

## WANTAGE AREA WALKS & CYCLE ROUTES



### Route 4 - Victorian Wantage Part 2

The ancient market town of Wantage sits on the Letcombe Brook, at the foot of the Berkshire Downs. The town is characterised by 16th century timber framed houses refaced in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in red brick. In 1847 Wantage became an educational and spiritual centre for the Oxford Movement, and the vicar of the parish church, Rev William Butler, was responsible for several fine buildings in the town centre.

This walk is in two parts, Route 3 and Route 4; together they total about four miles and form a figure of eight, with the Museum and Market Place at the centre. This route explores 19th century Wantage south of the market place. It shows how the Rev William Butler and the Oxford Movement changed the town in the Victorian period.

#### SECOND CIRCULAR WALK about 2 miles - all on the flat.

**1** Leave Museum, turn left into Church Street, follow the road past the parish church and turn left into Priory Road, formerly Tanner Street. This was once the western side of the ancient Wantage village green. It is dominated by 16th century timber framed tanyard buildings, faced in brickwork during the 18th century. On the left, buildings on the former green are mainly Victorian and Edwardian.

**2** Having passed the continuous rows of brick fronted cottages and houses, we reach a wall on the right, enclosing St Michael's which was set up in 1852 as a school for training girls for domestic service but under the influence of the Rev Butler became training premises in 1855. The chapel apsidal was added in 1888. The buildings were converted into housing recently.

**3** At the corner of Locks Lane turn left, 'dog leg' south, past Victorian terraced cottages with slate chimney pots.

**4** On your left are more recent buildings of the former King Alfred's Grammar School built from 1850 onwards. The limestone portion in



King Alfred's School

domestic Gothic was designed by J. Clacy and the brick buildings by Butterfield in 1872. Now this is the centre site of King Alfred's Community & Sports Academy.



Roof detail

**5** Turn left into Portway past the oldest part of King Alfred's Grammar School with its former chapel 1908 -1922.



Newbury Street Terrace

- 6** Follow Portway east past Orchard House 1840 to 1850, to reach Newbury Street.



Old Newbury Street practice

- 7** Turn right into Newbury Street. A little way along this street you come to Robert Stiles Almshouses, built in Stiles Court. Behind the big entrance door you can see sheep's knuckles embedded into the pathway. These almshouses still provide



Outside Stiles

a home for elderly folk. They are the result of a legacy from the will of Robert Stiles who was born in Wantage in 1625, and made his fortune in the Netherlands. He died in 1680.



Inside Stiles

- 9** Walk as far as Pontin's School Chapel 1898 before returning to the crossroads.

- 10** Turn left into Ormond Road. You can see about 100 metres ahead on the right, on the opposite corner of Chain Hill, an imaginative development of apartments, Alfredston Place, the former Wantage Engineering Works. (Alfredston was Thomas Hardy's name for Wantage – Alfred's Town – in 'Jude the Obscure'.)

fold line - non-printing

- 11** First left takes you into the new St Mary's housing development.



St Mary's Chapel

- 12** Follow the access road and explore behind the modern blocks of buildings to find the rear of the School Chapel and the various Victorian buildings extended by William Butterfield 1874 -75, now incorporated into the housing development.

- 13** Follow the pedestrian road northwards around Butterfield's extension and out through a blue gate back into Newbury Street.

- 14** Across Newbury Street to your left is St Anne's, one of the earliest Georgian houses in the town, in front of you is the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel 1844.

- 15** Remain on the east side of Newbury Street.

- 16** Turn right and walk to the junction with Post Office Lane; on the corner is the former post office 1876. Note the text over the door and the stamp dispenser.

- 17** Follow the lane to a fork, ahead is Eagles Close Almshouses, built in 1867. There is a former water pump in the terrace gardens. Thomas Eagle left the land "...out of respect to the memory of his beloved and affectionate wife, a native of Wantage, as an asylum for decayed housekeepers". The interesting ecclesiastical features reflect the church's involvement with housing. Today the almshouses provide attractive housing for retired people in the town.



Eagles Close Almshouses

- 18** Return to Newbury St, cross to Church St, and back towards the Museum. On the left is the former Church Primary School which was designed by Woodyer and established in 1850. There are some wonderful Pre-Raphaelite paintings on the ceilings, some restored, some never finished. The old screens separating the classrooms are intact as are the rolls of honour.

- 19** Return to the Museum.



Vale & Downland Museum

Continue to explore the Victorian buildings: large houses such as St Gabriel's, now converted to apartments, and part of the former St Mary's School and Brooklands, the large house now used by a firm of solicitors; also terraced villas and cottages, until you reach the former Toll House 1833, the white house just before the Comrades' Club.



Brooklands

- 8** Retrace your steps back to the crossroads and observe Newbury Street northwards where several older buildings were encased to form St Mary's School in 1848 with extensive additions 1874 - 75.

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Further copies of this route and others in the series are available from the Independent Advice Centre, Market Square, Wantage