

Walking in  
**West Berkshire**

**6**

# Sulham Valley

**3**

circular routes  
for walking

# Introduction

The three circular walks (brown, green and white) follow public rights of way (footpaths and bridleways) and sections of the brown and white routes use 'Permitted Paths'. These are paths designated by the landowner for the public to use, where no public rights of way exist.

Each walk is marked with a different colour waymarking disc: brown, green and white. These are displayed on posts, stiles and gates.



The walks are waymarked and have been described from the Forestry Authority's car park at Sulham Wood. The walks can also be started from Pangbourne, Theale, Little Heath and Hogmoor Bridge.

The Sulham Valley is unspoiled, but it is close to the built-up areas of Tilehurst, Pangbourne, Purley and Theale. The valley is unusual because two streams - the Pang and the Sulham Brook - run through it, side-by-side. There are woods on the lower ground among traditionally farmed small fields, which create a patchwork rich in nature conservation interest. Public footpaths offer several pleasant walks through the area.

## The Brown Route - 3.1 miles/5km

The Brown Route runs through the meadows by the River Pang. Waterproof shoes are recommended: allow about 1½ hours to complete the walk.

Follow the Brown waymarks down through the wood to where the circular walk begins.

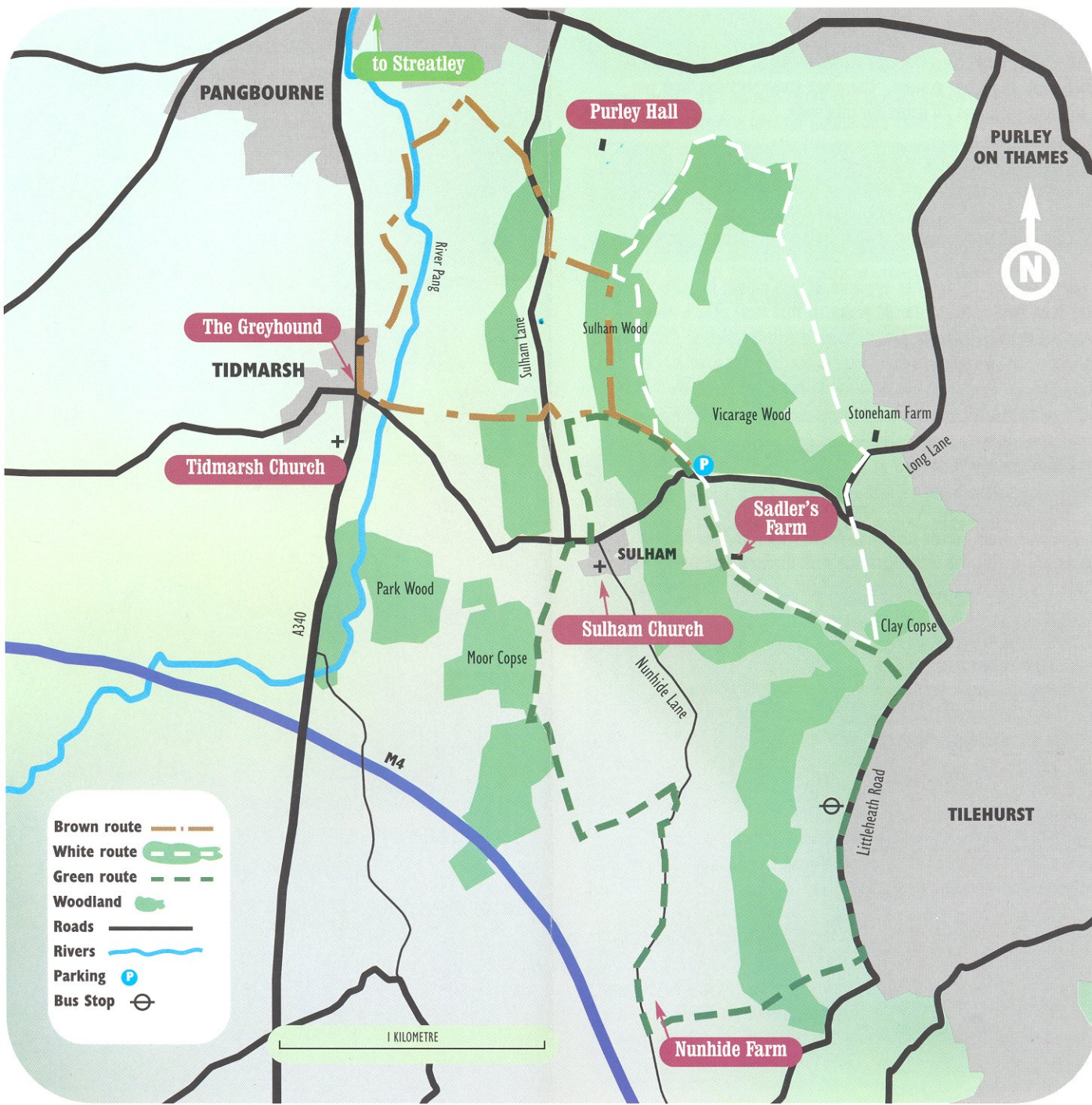
From the pedestrian gate, follow the path to the road, cross and take the waymarked path.

This path runs through some small fields which are grazed and cut for hay, a traditional use which allows grasses and wild flowers to flourish.

After crossing the River Pang turn right at the road.

Opposite is the Old Water Mill. This Mill was once the home of the author Lytton Strachey.





PANGBOURNE

to Streatley

Purley Hall

PURLEY ON THAMES



The Greyhound

TIDMARSH

Tidmarsh Church

River Pang

Sulham Lane

Sulham Wood

Vicarage Wood

Stoneham Farm

Long Lane

Sadler's Farm

Sulham Church

SULHAM

Park Wood

Moor Copse

Nunhide Lane

Clay Copse

A340

M4

Littleheath Road

TILEHURST

- Brown route
- White route
- Green route
- Woodland
- Roads
- Rivers
- Parking
- Bus Stop

1 KILOMETRE

At the A340 junction turn right (past the Greyhound Public House).

A detour to the south leads to Tidmarsh Church. It has a Norman doorway but most of the structure dates from the 13th Century. As well as carved oak beams, other unusual features can be seen. The apse (arched recess) is of a unique design, being octagonal in shape with small stained-glass windows set in each face. In the apse, several wall paintings were discovered in the 19th Century. The restorer, lacking today's skills, picked out each of the figures in purple paint!

Walk through the village of Tidmarsh and at a field entrance turn right off the main road. Pass through the kissing gate.

Follow the waymarks to the River Pang, a typical chalk stream, fast clear and ideal for trout. At its water's edge varieties of rush and reeds grow alongside other plants such as Water Mint and Marsh Marigold.

After several waymarked turns, the path crosses the river (at this point the link path from Pangbourne joins the route). The path crosses the valley bottom with one sharp right turn halfway across the open meadows. Turn right at the road, and take the path on the left which goes up-hill into Sulham Wood. Turn right a few metres into the wood and follow the waymarks along the woodland edge and back to the car park.

### The White Route - 3.1 miles/5km

The White Route stays mainly on the higher ground and crosses different kinds of woodland. Allow about 1½ hours to complete the walk.

Start from the Forestry Authority's Sulham Wood car park.

This wood is dominated by evergreen trees such as Norway spruce, Douglas fir and Scots pine that bear seed in cones. They have been planted to produce timber for poles or pulping. Not many plants can survive the heavy shade they cast, though holly and yew may be seen.



Follow the White waymarks through the beech trees along the hillside.

Beech grows well on thin chalk soil and its leaves and nuts ('beech mast') provide food for plants and animals. Throughout the year many kinds of fungus can be seen. Some are parasitic and live on growing trees, while other kinds flourish on the dead wood that litters the ground.

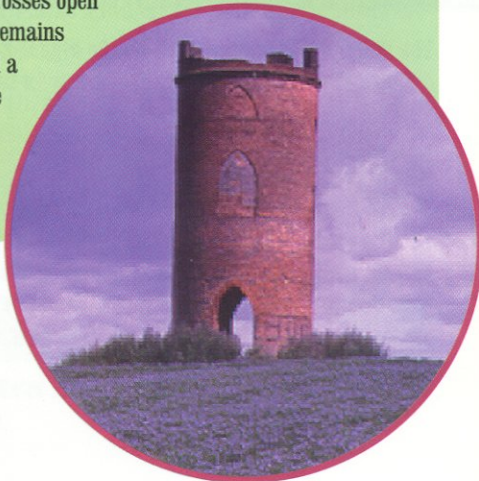
There is a view of Purley Hall – originally built in 1609. The gardens and parkland were laid out in the early 18th Century, possibly by Charles Bridgeman, with ornamental canals (recently re-dug) and tree-lined avenues.

The (permitted) path continues right around the edge of the wood to where there are views of the Chiltern Hills, then up-hill between large fields.

These were created by grubbing out hedges to permit the use of larger and more efficient farming machinery.

One stretch of hedge still exists. The path follows it downhill and runs between Stoneham Farm and Vicarage wood to reach Long Lane.

At the road junction, turn right (take care to walk on the right to be seen by cars). Cross the kissing-gate opposite the next road junction. This path runs between open fields, and crosses a shallow dip by Clay Copse. The route then takes a sharp right turn, and from here the path coincides with the Green route back to the car park. The path crosses open fields and passes the remains of Sadler's Farm and a large pond. Follow the waymarks to the right, and the starting point will be in view.



### The Green Route - 4.4miles/7km

The Green Route runs through meadows along the valley bottom, then back on higher ground. There are steep sections, and you should allow about 2½ hours for this walk.

From the car park, a track goes down through the Forestry Authority woods, then across a field (this coincides with the Brown route). The field backs on to houses, and the Green route turns left to run behind their gardens until a lane is reached.

Here Sulham Church lies opposite. It was rebuilt in 1838 by the Rev John Wilder, Rector for 56 years. At that time people were starting to study and imitate the churches of the Middle Ages. The Wilders were the main land owners in the Sulham area for 300 years, and built cottages in Sulham for estate workers, as well as a dove-cote seen later on the walk.

The route turns right by the churchyard entrance then left a few metres beyond the road junction.

The path runs across low-lying fields with drainage ditches. Wet fields are unsuitable for cultivating with modern machinery, and these are grazed by animals as they have been for many years.

The path runs along the edge of Moor Copse, which is on the right. At this point the waymarked link-path from Hogmoor Bridge comes in from the west. After two changes of direction, the route leaves the woodland to run between fields. At the junction of footpaths turn left to Nunhide Lane. Turn right down the lane (a public bridleway) to Nunhide Farm, then left after passing by the farm, and then up a slope towards the woods.

Behind the farm is the brick dove-cote mentioned earlier. Dove-cotes were originally built to breed pigeons for the table. The wood mainly of beech and is on a steep slope.

Skirting the playing field beyond, turn left along Little Heath Road. The route now follows Little Heath Road, along the edge of built-up Tilehurst. After about a kilometre just beyond Kiln Lane, the walk turns off to the left. This leads over the fields past the remains of Sadler's Farm, and coincides with the White route to the end of the walk.

# The Country Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Leave all gates as found
- Keep your dogs under close control
- Keep to public rights of way across farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges & walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
- Take your litter home
- Help to keep all water clean
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Take special care on country roads
- Make no unnecessary noise

## Public Transport

**Bus Services:** No. 105 runs from Reading to Pangbourne via Purley.  
No. 1a runs to Little Heath Road in Tilehurst.  
Nos. 101/102 runs from Reading to Theale.  
Travel Line on tel. (0870) 608 2608 for further details.

**Rail Services:** Pangbourne, Theale and Tilehurst stations are nearby. For information phone the National Rail Enquiry Service on tel. (0845) 748 4950

## Car Parking

Forestry Authority's Sulham Wood car park.

This leaflet was produced by West Berkshire Council .

For further information about this and other leaflets, please contact West Berkshire Council, Countryside and Environment, Faraday Road, Newbury RG14 2AF. Tel: (01635) 519808