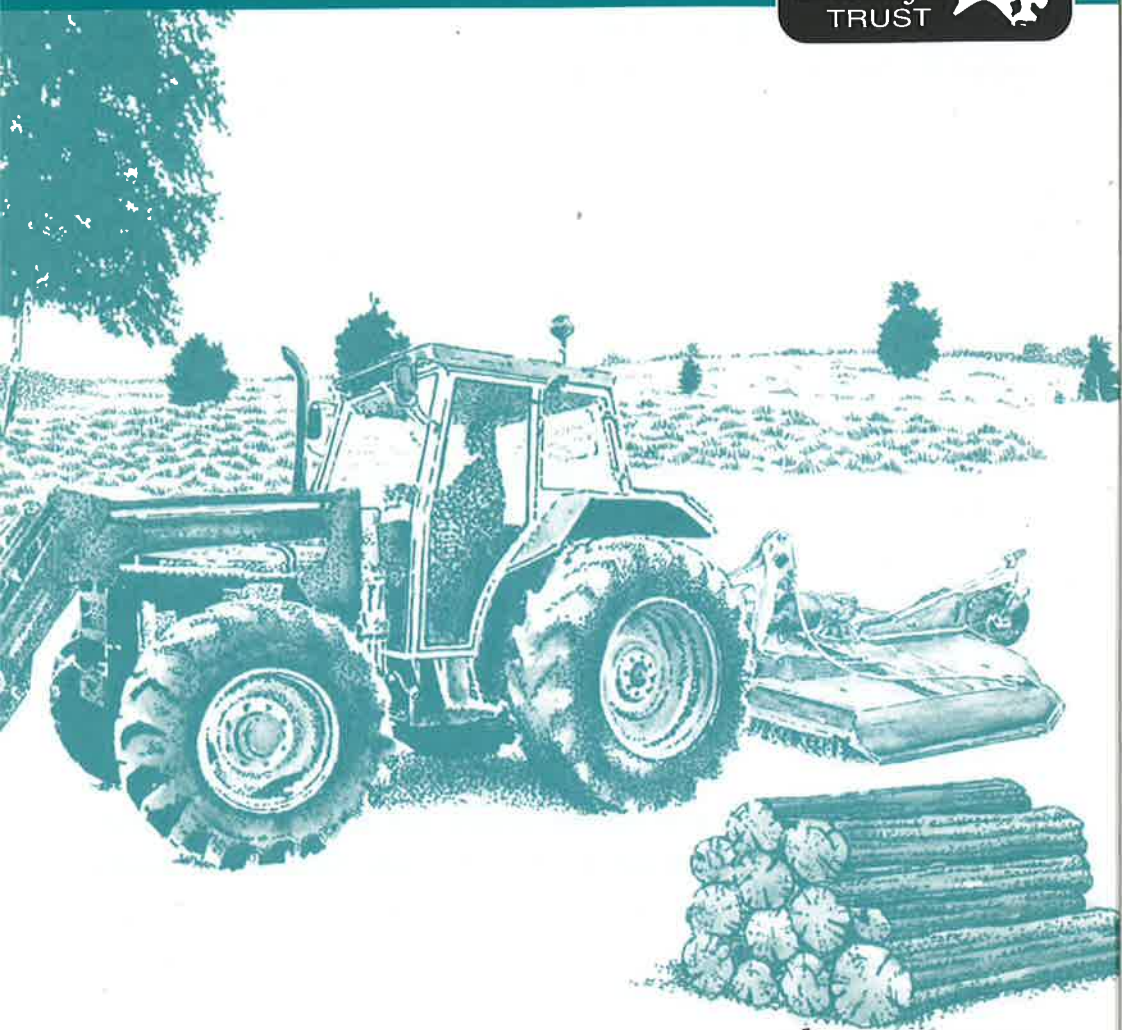


PUTTENHAM COMMON



Visitor Guide and Self-guided Trails



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Puttenham Common

Puttenham Common is managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust as a place for people to visit and enjoy as well as for its extensive wildlife. The Common is owned by Hampton Estates and is open to the public under an access agreement with Surrey County Council.

Much of the common has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest because it lies on the acidic Folkstone Beds of the Lower Greensand and represents the fragmented remains of what was once a much larger area of heathland. Heathland is virtually a man-made environment. There is a hill fort at the highest point of the common, which is thought to be pre-Roman with some evidence of iron-age peoples. This indicates that the land has been occupied and worked for thousands of years. The soil is nutrient poor and free draining. Clearance of the tree cover by early man led to a heathland landscape comprising of low growing shrubs such as heather and gorse. This would have been maintained over time by grazing animals, wood collection for fuel and turf stripping for thatch. Many species have evolved and adapted to this environment and are now dependent upon it for their existence.

This practice has declined over the last century and particularly in the last thirty years. If the area is not grazed or cut regularly, the heathland quickly reverts to scrub and woodland and the heathland species suffer accordingly.

Today Puttenham Common is mainly covered by birch, oak scrub and bracken but two large open areas of heathland do still remain. Work is currently being undertaken to restore and connect these by small-scale tree removal, reducing the bracken and scrub and encouraging heather growth. This work is supported by DEFRA and Natural England.

Self-guided Circular Trails

There are three self-guided trails, of varying length, that start from the middle car park (height restriction at entrance). All are on a sandy surface with no gates or stiles.

White Trail (1/2 hr) - mostly through woodland and takes you past the Generals Pond.

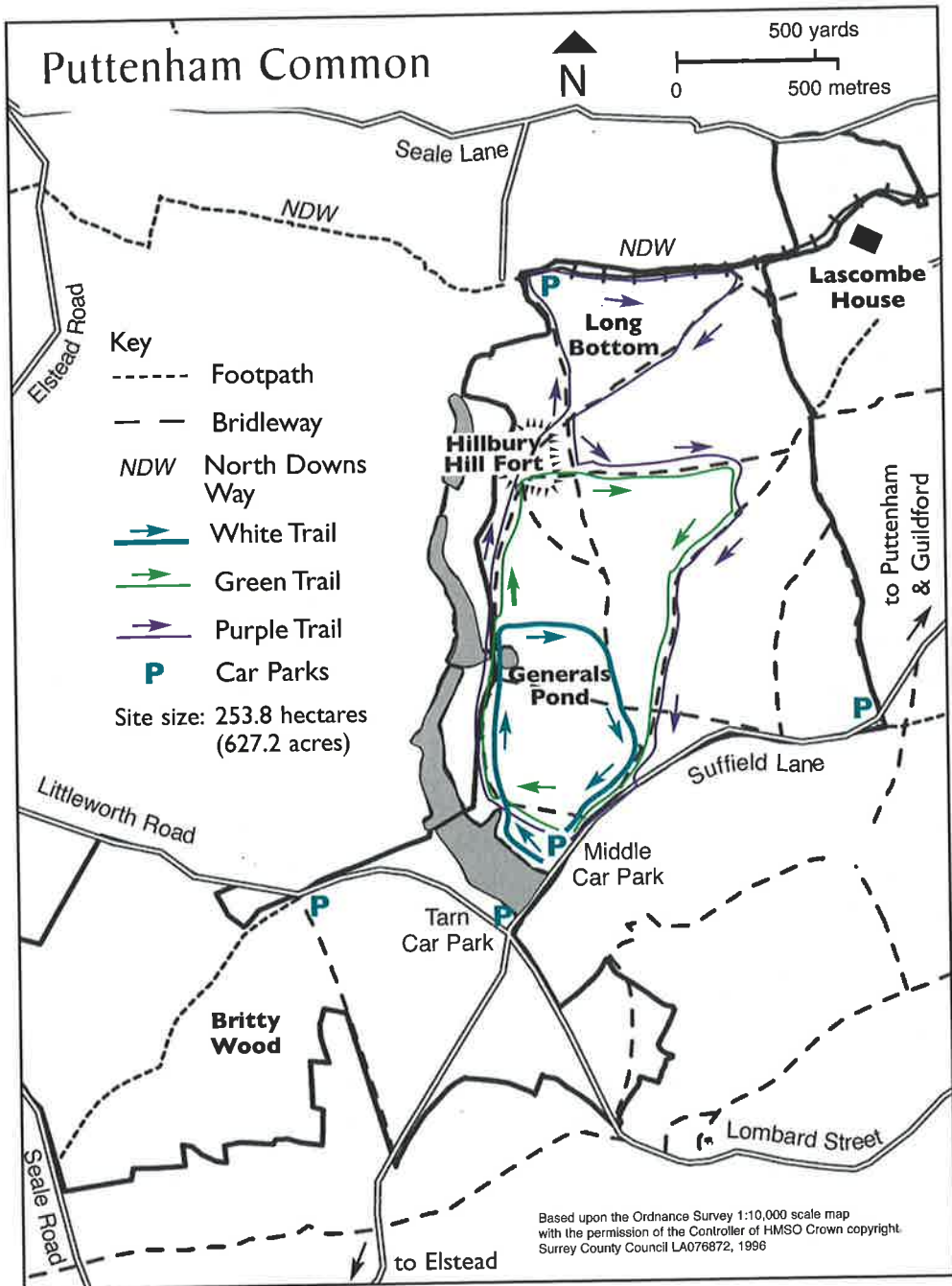
Green Trail (one hour) and **Purple Trail** (two hours) - take you through woodland and then up on to the heath, which offers splendid views in all directions, some slopes and tracks are along narrow gullies. The short section of the North Downs Way used in the 'Purple Trail' is designated a 'Byway Open to All Traffic' so be prepared for the occasional Landrover or trail bike.

Woodland

Apart from some specimen scots pines most of the trees in the woodland are relatively young and are broad-leaved, such as birch and oak. In the wetter areas you will find willow and alder. The woodland would have been open heath up until the 1940s however it is currently and will continue to be managed as woodland. Some of the open areas within the woodland may be kept open as glades, these are an important woodland habitat.

Generals Pond

The pond is thought to have been named after General James Oglethorpe who owned the Priory Manor in Puttenham during the middle of the 18th century. As a young officer he served in the Prince of Savoy's army against the Turks and was commended for bravery in the Battle of Belgrade in 1717. On his return he took up the family parliamentary seat of Haslemere and took a great interest in humanitarian issues, particularly prison conditions and the welfare of the poor. This led him to found the (American) Colony of Georgia as a place for the "worthy poor (and reformed prisoners) to remake their lives". He was well known to many of



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OS Explorer map 145 covers this area.

the great people of the age, including Samuel Johnson, John Wesley and Thomas Paine. In later life he was involved in founding institutions such as hospitals and university colleges, and the British Museum.

The pond was hand dug and lined with clay, to be used as a 'stew pond' to allow young fish to grow to a sufficient size before they were released into the larger lakes on the estate. It is an important area for dragonflies and in the summer months you can see them flying around and catching insects on the wing or fiercely defending their territories. Just beyond Generals Pond, the short trail (white marker posts) branches off to the right and will return you to the middle car park in approximately 15 minutes. The purple and green trails continue up the rise to the hill fort.

Hillbury

This hill fort is probably pre-Roman and the area was extensively occupied during the Roman period. Charles Kerr, the curate of Puttenham between 1869 and 1876, carried out excavations in the area and found various artefacts from many periods but the majority were Roman. The fort is a scheduled ancient monument and provides good views of the Hogs Back to the north and the hills surrounding the Devils Punch Bowl to the south. The green trail leads off here to the right and provides a quicker route back to the car park. For the longer walk follow the purple trail across the fort and down the hill to the crossroads.

The North Downs Way

This 141 mile National Trail runs from Farnham to Dover, mostly along the North Downs ridge. Waymarked by white acorns on posts, it follows, in parts, the route taken by pilgrims travelling to the shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury. Pilgrims are likely to have taken a route along the foot of the downs to visit shrines and local inns. However, travellers may well have preferred the dry chalk roads on the downs to the muddy, rutted roads of the lower land. Follow the North Downs Way to the top of the hill.

Lascombe

The house on the hill is Lascombe House and is a fine example of an early design of Edwin Lutyens and was built in 1898. The trail drops down into a valley and up the other side to the crossroads. Turn left here and go up the hill and across the main sandy track. The route then goes eastwards along the ridge. In spring and summer, this area is usually alive with the ground-nesting skylark and woodlark, which hover protectively near their nest sites, so please stick to the trail at this point. In the autumn, many different species of fungi will be visible, the most common of these being the picturesque fly agaric with its distinctive red cap covered in white spots. The trail continues along the ridge and then drops down the steep slope and returns to the car park. You may be surprised by the sudden flight and alarm call of the green woodpecker, as these are often seen on the common.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit. If you have any comments, the Countryside Ranger for this site can be contacted on 07968 832505.

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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