

# **Guide to the Village Centre**

## **The Church and the Meadows**

## **CONTENTS - THE CHURCH AND THE MEADOWS**

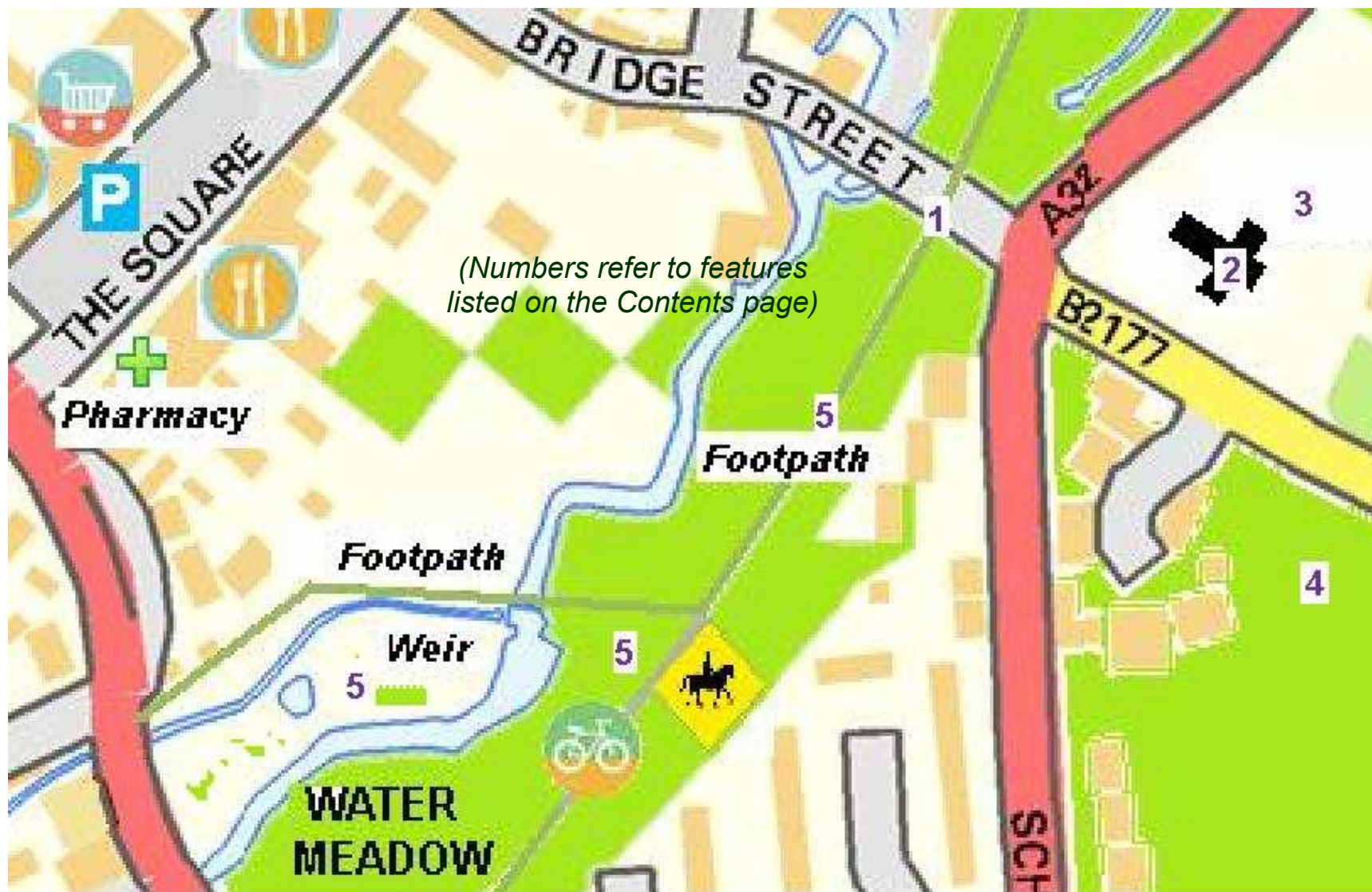
*(Map on next page)*

*CLICK ON A CONTENTS TITLE TO JUMP TO THE FEATURE, THEN CLICK ON THE FEATURE TITLE TO JUMP BACK*

<b><u>Map ref.</u></b>	<b><u>Feature</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
1	<b>The Railway Bridge</b>	4
2	<b>St Nicholas Church</b>	4
3	<b>The Churchyard</b>	6
4	<b>The Glebe</b>	6
5	<b>The Railway Line and Meadows</b>	8

*(For source information references, see separate page on this site)*

## MAP OF THE CHURCH AND MEADOWS



## **THE CHURCH AND THE MEADOWS**

From at least Saxon times until the end of the thirteenth century, the village of Wickham clustered around the church and the manor house on the east side of the River Meon, after which it migrated to the plots surrounding The Square. Most of the evidence for this early village has been lost with the building of the railway line embankment and the construction of a housing estate. However, archaeologists have found the remains of the old manor house in the field south of the church.

*Ref. 17.*



### **THE RAILWAY BRIDGE**

*(Map ref. 1)*

Built 1902 for the Meon Valley Railway “strawberry line”. The Meon Valley railway ran for 22.5 miles between Alton and Fareham, closely following the course of the River Meon. This link line opened in 1903, making it one of the last railways of any size to be built to main-line standards in the United Kingdom. The population of Wickham was about 1200 at the time. (See separate entry regarding the railway line).

*Ref. 7.8.9.15*

### **ST NICHOLAS CHURCH**

*(Map ref. 2)*

The site of a Saxon era church around 670 AD, dedicated to St Wilfred. The current church, built 1120 AD, during the reign of Henry I, has a fine Norman door arch, (see overleaf), with a carved zigzag pattern in its curved arch and on the left capital is carved the arms of King Stephen, 1135-1154, (a Centaur with bow and arrow). This capital may have been re-carved to indicate allegiance to King Steven during the civil war between Steven and Matilda, 1139-1154.

continued...



Later changes were made in the 13th century through the church's association with the Manor of Wickham and the Uvedale family, (the fine monument of William Uvedale, d1569, is inside). In the chancel floor are two 14th century coffin lids with crosses in relief, and two blue marble slabs, dated 1692 and 1696, the latter in memory of Elizabeth Countess of Carlisle, the heiress of the Uvedales.

In 1768 the church was given a new peal of bells, the tower at the time requiring modification because the new bells were found not to fit the old tower!

From 1847 to 1862 the church was given a fifteen year 'makeover'. The Norman doorway was moved ten feet to the west and fitted into the new tower, (this time the bells fitted their allotted space), and the north transept was rebuilt and the exterior walls clad in flints.

**For more information, click [HERE](#)**



## THE CHURCHYARD

(Map ref. 3)

A number of interesting military men rest in our churchyard or are commemorated in our church. **For more information, click [HERE](#)**

Our War Memorial stands in a prominent and honoured position to the south of the church. The Role of Honour of our war dead also appears as a separate article.



*Ref. 5.11.*

## THE GLEBE

(Map ref. 4)

A long lived, (more than 300 years), Iron Age and Romano-British industrial site lay in this field, with the Roman road from Chichester running through the centre of it.

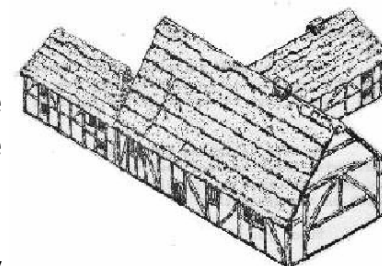
Part of the field has been excavated in the presence of archaeologists during surveying for a bypass and the laying of water pipelines, resulting in an investigation of the early Manor House, which dates from the eleventh century, and Iron Age occupation evidence.

**For more information on the ancient industrial site, click [HERE](#)**



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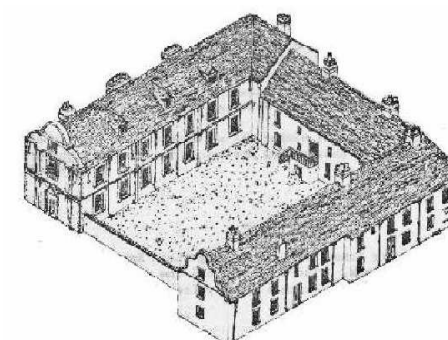
The Domesday book records that Hugh De Port held the manor in 1086. He was responsible for the erection of the earliest manor house; timber framed buildings centred on a large aisled hall. The flint footings and postholes discovered by the archaeologists revealed some of the ground plan of this building, and the hearth in the great hall still survived as close-packed tiles set on edge in the ground.



13th CENTURY MANOR

By the time that the right to hold markets in Wickham was granted by Henry III in 1269, the manor had passed to the de Scures, who refurbished and extended it in the latest style, and who built in stone. The new walls were mainly of flint with limestone dressings around the doors, windows and gables. At this time, a moat was also constructed and the river Meon was dammed to form fishponds.

In 1381, the Uvedale family acquired the manor through marriage. During their tenure of over 300 years, they first effected a series of repairs and alterations to the medieval buildings, installing chimneys to replace the central hearth, and better sanitation in the form of a well-built garderobe, (toilet). Following this, with the rise to popularity of brick as a building medium, the old house was demolished in the mid 17th century to make way for a rectangular gable-ended manor with three bays.



18th CENTURY MANOR

The Garniers were the last owners of the manor. It was sold to them in 1764 by the Rashleighs, who, having bought it when the Uvedale line all but died out, had spent the previous 40 years adding substantial new wings, so that the building eventually formed three sides around an open area. In 1835, though, the Garniers moved to a new house, Rookesbury, and Wickham Manor House was finally dismantled. The Manor was excavated 1975-77 and in 1998. Fourteenth century walls of flint, brick, wattle and daub were found, along with the remains of a medieval hall, latrines and a midden in which were found shards of eleventh and twelfth century pottery. **For more information on the Lords of the Manor, click [HERE](#).**



Ref. 7.15.17.

## THE RAILWAY LINE AND MEADOWS

(Map ref. 5)



Wickham was a station on the Meon Valley Railway which opened in 1903 as part of a through route from London via Alton to Portsmouth, making it one of the last railways of any size to be built to main-line standards in the United Kingdom. The line took five years to build and was expensive to maintain with two long tunnels at Privett and West Meon as well as numerous chalk earthworks.

With little passenger traffic, it was freight that kept the line alive, including milk and strawberry specials during the summer. The line was more heavily used during WW2; a special train containing the War Cabinet conveying them to make final preparations for the D-Day invasion in Normandy at the SHAPE HQ at Southwick House. The line closed to passengers and through goods services on 5th February 1955, though parts of the line, including one from Fareham to Droxford, survived for several years. continued...





There are fine views of the church and the riverside meadows, and the Millennium Project water meadow and the weir, which are close to the site of the ancient Roman ford. The site of the Manorial fish ponds, now vanished, lies to the east of the weir, under the railway line and housing. In the northern corner of the Millennium Project water meadow is possibly the site of the old mill, mentioned in the Domesday Book, with remains of the leet near by. It is close to the old pumping station, which was once the village blacksmith's shop and is now a hairdressers.