








































# Symbols Key

|   |                     |   |                  |   |                               |   |                    |
|---|---------------------|---|------------------|---|-------------------------------|---|--------------------|
|  | Parking             |  | Picnic Site      |  | Fishing                       |  | Bus stop           |
|  | Information Centre  |  | Walks/Trails     |  | Theme/ Pleasure Park          |  | Train station      |
|  | Visitor Centre      |  | Cycle Trail      |  | Cathedral/ Abbey              |  | Stile              |
|  | Public Convenience  |  | Horse Riding     |  | Museum                        |  | Viewpoint          |
|  | Forestry Commission |  | Public House     |  | Castle/ Fort                  |  | Gate               |
|  | Public Telephone    |  | Viewpoint        |  | Building of Historic Interest |  | Hazards/ Take care |
|  | Camp Site           |  | Country Park     |  | English Heritage              |   |                    |
|  | Caravan Site        |  | Garden           |  | National Trust                |   |                    |
|  | Camp/Caravan Site   |  | Nature Reserve   |  | Other Tourist Feature         |   |                    |
|  | Leisure Centre      |  | Water Activities |  | High Weald Landscape Trail    |   |                    |
|  | Golf Course         |  | Slipway          |  | Interesting feature           |   |                    |

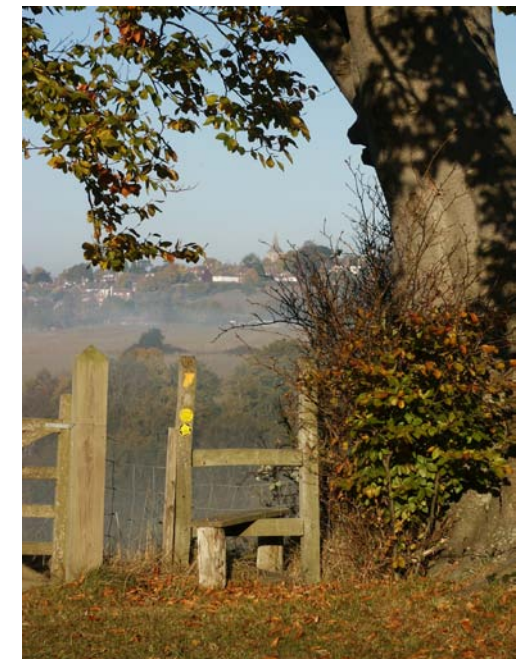
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# Chapter 5: Matfield to Rolvenden, 5.1



## A Productive Landscape

The western area, around Matfield and Brenchley, is orchard country, but as you move eastwards the orchards reduce and hops take over. In the middle section, towards Benenden, the valleys become steeper-sided and more dramatic. From Cranbrook towards Tenterden pasture dominates, reflecting the importance of sheep in that area. The route crosses a series of ridges, and the constant change of height gives both variety of walking and ever-changing views.

### 90. Matfield

The village green with its willow-edged pond is flanked by elegant houses and rows of tile-hung and weatherboarded cottages. The grandest is Matfield House, built in 1728 in the Queen Anne style.

Classical elegance was the aim - look for the perfect symmetry of the facade, the hipped roof sloping evenly from the eaves and the third floor windows incorporated as dormers in the roof so the building doesn't appear disproportionately tall.

The white weatherboarded tea shop and post office is full of memorabilia from the 1940s-50s to reminisce over as you enjoy your tea.

### 91. Orchards all around

Lines of fruit trees curve over the slopes. Apples thrive best on the well-drained upper slopes. Cooking varieties prefer heavier soils, eating varieties sandier soils, while plums and pears grow well on the richer soil of the less-exposed lower slopes.

You may see tapering wooden ladders leaning against gnarled plum or cherry trees; the narrow tops fitting more easily between crowded branches.

### 92. Shelterbelts

Hardier tree species are planted to shelter the precious fruit trees. Look for lines of hybrid alders and poplars with shiny leaves and clusters of small cones, and the thick hedgerows edging many orchards.

### 93. Swingle Swangle

The name of the green and cream weatherboarded cottages opposite the Walnut Tree refers to the spinning of flax for linen that took place there.

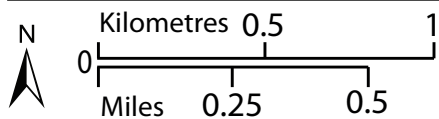
### 94. Brenchley



The route enters the village through the leafy churchyard. The church is built from locally-quarried sandstone. Look inside for the unusually painted wooden tresses and panels on the wooden ceiling. Outside, the names on the gravestones reveal families that have been in the village for generations. Can you find the Diamonds, whose graves date from 1746 - 1950s, and the Fuggles dating from the 18th century?

Looking down the picturesque High Street it's clear that the village still thrives, with its forge, butchers, post office, village stores and two pubs.







 High Weald Landscape Trail  
 4 Interesting feature

Also use Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer 136  
**Section 5, Map 1, Matfield to Rolvenden**  
[www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent](http://www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent)





### 95. Dwarf fruit trees

The dwarf apple trees beside the footpath at Honiton Farm are probably Royal Gala eating apples. These plants have been grafted onto dwarf rootstock to enable more trees to be planted in a given space and to tend them more easily. You may be able to see the grafting mark about four inches above the soil.

### 96. Furnace pond

This large pond once powered the bellows for the Horsmonden iron furnace and would have been a bustling industrial centre with hammers noisily beating the iron. Look for the probable position of the original dam in the north eastern corner, where water cascades down to the stream below. It is now a tranquil place with ducks and grebes, undisturbed save for the quiet angler or occasional walker.

### 97. Parkland and stately houses

Dotted along the hillsides are a number of grand mansions built from the wealth of iron and cloth or for the aristocracy. Shirrenden is an elegant house, white due to the smooth stucco rendering, close to the site of the ironworks.

### 98. Sprivers

Sprivers looks Georgian but the brick encases a much older house.

### 99. Rectory Park

Ornamental lakes and tall redwoods of great girth in the parkland surround the rambling Old Rectory.

The parklands surrounding Shirrenden, Sprivers and the Old Rectory have a very different feel from the adjoining meadows. The rolling grasslands dotted with huge ornamental conifers and spreading oaks provide a suitably stately backdrop for the grand houses.

### 100. Church

Horsmonden's 14th century stone church was built for a congregation living on scattered farms. The village developed later near the ironworks so the church now sits surrounded by fields and hop gardens some distance from its parishioners.

Look for the stone mounting block by the gate, reflecting an earlier form of Sunday transport. John Browne, the iron master, is buried here along with his wife Martha, who has a grave slab of Wealden

iron. A brass plaque commemorates some of Jane Austen's wealthy clothier ancestors who are also buried here.

### 101. Hop growing

Hops are naturally climbing hedgerow plants and need shelter and support if they are to be grown commercially. You can see the distinctive supporting framework of poles, wirework and string in the hop gardens around the church. Compare the position of the hop gardens with the orchards - hops prefer deeper soils and so thrive at the foot of the slopes where the soil has washed down.

### 102. Old and new

Walking into Goudhurst you pass through overgrown derelict orchards. These large older trees are now uneconomic compared to the densely planted dwarf bushes and heavy cropping modern varieties.

### 103. Goudhurst

This village developed at a time when the tracks led along the ridgetops and still occupies a spectacular position astride one of the steepest and tallest hills.

### 104. Village focal point

The large squat sandstone church of St Mary's sits impressively at the top of the hill.

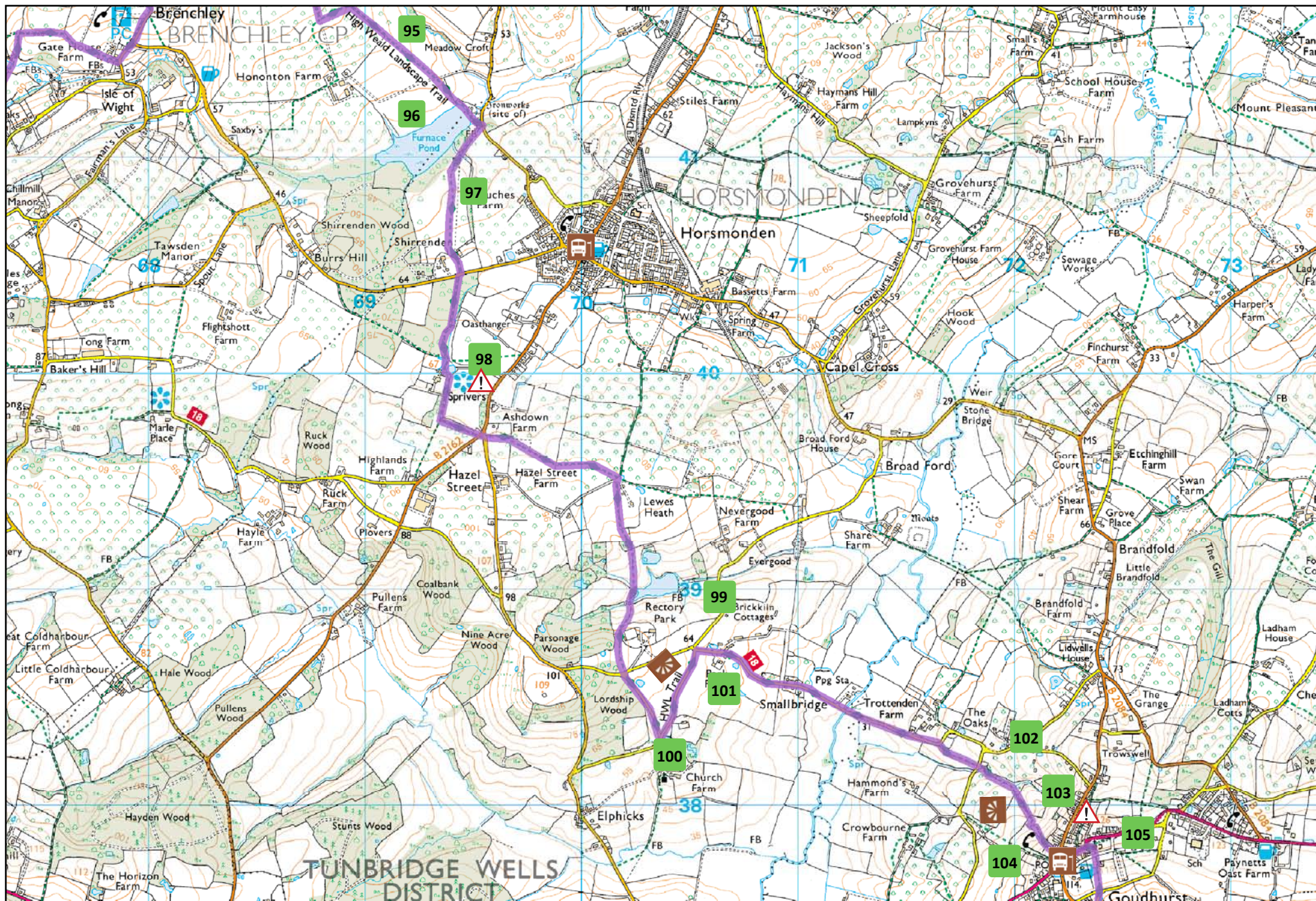
Spare time to explore its lavish interior, adorned and embellished by wealthy local residents over the centuries. Most notable was the Culpepper family of Bedgebury, a most influential family in Tudor times, rich owners of Bedgebury ironworks and favoured by royalty. Their 16th century table tomb is superb, with realistic life-size wooden figures of Sir Alexander Culpepper and his wife.

### 105. Fearsome smugglers

The people of Goudhurst suffered particularly badly at the hands of the notorious Hawkhurst smuggling gang. The Star and Eagle pub was a regular haunt of the gang and Spyways, overlooking the main street, was their sentry house.







Kilometres 0 0.5 1  
Miles 0 0.25 0.5

High Weald Landscape Trail

4 Interesting feature

Also use Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer 136  
*Section 5, Map 2, Matfield to Rolvenden*  
[www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent](http://www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent)





### 106. What shape oast?

The white cowls of oast houses stand out on the walk but why are there so many different shapes and sizes? The first purpose-built oasts were square with pyramidal roofs. Round oasts were introduced in the early 19th century as it was thought the round kilns greatly increased drying efficiency. A fire was lit in the base of the kiln, usually fuelled by charcoal, and the hops spread on the drying floor above. The white wooden cowls aided ventilation.

In the 1900s, it was discovered that square kilns distributed heat just as evenly and, as these were easier and cheaper to construct, most later oasts were square but larger than the earlier ones. On large farms several kilns were built sharing one large stowage area and many of these multiple oasts remain, such as the four-cowled oast at Smugly Farm beyond Goudhurst.

### 107. Glassenbury

From the path you have a good view of the ornamental lakes and gardens of this grand house. Once moated, it was originally built for the Roberts family, wealthy clothiers.

### 108. Working the woodland

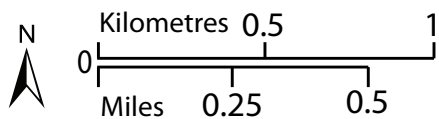
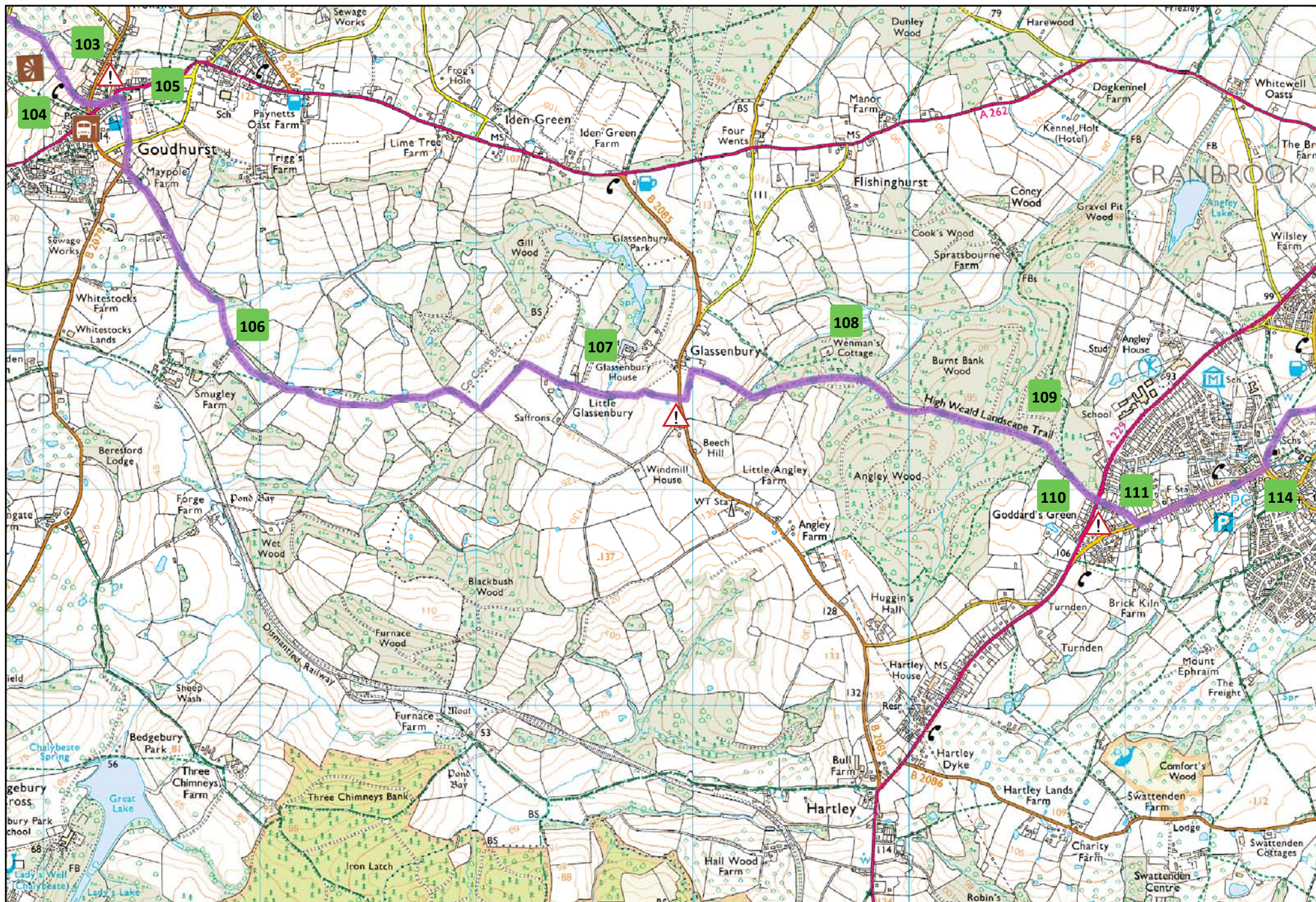
These woodlands are still traditionally managed by coppicing. Locally there would have been a high demand for coppice for hop poles but this has fallen as hop growing has reduced. Many coppice woodlands are now overgrown but here it has been re-introduced and the coppiced chestnut is sold for fencing and firewood. Look for the flush of spring flowers, thriving on the increased light beneath the freshly cut coppice.

### 109. Sandier soils

Can you tell the difference underfoot as you climb from the clay valley to the drier sandy soils on the higher ground? The plants change too - heather and pines thrive on the lighter sandy soils.







High Weald Landscape Trail  
 4 Interesting feature

Also use Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer 136/125  
**Section 5, Map 3, Matfield to Rolvenden**  
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### 110. Cranbrook

"Cranbrook" means marshy ground frequented by cranes. Cranes are now only occasional summer visitors from North Africa but in medieval times they bred in England and gave their name to the town.

### 111. A cloth making town

Cranbrook's splendid white weatherboarded houses date largely from the 15th and 16th centuries, the height of cloth manufacture. Schools, churches and a number of grand houses bear witness to the great wealth and influence of the clothiers. Leaflets about the town's history are available from the TIC (closed in winter).

### 112. The three-aisled church

Light and airy with its tall ceiling and large windows, the church is one of the largest and finest in the area. The original Saxon church was largely rebuilt at the height of Cranbrook's clothworking prosperity. Look for the plaques and memorials to its many clothier benefactors.

### 113. Dence School

A wealthy clothworker bequeathed the Dence School opposite the

church to the parish for the education of the poor in 1573. Fittingly it is still used for education - it is now a playschool. Another benevolent clothier founded the imposing 16th century public school beyond the church.

### 114. Weavers' cottages

Two half-timbered cottages on the High Street, Old Studio and Broadcloth Cottage were originally weavers' cottages.

### 115. The white smock windmill

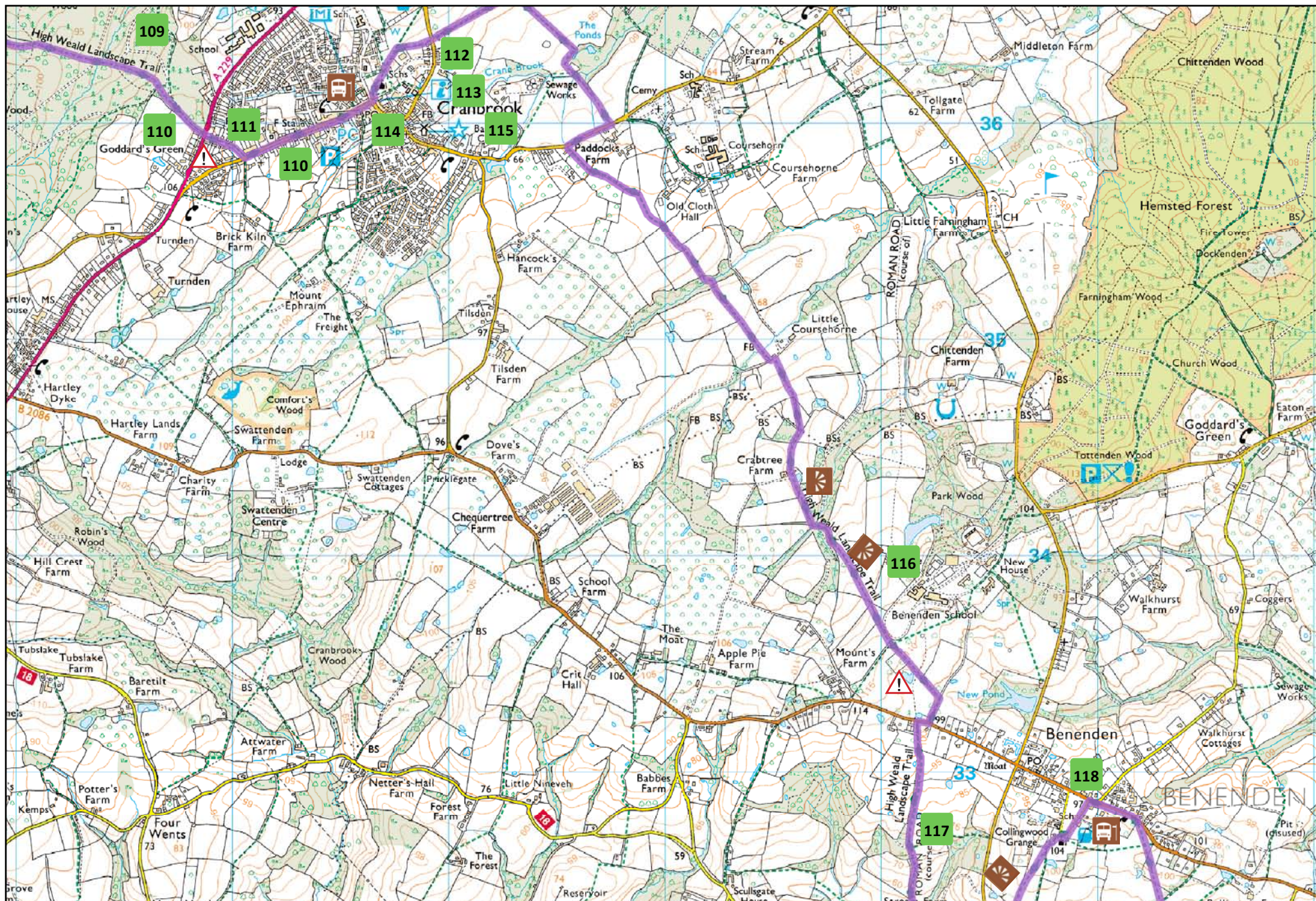
One of the largest in England, at 21 metres, (70 feet) high, it is a landmark for miles. It was built in 1814, at a cost of £3,500, when agriculture was prosperous and corn plentiful. It still grinds corn occasionally and is open to the public.

### 116. Benenden School

Benenden School is an impressive sight as it comes into view across the fields. Its tall chimneys and large rectangular windows with stone frames and leaded panes suggest it is Jacobean - in fact it was built in 1859 on the site of the Jacobean mansion it imitates.







Kilometres 0 0.5 1  
Miles 0 0.25 0.5

High Weald Landscape Trail

4 Interesting feature

Also use Ordnance Survey Map: Explorer 125  
**Section 5, Map 4, Matfield to Rolvenden**  
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### 117. Roman road

The path follows the straight line of a Roman road that perhaps linked early iron smelting centres. Look for the grey twisting branches of the hornbeams, once widely used for charcoal making, that edge the stream.

### 118. The hub of village life?

Benenden has one of the largest village greens in Kent; a focal point of village life for centuries. Passion plays may have been performed here; it was a bowling green for local gentry, and later, the village cricket green; and the annual stock and pleasure fair was held here.

### 119. Rolvenden windmill

The brown weatherboarded windmill near Rolvenden is a post mill. Post mills were originally built around a growing tree which was cut off and used as the main post or pivot upon which it could be revolved.

### 120. Rolvenden Church

Rolvenden Church is a landmark for many miles. The oldest parts of the church date from the 12th century but were added to many times. You can tell the relative ages

of different parts by looking at the walls - more recent sections are built of smooth, well dressed stone blocks whereas the 13th century wall is much rougher; made up of smaller, irregular pieces of stone.

### 121. A "Secret Garden"?

Elegant Maytham Place was rebuilt in 1911 in neo-Georgian style, following the fashion to design contemporary buildings in a style of an earlier era. Look for the high hipped roof, dormer windows and strong vertical emphasis. Author Frances Hodgson Burnett lived here at the turn of the 20th century and the old walled garden was allegedly the setting for *The Secret Garden*.







Kilometres 0 0.5 1  
Miles 0 0.25 0.5

High Weald Landscape Trail

4 Interesting feature

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