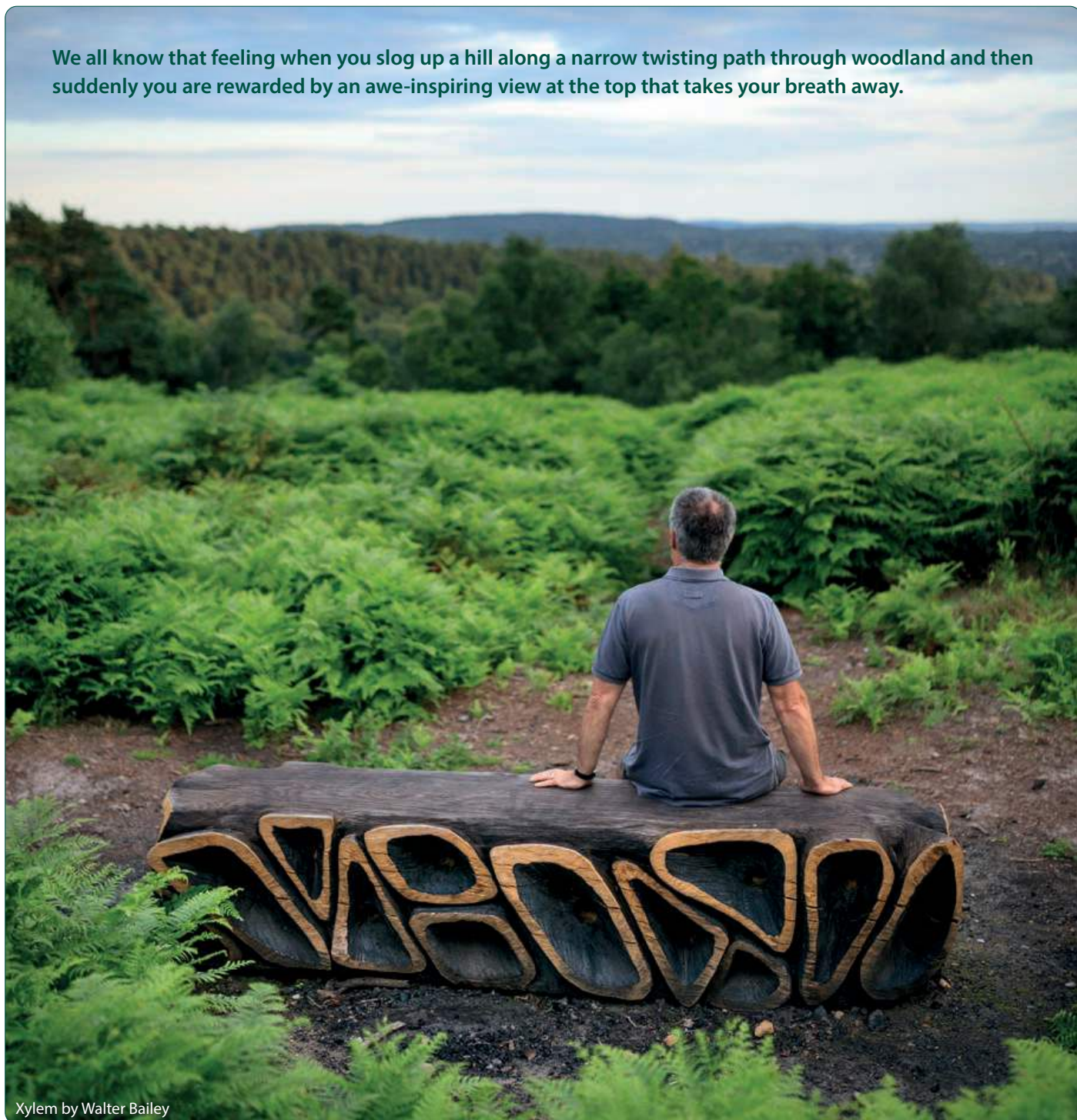
Susie Turner



Yoga with Ruth Wheeler Photo by Tamsin Tottle

Creating 'Inspiring Views'

We all know that feeling when you slog up a hill along a narrow twisting path through woodland and then suddenly you are rewarded by an awe-inspiring view at the top that takes your breath away.



Xylem by Walter Bailey

The Surrey Hills has several internationally famous views including Box Hill, Reigate Hill, Newlands Corner and the Devil's Punchbowl in Hindhead. However, since WWII, many woodlands have become neglected and many of our less visited views have started to disappear. The Society has worked with the Surrey Hills Board and Surrey Hills Arts to bring some of these lesser-known viewpoints back and make them destinations in their own right.

It all started nearly ten years ago in the far west of the county. Some money was donated to the Surrey Hills in order to create some permanent art works that would help to make these viewpoints a

'must see' destination. The project would also benefit the environment by opening up the area and creating beneficial habitats for wildlife. The sculptures marked the creation of Surrey Hills Arts and the formation of a Surrey Hills Trust Fund within the Community Foundation for Surrey. Ali Clarke, seconded from the County Council's Arts team, set about recruiting a partnership board and commissioning the first five art works in Waverley Borough along the Greensand Way.

Artist, Walter Bailey created his 'Xylem' bench – around an exploration of charcoal and its historical relevance to this long-distance trail at Hindhead.

All photos by John Miller

Contour by Russell Jakubowski



In developing his piece, sculptor Russell Jakubowski was inspired by the geology of the Greensand Way. At Reynards Hill his innovative 'Contour' bench is made up of many layers of recycled material.

Converse by Matthew Burt



The fourth sculptural bench, 'Converse', was created at Holmbury Hill by furniture designer Matthew Burt. His choice of materials was inspired by the many chestnuts growing in the area.

Perspectives by Giles Miller



'Perspectives' is a pod-like shelter nestled in the woods at Winterfold, near Cranleigh. The visitor enjoys a secluded experience sitting and looking out across to the beautiful South Downs.

Coccolith by INSTAR



Having established this new model for creating exciting art within our protected landscape, others soon followed via various funding mechanisms including crowd funding, legacies and grants. Subsequent pieces have included 'The Optohedron' at Newlands Corner, created by Will Nash, 'Radius' at Denbies Vineyard in Dorking, created by James Tunnard and 'Coccolith' designed by INSTAR artists Trish Evans and Nick Humphrey, on the North Downs Way within the Titsey Estate in the far east of the County.

That initial donation, a decade ago, has enabled Surrey Hills Arts to develop a different way to fund artworks to help to create new, exciting destinations to visit in our county. All the benches have restored long lost views and associated works have created important habitats for our wildlife. For more information visit <https://www.surreyhillsarts.org/>

Christine Howard DL

The Optohedron by Will Nash



Radius by James Tunnard



New podcasts about the Surrey Hills

The National Trust Surrey Hills estate has been awarded over £8,000 from the Defra Access for All fund to facilitate the production of a series of six podcasts, due to be launched later this year. Holly O'Neill and Aly Holly, Programming and Partnerships Managers for the Surrey Hills National Trust Portfolio tell us about this exciting initiative.



Podcast recording at Oxted Downs. Photo: A de Serra.



Walking on the North Downs Way – Photo: C.Lacey

The new podcast series, entitled “Walk with a Ranger” highlights the important nature conservation work of our ranger teams and volunteers. Interviewer Jo Dyson (from the central National Trust podcast team) discusses the biodiversity challenges and gains with area rangers in an engaging and informal way – each recording is a joyful tour around our places in which the rangers’ passion for sites in their care really comes across.

As we know, the Surrey Hills is beautiful walking country, but sadly some can't access all the area has to offer. The brief therefore to the podcast production company was to “include as much recording of nature sounds as possible – birdsong, wind, rain, grasses rustling in the breeze”, in the hope that listeners could feel transported to our places by the sounds. Using state of the art recording equipment, our sound recordist captured the call of buzzards and skylarks, the rumbling of tractors,

mooing of Belted Galloway cattle and the fast-flowing river Mole.

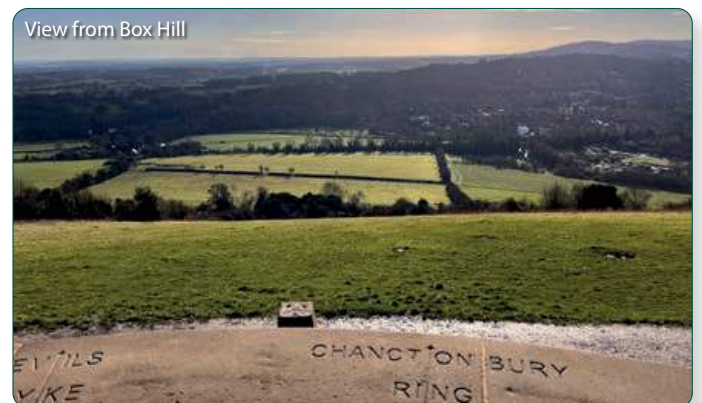
Over a period of five months, podcasts have been recorded at Box Hill, Headley Heath, Reigate Hill, Limpsfield Common, Harewoods and Sandhills and Oxted Downs. Each episode will focus on different land management techniques and habitats and will introduce listeners to the rangers at each site. Here they share how they look after the different habitats in their care – including ancient woodland, arable farmland, chalk grassland and low-lying acid heathland. The history of Reigate Hill is discussed by National Trust Archaeologist James Brown, bringing an added depth to the story-telling.

These are rich stories to tell, told even better in the field by our passionate rangers, keen to share their knowledge with everyone.

Once finalised in the autumn, the National Trust will be sharing the podcasts on their website and through social media channels.



Belted Galloway Cattle at Manor Farm, Wotton



View from Box Hill

Promoting Health and Well-being in the Countryside

Christa Emmett reports on our current projects



Our Surrey Hills Society team – From left to right: Christa, Katie and India



A co-design session with Surrey Coalition of the Disabled



A Growing Together session at Newlands Corner

We currently have lots of exciting projects afoot, all aimed at connecting different audiences with the magic of the Surrey Hills.

At the beginning of June, we were delighted to welcome India Davies to the Society team. She is leading on our National Lottery Heritage Funded project, Growing Together. The aim of the project is to engage under-represented communities in the Surrey Hills countryside by co-designing a programme of nature-based activities focussed on building confidence, developing skills, and improving health and well-being. We are working with three key partners, Surrey Minority Ethnic Forum,

Surrey Coalition of Disabled People and Surrey Choices (who support people with a range of disabilities, particularly learning disabilities). At the end of June, we ran our first taster session which brought together our participants for a forest bathing session at Newlands Corner. It has also been brilliant running our first co-design sessions, generating ideas for an exciting programme of activities to come.

Katie Daw, our Care Farm Coordinator is also hard at work on the Care Farm project and has now facilitated the first care farm visits for people with mental health needs in East Surrey. Care Farm visits may simply involve visiting the farm and walking around or may involve assisting with animal care or taking part in a craft or conservation activity. The important thing is that the visit is tailored to the individual's needs, and supporting an individual's mental health is at the forefront of the purpose of the visit.

We are also thrilled to be partnering with local children's author Lucy Reynolds and illustrator Katie Hickey, who have been working with Weyfield Primary Academy in Guildford to co-create a children's book called the 'Thousand Year Tree', celebrating Surrey's ancient trees, including the ancient yew trees at Newlands Corner. There is also a Surrey wide competition to encourage 4 to 11 year olds to design the endpapers for the book. At the time of going to press over 150 children have already participated in the competition! We are looking forward to seeing the finished project which will be distributed across all 52 of Surrey's libraries!



Helping with the cattle at Pondtail Farm, Brockham



The children of Weyfield Primary Academy exploring trees at Newlands Corner

Events programme September to December 2024

Below is a brief list of planned events we are running.

There is much more detail on our website and a link to a booking form which needs to be filled in whether an event is free or has a cost. Our free walk every first Sunday of the month still needs to be booked.

DATE	EVENT DETAIL
Monday 23 September 	Chilworth Gunpowder Mills and Beyond – Part of Guildford Walkfest Chilworth Gunpowder Works are a fascinating reminder of the importance of the Tillingbourne Valley's industrial heritage. The mills were the most extensive and productive in the 17th century.
Wednesday 25 September	Presidents Day – A day in and around Titsey Place Join our President Chris Howard for this very special day in the historic estate of Titsey, in the far east of the county. We will explore the ancient church of St. Mary, meet the North Downs Way Manager and lunch at Botley Farmhouse pub, followed by a private tour of Titsey Place.
Sunday 29 September 	Albury Heath to Shere Walk – Part of Guildford Walkfest A ramble around the Surrey Hills taking in Albury Saxon Church and the beautiful village of Shere.
Sunday 6 October 	Downlands Circular Walk Join Chairman, Gordon Jackson exploring the chalk grassland of the beautiful Happy Valley and Farthing Downs recommended for inclusion in the Surrey Hills National Landscape extension.
Thursday 17 October	Return Visit to Kenley Airfield Established in 1917, Kenley was a very important airfield during the Battle of Britain. Douglas Bader served here and we will have a guided tour around this historic airfield.
Wednesday 30 October	Tour of Dunsfold Aerodrome We will have a guided tour of this historical aerodrome. Its life began on the 11 May 1942 when the Canadian Army began construction of an emergency airfield. Since then it has been host to many companies including BAE Systems which tested and refurbished many British military aircraft.
Sunday 3 November 	Explore Godalming This will be a very easy walk around the historic town. Find out about its famous past resident and also the unusual fact that makes this town famous!
Saturday 9 November	AGM at Leith Hill Place
Saturday 16 November	Glass Fusion with Hazelhouse Jewellery We have previously held an afternoon making glass fused ornaments and we are offering another opportunity to produce your own objects of delight. The theme will be widely based on Christmas and perhaps you could produce your own masterpieces for Christmas presents?
Saturday 7 December 	Pre-Christmas Walk This is our traditional walk which we have been enjoying for as long as we can remember! This year the walk will explore part of Leith Hill and will be hosted by former Chairman, Neil Maltby.
Saturday 14 December 	Christmas wreath making One of our most popular events, gathering materials on a short walk and then returning to the hall to make your own natural door wreath.
Friday 27 December 	Walk off your Christmas pudding We are putting on two walks again this year, one in the east and one in the west of the county.



Family friendly



1st Sunday Walk of the Month



Dog friendly but kept on a short lead throughout the walk

When booking yourself on a walk please make sure that you are fit enough to cope with the category stipulated.



Easy



Moderate



Challenging

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION visit our website **OR EMAIL:** info@surreyhillssociety.org
OR PHONE: 07530 949302 and leave a message

