

# Halling Community Trail

*A gentle stroll by the marshes or longer rambles over the Downs above the village and its industrial heritage.*

KEY	
	Walking route
	Follow North Downs Way waymarkers on this section of the route
	Link to Marsh Walk
	Railway line and station



## Downs walks

### Route directions

From the New Bell Inn, turn left along the High Street, keep going through the traffic lights until you reach the New Town Social Club at the end of the village on the right. You now have two choices. Firstly, you can cross the A228 (carefully!) and then on to the pedestrian bridge, from which you can follow the footpath where the remains of the old Cemex factory will be on the right and the locally famous "Blue Lake" on the left. The top of the footpath takes you out onto Pilgrims Road in North Halling.

Alternatively you can continue along the west side of Rochester Road to the next footpath and take that route up to Pilgrims Way. From either route turn left until you find a footpath on the right which leads up by the Warren.

A spectacular view of the Medway Valley stretching out before you awaits when you reach the top. Walk the path in springtime and the woodland will be covered with blankets of bluebells.

You then need to follow the paths set out on the map and decide if you want to do the shorter four mile walk or go on to do an eight mile walk. This shorter walk takes you past Court Farm with its large shop selling locally sourced meats, including their own lamb and beef, cheese and vegetables.

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The Blue Lake

# Introduction

Halling Parish lies between the slopes of the Kent Downs and the River Medway. Using the routes we have designed, you can either take a gentle stroll by the marshes or if you are slightly more adventurous, you can try the longer walks over the Downs above the village.

The history of Halling surrounds you as you stroll around with evidence of a rich industrial past marked by several old chalk pits which have largely been returned to nature and the remnants of the Cemex (Rugby Cement) factory which was the last factory to quarry chalk in Halling.

There are many historic buildings in the parish, perhaps the most iconic being the remains of the medieval Bishop's Palace, set in its recently landscaped grounds. This can be discovered whilst undertaking the Marsh Walk.

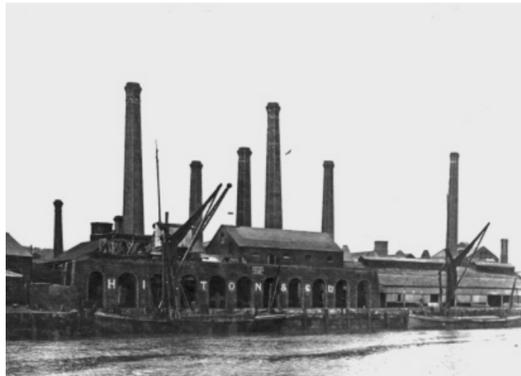
The name "Halling" is thought to derive from the Saxon word "haling" meaning a wholesome low place or meadow. This is reflected in the street name "Low Meadow" which you will pass on most of the walks suggested below. The name also forms the title of the excellent book "Across the Low Meadow", written by local historians Edward Gowers and David Church.

View over Halling and the Medway



## Historic Halling

Today the upper slopes of the Kent Downs are largely covered by woodland. Old photographs of the parish show chalk grassland on the same slopes. Changes in agricultural patterns over the centuries have shaped much of the area's landscape. The woods around Halling were traditionally a source of fuel but the growing hop industry in the 17th century created a demand for chestnut and ash poles. In later years the cement industry took advantage of the by-product, bavins (faggots of brushwood), for use in firing their kilns. The Medway Valley has been a location for lime burning and cement production for centuries. However the industry expanded significantly in Halling in the latter part of the 18th century to its boom period in the second half of the 19th century. A number of different quarries and factories were set up around the parish. This development was mirrored in the growth of its population from 550 people in 1851 to 2,095 in 1891.



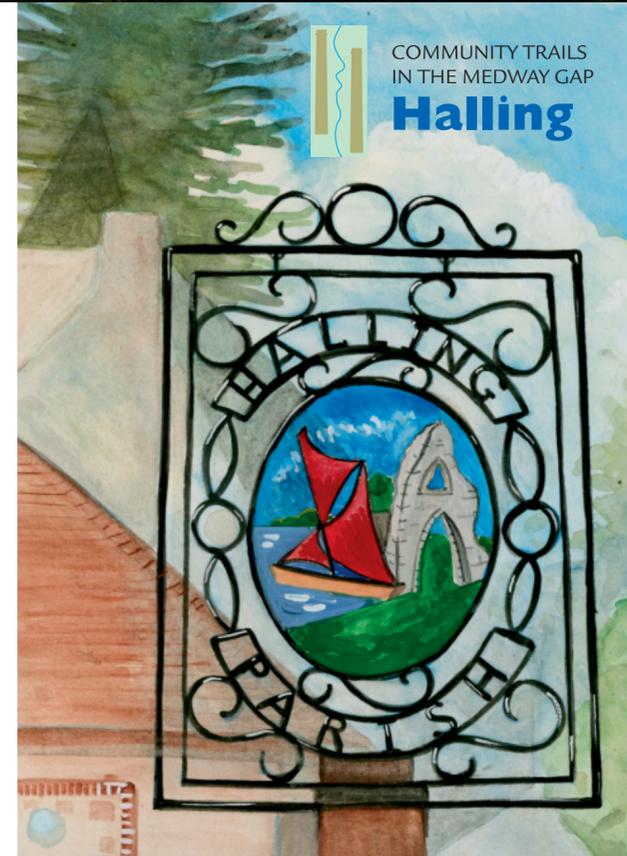
The Hilton and Anderson Cement Works in 1899



Bishops Palace

The river was the key means of transport for freight before the arrival of the railway line through Halling over 150 years ago. The River Medway was once teeming with barges laden with coke, mud, cement and lime, serving the industries built in the valley. There was even a barge building industry in the village, connected to the Lee's cement workings. Ironically the river contributed to the decline of the cement industry in Halling by the early decades of the 20th century. No large sea-going vessels could navigate upstream of the new Rochester Bridge. This meant that cargoes for both import and export had to be double handled and businesses in the Medway Valley were at a disadvantage, leading to the closure of many of the local factories by the 1920s.

During World War II many of the derelict chalk pits were used as army training areas, rifle ranges and ammunition stores. Those that still remain today have become distinctive features of the local landscape. Just recently, in 2010, the Cemex (Rugby) Factory ceased its production and for the first time in many years, no cement is being produced in Halling Parish.



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](http://www.valleyofvisions.org.uk) for further information.

For more information about Halling visit [www.halling-pc.gov.uk](http://www.halling-pc.gov.uk)

Apply to join the Old Pictures of Halling group on Facebook.

You can find out more about the wildlife and nature reserves of the area at [www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk](http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk)

Halling Parish Council has just taken a lease on an old chalk pit in the parish, which contains some beautifully preserved old industrial lime kilns. It is currently anticipated that guided tours of the area will begin later in 2011. For more information on that, anything else in this leaflet or anything at all concerning our parish, please contact the Parish Office at 01634 241551.



## Marsh walk

### Route directions

Leave the New Bell Inn (if you can!), turn left along the High Street and right into Marsh Road immediately before the traffic lights, Marsh Road is behind the bollards preventing vehicular access. Halling Marshes stretch out to the left and you will see a variety of flora and fauna, constantly changing according to the seasons. At the end you can turn left and walk a little further before returning to cross the stile and walk along the waterfront in Maximilian Drive, with Wouldham village immediately opposite.

The ferry to Wouldham plied its trade until 1964 before closing after nearly 600 years of use, but not always with the same boat! In its later years the ferry was used by Wouldham villagers crossing to work in the cement industry or to use the rail service from Halling and by Halling villagers to work in the factories at Wouldham. The Old Ferryman's House which was opposite the steps behind the riverside railings at the end of Maximilian Drive has long since been demolished. The steps on the Halling side remain in excellent condition, but sadly those at Wouldham have deteriorated considerably.

From here you will see the remains of an old industrial railway that transported carts carrying chalk quarried from the now disused Hilton Pit on the other side of the A228. You wouldn't think it now, but the entire river frontage here was once lined with industry, all serving the Hilton and Anderson Cement Works where Maximilian Drive is today. Behind the old railway lie the remains of the medieval Bishop's Palace next to St John the Baptist church and marked by the last remaining stone wall. Only the outlines of its lancet windows mark it as a building of some significance. The palace was built towards the end of the eleventh century by Gundulph, Bishop of Rochester, as a manor



Halling Marshes



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