

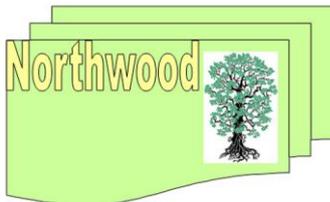
Northwood Historic Pub Walk



Cowes Heritage



IW Branch CAMRA



An historic journey between the pubs of Northwood, the once principal location in the north of the Island, with its Grade 1 listed 12th Century church, St John the Baptist, at the bottom of Chawton Lane and its 18th century 'halfway house' pub, wheelwright and smithy.

Contents

An Introduction to Northwood

Northwede, North Wode, Northwood (since 1364), once extended from the river at Newtown to the Medina and from Parkhurst Forest to the Solent. Northwood was servient only to the then capital, Carisbrooke. It was not until the Local Government Act of 1894 that Cowes was taken out of Northwood.

Northwood consisted of separate distinctive communities at Chawton, Furzyhurst (near the school), Wyatts Lane and Tinkers Lane (Pallance Road) until the 20th century expansion in the linear developments of Newport Road, Coronation Avenue, Oxford Street and Pallance Road.

In 1875 there was a boundary dispute between Newport and Cowes. In 1876 the village was hit by a tornado, destroying a thirty-yard wide strip of trees in Parkhurst Forest, two houses at Marks Corner and one in Tinkers Lane!

Most of the local farms were bought up by the wealthy 18th century London merchant George Ward, whose principal Island residence was Northwood House. Much of the estate was sold off at the turn of the 20th century when the estate was broken up.

In the late 18th and 19th centuries there were four brickworks in the Parish, along with a blacksmith's and wheelwright next to the Horseshoe Inn, which acted as a staging post, and another blacksmith down below the Travellers Joy in Tinkers Lane, where there was also reputed to have been a family living under an upturned boat by the roadside. The descendants of the most prominent family associated with the brickworks, the Pritchett's, are still known in the community, one being a farrier.

Northwood's Somerton area has been and continues to be a place of major employment, innovation and historical interest, from being a WWI airfield to a *Scotamota* factory to a base for the Vectis Bus Company, an aircraft factory extending through WWII, to a post war kitchen and white goods factory, then a home for Enfield Industrial Engines (who built electric cars – ahead of their time!). On the opposite side of the road, Decca Radar, Plessey Radar, then Siemens and now BAE Systems. Today, making room for an industrial park in the old grounds, it is not unusual to find the odd war time pipe bomb!

The Route Described

The following pages describe the various buildings and sites that we shall be talking about on our route.

Recommended Reading

For more detail see The Pubs of Cowes, Gurnard & Northwood and The History of Somerton Airport, published by Cowes Heritage (<http://www.cowesheritage.co.uk/>); Northwood Village website (<http://www.northwoodvillage.org.uk/village/village-history/>);

The Brewery History Society – (www.breweryhistory.com)

Formed in 1972 to research and record the history of brewing, the BHS has around 500 individual and corporate members who enjoy a range of visits and meetings throughout the year. The Society publishes Journals, Newsletters and a range of books

Cowes Heritage – (www.CowesHeritage.co.uk)

A voluntary group dedicated to recording and publicising the history of Cowes.

The Isle of Wight branch of CAMRA – (www.wightwash.org.uk)

CAMRA – The Campaign for Real Ale, was formed over 40 years ago and has since become one of Europe's most successful pressure groups with almost 200,000 members. The Island branch holds social meetings, surveys pubs and publishes a quarterly magazine, Wightwash.

Walk Compilers

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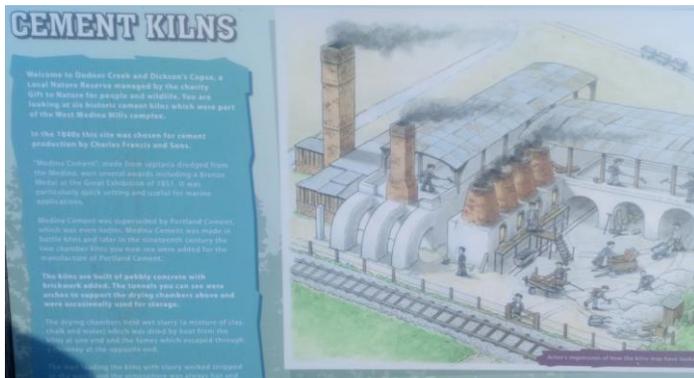
The Stag Inn (PO30 5TW)

Once in the Parish of Northwood (which used to extend down to the Dodnor Stream, at the bottom of Horsebridge Hill), the Stag sits on the corner of Stag Lane, at No 2 Cowes Road.

The earliest entry in Kelly's directory (a former trade directory – think Yellow Pages) is 1898, with the landlady listed as Elizabeth Fry.

The Cement Mills, Stag Lane

At the bottom of Stag Lane, currently the riverside site of Vestas Offshore Wind Blades, the former West Medina Cement Works once produced an award winning (at the 1851 Great Exhibition) Medina Cement (a type of Roman cement), under the ownership of Charles Francis & Sons. The



product was superseded by the manufacture of Portland Cement. The site continued to operate until recent times as a Blue Circle Depot.

The Cement Mills was served by the Cowes-Newport steam train until the line was closed in 1966. The stop was classed as a Halt (request stop), primarily for workers at the mill. Chalk from Shide Quarry was also brought in by rail for the manufacture of Portland Cement.

In 2018 the old cement kilns were uncovered and can be viewed from cycle and foot path.

Alternative Leisure Route to Northwood & Cowes

At the bottom of Stag Lane, the passageway of the old Cowes-Newport railway line now serves as a cycle and foot path between Cowes, Northwood and Newport. The exit at Northwood rises through Medham Lane to Newport Road, opposite the Horseshoe Inn. It was off Medham, following the Battle of Trafalgar, that prison ships (hulks) were moored to keep French prisoners of war in. The Cowes exit, a little further on, runs onto Arctic Road and is just below Northwood Cemetery and the Kingston Arms, both on Newport Road.

The County Showground & Gravel Pits (direct route)

Progressing along the Cowes / Newport Road, the County Showground was opened in 1967 as the new home of The Royal Isle of Wight Agricultural Society, which dates back to 1874 and was patronised by Queen Victoria. The Queen was a regular visitor to the Society's annual show where she exhibited livestock from the Osborne Estate. Nowadays it hosts festivals and shows of all types, being an easy to access location.

Northwood is one of the highest settlements on the Island, and there are significant gravel beds in the ridge along Newport Road. Named after its use, Gravel Pit Cottage, just past the Showground, opposite the Military Museum, still shows the scars of excavation, its front garden being dug out well below all the surrounding land.

Wight Military & Heritage Museum

With an interesting array of military vehicles, uniforms and artefacts, the museum offers scheduled guided tours from their ex-service volunteers. The museum is open between 10am – 4pm (check – tel: 632039) Mondays to Saturdays and is fully facilitated, its size not being fully appreciated from the road.



Chawton & St John the Baptist 12th Century Church

At the bottom of Chawton Lane is the Grade I Listed Parish Church of St. John the Baptist. There are also several Grade II Listed Buildings in the area, including Hope Cottage and Fryers Cottage, Tara House, Pallance Farmhouse, Wyatts Cottage, Barleyfield Cottage and buildings at Chawton Farm.

St. John The Baptist Church was a chapel of ease in the Carisbrooke Parish until the reign of Henry VIII when it obtained parochial privileges. The church building dates from the 12th and 13th centuries with some works being carried out in the late 19th century.

In 1513 there was a hospital in Northwood. A confraternity called the Brothers and Sisters of St. John the Baptist was founded near Northwood Church about 1513 and was dissolved in 1536. The building housing the confraternity, later known as Church House, no longer standing, was sited near St. John's church.

In 1727 one of the earliest workhouses in the country was opened near the church. It supplied apprentice labour to many of the local farmers, and also to work the glebe land of the Rector (glebe: an area of land owned by the church to support the parish clergy). In 1775 it was sold and converted into a malthouse.

There were strong brewing connections in Northwood, providing barley for Mew Langton Brewery and the growth of Cowes as victualling port for the fleets of the merchant navy busy expanding the British Empire and Royal Navy busy fighting the French, Dutch, Spanish etc. Increasing numbers of troops were stationed on the Isle of Wight around Cowes, Carisbrooke and Parkhurst.



Luton Farm & Tara House

Almost opposite Chawton Lane is the unnamed lane that leads down to Tara House, listed building and former rectory, and Luton Farm. The narrow field that runs alongside, to the north of this lane (to the right as you look down the lane from Newport Road) is called Longbutts. This was used for archery practice



(around the time of Agincourt), when people were compelled to practice the long bow, and did so after attending church.

Luton Farm is old enough to be included in the Domesday Book, under the name of Levintune, and the current farmer occupant says there have been Neolithic remains found in the grounds, indicating a settlement in those times.

Tara House was substantially extended in 1736 by Dr. Thomas Troughear, the well-connected Rector of the time, but by the 19th Century it was a boarding school as well, supplementing the curate's income. It was finally sold by the church estate in 1953 when the current rectory was built in Chawton Lane.

The Horseshoe Inn (PO31 8PL)

The Horseshoe Inn is the oldest secular non-agricultural site in Northwood (Wyatts Cottage, nearby, was originally a small farm). It has served the local community continuously since at least 1729. Until the early 20th century it was the only building in its immediate area, dominating the landscape. The complex included a wheelwright's shop, one of the most important elements in any village before the advent of the motor car. Remaining evidence of the former industry are the fine wrought iron hinges to be seen on one of the gates which must have been handcrafted in the smithy.



Amongst its historical features is a well that can still be viewed through a glass panel in the floor in the lounge bar. The Horseshoe has remained a centre for village life for many years and today hosts meetings for numerous local societies, groups and organisations, including the allotment society. In recognition of its significance it was registered as an Asset of Community Value by the Parish Council in 2019.



In 1946 the pub was broken into by a notorious Nottingham criminal, 26 year old George Jackson, who escaped from Parkhurst on 16th June and was recaptured on 28th June. In the morning of Thursday 20th June 1946, Mr Harwood, an ex-Royal Navy Petty Officer and landlord of the Horseshoe Inn, went downstairs to investigate a noise, to be met by George 'The Fox' Jackson, who set about him with an axe. The full account can be read in the Cowes Heritage book dedicated to the incident, also available through the pub.

The Flowerpot

Still bearing the painted sign, this lovely looking building was a stopping place for travellers to and from the North Shore of the North Wood into which, what is now known as Cowes, was once encompassed.

The last recorded landlords were James Cooley, a decorated seaman (1914-18 Star, British War Medal and Victory Medal) in the Royal Navy, and his wife Ellen who were in tenancy by 1914, James registered as licensee in February that year, but was killed in service (First World War) on 1st November, that same year. His wife Ellen subsequently took over the tenancy until 1922, when the pub was finally closed. She died in December 1939 at the Frank James Hospital, East Cowes



Myrtle Cottage (Malt & Hops)

Once the Malt & Hops public house, and a brewery (19th century), then a 1960's hippy commune, the site is destined to reclaim its heritage as the location for Island Brewery's operations in 2020.

On the corner opposite is a scrapyards, where, if you look carefully, you might just be able to still see the nose of an old Buccaneer aircraft.

Footpath to Nodes Road

Just past Myrtle cottage is the CS10, a short footpath cutting through to Nodes Road, then turn right until Fourcross crossroads, where Pallance Road takes you down to the Travellers Joy.

At one time Google Maps featured local celebrated character, engineer, and onetime motorcycle trike owner, Ivan Day, sat on the roadside bench resting whilst walking his dog (not Yosemite Sam, as some people might have thought – also rumoured to be the real Father Christmas, whose dogs turn into reindeer when he needs!).



Somerton Airfield/ Decca Radar

Northwood is one of the highest settlements on the Island and from its crown it is possible to see the St Boniface Down (in Ventnor) to the south and as far as Alum Bay to the west. The Somerton plateau extends alongside Three Gates Road and Nodes Road and made an ideal location for a WWI airfield. The remnants of this function are still recognisable today.

In 1962 it was agreed that Decca Radar should open a new factory research site here, which opened its doors on 17th July 1964. It has remained a site at the centre of MoD work to this day (now as BAE Systems).



The Travellers Joy (PO31 8LS) and Pallance Road

Originally a thatched alehouse serving the needs of travellers and tinkers that passed by, living and working on the route crossing the Luck to Newtown and the marine based communities on the Island's north-western shore.



Rescued from closure by Whitbread in the 1980s, the Travellers continues to thrive as a community pub and Real Ale house.

The Ward estate included Comforts Farm, off Pallance Road, and cottages built to house the workers, of which Rose Cottage, (now rebuilt in similar style) and Sydney Cottage, both in Pallance Road are examples, the former being the home of the laundry lady and the latter a gardener's cottage.

The River Luck and The Romans

In centuries past the Luck was a navigable waterway. There is a field at the bottom of Harness Lane (off Rew Street), by the river, called Cannons Field, where a base formerly used to site cannons can still be found; cannons to repel the French! The owners of Comforts Farm have found Roman remains in the fields above the Luck, and what is now a bridge crossing the Luck at the bottom of Pallance Road was once a ford and a place of industry for tinkers, after whom the road was known (Tinkers Lane). Some say there was birthing for vessels as far up as Comforts Farm fields. There is also a tale of a family that lived at the side of the road, with an upturned boat as the roof of their home.

Rew Street (off the junction at the western end of Pallance Road), is said to date back to Roman times and up until the 19th Century, Gurnard (then known as Gurnet, and just a small hamlet) was the main crossing point for embarkation to the mainland – until Cowes was invented!

Back Up Pallance Road

From the Travellers Joy to the top of the road again, cross the road and turn left, on to the Kingston Arms. Although not officially in Northwood now, it is only just the other side of the road from the current boundary line, which our route follows, running down the centre of Three Gates Road, then down the middle of Newport Road towards Cowes and then down the middle of Artic Road hill as it drops down to Medina Wharf. The Medical Centre and Northwood Cemetery both being in the Parish of Northwood, whilst the other side of the road is Cowes South. The Kingston is literally a stone's throw from the boundary and a bit out of Cowes town, so Northwood tends to look kindly on it and there is a sort of unofficial triangle between the Horseshoe, the Travellers Joy and Kingston Arms.

Other Cowes Walks in this series pick up at the Kingston, whilst the Gurnard Walk picks up at The Portland, which can be accessed along Cockleton Lane, running Northwest from the top of Pallance Road, then up the unmade Hilton road or, lower down, Church Road.

Three Gates and Turnpikes

Turning left at the top of Pallance Road (you will need to cross the road first), takes you into Place Road. Passed the area of grass and trees is Three Gates Road and a good view of BAE Systems. It is looking out over Place Road, towards Gurnard and the Solent that they test their high-grade military radar equipment.

This is, again, the high ground, and it is worth mentioning that Northwood was the site of one of a string of warning beacons across the Island that existed in 1324.

Further on, in Three Gates Road (named after three gates that once were), in 1770 a band of smugglers were apprehended, and in the 1820s and 30s, several Northwood residents were tried for smuggling and sentenced to either serve in the Navy or be imprisoned in Winchester gaol, their main contraband being brandy, spirits, wine, tobacco and East Indian silk. In 1777, Sir Richard Worsley bought the Manor of Northwood – maybe because of its contraband?

In 1813, turnpikes were erected in Love Lane (now part of Cowes South/ Medina) and in 1816 were moved to Dallimore (somewhere near Smithards Lane). Also, in 1816, the Highway Commissioners removed the three gates on the road from the Horseshoe to Nodes Farm; the fields were to be enclosed with culverts, and drains were to be built on the Northwood road. You have to appreciate that roads in those days were what we would now refer to as tracks and many were privately owned, passing over private property.

Northwood Cemetery

Following the Burial Act of 1853 four acres of land was purchased from the Ward Estate for the construction of a municipal burial ground, three quarters of which would be consecrated the rest unconsecrated. The first burial took place in 1856. Over the years more land was acquired and to date over 17,000 burials have taken place.

In the cemetery are the graves of many prominent local people as well as some Commonwealth War Graves along with a memorial to the civilians killed in the blitz of Cowes on the night of 4th/5th May 1942.

The cemetery is still open for burials, with facilities for services in the Chapel. The grounds include the only municipally owned Natural Burial and Muslim Burial areas on the Isle of Wight. Northwood Cemetery is a green oasis for quiet contemplation, well worth a visit,

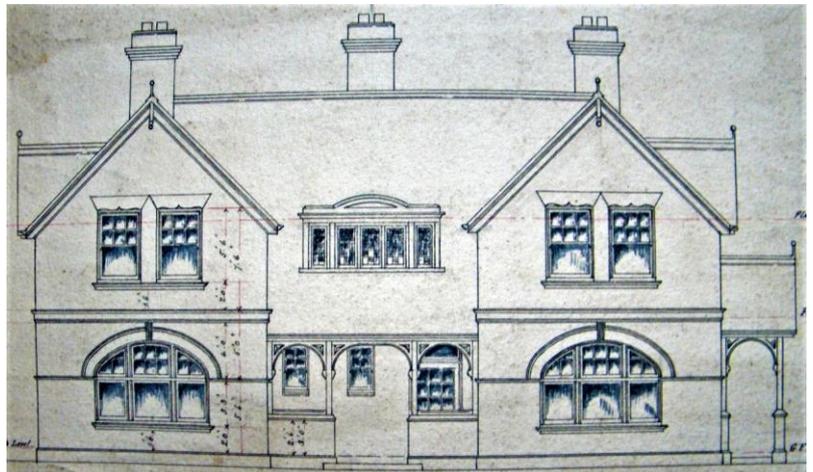
Following a significant Heritage Lottery Grant awarded to the Friends of Northwood Cemetery both Chapels were restored, and a programme of grounds maintenance agreed. The left-hand consecrated Chapel is still used for services & concerts; the right hand, formerly for non-conformist services, is now a Heritage Resource Centre, open and manned by volunteers five half days a week.

Volunteers continue to look after this local asset on Wednesday & Saturday mornings. The Friends are always looking for volunteers so come along and have a chat.

The Kingston Arms (PO31 7PS)

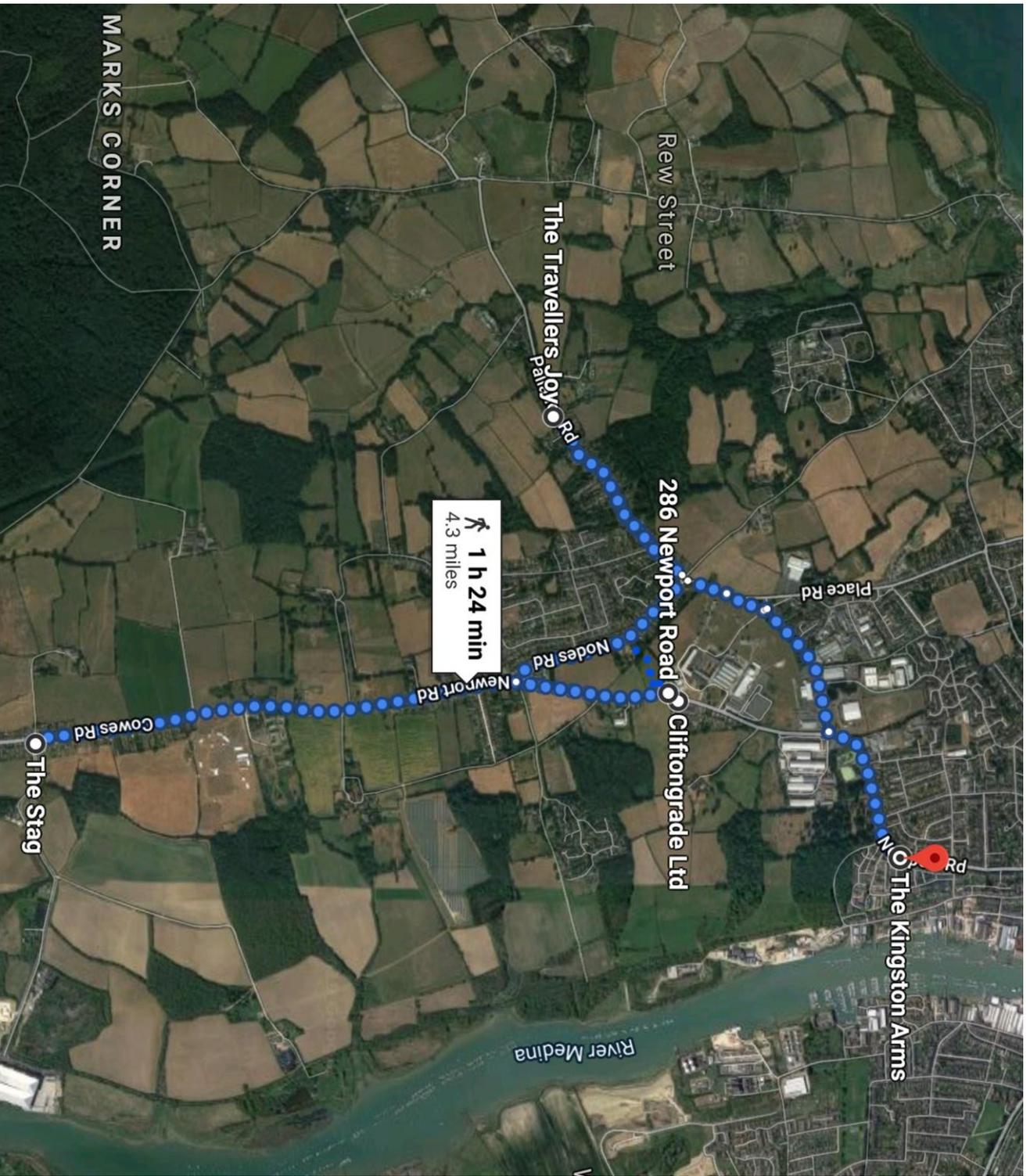
In 1898 Mew Langton submitted plans to build a new public house in the area known as Shamblers, such was the spread from the rise of Cowes as an industrial port. The proposed new pub would serve travellers, workers and residents travelling to and from Cowes along the course of the river and through Northwood.

When you go in the Kingston, observe the magnificent Mew's stained-glass window, now mounted on the wall behind the lounge bar.



Another point of interest for 60's pop

group fans may be that one former landlord of the Kingston was Dave Dee, out of the band Dave, Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Titch, most famous for their bullwhip cracking song Xanadu (*you'll hear my voice, like the winds across the sands tra-la-la-la ...*)!



Route Map

- Stag Inn
- Coves Road/
- Newport Road
- Horseshoe Inn
- The Flower Pot
- Myrtle Cottage
- SC10 Footpath to
- Nodes Road
- Pallance Road
- Travellers Joy
- Pallance Road
- Nodes Road
- Three Gates Road
- Newport Road