



Weybridge Walks

Five walks in and
around Weybridge

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Contents

Introduction

FIVE WALKS	Page
1. D'Oyly Carte Island to Hampton Court	5
2. Broadwater Circuit	6
3. The River Wey	7
4. Wey Meadows	8
5. Brooklands	9

Please take care to follow all safety requirements along the Public Footpaths and especially if you are crossing any railway lines.

Introduction

Weybridge is one of the most beautiful and ancient places in Surrey. Remains have been found from the Neanderthal period as well as the presence of a Roman encampment on St. George's Hill. There are wonderful surrounding parks and waterways which make for perfect long walks with many unusual buildings to see along the way. Highly recommended is Neil White's book *Weybridge Past* for those who might like to delve further into the rich history of the area.

There are many great places in the town centre for food and drink. Along with the usual suspects, there are local favourites such as Enzo's and Meghan's by the Wey. Weybridge has bookstores with a Waterstones as well as the Sam Beare Bookshop which also offers vinyl, DVDs and other interesting items. There is also an excellent Post Office.

The local library on the High Street has also recently opened after a recent refurbishment with many unique books on local history.

St. James' Church was originally built around 675 and has been rebuilt many times the most recent being in 1848. Inside is a repository of Weybridge history, well worth exploring. There are a few brasses from the 16th century and a magnificent stained-glass window by Sir Edward Bourne-Jones.

Frederica Charlotte of Prussia, the Duchess of York, (1767-1820) is a key figure in Weybridge. She is buried in front of St. James' Church, and her dogs are buried in the garden at the Oatlands Park Hotel. Her husband was allegedly a nasty piece of work, carrying on in London, while she remained in Weybridge and was greatly admired by the local townspeople. She was a benefactor to many local causes and lived in the area for over 30 years. High stakes gambling is alleged to have taken place at Oatlands and she also kept monkeys.

The York Column, located at Monument Green, is dedicated to her after previously having been the Seven Dials in London. The dial stone was moved to behind the Weybridge library, also as a memorial to Frederica Charlotte.

W.G. Tarrant, the master builder, is another key figure. He built many properties in Surrey and elsewhere, most notably grand houses around St. George's Hill including the Golf Club which started around 1912. In the 1920s he had over 5,000 workers. He went into receivership in 1931, but his legacy will live on in the many fine houses and buildings in the area.

E. M. Forester, the novelist, lived at 19 Monument Green from 1904 to 1925 with his mother. He wrote all six of his novels there and used small town life themes in his works including "A Passage to India".

The Oatlands Park Hotel was originally a Tudor structure called Oatlands Palace which was acquired by Henry VIII for Anne of Cleves. The marriage was annulled and Henry married Catherine Howard in the Chapel of Oatlands Palace in 1540. Elizabeth I used it as a hunting lodge. Charles I planted a Cedar of Lebanon tree to honour the birth of his third son, Henry, that is still standing today. The Palace was demolished after the execution of Charles I around 1649. There are some surviving walls near Grotto Road. The current hotel was built on the same site in 1856 and has hosted many notables over the years such as Emile Zola, Anthony Trollope and the artist Edward Lear. The lobby has many original engravings which show the building and surroundings over the centuries.

The World War I Memorial at the junction of Hangar Hill and Queens Road was unveiled on March 24th, 1923. The names of those who have fallen in World War II and the Korea War have also been included. The Memorial has been recently refurbished and sits proud at the intersection.

There are two lovely columns at the junction of Portmore Park Road and Thames Street that were the entrance gates of Portmore Palace, the Earl of Portmore's Estate in the 1700s. The mansion was demolished in the 1820s. One can easily imagine the wonderful estate these would have welcomed you to many years ago.

FIVE WALKS

1. D'Oyly Carte Island to Hampton Court

There are two free car parks opposite D'Oyly Carte Island but in the summer, they tend to fill up quite early. The D'Oyly Carte Island has recently been open to the public in the summer with a restaurant and cafe.

Richard D'Oyly Carte was the impresario who bought together Gilbert and Sullivan to create an English Light Opera tradition. He was very successful and wanted to develop a hotel in the middle of the Thames around 1890, but the local council would not allow it. He established the Savoy and Clarridges Hotel as well as the Savoy Theatre and Royal Opera House. The property passed through several owners until the current proprietor, Andy Hill, a music entrepreneur, decided to refurbish it to the previous high standards and open it to the public.

There is a Summer Music Festival on D'Oyly Carte Island which usually sells out and there are also Pilates classes.

Start facing the pedestrian bridge that leads to D'Oyly Carte Island. Turning right follow the footpath towards Walton Bridge. You will pass the under the Desborough Island bridges. There is an excellent coffee shop, the Wilde Brunch Café if you would like a nice break. The tow path goes under Walton Bridge, by the Sunbury Locks, Waterworks, Hurst Park, finally reaching Hampton Court. The whole circuit is a few hours, and you can turn around and go back anytime you wish.

There are many pubs and cafés along the route where you can sit outside and enjoy the views.

Hampton Court also offers many fine cafes, pubs and restaurants. One of my favourites is the Lebanese Mezzet Restaurant.

If it is wet, consider wearing appropriate footwear as some portions of the tow path may prove quite muddy.

2. Broadwater Circuit

Using the same car parks as the D'Oyly Carte Island Walk or Walton Bridge car park you can walk along the Thames as well as along the Broad Water in a lovely circuit.

The Broad Water was created in 1750s as part of the rebuilt Oatlands Palace. The nobility would pass carefree afternoons walking around the water and there was a grotto at the western end where it connected with the River Wey, but this had fallen into disrepair and was demolished in 1947.

You follow the same tow path to Walton Bridge as if you are going to Hampton Court. There are several pathways off the parking lot that lead to the path around Broad Water. I would recommend studying a map as if you take the wrong path you will end up somewhere else, perhaps along Oatlands Drive.

The key path to follow is on the south side of the car park about one third down as you approach from Walton lane. The path leads to a small bridge and the forks left and right. Please follow the right path which will lead around the Engine River, across a meadow and then to the path along the south side of Broad Water lake.

The Broad Water path looks on the lovely flats and houses off Oatlands Drive.

Follow the path all along and straight through the playing fields of St. George's School until you reach Grenside Road. Turn left and go down Grenside Road to Grotto Road. Turn right on Grotto Road to Thames Street and then right again on Thames Street. Follow Thames Street to some suitable local pubs and restaurants such as the Minnow and the Old Crown

Continue along Thames Street and you will return to the car parks where this journey started.

3. The River Wey

You can park in the same car parks near the D'Oyly Carte Island and walk west along the tow path.

Start again at the footbridge to the D'Oyly Carte Island and now turn left. You will pass the Ferry Stop which runs to Shepperton. Continue through the car park, down Thames Street until you reach the Old Crown. Follow the public footpath at the back of the Old Crown along Church Walk which leads to Jessamy Road. Pass over the bridge and you come to a small park and a t junction. Go left and leave the road and take the public footpath prior to the blocks of flats. The footpath winds around the River Wey and there is a footbridge which leads to the other side of the canal near the Weybridge Rowing Club. Follow the public footpath past the canal and continue along the public footpath. There are lovely waterworks and locks all along the route and you can see the old warehouses which have also been converted into flats.

Further down the same footpath, there are grand houses from all eras on the other side of the River Wey Navigation Canal as well with great Victorian mansions, elegant 1920s villas and modern steel and glass palazzos.

This path leads to the actual Weybridge bridge so you can either go back to town through the High Street or keep going for the following walk.

4. Wey Meadows

The best place to start is the Queen's Head Pub. Head west along Addlestone Road and cross the bridge. There are lovely views all-around of the River Wey and the canal. These were built around 1653 with 12 locks between Weybridge and Guildford. The Godalming Navigation Canal was added in 1764. The arrival of the railways diminished their stature, but these are still used for pleasure cruises and fantastic to walk along.

After the bridge follow the canal along the footpath through Addlestone. There are wonderful old warehouses which are now flats at Coxes Mill.

At the New Haw lock leave the canal and follow the road until you see the public footpath off Byfleet Road. Follow the public footpath east across fields until you see the farmhouses at the end of Wey Mannor Road.

If you go straight, you will follow another public footpath which leads to Weybridge Station or Brooklands.

If you go left, follow the road north along several farms with cows, goats and other animals. The road ends at a sign which says private property but there is another path which heads east toward the River Wey. There is a public footpath along the River Wey, follow it.

You will eventually arrive at the elevated train line and cross over, it leads back into Weybridge along the Wey Meadows street. There are several interesting houses along the Wey with lovely gardens. The road eventually comes back to Bridge Road. Walk east and you will come back to the Queen's Head thus completing the circuit.

5. Brooklands

The best place to start this walk is at the car park off Brookland's Road after the railway bridge on your right. There is a public footpath at the bottom of the car park which ends up on Londsedale Road. Follow the road southwest until you reach Archers Approach and go right over the bridge.

Follow the footpath southwest by the Weybridge Sewage Works until you reach the Seven Arches Bridge. If you continue along the footpath you will wander by the River Wey, back over another railway line and ultimately end up on the Wey Meadows walk as detailed previously by the farms. You are welcome to do a loop back to the Queen's Head if you fancy.

Otherwise continue along the footpath under the railway bridge by Mercedes World and The Brooklands Museum

The Brooklands Museum is a wonderful repository local and transport history. The Racetrack was the first in Europe built in 1907. You can still see many of the turns all around the area. There are motorcycles, busses and airplanes all around the Museum. There is even one of the seven remaining Concorde's that you can visit with a separate ticket. There were many factories in this area supporting the aircraft and automotive industries over the last century, and it was bombed during World War II. Well worth a visit.

There is also Mercedes World which has a large collection of cars from all eras that you can visit. You also experience driving thrills with many courses and options available.

The Brooklands Hotel and restaurant is well worth a visit with delicious food and luxury accommodation.

Vickers started manufacturing aeroplanes at Brooklands in 1911. The Vickers plant was eventually closed in 1988, and 4,000 people lost their jobs. There are many interesting plaques along the walk that you can read and learn more about the history and of course the Brookland Museum also has lots of background material regarding the site.

Depending on how much time you have available, you can walk right around the whole old racetrack by the River Wey leading to the Brooklands shopping mall. Retrace your steps to get back to car park at the start of the walk.

