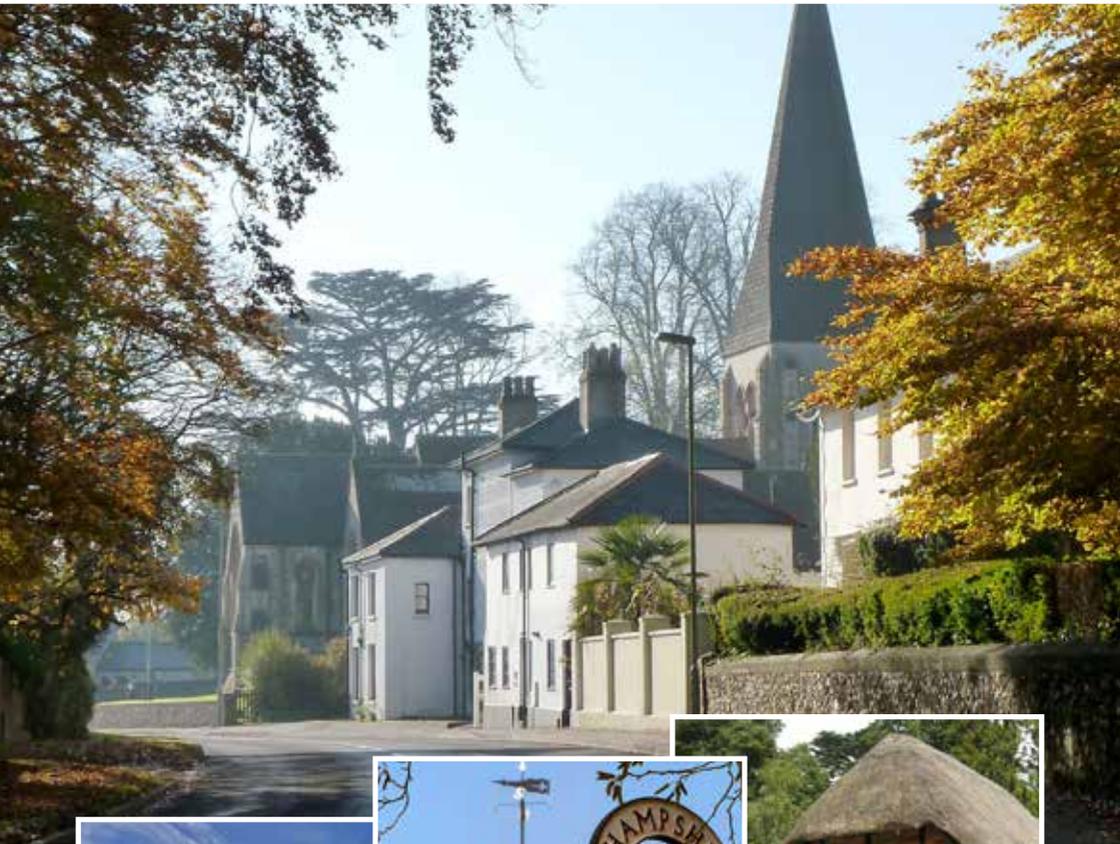
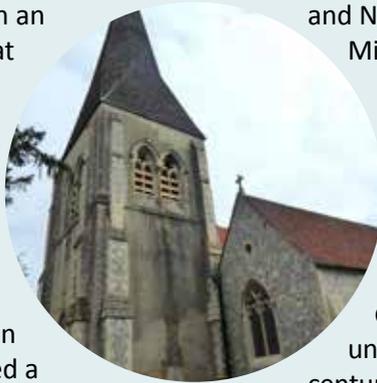


Whitchurch Heritage Trail



Whitchurch through the ages

There has probably been an established settlement at Whitchurch since the 10th century, near the 'white church' of the place-name; Medieval Whitchurch was one of many estates belonging to the Priory of St Swithun in Winchester. In 1241, the Priory obtained a royal grant for a weekly market at Whitchurch, and issued a charter for a borough in 1248/9. Whitchurch was a 'new town', one of many that were founded in England in the 12th and 13th centuries.



Whitchurch developed around the five-way road junction, which still forms the central square. Long and narrow strips of land, called 'burgage plots', were marked out along the streets. People who held burgage plots were called 'burgesses' and their combined rents made up the town's annual rent, which was collected by the local bailiff, later called the 'Mayor'.

Most of the burgesses had two acres in the burgage field, on which to grow crops, but the townspeople's main income came from trade, particularly alehouse keeping. Whitchurch was an ideal overnight stopping place for carts plying between Winchester

and Newbury and on to the Midlands.

Traffic slowed in the 14th century as the Winchester cloth trade declined and the Black Death decimated the population. Whitchurch did not begin to grow until the 15th and 16th centuries, when its own cloth industry became established. Increased traffic on the road between Andover and Basingstoke (part of a long-distance route between London and the west country) also helped to keep some of the alehouses in business. The market did not prosper, but there was an occasional fair from the late 17th to 19th centuries, and a cattle-market was re-introduced for a while in the early 20th century.

Industry

The Whitchurch cloth trade was replaced by silk manufacture in the 19th century. At its height, the Silk Mill employed over 100 people, including young children. It too declined by the end of the century, although the



mill has continued to operate and is now a popular visitor attraction. For many years, Long's jam factory in Bell Street and a chalk whiting factory in London Road provided local employment, but today many people commute to London for work.

Transport



In the mid 18th century the two main routes through Whitchurch were turnpiked and long distance coaches changed horses at the White Hart Inn. This was the age of the highwayman and newspapers of the day reported on the exploits of Thomas Boulter, 'The Flying Highwayman', and the occasion when being pursued he stopped at Whitchurch, where it is said "he partook of a bottle of wine and baited his mare with toast soaked in brandy" before galloping for home ground on Salisbury Plain.

The London and South Western Railway came through Whitchurch in 1854 and a line between Didcot and Southampton opened in 1885. Whitchurch town station closed to passenger traffic in 1960 and to freight in 1963.

Churches

In addition to All Hallows and St John Fisher, there have been many nonconformist churches in Whitchurch since the 17th century, of which the Methodist and Baptist remain. John Wesley preached here several times. The Salvation Army Corps, established in 1881, suffered years of persecution that culminated in riots in 1889. The next year, the Salvation Army won a famous legal victory when the right to demonstrate peacefully was won for the country.

Houses and pubs

Many of the houses and shops in the Whitchurch Conservation Area are listed buildings. Beneath their 18th and 19th century frontages, several are timber-framed and are much older than they appear. The medieval alehouses were replaced by numerous pubs and there is still a variety of places to eat and drink.



Local government

The Dean and Chapter of Winchester Cathedral replaced the Priory when it was dissolved in 1541 and their steward continued to hold borough courts in Whitchurch until the 19th century. These were held in the Guildhall in the centre of the Market Place until the present Town Hall was built in 1786. In 1974, Whitchurch

became part of the borough of Basingstoke and Deane. It still has a Mayor and Town Council, whose function it is to represent the community at 'grass roots' level.

Round and about

Whitchurch is on the edge of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and much of the town itself is a Conservation Area. The Millennium Meadow and QEII Field are small nature reserves easily reached from the town centre and the River Test,

with its water meadows, is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

In 1888, the *Star* newspaper reported:

'Whitchurch is in Hampshire. People who live IN it call it a town. People who live OUT of it call it a village. It is about as big as a good-sized pocket handkerchief. It has three shops and 19 public houses. Whitchurch residents are very proud of their town, the smallest in Hampshire; we invite you to explore and understand why.'

With thanks to Alison Deveson, Michael Bullen, Edward Roberts, Martin Smith and Jackie Browne

FOLLOW THE MAP ON THE BACK PAGE

Winchester Street

(turn left leaving the car park)

1 The **Silk Mill** dates from 1815 and is one of the most attractive buildings in Whitchurch. Converted to a silk throwing mill in 1817, it was a major employer in the town during the 19th century. The restored water wheel still drives the winding machinery on the top floor of the mill and silk fabric is woven on historic looms.

Silk Mill House, facing Winchester Street, was home to the mill owner in the mid 19th century.

Two bridges take you over the River Test and the mill leat.

2 The two pretty houses on the left, **Weaver's and Tackler's Cottages**, were made out of four small cottages housing Silk Mill workers and was formerly a weaving shed.

3 Further along on the right is the **Methodist Church**, opened in 1812 to replace an earlier building in Bell Street.

On reaching the town square, turn left in to **Church Street** and walk along the right hand side.

4 **Numbers. 2, 4 and 6**

are a row of cottages built on two of the medieval burgage plots and probably date from the 17th century. A passage, in which timber framing can be seen, leads to another cottage behind. The houses were probably always residential and occupied by the lower ranks of society – tradesmen such as tailors and barbers.

The long narrow gardens following the boundaries of the medieval burgage plots were lost to modern warehousing and now a private car park.

5 **The Kings Arms** dates from the late 16th century. It has a timber frame beneath its cladding and was once jettied*.

During the English Civil War, troops were billeted here on their way to the 2nd Battle of Newbury. In 1649, the town's residents sent a complaint, signed by the Mayor, to Lord Fairfax concerning the losses they had sustained by the free quartering of Colonel Martin's soldiers upon them.

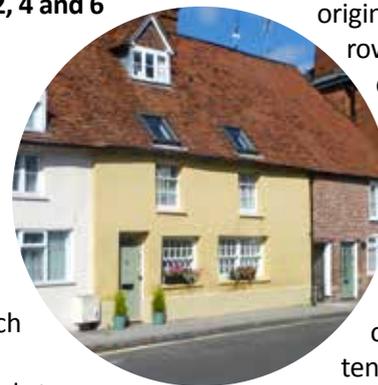
6 **Number 14 The Shrubbery** is an impressive Grade II listed house and coach house with the oldest part dating from the late 17th/early 18th century.

The house was originally a row of three cottages built at a right angle to the road. In the early 19th

century the main house was owned by Lord Middleton and his tenants were the Phillips family, the first tenants of Whitchurch Silk Mill. The Regency frontage dates from this time. Internal restoration work carried out 25 years ago in the oldest part of the house uncovered original floors, an internal well, fireplace, bread oven and smoke oven. During the 20th century, part of the ground floor was a drug store and later an antiques shop.

The detached coach house/cottage, seen through the metal gates, was one of a number of properties in Whitchurch in the ownership of the British Home Secretary, Thomas Townshend, Lord Sydney. The Australian colony 'New Albion' was renamed Sydney in his honour.

7 **Benwells** is so named after Thomas Benwell, member of a prominent Quaker family from Berkshire and resident town surgeon in the late 18th century. More recently, it was the home of Richard Adams, author of *Watership Down*.



8 **The Cottage** and **The Hermitage** is an attractive pair of cottages, once a single dwelling and probably dating from the 15th century, making this one of the oldest surviving buildings in Whitchurch. Beneath the render is a cruck frame,* a rarity in Hampshire towns. In 1668, its owner Thomas Neave installed an upper floor into the open hall and inserted a chimney which still bears his initials and the date.

9 **The Mount** is an impressive late Georgian house set in a large garden above the road. In the late 19th century it was home to Thomas Augustine Edney Hayter, Justice of the Peace and councillor for Hampshire.

10 On the other side of the road is **The Lawn**, formerly the home of the late Lord Denning, renowned judge and Master of the Rolls from 1962 to 1982. The rear lawn slopes down to the River Test and for many years has been a popular venue for the annual parish fete.

11 Parts of **All Hallows Church** date from the 12th, 13th and 15th centuries, but it was altered in the 1860s when the Gothic Revival spire was added to the Norman tower.



Inside are brasses and effigies of the Brooke family, who once lived in Kings Lodge (opposite) and memorials to the Portal family who were former papermakers for the Bank of England banknotes. The most notable monument is a ninth century grave marker for a Saxon woman called Frithburga, It reads: "HIC CORPUS FRITHBURGAE REQUIESCIT IN PACEM SEPULTUM", translated as, "Here the body of Frithburga' lies buried in peace". Whoever she was, she represents the Saxon community of centuries ago. Outside is a very large yew tree thought to be over 800 years old making it one of the oldest trees in Hampshire.

12 Opposite the church is **King's Lodge**, so named because Charles I stayed here in 1644 on his way to the 2nd Battle of Newbury. Turning left into the cricket ground you will see a well-preserved 17th century thatched granary perched on staddlestones.

Cross the road to Wells Lane.

The embankment along the left was built by navvies in the 1880s to carry the now dismantled Didcot to Southampton railway line through the town. It was the first line to employ a steam navvy (a steam-powered mechanical digger) in its construction.

Cross the road and turn left into Park View and then right onto a footpath along the top of the embankment.

13 The old station house (now a private home) can be seen from the path. It retains many original architectural features and station fixtures.

Turn right from the path, passing through the foot tunnel and crossing into Fairclose where medieval fairs were once held.

14 On the left is the old **Elementary School**, built in 1845 and now converted into houses.

Continue down and shortly before reaching Church Street, turn left along an alley (known locally as Man's Lane or Great Lane). Continue past the car park to Bell Street.

15 **The Bell** public house is a two-storey timber-framed hall with cross wings, set at right angles to the road.

Stand to the side to see the different periods and styles of construction, the front and rear sections are 17th century additions with the middle section dating from the 16th century. At that time Edward Pearce had a cloth-making business here.

The main façade dates from the 19th century.

16 The late 16th century high quality jettied* house, **number 22-24**



may have been built for a wealthy merchant. It has well-preserved timber framing and although re-fronted in the 19th century it retains the old tiled roof and original tall brick chimney stack to the rear. This house and **The Bell** stand out from the rest of the street.

17 Dating from the second half of the 15th century, number 2 and the adjoining shop facing the market place were originally a single large building. It was once jettied* on two sides, since removed, and a corner has been cut off altogether to allow modern traffic to pass. In this central position, it may have been an early shop.

18 The plaque on the wall commemorates the 1890 High Court victory for the Salvation Army when the right to peaceful protest was won. Towards the end of the 19th century, the Salvation Army and its open-air services were the dominant talking point. They maintained that they had a right to hold these services, but were prosecuted for obstructing the highways and causing a disturbance. The conviction in 1889 of one



group, and their ill treatment by the authorities, led to demonstrations and in October 1889, 5000 Salvationists and 12 Salvation Army bands demonstrated in the Town Square. A photograph recording the event hangs in the town hall council chamber. Charged with riot, unlawful assembly and rout, the group applied for the case to be heard in the High Court of Justice and in July 1890 the court found in their favour, setting down laws granting the public the right to peaceful protest.

Newbury Street

(walk up the left side as far as number 31 and back down the right).

19 The Town Hall

was built in 1786 to replace an older building in the centre of the market place and it has been the focal point of Whitchurch ever since. During the 19th century, the ground floor housed a Reading Room, a Mechanics Institute and the town's fire-fighting equipment was kept here. The pediment over the central bay has an eight-day clock made in 1864 by a local clockmaker and the bell hangs in a cupola surmounted by a weather vane. The town council still meets in the elegant first floor council chamber.



20 Numbers 5, 7 and 9 were originally a single long building dating from the early 16th century and probably built as a row of shops. Lord Denning was born above his father's drapery shop at number 5. In 1863, looking across from the dining room of the White Hart, the author Reverend Charles Kingsley, described the chemist/post office just opposite:

"In the window are a dozen bottles - some near a hundred years old, with drugs of ditto age. One hopes they are all labelled right". The shop is still a chemist with the bottles and potions long since replaced with modern medicines.



21 Causeway House is an impressive three storey (probably) early 18th century building retaining many original features and an original 'full' cellar. Towards the end of the 19th century, a Miss Tate was running a boarding school here, a respectable occupation for the daughter of a clergyman. A number of her 'charges' were children born to parents serving in India where two of her own brothers were distinguishing themselves with the British Army on the North West Frontier; Colonel Alan E. Tate, Surgeon in the Army Medical Service, was awarded the Star of India by King George V for 'meritorious services in the war with India'.

22 The Baptist Church is the oldest nonconformist denomination in Whitchurch. The present red-brick building was enlarged in 1836.

23 24 Boundary Cottage

marks the limit of the medieval town and number 31 is a well-preserved late 16th century jettied house squeezed into a small space on the edge of the town.

25

Numbers 4 to 8 make a pleasant Regency terrace built on older foundations. They have interesting details on the ground floor windows and door frames. Number 4 (The Vinery) was home to the public vaccinator, surgeon and medical officer to the workhouse in the early 20th century.



26 The White Hart was once the town's main coaching inn. The present building is not as old as the date 1461 over the entrance, although there has probably been an inn on the site for many centuries. The inn benefited from passengers changing here for the West of England coaches and it is thought that Cardinal Newman wrote the first verses of the Lyra Apostolica

here in 1832, whilst waiting 'from one till eleven' for the down Exeter mail.



The Reverend Charles Kingsley, keen fisherman and author of the Water Babies, was a frequent visitor to the inn and it is thought that the local chalk streams were the inspiration for his book. In his memoirs he said of the White Hart, "I like this place and that is the truth....I have had such a jolly day and the lamb chops are so good."

Turn left into **London Street** and walk along the left side. In the past, many of the properties along this stretch of the old south west road were shops and alehouses.

A Brief Moment in History.....

If you were standing here in London Street on the afternoon of 5th November 1805, it is very likely that you will have witnessed the express post-chaise hurrying through, carrying Lieutenant John Lapenotaire to London with urgent news for the Admiralty of the British victory at the Battle of Trafalgar and the death of Lord Nelson.

27 **London House** is another impressive period property retaining many original features. In the early 20th century the building was occupied by Gunstone's Drapery and Outfitters Store.

28 **29** **The Red House** is a substantial early 16th century building and the thatched number 29, dating from the 17th century, may originally have been a barn or stable.

30 The old **Regal Cinema**, built in typical Art Deco style, is believed to have opened during World War One and entertained the residents of Whitchurch until its closure in 1959.

31 **The Primitive Methodist Church** opened in 1902. Between 1968 and 1994, the property was a shirt factory owned by Turnbull & Asser Ltd of

Jermyn Street, London, shirt makers to HRH the Prince of Wales. It was then briefly an auction house before falling into disrepair.

It has recently been beautifully restored, retaining many of its original architectural features.

Fork left along **The Lynch**. This area of town has many houses huddled on small plots, which derive from the leases granted by early 17th century Mayors trying to squeeze profit out of marginal land.

32 **The County Police Station**

was built in 1862 and served the town for a little over 100 years. The Civil Defence then occupied the building until its sale in the early 1970s. It is now a private home retaining many original features, including an original cell door complete with bolts, a double trip lock and a panel to pass food through.



Demolition of an interior cupboard during restoration work uncovered Civil Defence information posters for before and after a nuclear attack and an original 'Wanted' notice, found tucked behind an old rafter, for a certain S. Smith aka 'Bristol'... 5 feet 5 inches, 40-45 years old, of untidy appearance, living in low class lodgings, a rag and bone collector, addicted to drink. Excavations in the garden uncovered clay pipes and a surprising graveyard of police memorabilia; helmet badges and other items.

At the far end of **The Lynch**, walk back along London Street a little way to Town Mill Lane.

Whitchurch water meadows are good examples of a typical valley floor landscape. The meadow on the right beside Town Mill Lane conserves ancient grazing scenes allowing Town Mill to retain its original setting on the banks of the River Test.

33 A short stroll along the lane, beside a pleasant backwater of the River Test, brings you to **Town Mill**.

There has probably been a corn mill on this site for at least a 1000 years, but the present structure is 18th century.

In 1966 Ronald and Rosemary Eastman (owners of Town Mill) filmed a pair of common kingfishers at their underground nest on this stretch of the River Test.

'The Private Life of the Kingfisher', screened in 1967, was the first BBC natural history film to be shown in colour.



Retrace your steps to London Street.

34 Directly opposite is the tiny **Voter's Cottage**, so called because the rental value entitled its owner to vote for the county MP after the town was disenfranchised in 1832.

Continue along London Street and turn left at Test Road.

Test Road crosses a backwater of the River Test and then runs parallel to the main river. Historically this area between the two branches of the river was known as Frog Island. The route back to the Silk Mill passes a set of Edwardian terraces (Hide Terrace) built by James Hide, owner of the Silk Mill in the early part of the 20th century.

Listing Text

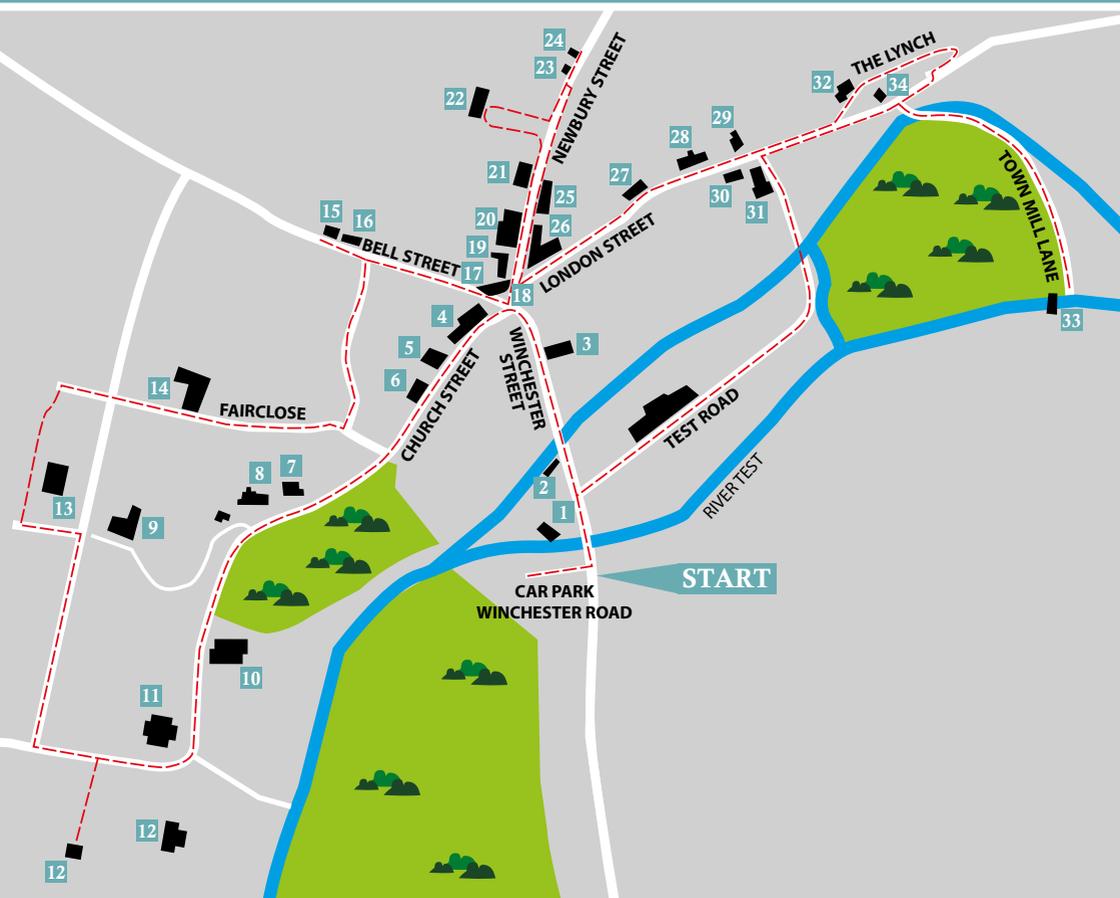
Jettying is a building technique used in medieval timber-frame buildings in which an upper floor projects beyond the dimensions of the floor below, increasing the available space in the building without obstructing the street.

A cruck frame is a curved timber, one of a pair, which supports the roof of a building and were generally secured by a horizontal beam, which formed an "A" shape. Crucks were particularly in use during the Medieval period.

The walk is approximately two miles long

and starts at the Winchester Road car park next to the Silk Mill.

Please be aware of the narrow pavements along stretches of London Street.



With thanks to

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Photographs courtesy of J Buckley and J Browne.



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