

## The Hog's Back from Puttenham

**Distance:** 8.5 km / 5.3 miles, moderate walking, total ascent 241m / 790 feet

**In Pursuit of Spring:** Chapter 3 Guildford to Dunbridge

**Refreshments:** The Good Intent, 60-62 The Street, Puttenham, Guildford GU3 1AR  
The Jolly Farmer Harvester, Puttenham Heath Rd, Puttenham, Guildford GU3 1AJ  
Manor Farm Tea Room Wood Lane, Seale, Farnham GU10 1HR

**Map:** Explorer 145 (Guildford)

### Getting there:

If driving, park in The Street at the east end of Puttenham, in the village itself, just beyond the church of St John the Baptist and the village war memorial.

This walk from Puttenham to Seale runs south of Edward Thomas's ride along the Hog's Back before he went on to Farnham. The walk might have gone along the road between the villages of Puttenham and Seale at either end below the ridge. Thomas knew this road and in 1914 advised his friend who was following the Pilgrim's Way to *turn off to the right [after Guildford] and go under the Hog's Back west to Puttenham or Seale (see Belloc for the exact line) and so to Farnham*. But both places are small and the road between them twists and turns, with few houses to be seen. High trees and hedge growth hide the surrounding countryside. Thomas's schoolfriend Hilaire Belloc, who wrote in 1905 about the ancient trackway along the North Downs to Dover, reckoned that the Pilgrim's Way went this way as a *flanking road* under the ridge and doglegged under Puttenham's St John the Baptist church. Nevertheless, it would be inadvisable to walk it. Neither is it easy to find places along the Hog's Back to see as Thomas did, owing to the speedy and unremitting traffic and the often impenetrable screen of trees on either side, particularly to the south, Thomas's left. However, the countryside remains well worth walking into and observing. To work through it, this walk runs to the south, parallel to his route, and then rises to the Hog's Back itself and returns, walking just below the ridge, to Puttenham.

Of the actual Hog's Back road, Thomas writes *the road is well upon the Back, and for five or six miles it runs straight, yet not too straight, with a slight change of altitude, yet never flat, and for the most part upon the very ridge – the topmost bristles – of the Hog's Back*. From here he enjoyed the wide views, the gypsy camp *with the men by the half-door at the back smoking, while the hobbled horses are grazing and the children playing near. The children play across the road, motorcars or no motorcars, laughing at whatever amuses them*. He even likes the telegraph posts *business-like and mysterious*.

He writes that in March *many miles of country lay cold and soft, but undimmed*. His view to the north of *the darker heights of Bisley and Chobham on the horizon, and gradually... the red settlements of Aldershot and Farnborough, and the dark high land of Bagshot* cannot be seen from this walk.

Cobbett, in his *Rural Rides*, talks of the *chalk hills, the juniper shrubs and the yew trees* as an extension of the chalk hills of Kent. *To the westward here lies Epsom Downs, which lead on to Merrow Downs and St Margaret's Hill, then, skipping over Guildford, you come to the Hog's Back, which is still of chalk, and at the west end of which is Farnham. With the Hog's Back this vein of chalk seems to end: for then the valleys become rich loam, and the hills sand and gravel till you approach the Wiltshire Downs by the way of Alresford*.



The Hog's Back 1909; Hugh Thompson, from *Highways and Byways of Surrey* by Eric Parker

**1. Walk down The Street, passing the Good Intent Pub.**

**2. At Lascombe Lane take the North Downs Way on the left and follow this as signed.**



North Downs Way



The Street, Puttenham, Hugh Thompson

The North Downs Way lies along the dividing line between the chalk hills up on the right and the greensand to the south. This geology creates the environment for differing flora. Initially the walk runs along a sunken lane and a sandy track through Little Common. It is delightful, is gentle underfoot and courses through mixed woodland of sweet chestnut, oak, birch, carpeted in bracken and wildflowers which attract a variety of butterflies. To the right it gives the occasional glimpse of the downland fields dropping away from the chalk ridge of the Hog's Back.

**3. At the road go left and immediately right**

**4. Go left at the next kissing gate and right through another onto the Seale Road. (Alternatively, take the road on the left through the village to avoid walking along a busy road without a pavement). Follow this to the road from Puttenham, passing Seale war memorial and St Lawrence's Church.**

The path becomes a sunken lane again and, at a kissing gate, leads into open fields.

The church, built of clunch, an easily worked hard chalk, goes back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, though the current structure is 15<sup>th</sup> century. Among its monuments is one to Ensign Long, who was killed in an 1809 naval collision, shown in bas-relief. He was a friend of Byron's.

There are toilets just inside the churchyard and tea rooms at Manor Farm on the left.



St Lawrence's Church, Seale 1909; Hugh Thompson

**5. Take the footpath on the left inside the churchyard by the lych gate and go up the steps ahead and right onto the lane. At the top of the lane, a footpath is indicated downhill to the right. Ignore it and instead go forward across the chalkland with its fine views.**



Chalkland view to the south

**6. Walk over to copses and then upwards on the left topmost corner where a gap leads into another field.**

**7. Walk across this to the gate on the right of the dormered house which lies at right angles to the Hog's Back. This road is claimed to be private land so 40m before the house, find a small gap in the hedge and follow up to the Hog's Back road and continue along the verge for 500m to a driveway at another white house, "Woodbury".**



Seale chalkpits

On this eastward stretch we can share his left-hand southern view. *On the south at first I could see the broken ridge of Hindhead, Blackdown and Olderhill, and through the gap a glimpse of the Downs; then later the piny country which culminates in the dome of Crooksbury Hill; and nearer at hand a lower but steeply arising and falling region of gorse, bracken and heather intermingled with ploughland of almost bracken colour, and with the first hop garden. Both the level-seeming sweep on the north and the hills of the south, clear as they were in that anxious light, were subject to the majestic road on the Hog's Back.*



No children today would be laughingly playing across this road today as they did in Thomas's day!



**8. Take the bridleway on the drive's farther side through the woods. Turn right almost immediately just beyond the bridleway signpost. Follow the waymarks.**

**9. Look out for a bridleway signpost by a gap into the field. Cross the field half left to a waymark post by a tree.**

**10. Go left following the bridleway around the hop fields to join Seale Lane and back to The Street.**

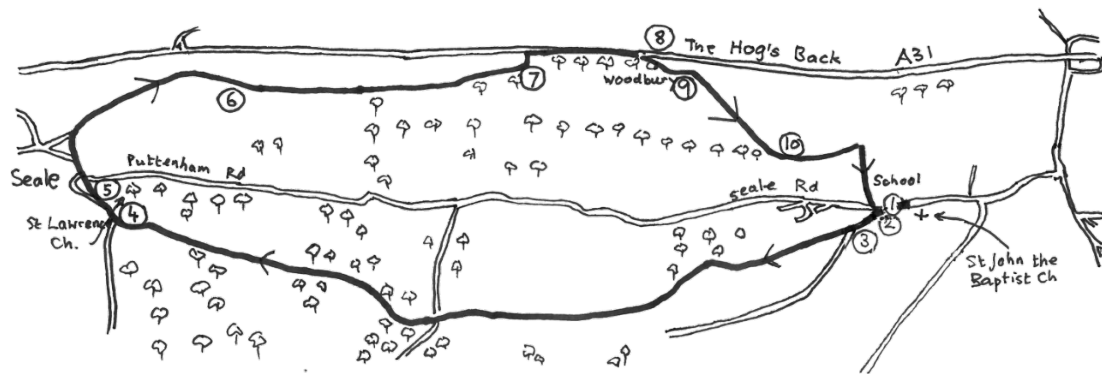


Romany family in Surrey



From The Hog's Back, looking south, BM

With special thanks to Pam and Stephen Turner, Edward Thomas Fellowship  
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