

COUNTRYSIDE & LANDSCAPE

The Wootton environment



Walks about Wootton

Countryside and Landscape

Welcome to Wootton Bridge. This leaflet is one in a series of five walks designed to help you explore some of our village's history and beautiful surroundings. Enjoy your walk.

Distance: Approximately 3½ miles.

Timing: 2 - 2½ hours

Nearest car park: Brannon Way.

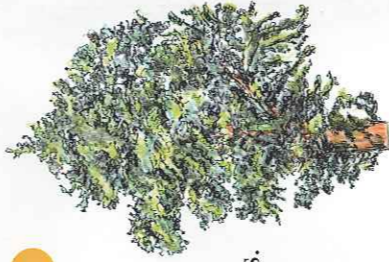
Bus routes: Ryde - Newport No. 9, Ryde - East Coves No 4.

Recommended: Bring your binoculars and bird book!

Not recommended: For disabled.

Start and finish: Brannon Way car park.

Taken at a gentle pace this walk is a little challenging. Sturdy footwear is recommended. You will cross fields and stiles.



1. The walk starts in Brannon Way car park. Leave the car park and turn right. Proceed to the High Street, turn right and walk down the hill to the Creek and Mill Pond. Stop halfway across on the 'bridge footpath'.

2. On your left is the Creek which flows down to the Solent and on your right is the Mill Pond, so named because prior to the 1960s and adjacent to the Sloop Inn there used to be a tidal mill, whose site is now occupied by yachtsmen's houses.

The **Mill Pond** is a Site of Important Nature Conservation and is surrounded by Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It is 'brackish' which means it is a mixture of salt and freshwater. There is still evidence of the Mill race half way across the footbridge if you look closely. Sluice gates under the bridge control the management of the water in and out of the Mill Pond. Look out over the Mill Pond for herons, egrets, swans and other wading birds.

Now retrace your steps a little way until you come to the Plane Tree opposite the Sloop Inn. This tree is held in

great affection by local people and has become synonymous with Wootton Bridge. It has a girth of 13'4" and is about 160 -200 years old.

Turn left at the Plane Tree into Lakeside along footpath N1.



3. In Spring note the cloud of white blossom on your left, near the willow trees. This is a rare wild pear. The fruits are a little larger than a golf ball and are hard and bitter. Pass over a small bridge. On your right is the entrance to Fernhill Park.

On your left is the site of a former holiday centre known as Lakeside which was the location for the film 'That'll be the Day' with David Essex and Ringo Starr.

Continue straight on, bear left with Fernhill Park on your right and after 100 yards proceed through the iron farm gate.

The countryside on this section of the walk is particularly lovely and is all part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

4. After about 350 yards there is an information panel on your left which tells you about Hurst Copse. Next to the panel is a stile into Hurst Copse.

Note : Hurst Copse is well trodden and can be very sticky going, even during a dry winter.

5. Detour: If you choose, you can take a detour at this point. Walk 100 yards along the main path and take the wooden gate on the right. Pause to read the information panel. This land belongs to the People's Trust for Endangered Species which has made the field available to the public. It has been left, with a little grazing, to revert to meadowland providing a site for meadow flowers that are being rapidly lost. Many varieties of butterflies can be seen here. At the top of the field is a particularly handsome oak tree with massive branches springing from low on the base. Beyond the oak tree, at the field boundary to the west and south, are what could be thought of as beech trees. They are in fact, Caucasian elms or Zelkovas which are doing well.

Now retrace your steps to the stile and enter Hurst Copse. Pause and read the information panel as you pass it.

If you choose not to take the detour: Cross the stile into Hurst Copse.

Acknowledgements

The Parish Council wishes to thank the many people and volunteers who have supported and helped in whatever way with the production of the Walks about Wootton project. Without them the production of these leaflets would not have been possible.

This project has been funded by the Local Heritage Initiative which is a national grant scheme that helps local groups to investigate, explain and care for their local landscape, landmarks, traditions and culture. The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) provides the grant but the scheme is a partnership, administered by the Countryside Agency.



12. Turn right and after about 50 yards turn right again into Fernhill. Continue down through Fernside Way and Mary Rose Avenue, which will take you back to Brannon Way car park where you started.

Carry on past rolling pasture and woodland, to exit onto Station Road.

11. Carefully cross over the railway line. Continue past **Packsfield Farmhouse** on your right (N8). At dusk, look carefully in the grass and banks. If you are lucky you will see the pale green light of female glowworms trying to attract a mate. Glowworms are becoming increasingly rare due to changing field/bank management, insecticides and street lights, which baffle the poor flying males.

Turn right onto footpath N7 Packsfield and Station Road enjoying the pretty farmland countryside on either side of the footpath. In summer watch out for swallows, swifts and a variety of hedgerow birds.

10. At the junction of footpaths N4 and N7 pause and admire the view over Wootton Bridge to the Solent beyond. You will see the sails of the Spinnaker Tower at Gunwharf Quay in Portsmouth and on a clear day you will be able to see right down the eastern Solent.

Turn right onto footpath N3 and follow the bridleway.

9. Continue straight ahead, with Woodhouse Farm to your left, until reaching a sharp left hand bend in the track. Go over the stile on the right at signpost N2, Littletown Lane. At this point you will be leaving the AONB. Continue left over 4 stiles and pasture land, keeping all dogs on leads. You may see the farmer training his young sheepdogs, which includes herding a flock of geese and is very entertaining. Carry on until reaching the bridleway at Mousehill Farm. Turn right onto footpath N3 and follow the bridleway.

If you look carefully at this point you may see buzzards overhead or even catch sight of an adder basking in the sun over the railway line.

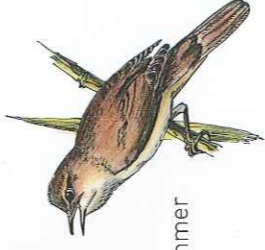
8. Follow the undulating track until arriving at the level crossing at Woodhouse Farm. Take care when crossing over the railway line.

Turn left and continue uphill until the track runs to the right; a good view across the open countryside may be obtained here. Note the woodland on either side of the track is being brought back to coppice rotation. This is to encourage more hazel to grow for the benefit of the elusive dormouse.

Hurst Copse was purchased by the People's Trust for Endangered Species in 1996 and is an SSSI. The Trust allows public access but asks that you observe the Countryside Code at all times. The copse has elements of ancient woodland and can be traced back to the late 17th century. In spring swathes of wild bluebells can be seen on the left bank, whilst in the more open glades the pale heads of wood anemones turn to follow the sun. Note the polypod ferns growing profusely on some of the oak trees.

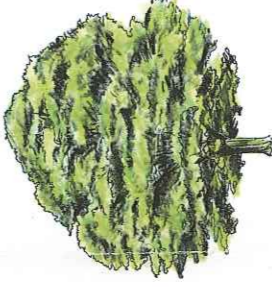
6. Follow the path through the copse.

Look out for red squirrels. You will come to the boardwalk which has reedbeds on either side. If you are quiet you may hear or even see reed warblers at this point. During the summer shelduck and red shank can be seen feeding on the mudflats.



The marshland here is of ecological importance.

Where the freshwater streams meet the brackish water of the Mill Pond there is a change from the tall freshwater reed beds to blue/green sea couch grass to more open saltmarsh vegetation on the edge of the creek where marsh samphire, cord grass and sea plantain grow.



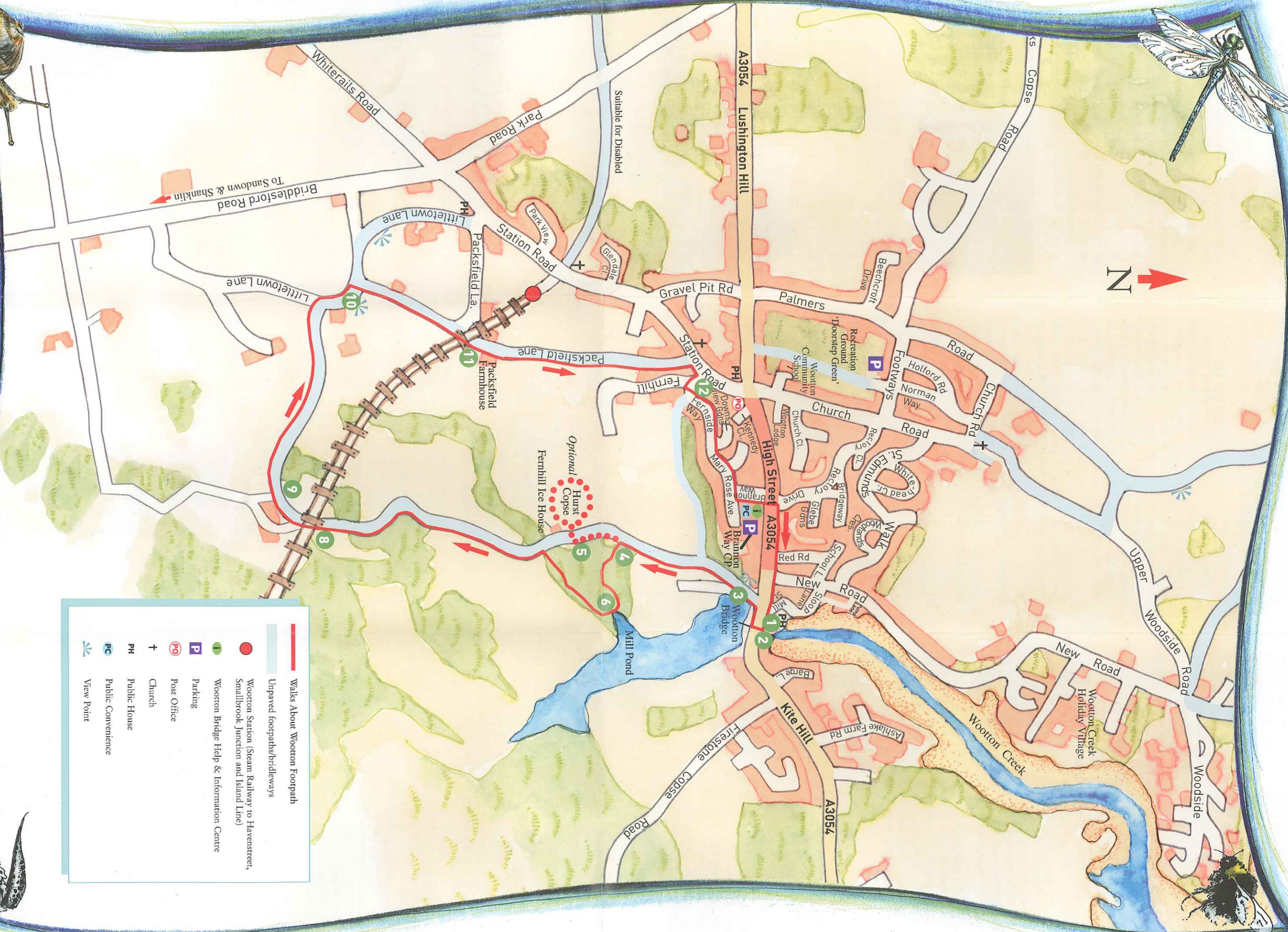
7. As you exit the copse, on the opposite side of the track is the **ice house**, an egg-shaped brick building constructed in the late 18th century to store ice for the residents of Fernhill House. The ice came from as far away as Scandinavia and was stored in layers of straw for as long as two or three years. Ice houses became a desirable adjunct to large houses and over 3,000 of the structures still survive throughout the country today.



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	Walks About Wootton Footpath
	Unpaved footpaths/bridleways
	Wootton Station (Steam Railway to Havensstreet, Smallbrook Junction and Island Line)
	Wootton Bridge Help & Information Centre
	Parking
	Post Office
	Church
	Public House
	Public Convenience
	View Point



WOOTTON BRIDGE HELP AND INFORMATION CENTRE
 4 & 5 Joanne's Walk, Brannon Way, Telephone: 884 555
 Web address: www.woottonbridge.com
 Open: Mon - Fri 0900 - 1300 hours

