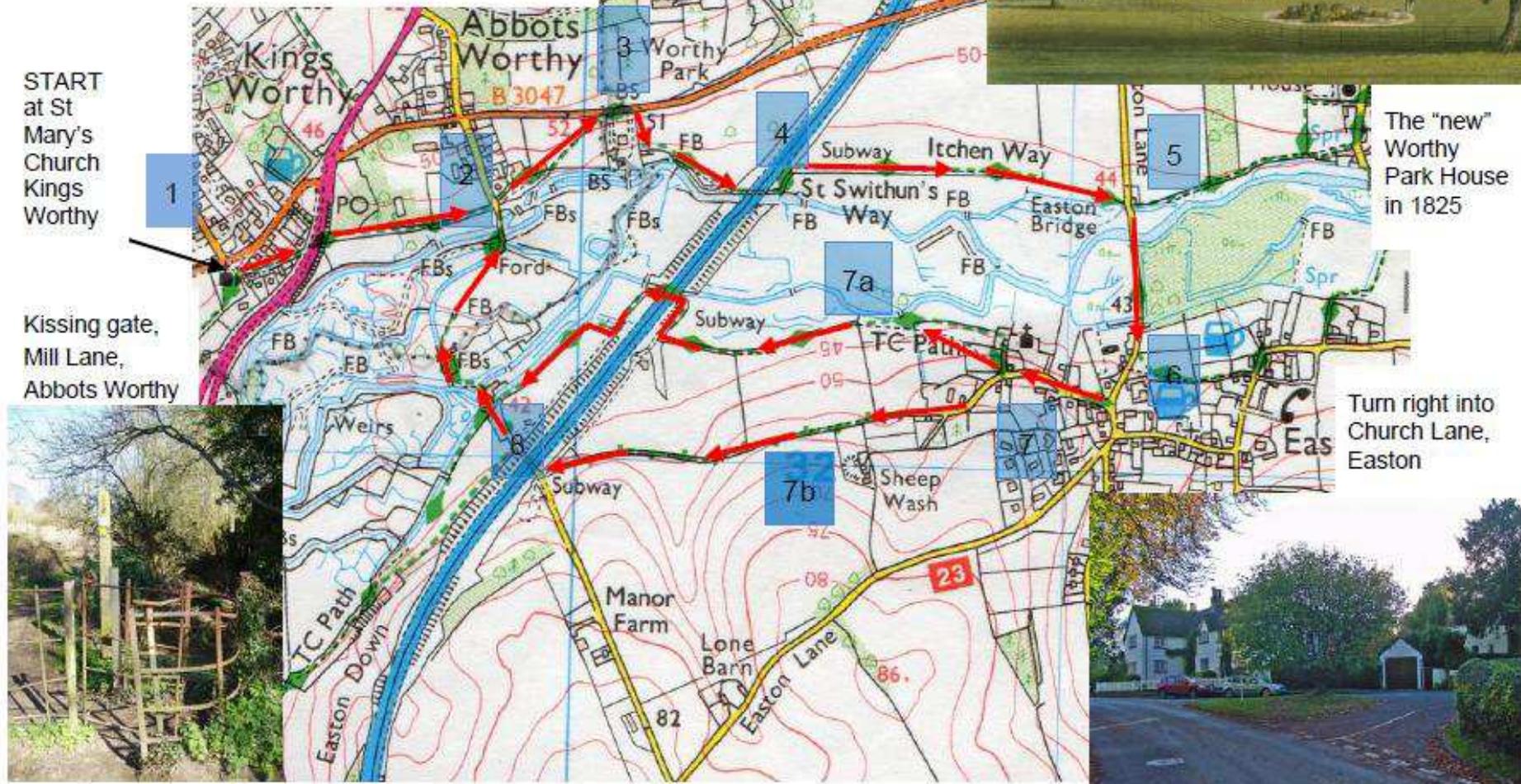


## Worthy Walk 7: Easton Circuit

Our walk this time takes us along the Itchen valley as far as Easton on one side of the river and back on the other, a distance of approx. 3 miles (5kms). The going can be a bit muddy in places particularly after prolonged rain.



## Worthy Walk 7 : Easton circuit

1. We start at St. Mary's Church and head off through St. Mary's Close, stopping at the A33. Be very careful crossing the dual carriageway and once across go down the slope and follow the obvious path to Mill Lane. *The newly erected fence encloses the garden of Abbots Worthy House, once the home of Lord Eversley who was a tireless campaigner for public access and footpaths – our recreation ground is named after him.*

2. Cross over the tarmac at the bottom of Mill Lane and go through the metal kissing gate opposite – a gate that's seen life! Follow the path diagonally uphill towards the Alresford road. *The derelict buildings were once a small farm.*

3. On reaching the road walk alongside it for a short distance beside a very nicely made modern flint wall before turning right into the field along a path which leads towards the river. *From this path you get a good view of Worthy Park House, now home of Prince's Mead School.*

*This is the second house to be built on the site the - the original 1772 building was demolished and a new one built to a design by Robert Smirke in 1820. The Ogle family, who had strong naval connections, lived there throughout this period and were followed by a succession of families who feature prominently in village life, the Williams, Fryers and Butcharts. Between the 1950's and 1986 Currys Ltd used the house before it became serviced office suites and now the school.*

*It was the son of Captain Williams who started hydraulic ram production at the Vulcan Iron Works in the village (have a look at the one on Church Green). There is evidence of the use of hydraulic rams in several places between Easton and Kings Worthy – they were used to pump water to the "big houses" and estates along the valley.*

4. It's all a bit sordid as you go under the M3 and the sooner you emerge on the other side the better. *There was an understandable outcry when the road was planned and built, quite apart from the traffic noise it was felt that the road would effectively cut the valley in two from a wildlife point of view. The villagers of Easton were outraged and funds were raised to campaign against the plans. Amongst the fund raising schemes was the sale of a beautifully illustrated book "Janet Marsh's Nature Diary". Long since out of print but still to be found in second hand bookshops and on line it chronicles a years meticulous observation of plants and wildlife beside the river. Carry on along the well marked path, with views of St. Mary's church (yes, another!) on its river terrace to your right.*

5. When you get to the road turn right and follow it into the village.

6. At the triangle in the road you have decisions to make – turn right along Church Lane for straight home or you may be tempted to try the newly refurbished Cricketers Arms on the left or the Chestnut Horse at the other end of the village.

Whatever you decide you will need eventually to turn right and walk along by the church which is worth a closer look – *you will see from the sea shell badge that we are on the Pilgrims Way, the ancient route from Southampton to Canterbury.*

7. Past the Church on the right is the old school, recalling a time when villages like Easton were self contained with their own shops and services. Here you have a choice.

7a. You can walk diagonally downhill across the playing field and follow the obvious path along the edge of the flood plain towards and under the M3. When you emerge on the far side it is into a more wooded area through which you walk until you reach the road by the Fulling Mill. This choice can be rather dismal on a damp day.

7b. Alternatively you could continue on the tarmac road which then peters out into a well defined track leading to another M3 subway where you turn right on the road to the Fulling Mill. Taking this option should reward you with fine views to the North across the valley.

*We've already spoken about the Fulling Mill on an earlier walk - the Editors may have a spare copy if you're very interested!*

8. Walk through the garden of the Fulling Mill and back to Mill Lane Abbots Worthy via the aptly named Water Lane.

You may want to loiter on the bridge by Abbots Worthy Mill and then turn left for St. Mary's Church and home.

**With thanks to Derek Brockway and members of the Worthys' Local History Group**