

CHINTHURST HILL



Visitor Guide and Self-guided Trail



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Chinthurst Hill

Chinthurst Hill is an isolated hill situated just south of Guildford. A peaceful and attractive open space, the lower slopes of the hill are covered in shady mixed woodland. The summit is maintained as open grassland and has extensive views of Guildford, the North Downs and the surrounding countryside. The summit makes an ideal picnic spot and here you'll find a stone folly, built in the 1930s, which is now a Grade II listed building. Today the Hill is owned by Surrey County Council and managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust.

On the hill there is oak, sweet chestnut, hazel and rowan. The woodland has been carefully managed for hundreds of years under a system called 'coppice with standards', to keep them productive. When a tree is coppiced it is cut at ground level. New shoots soon sprout from the remaining stump and grow into a dense crop of poles. Traditionally these had a very wide range of uses, including fencing and thatching spars.

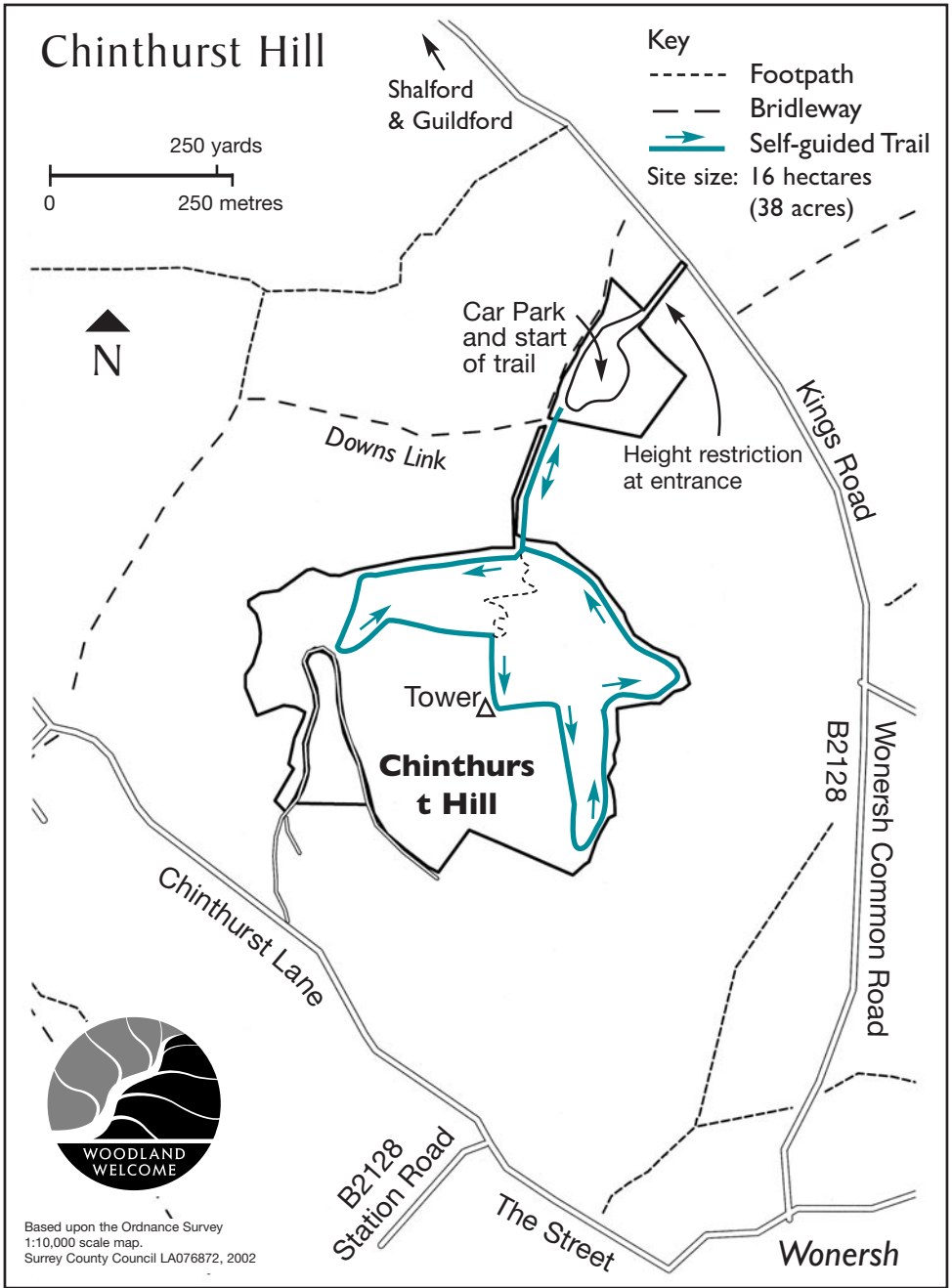
Coppicing is also good for wildlife as the wood develops a patchwork of different habitats through the coppicing process. Certain species prefer different ages of coppice. In recently cut open areas, butterflies feed on the carpets of woodland flowers, while the shrubby growth of older bushes provides cover for birds and animals.

Self-guided Circular Trail

The route includes steps, some steep slopes and descents and will take about an hour to complete. Follow the green marker posts. A direct route to the Tower is also available, just follow the fingerpost saying 'The Tower'.

In the past the hill would have been part of the rural economy, supplying pasture for animals as well as a variety of wood products. This management created the interesting habitats that we can enjoy today.

- Follow the track from the car park, between the fields, to the base of the Hill and turn right. The route follows the field edge and then turns up to the drive to Chinthurst House, but instead of following the drive, turn to the left, past the barway and round to the viewpoint.
- The hillside trees have been felled and replanted; larch trees were removed for timber and have been replaced with a mix of broad-leaved trees and shrubs, although care has been taken to retain the view of Guildford, the Chantries, St Martha's and Blackheath. Turn up the hill and continue on up to the summit.
- The Tower was constructed in the late 1930s by Lord Inchcape as a folly and it is now a listed building. The pine trees were planted at the same time and by walking further along you can see Chinthurst Hill House, designed by



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OS Explorer map 145 covers this area.

Edwin Lutyens and completed in 1895. Walk back across the grass down the slope to the surfaced track watching for the marker post.

- Follow this track, which was originally laid as the tradesman's entrance for the House, then follow the green marker posts as the trail turns right and down the slope to follow the field edge again. Note the coppiced hazel on the boundary bank to your right. This will be laid as a hedge, much as it would have been in the past, preventing livestock from accessing freshly cut coppice elsewhere.
- The lower slopes of the hill are a mixture of mature oaks and hazel and may have been like this for hundreds of years. This type of woodland is important, both for the length of time that it has existed and also the way it has been managed, known as coppicing. The hazel would have been cut down every few years to provide wood for hurdle-making, thatching spars and hedging stakes and binders. The oaks would have been felled less frequently to provide building timbers. These practices allow light to reach the woodland floor and result in a mixed age structure, which provides varied habitats for plants and animals. Hazel coppicing is being gradually reintroduced to ensure the local survival of plants such as the bluebell, foxglove and wood anemone, and to provide habitats for mammals and birds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches and wrens. Straighter oaks and chestnuts will be periodically felled for steps and fencing, while gnarled, twisted and decaying trees will be left to provide habitat for fungi and insects.
- The trail continues until the path reaches the car park, completing the circular walk.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit. If you have any comments, the Countryside Ranger for this site can be contacted on 07968 832504.

Surrey Wildlife Trust's mission is to protect and regenerate Surrey's wildlife.

The Trust is a registered charity (No: 208123). In partnership with Surrey County Council we currently manage 80 sites covering over 4,000 hectares of land, for nature conservation and public enjoyment. This includes the Trust's own nature reserves, SCC's countryside estate and land managed under access agreements with private landowners. A further 3,200 hectares are managed under a grazing contract with the MOD, making Surrey Wildlife Trust, in terms of land managed, the largest Wildlife Trust in England.

Surrey Wildlife Trust

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