

# Seeking Farnham's Hidden Spaces

## Walking Festival 2017

The long walk is 2 miles and takes 2 hours. The short walk is 1 mile and takes 1 hour. There are stops to view and hear about the history of the area. During the walk there are benches to sit if one needs a rest and there are public conveniences in Gostrey Meadow.

### Waggon Yard, Lower and Middle Church Lane, St. Andrew's Church

Starting from **Waggon Yard** turn to look at the white building (near the entrance to the car park) with the name '**Dufty**' written on the wall; this is one of the eldest in the town centre, with evidence of lead smelting dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century or earlier.

Turn left into **Lower Church Lane**. During Tudor times human body waste was thrown from upstairs windows into the street below which ran into the gutter down the middle of this cobbled road. There was no sanitation as we have now, so this was used as an overground sewer.



Stop to look at No. **18 Lower Church Lane** to view a very fine brick carving of St. Andrew's Church on the wall by the front door. Note the fine detail of the plaque; this was carved by the late Leslie Graham who lived here with his family. He was the last brick carver and more of his work can be seen at the Rural Life Centre in Tilford. He was still carving bricks until a short time before his death in early 2015.

Travelling up Middle Church Lane look at the corner of Middle Church Lane and Upper Church Lane where the last **Forge and Blacksmith** operated from which was still in use until the latter half of the last century. It has now been turned into an architect's office.

Entering the Church yard go along the main path of **St. Andrew's Church** looking at **William Cobbett's tomb, (1763-1835)** which is just outside the main door of the Church. He was a farmer, soldier, politician and a crusading journalist. Author of Rural Rides, he was the founder of the Political Register now call Hansard, the daily record of proceedings of the House of Commons and the Lords. His descendants still live in the area and you will later see his birthplace and a statue in his memory.

Following the path around the Church turn to the left and look at the **Old Vicarage** (there is a plaque on the wall), before following the path into **Bishop's Meadow**. Part of the path before reaching the meadow can be muddy in wet weather and in Spring and Summer has stinging nettles growing either side.

### Short Walk 1 mile

*For those doing the short walk and after reaching the **Notice Board** on the right of the path giving information about Bishop's Meadow, retrace your steps and go through Waggon Yard car park. At the left hand corner, turn left into Riverside Walk, where the longer walk will meet up at the bridge over the River Wey. Take time to read the Longbridge history plaque which gives a brief history of the river crossing, where there was a ford in Saxon times. There has been a bridge here since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the present one was rebuilt in the 1960's.*

### Long Walk 2 miles

## Bishop's Meadow

The earliest map of what is now known as the Bishops Meadow is from Saxon Times. For centuries past, when Farnham was mainly fields, all of the surrounding land were all under the control of the Church, and in particular the Bishop of Winchester who owned Farnham Castle. The land was used mainly for grazing sheep - for the wool (England, and therefore the Church, supplied much of the wool throughout Europe) and hop growing (Beer was a huge undertaking). The land in the valley was broken up into small fields; as time went by the holdings passed into private ownership, and until recently the area now known as Bishop's Meadow was owned by a local farming family. In 2009 they decided to sell the land and it was saved from developers by the newly formed Bishop's Meadow Trust, with the extreme generosity of a 3 year loan in 2012 from Sir Ray Tindle, who bought the land.

From the Notice Board follow the path and turn left along the paved pathway. On your left you will see the **Tudor Ditch** running beside the path. Crossing the bridge over the River Wey and to your right can be seen the remnants of the old **Weydon Mill**. A mill of some sort has stood on this site since before the Domesday book of 1086. The mill is shown on the old Saxon map, and it is speculated that there was a mill here as far back as Roman Times.



Weydon Mill was thought to be first used to mill flax before it milled corn. The undershot water wheel was turned by the mill race which you can still see. The mill was producing food for the local populace until about 1912 when it ceased working after more than 800 years of public service. It was finally demolished in 1919. In about 1955 a bungalow was then built on the site, later extended and upgraded in 1991/2 into the present bungalow.

Turn to face the path going uphill (Weydon Mill Lane) where you will reach the tarmacked Red Lion Lane. Keeping to the road go past the houses and Church before reaching the Maltings.

## The Maltings

The earliest surviving document relating to the Maltings is dated 1729, but there is evidence of two previous owners. Originally it was a tanyard, otherwise known as a tannery. In 1830 Robert Sampson set up as a maltster in the then separate East Wing. He was succeeded in business by his son, Sampson Sampson, whose sign can still be seen on the end of his cottage at 18 Bridge Square, across the road from the pub.

Farnham was once well known for hop growing for use in the brewing process, and the tanyard was sold to John Barrett, who converted it into a brewery where barley was malted when Prince Albert first brought the army to Aldershot in the 1850's.

When the building eventually fell into disuse in 1957, it stood empty for twelve years before being saved by public subscription in 1969 and converted into an arts and community centre. Crossing the car park in front of the **Maltings**, cross another bridge and turning right into Riverside Walk.

*(Here the short walk rejoins the long walk).*

Walking along Riverside Walk, look across at the Maltings and note the sculptures and carved panels along the wall above the river.

## William Cobbett

Entering the road called Longbridge, look to the right you will see the William Cobbett pub. William Cobbett was born in the Jolly Farmer, the pub was renamed the William Cobbett in 1971. Many years ago, a pillory was situated outside the pub and near the Police Station now Hawthorn Lodge. There was much hilarity from onlookers including the police, when a 'birthday boy' was present, as he was put into the pillory and the beer slops were poured down the unfortunate. In 1977 at the time of the Queen's Silver Jubilee the police lent some handcuffs for more than one young man to be 'baptized' with the beer slops; the beer that has run into the drip trays and normally, or should be, discarded.

Turning to the left walk past a new building, now residential apartments, this was formerly the police station. Outside Hawthorn Lodge a chance to admire a beautiful sculpture designed by the late Sheila Mitchell. She was a Fellow of the Royal British Sculptors and President of the British Society of Portrait Sculptors, born and brought up in Farnham. The sculpture is of William Cobbett astride his horse and accompanied by his dog.

Moving forward cross Longbridge at the triangle in the middle of the road and enter Gostrey Meadow.

## Gostrey Meadow

Following the path immediately to your left, reach the drinking fountain designed by local architect Harold Falkner.

**Gostrey Meadow** was created in 1910 by Farnham Urban District Council as a recreational area for the residents of Farnham, the name comes from 17th Century meadows, part of The Bush Hotel estate which was known as Gostreeds.



Follow the path towards the river and crossing the bridge continue to your left towards the main road.



The War Memorial, designed by architect W.C Watson, was placed by the South Street entrance in 1919, and services are held on Remembrance Sunday every year. During the Second World War the meadow was the site of the British Restaurant, housed in two Nissen huts and staffed by the Women's Voluntary Service, which provided meals for hundreds of people every day. After enjoying the delights of Gostrey Meadow, cross South Street and then turn left.

## The Haren Garden

The garden commemorates the friendship between a small town of Haren in the North of Holland, near Groningen and Farnham. There are two versions of how Haren and Farnham became friends resulting in Farnham being given the monument which is now placed in the **Haren Garden**.

One version of the story is of a Farnham business man began talking to a Dutchman on a train during the difficult times after World War 2. Discovering that both their communities were very similar persuaded their civic leaders to form a friendly attachment now known as 'twinning'.

The second version of how contact was made between the two towns was that the daughter of a Dutch pastor from Haren had married a young Canadian from Farnham. Following Holland's liberation by the British and further fuelled by the dropping of food parcels at the end of the savage winter of 1945 (aptly named *Operation Manna from Heaven*) there was considerable enthusiasm for the idea of closer contact proposed by the Pastor of Haren and his daughter in Farnham.



Both versions agree that after about four exchange visits, in February 1953, disastrous floods caused havoc in the low-lying countries bordering the North Sea. Holland had to expend enormous amounts of energy, time and money to repair the damage. The Dutch whose turn it was to visit England decided to donate the money saved up for the journey to the Dutch Disaster Fund. This was destined for the victims of the totally flooded Province of Zeeland, and subsequently the construction of the huge Delta-works to help prevent future catastrophic flooding. The Farnham people promptly organised a collection in support, but the momentum of the regular, spontaneously supported exchanges had been lost and the friendship languished.

Leaving the Haren Garden go past the Town Hall following the road down towards Sainsbury's Car Park. Turn right into Brightwells Road and then into Victoria Garden.

## Victoria Garden

The Victoria Garden is a 'secret garden' created on the site of the former Victorian open-air swimming baths. Entrance through the fine red brick Jubilee arch, designed by the notable Farnham architect, Harold Falkner, to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and the garden was named after her. The Falkner Arch formed the entrance to Farnham's first open air swimming baths. The Baths were closed in 1981 following the opening of the new Sports Centre and became derelict.

There is a slope into the garden enabling wheelchair or mobility scooter users also enter and enjoy this lovely hidden and secret garden which is surprisingly quiet.

There is a sculpture by a local artist called 'Outdoor Bathing' or more usually nicknamed 'The Shivering Boy', which reflects the previous use of the site as a swimming baths. Information panels in the alcoves describe the history of the swimming baths, the creation of the garden and details of the early planting.



The Victoria Garden was opened in May 1997, one hundred years after the building of the Baths was begun and ninety nine years after the Baths were officially opened by the Duchess of Albany, the Queen's daughter-in-law. This was the centenary project of the Farnham Swimming Baths Trust, which owns the land on behalf of the people of Farnham.

This is where the short walk ends in this lovely scented garden where you will find a large chess board between the two facing seats and on one of the pathways there is a mosaic hopscotch laid out for any active person to enjoy. A small maze and a Giant chess board (so long as you have some chess pieces) can entertain those who want to just sit and rest in this beautiful scented garden.

Leaving Victoria Garden by the opposite gateway then turn left following a narrow uneven path that leads past Falkner Court, a sheltered home named after one of Farnham's great architects. Keeping to this path, bypass the car park and head towards 40 Degreez a community centre and the Leisure Centre behind it and cross the bridge on your right.

## **Borelli Walk**

This walk is one of the most attractive walks in the Farnham area and commemorates a former prominent figure of Farnham, Mr Charles Ernest Borelli, who served for many years on the Farnham Urban District Council prior to his death in 1950.

This site has a very secluded feel even though it is in the middle of the bustle of Farnham. There is seating along the river path should you wish to stop and relax to enjoy the moment, and there is a growing collection of ornamental trees in the cut grass, some of which have been kindly donated by members of the public.

The idea for a riverside walk was first put forward to the Council in 1945, five years before Mr Borelli's death. Money was raised for the scheme and the walk was opened on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1953.

Crossing South Street by the dropped kerbs by Borelli Walk and opposite the War Memorial, re-enter Gostrey Meadow and follow the river along the tarmacked path and follow this to one of the exits onto Longbridge to return to the Waggon Yard car park.

For those who are unfamiliar with the area, cross Longbridge again at the triangle in the road, being very careful of traffic coming from your right, which can come very fast. Go past Churchill's new housing development, Hawthorn Lodge, keeping it on your left. Follow the road and before you turn into Downing Street, you will find straight ahead the cobbles that form part of Church Lane. Continue into the car park on your left and enjoy the delights of the New Ashgate Gallery and the river before locating your mode of transport.

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Between 1500 and 2004, the only major change to Farnham's street plan was the construction of South Street and Union Road. During these 500 years, the area covered by the present Conservation Area, changed as medieval timber framed buildings gave way to red brick Georgian town houses built with money made from corn and hops. The Victorians also left their mark whilst 20th century developments owed much to the restraining and sensitive influence of Charles Borelli and Harold Falkner, two local men who were in a position to shape the architectural future of the town. Borelli had acquired considerable town centre property and after his death, the family continued his philosophy of conservation. This kept development at bay until after the establishment of the official Conservation Area to which heightened planning criteria would apply.

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