



Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley Abbey & The Westwood

Trail : HAMPTR0028
Activity : Walk
Type : Pub
Terrain : Towpaths and Cycle Tracks
Author : Anne-Marie Edwards
Distance : 3.7 miles / 6 kms
Ascent : 118 feet / 36 metres
Location : SU456082 / SO31 5DS



The Prince Consort Public House
© The Prince Consort



Royal Victoria Chapel, Netley
© Royal Victoria Country Park



The Ruins of Netley Abbey
© Gillian Moy

Trail Summary

This is an ideal family walk as there is something to please everyone. History comes alive in the romantic ruins of Netley Abbey and in the Royal Victoria Country Park, once the site of a great military hospital now a large landscaped area with a museum recreating life in Victorian times. The route follows the Solent Way as far as the pier where the wounded were ferried ashore then turns inland to explore Westwood Woodland Park. Here you step back in time 800 years and follow paths through pasture woodland little changed since it belonged to the monks of Netley Abbey.

Trail Details

1. Turn left from the front door of the Prince Consort and follow the road as it approaches Southampton Water on the right and the entrance to the Royal Victoria Country Park on the left. Just before the park entrance several streams have been channelled into a series of small lakes providing a haven for ducks and geese. Opposite is part of Netley Hard which dates from the 13th century. In the past it was the scene of great activity, including the famous Netley Regatta.

Follow the road into the park and keep straight ahead beneath the trees fringing the waterside for about 1/2 mile. The hospital was demolished in 1966 but the Royal Chapel with its conspicuous green dome has been preserved. And everywhere there are the beautiful trees and shrubs favoured by Victorian gardeners: Corsican, Scots and Monterey pines, holm oaks, cedars and viburnums.



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2. When you come to the Pier Head leave the Solent Way and turn left to follow a gravel path to the chapel. From the platform in the dome you can enjoy a magnificent view of Southampton Water. Leave the chapel on your right and keep ahead to the narrow-gauge railway. Turn left and walk up to the park tea rooms, a large wooden building formerly the hospital YMCA.
3. With your back to the shore and the tea rooms on your right take the gravel footpath leading ahead between pine trees (with a car park at first close on your left) to a road. Bear right down the road to leave the park through Hound Gate. Note the gas lamp standard!
4. After about 100 yards turn left along a narrow footpath running along the top of a wooded valley then through a housing estate to Netley Station. Turn left, then bear right round the Station pub to St Mary's Road. Walk up to the railway bridge, cross, and take the footpath on the left.
5. Follow the path with the line on your left to Grange Road. Turn left to recross the line in the direction of the red-brick Grange pub.
6. Just before the pub turn right through the entrance to the Westwood Woodland Park. Follow the main track as it curves left over Grange Fields towards the woods. When you reach the trees and the track curves right, keep straight ahead along the narrow path into Bluebell Wood. You cross deep ditches, originally conduits dug by the monks to channel water to their fishponds, to a crossing path.
7. Turn left and follow this path, keeping straight ahead at all divisions through this lovely area known as 'Southampton's Secret Woodland'. Leave the park through an iron gate beside the entrance to Fountain Court.
8. Turn right and go through a gate on your left to stand high on an embankment and enjoy a spectacular view of the ruins of Netley Abbey set in a shallow valley shaded by huge oaks and beeches. Much of the graceful 13th century work remains, particularly the soaring arches and windows of the Abbey church. Bear left and walk down to explore the Abbey, then with the ruins on your right (an isolated building is on your left) cross the grass and go through a gate at the foot of a hill. Turn right then left up steps to a lane leading to Netley church on the left. Turn right to walk down to Victoria Road.
9. Bear left to walk through Netley, aptly described by Pevsner as a 'Victorian period piece', to return to the Prince Consort pub.

Royal Victoria Military Hospital, Netley

Until the 19th century only the ruins of Netley Abbey overlooked the thickly wooded eastern shore of Southampton Water. But reaction to the horrors of the Crimean War led to the building of a great British Army hospital on the waterside. It was named after



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Queen Victoria who laid the foundation stone in 1856. She took a keen personal interest in the hospital and often visited the wards. A village grew up beside its gates and, of course, there had to be a convenient pub!

The Prince Consort

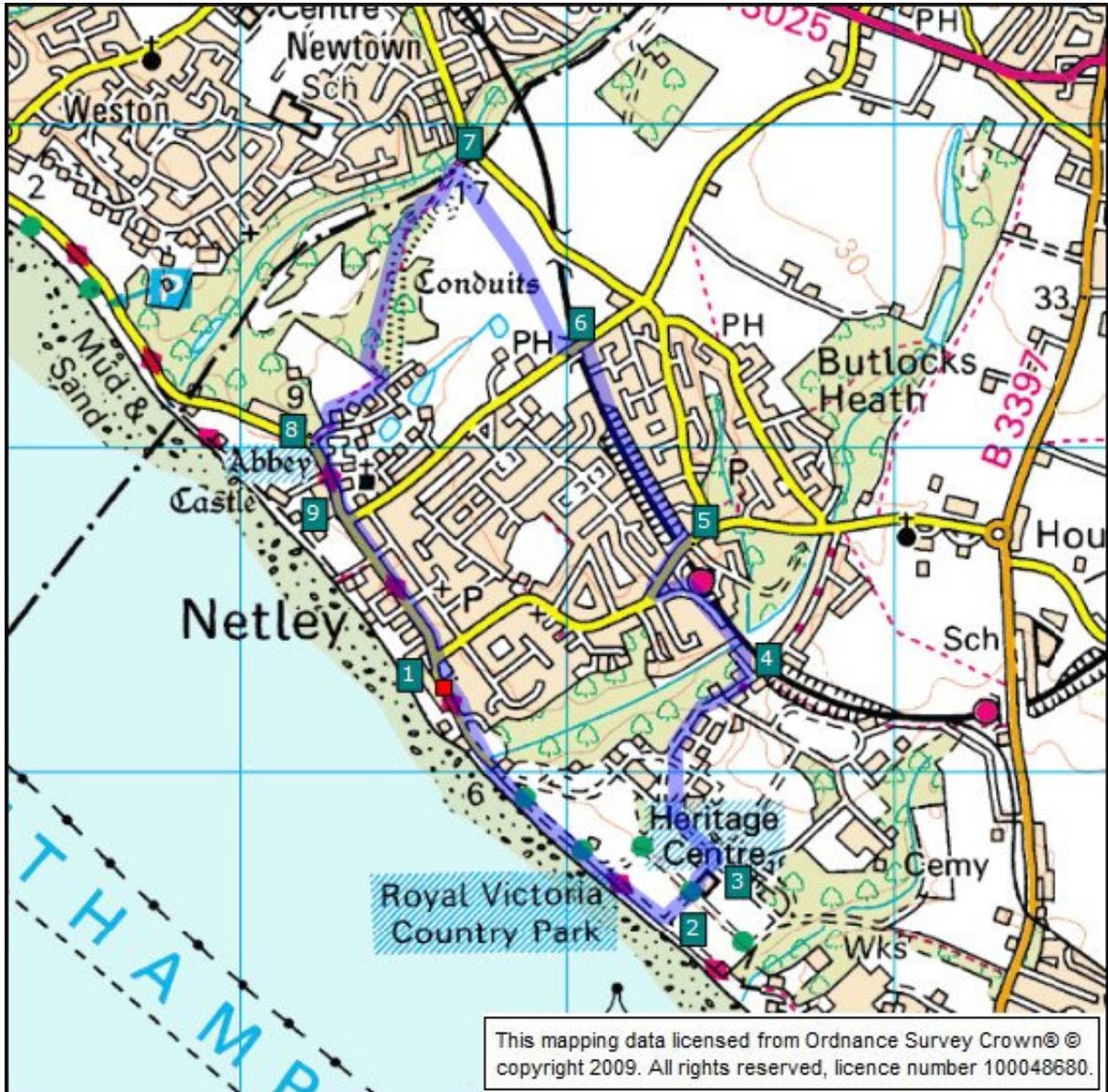
Our starting point is this splendidly Victorian inn, originally called 'The Army and Navy'. The name was changed to 'The Prince Consort' to honour the Queen's husband. Walk inside and enter Victorian England. Everything is in keeping with the time from the deep maroon drapes and carpeting to the elegant fireplace with its floral tiles. Apart from the spacious bar areas there is a large, beautifully appointed restaurant. Everyone receives a warm and friendly welcome and there is plenty of room for families. There are bar and snack menus which include tempting homemade soups, hot baguettes with a variety of interesting fillings (try the smoked salmon and cream cheese!) Cumberland sausage on garlic mash, and a range of 'specials'. Full meals available when we visited included the roast of the day, chicken breast stuffed with bacon and leeks and oven-cooked rainbow trout with citrus butter.

Real ales are Fuller's London Pride, Morland Old Speckled Hen and Gale's HSB. Cider is Strongbow and there is an extensive and popular wine list. The pub is open all week from 11 am to 11 pm; Sundays 12 noon to 10.30 pm. Food is available all day. The Prince Consort offers attractive accommodation in a separate cottage-style building.

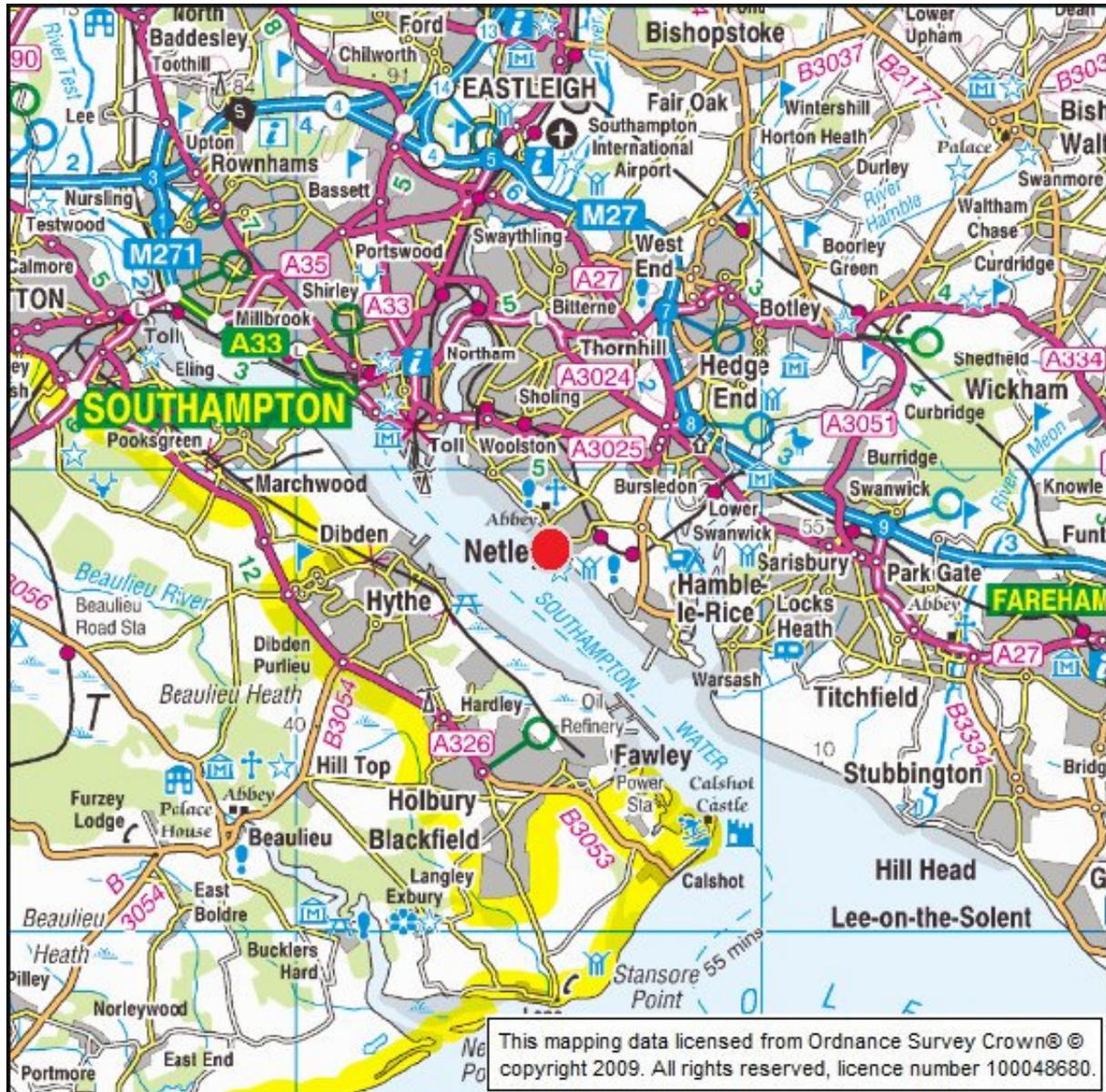


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Trail Map



Trail Location



Location Details

To avoid driving through Southampton take the M27, leave at junction 8 and follow the signs for the Royal Victoria Country Park. Follow the sign close to Netley waterfront and turn left into Victoria Road. The pub is almost immediately on your left. Clients are welcome to leave cars in the pub car park while they walk but have a word with the management first. There is a bus service between Hamble, Butlocks Heath, Netley and Southampton. Netley station has rail services to Southampton and Portsmouth.