



Walk 5

A Victorian Artists' Haven Wormley and Sandhills

Directions

No artistic colony can ever have been more agreeable than the little community that flourished at Witley in the second half of the 19th Century. Of the 25 distinguished writers and painters who lived in this area between 1860 and 1905 over half of them resided in this small area in the south of the parish, attracted down from London with the arrival of the railways.

With your back to the A283 walk up New Road to Combe Lane, cross over and proceed ahead to Witley station.

Proceed to the top of the station car park and take the public footpath over the railway line and continue ahead over a cross roads. When the footpath meets a road turn left.

Redlands is on your left. **Arthur Melville RWS, ARSA (1855-1904)** rented the house from his friend **Walford Graham Robertson**.

The Studio is next to **Redlands**. In an earlier house on this site **Walford Graham Robertson RP, RBA, ROI (1867 – 1948)** painted and designed theatre sets.

Continue into Sandhills and on the left you will find:

Sandhills House. This house was originally built for artist **John Malcolm Stewart**, who, after suffering a serious illness in 1881 was admitted to the Hambledon Asylum where he died. The house was put in the hands of his trustees **Charles Keene & Edmund Evans** who sold the lease to **William & Helen Allingham** in 1881. **Helen Allingham RWS (1848-1929)** was a popular painter of rural scenes, sunny gardens and children,

strongly influenced by **Birket Foster** and **Frederick Walker ARA** (who lived locally at Tibbett's Farm in Brook). Helen was inspired by the Sandhills environs. She became very concerned about the changing countryside, hence she made many permanent records of rural cottages. Helen's husband, the Irish poet **William Allingham**, wrote many popular children's poems including 'The Fairies'. He had many contemporary artistic friends, particularly Rossetti and Alfred Lord Tennyson who lived locally in Haslemere. W. Graham Robertson leased Sandhills from the Allinghams in 1888. He founded the 'Chiddingfold Players' and purchased Sandhills Common and 16 cottages. On his death the Common was left to the National Trust and each cottage to its tenant. **Dame Ellen Terry (1847-1928)**, a celebrated Victorian actress was a close friend of the Allinghams and Graham Robertson. She came to 'rest' at Sandhills.

Turn right up Sebastopol Lane and at the top right again onto the unsigned Bannacle Hill Road. There is a good view south beside Sandhills Cottage. At the T-junction turn left into Brook Road. Further along the road on the right hand side is the entrance to:

Pinewood House, Cottage and Stables where James Clarke Hook RA (1819-1907), the famous marine artist lived from 1858-1866. He then moved to Churt because of the 'trains in his garden and the construction of a huge hideous brick box crammed with hapless children' – now known as King Edward's School.

Continuing along Brook Road you come to:

The Heights now known as Surrey Heights, a care home. This very large house was built for **Sir Henry Cole KCB (1808-1882)**, best known for his work on the 1851 Great Exhibition, with the profits from which he built the Victoria and Albert Museum. Sir Henry's nom de plume was Felix Summerly and he was the originator of the Christmas Card in 1846. English novelist **George Eliot (Mary A. Evans 1819-1880)** purchased The Heights for £5000 in the 1870s.

The next large house down Brook Road was:

Fernside, now known as Surrey Hills, another care home. Fernside was

*built by **John Foster**, brother to **Birket Foster** at **The Hill**. John took an active interest in all local affairs and became a generous benefactor providing the Men's Institute and restoration of the church. He had a particular interest in highlighting the importance of preserving the local public footpaths.*

All these houses have good views to the south.

Just before you reach the A283 Petworth Road note on the left the chapel of King Edward's School, a fine Victorian building. Turn right on to the A283, over the railway bridge and right again into Combe Lane. 100 yards down this lane you come to:

***Leybourne** (next to **Leybourne Lodge**) which was built by **Edmund Evans (1826-1905)** reputedly the most famous colour printer of the 19th Century and the main promoter of **Kate Greenaway RWS, RI (1846-1901)**, **Randolph Caldecott RI (1846-1886)** and **Walter Crane** who all spent a great deal of time at Leybourne.*

Continue for another 300 yards down Combe Lane and turn left on to a public footpath by a bus stop (part of the Greensand Way) and go through to the A283.

*In the area of Wormley Hill bounded by the A283, Combe Lane and the FP is the site of '**The Hill**' a mock Tudor house built by **Birket Foster RWS (1825-1899)**, one of the foremost watercolour painters of the day. **William Morris (1834-1896)** and **Sir Edward Burne-Jones ARA (1833-1898)**, both made significant contributions to the internal decorations of the house, samples of which can be seen in the V & A. The grounds of The Hill were often used for local fetes and charity events. The family lived here for 30 years. Unfortunately the main house was demolished in 1952 although 'Stonehaven' and some buildings remain, including 'Littlecote' (the laundry), The Coach House and Well Cottage. **William Paton Burton (1828-1883)** a fine landscape artist also lived in a small cottage on Wormley Hill which has now been pulled down.*

Turn left and cross the A283 into Wormley Lane and follow it round the sharp right hand bend to reach a T-junction. Turn right and Tigbourne Cottage is the second house along on the right.

Tigbourne Cottage. *Birket Foster spent several summers here before building The Hill and when he moved up to the new house this cottage was inhabited by **Charles Samuel Keen (1823-1891)** a popular illustrator for Punch and **W.H. Hammond Jones (1845-1878)**, a minor artist who painted landscapes and views in the south of England.*

Now cross the busy A283 to New Road and return to your car. If you are returning to Witley station you can turn right onto the A283 and take the footpath on the left used earlier.

