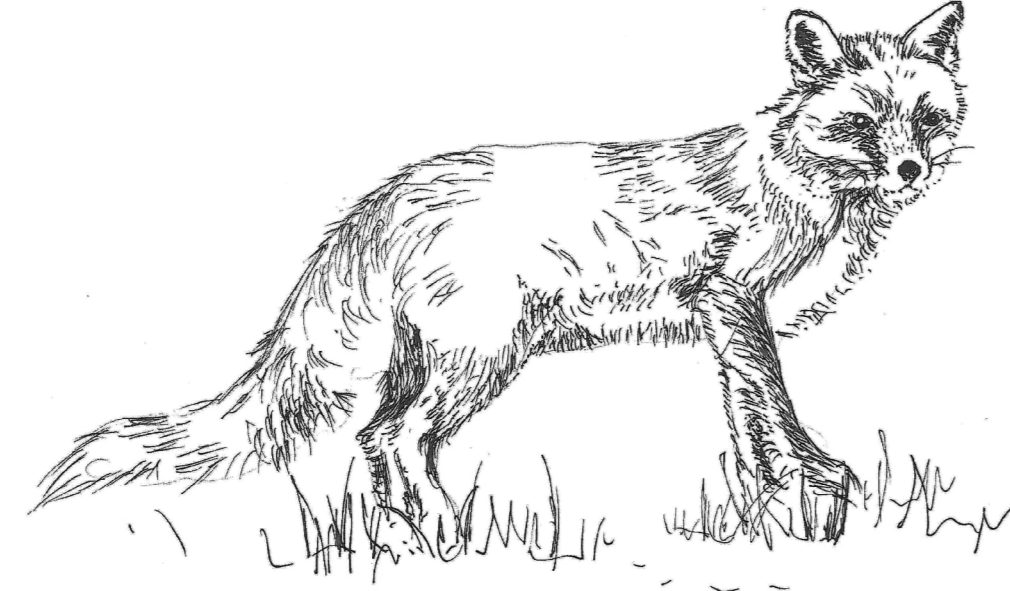


WELCOME TO WALTHAM



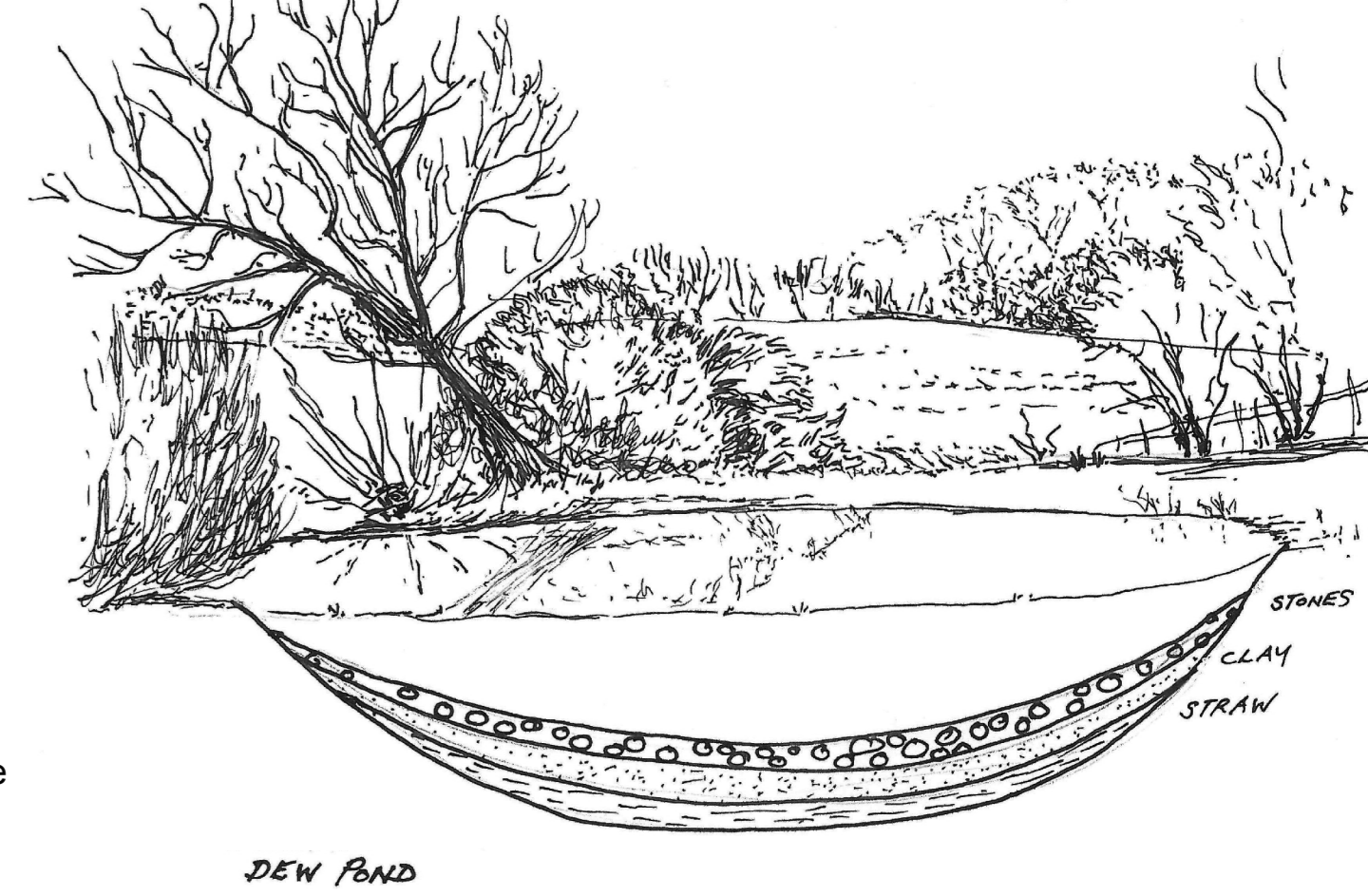
Landscape

Waltham (pronounced Walt-Ham) is a small village set atop the North Downs (from the Old English 'dun' meaning hill). It is approximately 145 metres (475 ft) above sea-level, nestled in the Kent Downs – a location that is designated as an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' or AONB. The steep escarpment and gentler dip slope of the Kent Downs, upon which Waltham lies, forms part of the chalk ridge of the North Downs. The ridge runs over 125 miles from west to east, to the south of London; from the Hog's Back, near Farnham in Surrey to the sea between Deal and Folkestone - where it terminates as the famous White Cliffs of Dover.

The landscape here is typical of chalk downland in southern England: rolling hills, intersected by steep valleys and dotted with ancient woods. The local geology is chalk – a very soft, white stone which can be seen close to the surface in many places around the village and which may be found under recently uprooted trees, for example. It is pure enough to write on a blackboard – try some!

Chalk is formed by the remains of minute Crustacea which lived in the warm, shallow seas that lay over this part of the world 90 million years ago. Also in those seas were the sponges that some people think may be the source of the silica-rich flints that are also scattered across the landscape, along with the occasional surface deposits of clay.

Flint and chalk have been quarried in the area since the age of the earliest Neolithic settlers 3,000 years ago and this has resulted in a legacy of chalk pits and quarries. Other evidence of early settlement can be found in the remains of tumuli or burial mounds which date from the Bronze Age. There are examples of **Tumuli** shown on our map to the west of the village but little can be seen of them at the surface today for they have been almost obliterated by ploughing and excavation. Better examples exist just outside the parish in **Denge Wood**.



Dew Pond

Nelson House was until 1996 The Lord Nelson public house. Historically the old ecclesiastical buildings near the church would have been used to accommodate, feed, and water travellers and wayfarers but in the 18th century the hostelry was moved to the centre of the village.



The School House was built in the 1830s in the centre of the village to house the teacher who taught in the old village school room (located in the churchyard). The old schoolroom is now just a ruin, although it was used by the Home Guard in WWII. A newer school was built in the school house which opened in 1843 and closed 140 years later at the end of the summer term in 1982.



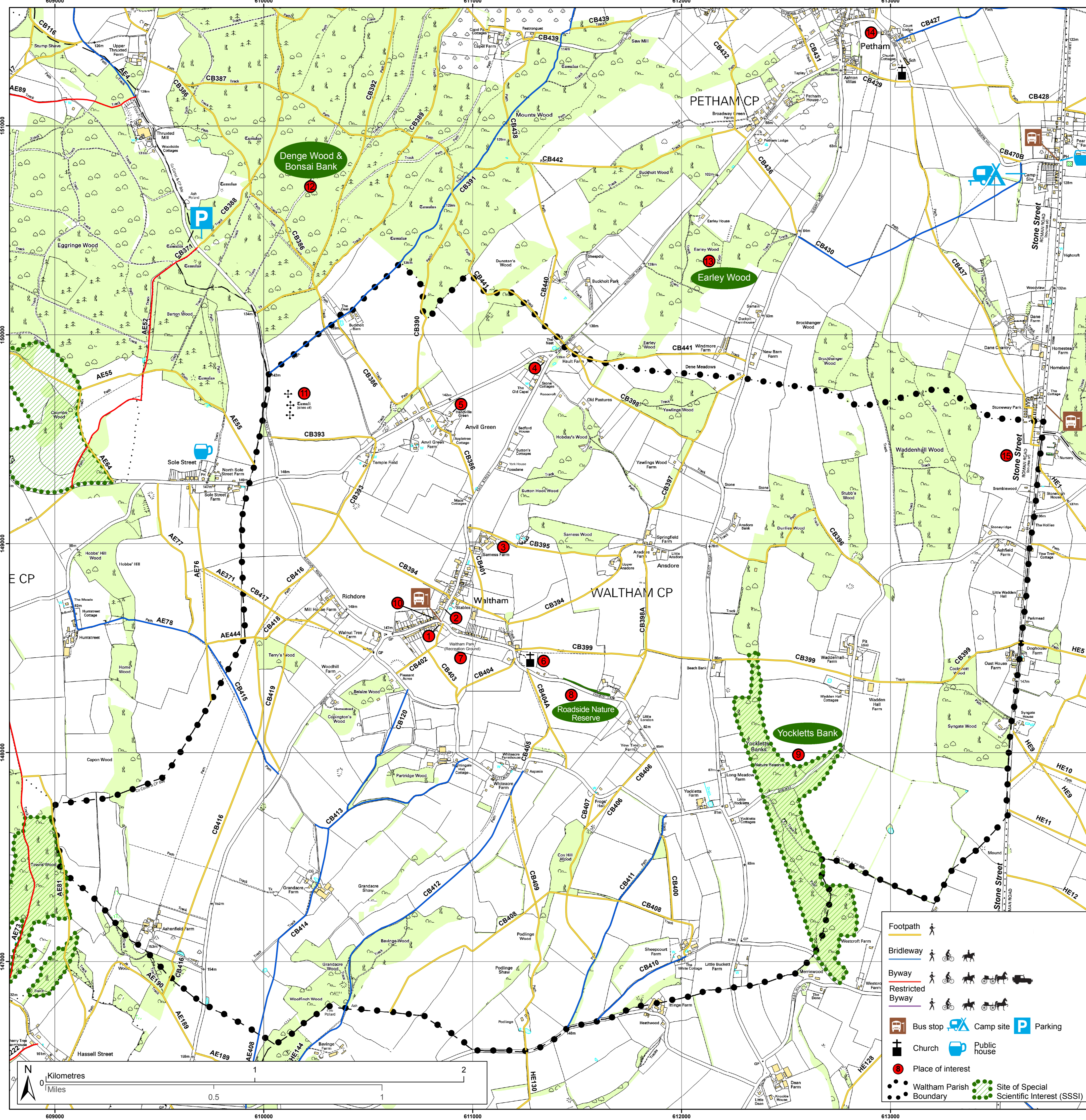
Sarness Farm was built (or rebuilt) in 1714 as Sarness Court and was used for local judicial matters. It has a Victorian well-house. The well was one of the deepest in the area (450ft) and served many local farms in years of drought.



Waltham Court was built in 1796 on common land during the reign of King George III as a poorhouse for the parishes of Petham, Lower Hardres, Crundale and Waltham. After 1829 it was used for a Methodist chapel, a bakery, and a brewhouse, as well as tenements for agricultural workers. In the early 20th century it was converted to a single dwelling and has since been a residence, restaurant and hotel.



Handville Green is a fine example of an old Hall House, built circa 1300. Two inglenooks and the chimneystack were added in 1537. Many original internal features remain and externally there is some 16th century herringbone-pattern brick nogging.



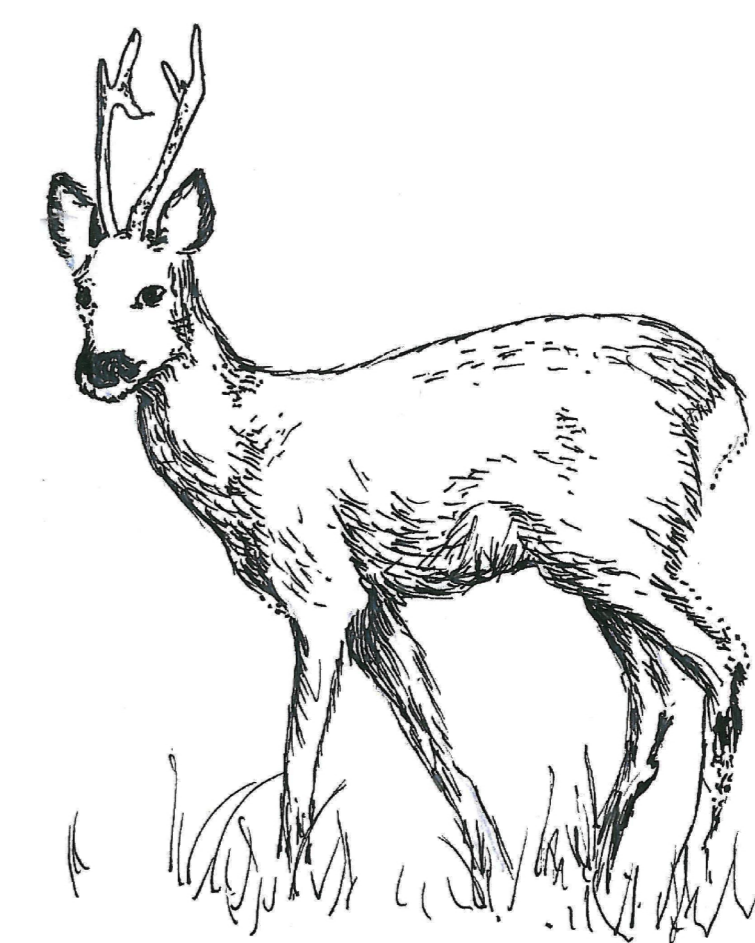
Features

Other man-made landscape features are the dew ponds or 'soles' that show as isolated blue spots on our map. Standing water is scarce on the free-draining chalk soils of the Downs so farmers through the centuries have lined hollows with clay or used other ancient methods to create watering holes for their livestock. These still dot the landscape today, often shaded by stands of trees. They give rise to the name of 'Sole Street' in the north-west of our map.

Water on this part of the Downs permeates to lower layers of the chalk which holds it like a sponge. Waltham has been punctured through the ages by deep wells to extract this ground water. One of the deepest - over 450 feet deep - was dug at **Sarness Farm**.

In the middle of the parish a dry valley runs north from Dean Farm through the Duckpit valley and down into Petham. Following periods of prolonged rainfall the water in the underlying chalk aquifers can rise sufficiently for water to emerge through springs, and streams begin to flow along the valley floor, or indeed over its entire length. These intermittent streams are often called winterbournes, but in Kent they are known as nailbournes. The stream from Waltham passes down the valley to the pond opposite **Petham Village Hall**, and from there the Petham Bourne flows down to Swaring Manor and on to Shalmsford Street where it joins the Great Stour.

An ancient - and famous - road, **Stone Street** lies to the east of our map running north-south. Its geometrically straight line tells us instantly that it is Roman in origin. It was built to join the ancient port of Portus Lemannis, near Hythe on the coast, with the important Roman City of Durovernum Cantiacorum, now Canterbury. It is still a busy road today, the B2068, serving the modern city, and forms our eastern boundary with neighbouring Stelling Minnis.

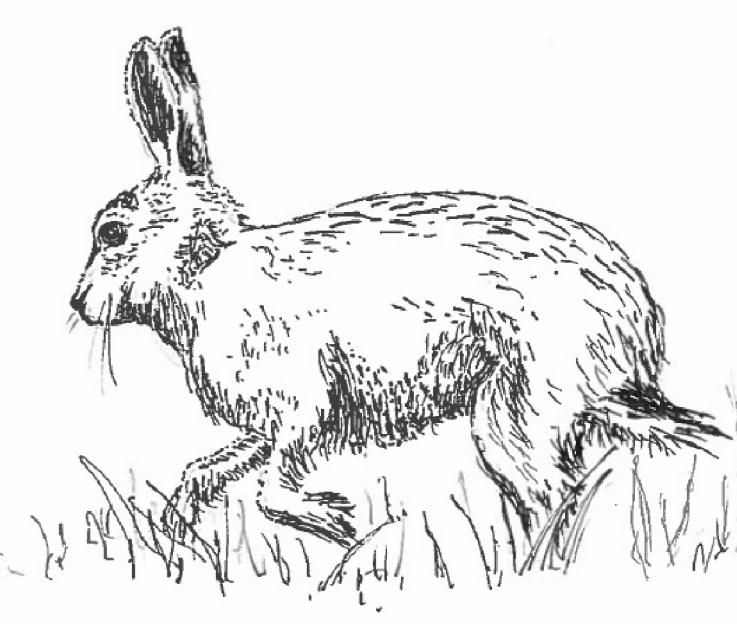


History

The village's name is Saxon in origin with 'Walt' meaning weald or wood and 'Ham' meaning settlement. **The Church** is evidence of the village's continuous habitation since these times as it is probably Saxon in origin. Some of the Yew trees around the churchyard are thought to date from the 11th century while the Norman Nave of the church, which is dedicated to Saint Bartholomew, may be a little younger.

The village was known as 'Temple Waltham' when the manor of Waltham was given to the Knights Templar by Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury during the reign of King Stephen of England (1135-1154). When the Order of the Knights Templar was disbanded between 1312 and 1314, the assets in Waltham were transferred to the Knights Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem, who remained associated with the village until the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII between 1535 and 1541.

The 17th century saw the church tower embellished with a peal of four bells, the first cast in 1602 and the remainder in 1631. By 1996 the bells were unringable, but the peal was rejuvenated, re-tuned and augmented to a diatonic peal of six in 2000. Over the years the village has seen the addition of numerous buildings, some of which are illustrated here. Today, Waltham is a modest village of approximately 180 households. The **Village Hall** provides a venue for local functions, produce shows, clubs and group meetings. Sports and outdoor community activities take place on the recreation ground, **Waltham Park**, where there is also a children's play area.



Nature

Take time to look at the verge along the north side of Church Lane, below the church, going down to the Kent Wildlife Trust as a **Roadside Nature Reserve** because it boasts such a wealth of typical chalk grassland wild flowers. You can search out wild herbs such as marjoram basil, salad burnet – all illuminated by the local population of Common Glow-worms (actually a beetle of the firefly family).

Waltham is surrounded by beautiful countryside and woodland and boasts its own Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at **Yocklets Bank** in the south east corner of our map. This site is owned and managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve and is renowned for its rare wild flowers. Orchids are a special feature of the chalk downland and Twayblade, Early Purple, Common Spotted, Fly and Butterfly orchids can all be found there along with one of the best populations of Lady orchids in the country. They share their home with a wide variety of rare and special wildlife such as tawny owls, woodpeckers, nightingales and dormice.



Just outside the Parish, to the north-west, lies **Denge Wood** within which the Woodland Trust manages the unique nature reserve of **Bonsai Bank**. This reserve is so-named because of a number of conifer trees which have been dwarfed by lack of nutrients. It is home to a profusion of nectar-rich chalk flowers with associated butterflies including the Common Blue, Brown Argus, Marbled White and the nationally endangered Duke of Burgundy Butterfly which is the object of an ongoing conservation project.



To the north, along Duckpit Road is **Earley Wood** owned and managed by the Woodland Trust, which is full of ancient trees, wildlife and wild flowers. In the spring, bluebells and wood anemones carpet its floor. It runs up the valley side, from Duckpit Road to the Waltham Road where there is car parking.



Countryside Code

We hope that you enjoy visiting and exploring our Parish as much as we enjoy living here. Please remember to follow the countryside code. Take only photographs and leave only footprints so that Waltham can be enjoyed by many generations to come.



To report a problem on a public right of way please call 03000 41 71 71
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