



# Widmerwell Priory



time is precious.  
use it fishing



# WELCOME TO WHERWELL PRIORY

*Dear Angler,*

*Welcome to Wherwell Priory! By now I hope you are all organized and are relaxing with a cup of coffee. Here is a summary of the fishing and what to expect; have a lovely day.*

## A BRIEF HISTORY

The original Wherwell Abbey was founded as a nunnery in 986AD on the site of a Saxon royal house. It was founded by Ælfthryth, the widow of King Edgar as an act of penitence for her part in the murder of her first husband in Harewood Forest, and of her step-son Edward the Martyr. At its height it was home to over fifty nuns but the numbers fell to single figures after the Black



**Wherwell Priory**

Death. The spire of the church was the same height as Salisbury cathedral, and the footprint the same as Romsey Abbey, so the building (by all accounts elegant and magnificent) must have dominated the surrounding countryside. During the Dissolution the Abbey was surrendered on 21 November, 1539. The Abbess received the annual pension of £40, the Prioress £6, and twenty-three nuns received pensions from £5 to £2, 13s. 4d.

It was originally intended that the site and estates be granted to John Kingsmill, brother of the abbess, but in fact they were granted to Thomas West, 9th Baron De La Warr, after he successfully petitioned Cromwell for it. Parts of the original abbey still remain (the offices and the kitchen of the main house) with the current house incorporating additional 'extensions' built in every century except the 14<sup>th</sup> and this current century.

More recently the Priory and the fishing was part of the larger Wherwell Estate owned by Lord Camden, who inherited it from his mother. However, in the 1980s the estate was split up with the fishing, land and house that comprises the current Wherwell Priory sold to the present owners the Hon. James and Clare Hogg.

For some years Lord Camden continued to lease the fishing and those with long memories will recall the current Priory beat as beats 7 and 8 and the Park as 11 and 12. The lease ended in 2006 and the Hogg family embarked on a substantial restoration programme to create the fishing as you see it today.

## **RIVER KEEPER**

The river keeper, Terry Snellgrove or his deputy Kyle, are around most days of the week, so he will likely drop by to say hello. If there is anything that needs attention let him know or do call the Fishing Breaks office. You don't need to wait on Terry's arrival to start fishing just begin in your own time.



**Terry Snellgrove**

## **THE RIVER TEST**

The River Test has a total length of 40 miles and it flows through downland from its source near Overton 6 miles to the west of Basingstoke, to the sea at the head of Southampton Water.

The river rises in the village of Ashe, and flows west through the villages of Overton, Laverstoke, and the town of Whitchurch, before joining with the Bourne Rivulet at Testbourne and turning into a more southerly direction. It then flows through the villages of Longparish and Middleton to Wherwell and Chilbolton, where the Rivers Dever and Anton contribute to the flow.



**Leckford eel traps**

From Chilbolton the river flows through the villages of Leckford, Longstock, Stockbridge and Houghton to Mottisfont and Kimbridge, where the River Dun joins the flow. From here the village of Timsbury is passed, then through the grounds of Roke Manor before reaching the town of Romsey. On the western edge of Romsey, Sadler's Mill, an 18th Century watermill, sits astride the River Test.

South of Romsey, the river flows past the country house of Broadlands, past Nursling that was once the site of a Roman bridge, and between Totton and Redbridge. Here the river is joined by the River Blackwater and soon becomes tidal, widening out into a considerable estuary that is lined on its northern bank by the container terminals and quays of the Port of Southampton. Finally the Test estuary meets that of the River Itchen and the two continue to the sea as Southampton Water.

## **THE FISHING**

This is a brief synopsis that I will hope give you a better idea of what to expect, where to go, the best tactics and so on. As you will have gathered there are two beats, Park and Priory which run parallel to each other, about quarter of a mile apart. If you have booked just one of the beats there is no likelihood that you will see the fishermen on the other beat. If you have booked both beats, ying and yang between them as you wish.

Generally each beat is booked by a small group of two to three Rods who will have exclusive use for the day, or two 'solo' Rods who will share the one beat. If you are a solo Rod and are not sure whether anyone else is fishing today, again do feel free to call the Fishing Breaks office.

The etiquette of sharing a beat with a stranger is that the first Rod to arrive walks to the start of the beat to begin fishing; the later arrival then does likewise fishing the water below the first Rod. Should the second Rod catch up with the first Rod it is customary to ask permission to pass on upstream and then recommence fishing some way further upstream. However, if you have both arrived together you may choose to do it differently and that is fine.

## **The Park Beat**

Of the two beats this is the most tricky to navigate around, so you might well like to keep the map we provided in your pocket.

As you stand by the fishing cabin you are about three quarters of the way to the top of the beat, so turn and walk downstream. Soon you will reach a gate, go through a garden beyond and through another gate. Cross the road to follow a narrow concrete path directly opposite. This path has a white cottage on the left and the river on the right.

Make your way downstream through the garden (I know it is a bit disconcerting!) until the path narrows again and you come to hatches and a pool. Keep left to follow the left bank to another gate. Cross another road (these are all private estate roads) and you are now on the lower section of Park beat. Keep going down the same bank, with the open fields and horse paddocks on your left until you finally reach the start of the beat which is about half a mile.



**Lower section of Park beat**

Wherwell is really classic sight fishing and as such there are no particular areas or spots that I would single out for attention. Just move up slowly, keeping your eyes peeled; the fish are generally steady surface feeders and easy to locate. It is worth noting that the houses opposite have no fishing rights along the garden boundaries, so I do like to target the opposite bank undercuts and lies as the fish over there are relatively undisturbed.

As you get back to the garden section, please note that no fishing from the bank is permitted and please only two people in the garden at a time. However, you are very welcome to wade (see hatched area on map) and I can tell you that this is great for small, wild fish. Back on the concrete path, over the road and through the first garden (no fishing please) brings you back to the cabin. Here you have the option of fishing from the island; the pool at the top is fantastic.



**Park garden section (No fishing from bank)**



**Island opposite Park cabin**

Beyond the bridge (a good place to stand to spot fish) is the final section. Here is second island to fish from, with the chance to pick up some nice fish below the hatches.

Above the hatches is the final section to a red brick road bridge at which point you can go no further. I hope you are pleasantly exhausted.



**Second island with hatches beyond**

The Park Beat cabin is fully equipped and there is a WC for fishermen located near the offices (see map for details). The padlock code is C1834.

### **The Priory Beat**



**Priory cabin from river**

The cabin is just slightly over half way up the beat; as you stand in front with the cabin to your back the river is at the end of the mown grass. The river keeper, Terry Snellgrove, has created a seating area by the river which is a good place to relax on a sunny day.

To reach the start of the beat head for the bridge and turn right walking downstream. You will remain on this bank until you reach a pair

of bridge/hatches where you cross over. You are at the start of the beat when you quite simply can't go any further.



**View from start of Park beat**

To a great extent I would repeat my advice for the Park beat on how to fish as this is classic sight fishing and as such there are no particular areas or spots that I would single out for attention. Just move upstream slowly, keeping your eyes peeled; the fish are generally steady surface feeders and easy to locate.



**Bridge/hatches**

is wide and straight, one of the most favoured sections by the regulars.

When you reach the sluice races and white, pantiled disused turbine hut you will be close to where you began. At the bridge return to the cabin (keep your eyes peeled for the large fish that live under the bridge) or stay on the right hand bank as you look upstream. This



**Sluice races and turbine hut**

At the end of the straight there is a high concrete bridge; cross over and fish on up to the end of the beat. This is the wading section of Priory beat.



**Straight section with concrete bridge in distance**

### **Booked both beats?**

If you are going to make Priory cabin your base for the day there are a few options for reaching the Park beat. If you want to get right to the bottom of Park, follow the directions to the end of Priory and then cut across the field. Alternatively, if you want to join it part way up, retrace the route you drove in on and join Park where it flows under the estate road.

## WC

There is a WC in Priory cabin and another WC by the offices for the use of fishermen on the Park beat. The padlock combination for both is C1834.

## Places to Eat

The White Lion, Wherwell (1/2 mile) 01264 860317. Our village local with good food lunch time and evening. Best to call ahead to check opening times and meal hours, especially during the week.

The Abbott's Mitre, Chilbolton (1 mile) – 01264 860348 Good food in a pretty village.

The Mayfly, Chilbolton (2 miles) – 01264 860283. Food and drink on the banks of the River Test.

Stockbridge (3 miles) – plenty of choices with one hotel, five pubs, tea shop and plenty more.



## Local stores

Village shop – in Chilbolton (1 mile). Open 8am-5pm approx. (closed for lunch)

Fishing & clothing shops – Stockbridge has Robjents and Orvis.

Beer, wine and food – again Stockbridge. Annie's Bakery is good for take away sandwiches. The Co-op is a newsagent, general store and off-licence, open 7am-10pm. There is also a chemist.

## Places to visit

Danebury Hill – ancient hill fort. Great walk and view. Free. 5 miles.

The Hawk Conservancy, Weyhill – extensive collection of birds of prey. Admission charge. 5 miles.

Salisbury Cathedral – magnificent spire, oldest working clock in the world, original Magna Carta and a beautiful cathedral close. Voluntary admission charge. 12 miles.

Mottisfont Abbey & rose gardens – National Trust house and gardens with walk beside the River Test. Admission charge. 9 miles.

I will be sending you an email in a few days time. If you have a spare minute to give us some feedback from your visit it would be really appreciated.

I hope that you have a great day with us at Wherwell Priory and that we see you another day.

Tight Lines!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

**Simon Cooper**  
**Fishing Breaks Founder & Managing Director**

**Emergency**

The approximate postal address here is:

**Wherwell Priory, Wherwell, Andover SP11 7JH**

**Doctors surgery**

Stockbridge 01264 810524

Out of Hours 0844 811 3060

**Local hospital**

Andover War Memorial Hospital, Charlton Road, Andover SP10 3LB 01264 358811

NHS Direct 08 45 46 47

**Chemist**

High Street, Stockbridge (opposite Orvis)