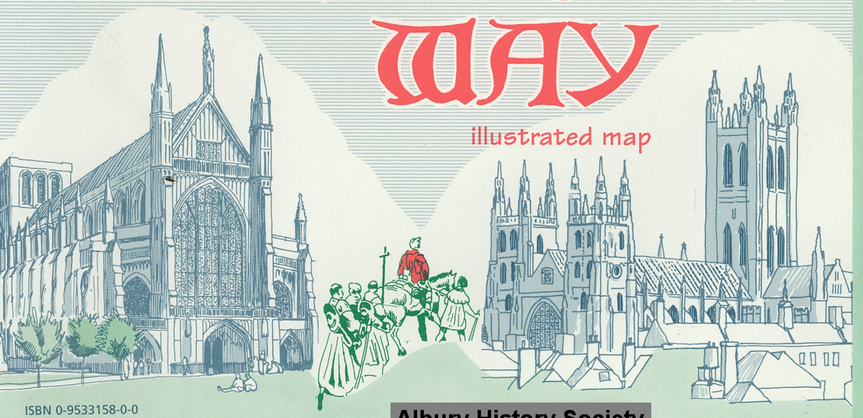
O happy band of pilgrims, if onward ye will tread.... O happy band of pilgrims, look upward to the skies.... English Hymnal J. Neale.

When in April the sweet showers fall and pierce the draught of March to the root...Then people long to go on pilgrimages... Geoffery Chancer.

ALONG THE PILGRIMS' WAY

illustrated map



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Albury History Society

WINCHESTER...Alton....Farnham....Guildford....Reigate....Maidstone..CANTERBURY

Introduction to the Pilgrims' Way

The 'Old (Way) Road' became, in parts, the Pilgrims Way after the pilgrimages to Winchester for the relics of St Swithin and even more so with the martyrdom of St Thomas a Beckett at Canterbury. Before this it was the E/W route, for traders, perhaps the oldest route in the land since the Stone Age. It connected the Channel ports (and previously the land bridge to Europe) to Salisbury Plain and Stonehenge. Cornish tin traders and Welsh sheep drovers used the 'Way' to trade with Phoenicians, Gauls and Greeks. The Romans marched their legions along it westwards before turning northwards to conquer Britain. The Normans came to reach Winchester to make it their capital city. Castles were built along it at Farnham, Guildford, Thurnham, Chilham and Canterbury.
Later many ecclesiastical buildings arose near the 'Way' to cater for the Pilgrims. A whole industry was built up to attend to their needs with hostelries for overnight accommodation and refreshment. Some of these still exist, many in ruins, a few now used for other purposes.

Using the river valleys of the Itchen, Wey, Mole, Darent, Medway and Stour the 'Way' sits mostly along the lower slopes of the south facing escarpments. Neither on the bottom, with heavy clays, marshy ground & thick woods; nor at the top of the Downs, exposed to the elements. Although found on official maps much of the route is still speculative and there are many diversions. The route for much of the 'Way' has been avoided, fortunately, by modern traffic. Consequently it gives the walker and the cyclist a chance to enjoy the countryside. The views for the most part are spectacular. *'The beauty of the country through which the old road runs, its historic associations amd famous memories, the ancient churches and houses which lie on its course, will attract those who love and reverence the past, and will lead many to follow in the footsteps of the medieval pilgrims along the 'way' to Canterbury.'* -Julia Cartwright 1911.

Guildford: *Guildhall*

Guildford

With its main street, said by Dickens to be *'the most beautiful High Street in England'* which drops gently down to the River Wey passing under the fine Guildhall clock, over 300 yrs old. The Castle, with its huge 11c motte and tower keep, sits in a beautiful garden setting. There are many other buildings worth visiting. The Cathedral is sited on top of Stag Hill with the University of Surrey spread along its slopes.

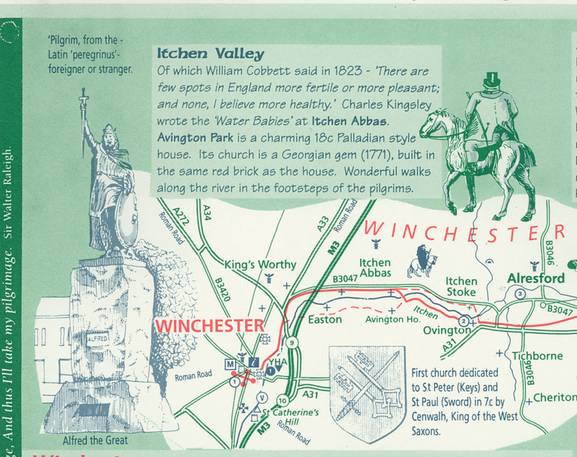
Polesden Lacey (NT)

Given to the National Trust in 1942 by Hon. Mrs Greville as a memorial to her father the Scottish brewer McEwan. From when she purchased it in 1906 it became the mecca for the famous, the literatti and Royalty. It contains an outstanding collection of paintings, furniture, tapestries and other works of art. it was built in 1824. A previous house on the site was the home of the author Sheridan. It is now the regional offices of the Trust. Mrs Greville is entombed near the rose garden. The gardens extend to 1000 acres.

Denbies Visitor Centre

Denbies Wine Estate

Present day pilgrims will appreciate this hostelry. Overlooked by Box Hill this vineyard is the largest in England, producing ½ million bottles of wine a year from 300,000 vines. The chateau style Winery & Visitor centre contains an indoor garden refreshment area, gift shop & viewing gallery. A tour of the vineyard can be had with wine tastings. A treat for wine lovers and abstainers alike.



Itchen Valley

Of which William Cobbett said in 1823 - *'There are few spots in England more fertile or more pleasant; and none, I believe more healthy.'* Charles Kingsley wrote the *'Water Babies'* at **Itchen Abbas**. **Avington Park** is a charming 18c Palladian style house. Its church is a Georgian gem (1771), built in the same red brick as the house. Wonderful walks along the river in the footsteps of the pilgrims.

Alton

Here the Pilgrims' Way goes along the main street of the pleasant country town, which stands at the head of the Wey valley. The Market Square has a lovely restored Town Hall. King's Pond, near the station, is a well visited Nature Reserve. A privately run steam railway (The Watercress Line) runs from here,to New Alresford.

Farnham

Standing nobly on a hill the Castle overlooks the town from the north, on a site where King Alfred's son, Edmond, defeated the Danes in 893. The Castle remained the residence of the Bishops of Winchester until 1927, when it was transferred to the See of Canterbury, then it became the home of the Bishop of Guildford. Most of the building is of the 12c. It has hosted many royal events up until Queen Victoria's reign. Now owned by a private Trust. South of the river, near the Maltings, is William Cobbett's birthplace. The cottage is now a pub named after him. The town was a meeting place for all travellers going east or west along the 'Way'. Fine Georgian street leading north from the 'Borough' to the Castle.

Chawton

Home of Jane Austenfrom 1809-16. Here she wrote *'Emma'*, *'Persuasion'* and *'Mansfield Park'*. It now houses a museum dedicated to her and administrated by a Trust. She is buried in Winchester Cathedral.

Loseley House

Set in a fine wooded park this beautiful example of an Elizabethan Manor House (1560-9) with some wonderful coloured glass of coats of arms in the Main hall. Now famous for its Ice cream and Yoghurt.

Watts Gallery & Compton

The 'Way' goes under the A3 by way of a Lutyens bridge (marked by a wooden cross each side of the road) and passes alongside the Watts Gallery. Here are housed many paintings and sculptures of the famous Victorian artist G. F. Watts. Along the road towards Compton is the Memorial Chapel & Cloister to him which was designed by his wife Mary. Built with the help of local ladies, trained by her in her local Pottery. This unique terracotta building is a mixture of Byzantine, Celtic & Art Nouveau designs and symbolism. The interior is a remarkable mystical work, a riot of colour & gilding. The building was restored in 1996. A one-off piece of architecture not to be missed.
In **Compton** village the Norman Church is another gem, with many unique features including the Saxon anchorite cell.

Tan. Watt's Memorial Chapel

Shalford & St Martha's

John Bunyan lived in **Shalford** and probably used the local geography for his *'Pilgrims Progress'*. *'Vanity Fair'* from the medieval fair held here. *'Slough of Despond'* - the marsh - land of the Wey & Tillingbourne rivers. *'Hill of Difficulty'* - the long climb to St Martha's. St Martha's (Martyrs) was rebuilt in 1848. Earlier an important church for pilgrims on the 'Way'. Many ancient yews around the church. Views of the 'Way' back to St Catherines and onwards to Box Hill. On the North Downs Way to the north is popular **Newlands Corner.**

St. Martha's Church

Gomshall Mill

17c mill now refurbished as a restaurant. Still retains it's waterwheel, turned by the Tillingbourne flowing under the mill. Gallery and antiques nearby.

Gomshall Mill

Beckett: Stained glass Window, Trinity Chapel.

Pilgrims' scratch marks

Canterbury

Birthplace of English Christianity. From here in the 7c. St Augustine and his followers spread the Gospel. The town's roots go back to prehistory and through to Roman occupation as a trading centre. The Romans called it Durovernum (the marsh city). It was the Saxons who called it Canterbury, Cant-wara-byrig, stronghold of the Kentish people. The town has direct routes to the Channel and Europe. St Augustine came from Rome in 597 and became the first Archbishop of Canterbury in 603. The Abbey, in its early days, became the great centre of learning in England. After the Viking capture in 851, it was burned by the Danes in 1011. The Normans began building the present Cathedral in 1070 under Arch. Lanfranc. It contains the largest Norman crypt in the world. The eastern end was added in 1170 as a shrine to Becket. The beautiful nave was completed in 1400 and the Central Tower a 100 years later. the Church contains some magnificent stained glass. St Martin's Church in the east is the oldest place of Christian worship in England, before Augustine arrived in AD 597. Since the martyrdom of Thomas Becket the Cathedral has become one of Europe's most celebrated places of pilgrimage. The city still retains some of the atmosphere known to medieval pilgrims. Ancient Inns (Hostelries) still survive today including The Chequers of Hope, The Bull and The Sun. It is chronicled that after the victory at Agincourt in 1420 there were over 100,000 pilgrims celebrating in the city. There is much to explore in this city which is the seat of the Primate of England with its motto of 'Hail, Mother of England'. A trip on the river through the town is a treat worth finding.

Winchester

Capital of Saxon England under King Alfred the Great in the 9c. It remained a national capital, with London for 200 years after the Norman Conquest. The magnificent Norman Cathedral took 300 years to complete, built on the site of Alfred's Saxon Church. It dominates the city, the longest (556ft) in Europe. Building commenced in 1079. St Swithun, Alfred's tutor, was so much a respected Bishop that on his death in 862, pilgrims travelled from afar to visit his tomb. For 300 years they came from the Continent via **Canterbury**, along the Old (way) Road and up the Itchen from the Solent until the martyrdom of Beckett at **Canterbury**. **Winchester** then declined as a place of Pilgrimage in favour of **Canterbury** after the reports of miracles at Becket's Tomb in 1171. Thus the Pilgrimages became a national industry until the Dissolution of the Monasteries under Henry VIII **Winchester City** has many attractions. Castle Hill, with the remains of the Castle, in its Great Hall hangs King Arthur's Round Table. Around the Cathedral are the 13c Deanery, The Pilgrims' Hall and School. The Hall has a 14c hammer-beam roof. Adjacent to the Cathedral are the remains of the Abbey. The Priory (St Swithun's) Gate is 15c. In the crypt of the Cathedral is a fine modern sculpture by Antony Gormley. Winchester College is the oldest public school in the country, founded (1382) by Wykeham, an architect of the Cathedral. East of the Cathedral are the ruins of Wolvesley Castle and the City Mill (1744) now looked after by the National Trust. At the east end of the High Street is the imposing bronze statue of Alfred the Great. St Cross Hospital a medieval almshouse, founded in 1136, is by the river, south of the City. On the opposite bank of the Itchen is **St Catherine's Hill**, with fine views of the City from the top.

Alresford

Old & New are separated by the R. Alre which forms the head water of the R. Itchen. There used to be important wool and corn mills here in the 14c. Barges and small vessels traded to **Winchester** on the Itchen. A well preserved fulling mill can be seen to the north. Nowadays there is a flourishing trade in watercress. Broad St has some good Georgian buildings. It was here that a large sheep fair was originally held. Two ancient coaching inns can be seen in West St-The Swan & The Bell.

Farnham: *Castle Hill*

Knole (NT)

One of the biggest private houses in Britain. Begun in 1456 by Archbishop Bouchier, this wonderful mansion has grown into the random mixture of courtyards and towers you see now. Set in a magnificent park, famous for its herds of deer. Home of the Sackville family since Elizabethan times.

Knole: *Entrance front*

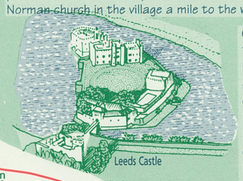
Kits Coty

Standing in a great Celtic cemetery with stone circles & burial chambers scattered all around. This burial 'house' is the remains of a long barrow, with three upright stones & a massive top slab. It would have originally been covered in earth, now washed away over the centuries. It is the largest specimen of its class in southern England. To the south and south east are the Little Kits Coty and the White Horse Stone.

Kit's Coty Chamber

Leeds Castle

Seemingly floating on islands. On one the 13c Gate Tower with the main building. On another, the medieval Gloriette the oldest part of the castle. The building has been associated with Royalty since Edward I in 1278. Construction started in 1119,with Henry VIII spending lavishly on it. It was finally bought by one of America's wealthiest families, the Whitneys. Now run by a trust and a centre for Medical Research. Open to the public, including the fine parkland. There is a remarkable Norman church in the village a mile to the west.



Leeds Castle

Charing & Chilham

These two ancient villages were important and busy stopping places on the 'Way'. **Chilham** still has a 'Pilgrims Fair' in the springtime. **Charing** has the ruins of a 14c Archbishops Palace. Both have buildings which would have been used as hostleries for the Pilgrims. Chilham Castle ruins with the Church and buildings around the square make a wonderful romantic setting

Pilgrims' badge or token made from pewter or lead.

'Canterbury bell' often attached to a pilgrim's staff.

'Canterbury' cross

Boughton Aluph

Here in the flint-walled church is a chimney beside the tower. It would have carried away the smoke from the fireplace built into the southern porch, where travellers on the "Way' could warm themselves when resting.

Chartwell (NT)

Home of Winston Churchill now a museum depicting his life. Statue of him was erected on **Westerham Green** in 1965.

Pilgrim's Costume. Long woollen robe, large round hat, satchel & a long stout staff.

Ightham Mote (NT)

14c moated Manor house built round a courtyard. The village some 2½ miles to the north contains many fine half-timbered medieval houses, including the 15c Town House with massive chimneys, amongst the old buildings clustered around the square.

Maidstone

County town of Kent and the 'Garden of England'. Archbishops of Canterbury had a Palace here until the 16c. Other Medieval buildings include the bridge across the Len, Church of All Saints and Corpus Christi Hall. The Bank Street shopping area is famous for the ancient guild signs above some of the premises. The Town was ideally placed to become a market centre, which it still is to-day. **Aylesford** in the north west has a Tudor bridge and the remains of a Carmelite Friary, with a 13c Pilgrims' Hall, now used as a retreat. Allington Castle, on the river north of the town, is now a private residence.

Shere

Reputed by some to be the prettiest village in Surrey, with the Tillingbourne stream running through the centre with its ever present flock of friendly white ducks. A haunt over the many years for artists and the literary set. There are some fine timber-framed buildings including early houses and lychgate by Edwin Lutyens.

Lenham

A pretty village with a square containing a nice mixture of period buildings. In the church is a tombstone to Mary Honywood who died in 1620, aged 92 years, leaving behind 367 living descendants . .

Boughton Lees

Key to Symbols

- Pilgrims' Way
- NDW North Downs Way / other tracks
- National Trust (listed)
- Tea / Refreshment (listed)
- Ancient Church / ruin
- Ecclesiastical building / ruin
- Castle or Fort / ruin
- Hill Fort
- Burial Chamber / Standing Stone
- Roman Site
- Museum
- Information Centre
- Youth Hostel
- Viewpoint with access to Car Park

Tea or Refreshment Places *(see also National Trust list)*

1 Cathedral Restaurant, Winchester
2 Bush Inn, Ovington
3 Tiffin Tea Rooms, Arlesford
4 Chequers Inn, Ropley
5 Little Chef, Four Marks
6 Casandra's Cup, Chawton
7 The Allen Gallery, Alton
8 The Farnham Maltings, Farnham
9 Manor Farm Crafts Centre, Seal
10 The Jolly Farmer, Puttenham
11 The Tea Shop, Compton
12 Ye Old Ship Inn, Guildford
13 Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, Guildford
14 The Weyside PH, Guildford
15 The New Barn Coffee Shop, Newlands Corner
16 Percy Arms, Chilworth
17 Drummond Arms, Albury
18 Lucky Duck Tea Rooms, Shere
19 Gomshall Mill, Gomshall
20 The Abinger Hammer Tea Rooms, (Post Office)
21 Wotton Hatch, Wotton
22 Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking
23 Burford Bridge Hotel, Mickleham
24 Fanny's Tea Rooms, Gatton
25 The Old Forge, Godstone
26 Road Chef, Clackett Services M25
27 Tiffins, Westerham
28 Village Tea Rooms, Brasted
29 Otford Antiques Centre, Otford
30 The Wheatsheaf, Kemsing
31 Nepicar Farm, Wrotham Heath
32 Upper Bell Inn, Blue Bell Village
33 Fleur de Lys, Burham
34 Aylesford Friary, Aylesford
35 Cobtree Tea Rooms, Museum of Kent Rural Life, Sandling
36 Tyland Barn Centre, Sandling
37 The Kings Arms, Boxley
38 The Cock Horse, Detling
39 The Black Horse, Thurnham
40 Road Chef Services, M20 Junction 8
41 The Dirty Habit, Hollingbourne
42 Lurcocks, Lenham
43 Little Chef, Charing
44 The Flying Horse, Boughton Lees
45 The Copper Kettle, Chilham
46 Old Coach & Horses, Harbledown
47 Cathedral Restaurant, Canterbury

National Trust Properties

1 Winchester City Mill
2 Shalford Mill
3 Clandon House (T)
4 Hatchlands (T)
5 Polesden Lacey (T)
6 Boxhill (T)
7 Quebec House (T)
8 Chartwell (T)
9 Emmetts Garden (T)
10 Knole (T)
11 Ightham Mote (T)
12 Old Soar Manor
13 Stoneacre

T = Tea Room

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Suggested further reading

Pilgrims' Way from Winchester to Canterbury....*Julia Cartwright* 1895-
The Old Road....*Hillaire Belloc* 1904
Pilgrims' Road....*F.C. Elliston-Erwood* 1923
Pilgrims' Way....*Seán Jennett* 1971
A Guide to the Pilgrims' Way & North Downs....*C.J. Wright* 1971
The North Downs Way....*Denis Herbstein* 1982
Exploring the Pilgrims' Way....*Alan Charles* 1990
The North Downs Way....*Neil Curtis* 1992
The Road to Canterbury....*Shirley de Boulay* 1994
Buildings of England: Hampshire, Surrey & Kent....*Pevsner.*
Ordnance Survey, Landranger maps 185, 186, 187, 188, 189 & 179.

We should be low and lovelike and lean each man to the other, And patient as pilgrims, for pilgrims are we all. Piers Plowman.

He'll fear not what men say, He'll labour night and day, To be a Pilgrim. English Hymnal John Bunyan.

Come wind, come weather, There's no discouragement. Shall make him once relent his first avowel intent to be a pilgrim. English Hymnal John Bunyan.

Give me my scallop shell of quiet, My staff of faith to walk upon... My gown of glory, hope's true gage, And thus I'll take my pilgrimage. Sir Walter Raleigh.

Stand at the cross roads and look. Ask for the ancient paths. Ask where the good way is, and walk it, and you will find rest in your souls. Jeremiah 6:16

All of us are pilgrims on this earth. I have even heard it said that earth itself is a pilgrim in the heavens. Maxim Gorky