Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Pyrford and the River Wey Navigation

Distance: 9 km=5½ miles or 10 km=6 miles — easy walking

Region: Surrey — Date written: 9-feb-2020

Author: Botafuego — Last update: 5-aug-2025

Refreshments: *The Anchor*

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

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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River meadow, heath, streams, woodland, canalside pub, towpath walk

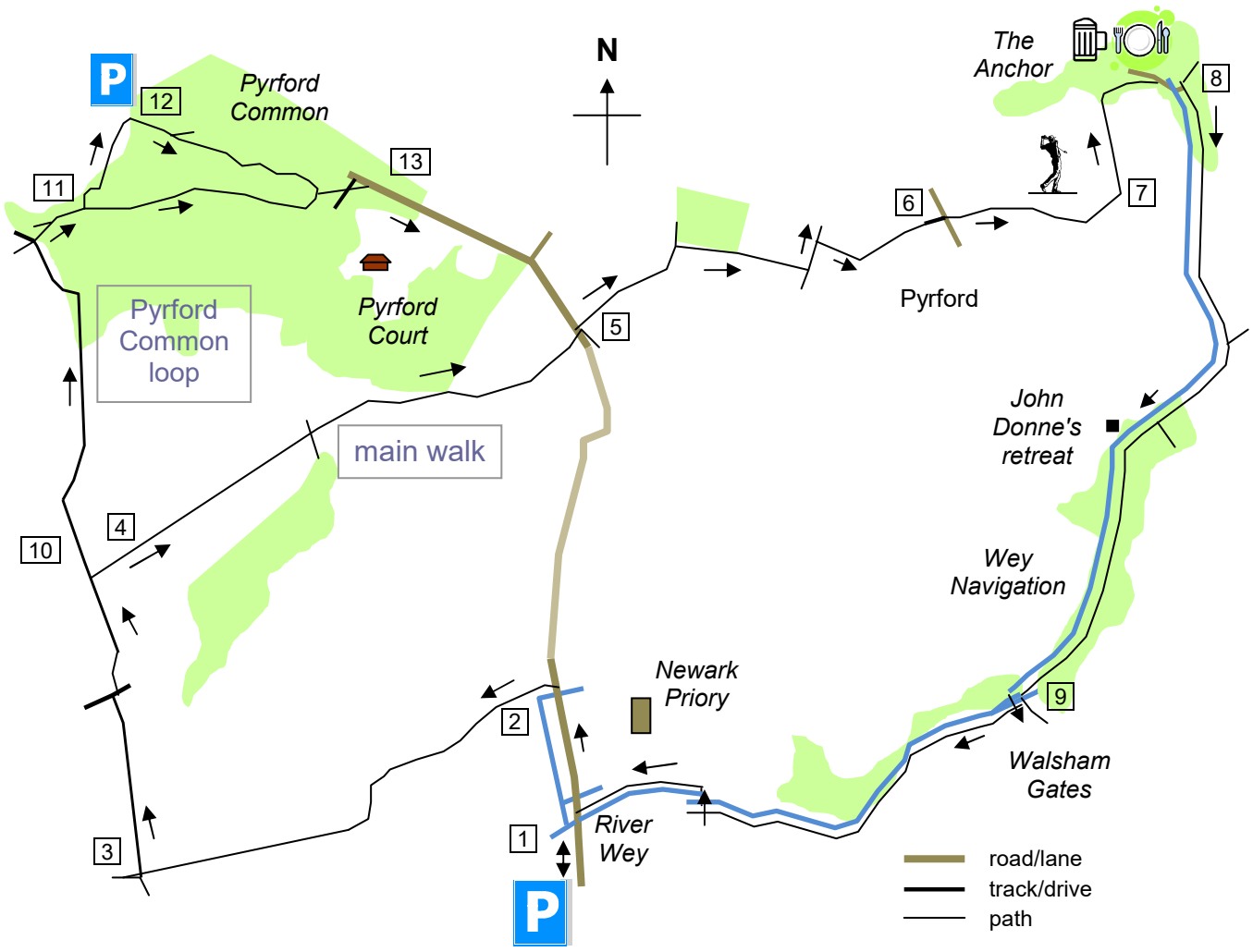
In Brief

Here is a popular canalside walk, but unusually you approach it across the meadows and pastures close to Pyrford village. The reedy marsh near the Wey road bridge at the start is another of the highlights of this walk: like a peaceful undeclared nature reserve, with a wealth of birds and other secretive plants and wildlife. Even in the wet winter of 2019/20 the path across the marsh at the beginning was surprisingly firm (but see below), with just a few gurgling mossy channels which were almost a pleasure to hop over. The rest of the walk is entirely on well-worn wide paths, where the only other wildlife you are likely to see are carrying bags of clubs. The canal towpath is legendary and a favourite Surrey saunter where you can watch the colourful canal boats go by. In August and September many people bring a container for the blackberries.

There are no nettles on this walk, but in summer there is some thick undergrowth, enough to rule out wearing shorts, except possibly in winter. The path across the water meadows in Section 2 is an adventure and requires some patient footwork. Boots are recommended. But after a prolonged rainy spell (as the winter of 2020-21) the water gets deep, requiring wellies and a pole or two for steadying. Your dog will be welcome, at least on the main walk where there is almost no road walking. There is only one unavoidable (badly broken) stile – the one at the start.

The walk begins at the car park off **Newark Lane** (the B367), just south of the bridge over the River Wey, outside **Ripley**, Surrey, postcode **GU23 6DP**, www.w3w.co/plans.riding.paths. In 2020 some walkers found the car park full and started in Ripley by combining this walk with the *Ripley and the River Wey* walk. Another good starting place is the car park at **Pyrford Common** Recreation Ground, www.w3w.co/window.pretty.form, postcode **GU22 8LE** (start at section 12). For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



1 Starting at the Newark Road car park, take the narrow path out of the car park to the river bridge. Cross the bridge over the canal, the river and the second arm of the river with its gushing weir, and continue along the main road using the footway on the right. *The ruins of Newark Priory are visible in the field on your right.* Running alongside the road on your left is the Abbey Stream, another arm of the river. After about 250m, the stream turns right crossing the road under a brick bridge. Immediately after the bridge, turn **left** by a footpath sign on a narrow path. Go over a stile next to the fingerpost.

2 [Jan 2021: in extremely wet conditions, one walker avoided the marshes and stayed on the road, which has a footway, with the benefit of a visit to the little St Nicholas church.] Follow the wide grassy path with a new barbed wire fencing on your right. Soon you cross over a wide boardwalk and go through a grove of saplings. Continue ahead, passing under power lines. *These open water meadows of the River Wey are rare in Surrey and you may see or hear the birds and other fauna that make this their habitat.* Your path winds left and right over a more marshy area and eventually reaches a a wide gate. Your path continues ahead over a little brick bridge. [May 2023: after prolonged rain this area may be swampy and you need to probe for shallower parts before stepping out.] You are soon on a drier course between thorn

bushes. After a redundant stile, your path runs beside a high metal fence on the right-hand side.

3 About 500m from the little brick bridge, you reach a junction with a tarmac drive on a bend coming from the timbered *Park Farm House* on your left. Before you reach the drive, turn **right** on a tarmac path between fences.

A walker suggests a historical diversion here. Instead of turning right, turn **left** and walk straight past the farm. From here it's just a very short walk to the ruins of **Woking Palace**. There's not much left of what would have been a substantial building, but a couple of bits remain, as well as some lovely walks around the fishpond. There are a couple of interpretation boards on the site giving information about the place and the Friends of Woking Palace would normally hold open days there a few times a year. Archeological digs are still uncovering new material. You need to retrace your steps after this diversion.

On either side you can see the ponds and tanks of the Ripley Water Treatment works. The prospect on the right changes to a tree plantation as you come through a wooden swing-gate and over a wide bridge across the Hoe Stream. Your path meets a track and zigzags right and left past Roundbridge farmhouse where a new development is under way. You are now walking along a poplar avenue through Hoebridge Golf Course. After the poplars, you meet a crossing path by a 4-way fingerpost .

Decision point. If you began the walk at Pyrford Common, or would like to extend the walk a little through those woods, skip forward in this text and do the **Pyrford Common Loop**.

4 Turn **right** at the 4-way crossing and follow a narrower path between lines of oaks, followed by silver birches. On your left is Fox Hill and, further ahead to your right is a hill called The Hanger, bringing to mind that chain of hills in Hampshire. After you pass some private gates, your path runs beside woodland and soon you come under a wooden bridge carrying a driveway which at one time was a grand entrance to Pyrford Court. Your path rises, giving you good views ahead to your right. Finally you come out between posts to the main Church Hill road. Turn **left** on the road and immediately **right** into a small car park with two footpaths ahead.

The Pyrford Common Loop re-joins the walk at this point.

5 Avoid the footpath on the right and take the footpath (Sandy Lane) straight ahead. You have great views of the Surrey Hills. This path runs along an avenue of newly-planted trees with fields on each side. When you reach a corner of some woodland, turn **right** at a yellow arrow, past a redundant stile. (The stile serves as a convenient seat.) After the wood, the path runs between pastures and fields. At the end, go through a small wooden gate and turn **left** on a path across a pasture, heading for a pylon. Before you reach the pylon, turn **right** on a narrow path, heading for a new metal gate. The path curves left round a metal fence, going past a redundant metal gate. *The garden of Pyrford Green House is beautifully landscaped with a swing seat, a pergola and evergreen shrubs.* A modern kissing-gate and a driveway lead out to the Pyrford Road.

6 Cross the road, a fraction right, going through a wooden gate and along the left-hand side of a pleasing green meadow. You come through a small wooden gate and over a wooden bridge onto the links of the Pyrford Golf Club. *The club course is famous for its many small lakes and resident swans and coots (and lost balls!).* Go straight ahead across a short stretch of grass and continue onwards on a golfer's sandy path. [May 2025: walkers went astray

here, maybe due to missing marker posts: please find the path without relying on markers; feedback welcome.] Where the path ends, keep straight on over grass to meet a marker post. Go straight over, crossing a wide fairway to a marker post which is just visible on a grass bank.

7 Now turn abruptly **left**, keeping to the left of a hump and joining a wide golfer's path. *On your right is a sand shelf which fills with water in winter and becomes another "lake" and a fearful obstacle for pitchers aiming for the distant hole.* Turn **right** at the 6th tee and follow the path into shrubs. You come out to a lane by a picturesque corner of the Wey Canal. Cross the bridge, using the pedestrian section, to reach the *Anchor* pub on your left.

The Anchor pub and restaurant (Hall and Woodhouse) 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. They boast "Real Chefs, Real Food" and they usually deliver. Starters are interesting and there are lighter dishes, kitchen specials and some "heritage cooking".

As an extra rewarding excursion, you can easily reach the Norman church at Wisley village which is only 700m from here (but closed during the 2020 situation). You will find directions in the neighbouring walk "Pyrford Lock: The *Anchor*".

8 After possible refreshment, turn **right** on the canal path, passing Pyrford Lock. You now have a lovely 1 mile=1.7 km stroll along the Wey Canal with a view of more locks, bridges and colourful canal boats. In 700m you pass a footpath on your left and a metal footbridge where you can stand to watch the canal boats gliding beneath. In a further 150m, you pass on your left the path leading to the broken Pigeon House footbridge (but see the neighbouring "Pyrford Lock" walk). In another 300m, on the other side of the canal is a historic little house with a plaque.

The poet John Donne (1572-1631) ("no man is an island") had fallen in love with 17-year-old Ann, daughter of Sir George More of Loseley Park near Guildford (also on a walk in this series). They eloped but Donne was thrown into London's Fleet Prison. On his release, he and Ann were given shelter by Sir Francis Wolley here at this romantic spot. The couple 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. His memorial survived the great fire of 1666 and now stands in the new St Paul's.

9 In 600m, the towpath reaches Walsham Gates. Keep straight on, ignoring the footbridge on your right and turn **left** over the weir with a dramatic scene of water running through the sluice. This is where the Wey Canal separates from the River Wey, the lower portion below the weir. Turn **right** to continue along the towpath. After a small metal gate, the path widens to a grassy river meadow until it leads you through a small metal gate and over a bridge across a creek. The ruins of Newark Priory are now visible (see the walk "Ripley and the River Wey" for more details). At Newark Lock, the path crosses a bridge to the opposite side of the canal. A short stroll leads to Newark Lane. Turn **left** here over the bridge, immediately reaching the car park where the walk began.

Pyrford Common Loop 2 km=1¾ miles

Take this alternative route if you began the walk at Pyrford Common or if you would like to visit the woodland.

10 At the 4-way crossing, keep straight ahead on a wide sandy path uphill. In 200m, at the top, this wide path veers right, in the direction of a yellow arrow. In only 100m, you reach a junction of golfer's paths. Look for a narrow waymarked path here, straight ahead, leading into woods. Follow this long straight path, under trees which partially hide the golf links on each side. You come through a metal swing-gate next to a large metal gate. Your path enters The Rough, part of Pyrford Common and bends left and right. You pass a double cottage and reach a driveway next to a 'phone tower. Turn **right** here by a fingerpost, with the tower on your left. You join a path coming from the left by another marker post and quickly reach an open area dominated by a large oak.

Decision point. If you did *not* begin the walk at the Recreation Ground car park, do as follows. Keep to the **right** of the large oak and stay close to a rather tumbledown fence on your right which delimits the estate of Pyrford Court. At the end of the fence, keep **right** with a ditch now on your right. About 500m since that large oak, the main path begins to curve distinctly round to the left, the start of a complete loop which makes part of a circular walk. Just 40m into the curve, take a path on your **right**, heading for a tarmac drive and a redbrick house. Now resume the main walk at section 13.

11 Otherwise, from the large oak, take the **left**most path, keeping close to the meadow on your left. In 80m, at a crossing path, turn **left** into the meadow and head for a kids' playground on your right. A gap leads into the Pyrford Common car park.

12 Beginning this walk at the **Pyrford Common car park**, just before the kids' playground, next to a notice board and map, turn **left** on a wide path into the woods. Keep **left** on the main path and stay on it at all times through Pyrford Common, avoiding all minor paths off. In 250m, where you see a yellow arrow on a marker post, **ignore** the arrow and fork **right** instead. In a further 250m, your path begins to curve distinctly round to the right, the start of a complete loop which makes part of a circular walk. **Leave** the main path here by turning **left** on a path, heading for a tarmac drive and a redbrick house, *Chicks Cottage*.

13 Your path leads to the main road. Keep straight ahead at first beside a fence and keep **right** on the road, using the narrow grassy verge. Shortly, on your right are the gates of the *Bothy*, part of Pyrford Court.

Pyrford Court is relatively modern. The land for the estate was purchased in 1906 by Rupert Guinness, heir to the brewing company, whose father-in-law had coined a new peerage "Lord Iveagh". The central block was started in 1906, designed in Georgian style. Two wings and terraces were added In 1911. The house has nine bedrooms, six reception rooms and a grand ballroom (very small by most standards – see e.g. Knole in Kent).

Continue, soon passing the main drive to Pyrford Court, a boundary stone and a road junction. The footway, which had tapered out, is now tarmac. Soon, on your left is a small parking area. Go **left** into this area, where you see two footpaths ahead.

Your walk now re-joins the main route, starting at section 5.

Getting there

By car: Newark Road is a branch road at Ripley. If arriving on the A3 trunk road, come off at the roundabout for *Ripley*. Go through the village and turn **right** on the B367, as for *Pyrford, Byfleet*. The car park is 1 mile on the left, just before you see the traffic lights for the River Wey road bridge.

You can reach the Pyrford Common Recreation Ground, by continuing a further 1½ miles, going through Pyrford village and ignoring all turn-offs. The entrance to the car park is on your left, immediately before the road bends right to meet a T-junction with the Old Woking Road.

By train and bus: bus 437 from Woking to Pyrford stops at several points along the route. Check the timetables.

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