



Pyrford Lock: The Anchor (Pub Walk)

Distance: 5¼ km=3¼ miles, plus optional 1½ km=1 mile easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Pyrford Lock

Map: 145 (Guildford) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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Canal walk, mill, village, meadows, optional medieval church

In Brief

The *Anchor* pub and restaurant (Hall and Woodhouse) dominates a bend in the Wey Canal at Pyrford Lock with its little narrow hump-back road bridge. It gets absolutely packed on a sunny spring day and you may need to book a table (01932-342-507 or on-line). So many of the tables are outside on the huge patios, there are even open-air non-smoking areas. The food is promising and usually delivers. Starters are interesting and there are lighter dishes, kitchen specials and some “heritage cooking”.

Beginning June 2014: there is a “temporary path closure” between Wey Navigation and Ockham Mill due to a broken bridge. The old bridge was demolished in 2016 and there is no sign (2020) of new work. In 2018, the section of the towpath north of Walsham Gates (point [2](#) on the map) was closed for work on the weir, requiring a diversion via Ockham Mill and the “closed bridge”. During that work, the Golf Club permitted use of the white bridge for walkers and provided an excellent path, marked by lines of white tape. The marked-out path leading to the footpath is still there in 2020 and, although the official notice formally reminds walkers not to transgress, the club seems to “turn a blind eye”. A good alternative is to treat this walk as a “there-and-back” walk using the same return route in both directions.



This walk is a lovely stroll along the Wey Canal with a view of the locks, bridges and colourful canal boats. There is an optional extension to the Norman church at Wisley.



Any kind of clothing and shoes are fine and this walk is perfect for a dog.



The walk begins on Ripley Green, nearest **postcode GU23 6AN**, grid ref TQ 052 571. If coming from the North, i.e. from the A3, the entrance to the Green is on the right near the start of the village, opposite a furniture store. Keep going, past the first car park on the right, until you are in the middle of the Green, near a children’s playground. There is a long dirt strip on the left-hand side of the tarmac road with many parking spaces. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

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The Walk

- 1 Continue along the tarmac lane away from the village, ignoring a footpath on the right, go past the end of the car park and continue round a left bend. Fork **right** here through a metal barrier onto a wide path across the Green. In 300m (330 yds), look for a pair of semis on your left with two tall chimneys, and here fork **left** on a narrow path. (These houses may be hard to see through summer foliage: if you missed this turning, look for a crossing path in another 40m and turn left on it.) This path takes you back to the edge of the Green. Go straight over a tarmac drive here to a footpath opposite (with a sign partially hidden in a holly bush behind you). Follow the wide track, soon crossing the Pidgeon House bridge. Just after two cottages, keep **left** over a bridge and follow the path between two meadows and over another bridge. This path takes you to the River Wey at a place where the Wey Navigation splits off from the River itself, known as *Walsham Gates*.

The Wey Canal and its various locks and buildings are owned by the National Trust. Opened in 1653, Walsham Gates are the last remaining of the original turf-sided locks. The gates are usually open because they are only used as a flood lock to divert water over the weir when water level becomes too high.

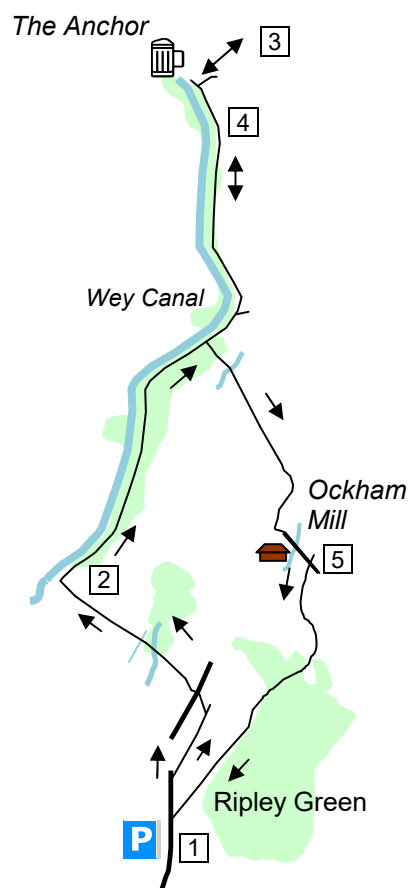
- 2 Go over the long steel bridge over the rushing waters by the weir and turn **right** beside the lock, continuing past a metal bridge and noticeboard. Continue along the right-hand bank of the canal with the river visible down on your right. Soon you see some of the colourful canal barges, now used for leisure. In a short distance, you see on the other side a small two-storey brick summer house, bearing a plaque stating *John Donne, poet and dean of St Pauls, lived here 1600-1604.*

John Donne ("no man is an island") had fallen in love with 17-year-old Ann, daughter of Sir George More of Loseley Park near Guildford. Donne eloped with her only to be thrown into London's Fleet Prison. On his release, he and Ann were given shelter by Sir Francis Wolley here at Pyrford. John and Ann lived here for two more years and the first of their twelve children was born here. John later became Dean of St Paul's Cathedral.



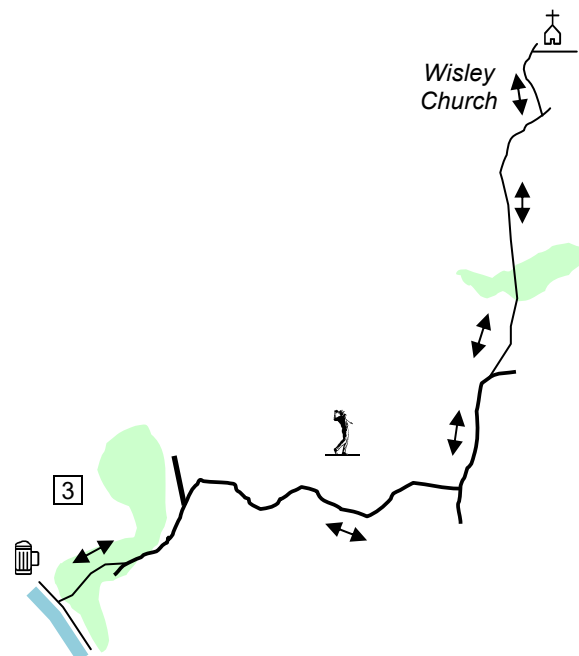
The canal passes large houses and gardens, followed by a black metal bridge. It then passes some mooring spaces with colourful craft and finally reaches Pyrford Lock and the *Anchor* pub.

Decision point. Here you have the option of a short total 1½ km=1 mile excursion to the Norman church at **Wisley**, best done before refreshments. If you do **not** want to take this option, simply skip the next numbered section.



3 Optional excursion to Wisley church.

(The outward and return routes are the same, so you need to memorise your route.) Just before the pub and opposite the little road bridge, go **right** by a large modern kissing-gate onto a footpath. This path quickly joins a wider gravel path beside the golf course. In 40m, take the **right** fork, a wide surfaced path which bends right between gorse bushes. This path runs between attractive golf links, curves left and right several times and finally reaches a T-junction. Turn **left** at the T-junction onto another wide path. This path veers right. As you round the bend right, look for a post on your left with yellow arrows. Turn **left** here over a strip of grass and a little wooden bridge, onto a gravel path.



This path passes the entrance to a yard on your right and then bends right through a metal swing-gate. Just before the path ends in a parking area, go **left** through a small wooden gate into Wisley churchyard. *Wisley Church was built in 1150 and inside has traces of wall paintings dating from that time.* After your visit, retrace all your steps, back to the gravel path, over the bridge and grass, **right** on the track, **right** at the junction and all the way back to the pub.



4 After refreshments, return along the canal side the way you came. (The canal is far pleasanter than the various golf courses that surround Pyrford Lock and this is why we don't attempt a circular route.) Eventually you pass the black metal bridge that you saw on the way out. Avoid the metal swing-gate immediately on your left here and continue along the canal for another 100m. Now turn **left** on a clear path marked by a post with a yellow arrow. The path crosses the river by a long wooden bridge with a view on your left of a white golfers' bridge. Follow this path between meadows for over 500m until it passes through a wide wooden gate into a hamlet at Ockham Mill. The track runs by some houses and a mill pond and curves left around the tall red-brick mill.

Ockham Mill is a fine brick structure in the beautiful setting of a pond on the River Wey. There has been a succession of mills at Ockham since probably 1296. The present structure was built by the first Earl of Lovelace (William King-Noel, 8th Baron King of Ockham), lover of gothic architecture, in 1862. The earl's coronets can be seen either side of the sack hoist sited near the top of the building. (See the other walk in this series [The Lovelace Bridges of Horsley](#).)

5 Continue ahead on a tarmac lane. In 100m, there are fingerposts on both sides. Turn **right** here on a footpath. The path goes over a large wooden bridge with pastures on your right and woodland on your left. When it goes over another large wooden bridge, keep straight ahead into the open space of Ripley Green. Continue ahead through some birches and stay on the left-hand side of the Green, passing several wooden benches. Finally you arrive back at the tarmac lane and the car park on the Green where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: if coming from the A3, come off at the *Ockham, Ripley, Send* exit, follow the road into Ripley village. The car park is just after the *Half Moon* pub and Bellpenny House on the right, before a terrace of modern houses. Keep going about 200m into the middle of the Green where there is a dirt strip on the left-hand edge of the tarmac lane, used as a car park.

By bus/train: bus 515 or 515A from Guildford; bus 462 or 463 from Woking or Guildford, not Sunday. Check the timetables.

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