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From Thomas Becket's canonization in 1173 until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 his shrine at Canterbury became the most important in the country and it drew pilgrims from far and wide. Winchester, apart from being an ecclesiastical centre in its own right (the shrine of St Swithin), was an important regional focus and an aggregation point for travellers arriving through the seaports on the south coast. Travellers from Winchester to Canterbury naturally used the ancient way, as it was the direct route, and research by local historians has provided much by way of detail—sometimes embellished—of the pilgrims' journeys. The numbers making their way to Canterbury by this route were not recorded, but the estimate by the Kentish historian William Coles Finch that it carried more than more than a 100,000 pilgrims a year is surely an exaggeration. A separate (and more reliably attested) route to Canterbury was by way of Watling Street from London, as followed by the storytellers in *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer.

Indeed, the concept of a single route called the Pilgrim's Way seems to be no older than the Victorian Ordnance Survey map of Surrey, whose surveyor, Edward Renouard James, inserted the route name on the Ordnance map gave an official sanction to his conjecture.

#### Route

Anyone walking the 'Pilgrims Way' from Winchester would have started along the Roman road east following the route through New Alresford, Alton and Bentley to Farnham. This roughly follows the modern A31. The ancient main streets of towns along the route from Farnham (where the old trackway converges with the pilgrims' route) through Guildford, Dorking and Reigate (where a pilgrims' chapel, dedicated to St Thomas, was established) — align west to east, strongly suggesting that this was the most important route that passed through them. On modern Ordnance Survey maps, part of the route is shown running east from Farnham, passing to the south of Guildford, many small towns and towards Cuxton (where it crossed the River Medway). South of Rochester, the Pilgrim's Way travels through the villages of Burham, Boxley, Detling and continuing in a south-east direction to the north of the villages of Harrietsham and Lenham. The route continues south-east along the top of the Downs past Charing, to Wye and then turns north to follow the valley of the Great Stour through Chilham and onwards to Canterbury.

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

## The Little Habit Walk

#### Walk overview:

Distance:	1 miles (2 km)
Time:	0.5 – 1 hour
Description:	A very short and very easy 'no barriers' (no styles or hurdles) walk. Highly recommended for those with prams/pushchairs or small children.



Leave The Dirty Habit, cross the road and continue straight onto the Pilgrim's way (follow 'Thurman' direction on the signpost **(1)**). Keep walking along the Way **(2)** for about 0.5 mile (800m) until a 'Byway' signpost on the right (ignore 'Public Footpath' signpost).

Turn left onto the byway and keep walking along it to the corner of the field. Follow the byway to the left and keep walking along it **(3)** for about 0.3 mile (500m). Join a small road and continue for about 0.2 mile (300m) more until a bigger road (you can see Manor house on the left **(4)**). Turn left onto the road and walk up the hill until you are back at The Dirty Habit.



Pic 1: The signpost in front of The Dirty Habit



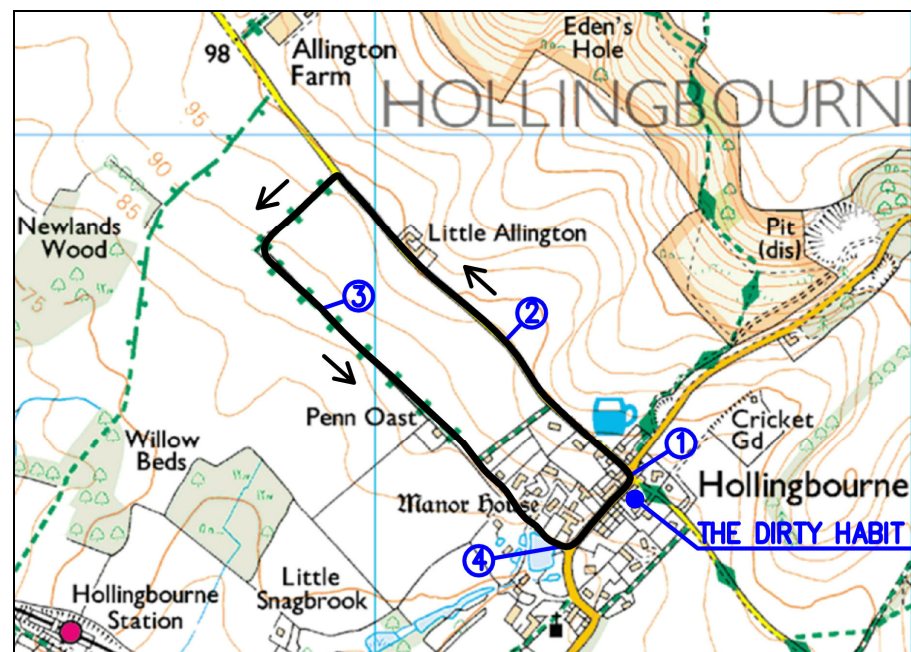
Pic 2: The 'Pilgrim's Way' in between the fields



Pic 3: The byway in between the field and hedges



Pic 4: Manor house of Hollingbourne



### Pilgrim's Way

The Pilgrim's Way is the historic route supposed to have been taken by pilgrims from Winchester in Hampshire, England, to the shrine of Thomas Becket at Canterbury in Kent. This name is somewhat misleading, as the route follows closely a pre-existing ancient trackway dated by archaeological finds to 500–450 BC, but probably in existence since the stone age, following the "natural causeway" east to west on the southern slopes of the North Downs.

### History

The prehistoric trackway extended further than the present Way, providing a link from the narrowest part of the English Channel to the important religious complexes of Avebury and Stonehenge, in Wiltshire, where it is known as the Harroway. The route was still followed as an artery for through traffic in Roman times, a period of continuous use of more than 3000 years.

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