North Downs Way
NATIONAL TRAIL



Lost Landscapes

HERITAGE TRAILS

Hollingbourne

Lost watermills, the ghost of Catherine Howard and the mystery of a manor that disappeared. These are just some of the highlights on the Lost Landscapes Heritage Trails in this booklet – two new circular walks from the North Downs Way.

The main trail takes you through Eyhorne Street, where you will learn about its industrial past, then up onto the downs, through ancient woodlands, and returning via the main village. The secondary trail takes you west of the village, past the ancient manor of Ripple and back along the Pilgrim's Way.

The main text of the booklet consists of detailed directions and information on points of interest for the main trail. The secondary trail has no detailed directions but the route is shown on a map and there are notes to help you and information on points of interest. The back pages of the booklet cover other local heritage themes.

The Lost Landscapes project

With grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund (through the Local Heritage Initiative) and the Rail Link Countryside Initiative, the Lost Landscapes project, organised by the North Downs Way National Trail, has been taking place in six communities along the North Downs. People in these communities have been looking into the heritage and history of their area and discovering what it is that makes their parishes special. Their contributions are the backbone of this series of trail booklets.

The Hollingbourne Heritage Trails have been carefully designed to take in the best heritage features of the area. As you walk you will find that the history has been brought to life by the contributions of local people.

Enjoy your journey back in time!

Terrain: Unmade tracks through fields and woods. Muddy at times. Some steep climbs (marked on map).

Distances: Main route - (purple) - 8 miles
Secondary route (orange) - 6 miles

For key to background map refer to any Ordnance Survey Explorer map

KEY TO MAP

- Main route
- Secondary route
- A Point of interest in text - main route
- a Point of interest in text - secondary route
- ! CAUTION at this point
- Pub serving food
- Steep climb
- Bench
- Steps
- Viewpoint

The map to the left shows the trail routes, and the booklet contains detailed written directions in numbered steps, but you may find it useful to take with you an Ordnance Survey map for this area – Explorer no. 148 or Landranger 188.

Getting to Hollingbourne

By train – Hollingbourne station is on the Ashford-Maidstone-London line, between Harrietsham and Bearsted. For train times telephone 08457 484950.

By car – Leave the M20 at junction 8 and follow signs for the A20. Come to a roundabout and turn left towards Lenham and Leeds Castle. Come to another roundabout and turn left, signposted Hollingbourne. Cross the M20 and Channel Tunnel Rail Link and come into Eyhorne Street. Drive through the village, passing a sharp left hand bend. Once out of the village, turn left, signposted Hollingbourne Station. Drive to the end and park by the station building.

By bus – The number 13 from Maidstone passes through the village. Get off at the school, walk under the railway, and turn right for the railway station (start point for both trails).

Be safe, be prepared

Please take care when walking on roads (use pavement if available or keep to the right) and crossing roads. Points where caution should be exercised are highlighted on the map and in the text. Always wear suitable clothing and footwear. Allow plenty of time for your walk – about an hour for every 2 miles (more for elderly or inexperienced walkers). Always keep to the countryside code (see back of booklet).

MAIN TRAIL

This trail is shown in purple on the map opposite. Below are detailed written directions, and information on the main points of interest which correspond to capital letters on the map.

Start this trail in the car park at Hollingbourne railway station.

From start to point A

1. Facing the station building, walk to the left of it and up a footpath that climbs a bank to a stile. Cross the stile and turn right along a track. At the end of the track, emerge into a field.

2. Bear left and walk across the field towards a gateway and stile. Cross the stile then walk along the edge of the field, with a hedge on your left. The path then takes you between two hedges. (The local name for this track is Thread Lane.)

3. Reach a field gate and cross a stile made from a tractor tyre. Continue between two hedges until you emerge onto a road (Athelstan Green). Turn right and walk a short distance to a T junction with Musket Lane. Turn left.

4. Follow the lane, entering the hamlet of Eyhorne Street. Come to a small green on your right with a wooden sign bearing the hamlet's name.

POINT A – EYHORNE GREEN

An ancient meeting place

Local tradition has it that the small green to your right is part of the once much larger Eyhorne Green – the outdoor meeting place of the Hundred of Eyhorne. But what exactly was a 'hundred'?

"Kent was divided for administrative, judicial and taxation purposes into seven large divisions called lathes … and these in turn were sub-divided into smaller areas called hundreds …"

A History of Kent by F.W. Jessup

So a 'hundred' was an area of land with its own local assembly, made up of representatives from communities. Here on the green, it is said, the assembly would have met to elect a constable or hold court proceedings.

The hundred of Eyhorne was the largest in Kent, covering an area from what is now the edge of Gillingham in the north to Headcorn in the south and Lenham in the east. But where does the name hundred come from? F.W. Jessup explains:

"Hundreds may have been so called because each was regarded originally as containing nominally one hundred sulungs."

The term sulung refers to the amount of land that 4 pairs of oxen could cultivate, equivalent to 240 acres. In theory a 'hundred' would have been an area of 24,000 acres, although in practice they varied a great deal in size.

To have been part of this system, this settlement must date back at least to the Anglo-Saxon period, and a coin from this time, found in the garden of nearby Eyhorne House, is evidence of this. However, the discovery of a Roman pot not far from here, in 1929, indicates even earlier settlement. The word 'street' in the place name Eyhorne Street suggests the presence of a Roman road.

From point A to point B

5. Carry on to a T junction with the main road through the village. Turn left and walk through the village until you reach the Windmill pub.

6. Follow the Public Footpath sign down the side of the pub, away from the main road. Walk past the village hall.

7. Come to a large, modern barn, bear left and walk down the side of the barn. Behind the barn you will see a metal field gate – go through and stop with a pond to your left and a stream to your right.

POINT B – GROVE MILL

A hamlet built from paper

You may find it hard to believe, but quaint little Eyhorne Street has an industrial past. At the heart of this industry were the watermills along the Bourne stream. Hollingbourne resident Alan Williams has traced the fascinating story of these mills:

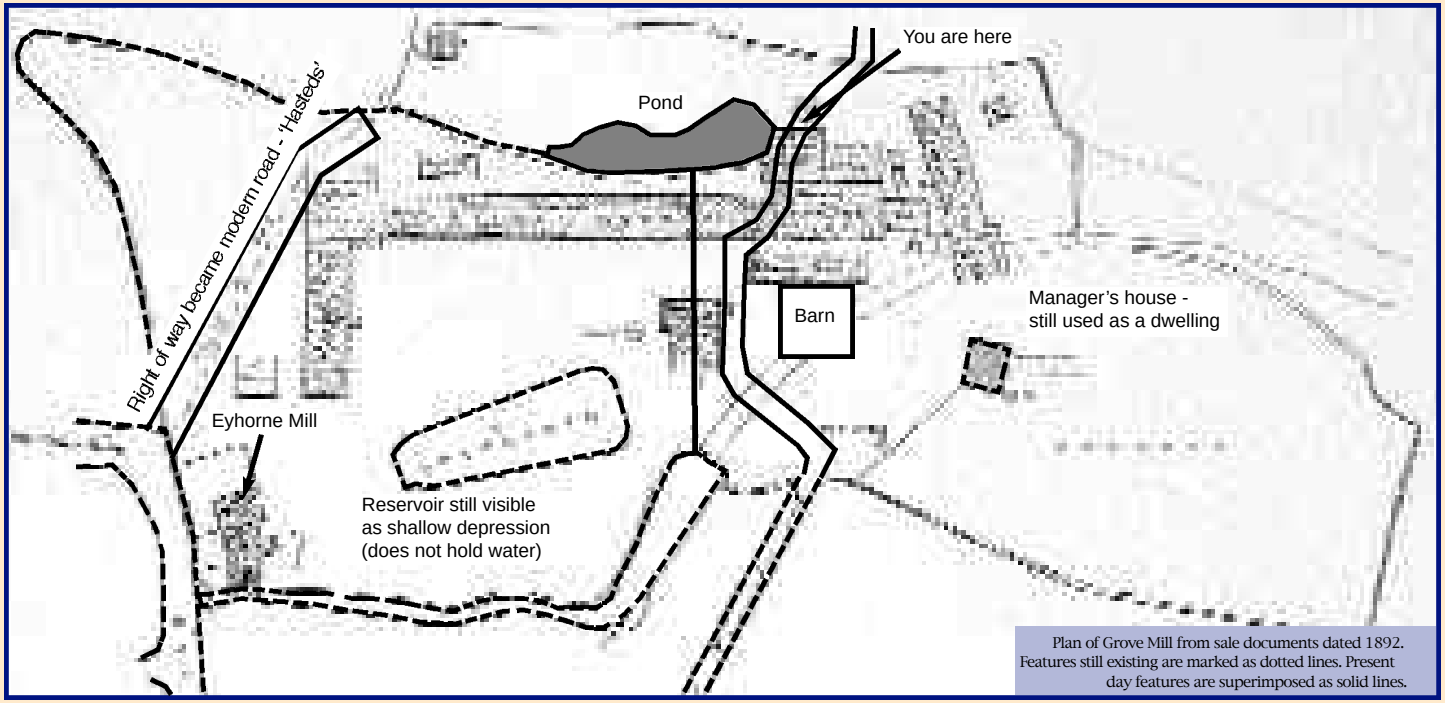
"Throughout their histories, these mills have adapted their function to suit the economic and technological changes … Following the fortunes of these mills has been complicated by the fact that not only did they frequently change roles and owners but inconsistently, their names."

The Lost Watermills of Hollingbourne – thesis by Alan Williams

You are now standing close to the site of one of these lost watermills – Grove Mill. Alan Williams believes this is a very old mill site, recorded in Domesday, the location of a succession of mill buildings through the centuries.

From Alan's research we know that a new mill was built here in the 18th century: insurance documents tell us that one James Austen insured his 'new-built' mill in 1762. These documents also tell us something else important – Grove Mill was a paper mill. Paper making was the driving force behind the early industrialisation of Eyhorne Street.

The changing economic fortunes that Alan describes meant that Grove Mill was milling corn by 1865, before going back to paper making and finally closing down and being demolished in the late 19th century.



Plan of Grove Mill from sale documents dated 1892. Features still existing are marked as dotted lines. Present day features are superimposed as solid lines.

The chimney of Grove Mill being demolished in 1894

Alan has found this wonderful description of the mill's large chimney being pulled down:

"11th July 1894 … At 4.30 pm great crowds of spectators assembled … about 5 o'clock the last supporting bricks were removed … then it began to tremble, then to sway and finally it all broke to pieces in the air and came to the ground with a grand crash."

The Diary of DeVisme Thomas

Alan also unearthed some sale documents for Grove Mill, including a plan of the site and an inventory of the buildings, which give a fascinating snapshot of the site just before its demise. The first impression is of some very large buildings, including a 382 foot long 'drying room', and a rag sorting house 105 feet long and three stories high! The machinery was also being sold and included a range of equipment the purpose of which one can only guess at:

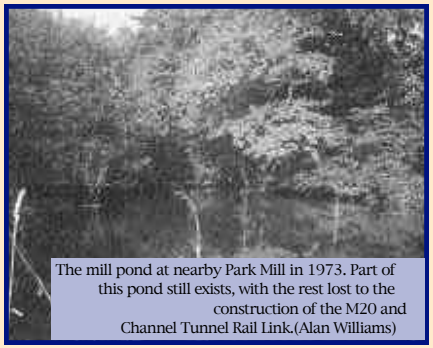
"Rag duster, sorting lattices, two rag boilers, five washing, beating and poaching engines, two cat iron stuff chests, nine water, stuff and vacuum pumps."

The buildings on the plan include another lost mill –

The wheel housing at Old Mill in 1973 The mill pond can still be seen from Old Mill Road. (Alan Williams)

Eyhorne Mill – which was one of the buildings in the complex but already disused by this time (you can find out more about Eyhorne Mill on the secondary route in this booklet).

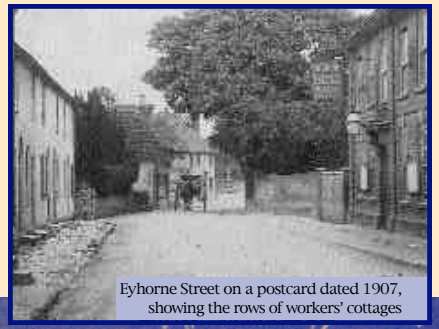
Not far to the south-west of here was a third lost mill – Park Mill. Historically it was often grouped with Grove Mill and at times both were worked by the same paper makers. Further downstream was a fourth paper mill – Old Mill – home of the famous Whatman's brand. Whatman's paper was of the highest quality, used for many important documents, including the US constitution.



The mill pond at nearby Park Mill in 1973. Part of this pond still exists, with the rest lost to the construction of the M20 and Channel Tunnel Rail Link. (Alan Williams)

With so many mills in a small area, Eyhorne Street, for about 100 years, became the hub of a thriving industry, which determined its character, as Alan explains in the conclusion of his thesis:

"Eyhorne Street underwent a change as a result of the introduction of the paper making industry during the 18th century … Commercial businesses took root. Small private residences sprang up and these premises were in-filled with rows of industrial workers' cottages. At the decline of the paper making activity during the late 19th century, the architectural pattern of the lower village was set."



Eyhorne Street on a postcard dated 1907, showing the rows of workers' cottages

From point B to point C

8. Continue along the path, as it bends to the left and onto a gravel track, with a hedge on your right. Follow the path until you reach a post and a stile on the right.

9. Turn and walk back towards the village, diagonally across the field to the corner, where you will see a large tree and a stile.

10. Cross the stile, turn right and walk between a fence and a tall hedge (of Leylandii trees). The path bends left and descends into a garden. Keep right, following another tall Leylandii hedge then cross a stile.

11. Go straight ahead then bear left. Follow the fences of gardens, passing a stile into a garden. You will see a stile straight ahead. Cross the stile onto a small bridge which takes you across a stream and into a field.

12. Follow the edge of the field, keeping the hedge on your left, then cut off the corner, bearing right across the field.

13. You will see an arch under the railway line – head towards it. Go through the arch and come to a field gate and stile. Cross the stile and walk up a driveway to reach a road. Cross the road and to where the path continues between two fences. This will lead you to another road – the main road through the village. Turn right.

14. The pavement bears right and takes you past a play area on your right and towards the pavilion at the edge of the playing field. Before you reach the building, turn left and walk onto a road (Greenway Court Road). Turn right. (A spitfire crashed near here in 1940 during an assault by 200 German aircraft.)

15. Stay on this road for about 1/4 mile, pass a turning on the right and come to a Byway off to the left.

POINT C – TARGET COTTAGE

Safe as houses?

The large house standing to one side of this byway replaced an old dwelling with the peculiar name of Target Cottage. Local resident Mr P. Rigall tells us that this name could not have been more literal – the house was used as a military range post! Mr Rigall goes on to say:

"I have picked up two artefacts relating to military presence in the past above the Pilgrims Way, one was the spur from a cavalry boot and recently a lead bullet of heavycalibre (.50)."

It seems that this area of the parish had a history of military usage. This apparently ended after WWII – Mr Rigall told us how a family moved in, taking out the mahogany rifle racks.

From point C to point D

16. Follow this Byway between two hedges, for about 1/3 mile. (Along this path a lump of bronze was found in 1932 that may have been buried for safety by a Bronze Age metalsmith. It is now in Maidstone Museum.)

17. At the end, reach a T junction and turn right onto the North Downs Way. After a short distance, you will come to a marked junction with two tracks off to the left. Take the second one (right hand).

18. Walk steeply uphill and come to a point where the byway bends to the right. (This spot is a good viewpoint.) Continue uphill and at an unmarked junction, fork left into woodland.

POINT D – HIGH WOOD

Woodlands young and old

As you walk through this woodland, known as High Wood, compare the woodland to the left of the path with that on the right. If they look quite different that's because, in woodland terms, one is a youngster and one is an old Man. The woodland on the right is the youngster. It was planted in the 20th century as a place for game shooting. The woodland on the left is ancient – it dates back to at least 1600 and is probably much older. To find out more about ancient woodlands, read the section Special Woodlands on page 14.

From point D to point E

19. Follow the byway through the woods for about 1/3 mile. The byway then comes out of the woods, but takes you along the edge of woodland for about another 1/4 mile.

20. The byway then bends left, away from the woodland, across a field, between two fences. After a short distance you will come to a narrow strip of woodland on your left.

POINT E – DRAKE LANE

Secret armies and naval legends

We now find ourselves in an area with a fascinating military history. Not far from here is a WWII 'fox hole'. This was one of a network of secret bunkers set up across the countryside in preparation for the worst case scenario – invasion.

If Hitler's army had ever crossed the Channel, a select band of local men, recruited to what was known simply as the 'secret army', would have taken refuge in these bolt holes, sat out the invasion, only to emerge

The interior of the foxhole.

and wreak sabotage behind enemy lines. Men who worked in farming were favoured because they had an intimate knowledge of the countryside. They were recruited in utmost secrecy, going to covert locations to be trained in the techniques of guerrilla warfare, such as how to kill an enemy silently. Recruits were not allowed to discuss their new role with anyone, not even their wives, so that their whereabouts could never be divulged. In fact they were bound to silence by the Official Secrets Act until recent years, and only then did the general public learn of their existence.

Going back to an earlier period of Britain's military past, Mr P Rigall has passed on some fascinating information about the field to your right, and about the track you are walking on:

"The footpath … is called Drakes Lane and local legend has it that crews recruited on the Weald of Kent were marched to Sheerness to man the warships at anchor there … legend also has it that they camped for the night on top of the Downs and the field they used was always known as Drake's Land."

The track is still marked as Drake Lane on modern maps. Whether or not this story is true, it is fun to imagine weary recruits trudging along here, reaching the camp site in this field, perhaps with some relief, but also with some trepidation about the coming hardships of life in Sir Francis Drake's navy.

From point E to point F

21. Follow the Byway until you reach a road (Ringlestone Road) and turn left. Almost immediately you will come to a byway off to the right.

22. Follow this byway, past a sharp bend to the left then to the right. Continue along this byway, to the edge of a woodland.

The beautiful valley near Wormshill and Bedmonton

POINT F – DRAKE LANE WOOD

Drake, deneholes and the valley where time stood still

The Francis Drake connection in local place names continues. The woodland you are about to enter is known as Drake Lane Wood; further on you will pass Drake Lane Plantation; and you are still walking on Drake Lane.

In the fields near this woodland are many deneholes. Deneholes were deep vertical shafts dug into the chalk as mines. Most are medieval or later and were used to extract chalk for putting on the fields, to reduce acidity of soil (just as you might lime your garden soil). This agricultural explanation of these mysterious holes is now generally accepted, but there have been other theories, one being that they were dug as hiding places from marauding Danes (denehole being a corruption of Dane hole).

North of Drake Lane Plantation is an area where the whole landscape is a piece of history – a valley where time has stood still and the pattern of woods and fields is much as it was 500 years ago, when it was part of the Medieval manors of Wormshill and Bedmonton. Visible features include 'lynchets', which are long earth banks created on hill slopes by gravity as a plough moves across the hillside. Further north at Gotteridge Wood is a 250m long and 20m wide ditch that formed part of a medieval enclosure.

From point F to point G

23. Walk through the woods and pass a sharp bend to the left. Staying on the byway, come out of the woods, bend sharply to the right then go back into woodland. (The traditional name for the woodland on your left is High Field Wood, that on your right was known as Broom Wood.)

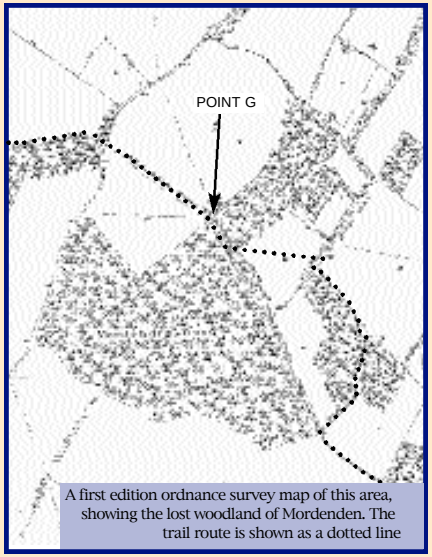
24. Reach a gate at the edge of the wood and go through into a field. Turn left, following the edge of the wood. The byway bends to the right, stay along the edge of the field and look for a stile on your left.

25. Cross the stile into a large pasture, pass a group of oak trees and walk diagonally across the field, heading for the stile in the corner, to the right of some farm buildings. Cross the stile and follow a short path to a gravel track.

POINT G – MORDENDEN WOOD

Mordenden no more

In contrast to the valley north of Drake Lane Plantation, this part of the walk has seen a very major change to its landscape. If you look to the left, beyond the nearest farm buildings of Gotteridge, you should be able to see strip of woodland on the horizon, known as Mordenden Wood. This is the rather sad remnant of a once much larger woodland of about 50 acres. Like many ancient woodlands it was lost in the 20th century, perhaps cleared in the drive for agricultural intensification after WWII. Kent still has much ancient woodland, but this does not change the fact that once lost, these woods can never be replaced, because planted woodland does not have the same ecological and archaeological value. For more about ancient woodlands, read the 'Special Woodlands' section.



A first edition ordnance survey map of this area, showing the lost woodland of Mordenden. The trail route is shown as a dotted line

From point G to point H

26. Turn right and follow the track up the side of a small valley and come to a road. Cross the road and take a footpath into the woods. The path bears left and you walk along the edge of the wood, past a denehole or small pit to your right.

27. Reach a stile and cross into a large field. Turn left and walk along the edge of the field. At a marked junction of paths, go straight ahead, across the large field, towards the woods. (On a clear day it is possible to see the North Kent coast from here. You can also see the water tower at White Post.)

28. Reach a stile and cross into woodland. Walk straight through the woods and reach a lane. Turn right. After the road bears left, pass a turning to the right and take a byway off to the left, just before a sign saying 'Colyers Wents'. Follow this byway to a point where it bends to the right.

POINT H – JACK CADE'S HOLE.

The hiding place of a rebel?

About 400 yards due south of where you are now, in the large field you can see to your left is a large pit known as Jack Cade's Hole. Local legend has it that this was one of the hiding places used by the notorious leader of 'Cade's Rebellion', an uprising that took place in 1450. Whether the legend is true we will probably never know – there are certainly other locations that lay claim to having been a bolt hole for this infamous rebel (including one on the secondary route in this booklet). Contrary to popular belief, Cade was no peasant revolutionary – his followers in Kent were from the middle and upper classes, so it perhaps seems unlikely he would have needed to take refuge in a hole in a field! To find out more on Cade, read the section about Jack Cade on page 14.

From point H to point I

29. Continue along the byway, into the woods. Pass a bend to the right. At a marked junction, bear left, staying on the byway. You will have woods on your left and thick hedges on your right.

30. Pass a footpath off to the left and keep straighton.

POINT I – HUCKING ESTATE

Return of the native

You may have seen signs telling you that you have now entered the Hucking Estate. The estate is owned by the Woodland Trust, a national charity dedicated to conserving native woods. Their management of the estate is bucking the trends of landscape change in two ways. Firstly, they are managing surviving woodlands in traditional ways, halting the neglect that affects so many old woodlands. You have just walked through Chitt's Wood, one of these surviving ancient woods.

Secondly, the Trust are reversing the loss of features of the landscape that have occurred over time:

"The main management objective is to restore lost woodlands and hedges …"

On-site information panel, produced by Woodland Trust

As you walk along the footpath you will see one of the newly planted areas of woodland on your right. This new planting means that while the story all around is one of lost woodlands, here on the Hucking Estate at least, native woodland is returning.

From point I to point J

31. Pass a footpath off to the right - keep straight ahead. At the next marked junction, turn left, onto the North Downs Way into woodland. Walk through the wood, reach a kissing gate and walk through on to open downland. (This area is 'access land' and provides excellent views.)

32. Turn left and follow the North Downs Way along the top of the down. Come to a kissing gate and go through into scrubby woodland. (A number of local people have told us that the area on your right (Eden's Hole) was a training area used by the Home Guard in WWII.)

33. Continue through the woods, reach a kissing gate and walk through on to open downland. Follow the path along the downs and through a patch of scrubby woodland.

34. The path goes slightly downhill, towards a field gate and kissing gate. Go through, keeping to the top of the downs. Come to a post with a North Downs Way waymarker.

POINT J – HOLLINGBOURNE DOWNS

Treasure under your feet

The views from Hollingbourne Downs are truly magnificent, but the land under your feet is also full of interest. Did you realise that the grassland you are walking on is a national treasure? A large part of Hollingbourne Downs is nationally protected as a 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' or 'SSSI'. So what's special about it?

"This section of the North Downs … supports a variety of habitats characteristic of calcareous [chalky] soils, including unimproved chalk grassland … A number of plant species indicative of the chalk soils are present, including … musk orchid and man orchid …"

SSSI Notification – English Nature

Man orchid: a rare plant thriving on Hollingbourne Downs

'Unimproved chalk grassland' is grassland growing on chalky soils that has not been ploughed, fertilised or had pesticides used on it. It is a piece of living history, relatively unaffected by the ravages of modern farming.

But not all parts of the Hollingbourne Downs have remained undisturbed. Just to the east of here is an area known as Baldwin's Rough. Local resident Andrew Brice told us that there used to be a large chalk quarry and three lime kilns here. The pit was active in the late 19th century, and disused by 1908. The chalk would have been burnt in the kilns to turn it into quicklime for mortar and other uses.

Surprisingly, the quarry was not a disaster for the flora of the downs - the chalk grassland re-colonised the disused pit and some of the most valuable plants can now be found there.

From point J to point K

35. Follow the waymarker arrow, turning right, down hill. Come to a kissing gate and go through into an agricultural field. Walk along the edge of the field, with a hedge on your left.

36. Come to the corner of the field and continue downwards, close to a house. The path runs alongside the main road, with a handrail. Come to some steps which lead you down to the road. Turn right and head downhill. (Just by the cricket ground on the way into Hollingbourne have been found iron age coins issued by the pre-Roman kings of Kent as well as Roman coins closer to the Pilgrim's Way which cuts through the north of the village.)

37. Go straight ahead into the village at the crossroads, past the Dirty Habit restaurant. (Long-standing residents of the village have told us about the flood of September 15th and 16th, 1968. It rained continuously for two days, and water came running off the downs, down this hill, in one door of the Dirty Habit (then the King's Head pub) out of the other and into the village, where the road was flooded for three days.)

CAUTION: This is a blind bend on a busy road, with a junction and no pavement, please take care.

38. Walk downhill through Hollingbourne village. Just before a bend to the left, stop and look to your right and you will see Hollingbourne Manor.

POINT K – HOLLINGBOURNE MANOR

Hollingbourne Manor House is an impressive and well preserved grade I listed building, dating from about 1570. The original design would have been an E-shape, but the north-east wing was destroyed in a fire, leaving the L-shaped building that survives today.

Features of interest include a fine flint and brick garden wall to the north-east, and some impressive wrought iron double garden gates to the south-west. There are also some fragments of a thick walled building in the south-west corner, possibly dating from the thirteenth century, and a pointed arched stone opening to the south end of the hall.

Hollingbourne Manor by C J Richardson, 1843

From point K to point L

39. Continue along the road until you come to another bend in the road by the church. Cross the road and walk towards the church. Look to your right and you will see some red brick buildings, one of which is Manor Mill.

The mill pond (above) and wheel (right) at Manor Mill in 1973 (Alan Williams)

POINT L – MANOR MILL

A tale of two villages

Close to the 16th century Hollingbourne Manor and the church lies Manor Mill. If you're counting you will realise that makes five water mills that have existed along the Bourne at one time or another, which is quite a few for such a small area.

Alan Williams wrote about Manor Mill in his thesis. He believes this to be an old mill site, dating back to Domesday, and "an integral part of the manorial property". It was almost certainly used to mill the lord of the manor's corn.

From records we know that in 1868, it was still a corn mill, despite the growth of the paper milling industry just down the road, and despite the fact that it was, as Alan puts it, "ideally suited and sited for papermaking". His theory is that the different usage of mills actually reflects the 'two villages in one' character of Hollingbourne, which intrigues so many visitors. The upper part, which you are now standing in, is quite different, and quite separate from the lower part – Eyhorne Street. By exploring the history of the lost mills we start to understand this separation. Much of Eyhorne Street grew up quite quickly around the rapid expansion of the paper making industry, while the upper village, centred on the church and Hollingbourne Manor, grew slowly, more like a typical agricultural settlement.

Upper Street, Hollingbourne

But what was the underlying reason for this difference? Alan explains:

"The area in which industrialisation took place was entirely within the bounds of the old Manor of Elnothington. The Manor of Hollingbourne remained the property of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury … Whilst the area owned by the Dean and Chapter remained whole and intact, the lands of Elnothington Manor became fragmented into smaller units of freehold property …"

The upper village remained agricultural in nature because the manor was in the control of the church, who let it to a few wealthy, farming landowners. Meanwhile, in Eyhorne Street, there were opportunities for the new breed of early industrialists to buy property, because Elnothington Manor had been broken into smaller, more affordable land holdings.

But what became of Elnothington? You won't find this place name on a modern map. You can find out more about this mysterious lost manor on the secondary trail.

From point L to start

40. Walk into the churchyard. Take a footpath that goes to the right hand side of the church. Walk between two hedges, then out of the church yard into a large field.

41. Cross the field then follow the path down the side of a school and come to the main road. Turn right. The road bends to the left. Pass a bench and go under the railway, through an arch. Take the next right - this is the road that leads to the station.

SECONDARY TRAIL

This trail is shown in orange on the map at the front of this booklet. There are no detailed written directions. Below is information on the main points of interest and notes on the route at points where it may not be clear where to go. These points correspond to lower case letters on the map.

To start this trail, follow steps 1 to 3 for the main route. When you reach Musket Lane, turn right, not left.

Point a – Musketstone area

The lost manor of Murston was already well established when it was mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086. Meaning a farmstead situated on moor land, the name 'Murston' seems to have been adopted by the family of de Morestone, who lived here in the fourteenth century. While the manor of Murston disappeared, the name survived, albeit in a corrupted form, as 'Musketstone'.

Musket Lane, which led you to this point, presumably also took its name from this corruption. It is now a dead end, cut in two by the M20 and Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Old Ordnance Survey maps show that it used to continue west, past Muskestone itself, past Silver Hill with its old sand pit, joining what is now the A20 at White Heath, site of the Hollingbourne Union Workhouse and a gas works.

During the construction of the Rail Link in 1999, several finds and features were unearthed not far from here, that shed some light on successive layers of history in this area. The earliest finds date from the early Bronze Age, roughly 2,400 to 1,500 BC. Several pieces of scattered worked flints were discovered, which may have been associated with a number of features discovered when the nearby motorway services were built. More substantial occupation seems to date from the late Iron Age, (approx.. 100 BC to 100 AD). A small kiln or furnace, usually associated with metalworking slag, was found, along with several storage or rubbish pits. There were rectangular enclosure ditches and post-holes for six buildings, including a small circular one, as well as a solitary cremation burial.

Point b – Snarkhurst Wood

Recorded as 'Snockhurst' in 1645, Snarkhurst Wood is an ancient woodland covering some 80 acres. The name derives from 'snook', an old dialect word for a projecting point of land, and 'hyrst', which is Old English for a wooded hill. This is fairly descriptive of the woodland, the highest point of which is locally known as 'Bobs Knoll'. Interestingly, this hillock, an 'outlier' of chalk, supports a slightly different range of flora from the Gault Clay found in the rest of the wood. Many species of trees are present in Snarkhurst Wood, such as oak, hornbeam and ash,, while some of the varied plants found include bluebells, herb paris, and greater butterfly orchid.

Bob's Knoll, Snarkhurst Wood

Point c – Five Wents and a note on the route

This spot is so-called because it is the junction of five footpaths. The junction is marked by a prominent oak tree. To 'wend' your way from here, bear left towards a block of woodland, heading for the right-hand corner. Reach a marker and turn left along the edge of the woodland.

Point d – Ripple

Stop at the second 90 degree corner you come to and look south-west. You will see a small group of houses, which is the present-day Ripple, and just to the right of that a wooded area, which is the medieval moated site of the original Ripple Manor.

The current farmstead of Ripple is a small two-storied timber framed building showing features from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The name comes from the Old English *rippel*, meaning a strip of land. However, a map from 1707 shows that the moat, some 200 metres to the left, is the site of the original manor house, dating back to the thirteenth century. Now seasonally dry, and overgrown with oak, hazel and hornbeam, the moat originally enclosed an area of some 4,000 square metres, the house being roughly 50 metres long by 30 metres wide.

Broken roofing tiles and stone footings for a building have been found here, and the current farmstead of Ripple incorporates some of the remains of this older manor house. Tradition has it that after the failed rebellion of 1450, Jack Cade went into hiding here, and it appears that by the middle of the Sixteenth Century, when Sir Martin Barnham was the owner, the site of the manor house had been moved to that of the present building.

Of note, immediately south west of here and situated on a western slope of pasture, several undulations, hollows and earthworks can just barely be made out. These possibly suggest a small area of habitation, long deserted, connected to the medieval manor.

Point e – CAUTION

The Pilgrim's Way here is a narrow road well used by traffic. Please take care.

Point f – Elnothington

Evidence suggests that this area around Broad Street is the likely setting for the ancient manor of Elnothington. Now absorbed into Hollingbourne, this manor was once, as the great eighteenth century historian Hasted notes, of 'eminent account'. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, it was then transcribed as 'Alnoitone', and it is thought by some that echoes of this survive in the name of a nearby farm, 'Allington'.

While Hollingbourne and its sub-manors were under the control of the monks at Canterbury, Elnothington seems to have been in the hands of Bishop Odo, William the Conqueror's half brother. The Domesday entry notes that it was about half the size of the main manor at Hollingbourne, containing three 'sulungs' (one sulung being roughly 240 acres), eight ploughs, eighteen villagers, two and a half mills, and valued at twelve pounds.

Though considerably shrunken in size, it was still in existence in the Eighteenth Century, when it contained 40 acres of land, 20 acres of meadow, 20 acres of pasture and 20 acres of wood, but it is unsure when precisely this manor disappeared. In his article in 'Archaeologia Cantiana' (Volume 100, p153), historian Allen Grove pieces together its likely boundaries …

"… Elnothington Manor occupied an area roughly enclosed by the North Downs on the north, by the track from Allington Farm to the ironstone workings and Hucking to the east and by the Chrismill-Ripple-Whitehall road on the west side. On the south side it probably went almost as far as … Snarkhurst Wood."

Mr. Grove also manages to deduce a likely location for Elnothington Church, which seems to have vanished from official church records by 1557. By studying the positioning of churches in this area, he notices a pattern in their layout, and that there is usually a gap between them of one to two miles. He therefore places Elnothington church half way between Hollingbourne Church and the church at Thurnham, which is here, at Broad Street.

Point g – Godfrey House

Godfrey House is Kent's oldest dated lobby-entry house, the inscription stone stating it was built in 1587, and restored in 1859. It is a timber framed, three-unit building with plaster infilling set on a stone base, the continuous jettied front broken by a three-storey porch. A three-storey porch is relatively unusual for a house of this period, the third storey being formed in the main roof.

As part of the Lost Landscapes project, local schoolchildren interviewed long-standing residents and recorded their memories. Many of them remembered Godfrey House being used as the doctor's surgery.

Point h – Eyhorne Mill

Although the mill building no longer remains, there is still evidence remaining that this was the site of Eyhorne Mill. Most obvious is the small waterfall, which can be seen from the pavement. An area of flat land next to River Farm is the likely site of the mill pond.

While it is probable that a mill was here for many centuries, the earliest reference to it comes from a fifteenth century will, when a man named Brooker is mentioned as the miller here. In the 1840's, records show that a Mr James Barnard or Bunyard owned the lands around the mill, and that it was occupied by Mr John Symmonds. By 1898, a map of this area marks the mill as being disused.

Local resident, Mr Pat Moon, has an interesting theory relating to this mill. Walk a little further on the same side of the street as the waterfall and you will find the entrance to the drive leading to Tanyard House. The design of the drying lofts of Tanyard House, with their system of louvered weatherboards, lead Mr Moon to conclude that they were intended for drying paper rather than hides. He believes that James Whatman, the eighteenth century paper maker behind the famous Whatman brand, may have built his first mill here, citing similarities with the design of Whatman's Turkey Mill near Maidstone. Further evidence for this is the fact that Eyhorne Mill ended up as part of a much larger paper mill complex, known as the New Hollingbourne Paper Mills centred on nearby Grove Mill (see main trail text). Intriguingly, a griffin insignia on an excise mark for paper made at the New Hollingbourne Paper Mills is remarkably similar to a griffin weathervane that can still be see on top of Tanyard House.

The excise mark showing the griffin insignia

Tanyard House showing the drying lofts and the griffin weather vane (Alan Williams)

Special woodlands

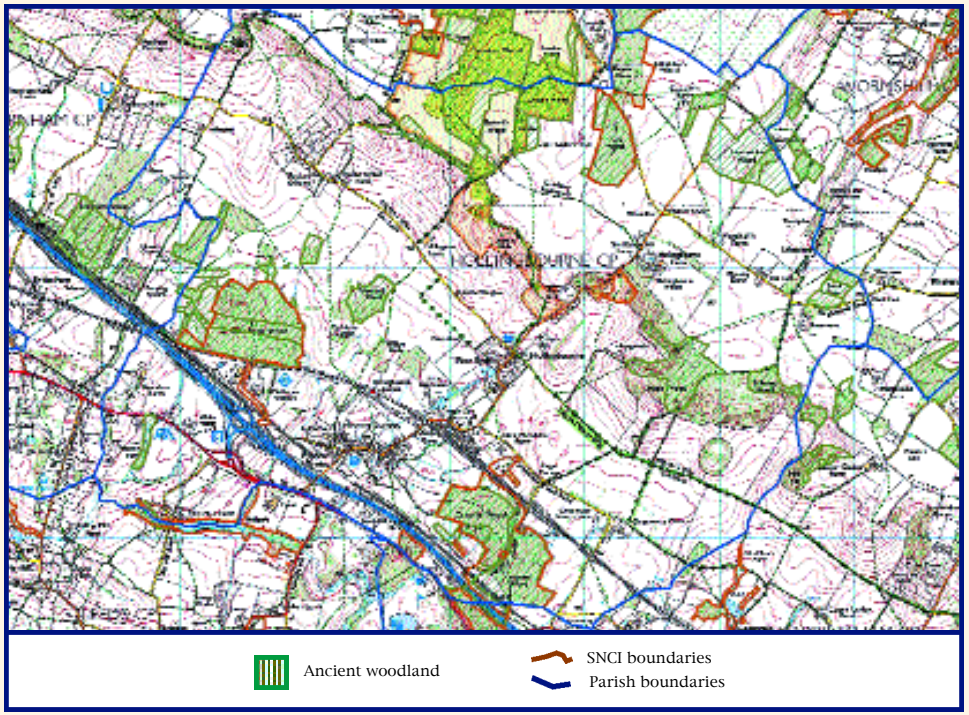
Hollingbourne is quite a well wooded parish. Much of this woodland is termed 'ancient', but what does this mean?

"An ancient woodland is one that has existed since at least 1600 AD, and possibly much longer. Prior to this date, planting of woodland was very uncommon which suggests that if a wood was present in 1600 it is likely to have been there for some time previously, and may be a remnant of the original 'wildwood' which once covered most of Britain. This continuity of woodland cover has provided a refuge for a great variety of plant and animals over the centuries … Consequently, ancient woods are often very rich in wildlife."

Guidelines for Identifying Ancient Woodland - leaflet produced by English Nature.

Conservationists regard ancient woodland as the closest thing to 'natural' woodland that we have in the highly cultivated landscapes of Britain. Those with rare habitats and species are often protected. Many of Hollingbourne's ancient woodlands are Sites of Nature Conservation Interest or SNCIs. SNCIs are designated by Kent Wildlife Trust as good places for wildlife in the county.

The map on the right shows which woodlands in the Hollingbourne area are ancient and which are SNCIs.



Jack Cade

If you are from Kent and a bit anti-establishment, you will be proud to hear that you are carrying on a great Kentish tradition. The famous peasants' uprising led by Wat Tyler in 1381 had many men from Kent as its ringleaders. Then there was the 'Lollards' rising of 1414, with Sir John Oldcastle of Cooling Castle (on the North Kent marshes) at its forefront.

Cade's Rebellion began in May 1450, against the background of unrest that would eventually lead to the Wars of the Roses. Jack Cade camped with this militia (an organised force, and not the peasant rabble one might imagine) at Blackheath. They clashed with the King's men near Sevenoaks and defeated them. The King fled to Kenilworth and the rebels took control of London, executing their oppressors. After three days it was the citizens of London who drove them out, but they remained a threat to the King who agreed to listen to their 'Complaint' and grant them a free pardon if they returned to their homes. The rebel's grievances ranged from major issues such as intimidation and bribery in elections to the rather less serious matter of noblemen from west Kent having to travel for five days to attend Sessions at Canterbury.

The offer of pardon was accepted and the Rebellion weakened, but Cade (who accepted the pardon under his alias of John Mortimer) did not give up the struggle. He went on the run through Kent with a few followers, and this is presumably why local legends of his hiding places exist. He fled to Dartford then Rochester, then to Sheppey, where he failed to capture Queenborough Castle, then through the Weald into Sussex, meeting his death at Heathfield. Cade's rebellion was over in just one month. In August of that year, a Commission was appointed to investigate the 'trespasses and extortions' that Cade had complained of.

If Cade did flee from Sheppey into the Weald, that may be when he came through the Hollingbourne area. But it's impossible to say with a figure like Cade, who quickly became the stuff of legend: Just two years after his death, revolutionaries lead by John Wilkins claimed that Cade was still alive and one of their ringleaders.

Ghosts

As part of the Lost Landscapes project, children at Hollingbourne Primary School interviewed long-standing residents of the parish to record their memories of the area. One story that several people mentioned was of a local and very regal ghost. One of the children wrote:

"Hollingbourne Manor – Henry VIII's fifth wife Catherine Howard came to the manor. When beheaded she haunted the manor …"

However, the story is not consistent. Other children were told that she haunts Eyhorne Manor or Greenway Court or Hollingbourne House. One pupil recorded that Catherine haunted Hollingbourne Manor *and* Greenway Court.

But why would Catherine Howard haunt anywhere in Hollingbourne? What was her connection with the village? In most versions of the story she merely visited with Henry VIII, but one pupil recorded:

"Catherine Howard learnt to be polite and have manors (sic) in a big house in Hollingbourne."

This might explain the connection with Greenway Court where, according to local resident Mr P. Rigall, there was once "a school for the daughters of gentlefolk."

With so much uncertainty, it should be no surprise that a couple of people mentioned the story only as a deliberate fake: "… an invention to attract tourists to the house."

One pupil was told about Catherine Howard haunting Hollingbourne Manor, and "an old lady who faded into the wall" at Eyhorne Manor. Two ghosts? That might explain the confusion.

There may even be a third – one of the children wrote: "Manor Hall ghost – maid who drowned in a mill pond."

Well, with so many mills in one parish, it was an accident waiting to happen!


Hollingbourne Manor, looking spooky (Alan Williams)

Contributors

We would like to thank the following contributors to this booklet (in alphabetical order):

Andrew Brice
Mike Perring
Mr P. Rigall
Alan Williams
The staff and pupils of Hollingbourne Primary School and all the local residents who told them their memories.

Thanks to Andreas Lowson from Chartham for checking the route directions.

Secondary route text written by Andrew Hudson.

This booklet was edited and designed by Clarity Interpretation
clarity.interpretation@virgin.net
01303 249501

Useful information

This circular route is one of a series of Lost Landscapes Heritage Trails that have been developed in the following parishes along the North Downs: Cuxton, Detling, Thurnham, Charing, Chilham and Chartham.

For further information about Lost Landscapes and walking opportunities along the North Downs Way visit www.nationaltrail.co.uk/northdowns or e-mail northdownsway@kent.gov.uk or telephone the Trail Office on 01622 221525.

For further walking opportunities in Kent please visit www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent or telephone 08458 247600.

The Countryside Code.

Be safe – plan ahead and follow arrows or signs
Leave gates and property as you find them
Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
Keep dogs under close control
Consider other people

Waymarking

During your walk you will see arrows marking various public rights of way:

- Footpath (on foot only)
- Bridleway (on foot, horseback or pedal cycle)
- Byway (all traffic)

Please tell us about any problems concerning the paths by using the Kent Report Line – 0845 345 0210.

North Downs Way National Trail
Local Heritage initiative
Explore Kent
Rail Link Countryside Initiative
Heritage Lottery Fund
Nationwide
The Countryside Agency
Kent County Council