

St Martha Parish Council

Councillor Toynbee's Report for the meeting on 16th April 2026

In late December 2025 the current owner of Postford House noticed that water had ceased flowing through the leat on his property.

The leat, after leaving Postford House, continues towards Chilworth. Some of the water branches off in a field behind the war memorial and joins the cut at the Gunpowder Mills at the 'snail' junction. The main part of the leat carries on, behind the Percy Arms, and feeds the large lake at Tangley Mere.

The problem of the lack of water stems from an area south of Albury just before the leat enters Postford House. Here it passes under the railway along with the natural stream. The railway bank has collapsed on the leat and the water from the leat is now flowing into the natural stream and the leat is completely blocked.

The owners of Postford House and Tangley Mere are very concerned about this situation and have been in discussions with Network Rail, the Environment Agency, Albury Estates and owners of adjoining land. Discussions are ongoing as to who is responsible for the repairs and, once that has been agreed, how those repairs would be made, given that heavy machinery would have to enter the site across several fields.

Update re the lack of water entering the Gunpowder Mills at the 'snail' junction - April 2026

Concern about water flow at Chilworth Gunpowder Mills which is classified as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. (<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1018507>).

The historic site is owned by Guildford Borough Council, who have a duty of care to protect this designated monument.

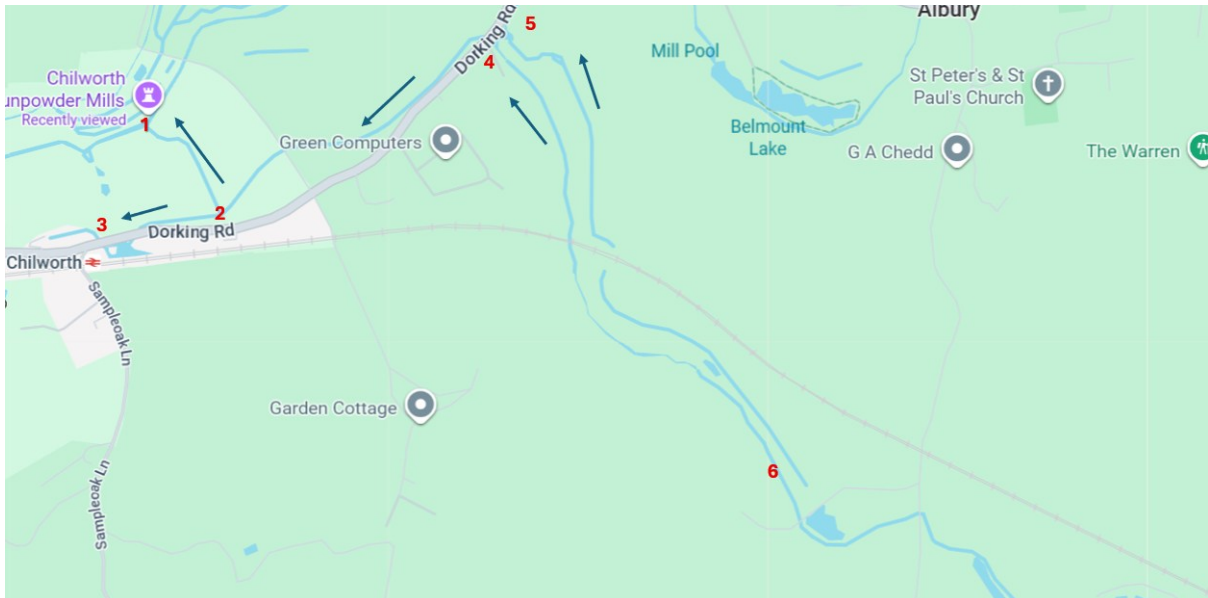
The River Tillingbourne flows through the site, along with several 'cuts' which were made over 100 years ago to divert the water around the Mills. The largest 'cut' runs alongside the public footpath through the centre of the mills and eventually flows under the path where it used to cascade down a drop and into the river. Last year, Guildford Borough Council did a huge amount of work at the point where it rejoins the river. Originally this was where a waterwheel would have been placed, which illustrates how much water used to flow along here.

The concern is that at one crucial point, at the other end of the Mills, the water is not flowing into the cut, and the whole length of the stream through the mills is in danger of completely drying up in the summer.

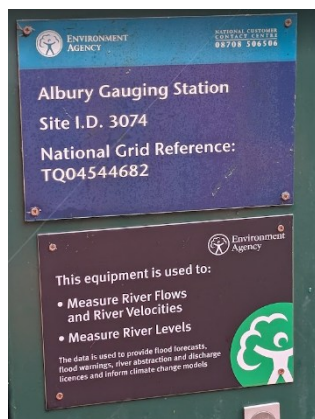
Several residents have noticed this too and we are trying to find the cause.

During February, when, due to the above average amount of rain that had fallen, the River Tillingbourne was on a flood alert, I looked into this and can confirm that despite the extremely wet and rainy conditions, water is not flowing into the Gunpowder Mills as it should.

Please see the map and comments below.



1. This is where the stream joins the cut at the Gunpowder Mills. The junction is known locally as 'The Snail' as there is a large wooden carved snail at this point.
2. The stream runs into the Gunpowder Mills, across a private field from point 2 on the map where it connects with another stream running west/east. There may be a sluice gate here, but at the moment we think that is not the cause of the blockage.
3. The stream here is static. It used to flow strongly east to west at this point, under the road, into the duck pond and then returning back under the road to run behind The Percy pub. Water levels in the duck pond are low.
4. Travelling east towards the source of the stream we reach points 4 and 5 on the above map, where there are Millstones on the roadside marking the entrance to Chilworth village from the direction of Albury. There are two bridges at this point and two streams that flow under the road. The stream on the east of these two (5) is flowing strongly and can be heard rushing under the road towards Mill Lane. A short distance away, at point 4, (which traces to the Gunpowder Mills) there is hardly any water flowing which can be seen from a smaller bridge on the north side of the road.
5. Opposite, on the south side of the road, the stream disappears into a gated property - 172 Dorking Road and cannot be traced further at this point.
6. I therefore accessed the stream from further south, via Blackheath Lane in Albury. Here the water is flowing strongly, and 'Albury Gauging Station' is at this point



It would therefore seem that whatever is stopping the water flowing is between the Albury Gauging Station and 172 Dorking Road, Chilworth.

Environment Agency – the reply to the Clerk to the letter that the Clerk sent on 18/02/26

RE: Enquiry: ENQ2026/15128

Thank you for your enquiry The water flow at the Chilworth Gunpowder Mills Estate, GU4 8NQ, which we received on 18 February 2026. We are sorry for the delay in response. Your enquiry was forwarded to our Asset Performance Team who have provided the response below.

Thank you for your email regarding the water flow at Chilworth. We are aware of an issue that is affecting flows in the area. Our local Operations team has investigated and identified that the cause is located on private land. We have notified the relevant landowner, who is responsible for carrying out the necessary repairs. We have been informed that they are currently in the process of organising these works.

We hope this information is of use. Kind regards,

Lower Tributaries Asset Performance Team – Wey Catchment Sent via Thames Area Customers and Engagement Team