

Trail	: HAMPTR0026
Activity	: Walk
Type	: Tea Shop
Terrain	: Towpaths and Cycle Tracks
Author	: Jean Patefield
Distance	: 5.6 miles / 9 kms
Ascent	: 377 feet / 115 metres
Location	: SU487488 / RG28 7NN



St Mary the Virgin  
© Alexander P Kapp



Riverside Walk, Whitchurch  
© Chris Talbot



Whitchurch Silk Mill  
© Chris Talbot

### Trail Summary

Leafy lanes and quiet byways through the landscape made famous by the classic story 'Watership Down' mean this walk is a delight all year round. The route leads gently over a hill with some fine views of rolling Hampshire countryside to the ancient town of Whitchurch. On an island in the river Test is a beautifully restored and working silk mill with a teasshop. Fully refreshed, your return is along the valley of Britain's purest trout stream with some more views to enjoy.

### Trail Details

*Henri Portal was a Huguenot who fled France as a boy to escape persecution. The tradition is that he and his brother hid in an oven when the soldiers came to seize the family's chateau and they were then smuggled on board ship by servants. He established a paper mill at nearby Laverstoke, which won the contract to produce watermarked paper for the Bank of England. The hamlet of Freefolk housed the workers while the Portal family lived at Laverstoke Park, skirted by this route.*

1. Continue up the lane leading to the church. In front of a house next to the church bear right up three steps and through a gate onto a surfaced path. When the surface ends, continue ahead across a field to a lane.
2. Turn right and walk along the lane, ignoring all turnings on the right. When the surface soon ends, continue ahead along the track, again ignoring all turnings on the right.

3. At a T junction with another track turn left then bear left after 10 yards. Continue on this track across a lane to a second lane.
4. Turn left, passing a lane on the left after 40 yards and continuing.
5. Some 125 yards after the drive to Wooldings Farm, cross a stile on the left and walk along the left-hand side of a field. Cross a stile on the left and walk round the edge of a field, with the boundary on your left, to a farm track.
6. Turn left. Immediately after passing under the railway leave the track and cross a stile on the right. Head diagonally across a field to a stile in the far left corner to emerge at a turning circle at the end of a road.
7. Bear left along a track and continue ahead as it becomes a road. Turn left at a T junction into Lynch Hill Road. Immediately opposite number 30 take a fenced path on the right and follow this downhill into a cul-de-sac of modern houses. Bear right across the road to continue on the path downhill. At a T junction with a cross path on top of a cliff, turn right and follow the path down into Whitchurch, bearing left at a fork. Turn right along the road into the town centre. At a small roundabout turn left, following the signs to Winchester and the silk mill, on the right.

*Winchester is an ancient town. There was a Saxon community here with a church, possibly even a minister, on the site of the present church. One of the treasures of All Hallows is the 9th-century tomb of a woman called Frithburga who was possibly a nun at Wherwell. The community grew up at an important crossing point on the river Test and in the days of horse drawn coaches bristled with inns.*

*At the time the Domesday Book was written, Whitchurch had four mills. One mill may have been on Frog Island where the silk mill still stands. This mill was built in 1815 as a brush factory but by the 1830s had switched to silk making which continues today. This fine industrial building has been restored by the Hampshire Buildings Preservation Trust, though the looms are now powered by electricity.*

8. After visiting the mill, continue along the road and immediately after crossing the river take a walled path on the left, opposite the entrance to the car park. Follow this through to a road. Turn left. When the road bends right, continue ahead on a surfaced path that soon comes to the bank of the river Test.
9. Just before a footbridge over the river, turn right on a path along the river bank. Follow the clear path with a field on the right and then go over a stile into a small wood.
10. On emerging from the wood take a left fork to a further stile. Over this stile bear right across a field and then walk along the right-hand edge of this and the next field, climbing slightly for further wide views. St Mary the Virgin, the starting point, comes into sight.



## Freefolk and Whitchurch

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11. At a T junction with a track turn left and walk along this, continuing when it is surfaced after passing St Nicholas' church. Cross the main road, back to the start.

*Watch out for St Nicholas' church to the right of the track. Dating from the 15th century, it is maintained by the Churches Conservation Trust, which cares for fine churches now surplus to requirements.*

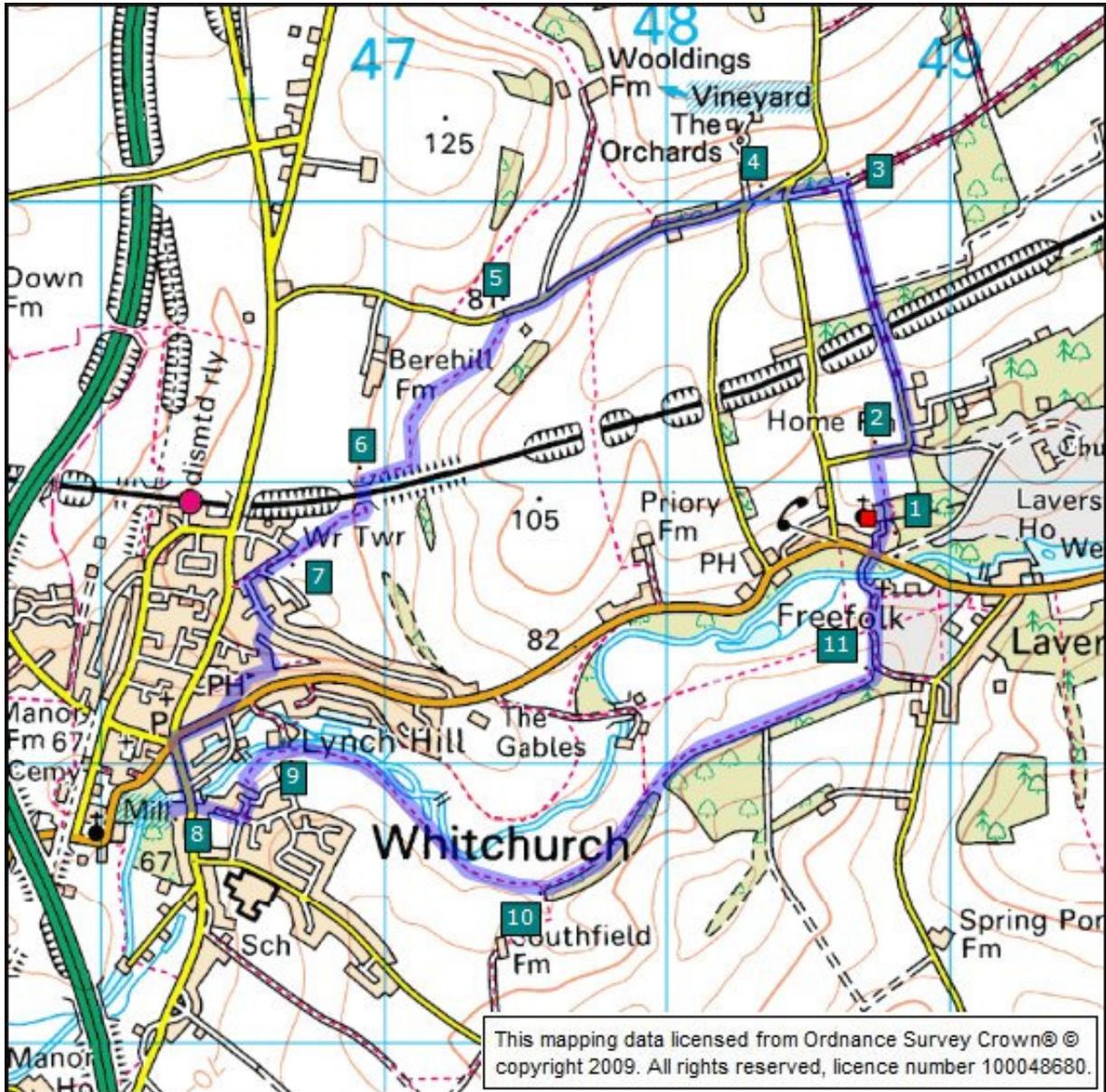
### Whitchurch Silk Mill Tearooms

Whitchurch Silk Mill Tearooms, Winchester Street, are on the first floor of the old building and overlook the gardens and river. The teashop is decorated with examples of how the silk from this historic mill has been used and papers are provided to read over tea. Open throughout the year every day except Monday (open on bank holidays), it serves delicious cakes and for lunch sandwiches or baguettes, filled baked potatoes and soup are offered.

Please note that the enterprise is a charity and charges to look round the mill, an important part of its income. You are welcome to visit the teashop without paying the entrance charge but if you want to look round, please support their work by paying the fee.



## Trail Map





## Trail Location



### Location Details

The starting point for this trail is St Mary the Virgin church at Freefolk. This is not the church signed from the B3400 but is immediately behind an exceptionally attractive row of thatched houses on the main road. There are several spots where a car can be left without causing inconvenience to others. Freefolk is on the B3400 Basingstoke to Whitchurch road. Turn down a small lane, signed as a footpath, opposite the sign to St Nicholas' church. For an alternative starting point, if you wish to visit the teashop at the beginning or end of your walk, start in Whitchurch where there is ample parking in the car park on Winchester Street next to the mill and teashop. You will then start the walk at point 8.