

West Berkshire Countryside Society

West Berkshire Countryside Society was formed in January 2012 by merging four long-established environmental groups. These were *The Friends of the Pang, Kennet & Lambourn Valleys, The Bucklebury Heathland Conservation Group, The Pang Valley Conservation Volunteers* and *The Pang Valley Barn Owl Group*.

Our remit is to continue their work of promoting and improving the landscape of West Berkshire by practical conservation work and by introducing people to the countryside, its work, history and wildlife, through the medium of talks and conducted walks – of which this is one. The Society is entirely run by volunteers.

Members of **West Berkshire Countryside Society** currently pay a £15 annual subscription for individual and family membership to provide a financial resource. Those members who wish to, make up volunteer working parties to undertake practical conservation tasks.

Non-members are very welcome to join our conducted walks for which we make no charge. Non-members are also welcome at our talks for which we make a small charge.

If you would like more information about our activities or would like to join us and help with our work, please visit our website:

www.westberkscountryside.org.uk

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West Berkshire
Countryside Society

‘ANCIENT & MODERN’ A STROLL AROUND YATTENDON

A walk around Yattendon Village and the surrounding countryside. Starting and finishing at Yattendon Square

**About 2 miles or 3 km.
Ordnance Survey Explorer Map
158 – ‘Newbury and Hungerford’ will be useful**

The first part of this walk is around the village on firm dry surfaces. The second part is across fields which will be muddy and uneven.

There are a number of narrow gates along the route.

Part of the route is along well used roads without footways.

The walk passes through cattle grazing fields and passes a dairy – dogs are not recommended.

The Development of the Village

People have lived in and around Yattendon for thousands of years. A Mesolithic stone tool known as a Thames Pick and dating from between 10,000 and 4,500BC, was found at Coombe House on the edge of the village. A Bronze Age (c.2,500- c.750BC) burial mound exists in the corner of the parish at Everington and two others- now ploughed out – once existed near Wyld Court. A Roman farmhouse was excavated on Eling Farm in the 19th century and the Manor of Yattendon was recorded in Domesday Book in 1086. The entry says the land had been owned by the Saxon royal family. It is possible that Yattendon and Frilsham were once a single Saxon estate. The original boundary between them looks very contrived whereas the outer boundary is purposeful and forms an almost complete circle. The dividing line steps around medieval strips and Yattendon Great Field is actually in Frilsham! Yattendon means *The Hollow of the People of Geat* and this hollow, and therefore the original settlement, was probably around the modern school. The oldest pottery has been found in this area. When the Manor and the Square were built in the 15th century the focus of the village moved up to the Square.

The Norreys Family

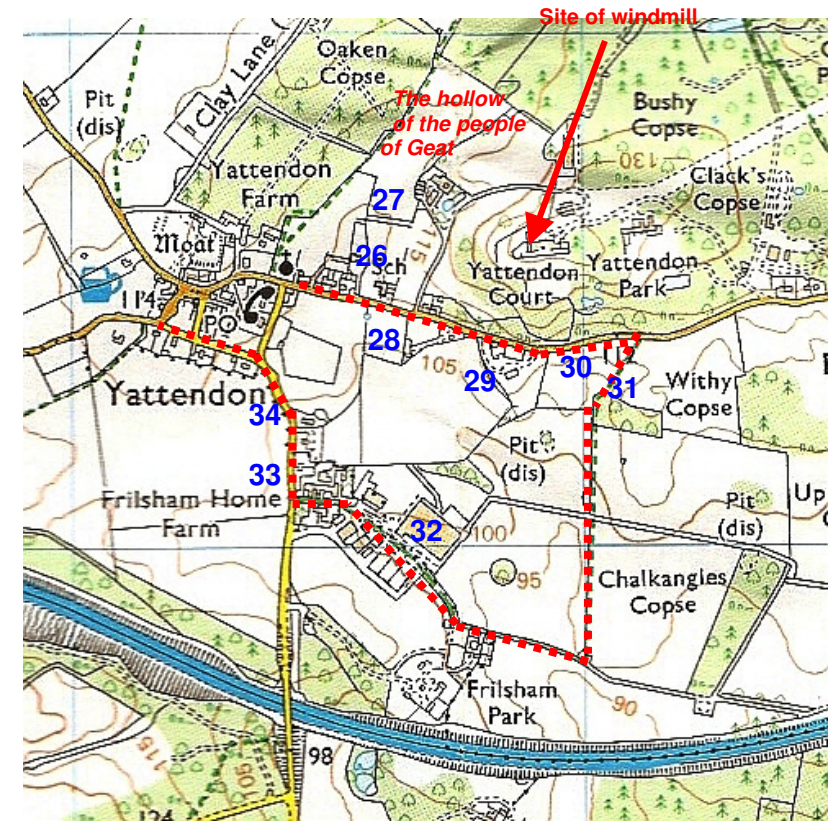
The Norrys family of Bray acquired the manor of Yattendon by marriage in the early 15th century. In 1448 John Norris obtained a licence to build and fortify the manor house. They built it astride the road to Hampstead Norreys and diverted the road through their new market place in the Square. He also built the present church, although there was almost certainly an earlier church in the village and it may have been in the field NE of the Old Rectory. The Norreys were an important and aggressive political family and their exploits read like the more lurid historical fiction. Sir William Norreis was knighted on the battlefield of Northampton and Sir Henry Norris was executed for an alleged, but unlikely, *affaire* with Queen Anne Boleyn. His son, Sir John Norreys was a professional soldier and shared an expedition with Sir Francis Drake.

The Waterhouse Era

Alfred Waterhouse and his wife Elizabeth bought the manor in 1877. Alfred Waterhouse was a famous Victorian architect. Amongst other buildings, he designed the Natural History Museum in London and Reading Town Hall. The Waterhouses made many changes to the village. Some of these are noted in the walk paragraphs. Elizabeth Waterhouse taught young village people to make brass and copper items to her designs. These were then sold in a village shop and at Liberty's in London. They won many prizes for their work.

The Modern Estate

The Waterhouse family sold the estate to Sir Edward Iliffe in 1925 and the Iliffe family have continued the process of maintaining and improving the village. Again, a number of their changes are noted in the walk paragraphs. They increased the size of the estate to 3742 hectares (8923 acres) of which 885 hectares (2181 acres) are woodland and 105 hectares (507 acres) are Christmas tree plantations. The very modern dairy unit at Frilsham Home Farm manages 540 cows. A variety of arable crops are grown ranging from wheat and barley, through beans and oil seed rape to lucerne. Redundant farm buildings have been converted into workshops and offices that provide local employment.



They gave sophisticated performances in the small concert studio.

30. The Miraculous Well. So called because it never failed even in the driest weather.

31. The chalk pit and mines. Local soils are often very acid. Chalk from the quarry was ploughed in to allow cereals to be grown. Bricks also need chalk and sand to be mixed with the clay and both these were available here together with timber from the surrounding coppices to fuel the kilns. The mines provided the chalk for the bricks. Graffiti in the caves are reported to go back to 1720. The tunnels were large enough to take a pony and cart. The entrances were closed in about 1930.

32. The dairy unit. Commissioned on 2 September 2002 to handle 550

milking cows and 220 young stock It now specialises in milk production with 540 milking cows. Replacement cows are supplied by a specialist farmer. The dairy uses the most up to date computer controls and sensors. It is supported by 309 hectares (735 acres) of land growing 60% maize and 40% grass. It produces 5.3 million litres of milk a year. This is enough to supply a daily pint to everyone in a town of 25,500 people. For comparison Newbury has 32,000

33. Frilsham Home Farm. The redundant buildings of this late 19th century Model Farm have been converted into business units. West Berks Brewery now lives here.

34. The Withys. The Estate gave the land for these 12 shared equity homes for young village people.

1. The Carriers. The car park was the carriers' yard. Carriers were the ancestors of our rural bus services. They travelled fixed routes to a published timetable using a wagon and horses. They carried both goods and people. They also undertook shopping commissions and would shop for the most trivial items such as buttons and pots and pans.

2. The Reading Room. (Now a private house called The Close). The Waterhouse family were Quakers originally and disapproved of alcohol. They built a Reading Room as a counter attraction to the Royal Oak and staffed it with a husband and wife. It provided books and the latest newspapers. It served the best coffee and the wife made the best cakes for miles around!

3. The Square. This appears to have been deliberately built as a market place in the 15th century although there had been markets here from the 13th century. Saddlers Cottage dates from at least the 15th century and may be older.

4. The Well. Waterborne diseases were common in the days before piped water – particularly scarlet fever and diphtheria. The Waterhouses had the well dug in 1878 to supply safe drinking water. It is 131' (39.9m) deep and cost £29.65.

5. The Barracks. Parliamentary troops are reputed to have been billeted in these houses during the Civil War (1642–46), hence the name. Note the chimneys.

6. The Royal Oak. An 18th century false front makes this building look more modern than The Barracks, but they are actually of the same date. Again, note the chimneys. In 1785, Robert States, the landlord of the Royal Oak, took over the Yattendon Kiln and advertised its products in the Reading Mercury. The left hand end of the hotel was once an abattoir. It was extensively re-built after a well collapsed under the kitchen killing a lady working there.

7. The hairdressers. This shop was used by *The Home Arts & Industries* to sell the Yattendon Copper and Brass work made by Elizabeth Waterhouse's pupils. Alfred Waterhouse had a studio on the first floor at the rear.

8. The tree. A tree is shown here on the earliest map (1773). A very ancient elm died during the Dutch Elm epidemic in the 1970s and was replaced with an oak by Lord Iliffe in 1977.

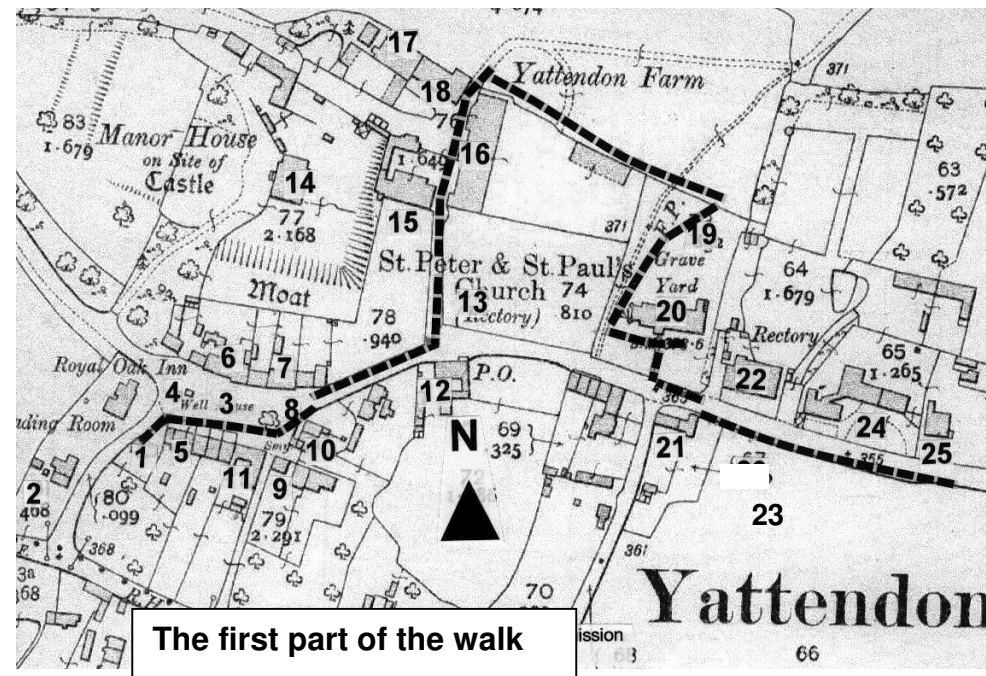
9. The Forge. *Eustache the smith* is recorded in 1315 and a forge would have been an essential part of the village until recent times. Forge Cottage has an inscribed date of 1675 but the forge is 19th century. The Briant family were the smiths in the 18th & 19th century and gave their name to the lane. Two female members are recorded as smiths. They were succeeded by the Print family at the end of the 19th century who were renowned for their skill.

10. The fire engine. In the early 1900's this shed held the manual fire engine.

11. The Stores. Maps of 1773 and 1845 show this as an open site, but a shop had been built by 1877 when it was destroyed in a fire. Alfred Waterhouse bought the ruins, re-built the shop and leased it back to the former owner.

12. Bakery, brewery and green phone box. This was the originally the village bakery and Post Office. Until early 2012 it was the headquarters of the world famous West Berkshire Brewery. The brewery has moved to Frilsham Home Farm and the buildings have been converted to offices and workshops. The identity of the revellers who painted the phone box green (now sober and respectable citizens) is a closely guarded local secret!

13. The Village Hall. It was built by the first Lord Iliffe in 1931 at a cost of £1250 and has been central to village life ever since.



14. The Manor House. The Norreys family built a fortified manor house surrounded by a moat in 1448. It sat astride the original road to Hampstead Norris and caused the awkward bend in the road. The slight holloways marking the old road and the extension of Clay Lane could still be seen in the grounds until recently. The first phase of the present house was built about 1680 but it has been extended, refaced and remodelled several times since then.

15. The Grange. A date on the chimney indicates that this was built in 1702 by Sir Edward Norreys, probably for his estate manager since it backs onto the farmyard and the manor barns.

16. The Manor Wheat Barn. (Private). This is an magnificent eleven bay timber framed barn and was built about 1700. It is of 'Queen Post' construction – popular at that date and was originally thatched. Slots for wattle panels can be seen in the main posts. A graffito on the end wall gives a date of 1743.

The barn is often wrongly called a *Tithe Barn*. Tithe Barns were used by the Church to house the Tithe. This was a tax of one tenth levied on the increase of the land to support the Church. It was received by the rector 'in kind' and he need the Tithe Barn to store it. Yattendon's tithe barn was opposite the Old Rectory and was accidentally burned down in the 19th century. The humps and bumps in the field mark its position.

17. The Manor Barley Barn. This is smaller than the wheat barn reflecting the relative importance of the crops. Wheat made bread, 'the staff of life' before the introduction of the potato. Barley made malt for beer. Important but not vital!

18. Retirement homes. Yattendon Estate built these in 1982 on the site of redundant cart sheds. They house retired employees moved from outlying houses to the company, shops and resources provided by the village.

19. The churchyard. This contains the Waterhouse family graves. Looking eastwards we can see the hollow which contained the early village and the hill on which the village windmill stood. Its remains were found when Alfred and Elizabeth Waterhouse built the first Yattendon Court there in 1878. It was a post mill. The structure containing the stones revolved on a massive oak post set vertically in the ground.

20. The church. John Norreys built the church *de novo* in about 1450 but the list of rectors goes back to 1297 so there was certainly a church in the village at that date and it may have been in the field to the NE of the Old Rectory. The church contains a remarkable monument to Sir John Norreys. There is a mass dial on the buttress beside the priest's door. It allowed the priest's assistant to time the services. The cross in the front churchyard is in memory of the mother of Robert Bridges the Poet Laureate who lived in the village. The church has been remodelled several times - most extensively by Alfred Waterhouse.

21. Isaac's. This is a 15th century jettied house. Note the small medieval windows close under the eaves. These *wind holes* were originally unglazed and covered with wooden shutters. The steepness of the roof shows that it was originally thatched. It was probably tiled in the 18th or 19th century.

22. The Old Rectory. This house dates from 1747 but a document of 1608 listing church property and privileges shows that an earlier medieval house existed on the site. Building work in 2004 showed that the house consists of two buildings, one built in front of the other.

23. The (real) tithe barn. The 1608 document makes it clear that the rector's barn was in the field opposite the rectory where buildings are shown in 1773. It was apparently burnt down in the 1800s and is not shown in 1845. The humps in the field are all that remain.

24. The Malthouse was originally Lower Farm which worked the land to the east of the village. **Yattendon Common** lay along the parish boundary in this direction.

25. St Martin's was built in 1909 to house the village nurse and as a memorial to Amyas Waterhouse, a son of Alfred and Elizabeth who died in 1890 aged 22.

26. The school. The 1877 map shows a school near the modern rectory. The Waterhouses built and paid for the modern school and the teacher's house in 1886. Designed for 110 pupils it usually had about 80. During WW2 it coped with 88 London evacuee children. The modern school, with the several extensions, holds 75 pupils.

27. Yattendon Park. John Norris created a deer park here in the mid 15th century and traces of the boundary survive. It sits on a hill of London Clay and clay for brick making was quarried in it in the 18th century. The kilns were just to the south of Oaken Copse.

28. The wheelwrights shop. These garages are built on the site of the Wyatt's wheelwright shop where they made carts and wagons for the local farmers. When it closed all the tools and templates were thrown into the sawpits and covered over.

29. The Estate Office. This is built on the site of the Yattendon Kiln. The kiln was in operation in the 18th century and clay digging has visibly lowered the surrounding land. The pits on the north side of the road are also clay pits. The first phase of this elegant building was built as a music room for Miss Florence Waterhouse. She was a gifted amateur musician and formed and ran the Yattendon Band. She taught many young local people to play an instrument.



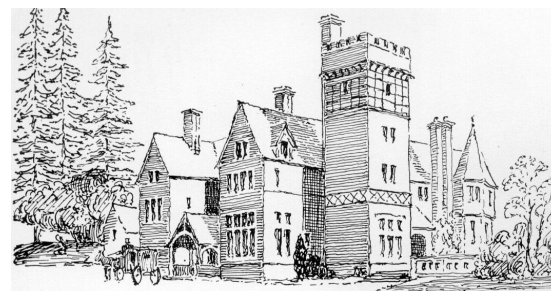
Yattendon Square & Fete in 1907



Yattendon Church before the Waterhouse Restoration



Yattendon School as newly built in 1886



The Waterhouse Yattendon Court
The windmill base was found when the tower was built.



The Chalk Mines Acknowledgements to
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