

This trail is part of the Valley of Visions Community Trails project, encouraging people to enjoy, explore and learn about their local area and surrounding countryside. Why not explore one of the other community trails in the Medway Gap? Visit www.valleyofvisions.org.uk for further information.

For more information about Snodland visit www.snodlandcouncil.co.uk and www.snodlandhistory.org.uk

You can find out more about the wildlife and nature reserves of the area at www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk

Illustrations – Jo Savage



Start of route

Walk through the car park heading towards the **High Street**, keeping the recreational field on your right.

The cricket meadow on your right was formerly glebe land and belonged to Snodland rectors until being given over to recreational use. Directly opposite you as you leave the car park and reach the High Street is the United Church, built in 1888 by Joshua Wilford. Whilst not the oldest in Snodland, this church replaced two earlier non-conformist buildings elsewhere in the parish.

Turn right into and walk along the **High Street**.

The larger houses on the left hand side of the High Street were built around 1900 for professional residents. Evidence of fine iron work and original tiling on the path and porch can still be seen on number 37 which was a former surgery. Anchor Place (no. 43) was built by the coal merchant Thomas William Peters around 1861 and Hope Terrace immediately after it, was built for his family. These dwellings are typical of the housing built as Snodland began to expand and transform into a small industrial town.

On the south side of the High Street just after the cricket field you can see Lymeath. Now extended for office space, it was built as the home of Colonel Holland who used to be the manager of the paper mill. It is said that the name was derived from the Hook family who owned the mill: M = Maude Midsummer Hook; E = Edith Anna Hook; A = Agnes Darlington Hook; TH = Charles Townsend Hook and IVY because they clung together as a family.



The next building is the Church of the New Jerusalem, built in 1882 by the Hook family, who were followers of Emanuel Swedenborg. This replaced a small chapel in their own house which had served since 1864. This church closed around 1990 but stands as a testament to the Hook family's dedication to Swedenborgianism which had a number of followers in Sweden and England (including William Blake for a time) during the 19th century. The church was inspired by Emanuel Swedenborg's work of the mid 18th century and rejected the Holy Trinity and stated that salvation could not come through faith alone but a combination of faith and charity.

This area was the centre of Snodland up until the 1890s and is bequest by the Hook family. On the corner of Waghorn Road and the High Street is a building that was once the woodwork and metalwork classrooms associated with the British Schools in Holborough Road (provided by the Hook sisters). On the opposite side of the road is the Devonshire Rooms, built by the Hook family as a Sunday School for the Church of the New Jerusalem and as a parish meeting place. This usage is maintained to the present day as the building still hosts the Town Council and a wealth of community groups. Two sets of almshouses were built next to the Devonshire Rooms: the Hook building in memory of Eustace Hook who died in 1890 and the Drummond building in memory of Amelia Drummond, governess to the Hooks. Opposite the Devonshire Rooms stands the Fire Station, built in the early twentieth century but now houses Snodland Millennium Museum which opened in 1999.

Back on the High Street there is a timbered house that probably dates back to the 15th century but was extensively re-modelled in 1932. The former Red Lion pub at the far end of the High Street is only documented from 1738 but there has been a building on the site from at least the 15th century.

When you reach the end of the **High Street**, turn right along the path to cross the bridge over the A228. Turn left and follow this road (**Brook Street**) as it bears round to the right towards the railway line.

Introduction

From downland to marshes and a rich historical centre all in the space of one parish, Snodland has a great variety of areas to explore. The three routes that make up Snodland's Community Trail offer people the opportunity to enjoy all these fantastic areas, all accessible from the centre of Snodland.

Farms & Downs Walk

(4½ miles plus optional loop of 2.6 miles around the Lad's Farm circular walk). Experience the surrounding farmland landscape of Snodland, enjoying views over the valley below from the top of the Kent Downs. Please be advised that sections of this walk are steep as you head up on to the Downs.

Lakes & Marshes Walk

(5½ miles or two separate walks of 2.3 miles and 4 miles). Amble around Leybourne Lakes and Holborough Marshes enjoying the riverside views and array of wildlife as you go. An easy access route for all with no hills, following footpaths and some roads, with the second part of the loop entirely on surfaced paths.

Snodland Heritage Trail

(3 miles). A short loop taking in the historic buildings and landmarks of Snodland. This walk is flat and on pavements and footpaths around the heart of Snodland.



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Hedgerows

The hedgerows throughout the landscape provide a lifeline for wildlife, particularly in farmland areas. They provide shelter for animals and the berries, fruits and nuts found in the hedgerow trees are a welcome source of food. Hundreds of insects and other small creatures live in the hedgerows which in turn, act as a kitchen cupboard for small mammals and birds.

Hedgerows also play a major part in allowing animals to move from one place to another safely such as dormice and birds. Many birds and bats fly above the line of a hedgerow using it for camouflage from any watching predators. The hedges in this part of the Medway Valley not only contain hawthorn, probably the most common hedgerow tree, but are also full of the chalk loving species such as field maple, wild privet, spindle, wayfaring tree and dogwood.

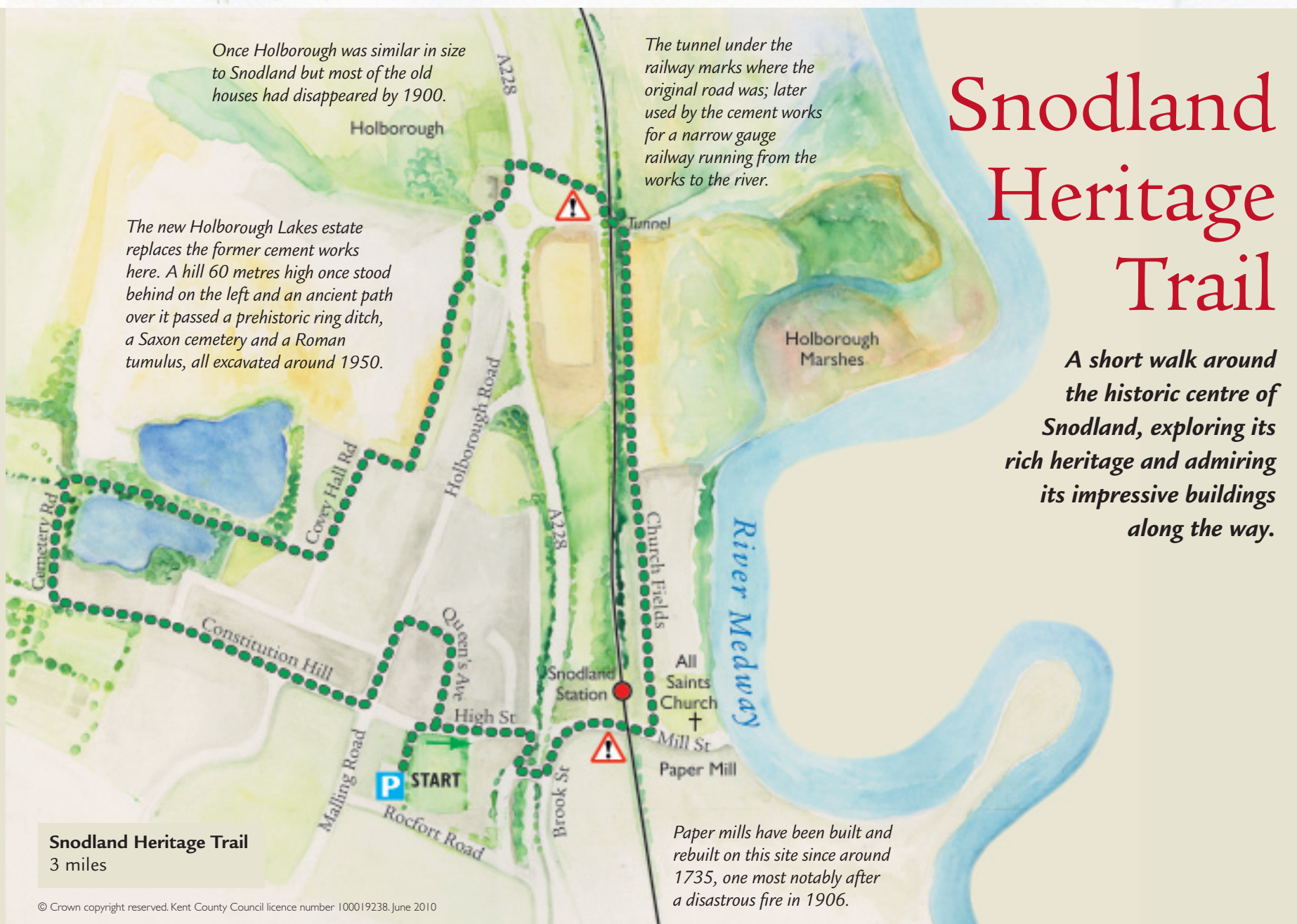


Majestic woodlands

Unlike farming areas that have been ploughed and often hide the past use of land, woodlands often have features that can provide information about their history. The woodlands in Snodland are no different. A substantial ditch and bank system which appears to mark the boundary between Snodland and Halling can be seen in Hanginghill Wood on the Farms and Downs walk. It is not just the lumps and bumps in the land either that reveal the past. If you look carefully at the trees in woodlands you will see that not only are some older than others but some have been managed in different ways. As you walk through the woodlands on the Downs above Snodland, you will come across short trees that have large trunks. These are pollarded trees and are often used to mark divisions and boundaries in a wood. Not only are they beautiful but the old wood contained within them provides a fantastic home to all kinds of wildlife.



COMMUNITY TRAILS
IN THE MEDWAY GAP
Snodland



Snodland Heritage Trail

A short walk around the historic centre of Snodland, exploring its rich heritage and admiring its impressive buildings along the way.

Snodland Heritage Trail
3 miles

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This part of Snodland was dramatically altered when the by-pass was built in the 1980s. The old road to the common of Brookland used to be situated here. Charles Townsend Hook built many houses for workers at the paper mill but most of these have been destroyed, though some remain in May Street. Two large houses, the residences of the Hook family, once existed on the line of the by-pass, but today all that is left are the governess's house in May Street, and the former laundry and groom's house in the High Street.

Cross the railway with care and head towards the church.

The parish church of All Saints is one of many locally which are sited near the river and offers a contrast to the industrial site next door. Little remains of the church's earliest fabric, although it was mentioned in the Domesday Book, and today what can be seen is largely 13th to 15th centuries. Note that there is a large cross by the gate which was erected by the rector in 1846. The other building in this area was the ferryman's house which was built by the rector in the 1840s behind the church. Although the ferry no longer exists, it operated until 1948 and was at its busiest when the cement works were active on both sides of the river.



Railway Approach, High St, Snodland

Turn left into **Church Fields** and follow this to the end of the road where you will find a footpath that runs alongside the railway line.

The two large houses towards the northern end of Church Fields, numbers 28 and 30, formerly belonged to the builders Joshua Wilford and John Mason. The new estate stands on the site of a Roman villa which was itself the centre of a more substantial estate. There is now no visible evidence of these remains which were excavated before houses were built on the site.

Follow the footpath until it ends. Opposite the entrance to **Holborough Marshes**, turn left underneath the railway and over the small road and onto the footpath. The footpath takes you through an industrial area and brings you out at the main road (**A228**). Cross the road very carefully. Turn left towards the roundabout.

There are remaining ancient buildings at Holborough including Island Cottage, perhaps originally late 16th century almshouses built by William Tylghman (d.1595). Streams run either side which once came from the large mill-pond behind. One stream turned the mill wheel which has recently been restored. A flour mill has been here since before Domesday and ceased operating about a hundred years ago. The 15th century 'Mill Stream Cottage' was once a tavern called 'The Buck' and later the farmhouse for 'Gilder's Farm'. It was offered to Snodland for a museum but the offer was declined because of its distance from the village.

Holborough Court, a large house, was built at Holborough Park between 1884 and 1886 for the Roberts family, owners of the cement works; an older house, which for many years from the 1820s was occupied by the manager of the works, still stands. The old road to the Halling ran nearby.

Turn right at the roundabout on the main road towards the housing development and then follow the footpath to the left of the smaller roundabout.

Very few houses on the left of the footpath now retain the end-of-garden buildings for lavatories and washrooms but one of two surviving sets are passed here. Most of

the Holborough Road houses were for cement workers, although there are two larger ones. On your left at the end of the footpath, you will see Snodland's clock tower which was built in 1878 as a memorial to Charles Townsend Hook. At the time it could be seen from anywhere in Snodland and was also the site of the former British Schools until 1930.

Follow this footpath until you reach a crossroads of public footpaths. Turn right here and then left into **Covey Hall Road**. Once you have gone past the open grassy area on your right, take the next right marked as a public footpath. At the end of the road keep going along the footpath which takes you between two lakes until you come to the cemetery.

There is evidence that this public right of way has existed for 1,000 years and seems to have run between the manors of Veles (the Bishop of Rochester) to the right and Pottyns (the Bishop of Bayeux) to the left. The cemetery itself was built in 1896 with the house and chapel being designed by Hubert Bensted of Maidstone.

Turn left at the cemetery along **Cemetery Road** and then at the junction with the main road, turn left onto **Constitution Hill**. Follow **Constitution Hill** all the way back to the crossroads with the Bull public house on your left.



The fine farmhouse of Woodlands on the left was enlarged in Victorian times but once seems to have been the manor house for Pottyns. There has been a travelling community in Snodland for more than 100 years and fairground equipment comes and goes from their land opposite Woodland Avenue. Near the junction of Constitution Hill and Birling Road is the Lodge (now a residential home), built by Thomas Fletcher Waghorn around 1841. He is famed for establishing the Overland Route to India for passengers and mails in the days before the Suez Canal was built. The fine Bull Hotel dates from 1881 but older inns once stood on this site and also opposite.

Turn left at the crossroads and then take the second right into Queen's Avenue.

All the older houses in Queen's Avenue, Queen's Road, Waghorn Road and those nearby in Holborough Road, were built by Joshua Wilford in the years before the First World War. He also built the Public Baths (near the corner of Queen's Avenue) and his former builder's yard next door still retains its arch (although modified). As already mentioned he also built the Congregational (United) Church on the corner of the High Street.

Follow **Queen's Avenue** as it bends right back towards the **High Street**. The car park is directly opposite the end of **Queen's Avenue**.

Our thanks to Dr Andrew Ashbee of Snodland Historical Society for contributing this information about Snodland's past.

Old photographs and postcards courtesy of Snodland Historical Society

Historic Snodland

Although there is evidence to suggest that there has been a settlement at Snodland since the Bronze Age, it is only in the last 150 years that Snodland has become the place it is today. Pottery found in one of Snodland's numerous quarries has been dated as Bronze Age and the numerous stones and Neolithic monuments suggest that human settlements have been found in this part of the Medway Valley for longer than this.

Snodland remained a rural community until the middle of the 19th century. The growth of the cement industry in the valley, the expansion of the paper mill and the coming of the railway in 1859 allowed for rapid expansion – Snodland became a town of some 3,000 people by the turn of the 20th century. Reminders of Snodland's industrial past exist from the numerous quarries seen in the landscape. The history, wildlife, rural and urban areas side by side, make Snodland an inviting place to explore.



Industry & nature side by side

The eastern part of Snodland is an area of contrasts. The areas of industry which have shaped Snodland are on the floodplains of the River Medway alongside a host of wetland complexes, lakes, streams and channels with areas left for nature in between. When taking a walk from the centre of Snodland towards Leybourne Lakes it is easy to see that wildlife does not seem to mind whether there is a factory next door. Areas that may appear as though they are not looked after have long grasses, bramble and small bushes growing in them, which create a paradise for nesting birds, small mammals, reptiles and all manner of insects and other invertebrates. When you walk through these areas keep your eyes open and listen for the chorus of birdsong and calls that reverberate through the air.



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Character of the Downs

The last century has seen changes on the scarp slope (the steep bit) of the Downs that have altered the character of the area drastically. Just by taking a look at old maps and photos it is easy to see how much things have changed. Where there are now trees and scrub there used to be open fields and animals grazing. Some of the most important wildlife habitat that Kent has to offer is the chalk grassland of the Kent Downs with some of Britain's rarest plants such as ground pine and musk orchid found in the Snodland area. The optional loop around Lad's Farm and surrounding woodland on the Farms & Downs walk takes in this chalk grassland habitat.





Disused quarries are a characteristic feature of the Medway Gap; a reminder of the once thriving industrial past that this area was so important for

Farms & Downs Walk

This walk takes you from the centre of historic Snodland, west into the heart of rural surroundings, alongside farmland and old quarries up to the Kent Downs. The fantastic views from the top of the Downs back to Snodland and the valley below are stunning and well worth the short uphill walk!



For those continuing with the trail, continue along the byway (which becomes a surfaced path) until you reach a junction with a road with a house on the left hand side - **Lad's Farm**. Turn left along a path that runs alongside this farmhouse and follow it up the steep hill into the wooded area.

Enjoy the panoramic views of Snodland and the valley below from here all the way around this section of the walk.

Once the gradient has levelled off, you will reach a split in the footpath where woodland continues on your left with an open field on your right. Take the left hand fork and follow this path all the way through the woodland (**Hanginghill Wood**) until it eventually emerges into the open again.

The woodland you pass through along this section of the walk is rare beech-yew woodland, found along the top of the Downs in the Medway Gap, thanks to the underlying chalk below.

Cross over the open field still continuing uphill. After you reach a line of trees, take the path left heading downhill into a wooded valley. Take care at this point as the path heads downhill very steeply.

This open area, with single and clumps of mature trees, is characteristic of 18th century parkland where deer and other animals would have grazed.

At the bottom of the valley turn left and then immediately right and follow this footpath through the woodland (**Crookhorn Wood**) back to the crossroads with Crookhorn bungalow on your left. At the crossroads go straight on following this path (**Whitedyke Road**) all the way back to Snodland keeping the disused quarry on your left all the way.

As you enter back into Snodland, you will pass the cemetery on your right. Follow **Cemetery Road** down to the junction with the main road and turn left into **Constitution Hill**. Follow this road back into Snodland. You will reach a crossroads with the Bull public house on your left. To complete the **Farms & Downs Walk**, carry straight ahead for about 100m before turning right into the car park. Alternatively turn left at the crossroads along **Malling Road** to begin the **Lakes & Marshes Walk** or the **Heritage Trail** around Snodland.



Farms & Downs Walk
4½ miles plus optional loop of 2.6 miles around the Lad's Farm circular walk

Start of route

From the car park in the centre of Snodland, turn right into **Rocfort Road**. At the junction with **Malling Road**, turn left and follow this road. After passing **St Katherine's Lane** on your right just before you get to Christ Church on the left hand side, turn right along a footpath just before Holmesdale Technology. Follow this along the length of the college and turn left at the end into **Tom Joyce Close** and almost immediately, turn right into **Hollow Lane**. At the end of this road, turn left into



Snodland Road (signposted towards Birling). You will now leave the built up area of Snodland. Take extra care here as there is no pavement along this stretch. Towards the end of the first field after 100m turn right up a set of steps and then left along a public footpath. (If you get to Sandy Lane on your left you have missed the footpath).

The transformation from urban to rural Snodland within such a short distance is remarkable. Fields of crops, thick hedgerows and large open areas cover this whole area west of Snodland.

Follow the footpath along the field boundary until the hedge line opens. Turn left here keeping the hedgerow to your left just after going under the power lines.

At the end of this footpath turn right and head north towards **Paddlesworth Farm** keeping a large oak tree on your right.

No matter what the season is, the majestic oak trees along this footpath are a beautiful sight to stop and admire.

When you reach **Paddlesworth Road**, turn right and then immediately left along the footpath that runs alongside the group of buildings and up the hill towards the North Downs. Take care here as you will be on a road with no pavement for 50m.



Some of the buildings at Paddlesworth date back to the 13th century while the stunning church dates back to Norman times.

At the end of the footpath go through the gate and turn right. You are now on the **North Downs Way**. You will soon come to a crossroads of paths where you need to carry on straight ahead passing **Crookhorn Bungalow** on your left. Alternatively you can return to Snodland here by turning right and following **Whitedyke Road** all the way back to Snodland, passing both the cemetery and Community Centre.



Lakes & Marshes Walk
5½ miles or two separate walks of 2.3 miles and 4 miles

Lakes & Marshes Walk

A walk taking in the fantastic scenery and wildlife of the wetland areas of Holborough Marshes, Leybourne Lakes and the River Medway that are just a stone's throw from Snodland town centre.



Start of route

From the car park in the centre of Snodland, turn right into **Rocfort Road**. At the junction with **Malling Road**, turn right and follow this road until you reach the clock tower.

Snodland's clock tower was built in 1878 as a memorial to Charles Townsend Hook, owner of Snodland paper mill and at the time could be seen from anywhere in Snodland.

Turn left down **Clock Tower Mews** between the houses and after about 50m, turn right along a footpath at the back of the houses on **Holborough Road**. Continue along this footpath until you come out at a mini roundabout. Turn right here and then left at the larger roundabout on the main road. Take care at this point of the walk as traffic can move quickly along the A228. Cross the main road and look for the footpath on the other side of the road. Follow this footpath and cross the road at the other end. Walk underneath the railway line and head through the kissing gate entering **Holborough Marshes**. Turn left onto the footpath to the right of the stream and follow this around the marshes.

Take time to enjoy the sights and sounds of Holborough Marshes, a beautiful nature reserve. In spring, listen for the distinctive song of the nightingale with an impressive range of whistles, trills and gurgles. It returns to this site and a few others along the River Medway year after year.

This footpath emerges on to an embankment with a reed bed behind it. Turn right here and follow the line of the embankment. When the embankment ends follow the path towards the railway line. Once the railway line is in front of you, turn left along the footpath following the line of the railway. You will come out into housing in **Church Fields**. Keep going to the end of the road where you will have a church (**All Saints Church**) on your left.



All Saints Church is mentioned as far back as the Domesday book of 1086 with the present building largely work from 13th - 15th century.

Turn right into **Mill Street** and over the railway line. Follow the road as it bears left into **Brook Street**. At this point you can take a short cut by turning right over the bridge over the main road into **Rocfort Road** and heading back to the car park or follow part of the heritage trail. Continue along **Brook Street** and keep to the left. Go past East Street and then take the next left. Do not go towards the roundabout. You will pass a series of industrial buildings and come to a car park with a track on the right before the entrance to the car park. Take this track keeping the waterway on your right. This is the entrance to **Leybourne Lakes**.

Leybourne Lakes Country Park was once a gravel workings and has been transformed into a local wildlife site, meaning it is important for wildlife on a county level. Many birds and other animals live in this stunning wetland area.

Follow this path for about a kilometre keeping the stream to your right. **Brooklands Lakes** will lie to your left the far side of the railway line. At the end of the path turn left and then right almost straight away keeping the main lake (**Ocean Lake**) on your left hand side. Follow this path all the way around the lake keeping the lake to your left. After passing through some housing and going across a tree-lined causeway between two lakes you will eventually come back to the point where you first approached the lake.



Listen out for the characteristic 'plop' of the water vole as it dives head first into the water. Water voles are the most dramatically declining of all British mammals but they do live at Leybourne Lakes so keep your eyes and ears peeled.

At the junction of a number of paths follow the signpost towards **Nevill Park** which directs you over the footbridge across the **A228** main road. Bear to the right following the footpath and continue along this path until you get to a road. Turn left and then go over the footbridge that takes you over the main road and into **Nevill Park**.

After coming off the footbridge, turn right and head towards the far left hand corner of the park. When you leave the park keep to your right and walk straight along **Saltings Road**. Follow this road north all the way to **Rocfort Road**. The car park will now be in sight on your left hand side.

Paddlesworth & its church

Paddlesworth was once a separate parish from Snodland until 1888 when the two were merged to become modern day Snodland. Evidence of Paddlesworth's past can still be seen in the small Norman church nestled within the modern farm buildings. The church may have some Saxon features but the shape is typical of a Norman church. The fate of the church reflects that of the parish of Paddlesworth, with depopulation and Henry VIII both playing a part in its downfall. By the end of the 17th century the church was being used as a farm building and remained this way until the 1930s when it was restored and is now looked after by the Churches Conservation Trust.



Holborough Marshes

Owned by Lafarge and managed by Kent Wildlife Trust, Holborough Marshes is a wonderful nature reserve lying to the north east of Snodland. The influence of the River Medway, which is tidal and brackish (a mixture of sea water and freshwater) as it passes through Snodland is great. As you enter the reserve you will see the grazed area of grassland to your right which contains a variety of orchids and moisture loving wild flowers. You will soon pass into an area that has lots of thick impenetrable scrub which nightingales love. Listen out for their amazing song in the late spring. The reserve also has a large area of reed beds which also host reed bunting as well as reed and sedge warblers who breed there. As the seasons change, so do the birds who visit the reserve. Sand martins and swallows roost in the reeds before their journey south to avoid the cold weather and amongst the winter visitors are redshank, snipe and water rail.

Leybourne Lakes Country Park

Leybourne Lakes Country Park straddles the boundary of Snodland and Larkfield and is the site of former sand and gravel workings. The hard surfaced paths make Leybourne Lakes an easy place to visit for all the family including those with wheelchairs and buggies. The lakes themselves attract wildfowl throughout the year, with the grassland and waterways that dominate the rest of the Park managed to encourage wildlife. Important though the wildlife is, Leybourne Lakes is a place for people to pursue a range of leisure activities including walking, cycling, fishing and water sports such as scuba diving and windsurfing. There is a children's play area en-route and toilets in the main car park which are just a short detour. The backdrop of the Kent Downs and the views across the lakes are spectacular. The car park at Leybourne Lakes makes a good alternative starting point for the Lakes & Marshes walk.

