

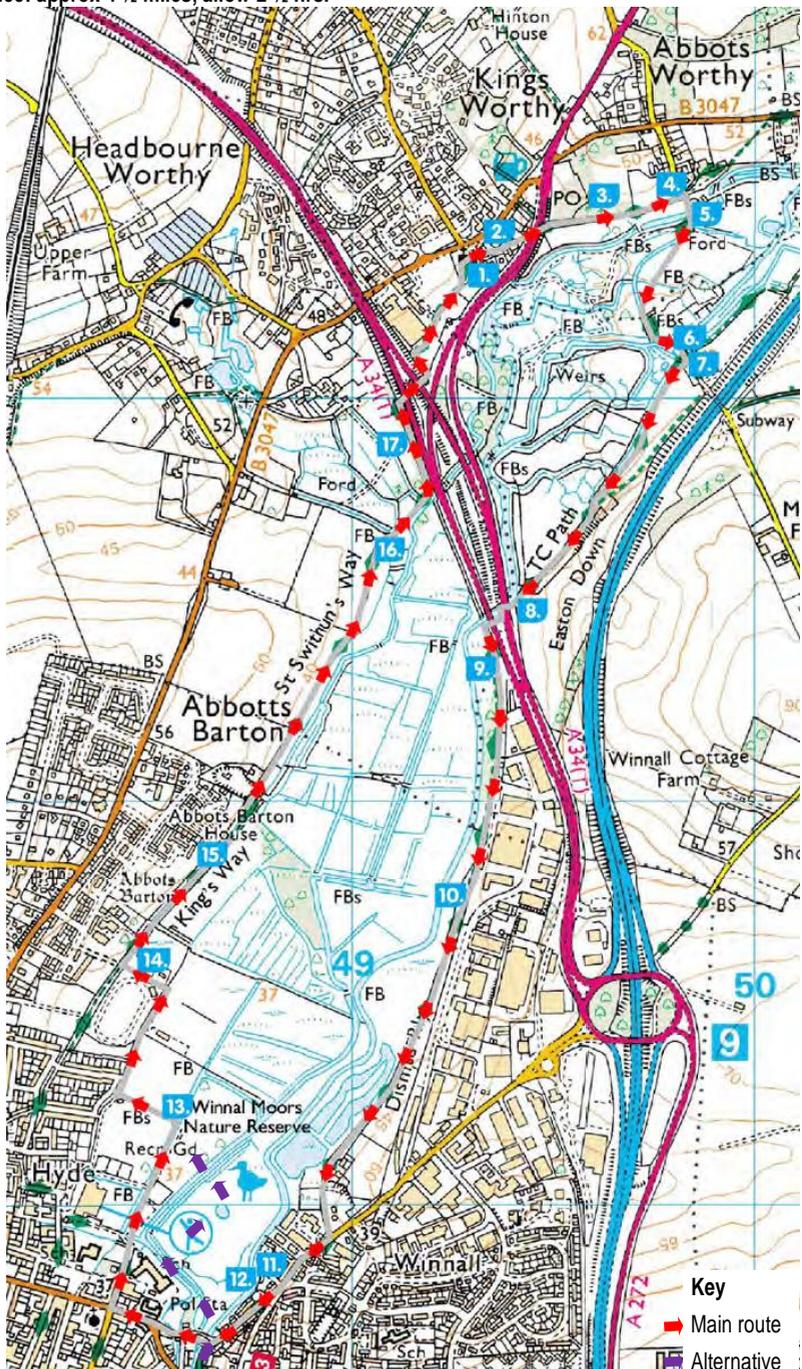
Worthy Walk 3: St Mary's Church to Winchester

Most of the walk is on well-drained paths but the stretch from Mill Lane to Fulling Mill can become muddy after prolonged rain. **Distance: approx 4 ½ miles, allow 2 ½ hrs.**

1. We start at the **Lych Gate of St. Mary's Church**: why not have a look inside the church before your shoes get too muddy? *There are usually leaflets about the history, stained glass windows and churchyard.* Once you have had a look go back to the lych gate then head off towards the thatched cottage in St. Mary's Close.

2. Follow the path & keep to the right of a wooden garage before reaching the A33. Please be very careful crossing the dual carriageway here. On the far side go down the slope & follow an obvious path to Mill Lane.

3. To the left is **Abbots Worthy House**, once the home of Victorian Cabinet Minister Lord Eversley. *This is very appropriate for us as he was a tireless campaigner for public access to open spaces and footpaths. He was one of the founder members of Britain's oldest national conservation body*



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The Open Spaces Society, in 1865. We have much to thank him for locally as it was his bequest that enabled the recreation ground, Eversley Park to be purchased. This was first suggested at a parish council meeting in 1898 but the first goal posts were not installed until 1931 - so perhaps we ought not to judge our current parish council too harshly!

4. Turn right when you reach the tarmac of **Mill Lane** & cross the bridge. The shallows on your left are where horses and carts crossed the river as the bridge is too narrow for them.

5. From the bridge there are good views of the **Abbots Worthy Mill** to the left and you may be rewarded by a glimpse of a kingfisher on the stretch to the right.

6. Go through the metal gate and along the easy to follow, but sometimes muddy, path to the **Fulling Mill**. Before you begin to walk through their very picturesque garden, which you have every right to do, please spare a thought for the residents and don't loiter!

Most people think of water mills as a means of grinding corn but this is not always the case. For example Kings Worthy Mill, now buried under the A33 used the power of the Itchen to drive machinery for sawing timber. Here the mill was used for fulling - part of the cloth making process which resulted in cloth being shrunk and thickened after weaving. This was originally achieved by walking on the woollen cloth in a tub of water. This appears to have been done in 3 stages. Firstly in urine, preferably preachers urine as it was said to be pure and without a trace of alcohol! Secondly, with fullers earth (a fine and strongly absorbent clay) and, finally, with soap. Later, large wooden mallets powered by the water wheel beat the cloth.

7. Once through the garden look out for a footpath sign on the right by a garage block. Turn right here and follow the obvious path through the field with Easton Down to your left and on through a copse towards the A34.

8. Just as you become anxious about how to cross such a busy road a walkway under the two bridges appears. Follow this and emerge on the Winchester side of the A34.

9. There are extensive reed beds which are part of the **Winnall Moors Nature Reserve** to the right of the path which runs parallel to the old Didcot, Newbury and Southampton Railway. *This formed a vital strategic link between the Midlands and South Coast particularly during World War Two, eventually closing in the 1960's.*

10. The way continues over the first of three stiles until you reach the entrance to some fishing lakes where you go over the last stile and follow a metalled track, which

leads to Easton Lane. From here you can either follow the pavement past the pubs all the way down to Durngate Bridge or

11. If you turn right into Colson Road follow the path between No's 7 and 9 on left hand side, this brings you to the same place at Durngate Bridge but away from the traffic.

➔ **12.** Durngate, which stood hereabouts, was one of 6 gates to the City – a postern gate or sort of back door. At the bridge the footpath turns right past the water sluice gates. *(At this point there is an alternative route taking you through the Nature Reserve: enter beneath their carved wooden arch, take the path that bends round to the left, along beside the river and the Art College. Follow the edge of the reserve turning right and along beside the park until you come to a gated wooden bridge giving access onto the football field. Rejoin the route at step 13 below.)* Otherwise continue along Durngate, walking past the new Trinity Centre and onto the Police Station turning right into Park Avenue and into Riverside Park. There are various routes through the park but the easiest is probably over the flint bridge, ignore the arched concrete bridge, cross over the next one.

13. Follow the tarmac path between the cricket pitches till you reach the cycle route sign to the Worthys. Turn right here passing the Rugby Club and pitches. Further on turn left passing the football club.

14. Turn right at the St Swithun's Way marker.

15. The way back to Kings Worthy is clear and follows the Nun's Walk which is a section of the old Pilgrims Way to Canterbury. The path and stream at this point is in Abbots Barton. *Somewhere along this stretch was a small chapel, which may have been the pilgrims first devotional stop on leaving Winchester - there are no visible remains of this building.*

16. Much further on distant views of Headbourne Worthy can be seen to your left.

17. You cross a channel of the Itchen and the path then runs beside the A34, nearly home - before going through two tunnels under the road, the second of which is the original brick tunnel of the old railway, which is now the route of the A34. Turn left into the Church Green development and back to the church yard of St. Mary's.

With thanks to Derek Brockway, Worthys Local History Group