

**A HERITAGE WALK AROUND PYRFORD  
(FROM THE CHURCH TO NEWARK & WALSHAM)**



This walk should take up to two hours as a gentle stroll in an evening stroll and, although the traffic around Newark do flood in winter, the walk should be acceptable most of the year. Please note that the path down from St. Nicholas' Church is very steep and can be slippery when wet. 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.F. to the publisher, at a cost of £1.50 per copy.

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**GUIDE** Published by Iain Wakeford, 100 High Street, Old Woking, GU21 1HL. **£1.50**  
 No. 5

# PYRFORD

A SELF-GUIDED HERITAGE WALK FROM  
 PYRFORD CHURCH TO NEWARK AND WALSHAM  
 ALONG THE WEY NAVIGATION



WITH NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS ON THE  
 HISTORY OF ST. NICHOLAS' CHURCH,  
 NEWARK PRIORY AND THE WEY NAVIGATION

By Iain Wakeford

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**Introduction**

In 956 AD King Eadwig granted some land to a gentleman by the name of Eadric at Pyrford - the ford by a pear tree. This land covered not just the present day Pyrford, but also the area we now know as Horsell.

**The Walk**

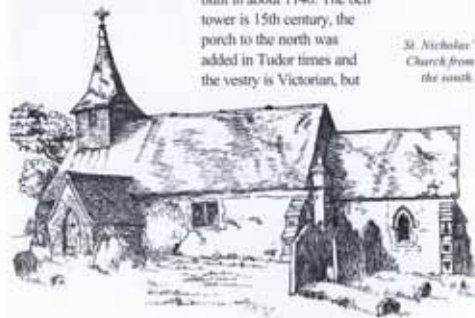
This walk starts at St. Nicholas' church, but if

you prefer you can start at the car park in Newark Lane (by the traffic lights at the Wey Navigation bridge), in which case you should start the walk at the section on Newark Mill House and return to the car park using the notes on the intervening pages.

**St Nicholas' Church**

St Nicholas' Church has hardly altered since it was built in about 1140. The bell tower is 15th century, the porch to the north was added in Tudor times and the vestry is Victorian, but

St. Nicholas' Church from the south.





The Tudor porch

most recent alterations have been to reveal older features – such as the wall paintings and consecration crosses inside the church. The churchyard is roughly circular, said by many to denote an ancient, pagan site christianised in Saxon times. The nearby 'Pyrford Stone' (at the entrance to Pyrford Court) could be a relic of some prehistoric cursus. It is made of 'Sarsen stone' – the same material as some of the stones at Stonehenge! Sarsen stone can also be

found in the buttresses of the church, with the walls (nearly three feet thick) of 'pudding-stone', chalk and iron-stone.

The buttresses at the west end and at the corners are believed to be 15th century, whilst the rest are probably Victorian.



The churchyard from Church

There is a booklet on the history of St Nicholas' church by Sylvia Lewin available at the church, together with a section of postcards and notelets.



The path down to Newark Lane is quite steep, so be careful (especially if it is wet).

From the church take the footpath to the right (between the church and the Old Vicarage), down the hill to Newark Lane. At the bottom of the hill follow the pavement on the right-hand side of the road, to the bridge over the Bourne stream.



The ford (originally by a peartree) on Newark Lane – now replaced by a bridge.

#### The Pyrford ford

The ford, below Pyrford Church, was still in use until the early part of the 20th century when a bridge was built to link Church Hill to the causeway of Newark Lane.



Continue along Newark Lane, carefully crossing the road where the pavement ends on the right and transfers to the left-hand side of the road.

The ruins of Newark Priory can clearly be seen across the field on the left, with the remains of the gatehouse clearly visible near the road.



One of the Abbot's seals.

#### Newark Priory

There has been a lot of confusion about the early history of Newark. The most generally accepted account is that it was founded some time in the late 12th century by Beatrice de Sandes and her husband Ruald de Calna. De Calna and his wife gave land to a group of Austin Priors to build a church 'to the Blessed Virgin and St. Thomas the Martyr' at a place called 'Aldebury'. The dedication means it

Looking through the 'right-stair' into the South Transept



could not have been established before 1171. However, a grant by Geoffrey de Lucy, the Bishop of Winchester, to 'John, Prior of Aldebury in Sandes' messes that it must have been founded before 1204 (when Geoffrey de Lucy died). The date 1189 is often quoted.

In 1285 Bishop John Pontissara confirmed de Lucy's grant. This seems to have caused confusion in the early 14th century, when the Winchester Registers recorded that Newark was founded by a former Bishop. Most historians seem to

think that the Austin Priors' original foundation was probably Ripley Church: part of the chancel dates from about forty years before the foundation of Newark.

This is believed to be the 'century' of Ripley that formed part of de Calna's grant. It may be that it was a small way-side foundation of the Austin Priors. The village of Ripley did not exist in the mid-12th century – so the building must have been used for something!

Some, however, still maintain that the Saxon Monastery at Woking (last recorded in the 8th century) could have been the original

foundation, with St. Peter's Church at Old Woking being the monks' first home.

Wherever the 'old' work was, we know that the ruins of the 'new' one came about because of the dissolution by Henry VIII in January 1539 (and had nothing to do with Cromwell bombarding it from Church Hill)! At the time of the dissolution the land of Newark Priory was valued at £294.18.4½d, and Sir Anthony Browne (who also owned Byfleet Manor) was appointed 'farmer for the crown'. He later rented the site and apparently instigated the removal of all



The roofline of the two south chapels (off the South Transept) can clearly be seen above the two doorways.

the lead and dressed stone, using other materials for road repairs.

The site was only saved from complete destruction in the 1760s when 'Speaker Onslow' stopped the site from being robbed any more.

Incidentally, the ramour that Martyrs Lane in Woodham is named after the Priors of Newark who were 'killed when trying to escape to Chertsey Abbey' is untrue. Richard Lippescorb retired with a pension of £40 a year in 1539. Of the others, six received £5.6.8d per annum, with Will Thatcher receiving £6 per annum (he was Curate at Pyrford in 1541).



The Victorian eel trap



The Priory ruins from the bridge by the eel-trap.



Unfortunately, Newark Priory is not open to the public.

**Eel Trap**

To the right of the gate into the Priory field are the remains of a 19th-century eel trap.

The brick structure possibly replaced an earlier device used by the monks and their successors. Eels were an important source of income for the monks and probably a major part of their diet.

Continue along Newark Lane until you reach the traffic lights and the towpath of the Wey Navigation. (If you start at the car

park across the bridge, please be careful as you cross the Navigation, as there is no footpath over the bridge).



Newark Mill House.

**Newark Mill House (and site of Mill)**

The large house on the other side of the Navigation is Newark Mill House - once the home of the miller here. The house dates from the early 19th century and is a listed building.

Sadly, the mill no longer exists, but as you can see from the photograph, it was

once quite an imposing structure.

It was built in the mid- 17th century (when the Navigation was built), probably on or near the site of the mill recorded in the Domesday Survey (1086) for Send.

There were apparently three separate waterwheels and four pairs of stones. The mill ceased to produce flour in 1942 after debris from the river damaged the machinery; and in December 1966 the entire mill burnt down in a dramatic fire that could be seen for miles around. A book on the history of the mill has been published by the Send & Ripley History Society.



Newark Mill in the early 20th century.

The Wey Navigation at Newark Lock with the Abbey Stream to the north and the mill stream re-entering the river from the south - c 1895.



Follow the Navigation towpath downstream, over Newark Lock and then along the right bank to Wabsham Weir.

**Wey Navigation**

The Wey Navigation is one of the oldest man-made waterways in the country. It was built in the mid-17th

century as an agricultural waterway carrying flour, timber and other produce to market in London, with coal and finished goods brought back on the return journey. By the early 18th century the waterway was in the hands of two families - the Langtons of Lincolnshire, and the Earl of Portmore

and his family, who lived at Weybridge. The two families were closely connected.

In the early 19th century the Stevens family became connected with the Navigation, first as wharfingers at Guildford and later as the main barge-operators on the waterway. By 1902 William Stevens (the third) had acquired the shares of the Portmore and Langton families to become sole owner.



The last commercial cargo to be carried on the Navigation was on 6th March 1969, when a barge of grain was carried to Coxes Lock at Addlestone. By that stage the waterway was in the hands of the National Trust, having been given to them by Mr. H.W. Stevens.



**Wabsham Weir**

The oldest part of the weir is dated 1884 with four gates manufactured by Jesse Stone (who was Master Carpenter and foreman of the Navigation at that time). The newer gates, dating from 1931, were added by Ramsome and Rapier, as part of a larger flood prevention scheme along the whole of the Wey Valley in this area.

Newark Lock.



Wabsham Weir (top) and a map of the weir and lock - in 1895 (below).

Cross over the weir and notice the 'tow-rope post' at the junction of the river and Navigation, before crossing over the footbridge (beyond Walsham Gates) and returning on the opposite bank.



**Tow-rope Post**  
This post with its roller allowed the horses to pull the barges out of the lock and past the weir.

The 'tow-rope post' by Walsham Weir.

**Walsham Lock**  
The lock at Walsham, which is only closed at times of flood, is one of the last remaining turf-sided locks in the country. The paddles are quite unique too, being of the original peg-and-hole design (before winches were introduced). Try lifting one of the paddles and then try to imagine how hard it would be if there was any water pressure on it!



One of the original 'peg-and-hole' paddles at Walsham Gates. Most of the other locks on the Navigation have been converted to the more conventional 'rack and pinion' gear.



The turf sides of Walsham Gates, with the lock-keeper's cottage on the right.

**Lock-keeper's Cottage**  
The lock-keeper's cottage dates from 1896, replacing an earlier structure of 1775. A wharfinger's cottage may have existed on the site previously, for this was where the barges bringing goods to Ripley would have moored - Pyrford's wharf being by Pigeon House Bridge (further downstream).

**Bridge**  
The bridge is built on brick abutments that are dated 1785.

**Walsham**  
The name 'Walsham' probably derives from 'Hwaetel - Hamm' meaning a meadow on a stream. It was first recorded as 'Wathelesham' in 1288, before developing to 'Wallsome' in 1605 and finally 'Walsham'.

Walsham Gates Bridge.



Having crossed the bridge, turn away from the waterway and with the golf course on your right and the woods of

**Warren Farm on your left, walk along the track to Warren Lane.**

**Warren Lane**  
In the past, rabbits were an important part of the diet and in medieval times it is recorded that the Manor of Pyrford had a right of warren in this area. Even today, rabbits can often be seen in the woods to the left of this path.



Turn right on to Warren Lane and, keeping to the right (so that you are facing the traffic), walk along the lane for about 100 yards. Here you will see a stile into the field on the left.

Cross over the stile and with the fence on your left walk up the field to another stile.

The stile into the field off Warren Lane.



Once over the stile, turn left and follow the path up to the farm buildings at Lady Place Farm. Climb over the stile into the small paddock and look left. The roof that can just be seen below the hill is Wheeler's Farm.

Warren Lane.



The stile at Lady Place Farm yard.



**Wheeler's Farm & Barn**  
The farmhouse (left) dates from the 16th century, whilst the barn is 18th-century, but with a 19th-century extension nearest the road. Both are listed buildings.

Wheeler's Farm - home of A.J. Munby from 1877-1910.

Lady Place Farm - John Napper's farm.

**A. J. Munby**  
A.J. Munby was a poet, barrister and diarist who lived at Wheeler's Farm from 1877 until he died in 1910. He first came to this area in the 1860s whilst visiting a friend in Ripley - an artist called Albert Lane. Munby's diaries, which he kept from 1859 to 1898, contain many references to visits to this area.



Munby took a keen interest in the plight of working women - colliery workers, fisher women, farm workers and servants.

In 1873 he secretly married his servant - Hannah Cullwick - and the two led a double life until she died in 1909.

In May 1863 Munby wrote about a visit to Lady Place Farm, then the home of John Napper. His notes are quite amusing (although they probably tell you as much about the character of the writer as of his subjects)!

2nd May, 1863

"A skinny servant maid, most unworthy of her position showed us into a neat little parlour with an old-fashioned piano and one or two books and magazines on the table. It was 1.30 am and farmer Napper and his two daughters had just done dinner. The farmer was a rustic but wizened man, kindly and unpretending. His daughters who were both fine tall girls were little less than ladies in appearance and demeanor.

The elder and handsome Emily was a very pre-raphaelite heroine, somewhat long in outline, though not angular with massive Auburn hair and features large but regular and softened by a frank and womanly smile, with hands large too and bluish red in colour, but tender and long and shapely."

The stile into the field by Lady Place Farm.



An extract from A.J. Munby's diary - for more information on Munby see the Sand & Ripley History Society's book on a Victorian Walk around Ripley.

Cross the field by the farm to a couple of stiles through the hedge into the new graveyard opposite St. Nicholas' Church.

Walk down the path to Church Hill and carefully cross to the church.



The crossing of Church Hill from the new graveyard to the church.



If you wish, you can explore more of the Church Hill Conservation Area by taking a short detour up the hill to your right.

Perfect Conservation Area

There are a number of Listed Buildings in this area (in addition to the Grade I Listed church), such as Church Farm, which dates from the 16th century. It is a timber-framed building but in the 18th century it became popular to live in "brick-built" houses and so the old timber-framing was covered up!

The old barn to the north of the farmhouse (also 18th-



Church Farm Barn before conversion (above) and now (right).

century) has recently been converted into a house. Lady Place Farm also dates

Church Farm.



from the 16th century, but unlike Church Farm it was not "improved" in the 18th century and its timber-framing is still exposed. All three buildings are Grade II Listed. Two locally Listed buildings include Lady Place Cottages, built in the 1860s, and the Victorian Old Vicarage (to the west of the church). The little building in front of



Lady Place Cottages.

the church - now used as a church room - was built as a "Dame School" in the mid-19th century.



Lady Place Farm.