

THE WHERRYMAN'S WAY

A Guide to Norfolk's Long Distance Footpath including 12 additional circular walks en-route

Steve Silk

For centuries the distinctive black sail of the wherry was a common sight along the River Yare. These magnificent craft plied their trade from Norwich to Great Yarmouth, transporting everything from coal and timber to market produce, ice and thatching reed. While the wherry survives today only in a handful of restored vessels the river remains, as do the staithes, the dykes and many of the wayside pubs once frequented by the wherryman. Once you start looking, their ghosts are everywhere.

In 2005, the 35-mile long Wherryman's Way was unveiled, opening up the riverside footpaths to a new generation of walkers. In this book the author has taken a step further, not only covering the main route but providing an opportunity for individuals, families and walking groups to explore the heritage of the Wherryman's Way by providing guides to the twelve circular walks which branch off from it.

The book is illuminated with photographs and stories relating to features connected with the route, from abandoned windmills to long-forgotten ferries, and eccentric characters such as Billy Bluelight and the irascible wildfowler known as 'Old Scientific'. This book is a must for anyone who loves what the wherryman themselves called 'The Norwich River'.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Steve Silk is an assistant editor for the BBC, working on its Look East news programme based in Norwich. He lives in Loddon, half way along the Wherryman's Way, with his wife Debbie and their two daughters Abbie and Maya.

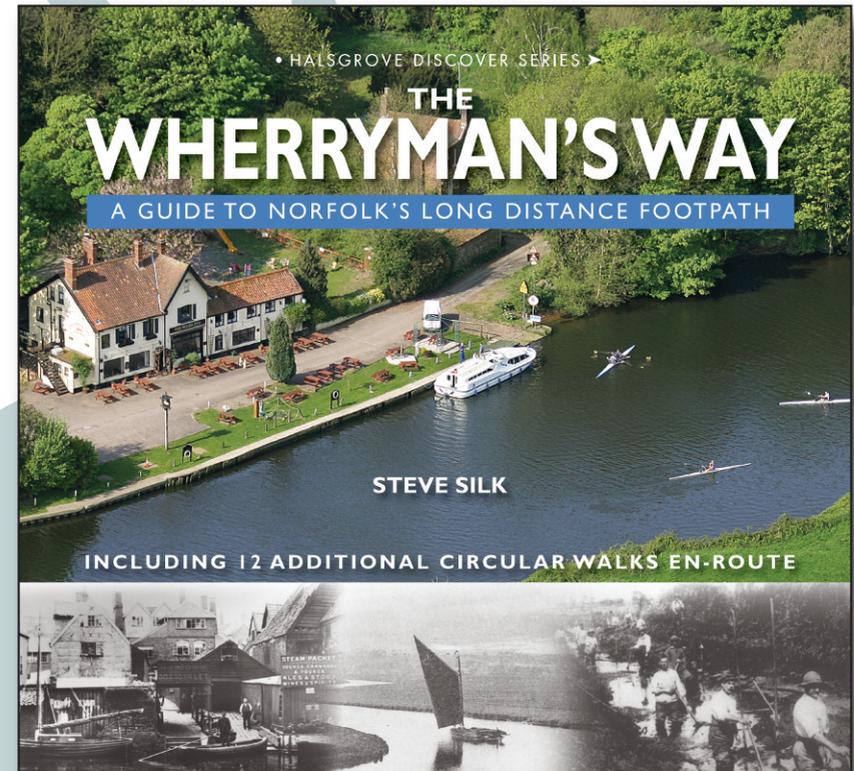
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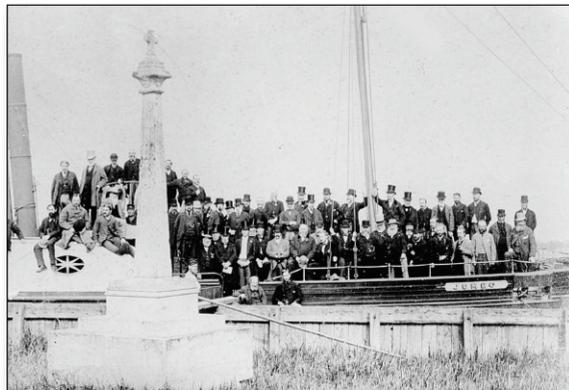


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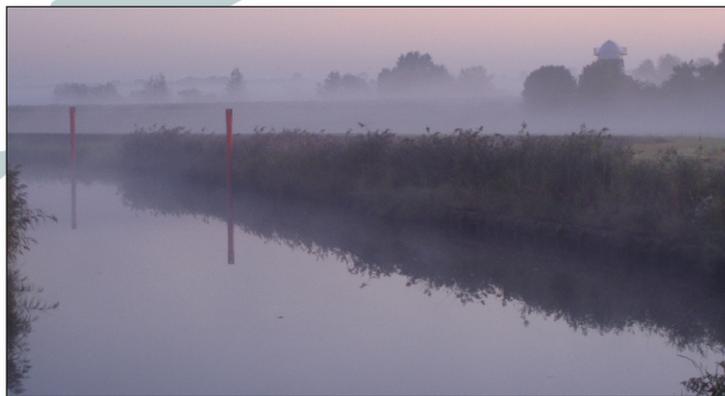
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The walk is well sign-posted.



The great and the good at Hardley Cross in the 1880s.



Right: Dawn on the Chet near Norton Marsh Mill.



An actor dressed as Billy Bluelight goes racing as the Wherryman's Way is officially opened in 2005.

THE WHERRYMAN'S WAY

PEOPLE: Nobby Clarke and Whittingham Ferry

As late as the 1930s there was still a "bar" marked between Whittingham and Thorne on some Norwich maps. In reality it seems as if the rowing boat pointed used the 1860s as the bar.

It was run by Nobby Clarke, remembered now as a "bit of a character" who lived on the Thorne side of the river in Bangeman Lane.

"He was a diminutive sort of chap, about 3ft tall and he ran a boatyard as well as the ferry," remembers crowd control inspector Tony Wilford.

"We used to do the odd diving job and he would recover bodies from the river too. He got paid more if the bodies were found in the city part of the river than in the country part. So he always had to be ready to get the body to where a medical centre."

Chet Fisher was a ferryman at the time. He remembers the words being heard "Ferry Cottage on Whittingham Lane."

"A lot of people would see it if they would a day or two. Thorne I remember having the bell they use on the Whittingham side and up would pop Nobby to come and collect them."

THE WHERRYMAN'S WAY - DIRECTIONS

Continue along Whittingham Lane from Thorne and once left immediately after the causeway side. Then turn right onto the Little Broad. The marker education centre at the head of the Cause Broad now appears on the left. The Van has beyond these banks and before the high ground at Thorne. In between in the distance. Then look out for the ruins of Thorne Newton Hall on the right, followed by the visitor centre and further back. Our path goes close to the broad before crossing by a narrow Whittingham Lane which later takes up to the lane opposite the White House. A path off to the right here leads to a long, narrow, chalk mine. Traffic noise from Norwich's southern bypass gets louder as we continue, passing Lower Cottage on the left and the remains of St Andrew's Church on the right. Go under the bypass and turn left at an unmarked crossroads. The five buildings here are all that remain of the village of Whittingham. Proceed west to the south, across woods on a concrete track and then onto off left onto a sign-posted horsepath, across a field and into Chappell.

THE BEAUCHAMP ARMS

DISTANCE 2 miles

STARTS Car park at Whittingham Country Park

Whittingham

Clarissa Walk 7. The Norwich Frothers in action

The path starts in the old chalk mine

Example of a double-page spread.



The Beauchamp Arms from the Buckenham bank.