

**North Downs Way**

NATIONAL TRAIL 

# Lost Landscapes

HERITAGE TRAILS

Two Norman Castles, the site of a Roman Villa and fascinating stories from both World Wars. 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 first trail explores the parish of Detling, where the drama of a WWII attack on Detling Aerodrome contrasts with the secluded beauty of Park Valley (right). The second trail takes you through Detling village, past the disembodied gateway of a lost Tudor house, and into Thurnham Parish, culminating with the evocative ruins and spectacular views at Thurnham Castle. Both trails lie entirely in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The main text of the booklet consists of detailed directions and information on points of interest for the Detling trail. The Thurnham 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 Detling and Thurnham 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!*



*Detling  
& Thurnham*



# About the trails...











## Distances

Main trail - Detling (purple) - 5.1 miles (8.3 km)  
 Detling and Thurnham trail (orange) - 3.4 miles (5.4 km)

## Terrain

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

## Map key

- |   |   |   |                  |
|---|---|---|------------------|
|  | Main trail (Detling)                        |  | Pub serving food |
|  | Secondary trail (Detling and Thurnham)      |  | Steep climb      |
|  | Point of interest in text - main trail      |  | Bench            |
|  | Point of interest in text - secondary trail |  | Steps            |
|  | CAUTION at this point                       |  | 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 an Ordnance Survey map for this area - Explorer no. 148 or Landranger no. 188.

## Getting to Detling

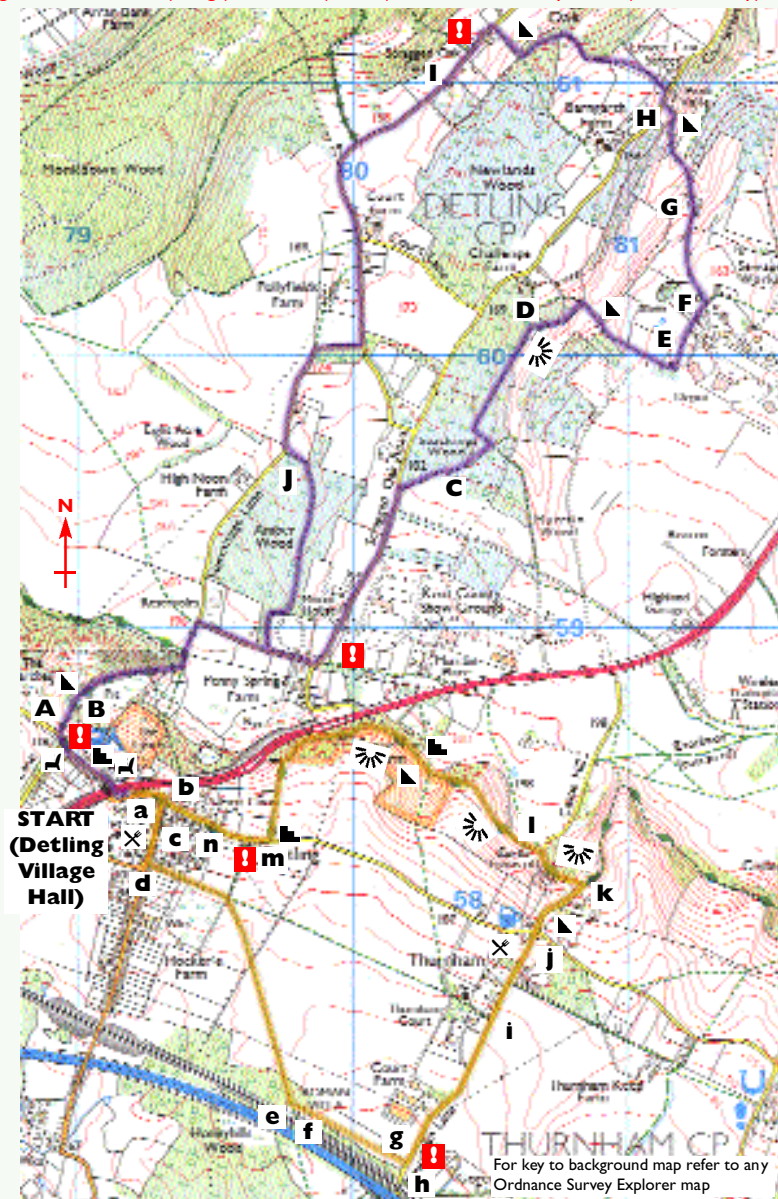
**By train** - nearest station Bearsted, on the Ashford-Maidstone-London line between Hollingbourne and Maidstone East. For train times telephone 08457 484950. The Detling & Thurnham trail is within easy walking distance of the station - walk up Thurnham Lane and join the route at point f on the map. Alternatively, the station is 2.2 miles from the start point at Detling village hall, which can be reached via footpaths or roads.

**By car** - take the A249 from junction 7 of the M20. After 0.5 miles, turn right, signposted Detling. Follow the road into the village. Pass the church and bear left. Pass a shop and school and bear left at Cock Horse pub. Village hall is short distance on your left - parking on road.

**By bus** - the 334 service from Maidstone to Medway goes through Detling. There is a bus stop on The Street

## 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).



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## MAIN TRAIL - DETLING

Start at Detling village hall.

### From start to point A

1. Cross the road towards the steps that lead to the large footbridge known as Jade's Crossing. Cross the bridge over the A249 and descend the other side. (During the construction of Jade's Crossing, a half penny trade token was discovered. It was dated 1789, made from copper and originated in Wicklow, Ireland.)

2. Reach a bench and a memorial plinth and turn right. Go down some steps, turn left and come to a road. Turn right and follow this road away from Detling village. CAUTION: There is no pavement here. (You are now walking on the Pilgrim's Way. Further along this ancient route was found an iron age coin of Eppillus - one of the pre-Roman kings of Kent during the early first century AD.)

3. Pass a left turn for Harple Lane and a bench. Take the next turning right, signposted North Downs Way, onto a byway. After a short distance you will come to the entrance to The Larches. (Feel free to explore The Larches but return to this point.)

## POINT A - THE LARCHES

### Grazing, gales and quarries

Many forces and factors can shape and change a landscape over time. In the case of The Larches, three things have affected it perhaps more than others.

The first is something that has shaped the landscape here, and right along the escarpment of the Kent Downs, for centuries - the grazing of livestock. The second, in contrast, was a brief but catastrophic event that changed landscapes all over south-east England



The Larches (Detling Parish Council)

overnight - the hurricane of October 1987. The third was a period of human activity that might have been seen as damaging the landscape but in fact has created habitats - the quarrying of chalk.

Tim Bell, warden of the Larches, tells us more:

"The Larches is part of the Wouldham to Detling escarpment Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site is a diverse mix of yew woodland, beech woodland and chalk grassland. The lower wooded area was historically a beech plantation but the 1987 storm devastated the area and only a few old beeches remain.

"The wood is now more mixed with ash and oak growing through. As you travel up from the woodland there are pockets of chalk grassland some of which are now grazed by ponies and some small areas grow on the edges of two small chalk quarries that are now overgrown. Here you can find orchids and numerous butterflies in the summer. The steep sided downs were historically grazed and the grass needs to be managed or else it would become scrubby woodland like the areas around it."

Since 1977, when the Larches was bought for public access with contributions from Detling and Boxley parish councils, Kent County Council have been managing it. They are now restoring the storm damaged beech woods, and grazing the grasslands with Exmoor ponies and goats, ensuring wherever possible that this nationally important site is shaped by the right forces.

#### From point A to point B

4. Follow the byway steeply uphill. Reach the metal gate to a chalk quarry.

#### POINT B - DETLING QUARRY Old quarries are not the pits

Across the North Downs there are many chalk quarries, of all sizes and ages. It was in the 19th century that chalk extraction began on an industrial scale, in large pits like this one. It contained a tramway to ferry the chalk towards a lime kiln at the western end. Burning the chalk in the kiln produced quick lime which could be used in agriculture as a soil improver (just like liming the soil in your garden) and in mortar for buildings. When the quarry was extended in the 20th century, the kiln was lost.

You may not think there is much value in a disused quarry, but some are protected by law for their geology or wildlife. In the section on The Larches you read about the orchids growing at the edges of old quarries. Elsewhere in the Wouldham to Detling SSSI, is an old chalk pit of national importance for its fossils of reptiles and fish.

#### From point B to point C

5. Continue straight ahead, uphill, staying on the North Downs Way. Reach the top of the hill and bear left, staying on the North Downs Way, past a footpath signposted off to the right.

6. Walk uphill a short distance and reach another signpost. The North Downs Way goes off to the left on a bridleway but you should go straight ahead, on the stony track.

7. At the end of the track, reach a lane and turn right. Follow the lane until you reach a T junction. Turn left, signposted Stockbury and Hartlip (onto Scragged Oak Road). CAUTION: This road can be busy - please take care.

8. Continue along this road for about 0.5 miles, (you will pass the Kent County Showground, home to the Kent Show and many other large-scale events).

9. You will reach a footpath off to the right. Take this path and follow it along the edge of a woodland, then into the woods.

#### POINT C - STOCKINGS WOOD Into the ancient woods

Stockings Wood is the first of three ancient woodlands you will walk through on this trail. It used to be much larger, extending to the south and to the



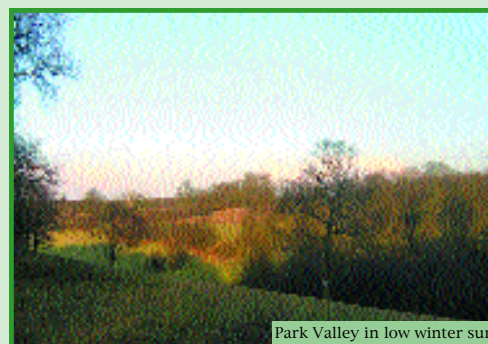
east, into Park Valley. The map shows the former areas of woodland, which was probably cleared after WWI, in the drive to maximise agricultural production.

Despite being reduced in size, Stockings Wood still contains excellent wildlife habitats. This has been recognised in the Kent Wildlife Trust's designation of the woodland as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest. For more information on this and on the subject of ancient woodlands, see the section on 'Special Woodlands' (page 14).

#### From point C to point D

10. Reach a crossroads of paths and turn left. Follow the path past a large hombeam tree and through a 90 degree turn to the right, then past some recently coppiced woodland. You will reach a stile into a valley.

#### POINT D - PARK VALLEY A new view over an ancient valley



The lovely, secluded Park Valley is arguably the most picturesque part of this trail - a somewhat unexpected vista that opens up as you emerge from the woods. But the view you are enjoying is a relatively new one.

That's because this part of Park Valley was wooded, from at least 1600, and possibly since it was formed by a peri-glacial river at the end of the last Ice Age. Following the retreat of the ice, Britain was gradually colonised by trees, forming the primeval 'wildwood'. It's possible that this part of the valley was wooded continuously from that time until woodland was

cleared in the 20th century (see the section on 'Special Woodlands' on page 14 for more). However, the woodland wasn't completely cleared - on the other side of the valley you can see where many mature oaks and other trees were retained, forming an attractive area of wood pasture.

Park Valley is quite long and the Parish boundary between Detling and Thurnham follows it. It extends north to join with another dry valley near Beaux Aires Wood, and you will walk across it again later in the trail before encountering the beautiful Park Valley House.

#### From point D to point E

11. Cross the stile and walk along the top of the valley side. Veer slightly right, slowly descending the valley side, towards a fence line and field gate in the valley bottom.

12. When you reach the gate, turn right and walk steeply uphill, along the fence line, towards another gate with a yellow marker arrow on a post (you have just passed into Thurnham parish).

13. Go through the gate, continue steeply uphill, with woodland on your right. Go through some small metal gates. At the top, reach a track and turn left.

14. The track takes you through a metal field gate towards a derelict corrugated metal building. As you reach the building, turn left off the track, towards some trees planted in rows and a telecommunications mast. Walk between the trees and a large open area on your right, towards the mast, approaching an industrial estate.

#### POINT E - SITE OF BINBURY AERODROME When the eagle flew over Detling

The Industrial Estate here is not the most appealing sight in this part of Kent, but it is a place with a dramatic history.

Imagine if you can the sky above you full of German fighter aircraft and dive bombers, raining down bombs and strafing the ground with machine gun fire. Their targets were British planes, stranded undefended on the ground here.

This industrial area is called the Aerodrome Estate, because it was once part of an airfield that saw active service in both world wars. Local resident and

historian, Mike Perring tells us, "Detling Aerodrome was opened in 1915 and played a role in the defence of the Thames estuary during WWII. At the beginning of WWII it was home to, among others, a squadron of Coastal Command Avro Anson bombers flying patrols over the Channel and Thames approaches." The attack described above came on August 13th, 1940, a day known to the Germans as Adlertag - Eagle Day. This was a massive operation, with waves of aircraft assaulting Britain's shores to test its air defenses. An incredible 1,485 sorties were flown by the Luftwaffe in a 24 hour period.



An aerial photo of the area; the yellow line indicates the airfield boundary (Dan Hamblin).

The 13th was unlucky for Detling. While heavy cloud shrouded much of south-east England, Detling was visible to the bombers through a gap. In all, 67 personnel were killed and 22 aircraft lost in what was the Luftwaffe's most successful attack of the day. However, as a whole, Adlertag was not a great success. Britain's fighter defenses were hardly touched, Eastchurch and Rochester aerodromes could not be located due to the cloud cover, and three major objectives - aerodromes at Farnborough, Odiham and Rochford - were missed.

Later, two further raids destroyed most of the buildings at Detling but, according to Mike Perring, after the Battle of Britain "the airfield was rebuilt...It was much used by fighter aircraft making sweeps into France at and after D-day."

After the war Detling was used as a gliding school, and finally sold to Kent County Council in 1956. The disused RAF camp became the industrial estate and,

according to Mike, "some of its buildings remain as industrial units." The airfield as a whole covered a much larger area, stretching south from here to the A249 and slightly beyond, and onto what is now the County Showground, as shown on the aerial photo'.

This area still has an aeronautical function - you may have seen the large aircraft navigation beacon on the horizon to the south. This stands where Detling's single grass runway used to be. Nothing remains of it now, but there are other remnants of the site's wartime past dotted around this area, including gun turrets and pillboxes. Most intriguingly, the underground plotting room is still thought to be intact.

### From point E to point F

*15. Keep straight ahead, passing a security fence on your right. You will reach a fingerpost and a gap in the fences around the industrial estate, next to the mast. Go through the gap and walk into the industrial estate. Keep straight ahead, passing McNicholas pk, then head out of the estate, past Detling Car Breakers on your left and On Time Rescue and Recovery on your right.*

*16. Go through a gateway and onto a track, leaving the industrial estate. You will reach a waymarker post with yellow arrows. Follow the arrow pointing off to the left, towards some trees and stop at a dirt track.*

### POINT F - BINBURY CASTLE - FLINT TOWER, MOTTE AND BAILEY

#### A lost castle's history in the words of a war-time writer

The remains of Binbury Castle are few but tantalising. To your left you should be able to see a ruined flint tower and, beyond that, some trees growing raised up on a defensive mound known as a 'motte'. Much of the ditch around it remains.

As well as the castle there was a later, mediaeval manor house here, but nothing remains of that. Here is what one author said about the house when it still existed as a ruin:

"Notes on Binbury Manor, Kent. The charm of antiquity is, to most of us, irresistible if it is obvious... but often we miss this charm in objects which have become familiar..."

These are not the words of an eminent historian, but of an RAF airman in WWII. They are taken from a monthly newsletter put together by airmen based at

Detling Aerodrome, which was sent to the Lost Landscapes project by local resident Robin Ambrose. The RAF camp was where the industrial estate you just walked through now stands, so you can see how close it was to Binbury, and the newsletter writer states that "Everyone on this camp has probably at least heard of, if not seen, Binbury Manor House." He apparently wanted to enlighten his companions about this piece of history on their doorstep. His notes, despite a few errors, form a fascinating human link between two periods in the history of this landscape, separated by many centuries.

The notes explain that Binbury was mentioned in the Domesday Book, as the property of Bishop Odo, and when he was disgraced was granted to Gilbert Magminot; later it was the seat of the de Turnham family, then the Northwood family. He relates a gruesome story about the death of Lady Northwood in the mid 14th century - she was standing on a hill when the sandy soil gave way beneath her; and she was buried alive and "stifled to death with the pressure".

It seems from the airman's notes that quite a lot of the manor house remained at the time he was writing - he talks of flint walls and includes a hand drawn picture of a plaque in the south wall, with a poetic inscription. The first verse, ironically, reads:

*"Thou that busilie bends thyselfe to build as aye here to remayne, with out high Jehovah with thee to joyne thou workest but in vaine."*

The manor house has since been completely demolished.

In the second installment of his notes, the airman concentrates more on the castle earthworks:



The airman's drawing of the plaque

"It is an interesting fact that the earthworks immediately behind the manor house were the site of an ancient Anglo-Saxon castle."

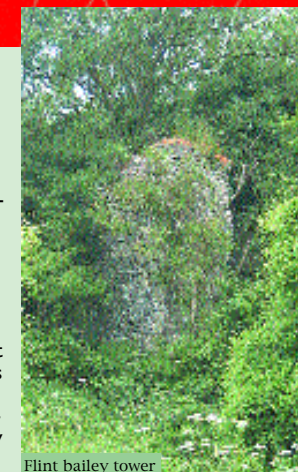
He goes on to discuss...

"...the underground passage which has so often been talked about but of which no trace is known to have been found by any of the station personnel... Actually there are two passages... One comes out on Detling Hill and many local people have penetrated it for some distance. The other runs in the opposite direction and nobody seems to know where it ends; but about twelve years ago a lorry travelling along Binbury Lane caused a collapse... where the passage passes under the road."

By the next edition of the newsletter, interest in the underground passages has clearly spread: "Certain members of 'B' flight formed an exploration party and traced the tunnel." They found a tunnel over a mile long, with entrances at three vertical shafts, and the writer makes the connection with a story of Bishop Odo's followers fleeing the manor via underground passages.

Unfortunately it seems this airman was prone to flights of fancy. Local historian Mike Perring tells us that Binbury was not mentioned in Domesday and that the tunnels were dug as part of the Chatham Land Defence Line in 1914.

The airman's statement that the earthwork is Anglo-Saxon is also incorrect. In fact it is a typical Norman fortification, comprising an oval mound (the 'motte') surrounded by a moat. On the motte would have stood a palisade and a tower of stone or timber. There was also an outer rampart with a stone wall known as a 'bailey', of which the flint 'mural' tower was part. Binbury was quite unusual in having a walled bailey.



Flint bailey tower

The castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and the schedule describes the function of fortifications of this type:

"...motte-and-bailey castles acted as garrison forts during offensive military operations, as strongholds, and, in many cases, as aristocratic residences and as centres of local or royal administration."

#### From point F to point G

*17. Carry on across the track and into the trees. Walk through the trees and reach a fence line. Find the stile that crosses this fence.*

*18. Cross the stile into a field and walk straight ahead. (Look to your left and you will get another view of the Binbury motte). Pass a broken fence line and continue downhill into a small valley. As the track bends slightly left you will reach a patch of rough vegetation and chalky rubble on your left.*

#### POINT G - SITE OF EXPERIMENTAL SOUND MIRROR Sounds incredible

Standing here in this valley north of Maidstone, you probably wouldn't expect to be able to hear an aircraft flying up the Thames Estuary, 15 miles away. But that's exactly what one Professor Mather was trying to do in 1915.

Mather was a pioneer in acoustic research. His goal was to improve Britain's defenses in WWI by detecting approaching enemy aircraft using sound mirrors. It was already known that paraboloid reflectors could be used to magnify distant sounds. In case you're wondering what a paraboloid reflector is, you may have one attached to your house. Satellite TV dishes are more or less the same shape as the sound mirrors Professor Mather was experimenting with, but instead of receiving satellite signals, his devices gathered sound waves. And they were much, much bigger.

Local resident Mike Perring has told us that the scrubby hillside to your left is the site of a quarry, since filled in, where Mather cut a 16 foot diameter sound mirror into the chalk face. To test it, arrangements were made for trial aircraft flights, to see if the mirror could detect the distant engine sound. The hope was that such devices would be able to give advance warning of raids by German Zeppelins.

It seems that some early trials didn't quite go to plan. In a letter of July 15th, 1915, one Royal Flying Corps officer wrote:

"I sent an aeroplane over yesterday but it did not come within the radius of action of the mirror...As you know I can little spare the pilot necessary but I am sure that unless the experiments are carried out methodically, no useful data will be obtained." From *Echoes in the Sky* by Richard N. Scarth.

However, experiments at this site did give Mather the information he needed - he detected a Zeppelin flying up the Thames Estuary in 1915 at a distance of about 12 miles. The pioneering tests carried out here enabled the development of more efficient concrete mirrors at Folkestone and the North Foreland which were later successfully used to alert air defenses to bombing raids along Britain's coasts.



Professor Mather with the sound mirror (National Archive)

#### From point G to point H

*19. Continue along the valley then veer left towards some trees. Go through a gap, walk through the trees towards a waymarker post and emerge into a pasture in a secluded valley bottom (you are now back in Detling parish).*

*20. Go straight ahead and into trees on the other side of the valley. Walk steeply uphill through the woodland.*

*21. Continue through the woods, emerging into a private garden (please respect the privacy of residents). Bear left between some trees near a garage, and onto a tarmac drive. Follow the drive uphill to a lane.*

*22. Turn right and walk a short distance until you can see a large old house on your right.*

#### POINT H - PARK VALLEY HOUSE A long way from the Weald

Park Valley House is the first of three buildings you will see which are, at least in part, Wealden hall houses. In the case of Park Valley, the house consists of the upper end and former open hall of a hall house. You may be wondering what anything described as 'Wealden' is doing up here on top of the downs. These late mediaeval houses have a characteristic structure and layout which is known as Wealden because they occur most commonly in the Weald, but are also found in other areas. The term 'hall house' comes from the large timbered halls which are the key feature of these dwellings. For more information, see the section entitled 'Wealden Hall Houses' on page 15.

#### From point H to point I

*23. Opposite Park Valley House is a gate to Lower Cox Street Farm. Go through the gate and walk straight ahead, past the house and garage towards a stile. Cross the stile into a field. (Lower Cox Street Farm House is a listed building dated 1400 to 1499.)*

*24. Walk diagonally across the field towards a stile near the corner of a woodland. Cross the stile onto a dirt track and turn right. Follow the edge of the woodland, downhill. Reach a junction at the bottom and take the narrow path off to the left into the woods - not the wider track along the edge. (This is Newlands Wood - the second ancient woodland on the trail.)*

*25. Reach a junction with yellow markers on a telephone pole and keep straight ahead. Reach a stile, but do not cross it - instead turn right, uphill, out of the woods.*

*26. Reach a stile at the top, cross and keep straight ahead, keeping fence line to left. Reach a stile and cross onto a lane. CAUTION: This narrow lane is quite well used by traffic - take care.*

*27. Turn left and follow the lane past a modern house (Scragged Oak House) and come to an old farmhouse. (This is Scragged Oak Farm House, dated 1655. Local resident Robin Grimble tells us that this name dates back to at least 1830.)*

*28. Continue along this lane a little further then come to an old orchard on your right.*



The orchard near Scragged Oak

#### POINT I - TRADITIONAL ORCHARD Heritage grows on trees

The large trees you can see in the orchard on your right are a sign that this is a traditional orchard. Modern orchards nearly always have small, dwarf varieties of tree, which have often been planted at the expense of the older ones. This can also be at the expense of wildlife (long established orchards can be excellent habitats - one of the Lost Landscapes trails for Chartham goes through an old orchard that is now a designated nature reserve). The demise of old orchards has also led to the loss of another kind of heritage - the fruit itself, which came in an array of traditional varieties, many of which are now rarely seen in the countryside.

Old maps of this area show that there were once small orchards associated with many of the farms and manor houses on this trail - at Binbury Manor, at Lower Cox Street, here at Scragged Oak, and further on at Pollyfields. As far as we know, these have all disappeared except for this one. This was probably a consequence of the decline of fruit markets in the 1960s that led to orchards being removed right across Kent. This didn't have a massive impact in this area because fruit growing was not one of the main land uses, but in other parts of the county it led to a great change in the landscape.

#### From point I to point J

*29. Continue along this lane for just over 0.5 miles.*

*30. Pass a left hand turn then come to a pair of oast houses and an old farmhouse beyond. (This is Polle Hill Farm. The oldest part of the farmhouse probably dates from the late 1400s, and was originally a Wealden hall house. See page 15 for more information.)*

*31. Continue along this lane for a short distance. Come to a large part-timbered house on your right. (This is Pollyfields Farmhouse. Like Polle Hill, the oldest part probably dates from the late 1400s, and was originally a Wealden hall house.)*

*32. Continue along this lane and take the next right hand turn. Follow the lane as it bears left through 90 degrees. Continue until you reach an period cottage on your left. (This dwelling is simply known as The Old Cottage. It probably dates from the 16th century.)*

*33. Continue along this lane. Take the next footpath off to the left into the woods.*

## POINT J - AMBER WOOD Roaming among Roman trees

This is the last woodland on the trail, and like Stockings Wood, it is ancient. Unlike Stockings Wood, it is not designated a Site of Nature Conservation Interest. This may be because most of the trees you will see as you walk through it are sweet chestnut. This is not a native tree, but one brought into Britain by the Romans. They brought it as a food source but many coppice woodlands in Kent were planted with chestnut to provide timber for hop poles and fencing, mainly in the 19th century.

This replanting of native trees with chestnut did no great harm to woodland habitats as long as coppicing continued, but the decline in hop growing and other economic factors in the second half of the 20th century meant that coppicing stopped in many woodlands. This in turn led to excessive shading and suppression of native trees and plants. As you walk through the wood, you will see the coppice trees with their multiple trunks, but these trunks are much taller and thicker than they should be - the coppice is very overgrown, and this woodland is not the rich habitat for wildlife it could be. This is a very common problem across Kent, although there is a revival in coppicing, and the traditionally managed woodland landscapes are coming back.

For more information see the section on special woodlands on page 14.

### From point J to start point

34. Follow the path through the woods as it bears right through 90 degrees, at a yellow marker.

35. You will come to another 90 degree bend to the right with a marker, followed immediately by an unmarked fork in the path where you should go left.

36. At a marked junction, keep straight ahead towards a small timber gate at the edge of the wood. At the gate, do not go through but turn right and walk along the edge of the wood with a chain link fence to your left. Follow the path as it bears left through 90 degrees and leads you to a lane.

37. You are now back at step 7. Retrace your steps back to Detling village: turn right, walk to a right hand bend in the lane and take the byway off to the left. Follow the byway back downhill. At the bottom of the byway, turn left and follow this lane back to Jade's Crossing. Cross the bridge back to the village hall.

## DETLING AND THURNHAM TRAIL

*The trail route is shown in orange on the map at the front of this booklet. There are no detailed written directions. Start at Detling village hall.*

*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 correspond to lower case letters on the map.*

### Point a - The Cock Horse

This pub is a listed building and was originally known by a different name. An old postcard of the pub bears the name the Cock Inn and clearly shows a cockerel on the pub sign. One can hardly blame whoever decided to change the name, although it may have brought an end to some very old jokes!



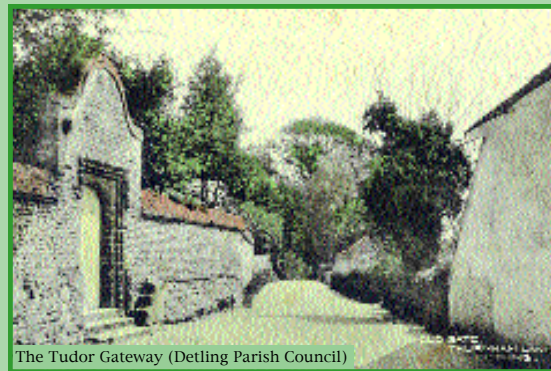
The Cock Inn (Detling Parish Council)

### Point b - The Tudor Gateway

This gateway on this corner and the wall running alongside it are all that remains of a lost Tudor house called East Court. There is a dwelling called East Court near here, but it is a much later, 19th century building. You may have noticed the small stone steps to the right of the gateway, that seem to go nowhere in particular. In fact this is a mounting block to aid in mounting a horse. You can just imagine a gentlemanly resident of East Court coming out of the gate, climbing the block to mount his horse and riding off down the Pilgrim's Way. See the plaque to the left of the gate for more information.

This photograph is an old postcard showing the gateway much as it is today. However, it also shows a structure that has been lost: Look carefully at the last building on the right hand side of the lane - you can

just see the Reading Room, which is discussed further at point n.



The Tudor Gateway (Detling Parish Council)

### Point c - The Street

The Street is the heart of the old village and includes many listed buildings. The photograph below captures it in the early 20th century and shows that it has changed relatively little.



The Street (Detling Parish Council)

### Point d - Note on the route

At this point, take a narrow footpath off to the left, between fences, following a marker on a telephone pole.

### Point e - Thurnham Roman Villa

Just south of this point is the site of Thurnham Roman Villa, a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Local historian Mike Perring tells us that "it was partially excavated in 1833 and again in 1933. Part of the site was more thoroughly dug in 1958 (prior to the M20

motorway) and the remainder was dug in advance of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link." These multiple investigations have led to a good understanding of the site. The most important revelation was that this had been an occupied site even further back than the Roman period.

The earliest activity here seems to date from the Bronze Age, although archaeologists found it difficult to accurately date their discoveries. A number of finds were made, including a bronze needle and a small bronze rapier.

The evidence from the Iron Age was better. Archaeologists discovered a large, enclosure, containing up to three 'round house' dwellings. It seems that soon after the Roman invasion in 43AD, this enclosure

was levelled and replaced with a larger one containing a basic rural building known as a 'proto villa', which was then replaced by a full-blown two storey villa at the end of the 1st century AD.

By the early 3rd century the villa had grown still further. If you had visited at that time, you would have approached from the east along a cobbled track leading to a large, impressive building, with rooms accessed by long corridors, perhaps with tile floors. There was a bath suite attached to the south side - the mark of real luxury at this time.

Many artefacts from this long period of occupation were found and dated. The latest, coins depicting the Emperor Constantine, were from about 340 AD, so this was approximately when the villa was abandoned.

### Point f - Note on the route

Some maps show no public footpath on the route here, but it still exists: Walk along the edge of the wood with the wood to your left. Follow the marker at the corner of the wood, straight ahead, with the embankment next to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to your right, walking towards a road.

### Point g - Corbier Hall

In this area are the buried remains of Corbier Hall, a late 14th century manor house and a scheduled ancient monument. Its foundations are visible from the air as cropmarks (variations in plant growth caused by buried features) whilst ploughing of the site

often brings building material up to the surface. The foundations and cellar of the building were uncovered by local landowner Sir George Hampson in 1862. At that time, considerable traces of the moat were still visible on the north-east side, but that too has now vanished.

**Point h - CAUTION**

This road is sometimes busy.

**Point i - Detour to church**

Come to a footpath off to the left. If you wish you can use this path to make a detour to beautiful Thurnham Church and Thurnham Court. Retrace your steps to this point.

**Point j - Thornham Friars**

Standing at this crossroads in the middle of Thurnham village, you can see a house called Thornham Friars to your right. It may look as if it's been here for centuries, but it hasn't. Local resident Mike Perring told us...

"Thornham Friars consists of mediaeval buildings brought from Sussex in the early 20th century and added to the two existing Forge Cottages."

In 1913 while the ground was being dug in preparation for a new bowling green, soon after the buildings had been brought in, an amazing discovery was made - many graves, containing spearheads, beads and other items. The gardens was the site of an Anglo-Saxon pagan cemetery. Although a number of graves were disturbed, and many of the 'grave goods' removed, only a few were recorded, and even those have now been lost without trace.



Thornham Friars

**Point k - Thurnham Castle**

You don't have to spend very long at this location to appreciate why a castle was built here. Sitting on a spur at the crest of the North Downs, it commands

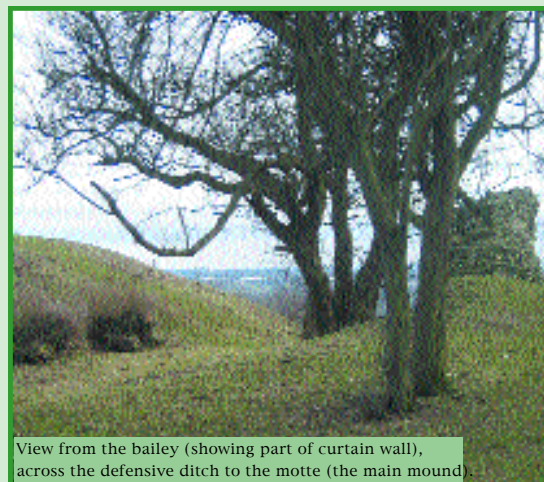


Remains of the thick, flint curtain wall

the surrounding area - and that's exactly what it was intended to do. The Normans who built it wanted Thurnham Castle to be imposing, both visually and strategically. With castles here, at Binbury (which you can visit on the main trail) and Stockbury, the Normans wanted there to be no doubt that they were in charge. Imagine being an Anglo-Saxon person in Kent in the early years of Norman rule and watching these structures being built, knowing that foreign invaders were now in control. The impact of castle building was perhaps as much psychological as military.

Local resident Mike Perring tells us that Thurnham castle probably started life with wooden palisades as defenses, "which were later replaced by stone walls". These walls were nearly 1 metre thick, so the castle must have looked pretty impenetrable. You will see some of the walls if you explore the castle site. They formed part of what was called the 'curtain wall' (the outermost defensive barrier), and the gatehouse (the main entrance to the castle complex). You can stand in the gap where the gatehouse used to be and imagine yourself as a Norman guard

controlling who was going in and out of the castle. Thurnham is what is known as a 'ringwork and bailey' castle. The ringwork was the inner stronghold of the castle, consisting of a raised 'motte' or mound, probably with stone towers built on it, linked by a



View from the bailey (showing part of curtain wall), across the defensive ditch to the motte (the main mound)

circular wall. This is the big mound you will climb up if you explore the site. The bailey was the outer part of the castle, where part of the curtain wall that protected it still stands. The bailey was where everyday life went on - cooking, washing, blacksmithing - and it was where animals were kept. The ringwork and the bailey were separated by a deep defensive ditch. This can still be seen, although it wouldn't keep many marauding Anglo-Saxons at bay now, because it's been slowly filled in with soil over the centuries.

As you explore you will see some information panels provided by Kent County Council who now own and manage the site.

**Point l - White Horse Wood**

At this point is one of the entrances to White Horse Wood. All too often on a Lost Landscapes trail, the story is one of woodlands being reduced in size or lost altogether, often to make way for arable fields. Here at White Horse Wood, this trend is being reversed. Open fields have been planted up with a mix of native trees, 20,000 in all, to create a new woodland and a brand new country park. The woodland, owned and managed by Kent County Council,

was created to mark the millennium. During archaeological investigations prior to tree planting, an enclosure, about 2/3 hectare in area, surrounded by a ditch, was found. This previously unknown feature is actually prehistoric, dating from the late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (between 1000 and 400 BC). It is thought to have been used as a summer camp, perhaps by the same community that occupied the Thurnham Roman Villa site before the Romans arrived.

**Point m - CAUTION**

This road is narrow in places.

**Point n - The Reading Room**

The Reading Room, pictured below, used to stand on your left, more or less opposite the end of the old wall of East Court. It first appears on maps as the Reading Room between 1907 and 1923, but may have existed before then. Local resident Robin Grimble tells us it is thought to have been an early lending library.



The Reading Room (Detling Parish Council)

# Special woodlands

Glance at any map of this area and you will quickly see that Detling and Thurnham are quite well-wooded parishes. Much of this woodland is 'ancient', but what does this term 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..."  
*Guidelines for Identifying Ancient Woodland - leaflet produced by English Nature.*

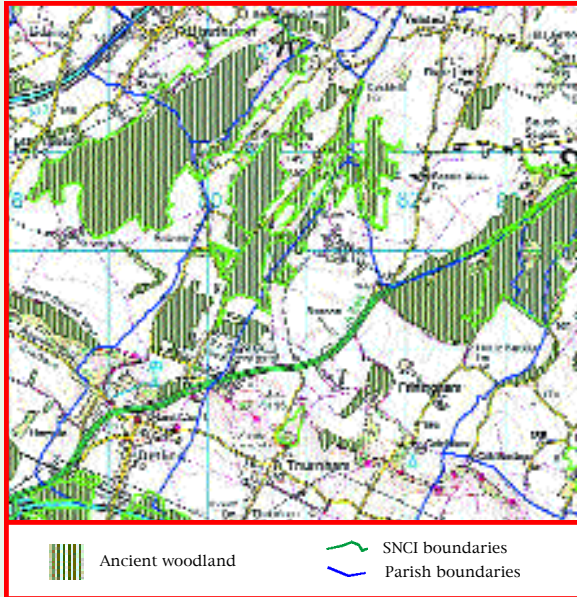
You can also find clues about whether a woodland is ancient by looking at various aspects of the woodland environment. For example, certain plants are known as 'ancient woodland indicators' - if a number of them can be found in a wood, that is evidence for it being ancient.

Conservationists regard ancient woodland as the closest thing to 'natural' woodland that we have in the managed landscapes of Britain. Those with rare habitats and species are often designated as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCl)s by Kent Wildlife Trust. Detling and Thurnham are fortunate in that many of their ancient woodlands are SNCl)s. The map above shows which woodlands in the area are ancient and which are SNCl)s.

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.

Local resident Robin Grimble highlighted to us the value of coppicing to wildlife and people over time:

"The practice of coppicing has brought tremendous benefits - a variety of important natural ground flora (and fauna) and understorey products very useful to man. In spring time the bluebells and anemones are amazing in the coppiced woodlands and are a major feature of Detling."



Legend for the map:  
 Ancient woodland (vertical hatching)  
 SNCl boundaries (green line)  
 Parish boundaries (blue line)

# Wealden Hall Houses

As today, in the late Middle Ages, the south-east of England was a relatively prosperous region, and, as today, that was reflected in its buildings. This affluence was not restricted to the ruling classes - non-aristocratic families could also afford to build large houses using substantial materials and fine craftsmanship. Typical of this era of high quality rural dwellings was the Wealden hall house.

When these wealthy families built their homes, they wanted to emulate the grand residences of the very rich, and that meant building an open hall. The hall was the most important room in the house - a large communal space for dining, holding court and conducting business. It usually contained the only source of heat in the house - a central hearth. As well as being a symbol of status, the hall was a warm, welcoming, social place, at a time when, even in the south-east, the countryside was a dark, remote and much wilder place.

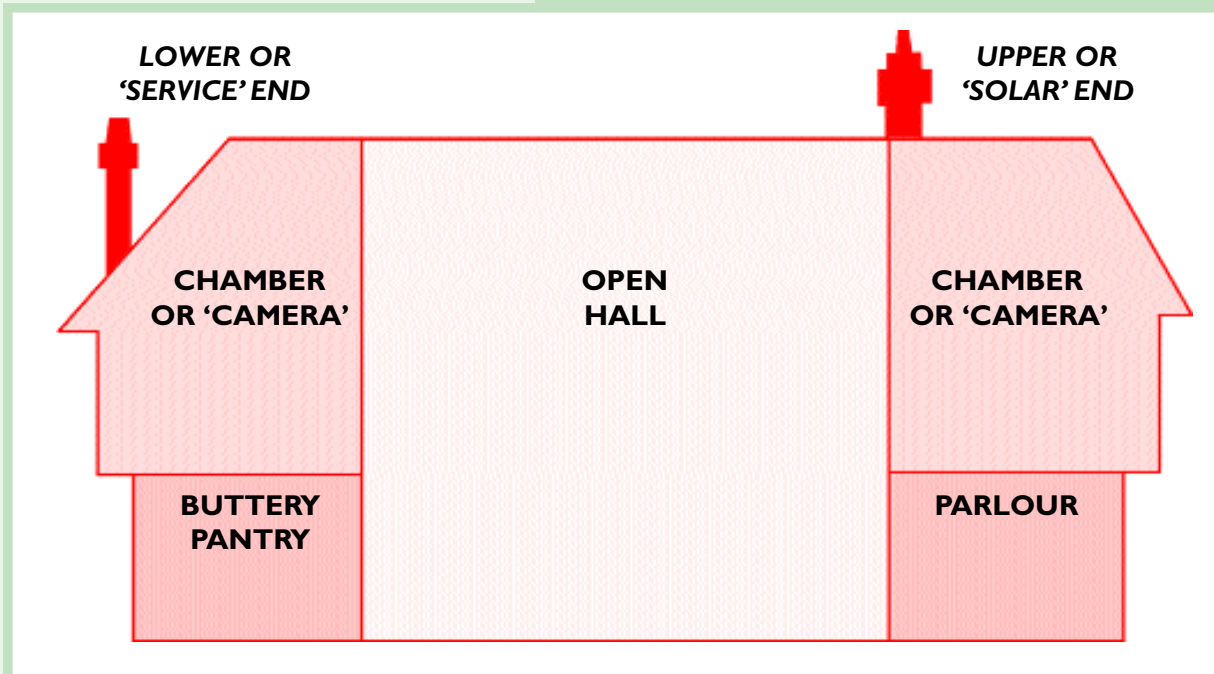
Wealden houses were a particular type of open-hall dwelling, so-called because many were built, and survived, in Kent and Sussex (several hundred can still be found in Kent alone). They were two storeys high, with a hall that was the full height of the house - open right up to the apex of the roof. Usually, on either side of the hall, were two two-storeyed 'ends': the upper or 'solar' end, consisting of a parlour on the ground floor and a 'camera' or chamber above; and a lower or 'service' end, that contained utility rooms like the pantry and buttery, again with a camera above.

BELOW: Diagram of a Wealden Hall House, showing the basic room layout.

This arrangement was typical but there were variations - single ends, or ends that were open like the hall. Wealden houses also varied a lot in size and number of rooms, reflecting a fashion being copied by many people with varying degrees of wealth. But even the most modest hall house was superior in quality to the majority of vernacular buildings outside the south-east. In

his book, *English Vernacular Houses*, Eric Mercer says this type of dwelling "marks a revolutionary change in the housing of a section of the rural population in south-eastern England."

Fashions change of course and, as time went, on the hall house fell out of favour. This started with a trend towards the solar end becoming larger in relation to the hall. After 1500, many hall houses were converted to two storeys throughout, by putting a ceiling across the open hall. In Tudor houses, large halls became imposing entrance rooms for visitors, leading to our current use of the word 'hall'. By the late 16th century, houses that were two-storeyed throughout were standard across south-east England.



# Contributors

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

Robin Ambrose  
Tim Bell (Warden, The Larches)  
Detling Parish Council  
Robin Grimble  
Mike Perring  
Adam Single (Kent County Council Heritage Team)

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## 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, Hollingbourne, Charing, Chilham and Chartham.

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




For further walking opportunities in Kent please visit [www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent](http://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.

