

Warfield Parish Council

Heritage Trail



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The Brickworks, Larks Hill and Newell Green

Warfield, like many villages which have ebbed and flowed since the compiling of the Domesday Book, is full of history. This short walk is the first in a series of Heritage Loops designed to give life to some of the 'stories' of both people and buildings within the Parish.

Start & Finish: Larks Hill car park off Harvest Ride.

Until the 1990s Larks Hill was just part of the arable land belonging to **Fairclough Farm**. The 18th century farmhouse and barn still stand in the northern corner of the plot. Head south out of the

car park, past the recycling bins and follow the path bearing gently round to the right. Just on the bend you will find the **Quelm Stone** lying on your right beside the path. This large slab of sandstone is a rare remainder of many such blocks distributed across the region during the ice age. Most have been utilised as building stone and the remnants are easily visible in both Binfield and Warfield churches. This particular stone is steeped in legend if not in history! The full story is set out in the display board by the car park. But in summary, the gods fought over the magical powers of these stones and the Sun God Titan won. He vowed that if the stone was ever moved, then any bird whose tail had the shape of the stone would have extraordinary powers of communication with man. During the Iron Age two farmsteads were established in the immediate vicinity, one by the roundabout on Harvest Ride and the other on the slopes of **Cabbage Hill**. It was then that the **Quelm Stone** was moved and set upright to determine the dates of the summer solstice. Hence the wren is capable of so close a relation with humans and became the symbol of Warfield. It just so happens that a Saxon word for the wren is war. Before the Enclosure Act of 1814, **Quelm Lane** ran past this stone but for reasons unknown it was moved to the present line a few yards nearer the Cut.

Carry on along the path and exit into **Watersplash Lane**. You won't find this lane on any map older than 1995, because until then it was always known as **Lackmans Hill**. Why the change was made no one seems to know even though the decision is barely ten years old. Cross straight over into **Avery Lane**. This lane used to be continuous with **Quelm Lane** and is an old established parish road. The dilapidated Nissan hut, just still visible on the right, near to the end of the lane, was the Warfield Home Guard's ammunition store during the 2nd World War. It is in the garden of **Huntercombe**, which until quite recently was one of two bakeries which served the village. **Avery Lane** brings you to **The Three Legged Cross** and **Bott Bridge**. The Pub has existed for over 500 years and until the late 1940s was known as the **New Inn**. Simonds Brewery in an attempt to grow its post war business felt that a more distinctive name might help. The pub has no cellar as flooding is a constant problem. Do pop in for refreshment, the interior is still very old English village pub. **Bott Bridge** is often referred to as **Battle Bridge** probably on the basis that as the village is called Warfield there must have been a battle somewhere! The more likely explanation is that the road was an extension of **Bottle Lane**. The first brick bridge was built in 1802 at a cost £163. At the time this was a large sum which had to be found from the Parish Purse. The original brick bridge was replaced in the 1930s.

Standing in the car park and looking half left you can see the impressive gates to **Warfield Hall**. It is difficult to get any view of the house itself as access is impossible from any direction. Warfield Hall has been the home of two very memorable Warfield residents. It was built in the 1840s as a prestigious early Victorian country house but was badly damaged in a fire and rebuilt on a larger scale in the 1870s by **William King**. In 1890 his eldest daughter Georgina married **Field Marshall Sir Charles Brownlow KCB**, a successful Indian Army soldier who was ADC to Queen Victoria from 1861 to 1881. In retirement they made their home in Warfield and he was a major benefactor to the village, funding repairs to the church and building The Brownlow Memorial Hall. **Sir Tommy Sopwith** bought the Hall in 1939 and lived there throughout the War. He was an inspired aircraft designer, partly or wholly responsible for such planes as the Sopwith Camel, the Hurricane, the Lancaster and even the early thoughts on the Harrier Jump Jet. He was also an enthusiastic sailor and challenged for the Admirals Cup in both the Endeavour and Endeavour 11. A spar from one of the two yachts supposedly still lies in the sheds of **Park Farm**, across the road in **West End Lane**.

On leaving the Pub turn right along the pavement to **Warfield Garage** with its heavy rescue vehicles. All through the 18th Century and on until 1960 this was the site for '**Thomas Bowyer Wheelwright**'. The business was famed throughout the area for the quality of the carts and carriages they produced. In 1755 it cost 14 shillings and 6 pence 'for ringing a pare cart wheels and 3 spokes'. The pretty but ruined house just before the garage was the home of **Miss Bowyer** until the 1960s. There have been Bowyers in Warfield since records began. Further on you will pass the **Old Police House** which still has a one man cell. It's strange to realise that within easy memory even villages as small as Warfield had a resident police presence. Next comes the old **milestone**. The modern one is clear for all to read but the original lurks by the telegraph pole. It dates from 1770 and informs the battered traveller that the comforts of Hyde Park Corner and Reading are still 28 and 12 miles on. A reminder that the **Forest Road** was a main route from London to the West. Just past the milestone you get a glimpse of the old **Newell Green Farm**, down the driveway to the right. **The Yorkshire Rose** pub/restaurant has long been a place of refreshment and during the 1930s was known as **The Rose Hill Tea Rooms** and provided a popular stopping point for weekend cyclists in need of a good traditional English 'tea'.

The Plough & Harrow dates from the late 18th Century and commands a central position in the village. Opposite is the **Memorial Ground** (see loop 2), but turn right towards Bracknell and on your right is **The Brownlow Memorial Hall**. Entirely funded by Sir Charles Brownlow it was opened in 1916. By the standards of the time it was a magnificent Village Hall. It had a full sized billiard table, kitchen, library and a wonderful collection of stuffed birds. It was leased by the Parish Council in 1999. They funded its modernisation to bring into compliance with current legislation.

Now turn right into **Watersplash Lane**. On your left is the old farmhouse and converted barns of Fairclough Farm, carry on down the lane and take the first gate way into Larks Hill. On your right is the Community Orchard, planted in 1995 with a mixed variety of apples, pears and plums many of which were common in the gardens of farms and cottages throughout the village in times past. Larks Hill is grazed by cattle and managed by the Borough to provide an appropriate habitat for a wide variety of species but particularly for the Sky Lark.