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# Different Perspectives: Guildford from the River Wey

A journey through the history of the Wey

Doug Scott



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# Answer Three Questions

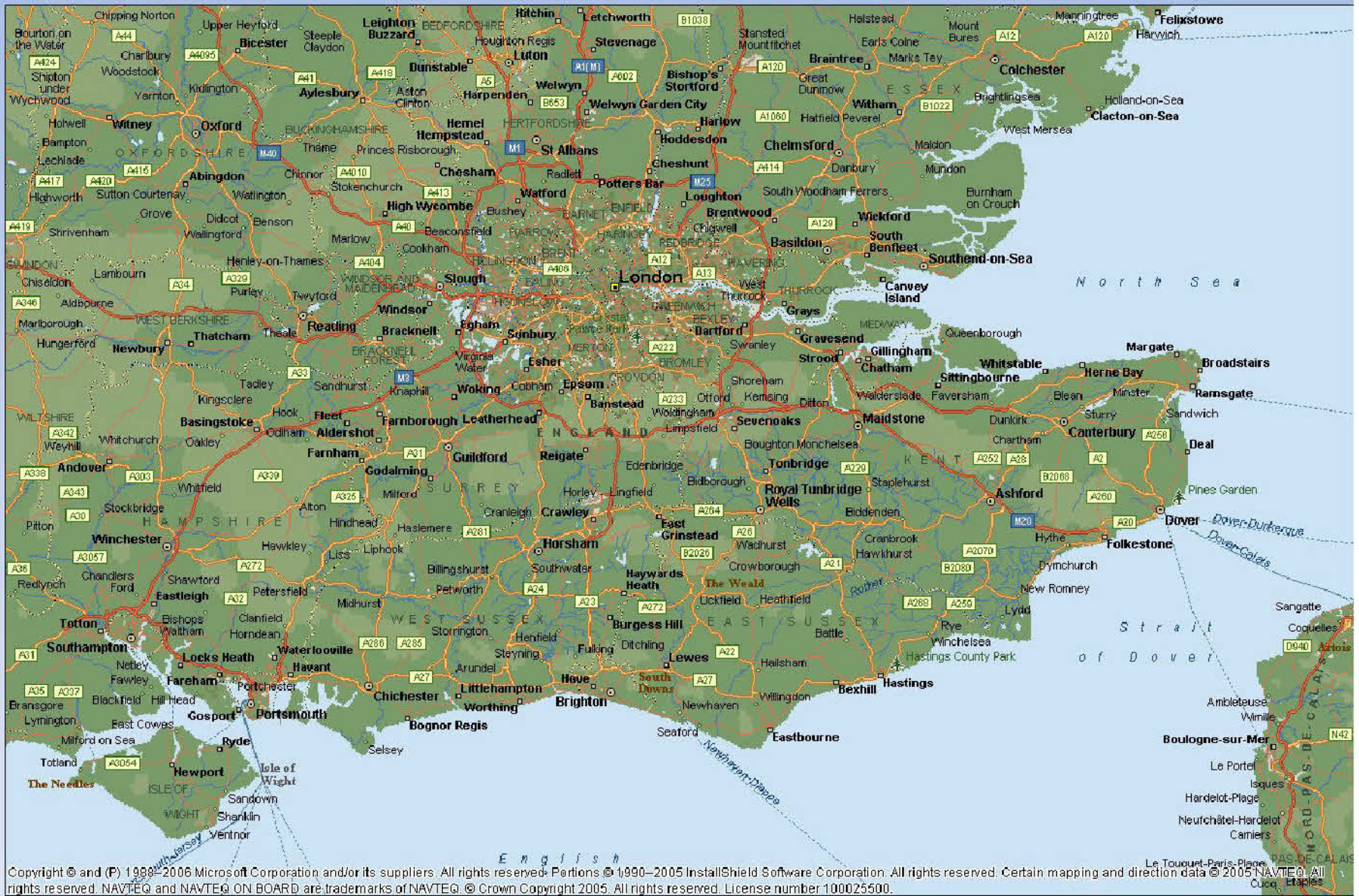
- Why is Guildford where it is?
- How did it become what it is?
- What does the river add to Guildford today?





# Where & Why = Wey

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# Wey, Where & Why

- Two Sources, Alton and Haslemere
- The two rivers join at Tilford
- Flows 28 miles through Guildford to join the Thames at Weybridge
  - Made a “Gap” in the North Downs
  - Crossing of two important trade routes
    - The Harrow (Old ~3000+ years) Way
    - London to Portsmouth (Navel Docks)





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# Guildford High Street – Where is the River?



Town Bridge is at the bottom of the High Street  
The site of the original golden ford and wooden footbridge





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## **View from Town Bridge**



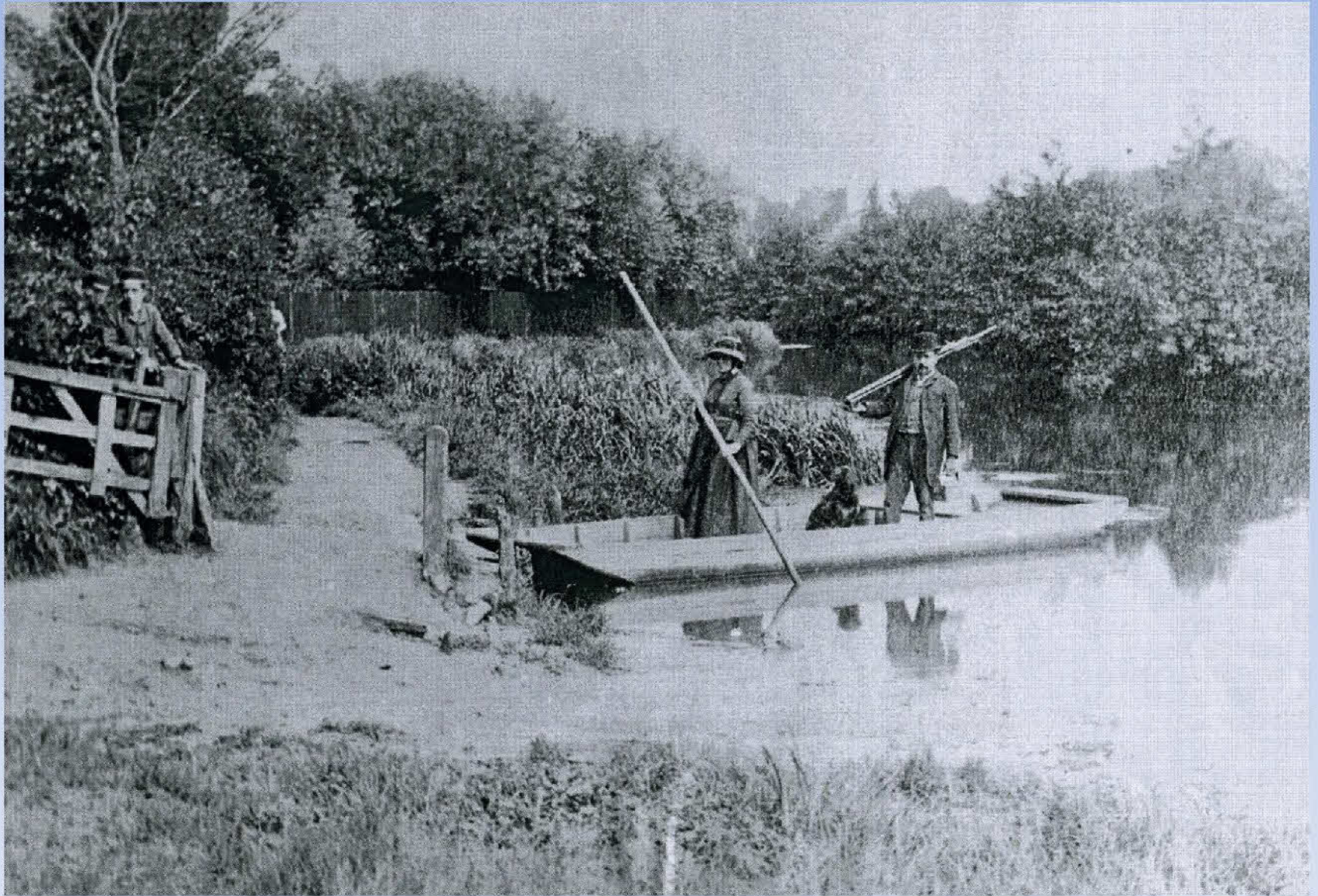
**Looking upstream towards Millmead  
920 Wooden Footbridge (280 yrs), 1200 Stone Bridge (700 yrs),  
1900 Iron Bridge (85 yrs), 1985 Steel Footbridge (22+ yrs)**





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## St Catherine's Ferry c1895 (Guildford Museum)



Crossing for the Harrow (Pilgrim's)Way / North Downs Way  
This was a ford until millers dammed the river



# St Catherine's Bridge



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The Bridge (1983) saved walkers a long detour into Guildford  
This is the source of the Golden Sands





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# Source of Flooding



Town Bridge 1900 - (Guildford Institute)

Flood Prevention Scheme in 1930





## Sir Richard Weston (1591-1652)

Sir Richard, born at Sutton Place, was educated in Flanders.

He introduced new agricultural techniques to England.

Deliberately flooded the meadows to keep them warm.

Introduced three crop rotation clover, flax and turnips.

Cut a 5 km channel from Stoke to Coopers Meadow called the Flowing River.

Increased the wealth and prosperity of Guildford.







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## Source of Water



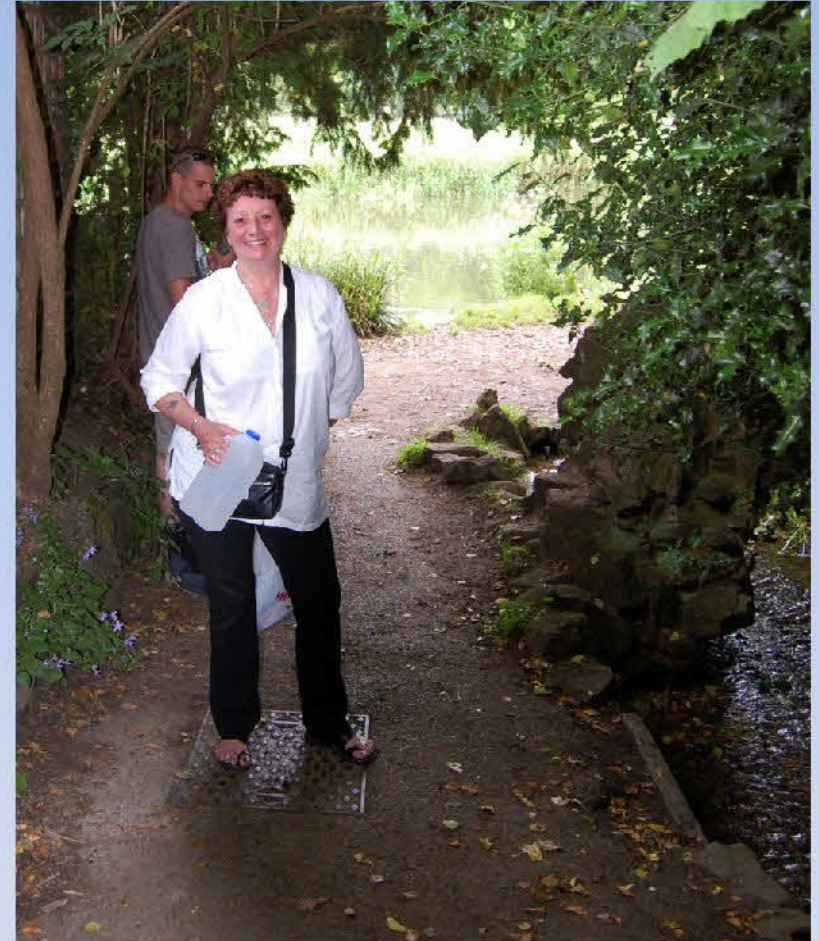
Town Mill Pumped Water up to the Reservoir on Pewly Hill  
One third extracted for water supply



# St Catherine's (Artington) Spring



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A Sacred Spring, said to heal eye complaints  
History books say the water was collected until C19  
But this lady from Croydon was collecting water last week C21





# Source of Power

- The river drops 30 m to the Thames with a flow of 700 million litres/day that equals 2.4 MW of Power
- This led to the building of 25 Mills between Godalming and Weybridge
- That's more Mills/mile than anywhere else in Britain.





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# Three Mills Left in Guildford



Stoke Mill (Surrey Advertiser)

Town Mill - Guildford Hydro and mini Theatre

Shalford Mill (NT) Open to the Public





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## Town Mill



Guildford was a centre for Wool and Weaving  
Town Mill was a corn, hog feed and fulling mill





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# Town Mill – Hydro-electric Project



2006 - 35 KW hydro-electric turbine installed

Power for 50 homes (GF~30,000 homes)

Reducing Carbon emissions by 120 tons/year



# What Made Guildford Rich?



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Town Wharf & Elkins Brewery c1870  
(Guildford Institute)





## Sir Richard Weston - Again

The Wool Trade was dying and Guildford needed new industries.

Sir Richard Weston persuaded the Borough of Guildford, James Pitson and Richard Scotcher to promote the Navigation Act creating a trade route to London.

In 1651 the Commonwealth Parliament passed an Act authorising the Navigation

It took two years and £16,000 to dig 9 miles of canal, build twelve locks and 20 Bridges

The Navigation opened in 1653 a year after Sir Richard's death







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# The River Pence



The Borough of Guildford was paid a toll of 1 penny for every ton of cargo. This paid for the granite setts in the High Street.





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## Cargoes (90 tons)

- Brewing
- Carbide
- Chalk
- Charcoal
- Coal
- Corn & flour
- Groceries
- Gunpowder
- Iron
- Mineral Water
- Paper & Rags
- Saltpetre
- Timber









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# Legacy



Parts of the river are blighted by legacy industries





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# The New Guildford



Woodbridge Meadows



# Heritage Sites



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Town Wharf and the Treadwheel Crane  
Scheduled Ancient Monument





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# Unsympathetic Development



Friary Court overshadows Town Bridge and Town Wharf

The Walnut Footbridge overshadows the old mineral water warehouse, now the Auction Rooms and Locally Listed







# Sympathetic Development

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Bridge House and the YMCA



# Old & New



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Dapdune Crane & Walnut Tree Park



# Commercial



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Wey House

Highlights the lack of public open spaces in the town



# Leisure – The Big Screen



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The Odeon Multiplex make good use of its riverside position





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# Leisure – Boat Trips



The Guildford Boat House



# Narrow Boats



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Bowers Lock





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# Riverside Pubs



Weyside Inn



# Residential 1960's



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The Meadows



# Modern Riverside



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Waterside Mews  
Off Stoughton Road





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Exclusive



Weycliffe House  
Portsmouth Road





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Ferry Lodge  
Pilgrim's Cottage  
St Catherines

# Idyllic







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# Derelict



Dapdune Cottage





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**The Wey is a Treasure. Fight to keep it that way!**



Weyside Road