North Downs Way
NATIONAL TRAIL

Lost Landscapes

HERITAGE TRAILS

Charing

A lost heathland,a woodland that's been moved and a special map belonging to an anonymous contributor. 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 explores the area to the south-west of Charing village, where vast modern sand pits that give you a glimpse back in time contrast with ancient woodlands and buildings,including a ruin that may or may not be a chapel. The secondary trail takes you south-east of the village, past buildings of many ages,then up onto the downs, culminating with the superb views near Charing windmill (right).

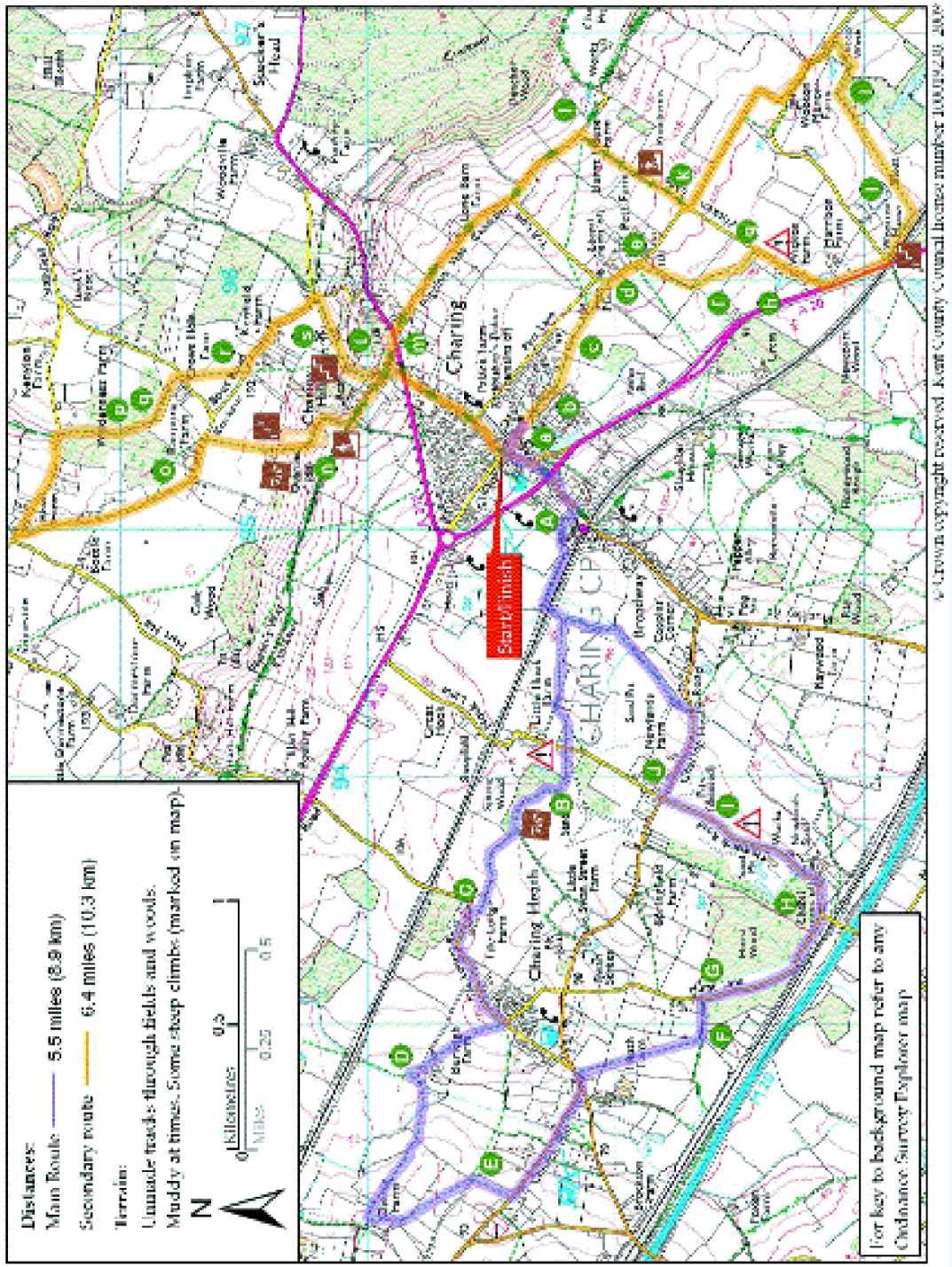
The main text of the booklet consists of detailed directions and information on points of interest for the main trail. The secondary trail has no detailed directions but the route is shown on a map and there are notes to help you and information on points of interest. The back pages of the booklet cover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



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 an Ordnance Survey map for this area - Explorer no. 148 or Landranger no. 188.

Getting to Charing

By train - Charing station is on the Ashford-Maidstone-London line between Ashford Domestic and Lenham. For train times telephone 08457 484950. The main trail passes close to the station - walk away from the station and reach a main road, turn left down Hither Field and pick up the trail at step 2.

By car - Leave the M20 at junction 9 and follow signs for the A20, heading west. After about 5 miles you will come into Charing. At a crossroads with a pedestrian crossing, turn right onto the High Street, signposted village centre. Take the second right into Market Square - park here.

By bus - The 510 Maidstone to Ashford bus passes through Charing. There is a bus stop in School Road.

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).

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
- Steep climb
- Bench
- Steps
- Viewpoint

BEFORE YOU START:...
We would like to acknowledge the anonymous loan of an original tithe map of Charing from 1840. You will find references to information we gleaned from this map, such as the traditional names of fields, throughout the trail. For more information about this and other tithe maps, see page 15. Our thanks also to Parish Councillor Allan Dixon for passing the map on to us.

Thanks to local resident John McIntyre who suggested the main route.

The Archbishop's Palace
On the north side of the churchyard there stands a fourteenth century building that now serves as a barn. In fact it is the surviving east side of the courtyard and Great Hall of the former manor house of the Archbishops of Canterbury. It was probably built by John Statford, Archbishop from 1333-1348 and whose favourite residence is said to have been Charing. For more information, see the 'Historic Charing' panel in the square or ask in the library.

Charing village as shown on the 1840 tithe map

From start to point A

1. Start in the car park in Market Place, next to the church. Walk along the lane out of the car park, away from the church. When you reach the main road through the village, turn left and walk downhill. Pass a turning on your left, keep straight on. When you reach the main road (A20) use the pedestrian crossing to cross over and go down the road directly opposite (Station Road). Take the next right (Hither Field).

2. Take the second right off Hither Field, towards the village surgery. You will see a stile on the left and a tarmac path into a new housing estate. Bear left on a grassy path and walk between a fence and the hedges of gardens.

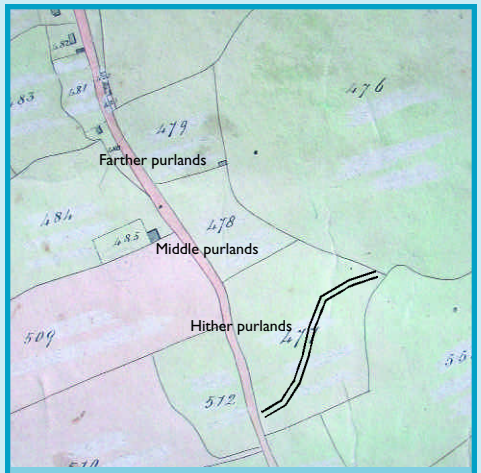
POINT A - PURLANDS AREA

Purlands and Piquets lost to 'progress'

The 1840 tithe map, leant to us by our mystery contributor, shows that the land where the houses on your left now stand was then part of a pasture called Hither Purlands. It is from this traditional name that the road Hither Field gets it name. Two more pastures to the south, called Middle Purlands and Farther Purlands are also now houses and gardens, the oldest of which is called 'Purlands'.

Another local resident did some on-line research of old maps and sent us what they found. The Ordnance Survey map from 1881 shows a dramatic change in this area - the railway had arrived, and where the houses to your left now stand were railway sidings and a gas works. It is hard to imagine the impact the railway must have had on villages all along its route. Before its arrival they were mostly very agricultural communities that had probably changed little in the last hundred years. The railway brought the modern, industrial age hurtling through these rural landscapes, and things would never be the same again.

The landscape of this part of the parish has recently undergone another change, with the building of a new housing estate over fields with evocative traditional names like Piquets and Horse Lees.



The Purlands area as shown on the 1840 tithe map with field names and the approximate alignment of the modern road Hither Field added.

From point A to point B

3. The path does a 90 degree turn then goes under a railway bridge. Follow the tree line on your right until you find a stile.

4. Cross the stile then a small bridge, and walk across a field (traditional name, Lower Meadow) towards a house.

5. As you approach the house, go through a field gate onto a surfaced driveway. Walk past the house then turn left and go through a field gate. Walk diagonally across a field (traditional name, Upper Meadow) towards a stile.

6. Cross the stile then go straight ahead, through some trees and over a second stile. Turn right, then left at the end, between two fences. Look for a third stile on the right, cross it, and walk through a belt of conifers.

7. Emerge onto a road, cross it and cross a stile. Go straight ahead across a strip of grass and over a second stile, onto another road. CAUTION: This is a quarry road used by heavy lorries.

8. Cross the road and a stile into a field (Horse Pasture). Walk diagonally across the field to a stile in the corner. Cross the stile and a small bridge, bear right and walk with a woodland on your right and a large sand quarry on your left.

POINT B - SPRINGWOOD AND SAND QUARRIES

Digging deep into the past

The woodland on your right is Spring Wood, one of two ancient woodlands you will see on this trail. Spring Wood is shown on the 1840 tithe map and appears to have changed little since then. Because Spring Wood is an ancient woodland we know that it has existed since at least 1600, and possibly much longer. See the section entitled 'Special Woodlands' on page 14 for more information.

In contrast, the landscape to your left has been utterly transformed by this vast sand quarry. The 1840 map shows pastures and arable fields here (including one called Sand Field) which are now long gone in the wake of the new topography created by excavation on a massive scale. This pit is an example of the impact of modern industry on a landscape, but it also reveals the past, in more ways than one.

Firstly, it quite literally reveals how this landscape formed. The deep pit exposes the geology of this area, which is part of a geological zone known as the Greensand Belt.

The geology of the Greensand Belt (as with most of Kent) was laid down as sediments at the bottom of a prehistoric sea, in the Cretaceous Period, (135 to 65 millions years ago). As sea levels varied, so did the type of deposits reaching the sea floor, and so layers quite different in character formed. Much later, during the Alpine phase of mountain building in Europe (25 million years ago) these layers of rock were pushed up into a dome or 'antidine'. This dome then eroded back, exposing layers as parallel belts.

The layers found in this part of the Greensand Belt include a sticky grey clay known as Gault Clay, and a layer with bands of hard Ragstone known as the Hythe Beds. You are now standing on a layer called the Folkestone Beds (so called because they were first classified where they meet the sea at Folkestone) - a layer made up of sand. Looking down into the pit you are quite literally looking back in time, at layers of sand laid down millions of years ago. As you will discover later in this walk, the presence of this sand has shaped the local landscape for a long time.


Sandy cliffs at The Bayle, Folkestone

The second way this quarry has revealed the past to us, is in the amazing archaeology that has been uncovered during excavations. These have included a late Neolithic axehead, fragments of Bronze Age pottery, and a late Iron Age/early Roman farmstead, with field ditches and enclosures, cremations, structures that may have been granaries, a possible drove road, a bronze brooch and a lot of pottery. Archaeologists also found what they described as a 'large irregular feature' consisting of channels of varying widths to a depth of 2 metres. This is thought to be a mediaeval sand quarry, pointing to a long history of sand extraction at this site.

From point B to point C

9. Follow the edge of the quarry and woodland. At a marked junction, turn right. Follow the path along the side of a second large quarry.

10. You will see a large modern barn ahead. Keep straight ahead past the barn and walk through a farmstead. Come to a road.

POINT C - TILE LODGE FARM

An earthy story

As you've already read, sand quarrying is a local industry that goes back a long way in this area. Another old rural industry, but one that no longer goes on here, is tile making. You may have noticed that the farm house opposite is called Tile Lodge Farm. In fact the kilns used for firing the tiles were a short distance east along this road - they are shown on a map of 1736 held at the Centre for Kentish Studies in County Hall, Maidstone.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map, drawn 130 years later, indicates a change of industry - the site was a brickworks, and quite a large one. The raw materials necessary were right at hand - a feature of the geology here is a large area of a rock called Brickearth, which overlies the Folkestone Beds, having been deposited in a later geological period. The presence of this material had clearly been recognised for some time, as it is reflected in the names of two fields just to the south of here - Brickearth Field and Little Brickearth Field.

From point C to point D

11. Turn left and follow the road into Charing Heath until you come to a left turn called Wind Hill Lane, and cross a stile directly opposite. You will see a hedge with two stiles in it - take the right hand one and diagonally cross the field (Sand Field), towards some farm buildings.

12. Reach a narrow lane and turn left, following it until it turns into a rough track, past a barn.

POINT D - BURLEIGH 'CHAPEL' RUIN

When is a chapel not a chapel?

If you look to your right, across the field, towards the railway, you will see a small overgrown ruin (please note, the ruin is on private land - keep to the path).

This insignificant looking flint structure has been the subject of a long historical debate, which hinges on the question of what its function was.

The debate started in 1900, with a book called 'A Saunter Through Kent', written by Charles Igglesden. He claimed that this building, being close to the mediaeval Burleigh Manor, was the ruin of Burleigh Chapel, founded in the 13th century by John de Burleigh. However, the chapel wasn't mentioned by other authors. Hasted, Kent's most famous historian, records that John de Burleigh founded a chapel in Charing church, but doesn't mention one at Burleigh.

The historical picture seems confused, and the archaeological evidence doesn't provide any definite answers either. We know that the walls are made of flint and chalk, that the building has an east-west alignment and that it was apparently all one space inside, with no internal walls. The problem is that there are no architectural features remaining that can be used to date the building.

In the Kent sites and monuments record - a database of the county's archaeological sites - it says that "there seems to be no real evidence for calling this building a chapel". What it doesn't say is what it was. It suggests that it could have been "one of the demesne buildings", which could mean almost any small building that might have formed part of a mediaeval estate.

For one final clue in the mystery, we can return once again to the 1840 tithe map. It shows two small buildings in the location of the ruin, which it refers to as Burleigh Cottages. No mention of a chapel.

You may be also wondering what has happened to Burleigh Manor, the mediaeval manor house that Igglesden recorded. No, you didn't miss it, and, no, Igglesden didn't imagine the whole thing. The late 15th century house was moved wholesale to a location in Egerton in 1975.

The ruin at Burleigh

From point D to point E

13. Follow a path across the field (Prebbles). Cross a bridge and stile then follow the path across the corner of a field towards another stile.

14. Cross the stile and walk straight ahead towards a corner fence post with a yellow footpath marker. Follow this fence line, keeping it on your right. You will approach a field gate ahead, but before you reach it, look to your left for a yellow footpath marker on a post. Walk across to the post then follow the arrow left, along a fence line, towards a stile.

15. Cross this stile into another field. Walk across this field diagonally left to the far corner. In the corner you will find a stile. Cross it, look to the right and see another stile, cross and go straight across a field towards the church and a field gate.

POINT E - THE LOST HEATHLAND

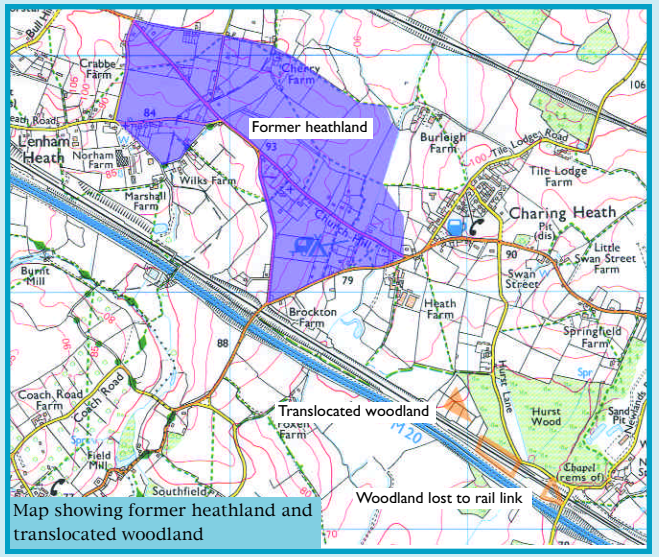
Lost land of heather

Earlier in this trail, you skirted the edge of a small settlement called Charing Heath, and you may have noticed that to the west of here is another called Lenham Heath. But where is the heath that gave these places their names?

In fact you've just walked across part of it. The heath is now no more, long since converted into pastures and arable fields. We know where the heath used to be from old maps. A map of 1801 shows a large area of heathland, straddling the parish boundary with Lenham, stretching east to Burleigh and south to Brockton (see map opposite). This would have been common land, presumably with grazing rights for those who did not own their own land, and perhaps other rights such as firewood gathering. It would have probably been a patchwork of heather, gorse, broom and scattered birch, all of which thrive on the sandy soils of the Folkestone Beds, perhaps with boggy areas on the clays of the Sandgate Beds. The common would have been open - un-enclosed by hedges or fences - for people and livestock to roam on freely.

By 1840, the picture had changed somewhat. The tithe map shows that the part of the heath you have just walked across was no longer heathland nor common land. It had been enclosed and turned into pastures and arable fields, and was now in the hands of just a few landowners, including the Darrel family, who owned large tracts of this part of Kent. This was part of a nation-wide trend in the 18th and 19th centuries, with commons being enclosed all over the country, sometimes on the basis of dubious ownership claims and in some cases with commoners being forcibly removed. Some of the names given to these ex-common fields suggest they were still heath-like in character - Heath Field, Furze Field (furze being another word for gorse); others reflect a boggier situation - Brook, Rough Brook, Upper Brook, Beeching Brook (Brook being derived from the Old English for marsh).

A much smaller area of common land did still remain in 1840 - the triangle of land shown on the map. But it wouldn't last long. The 1876 Ordnance Survey map shows this land too enclosed into fields. The same thing also happened on the Lenham side of the parish boundary.



Map showing former heathland and translocated woodland

In the past, on the sandy soils of the Greensand Belt, heathland vegetation was probably a common site wherever there was rough grazing of the land. This is reflected by the string of 'heath' place names, not just in this area but right across Kent. Now, in most of these villages and hamlets, there is nothing to indicate a heathland ever existed there except the place name. Kent now has only 90 hectares (about 220 acres) of heathland in the whole county.

However, all is not lost. The Heaths Countryside Corridor are a community based conservation group who are buying up land in this area to open it for public access. They recognise the importance of heathland heritage in this area and hope to bring heathland back to the area by recreating this habitat on land not far from the original heath.

From point E to point F

16. When you reach the road cross the stile and turn left. (Turn right if you want to make a diversion to the church (pictured right) but return to this spot.). Follow this road until you come to a junction and turn left.

17. Pass Forge House and take a footpath off to the right, over a stile. Walk across the field (Forge Field) towards a second stile. Cross the stile, through a hedgerow, then diagonally cross this large field towards a third stile.

18. Cross the stile, then go through a small timber gate to the left, onto a bridleway.

POINT F - TRANSLOCATED WOODLAND

Woodland rescue

You can probably hear from the traffic noise that you are now getting quite near the M20. When the motorway was built in the early 1980s, the woodland you can see ahead of you, Hurst Wood, was in the way and quite a chunk was lost from its southern end.

Come the late 1990s Hurst Wood was about to suffer another blow, as the Channel Tunnel Rail Link ploughed through in the same corridor as the M20.

Another few acres were shaved off the woodland, but this time, instead of being lost forever, the woodland was transplanted. Look over the fence on your right and you should be able to see where it ended up, planted in rows in what used to be a pasture called Hurst Meadow (see map).

Hurst Wood is an ancient woodland and ancient woodlands cannot be replaced once lost. So this effort at woodland rescue was certainly a good thing. Whether it will really work remains to be seen. Re-locating a woodland is not just a question of moving the trees - the ancient woodland soil, with it specialised fungi and seed bank of native plants, is just as important as the trees themselves. But in its new home, right next to the rest of Hurst Wood, there is a chance that in 100 years it will be very hard to tell that this bit of woodland was moved at all.

From point F to point G

19. Follow the bridleway and come to a road (Hurst Lane). Turn right and follow the road between two areas of woodland, with a wide strip of grass on your left.

POINT G - HURST WOOD

Woodlands - the older the better

You are now walking between two parts of Hurst Wood. Ancient woodlands like this often give a

Marsh marigold

glimpse of landscapes that have changed very little for centuries. The coppice woodland of ash and hazel in Hurst Wood has been here for at least 400 years and probably much longer, and apart from now being rather overgrown the woodland probably looks much as it did to mediaeval woodsmen cutting the coppice for fencing and a multitude of other uses. A stream runs through the centre of the woodland, lined by damp-loving trees and plants such as alder and marsh marigold. This kind of wet woodland would probably have once dominated the landscape on the local clay soils.

When it comes to woodland, the older the better, and the long-established habitats of Hurst Wood make it valuable for wildlife. It has been designated a Site of Nature Conservation interest by the Kent Wildlife Trust. Dormice have been recorded here, as has a rare fungus known at only one other site in the whole of Britain. For more information, see the section on 'Special Woodlands' on page 14.

The wide strip of grassland on your left is quite an old feature - it is shown of the 1840 tithe map, and may have existed for much longer. Its precise purpose is not known, however.

From point G to point H

20. Continue along this road, pass a turning on your right (Hunger Hatch Lane) and stop.

POINT H - NEWLANDS AREA

Plenty of old stuff at Newlands

You are now coming into an area known as Newlands. But don't be misled by the name - this place has a heritage going back thousands of years.

Start by looking over the fence into the conifer woodland on your left. You will notice how uneven the ground is under the trees. In fact you are looking at the earliest confirmed sand workings in the area.

Local residents Sheila and Tony Vinson, who are members of the Heaths Countryside Corridor group, did some research on Newlands. They went to the Centre for Kentish Studies, looked at old maps for evidence of early sand pits, and made notes on what they saw.

The first map they looked at was...you guessed it, the 1840 tithe map. They found no actual pits, but they noted a house with an interesting name:

"Sand Pit House, just north of Newlands would indicate the presence of sand extraction."

They also found that the area you are now looking at was a pasture called 'Sand Banks'.

By the time the 1870 Ordnance Survey map was published, Sand Banks had become "a sandpit with access from Newlands Road". This was the beginnings of the excavations you can now see as steep banks and pits.

The Vinsons noted that the 1907 Ordnance Survey map "shows that further development of the sand pit had occurred..." As the 20th century progressed, the pit was extended substantially, to the south (this part of the pit was lost in the construction of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link) and to the north (you will see this large, deep quarry area on your left when you continue your walk, and a breeze block works that is still active).

This long-established quarry, as well as being a piece of history in its own right, has produced some excellent archaeological finds, including 8,000 year old Mesolithic flint tools, a 5,000 year old Neolithic polished stone axe, Iron Age cremation burials and Romano-British pottery.

And the heritage of Newlands doesn't stop there. Tucked away among the buildings of Newlands Stud, the farmstead you can see ahead of you, is a Norman chapel. It dates from the 12th century, built as part of Newlands Manor, recorded in the late 13th century as belonging to Sir John de Newland and later sold to the Brockhull family, then to the Darrells in 1410.

In his book The Lost Churches and Chapels of Kent, Alex Vincent writes:

"The chapel...was built in the late Norman period with rubble stone and some Caen stone dressings...It has a north doorway and two pilaster buttresses in the south wall. There are carvings on the south side. The chapel is situated in the grounds of a Medieval timber-framed house. It came out of use a few centuries ago and is now in use as a store room."

The chapel cannot be seen from the road, so please respect the privacy of the residents as you pass Newlands Stud.

Finally, we have an unusual and evocative account contributed by local resident Alison McNaught who lived at Newlands Stud as a child in the 1960s. However, it's written not from her point of view but from that of the stable dog Oscar:

"Opposite the dung heap is the barn, built of old red bricks. At the back of the barn is the 'lads' room where they make coffee and eat their sandwiches. This is my favourite place. Once I found four ham sandwiches and a Mars bar in it. No such luck today though, still it's worth a look and a snuffle for crumbs. The lad's room smells interesting of leather, horses and condensed milk....

"The barn is built from bricks and beams whilst the stables are built of Kentish Rag stone. The racehorses look out of their boxes onto two sides of a quadrangle...By August the racehorses have been in training for just a few weeks. Him and the 'lads' ride the horses round in a circle in front of the stables before morning exercise...At this time of year they ride on the road, just walking and trotting on the lanes. When the horses are fitter, after a few weeks, they'll ride onto the 'gallops' for a canter and 'a look at the fences'.

"The mother takes the girl and her brother for walks up the track to the gallops. Past the big house. They paddle in the stream half way along. One day they built a dam and make an area deep enough for them to swim in..."

From point H to point I

21. Continue along this road (CAUTION: heavy lorries), with the breeze block works and sand pit on your left, until you reach a crossroads.

POINT I - KING'S SAND PIT

A childhood in the shadow of industry

As you walked up Newlands Road, you may have noticed that there are disused sand pits on both sides of the road. The one on the right used to be known as King's Pit. Local resident Alison McNaught recorded her memories of living so close to these pits:

"The start of the winter of 1965 and we move to a small bungalow at the edge of King's Sandpit. I am six, my brother five, my sister is ten. The rumble of lorries, empty after their drop-offs, punctuates our days into fifteen minute intervals. Their tail gates crash like thunder as their drivers hit the pot holes in our lane.

This photograph of a lorry being loaded with sand was taken at a sand pit in nearby Lenham Heath in the 1970s. (R. Morgan)

A piece of ironstone - the 'rusty rock' described in Alison's account.

"We find out that no vegetables or flowers grow in our new garden because a million rabbits live in the sand. The morello cherry trees that edge our plot attract plagues of wasps in the summer, but hundreds

of sand martens swoop and nest in the cliffs next to us. My Grandpa likes the sand martens.

"This sand is not the same as seaside sand. No stretches of flat beach or silvery dunes. This sand is orange. It scars the ground as the diggers quarry deeper. There is a sandpit to the side of our house and another across the road. Soon we don't notice the noise of the lorries. The quarries become our playground in the evenings and at weekends.

"One day I find a large piece of curved rusty rock in the sand next to us. I take it to school for our 'finds' table. A boy in my class says it is a dinosaur's hip bone. I am hopeful but doubtful."

Alison's piece shows how sand quarrying has shaped not only the landscape but the lives of local people too.

From point I to point J

22. Turn right, onto Charing Heath Road.

POINT J - THE 'OLD ROAD'

A wander down the lost highway

Walking along this typical country lane, you may find it hard to believe that this was once the main road to Maidstone. This route, known simply as the Old Road, ran from the crossroads you just passed, westwards through the settlement of Charing Heath (then much smaller), through the heath itself then into Lenham parish and on to Maidstone. To the east it ran for just a short distance to 'Coppins Corner' where it met another old route, the Biddenden and Boundgate Turnpike. This turnpike highway linked key Wealden villages (Biddenden, Pluckley, Smarden) to Charing and the Faversham-Ashford road (now the A251).

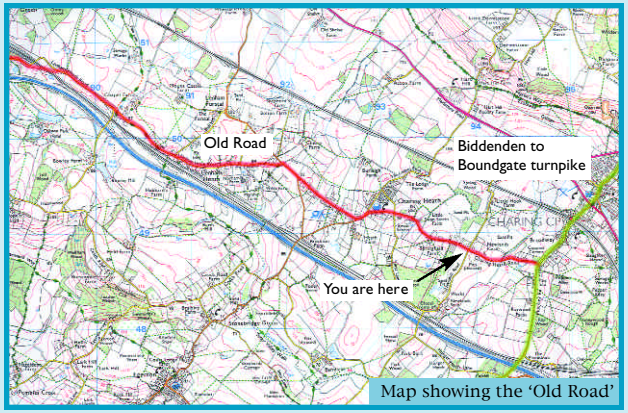
On a map of 1801, an alternative route makes an appearance. It corresponds very closely to the modern A20 between Charing and Lenham and was called, logically enough, 'the new road from Maidstone'. The coming of the new road was just the first of a series of changes to this area brought by transport routes. It was followed by the railway in the 19th century, then the M20 in the 20th, and most recently the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

From point J to start

23. Follow the road until you come to a left hand bend, and a footpath off to the left. Take this path, and cross a stile near a stream, then cross the stream over a metal bridge and turn right.

24. Follow a green lane, between two hedges, then cross another metal bridge. Reach a stile then walk straight ahead across a field.

25. Cross another stile then come to the small bridge and stile you crossed at point 4 above . You can now re-trace your steps, back under the railway bridge, alongside the railway to Hither Field, back to Station Road, turning left back towards the village, across the A20 and into the village, then turning right for Market Place.



Map showing the 'Old Road'

SECONDARY ROUTE

The route 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.

Point a - Note on the route

Start by walking into the churchyard and down the right hand side of the church. Head for a no cycling sign to find the footpath.

Point b - The Moat

A large dwelling called 'The Moat House' used to stand in this area, among ornamental grounds. Part of the Mediaeval moat that gave it its name still exists (the elongated water feature on the map). Lucy Simmons of the Charing Gardeners' Society sent us an account written by a now deceased member about her childhood memories of the Gardeners' Society's Annual Exhibition and Sports in the 1920s:

"The Gardeners' Summer Fete was held in the Moat House grounds. The show itself was in a marquee under the lime trees where the entrance to the sports field is now... There was an urgency to reach the marquee... to see if one's table decoration of harebells from the Downs had beaten the pretty one of wild scabious... There were sports events and competitions such as tossing a bale of hay with a pitchfork and clay pipe smoking... The gardens were open and tennis tournaments were held on the two courts in the grounds."

Point c - Alderbed Meadow

This six acre area of wet meadow and woodland is a piece of living history. While land all around has been drained and turned into playing fields or arable farmland, this area has remained much as it was in the days before modern agriculture. Historically part of the farm originally attached to the Archbishop's Palace, it is now owned and managed as a community wildlife area by the Charing Playing Field Committee. Traditional management - grazing in the grassland and coppicing in the woodland - has been revived, to maintain these habitats. Local resident Martin Pym, who is chairman of the Steering Group that oversees the site, wrote a fascinating account of the how this

Traditional management of coppice woodland at the Alderbed Meadow (KSCP)

area escaped the ravages of intensive farming. The first factor was the building of the houses and creation of the playing fields you have just walked through, in the 1960s and '70s.

"All these changes left Wood Brook field and Brook Wood (the traditional names for what is now the Alderbed Meadow) owned by Granville Wheler, isolated from Palace Farm... By then Mr Wheler had sold the rest of Palace Farm to the Homewood family, but this did not include Wood Brook field and Brook Wood, where the Homewoods remained tenants. Mainly because this parcel of land was so isolated, undrained, and acted as a barrier between the playing field and Pett Farm, which the Homewoods now owned, the now named "Alderbed Meadow" was unused by the Homewoods as tenants. It was not until 1999 that Granville Wheler agreed to give the Alderbed Meadow to the Playing Field Committee. So it was over 40 years that it remained unused and undisturbed."

Point d - Pett Place

This beautiful house was built by the Sayer family in the early 18th century around the core of an earlier, 16th century house. There are also traces of Norman cellars, indicating a long history of occupation. It is a grade 1 listed building

The main house is just one of a number of interesting buildings here. The most notable of the structures is perhaps the ruined chapel, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, consisting of a flint-built gable

end with a pointed window and part of the north wall. It has been suggested that in fact this is not a genuine Norman chapel, but that materials were taken from the Norman cellars of the house and used to create a folly in the 18th century. The mediaeval aisled timber tithe barn, re-faced with red brick in the 17th century, is a grade 2* listed building.

Point e - Note on the route

Look for a stile opposite a post box. Cross into the field then veer left and walk diagonally across the field towards a fence line with a few large trees on it. Follow the fence line until you come to the corner of the field with a metal field gate and a stile.

Point f - Romano-British building

Cropmarks observed on aerial photographs were the first clue to the discovery of a Romano-British building not far from here. Excavations in 1975 revealed that it was a four-roomed structure with ragstone walls, and a hypercaust (underground heating system) and is thought perhaps to have originated as a bronze workshop and later been converted to agricultural use (perhaps corn drying). A coin found indicates occupation between AD 225 and 409.

Point g - CAUTION

This is not a busy lane but is narrow with some blind bends.

Point h - Wickens Manor

This delightful Elizabethan manor, formerly known as Wykynys was built by the Brent family in the 15th century, with 16th and 17th century additions. There are many original features inside the house, including a fireplace in the hall from about 1530, and the timber framing has been altered little. John Brent is said to have entertained Henry VIII here on his way to the siege of Boulogne in 1544. Interestingly, the Archbishop's Palace was 'conveyed to the crown' just a year later!

Point i - Wootton Manor

The lovely moat here at Wootton Manor (formerly called Yew Tree Farm) is thought to be mediaeval. While many sites of this kind have been partially lost, all four sides of the moat here are intact, and three of them still hold water, as you can see. Moats like this are often good for wildlife such as amphibians, wetland plants, birds and aquatic insects.

Point j - Lacton Wood

Lacton Wood is the first of two ancient woodlands on this trail. Ancient woodlands have existed since at least 1600, and probably for much longer (for more on this, see the section on 'Special Woodlands' on page 14). Lacton Wood stands on the Gault Clay and has a stream running through it, so is extremely damp in wet winters. In spring it is a riot of ramsons and other wild flowers, including some that specialise in this now uncommon wet woodland habitat.

A note on the route
Follow the path through the wood and reach the stream. Cross a plank bridge, look to your left and see a stile. Cross the stile into a field, turn left and follow the edge of the woodland, then a hedge, towards and past a small white house. Come to the corner of the hedge and see a stile straight ahead. Cross it onto a lane.

Point k - Wicken Lane

This track is a part of Wicken Lane that was never 'adopted' as a highway and so remained un-metalled. Just think what it would have been like travelling at a time when most roads were muddy tracks like this! Local resident Tim Bain-Smith gave us a map marked with a number of archaeological finds and features of this area. This track is one of a few 'hollow ways' marked - these are tracks so old they have worn down into the landscape. Tim also indicated that a 4th century coin was found close to the track, and that Wicken Lane marks the old parish boundary.

Point m - Short cut option

To take a short cut, and avoid crossing the A252, turn left and walk along the pavement for a short distance then turn left down The Hill (signposted Charing), back towards the village.

To do the long route, follow the signs for the North Downs Way, turn left, walk a short distance, then cross the main road and walk up a track signed Pilgrim's Way next to a small cottage (Reeves Cottage). EXTREME CAUTION: The A252 is a very busy main road with fast traffic. It has three lanes and vehicles coming uphill may be overtaking. Please cross with care.

Point n - Disused quarries

The chalk quarries on this part of the downs are 19th century in origin - the 1876 Ordnance Survey map shows active pits here with limekilns for turning the chalk into quicklime. At the time, these quarries may have seemed like a scar on the landscape, but this area has since regenerated into an area so rich in plant life the Kent Wildlife Trust have designated it a Site of Nature Conservation Interest. Wild flowers thriving here include cowslip, autumn gentian and a number of orchids.

CAUTION: Beware of steep drops.
Note: This area is 'access land' (marked by pale orange boundary on map).

Point o - Ranpura Farm area

The 1840 tithe map, shows the area where Ranpura Farm now stands as woodland. It also shows another woodland on the other side of the lane, in two sections called Furze Field Wood and Hoe Field Wood which is now completely lost. The word 'furze' suggests an area of gorse. On the south side of this woodland was a cottage called Lone Barn - this too has now gone, although a small square feature shown on the route map may be its remains.

Point p - Stakesdale Wood

This is the second ancient woodland on the route. It is quite different in character to Lacton Wood - drier with acidic soils, as indicated by the open, gorsey area in the middle of it. The name 'Stakesdale' may come from its past use for providing stakes for hop gardens.

Point q - Woodbank

At this point you will walk out of the woods and into a long, narrow field. Look to your right and you will see a line of old trees on a bank. This is almost certainly an old wood boundary, indicating that this field used to be woodland too.

An old hornbeam - probably a boundary marker, on the woodbank

A note on the route
Keep straight ahead and walk through the field. Come to a building and turn left. Look for marker arrows on a small oak tree and turn right. Come to a post and rail fence and follow a marker.

Point r - Down Wood

As you cross this field, look to your right and you will see a woodland called Down Wood. Down Wood used to be much larger, covering more than twice its current area. The 'reference' accompanying the 1840 tithe map, which gives details of every piece of land in the parish, records it at 97 acres.

Point s - Charing Windmill

Charing Windmill was built in the early 19th century and is a grade 2 listed building. It is referred to as a 'smock' mill - its shape resembles a ladies smock. No longer in use the mill is now a private residence - please respect the privacy of the occupiers.

Charing Windmill

A note on the route
Once past the mill bear left and follow the path between a high fence and hedge. Emerge into a rough field and walk diagonally across it, downhill towards the furthest corner. Walk into a small area of woodland and bear left down some steps.

Point t - Viewpoint

As you emerge from the trees here you will be greeted by a superb view of Charing and the surrounding area (see cover photo'). The church can be clearly seen as can the patchwork of fields and woodlands which in places has changed little for centuries. The building you can see at the bottom of this path is a Victorian pump house, now a private residence.

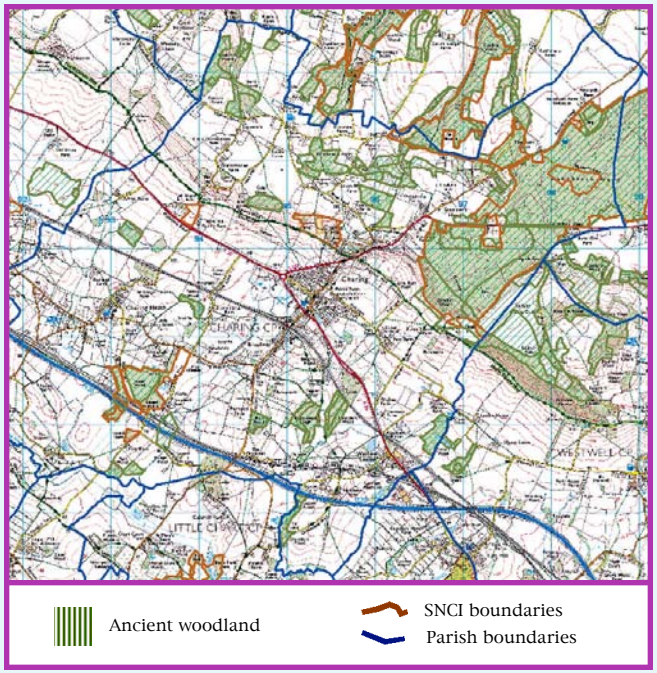
A note on the route
Continue downhill, between fences, past the Old Pump House. At the bottom, turn left, onto the North Downs Way. Follow the track for a short distance and come to a junction. Turn right. Head downhill towards the main road (A252). Cross the road and head down the lane directly opposite (The Hill) signposted Charing.

Special woodlands

Glance at any map of this area and you will quickly see that Charing is quite a well-wooded parish . Much of this woodland is termed 'ancient', but what does this mean?

Natural England's definition is: "An ancient woodland is one that has existed since at least 1600 A D, 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 …"

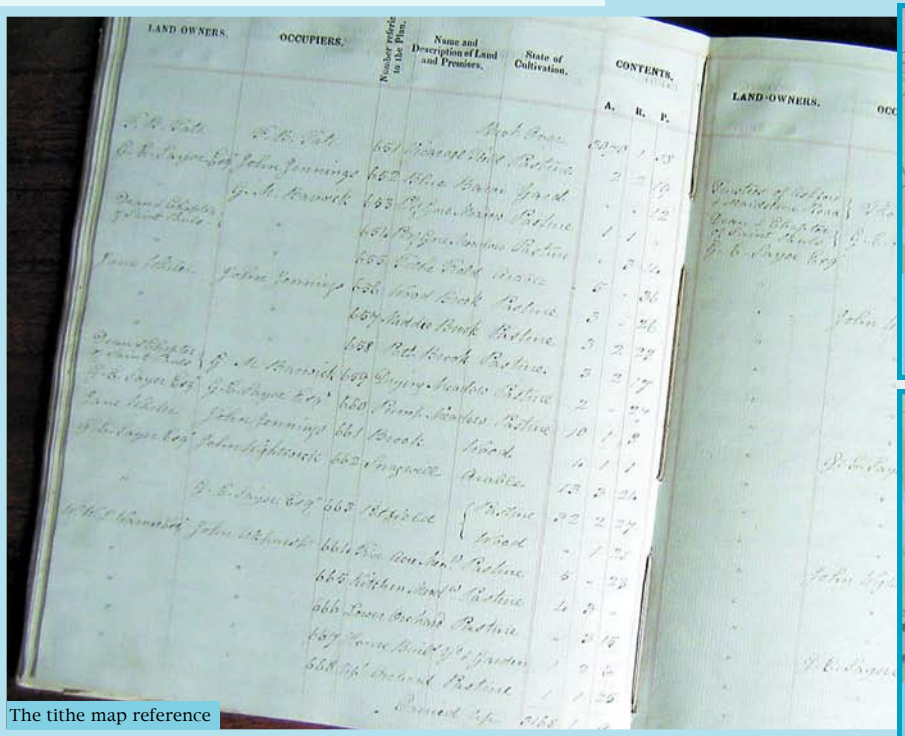
You can find clues about whether a woodland is ancient by looking at its plants. Certain plants are known as 'ancient woodland indicators' - if a number of them can be found in a wood, that is evidence for it being ancient.



Conservationists regard ancient woodland as the closest thing to 'natural' woodland that we have in the managed landscapes of Britain. In Kent, those with rare habitats and species are often designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs) by Kent Wildlife Trust. Charing is fortunate in that many of its ancient woodlands are SNCIs. The map above shows which woodlands in the Charing area are ancient and which are SNCIs.

Many ancient woodlands in Kent have a long history of management by coppicing. This is the traditional practice of regularly cutting small areas of trees down to a stump and letting them re-grow as many thin stems. Unfortunately, coppicing declined in the 20th century and many woods are now very overgrown.

One place where coppicing is still going on is the Alderbed Meadow (see page 11), where the Kentish Stour Countryside Project in partnership with the Alderbed Meadow Steering group and the local community are coppicing small areas. The benefits of this are explained in the site's management plan: "The coppice area will greatly increase light reaching the woodland floor, and enhance the growth of herbaceous plants. This will benefit the invertebrate fauna and in turn help the bird and small mammal population."



The tithe map reference

Tithe Maps

Tithes were a mediaeval form of tax - a tax by the church on local parishioners. The word 'tithe' means one tenth - this was the proportion of their production (be it wheat or wool or produce) that parishioners had to hand over every year.

John Seldon, an important English legal figure in the 17th century, voiced a widespread objection to the system when he said of tithes:

"...tis ridiculous to say the Tythes is God's part and therefore the clergy must have them..."

The situation with tithes was changed, as were so many things in England, by Henry VIII. When he dissolved the monasteries in the 16th century, much land belonging to the church was transferred to private ownership, and the rights to tithe went with it. There was also a move away from payments 'in kind' (the actual crops and produce) to monetary payments. This became known as 'commuting'.

In 1836, the situation changed again, with the introduction of the Tithe Act. In this, all tithes across the country had to be commuted by law. The Act also brought about 'enquiries' on tithe arrangements in every parish in England and Wales. This led to the drawing up of tithe 'apportionments' and accompanying maps in about 75% of parishes. It is one of these maps, that our anonymous contributor leant to the Lost Landscapes project.

The maps and apportionments together give a very detailed picture of rural life and the landscape in the middle of the 19th century. Maps vary in scale, accuracy and the amount of detail - some show only the bare essentials. Fortunately, the Charing map is relatively well detailed and seems to be almost as accurate as an Ordnance Survey map.

It was hand-drawn in 1840 by J. Drewry of Eastling and was in fact a revised version of a plan of 1813 by a R.H. Drago, a timber surveyor from High Holborn in London. Although faded by time the map is coloured, with roads in pale orange, woodlands in yellow-green, pasture fields a darker green and arable fields left blank. Woodland and scrub are indicated by tiny trees and bushes. Rivers, ponds, roads and individual buildings are all shown, although quarries and other workings are not. The map is quite easy to use, although one confusing thing is that it is not drawn with north at the top, instead being skewed on a south-west orientation. Many features are labelled, and every single field, wood and garden is marked with a reference number.

A portion of the map showing roads, buildings, fields and gardens with their reference numbers, and water features, including the moat when still intact.


The Alderbed Meadow and Pett Place as they were in 1840, showing that the woodland at the Alderbed Meadow was larger then.

Accompanying the map is a 'reference' - a hand-written book giving details of the land. To use it, you simply look up the reference number of the area you are interested in and it will tell you its owner and occupier, its traditional name, its acreage and, perhaps most interestingly, its 'state of cultivation' - what the land was being used for at that time. It gives a fascinating snap shot of land use in the parish, including a summary (or 'recapitulation) of various land types and their acreages: arable dominates with 2424 acres; there are 1229 acres of pasture, 684 acres of wood (giving Charing a 15% woodland cover), 79 acres of 'buildings, yards and gardens', 72 acres of common, 60 acres of hops and 9 acres of 'lime kilns etc'.

Contributors

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

Tim Bain-Smith
Allan Dixon
Kentish Stour Countryside Project
Alison McNaught
John McIntyre
R.Morgan
Martin Pym
Lucy Simmons
Sheila and Tony Vinson

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

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, Hollingbourne, 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 08458 247600.

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
Supported by The National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund
heritage lottery fund
Explore Kent
Rail Link Countryside Initiative
Natural England
Kent County Council