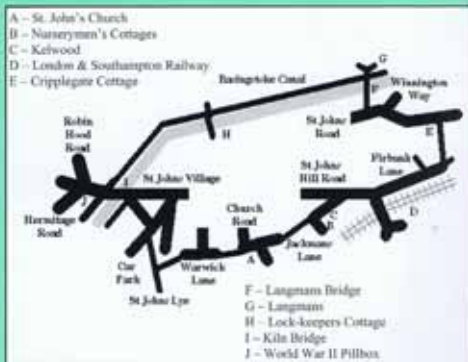


**A HERITAGE WALK AROUND ST. JOHNS
(TO ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, LANGMANS
and THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL)**



This walk should take up two hours as a gentle afternoon or evening stroll, and although some puddles may be encountered (especially in winter), most of the paths are metalled and the walk should be accessible all year round. In the summer some of the paths may become overgrown with nettles, so wear suitable clothing. Please follow the Countryside Code, respect the privacy of the owners and occupiers of the properties listed and enjoy your walk.

For a copy of the current programme of guided Heritage Walks, please send a S.A.E. to the publisher, or e-mail heritage.walks@ntlworld.com

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GUIDE
No. 3

ST. JOHNS

**A SELF-GUIDED HERITAGE WALK TO
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, LANGMANS and
THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL**



**WITH NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS
ON THE HISTORY OF THE AREA**

By Iain Wakeford

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**A HERITAGE WALK AROUND ST. JOHNS
TO ST. JOHN'S CHURCH, LANGMANS and
THE BASINGSTOKE CANAL**

Introduction

The name "St. Johns" is relatively modern – the village taking its name from the church – but before then this area was simply part of the common-land of the Manor of Woking, within the ancient tithing of Golding (or Goldsworth). Local people held "common rights" that entitled them to graze their animals, cut turf for fuel and remove small amounts of wood. There

was also the right to take sand and gravel to repair their houses and local tracks or roads. In the 1850s the London Necropolis & National Mausoleum Company sought to buy the whole of Woking Common to turn it into a vast cemetery – covering over 2,600 acres (from Maybury in the east to Brookwood in the west). The Vicar of Woking was concerned that the poor of the area would lose all

St John's Lye





their common rights and so eventually negotiated for the 60 acres of St. Johns Lye to be removed from the sale. Had he not done so, this area may well have been developed with housing when the Necropolis Company began to sell off their 'surplus land' from the late 1850s onwards! The origin of the name 'Lye' is uncertain, but it may come from the Old English word 'leah' meaning 'an open place in a wood' or 'a grove'. The description would certainly fit with some parts of St. Johns Lye today.

The car park on St. Johns Lye.

The Walk

The walk starts at the car park on St. Johns Lye. The entrance to the car park is by the pedestrian crossing in the village centre. Here there is also a bus stop for those who wish to use public transport. To the left of the entrance to the car park is a track across the Lye. Head along this towards the children's playground. Before reaching the playground, turn left off the track (below) and walk past the houses to the edge of the Lye green.



Turn off the track before reaching the playground and walk in front of the houses to the path up to the church.

To the side of the last house (above right) is a footpath that goes up the hill to St. John's Church. Turn right, into the churchyard, and up to the front of the church.

St. John's Church

The Chapel of Ease (now Church) of St. John the Baptist, was built in 1842 to serve the western part of the old parish of St. Peter's, (Old) Woking. By the 1840s the

Knaphill/Goldsworth area had begun to develop with the building of the canal (and later the railway) as well as the development of the brick-making and nursery industries.

The Chapel of Ease of St. John the Baptist was designed by George Gilbert Scott as a simple

St. John's Chapel soon after construction in 1842.



building with a Nave, Chancel and a small bell-turret at the eastern end. In 1884 the parish of St. John's was created out of St. Peter's parish and the following year a South Aisle and Vestry were added. The church was again extended in the 1970s.



From the church, return to Church Road (in front of the church) and then turn right along the dirt track that becomes Jackmans Lane (below).

Eventually the lane becomes a footpath and then a lane again! Here can be seen some of the cottages (below) built originally for the workers at Jackman's Nursery.

Jackman's Nursery
In 1810 William Jackman founded a nursery on 50 acres of land that was

Some of the nurserymen's cottages in Jackmans Lane.



eventually to be known as "St. Johns Hill". William had four sons, two of whom - George and Henry - took over the running of the nursery when William died in 1840. Two years later, however, the partnership was dissolved and George continued to run the business on his own. By 1851 he had 90 acres under cultivation,



employing 35 men and six boys.

They specialised in raising clematis, breeding the well-known "clematis jackmani" in 1859. Unfortunately George Jackman died in 1869, leaving the nursery to his son, also called George. He continued to expand the business, so that eventually it covered over 300 acres, including land between Wych Hill and

Egley Road, Woking. When George Jackman II died in 1889 he left strict instructions in his will, resulting in the forced sale of the St. Johns Hill site and ultimately the nursery's removal to Mayford.

The old family home (The Hollies - later renamed Deerstead House) was sold and the estate office converted into a house - now called Kelwood.

Kelwood, Jackman's Lane.



The junction of Jackmans Lane and St. Johns Hill Road.

Continue along Jackmans Lane, past Kelwood on the right, to the junction with St. Johns Hill Road. Here you have to cross to the pavement on the other side of the road. Be careful, as it is a busy road and the sight-lines are not too good at this point. After crossing the road, turn right towards the railway bridge.



Just before the bridge is a turning on the left - Firbank Lane. Walk down the lane parallel to the railway line (on your right).

Woking - Southampton Railway

In 1830 the people of Southampton promoted the idea of building a railway line from their town up to London. Plans were drawn up, money raised and in 1836 work began on what was soon named the London & South Western Railway. The route went from Nine Elms in London via the Common at Woking to Basingstoke and then south to Winchester and Southampton.

The railway cutting through St. Johns Hill.



In May 1838 the line was opened as far as Woking Common Station, with Winchfield reached in September that year, Basingstoke in 1839 and Southampton in May 1840.

This section of the line required a cutting through 'Goldsworth' Hill, with the spoil from the cutting being used for the embankment further along the line at Brookwood.

It was whilst digging this cutting that a number of shark's teeth were discovered, proving the marine nature of the underlying rocks of this area.

One incident of interest occurred on Christmas Day 1839 when, after weeks of heavy rain, the side of the cutting collapsed, blocking one line and threatening the other. Men worked all night to try to clear the slip, but by noon the following day they were only partially successful, so an engine had to be

called from Nine Elms to complete the job.

Continue along Firbank Lane to the end, noting some of the Victorian properties built on the site of the former Jackman's Nursery. Near the end of the lane there is a 'road' and path on the left that leads to Beacon Hill (above).

If you wish you can take this path, across Beacon Hill and then down a steep, dirt path to St. Johns Rise and St. Johns Road.

If you do, however, you will miss a glimpse of Cripplegate Cottage, so continue right to the very end of Firbank Lane (to the gate of Janaway House, below), where you must turn left down the footpath to Janaway Hill.

The entrance to Janaway House and the footpath to the left down Janaway Hill.



Cripplegate Cottage

It is easier to describe Cripplegate Cottage than it is to see it (and easier to see than photograph)! The oldest part of the property dates from the mid-16th century, with a 17th-century wing on the east (Janaway Lane) side. The west side would have been the service end of an 'open hall' house. Timbers within the house suggest that the old hall had been chambered over before the chimney was added in the 17th century. At about the same time a new 'east wing' was added, replacing the old open hall and parlour. Cripplegate Cottage is a Grade II listed building.

St Johns Road



At St. Johns Road turn left and when convenient cross over the road to the pavement on the opposite side of the road.

Royal Oak Green

In the past, on either side of the road here, was a 'green' known as 'Royal Oak Green'. It was probably named after a public house (later also known as 'The Bell') which stood on the other side of the railway in College Lane.

An 'Open Hall' house had a central fire within a 'hall' that ran 'open' to the roof timbers.



The Goldsworth for Goldsmiths area in the early 18th century.

Goldsworth

The name 'Goldsworth' was first recorded in 1229 as 'la Goldhorde' - probably recording a hoard of gold coins (Roman?) discovered in the area sometime before the early 13th century. The tithing covered not just most of what is now Goldsworth Park but, as mentioned in the introduction, also all of what is now St. Johns, Knaphill and Brookwood. The area was part of the Manor of Woking, but from the 16th century there was a small 'sub-manor' known as 'Hale End' or 'Harelands' recorded in the area.

Goldsworth Nursery

The nursery at Goldsworth was founded some time in the 1760s by James Turner, who grew mainly trees and shrubs - an early catalogue listed up to fifteen varieties of rhododendrons - a plant that had only recently been introduced into this country from the Americas. By 1804 the nursery was being run by Robert Donald, a well-known nurseryman of his day whose son (also called Robert) took over the running of the nursery in 1848. By 1861 he had built up the nursery business at Goldsworth to

cover 200 acres, employing 35 men and 8 boys. Robert Donald Jr. died in 1863 and for a while the property appears to have been owned by branches of the Waterer, Jackman and Chandler families – all well-known local nurserymen. In 1877 the 'stock and goodwill' of the nursery were bought by Walter Charles Slocock for £1,750, with a loan of £1,550 for working capital. Within a few years he had built up the business, so that by the 1890s sales reached almost £14,000 p.a., and when he died (in 1926) his personal fortune amounted to £244,000! W.C. Slocock's two sons, Walter Ashley and Oliver Charles, both joined the firm, with Oliver's son, Martin, eventually taking over the business in the 1970s. It was Martin Slocock who eventually sold the land for the building of the Goldsworth Park estate,

St. Johns Road heading down the hill towards Langmans Lane.



using the money to buy the old 'Knaphill Nursery' - where his grandfather had learnt his trade.

Having crossed St. Johns Road, continue heading west (towards St. Johns), around the corner (above) and down the hill past Winnington Way (on your right), to the junction with Langmans Lane.



Langmans Lane.

Turn down Langmans Lane over the canal via Langmans Bridge. Here you need to turn left on to the towpath and head towards St. Johns, but before you do, go straight ahead and look right to view Langmans.



Langmans Bridge.

just before smoke bays became fashionable, and was originally a two-bay open hall house with two two-storey bays on either end. The southern (right hand) bay has an internal jetty over the hall and the rafters over the northern bay still show signs of soot.

There are modern extensions to the rear. In 1719 the house was the

Langmans
Since 1979, when Langmans was saved from the developers by a local couple intent on restoring it to its former glory, the history of Langmans has been carefully pieced together (much like the house)! It was built about 1540,



Langmans.

home of a man called Edward 'Honour' - who farmed just over six acres. It may be that this is a corruption of the local name 'Hone', as an Edward Hone was recorded in the area in 1711, his son, John, later going on to be recorded as a 'currier' (a dealer in leather and hides) of Goldsworth. In 1841 the title map recorded that David Percy was the occupier of the property which, at that time, was owned by a man called Isaac Spooner. The name 'Langmans' comes from an occupier of the property from the 1880s - early 1900s called Thomas Langman - a retired sanitary inspector who is described in local directories of the period as living at 'Brooking' or 'Brooker', Goldsworth. In 1979, when the house was sold at auction, it had no plumbing (only an outside tap), mildew, mould, dry rot, woodworm and rising damp. The main roof was

The towpath by Langmans Bridge and Lock Seven.



supported by a car jack and the cesspool was full to overflowing. We are lucky still to have Langmans to admire!

After viewing Langmans, return to the towpath and head towards St. Johns (upstream).

The Basingstoke Canal
Construction of the Basingstoke Canal started at Woodham in 1788 and was opened as far as Horsell by 1791, Pirbright by 1792 and finally Basingstoke in 1794. In this area the waterway climbs 33 feet, from the bottom of Lock Seven above Langmans Bridge to the top of Lock Eleven



at Kiin Bridge. The bridge takes its name from the kilns that were established here to make the bricks for the locks and bridges. How good the bricks were, however, is in some doubt, as there is a report in August 1789 that many bricks on the canal were 'so exceedingly bad that much the greater part' was totally unfit for use. In total, 161,480 bricks were found to be faulty! The Basingstoke Canal was mainly an 'agricultural' waterway,

carrying flour and timber from Hampshire and West Surrey downstream to London, with coal and finished goods carried on the return journey. Sadly, the canal was never a great success and

Lock Seven.

Woodend Bridge.



by the early part of the 20th century this section of the canal was no longer navigable – some of the lock-gate being damaged. In 1966 the Surrey & Hampshire Canal Society was formed to restore the waterway and eventually both Surrey and Hampshire County Councils bought their sections to ensure the canal's survival. It is now maintained by the Basingstoke Canal Authority.

The Lock-keeper's Cottage, showing the original section between the two arows.



Lock-keeper's Cottage
By Lock Nine, on the opposite bank of the canal to the towpath, was the lock-keeper's cottage for the Goldsworth flight of locks. It has been added to many times over the years, so that now it is hard to work out exactly what it would have looked like originally. The old part is the central portion (highlighted below), with the smaller windows and the slightly more weathered roof.



Kiln Bridge.

Continue along the towpath, under Woodend Bridge, up to Lock Ten and Kiln Bridge.

were developed by the Jackman and Slocock families to supplement their nursery businesses.

The Brick-fields
The kilns by Kiln Bridge were situated beside the canal between Robin Hood Road and Copsé Road. They were some of the first to be dug in the area and must have been exhausted soon after the canal was opened. Other brick fields were situated lower down the canal on what is now part of Goldsworth Park. These

Kiln Bridge
Originally all the bridges over the canal were like Langmans or Woodend bridges, but with the coming of motor transport in the early 20th century, most of the main bridges had to be rebuilt. Kiln Bridge was the first to be rebuilt, in 1899, due mainly to the increase in traffic for the army barracks (where the Inkerman housing estate is today).

The owners of the canal agreed to provide the new foundation for the bridge on condition that Woking Council provided the new bridge and maintained it thereafter.



The steps up to the road at Kiln Bridge.



Kiln Bridge.

After ascending the steps, turn right and cross the bridge, returning to the start of the walk by turning down the 'exit' spur from St. Johns Lye Car Park.

Under Kiln Bridge, before you turn up the steps to return to the Lye, there is an old World War II Pillbox – now incorporated into the back wall of the shops of Hermitage Road.

The Second World War Pillbox.

World War II Pillbox
There are just three pillboxes now surviving in the Woking section of the canal: this one, one to the south of the canal at Blackhorse Road (under the railway arch) and at Pirbright Bridge, Brookwood.

