

GRAYSHOTT BOUNDARY WALKS

Circular Walks Around Grayshott and its Surroundings

3: Flat Wood and The Southwater



Introduction

Grayshott Boundary Walks is a set of 5 routes intended to help you explore the parish of Grayshott. Numbers 1 to 4 take in the village centre and the rural outskirts, each designed to follow a portion of the parish boundary. If you do them all then you will cover almost the entire boundary. Each walk is about 3½ miles, and should take about 90 minutes at a gentle pace. The walks interlink and can be joined to make a longer expedition. Each begins and ends at the same place, although you can join them at any point.

Walk 1; Kingswood and Stoney Bottom, from the Village Hall

Walk 2; The medieval hamlet, from Waggoners Wells

Walk 3; Flat Wood and The Southwater, from Applegarth Meadow

Walk 4; The Hanger and Whitmore, from the Playing Fields

The going is mixed, always on public footpaths, open access space, bridleways, lanes or pavements, but varying from smooth tarmac to steep slopes, with the possibility of mud and slipperiness at any time of year. There are no toilet or refreshment facilities away from the village centre. This walk has some steep

descents and climbs.

An alternative route is suggested for a shorter stroll on more level ground, still very pleasant. A route map is given on the centre pages. Ordnance Survey Explorer 133 might also be useful, as may the booklets for Walks 2 and 4.

Walk 5 is a shorter circuit of the village centre, all on pavements and level, accessible for those less mobile.



Please follow the countryside code:

- Follow the Rights of Way.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Respect the peace and privacy of others.
- Leave no litter.
- Park safely and considerately.
- Keep dogs under effective control; bag and bin it.

1. Start and Finish; Applegarth Meadow Car Park

There is free public car park on the right-hand side of Tennyson Way.

Take the gravel track from the east side of the car park to the footbridge.

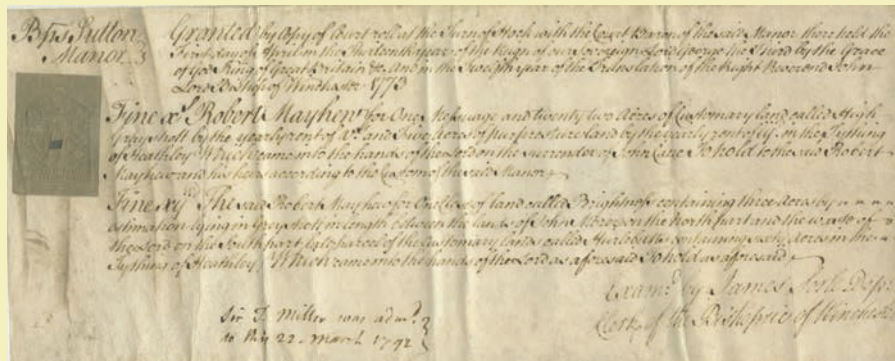
The watercourse is man-made, part of the Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) installed when the housing estate was built in 2017-18. It reduces surface flooding and pollution by providing a storage area that slows down run-off. It also creates a wetland environment, which will be attractive to wildlife and increase biodiversity.

To your north, the curved line of Miller Avenue traces the 400 metre buffer zone around Ludshott Common, within which there is a presumption against residential development, to reduce the impact of human footfall on the common's wildlife. A side effect is that we now have Applegarth Meadow as a beautiful green space for the benefit of nature and the enjoyment of humans.



Although it may feel as if you're surrounded by modern houses and new landscaping, you are actually plumb-centre in the middle of the original farming hamlet. Walk 2 explained how in the medieval period the settlement consisted of six small farms, originally set out in strips running back from the lip of Whitmore. If you stand on the footbridge, facing towards the houses with woods behind, then you are looking across the former fields of Barneland farm. To your left, beyond the farm shop, was Kings, and beyond that, straddling Hammer Lane, was Bulls. To your right, in front of the tree line in the distance, and over to where the Waggoners estate now is, was High Graveshott. Behind you, across the Headley Road, were Home House and Grassott, who also had fields in Flat Wood.

As time passed these little family-run smallholdings changed hands with each generation. They became amalgamated into larger farms, either through inheritance or marriage, or by purchase. By 1766, Kings, Barnelands and the nearer part of Bulls were all owned by Richard Holloway of Milford. The Cane family, an ancient parish tribe, were in possession of High Graveshott, Home House and the portion of Bulls beyond Hammer Lane. Following the death of family patriarch John in 1771, the first two plots were acquired by brothers Robert and John Mayhew of Herriard.



When property changed hands two entries were made on one page of the manor court records. The page was then cut in half and the tenant given the copy as proof, hence the term 'copyholder'. This one from 1773 records the transfer of High Graveshott to Mayhew.

Mayhew paid £600 for the lease of High Graveshott, equivalent to about £2,000 per acre in 2023. Considering that this was marginal farmland, it's value undistorted by modern house prices, this wasn't a giveaway deal. At the peak of

the so-called Agricultural Revolution, these were absentee landlords investing in the potential for scientific agriculture to feed a growing urban population.

The Mayhews and Holloway didn't last long, however. A new Big Man came on to the scene, in the form of Sir Thomas Miller, MP. Sir Thomas, the 5th baronet of his line, sold the family seat at Lavant and in 1772 purchased Froyle Place, near Alton. He soon acquired land in Headley and Grayshott, and incorporated it into his Wishanger Estate, some 1,800 acres along the left bank of the stream between Grayshott and Frensham Pond. Miller wasn't the lord of the manor hereabouts - that was the Bishop of Winchester. Nor did he live in the parish. But as the biggest landowner he was effectively the squire. As a moderniser he set about recovering his investment through making the land more efficient. In 1813 he merged all of the ancient farms except Bulls into one unit, consisting of 113½ acres of arable land, which became known as Grayshott Farm, run by a tenant farmer.

This scale of operation enabled greater productivity, but the price to be paid by wider society was that small landowners were edged out.

Sir Thomas expired in 1816 and was succeeded by his son, the Reverend Sir Thomas Combe Miller. As well as being the Vicar of Froyle,

he was a sportsman. As related in Walk 2, at the Headley Inclosure of 1859 he purchased the land of Headley Common (now the Land of Nod) and converted it into a hunting estate. Soon after he renewed the lease of Grayshott Farm. The new tenant, William Richard Wedgewood, was required by the lease, within two years and at his own cost, to 'in a good substantial and workmanlike manner and with good and proper materials enlarge the said messuage or dwelling house hereby devised by erecting and adding thereto on the west side a dining

Names of Fields		Quality
Holloways Farm Schedule C.		
Old Field	Arable	
Flat Field	D ^o	
Coppice Field	D ^o	
Hole Hill Field	D ^o	
Green Lane Field	D ^o	
Three Acre Field	D ^o	
Three and half Acre Field	D ^o	
Peckfield	D ^o	
Pondfield	D ^o	
Two Acre Field	D ^o	
Roundabout Field	D ^o	

An extract from Miller's lease of 1813. The fields named under Holloways Farm are the land around you, all arable. The crops included wheat, turnips and potatoes, with clover ley grown as part of the rotation programme. This was intensive cultivation compared to the medieval and Tudor farmers' rye and oats.

room not less than sixteen feet square and ten feet high, a drawing room not less than eighteen feet by sixteen feet and ten feet high, an entrance hall, five bedrooms and a cellar not less than twelve feet square, with walls of proper thickness and with a tiled or slated roof.'

The house referred to was the old farmhouse of Grassott, the only one of the old smallholders' homes still standing, and in this lease we see the first stage of its gentrification leading to it's re-invention as Grayshott Hall, a gentleman's seat and the new focus of Miller's Wishanger Estate. The lease also required the tenant to allow Sir Thomas and his chums uninterrupted access to the land for 'shooting, hunting, fowling, sporting, pursuing and taking the game woodcocks, snipes, quails and landrails therin ... with or without horses or dogs'.

Why Wedgewood, formerly a drawing teacher, and newly married to Harriet Brackenbury, fifteen years his junior, decided to take up farming and agreed to extend somebody else's property at his own cost is unclear, but it seems he

had mischief in mind. The suspicion is that his address at Grayshott Hall was an accessory to styling himself a *gentleman*, a respectable citizen. In 1865 the Wedgewoods were embroiled in a forgery case to the value of £12,000 (equivalent to about £1.2 million in 2023). Harriet was sentenced to seven years in prison, of which she served three. William was heavily implicated in the manipulation of his younger wife but not convicted. However, he was disgraced, filed for bankruptcy, and evicted.

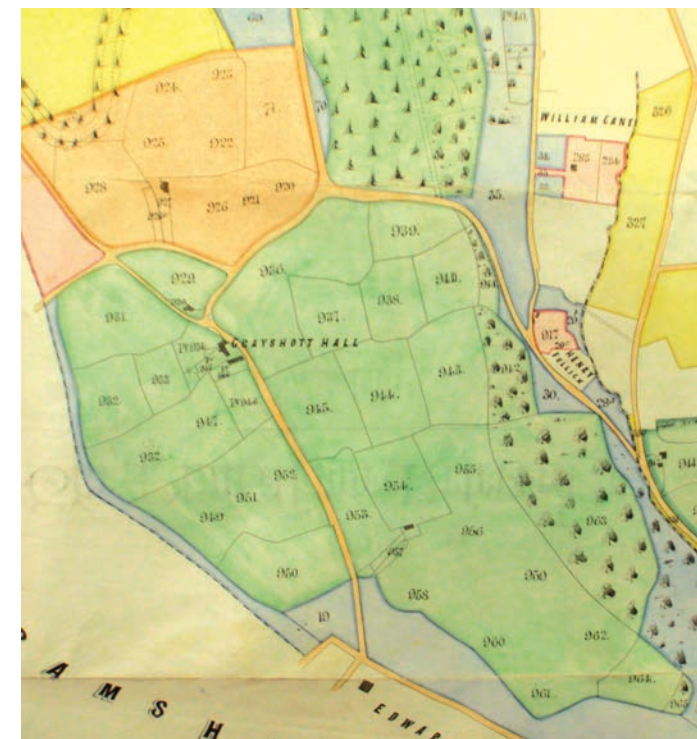
The Wedgewood situation came at a bad time for the Millers. Sir Thomas Combe had died in 1864, possibly to the relief of the local bird population. His son and successor, Charles Hayes Miller, died in January 1868, at which time his heir, Charles John Hubert, was only nine. Amidst this family turnover, Grayshott Hall found its most famous tenant. In 1867 Alfred Tennyson, Poet Laureate, rented

Grayshott Farm had a high turnover of tenants. A particularly interesting incumbent was Wedgewood's predecessor, one John James Dunn Oland. Either John or his wife Susannah were a fan of the Saxon kings, magnificently naming three of their seven children as Ethelred Henry, Charles Egbert and John Athelstan. In 1862 John left Grayshott for Nova Scotia, Canada, to be joined by Susannah and family in 1865. Susannah turned out to be a talented brewer and her October Ale launched the Moosehead Breweries. They're still going, and still owned by the Oland family.

Grayshott Hall as his family headquarters whilst house-hunting in the region. He didn't hang around for long; as soon as his new home in Aldworth, Sussex was built he vacated and the trustees of Sir Charles Hayes bundled up the Wishanger Estate for sale. The Miller name is now remembered only by the adjacent road.

The estate's new owner as of 21st December, 1868, was John Rouse Phillips, from an Oxfordshire family of brewers. Immaterial of Wedgewood's extensions, which he seems to have honoured, in the 1870s John and his wife Elizabeth rebuilt the hall. Described as a '*moderate sized mansion ... of artistic design ... under the superintendence of an eminent London architect*', the hall was made of Bargate stone, quarried on the estate, with red brick dressing, weatherhung tiles, and a red tiled roof. It was approached by an ornamental shrub-lined carriage drive rather than a farm track. The outer porch led to an inner lobby, both with ornamental floor tiles, and screened from the entrance hall by a decorative glass partition. Tradesmen of course will have gone to the rear.

Downstairs were the breakfast room, dining room and drawing room, the latter with bay window, plus a conservatory. On the first floor was a '*capital lofty billiard room*' plus seven bedrooms and associated dressing rooms and – luxury – water closets. Then, in the upper story, two further bedrooms, and a water tank in the



The map from the conveyance of 1868. Grayshott Farm is the area in green, re-branded as Grayshott Hall. You are standing in the centre of the map just below the word HALL. Everything in colour is the southern part of Wishanger Estate as purchased by Phillips.

roof. At a time when Grayshott's villagers relied on wells and earth closets, Phillips was using a ram pump to pipe running water up from Whitmore Bottom. We'll see it in Walk 4.

The list goes on – domestic offices consisting of store room, boot cupboard, wine closet, dairy, butler's pantry with cold and hot water supply, kitchen, servants' hall, beer cellar (Phillips was a brewer, after all), scullery, knife house, coal cellar, ash house ... And outside, a walled kitchen garden, outhouses, stables, lodge, lawns and ornamental grounds planted with rhododendrons, deodars, cupressus, parterres and separated by a ha-ha from a paddock.



Grayshott Hall circa 1880 as built by Phillips. Very nice indeed.

The Phillips' employed a coachman, groom, agent, parlourmaid, housemaid, cook, kitchenmaid and no doubt several groundkeepers and gardeners. John Rouse was another sporting gent, it seems. He had a gamekeeper and underkeeper-trapper, and enlarged the shooting facilities at Land of Nod so his mates could bang away at blackcock, wildfowl, partridges and the several hundred pheasants he raised every year, or the plentiful

supply of rabbits. Guests could also amuse themselves with any of the several fox hunts that met on the grounds, or practice their equestrian skills on the miles of tree-lined grass drives (remember the chestnut avenues from Walk 2?).

Unfortunately for John he had a short time to enjoy all this – he passed away in 1882. Within two months his executors put the estate up for sale. Its inventory is a fascinating snapshot of the chattels of a Victorian squire. Just a short sample here: on the farm; eight powerful cart mares and geldings, four handsome cart colts and a calf, a corn drill, harrow, scarifier, drag, ploughs, bean crushers, a mowing machine: from the hall; Arabian and French bedsteads, Brussels and Kidderminster carpets, damask curtains, a mahogany and rosewood card table, a rosewood pianoforte, oil paintings, cases of stuffed birds, two double-barrel

breach-loading shotguns, a brougham and, strangely, a shorthorn cow. Maybe it was lost.

The next chapter in the hall's history was written by the Whitaker family, its longest incumbents and the name with which it's most closely associated in local memory. In 1884 the entire Wishanger Estate was bought by Joseph Whitaker, originally from Yorkshire but operating out of Palermo, Sicily, as a wine merchant. Wine had made the Whitakers one of Europe's wealthiest families, and Joseph bought Wishanger for his son, Alexander Ingham. Alexander, 27 years old at this time, born in Palermo and working there for the family firm, came to Hampshire and installed himself at Grayshott Hall. He married a local girl, Berthe Catherine du Pury, who was literally 'the girl from next door', but not before, beginning in 1886, largely rebuilding the hall yet again. For this he employed the services of Grayshott's local architect Edward Blakeway I'Anson.

Alexander arrived as Grayshott village was entering its building-boom. Fuelled by the arrival of railway-borne holidaymakers intent on taking fresh air and sightseeing the surrounding heath-covered wilderness, late Victorian Grayshott was buzzing with activity, a tourism gold-rush. The new village needed its church, village hall, pub, fire station etc, all of which needed champions and finance. There were plenty of projects for a new squire with deep pockets to get involved in. The hall's grounds played host to Grayshott's first cricket club, and Whitaker gave the present playing fields to the village in 1919. The public spirit of the Whitakers and a handful of other leading citizens helped lift new Grayshott away from its rustic origins. Alexander also integrated into Hampshire gentry, taking seat as a JP in 1891 and as High Sheriff of Hampshire from 1919-20.



Every hall needs a tower. This is Whitaker's, erected circa 1906.

As a gentleman farmer, Alexander continued to modernise the land as well as his home. By 1895 the land around you, everything within sight up to the treeline, had been stripped of its ancient hedges and fieldbanks and levelled into one enormous park-like field. A second huge field stretched all across the Waggoners estate and up to the playing fields. We think he did this to allow for steam



Grayshott Hall became a centre of local society, high and otherwise. These little pots were given to schoolchildren to commemorate their visits there. There were also sports days and parties for Christmas, afternoon tea and the coronation of Edward VII.

ploughing – it's known that at one time there was a steam engine installed to provide power at the hall. He supplied beef cattle to local butchers, presided over agricultural shows and bred prize-winning sheep and pigs.

The First World War saw the village crammed with soldiers. Its location within the Aldershot

Command training area meant that thousands of troops were billeted in and around it, including C Company of the 8th Battalion Rifle Brigade at Grayshott Hall. Like many families, the Whitakers didn't escape loss. Their nephew Harold, a captain in the Rifle Brigade was killed on 14th November, 1914.

Through the 1920s Whitaker divided and sold much of the Wishanger Estate, it's said that he was heavily burdened by post-war taxes. He sold the hall in 1927, died in Bruges in 1933 and is buried, with Berthe, in our St Luke's churchyard.

Much of the Grayshott lands were bought by a property developer, Horace Wright of Kent. He conceived a grand plan to partition all of the former land of Grayshott

This cap badge of the Rifle Brigade was found very near by. Its owner more than likely perished when his company was virtually obliterated by a flamethrower attack at Hooze on 30th July, 1915.



Farm, from the playing fields to Fir Way, and sell it off in plots for building. His vision was for a garden suburb of smart new houses, solidly-built of brick, stone and tiles, well separated in generous plots. Unfortunately for him, his timing was bad, coinciding with the Wall Street Crash and Great Depression, and there was local opposition. A few plots were sold and some of the older houses in the west of the parish were built at this time, but by and large most of the land survived.

Grayshott Hall itself turned through a number of owners after the Whitakers. First, Sir George Hennessy OBE, also a JP and High Sheriff of Hampshire, and a member of the famous Cognac family. There is something about Grayshott that attracts brewers! Then to Commendatore Enrico Fontana Jucker, Italian Vice-Consul, who passed away there in 1935. The next incumbent was John Stanley Beard, architect, who dug-in there through WW2 and allowed the Grayshott Home Guard to parade on his tennis court.



The estate that never was - Wright's plan for the Applegarth area, centre plots of about an acre at £325.

After the war it was owned by Sidney and Queenie Rubin. They were the favourites of local schoolchildren for their garden fetes, which among other things featured army motorcyclists racing through a thirty-foot long tunnel of fire, and for their menagerie. The latter's best-loved occupant was Jimmy the marmoset, who became a press celebrity when he escaped his cage and popped up at numerous venues in the vicinity, including peeping through the school windows. Sidney was a flamboyant character. He made his fortune in textiles, had two London nightclubs, owned and flew a Dakota aeroplane, and

sent his chauffeur-driven Rolls Royce to collect Jimmy after he'd been lured back into captivity by the temptation of a coronation chicken sandwich.

In 1964, having been acquired by GR (Holdings) Ltd, the hall was incorporated as Grayshott Hall Limited and converted to a health club. Under the brand 'Grayshott Spa' it became one of the industry's grand dames, luxurious and popularised by celebrities and theatricals. Following a change of ownership in 2017, it closed permanently in 2020, and it remains so at the time of writing. We can hope that the hall's current nadir is but a temporary interlude in the history of a home, establishment and business which for over 150 years has been such a centre of patronage, society, and employment for the village.

The farmland remained in cultivation until the 1960s. The eastern part was given over to the construction of Waggoners estate in the 1970s, and in 1976 the western part was purchased by John and Stephanie Benson. Under the name of Applegarth, they set up a fruit and vegetable farm and pick-your-own. Some villagers still remember the area as 'Strawberry Fields'.

In 2023, you can't see Grayshott Hall for yourself. This painting by Peter Depledge shows it during happier times. The magnificent wisteria was for decades tended by gardener Philip Harris of Stoney Bottom.

Reproduced by permission of the artist's family.



From the footbridge, backtrack and turn left along the gravel path towards the childrens' playground, before which turn left across the grass and head for the middle of the clump of mature trees straight in front of you.

2. Barneland Farm

Having walked across former Ell Field, you're now standing on the site of the medieval farmstead of Barneland. This may be a little difficult to imagine, but, if you look carefully, you'll see that the ground here is a little higher than the surrounding grass.

We know that the farms were strung along the village 'high street' of Graveshott Lane, which here ran a few yards beyond the modern road. Also, High Graveshott, later known as Cane's, survived long enough to feature on accurate maps. It was over to the east, straddling the footpath between Waggoners estate and Baillie Cottage.

Here, look at the top map, right, from 1855, by which time Cane's was unoccupied. The orange strip is the lane, near Waggoners bend. The farm's yard is the long oblong with the pond in it. The red oblong is the sole surviving building by this time. The surrounding field names give clues to the farm's old layout - from clockwise from 953 being Carthouse, Barn, Stable and Orchard Fields. Note on the left of Carthouse field, a funny wiggle in its boundary. Now look at the bottom map. This shows Cane's in 1739. You can see that as well as the lane and yard, the draughtsman has drawn a little house and a gate across the yard! This gives us a template for how the farms were set out.

Now go back to that funny wiggle at the edge of Carthouse. Farmers like straight lines, as do ploughmen, so wiggly boundaries are a clue to something unusual, in this case the ghost of Barneland's farmstead. A survey from 1552



The typical farmstead layout; the through-lane, opening to a yard with pond, the buildings at the far end and fields behind and around. Note the building opposite Cane's; this was once Home House farm, its fate revealed by its later name – Burnt House Field.

describes Barneland as being 10 acres in three closes, plus a toft and garden. Turn back to face the car park. The fields were the land from here over to the farm shop, running in a rectangular strip rightwards, across where the houses are, to the treeline on the edge of the hanger. The three individual closes survived right up to when Whitaker levelled them in his modernisation. The word 'toft' is specific, meaning a place where a house once stood, which has decayed or burned down. This most likely happened to Barneland as a result of depopulation caused the 14th century's Great Famine and Black Death, which together reduced the population by 50%.

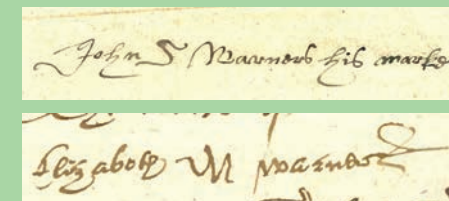
That wiggly boundary traces the left-hand side of Barneland's yard, with a pond nestled into the wiggle. The yard's right-hand boundary was an extension of the field boundary to its north, and the farmhouse itself almost certainly at the north end of the trees. Imagine: Barneland's occupants perish, either by plague or famine. Nobody needs their house – there are more houses than people – and it gradually returns to the earth. Land is valuable, so somebody keeps cultivating it, but without maintenance the pond silts up or springs a leak and disappears into a muddy patch. At some time the neighbouring farmer stops bothering to maintain his boundary and it too disappears, and Barneland's old yard becomes part of his field, or just a scrubby corner. All this very gradually over hundreds of years.... The old locals, generation upon generation born and bred in the parish, may have held a folk memory of this ancient place, but the new chap Whitaker didn't. Having ripped up the medieval fields he might have wondered why, at this strange place, nothing much grew, his steam-engine got bogged down and his fancy new plough kept getting bent on rubble. So, maybe, he planted the tree avenue to at least make a pretty spot out of some dud ground. And in spring it is beautiful, carpeted with bluebells. Incredibly, the pond's outline is still preserved – if you look carefully you'll see it on the edge of the trees, opposite the swings.

In the 16th century Barneland was farmed by John and Elizabeth Warner. They also had Home House opposite, and eventually Grassott too



(which became Grayshott Hall). At upwards of 60 acres they were Elizabethan Grayshott's largest landowners and the wealthiest family in the parish. John styled himself as a 'yeoman', which was the highest rank beneath gentry. They were a remarkable couple.

John was born before parish registers were instituted, probably in the 1520s. In 1547 he married Joane Grayshott. She brought Home House as her inheritance, 23 acres, and with Barneland's house decayed, that's probably where they initially lived, along with their two children who survived infancy. Joane died in 1582. Meanwhile, one Elizabeth Baker was born in 1543, out west towards Broxhead. When just nineteen years old, she married local lad Jerome Morar, even younger at eighteen, and commenced the production of their five children. As a farming daughter and wife, in between childbirth, she would have worked on the farm doing all but the heaviest tasks as well as looking after the household. She would eventually have had one or two house servants to assist, maybe younger members of their extended family, and amidst all this she found time to learn to write.



The Warners' signatures.

Jerome died in 1583, which at that moment left both John and Elizabeth single, John with farms to run, and Elizabeth with a posse of youngsters. So, inevitably, they married. John passed away in 1609, over 80 years of age. He was one of the village's veterans, and lived through the dissolution of the monasteries, all six of Henry VIII's wives, the Spanish Armada and the entire reign of Elizabeth I. His Elizabeth followed him fifteen months later and they are both in the churchyard at Headley, enjoying a long and well-earned rest.

We know a lot about their material circumstances, so let's pretend for a moment that we have a time machine, and go visiting the Warners for supper, at the end of July 1603 to gossip about the nation's prospects under its new king, James I. Our machine has dropped us off in Graveshotte Lane, and in the fields around us we see that the rye has been harvested and the oats are still standing. There's also a strange crop, about waist high and with white flowers. Must ask about that.

As we approach we can see that this is clearly a working farm not a gentleman's mansion. The yard is dry at this end of summer, and swept clean, but the midden is definitely warm and ripe after a day in the sun. There's also rather a thick vapour of pig. And small birds everywhere; on a summer's eve the swallows and martins dart from their nests under the eaves to scoop flies off the pond, and dozens of swifts peep and wheel high overhead. Half a dozen chickens are pecking around, under the beady eye of a mean looking cockerel.

The hay is in, two ricks. On one side of a yard there's a crotchety heather-thatched barn portioned up into stalls for the two oxen and ten milk cows, and a little stable for Elizabeth's riding horse. On the other side, on stout little wooden legs, a small but sturdy granary. In the distance, through a hatch from the common, two of Elizabeth's grown-up children are herding the family's main source of cash – 135 sheep, including this spring's lambs. Every day they're sent out to graze on the heath, then back at night onto a fallow field.



The type of sheep that would have been familiar to the Warners.

Our host's house is at the head of the yard; compact, consisting of three bays. They're quite proud of it, having recently made some improvements. The lower walls are of uncoursed stone, large rubble really, bound with pale mortar. Above, the upper part is timber framed with clayed wattle infill, sitting beneath a steep, red-tiled roof. The clay is nice and tidy, freshened up recently. Under John's supervision the various Morar offspring dug out new clay from the seam down in Whitmore – permitted under commoner's rights – mixed it with chopped rye straw and cow manure, then squidged it in all the holes and cracks. A nice coat of limewash over the clay and timber deters insects and gives a smart finish. Small casement windows have wooden mullions and shutters, and oiled parchment as panes. Only the window in John and Elizabeth's bedchamber has glass in it, tiny, wobbly panes in a leadwork lattice. Apart from the lead and some iron nails, the glass from Chiddingfold is the only material that's travelled more than a mile or two. Everything else of the house is taken from the land around.

Our hosts meet us at the door; John, at 76 years, still with a twinkle in his eye but creaky in all other organs; Elizabeth, nudging towards 60, wiry, sun-wrinkled as a walnut and wearing her finest wool dress. Inside, the central hall is surprisingly clear-aired. John has recently built a chimney. He loves it; now he can get a good blaze up to warm his old bones without burning the house down, but through a failure of consultation failed to realise that by getting rid of the old central hearth and vent holes in the roof, Elizabeth now has nowhere to hang her bacon for smoking. So his next project is a smoke oven. The fire's not burning today, but still set with it's irons, to show that the Warners burn proper logs as well as turf and gorse. The cooking kitchen is a separate little building, with its paraphernalia of copper cauldrons, roasting spits, pothangers, dripping pans and malting tubs. That's where Elizabeth's maidservant Edith is right now, preparing supper.

The floor is hard-packed earth with a fresh dressing of bracken, made fragrant by sprigs of mint and rosemary. On the wall there's a 'stained cloth', almost not as bad as it sounds, actually a religious painting upon a big canvas sheet, more affordable than a woven tapestry. It came with the house, too fragile to move without disintegrating, and at upwards of forty years old is now sadly mouse-nibbled, soot-grimed and mildew-spotted. Elizabeth's only keeping it until John gets round to doing something about the mouldy damp patch behind.

In the right bay, behind a plank wall, is the dairy, Elizabeth's domain, where she makes cow's milk butter and sheep's milk cheese. It's the only place with a stone floor. In the left bay, behind another plank wall, is the dry store, where the farm's produce reserved for household use is stocked. At the moment there are several sacks of this year's rye, a few more of last year's buckwheat and oats, dried peas and beans, and a couple of sacks of wool. There's a bedstead and flock mattress in the corner- the guests' sleeping place.

Despite the new chimney the hall doesn't have a full ceiling yet – that's another thing on John's to-do list. For now, the view goes clear up to the old smoke-blackened rafters and roof tiles. Except on the left, where an open stair leads up to the solar above the storeroom. That's John and Elizabeth's private room, rather smart with their flockbed, linen chest, coffers and a cupboard. Everything personal and valuable is kept in there.

Elizabeth is quite keen on their bed, a family heirloom, standing high on a wooden base with a straw base mattress, then a fine flock-filled top mattress, linen sheets, woollen blankets and soft pillows. One day she'd like a feather mattress and she's collecting chicken pluckings to that ambition. From the rafters



A Tudor-style herb garden, recreated at the Weald and Downland Museum.



Fifty shades of woad, and orange from onion skins – some of Elizabeth's palette for spinning and knitting.

function not beauty, yet to us it probably would look beautiful for its artless sense of Elizabeth's understanding of how to work with nature. We recognise cabbages, onions, leeks, marrows, spinach, garlic, carrots, peas, beans, celery, gooseberries, raspberries, parsley, mint, sage, thyme, rosemary, chives, lavender, fennel,

over the bed is suspended a wooden frame, carrying heavy curtains to keep the draughts off and a canopy to intercept bird droppings.

The back door leads out to Elizabeth's garden. As the lady of the house in charge of cooking, she's also in charge of the garden. In fact, she's in charge of almost everything although John pretends that even after eighteen years of marriage he hasn't worked that out yet. Like the rest of the farm, it's a working garden, designed for

marjoram, and lemon balm. So too the roses and foxgloves dabbed here and there, and the riot of tiny, bright scarlet wild strawberries that self-seed everywhere.

We don't recognise a big patch of large, fleshy, rosette-like weeds. We're told they're woad, which Elizabeth will harvest next month and extract indigo from, for her home-dyed wool, of which her blue dress is an example. The actual colour varies from pink to sky blue, depending mostly on the growing season's weather.

She also tells us that the strange crop we noted on arrival is buckwheat. Another of Mr W's experiments, it's actually a fruit but it produces large seeds which when dried can be milled to a coarse flour. John says that it's a good crop for dry, poor soils like ours but the bread from last year's flour was so dull that even Edith wouldn't eat it. Beyond is John's orchard, with apples, pears, plums and damsons. Now, early evening, the garden's alive with a trillion golden motes of bees zooming back to the neighbourhood's skeps with their last load of the day.



Back in the hall, and the table is laid for supper. It's just a big, plank table with forms along either side, but wearing a fine linen cover. In honour of her 21st-century time-travelling guests Elizabeth had Edith polish up the best pewter platters, candlestick and spoons. With dusk falling, we even have the luxury of beeswax candles instead of the usual smoky rushlights.

Edith brings the first course. A thick slab of rye flatbread, brown and still warm from the griddle, smeared with cow's butter and topped with creamy-soft two-day sheep's cheese blended with lemony sorrel leaves, and the whole lot dribbled with honey. The honey is from last autumn, taken just after the bees had finished on the heather, and it's dark golden-brown and caramely. And the portion is huge. Tudor farmers burn off upwards of 4,000 calories a day, twice what most of us do, and they've never heard of saturated fats or cholesterol. As a top-up, Edith plonks down a wooden bowl of pea soup - dried peas, boiled in milk and seasoned with thyme. Yum. By watching our hosts we work out that the drill is to scoop up the cheese by spoon, wallop a ladle of soup over the bread to soften it, then work away at the whole mashy lot with the spoon. And, of course, it is phenomenal – 100% organic, bursting with flavour and nothing has travelled more than a mile to get here.

Then – there's more – a lump of bacon appears. From one of John's pigs, slaughtered last autumn, grazed on acorns and beech mast, smoked by Elizabeth over a beechwood, rosemary and juniper fire and hung in the rafters to mature. And more bread. And butter-fried onions with garlic, leeks, chives and fennel. Finally pudding, or at least its equivalent, a sausage-shaped object which turns out to be stuffed with oatmeal, dried apples and berries.

There's no wine on offer, or tea or coffee, or even water. The regular drink is Elizabeth's home-brewed ale, the flavour softened off by the addition of malted oats. It's only about 1% alcohol, enough to kill the bugs but weak enough to drink all day. Otherwise it's John's home-brewed cider, flat, golden, considerably stronger and malevolent to the unwary.

Over supper the conversation turns to the future. John and Elizabeth are realists and they know they're living on borrowed time. They have no children together, but between them they've six adult children surviving from their first marriages, and grandchildren are starting to appear. They have two houses, one each on Grassott and Home House, and Elizabeth's three boys have all moved in to the second one just a couple of hundred yards away. Between them they work the land as an extended family. John's labouring days are behind him, now the boys do all the heavy work. The arithmetic of manual farming is staggering. Ploughing the arable fields means a walk of 500 miles every year, and

another couple of hundred for harrowing. Scything an acre of hay takes a fit man one day, that's before it's raked, turned, stooked, carted and stacked. Not to mention threshing, weeding, shearing, milking, slaughtering, butchering

Now John, who can also read and write, has become the family's 'ideas man'. He started work at four years old, bird scaring and stone picking, and with seventy years experience he knows what grows where and what doesn't, when to harvest, where to find the best clay for puddling the pond, where to excavate the best building stone (in the little valley beyond his Denefield), and a thousand other wisdoms to pass on. Elizabeth's fingers are getting too stiff to spin or knit, but her first granddaughter, another Elizabeth, is nearly two and will soon be old enough to start learning from gran. That aside, she's a genius cheesemaker.

So, to bed. John issues us with a wooden bucket. Outside is pitch dark, absolutely jet black. No streetlights, just a million diamond stars and the smear of Milky Way. Not a good place to stumble when making a nocturnal dash to the midden pit.

Morning, and the house has been awake since dawn. By the time we surface Elizabeth has supervised the sweeping, water-drawing, egg-finding and milking, and John is sitting in the early sun having ideas. Edith supplies us with breakfast, without asking, a giant bowl of oatmeal porridge made with milk not an hour outside the cow. This time it's drizzled with fresh honey, pale gold from early summer's wildflowers, and dotted with just-picked strawberries and raspberries. These people get 80% of their calories from grains, and on normal days that means lots of bread and porridge.

It's time now for us to leave the Warners. They don't know it but they still have several years together, enough for Elizabeth to see her first eight grandchildren into the world. It's quite possible that fragments of her DNA are still in the area.

Back in the 21st century, leave Barneland's copse towards the SuDS, turn right along the edge of the pond, and make for the gravel path in front of you. At which, turn left, follow the path for 70 yards, then by the end of a raised mound cut across the grass to the gravel path running parallel to Miller Avenue. Turn right and follow the path all the way, past a signboard about Whitmore Hanger, through gateposts, shortly after which you'll reach a cross-roads on the wood's edge.

3. Whitmore Hanger

Here, you have three options.

1. If you want to visit the site of Cane's farmstead:



Turn right onto the cross-path until you reach a fenced alley between houses. Stop.

Here you're in the middle of the site of Cane's. There was an old ruined barn here within living memory but it was demolished to make way for the estate. Now there's nothing at all to see on the surface, but you can say that you've been here. If you want to circumnavigate the old hamlet then you can continue across the road and link to Point 3 of Walk 2; otherwise return to the cross-paths.

2. The main route goes down the steep hill into the woods, and back up a slightly less steep track. If you don't fancy this, as it can be very slippery and muddy, then there's a level short-cut:

Go back through the gate, and take the nice flat path close alongside the woodland edge, keeping the houses to your left. After about 300 yards go through another gate, continue a short way, through a gap in the trees and emerge in a small clearing at the top of a track. You've now rejoined the main walk at Point 5.

3. For the main route, which is much more fun, proceed as follows:

Take the steep path down the hillside, bearing to the left. Be very, very careful even if it's dry. Continue through the woods, downhill.

Hangers – woods on a steep slope – are common on the greensand, but this one is very special for us. It's designated as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW) and a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Before descending, note that the woods on this route are all privately owned and therefore please keep to the public rights of way.

Immediately on entering, you may notice a flat ledge running just beneath the footpath. We think this is an old perimeter track around the farmland. The current footpath behind Waggoners and Applegarth is relatively new, implemented in 1928, and the ledge is its ancestor.

As you go, study the mature beech trees, especially to your left. Most of them have multiple trunks – they are outgrown coppice. This entire wood was once intensively managed for woodland produce. You are walking through Cane's Coppice. The wood was owned by the lord of the manor and he licensed its exploitation to individuals. We'll find out why in a moment. Here's a clue: about 50 yards down the path dips steeply, levels out for a few yards, then dips steeply again. The flat bit is the clue.



The ASNW designation is applied to woods that have existed since at least 1600. Whitmore is older. The SN part shows that they've been managed by humans rather than being fragments of the post-glacial wildwood, of which there is very little left at all. In its heyday it would have looked manicured, with stands of variously aged coppice all neatly segregated into coupes, or cuts. A few trees would've been allowed to grow up for timber, but even they would have been felled around their hundredth birthday. The hanger hasn't been systematically managed for decades, and its new owner has recently started a project to restore it.

Descending further, almost at the bottom, you'll reach another distinct hump in the path, with an old, blackened stump immediately to your left and the rootplate of a fallen tree downslope to your right. Pause here for a moment. Look left and right and you'll see that the hump is a bank. It's made of rubble and it goes straight up the hillside. Before Whitaker levelled the fields it continued all the way across to Barneland copse, and formed the farm's eastern boundary. As you step beyond the bank you enter Holloway's Coppice.

Continue. The path levels out and joins a dirt track (byway).

As you go, note that you are walking on a ledge, with a drop off to your right. The ledge is actually the top of the old boundary bank, its upslope side has been filled by centuries of downwashed soil. Almost at the bottom the path does a little switchback. Here, you are leaving the once protected land of Holloways Coppice and heading onto the former common, or waste. Managed woodland was always protected,

Such woods take centuries to develop; they are complex ecosystems full of interdependent habitats and are irreplaceable. The bit we can see, mostly trees, is less than half the story. The real action is underground in the form of mycorrhizal fungi. These little things are incredible; they form a symbiotic association with the trees' roots and each helps the other to thrive. The trees make sugars from photosynthesis in their leaves, which they pass to the fungi. In return, the fungi mine mineral nutrients from the soil and pass them to the trees. There's even evidence that the fungi can facilitate the movement of nutrients between trees, enabling a strong one to help a poorly neighbour. The system takes centuries to develop and can be destroyed in minutes by a bulldozer, which is why places like Whitmore Hanger need to be looked after.

Flat Wood and the Southwater Walk 3

- Main Route
- - - Level Option
- ▬ Pavement, tarmac
- ▬ Dirt, gravel
- ▭ car Park



The demise of
Barneland





usually by a bank with an external ditch and a hedge on top. The villagers had commoners' rights to graze their livestock on the waste and the woodbanks, which you've been walking over, were to keep them out. A few dozen peckish sheep would soon demolish the tasty new growth of young coppice.

At the track turn left, uphill

between a pair of steel

gateposts, and about 10

yards beyond stop at a tree

shaped like a backwards 'L'.

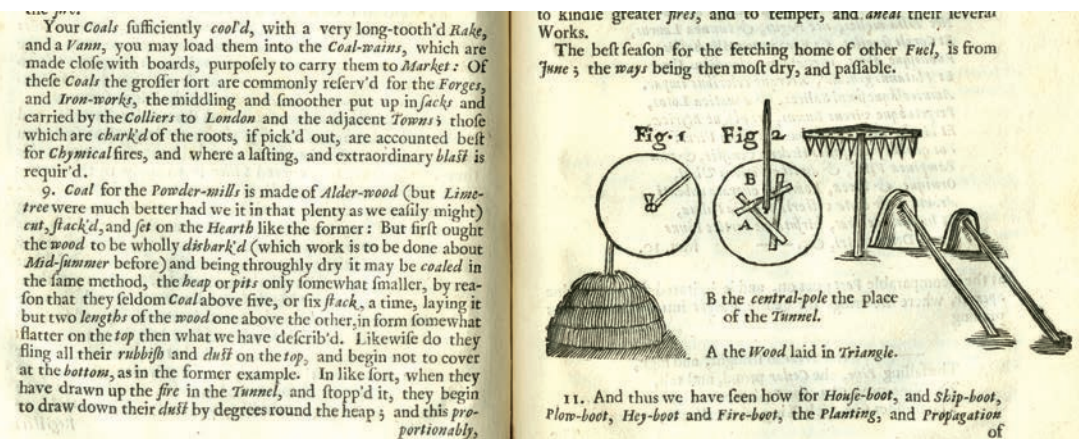
4. Charcoal Hearths

Look beyond the L tree directly into the woods. You'll see a flat, circular platform about 25 feet across dug into the slope. It's a charcoal making hearth. There are at least a dozen in these woods. There's another further up the hill to the left, with a shattered beech trunk upon it. You walked over another one earlier - the 'clue'. They're the remnants of a huge industry.

Charcoal has been made in Britain for over 5,000 years. It fuelled the kilns of Bronze and Iron Age metalsmiths, and the Romans needed it for their iron industry. From the middle ages it was used in the manufacture of gunpowder and its use peaked in the 16th and 17th centuries when the Wealden iron industry was booming. The invention of the coke-fired blast furnace by Abraham Darby in 1709 marked the beginning of the end of the Wealden iron-making. Charcoal was still needed for gunpowder, small-scale smithing and urban heating, but by end of the 19th century the use of traditional earth-covered forest kilns of the Whitmore Hanger type was very nearly over. It's impossible to date our hearths by just looking at them, but some good documentary evidence puts them in that peak ironworking period.

Charcoal is carbonised wood, baked rather than burned. If wood is heated in the absence of air then reactions occur which drive out the water, tar and volatile oils. This makes charcoal lighter than wood and hotter burning. Roughly, five tons of wood will reduce to one ton of charcoal, which occupies half the volume and therefore contains twice the energy density of the wood. Thus it was more cost effective to make charcoal in the woods than to take wood to the furnaces.

John Evelyn, a local-ish gentleman from Dorking way, described the process in his book of 1664 '*Silva, or a Discourse of Forest Trees and the Propagation of Timber*'. Almost any wood can make charcoal but various woods had specialisms. Alder was favoured for gunpowder. Oak or beech for ironworking, because it made strong charcoal that travelled well. Brushwood for 'small coals', for heating. But never elder, because it releases cyanide when burning. Whitmore Hanger has beech, oak and, in the swamp, alder. The process had a seasonal rhythm. The wood was felled in winter and stacked to season through spring and summer. Ironworks were busiest during autumn and winter when the streams to power their bellows and hammers flowed full, so charcoal burning would start in late summer and go on through autumn to feed the furnaces and forges. (A furnace converts iron ore to pig-iron by heating it with charcoal; a forge converts brittle pig-iron to malleable wrought iron by hammering out the impurities.)



John Evelyn shows the construction of a kiln and some of the burner's tools.

On hillsides, a level platform was scraped out for the hearth and the burner's hut. They were often towards the bottom of the valley - it's easier to carry wood

downhill than up! Coppice wood was much preferred to mature trees. The small poles seasoned faster and were easier to handle. A mature tree felled on a steep slope is a very uncooperative object! Also, coppicing creates biomass faster than leaving trees to grow to maturity. A forest kiln would take two or three tons of wood, and need about 30 gallons of water for temperature control during the burn and cooling afterwards. Hauling 30 gallons out of the Southwater and up the

side of the hanger in wooden buckets would have been great fun.

The soil underfoot was important. Clay – impermeable – would crack with the heat and also prevent drainage of the unwanted tar and gunge. Sand, like ours, was ideal – a little trickle of air could bleed up through it to ventilate the kiln and fluids could drain away. Sand was also preferred for the covering. This might be why our kilns aren't right down in the bottom – it would have been too swampy below the outcrop of Atherfield clay. Our hearths are quite close together in places. Each one had its catchment area and it was easier in the long run to dig another hearth than lug tons of wood through the woods.



This wonderful painting of 17th-century charcoal burners by Jane Brayne could easily have been made in Whitmore Hanger. Used here with the artist's permission.

Jane Brayne's lovely painting, left, gives an atmospheric view of how the hanger would have looked in the 1600s. Having made the hearth (and they were re-used many times, the earth beneath became 'seasoned') the burner would stand up a thick post about 3 feet long with a conical depression in the top. A second post with a matching point was located into it. This was called the motty peg, and it formed the flue. Then, timbers were stacked up around it in a triangle, as in Evelyn's drawing. Wood about three feet long was then stacked around this central structure, almost vertical in the centre and sloping out towards the edges. The wood was cut with a pointy end, placed downwards, to minimise contact with the earth. A couple of layers like this, then a final layer stacked horizontally. The heap was then covered with bracken, leaves or turf, the purpose being to prevent the outer coating of sand from collapsing into the charcoal and contaminating it. This is what's being done in the nearer kiln. When the kiln was completely covered with sand, neatly packed firm and with no cracks, the burner would pull out the motty peg.

To fire the kiln, the burner would put charcoal embers kept from a previous burn down into the flue to sit in the dimple in the lower post. You can see this happening up the hill. Then, pack the hole with more charcoal to the top and pop a turf over. This was repeated until the flue was a column of burning charcoal, and the kiln was getting hot, at which point the hole would be properly sealed by clapping over more turf and sand. The intention was to heat up the kiln to over 100 degrees, at which point the wood would begin to steam, but not burn. Vent holes would be made in the covering, starting at the top. These would release the huge amounts of steam being generated. Once the moisture was driven out, the temperature would creep up and more chemical reactions would take place. Gradually the temperature would rise until at about 280 degrees the carbonising process would start. This was an exothermic chemical reaction, not combustion. The smoke would turn from white to blue, as tars, acetic acid, methanol and other volatile oils were driven off. At this point the heap would begin to darken as it became stained by the tar and oil. Sometimes yellow sulphur driven out of the wood's bark would appear at the vent holes. Now the kiln would have been a mass of hot gas trying to escape, and the burner would be ducking in and out through clouds of smoke to damp down any excessively hot spots and sealing up cracks. The temperature inside the kiln would rise to 400 degrees.

As the burn worked through the kiln, the vent holes would be made lower and lower down. The kiln would gradually slump as the wood contracted into charcoal, and all the while it had to be prevented from cracking. It was a highly skilled process; the burner would judge progress by the colour and smell of the

smoke and the appearance of the sand crust. Wattle screens were set up to prevent wind turning the kiln into a blast furnace. It was a dirty, smelly, messy job. Burners were notoriously black-faced and during the burn the hanger would have stunk.



Charcoal fragments from Whitmore Hanger. Probably made centuries ago and it still writes quite nicely.

Depending on the quantity and dryness of the wood, a burn took between two and five days. For the burner and his accomplice it was a 24-hour watch. There are stories of burners nodding off on the job and waking up to find that their kiln had turned into a bonfire. This is why you can see a little hut in the background. During the burning season the burner and his family camped on-site. Right here.

Eventually the blue smoke turned into a transparent shimmer over the kiln. This meant that the burn was done. Now, the burner would very, very carefully rake off small parts of the cover and gently tip water in to cool it. Too fast and he would be rewarded with a face-full of scalding steam. The idea was to drip-drip-drip the water in

so that the kiln cooled by gradually transferring its energy into steam, rather than flooding it. Finally, if he'd managed not to explode, ignite or drown his kiln the burner could dismantle it and separate out and grade his charcoal, ready for transport to the ironworks. The most likely customer was the forge at Pophole in Hammer Vale, less than two miles by pack-pony.

We know some personal details about the lives of our local charcoal burners, or wood-colliers as they were more properly called.

- In 1543, John William was granted a plot of land 12 feet by 10 feet in the east of Headley (which of course Grayshott and Whitmore are) for a charcoal shop.
- In 1523, John Andrewes of Ludshott had *'felled certain trees called birches and made charcoal of them to the loss of the Lord'*.

- In 1556 our John Warner was granted a licence to *'move an exceedingly ruinous barn from Northland to Graveshot for the use of the woodwards'*. A woodward was the guardian or keeper of the woods, acting on behalf of their owner, and John's Barneland was directly above where you're standing.
- In 1529 Richard Drake of Headley was granted a licence to build a *'mill for working iron ... in that place called Drakes Bridge'*. We think this was on the Southwater off the northern end of Hammer Lane, about a mile or so from here. In 1545 this Richard took out a rent on 2½ acres of *'moor and underwood'* ie coppice, in the south part of Whitmore.

Best of all, we know of three colliers from the early 1600s, the brothers John and Charles Larby, and Roger Farr. The name of Larby is particularly interesting. Larbys were associated with ironworking across the Weald, including in Lynchmere parish in the late 16th century. They were originally immigrants from France, as were many of the Wealden ironworkers. This really cements the connection to ironworking.

Both Larbys were modest cottagers who had the typical furniture, kitchen gear, crops and livestock, plus specialist woodsman's tools. They weren't poor, but certainly not as comfortable as the parish's husbandman farmers who did 'proper' farming, and much less so than the Warners. Our colliers seem to have been charcoal burners by trade who did a bit of smallholding on the side, to help make ends meet. The woods were owned by the lord of the manor, and the Larbys (or their ironmaster customers) would have purchased licenses from the lord to work them for charcoal. They lived in Barford, less than a mile away, and would've commuted to the woods every day and camped here overnight during a burn.

You can stand here, and if you're lucky you might catch a whiff of woodsmoke to take you back 500 years...

The appetite of the iron industry for charcoal was immense. For every forge about 20% of the land within a two-mile radius had to be perpetually devoted to charcoal-producing coppice. Assuming that the hanger was mature and well-managed, its coppice could have indefinitely fuelled the hearths for one or two burns every year. This would have provided enough work to support an extended family such as the Larbys. Also, by implication, the woods must have been here for a long time before the 16th century in order to establish sufficiently.



Continue up the track, which is called

Bull Lane, the large woodbank visible all

the way.

Just as the gradient eases and you start to emerge from the sunken section, look into the woods on the left. You might make out a mature beech with a double trunk like a narrow V. This stands on the bank which marks the boundary of Holloways Coppice. The next section up is called Beechen Row. Towards the top there are some spectacular moss-rooted beeches on the bank. These are old standards, the hedgerow trees that were left to mature into timber but which never got cut. Nowadays their huge windage sometimes proves too much for their grasp into crumbly foundations and they fall, sad victims of storms. But their decaying wood provides homes and food to hundreds of other life-forms that are essential to the wood's long-term health.

When you reach the top, pause in the

small clearing.

5. Whitmore Bottom

Turn to the view across the valley. It's a beautiful spot. The land in front of you, outside the farmland's boundary and this side of the Southwater stream, was common land. Old documents call it 'the waste of the lord'. In this context 'waste' doesn't have the modern meaning of

rubbish or surplus, but derives from the Latin *vastus* – empty or by extension, uncultivated. It's the area over which the villagers, assuming they were rent-paying tenants not squatters, had their commoners' rights.

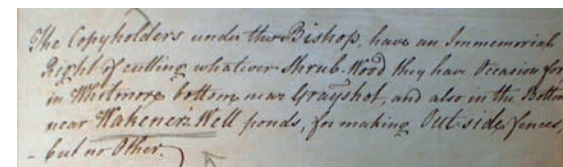
These rights formed part of the customs of the manor, a set of rules understood by everyone, and bent by many, which had been agreed since time immemorial and held in the collective memory. These rules set out the parameters within which the villagers could exploit the commons. They were valid until the Headley Inclosure of 1855, at which point the rights were withdrawn and the commoners awarded compensation in the form of land or cash.

There were limits. For example, your rights only applied in the manor to which you were a tenant. Pilfering from another manor's waste was fineable. The boundary between Headley and Churt was marked by the Southwater, so there was no excuse for not knowing when you'd strayed off home soil. Also, standing trees were deemed as timber, the lord's property, and felling without

permission was – guess what – fineable. Manors employed officials such as pinders and woodwards to enforce the customs, and informants were sometimes paid a reward. If you were nabbed, you'd be up in front of the manor court and trudging home several shillings poorer.

A few examples as to what our villages could use the commons for:

- Grazing livestock, of a number proportional to the size of their property.
- Collecting deadwood, but not standing trees.
- Taking minerals – stone, clay and sand for example.
- Collecting turf, bracken and gorse.
- Collecting food (nuts, berries) and herbs.
- In Grayshott, collecting shrubwood ie coppice for making fences.



When the Warners needed poles for fences, this is one of the places they could have got them. From the custumal of 1766.

The track you've just walked up is called Bull Lane. Downhill, beyond the point at which you joined, it crosses the Southwater at Brydelades Ford - Gushing Stream Ford. For hundreds of years Grayshott's farmers would have driven their livestock along here, to the communal grazing and running water. As you continue, you can see that the perimeter banks form a kind of funnel shape, which is a characteristic of the interface between ancient fields and common.

Continue along Bull Lane, between steel gateposts.



On your left you'll see a hedge of coppiced hazel. Pure hazel hedges are rare in nature but common in Grayshott and Churt. They were planted deliberately, for harvesting. The rule of thumb is that hazel coppice increases the diameter of its stool (stump) by about a foot per century, so these have some age to them. On your right, the perimeter bank of Flat Wood curves off down the slope.

Just a few yards after the gateposts, turn right along the footpath into Flat Wood.

Pause at the entrance.

6. Flat Wood

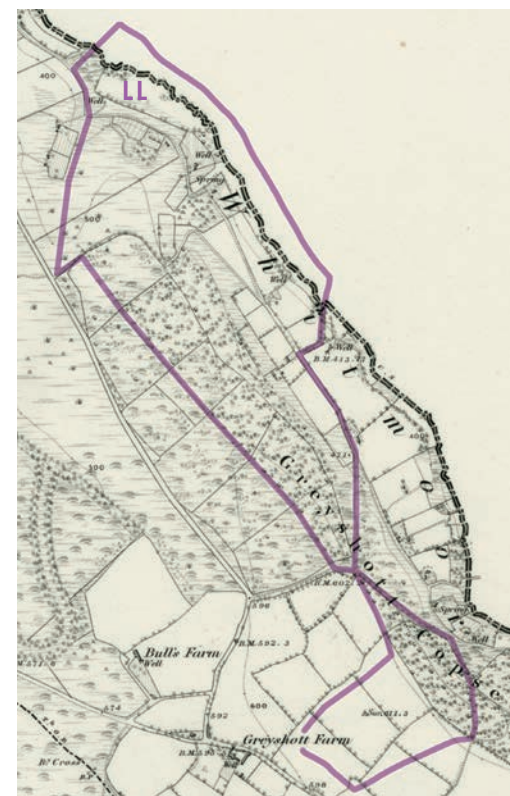
Flat Wood is a plantation upon an ancient field system. In the 16th century it was called Old Land. The name is significant. It usually applies to a settlement's primary site of cultivation; you are in the core of old Grayshott. To the right of the path there's a large, broad but shallow bank and ditch. Originally it was about six feet from bottom to top, capped with a prickly hedge, and would have grown full of thistles, brambles and other horrible stuff. This was the settlement's original boundary bank; it once enclosed the entire hamlet, the areas of Flat Wood, Bulls Farm, Grayshott Hall, Applegarth and Waggoners. By a modest estimate that amounts to three miles. This equates to at least 8,000 tons of soil and rubble that had to be dug out using hand tools such as mattocks, and spades made entirely of wood with just an iron cutting edge. This doesn't include the internal boundaries, which probably doubled the work.

Consider also the work involved in clearing the land, hoiking out roots and breaking it for cultivation. Our boundary earthwork may not be Stonehenge, but the investment of manual labour that our ancestors put into their land is inconceivable in our machine-assisted age. The reason was twofold. Partly it derived from the need to show and enforce possession, not particularly in the sense of a fortification but to make clear, in times when might was often right and violence came quickly, that the land was spoken for. More tangibly, in days when wolves roamed Whitmore, it kept out the wild animals as well as the wild humans. Much of this bank still exists and the piece here is possibly Grayshott's oldest visible human-made structure, maybe a thousand years or so.

Continue through Flat Wood.

The dirt path turns into a broad forestry track.

You are now walking through a fossilised coaxial field system, with each of the six fields being roughly rectangles of several acres arranged across your direction. The fields are about 180 yards wide – the local



Flat Wood is at the centre of this OS map of 1869. The eastern part retains the ancient woodland, the western part appears to be scrubland after a felling. Note the contemporary name of 'Greyshott Copse', the word 'copse' being derived from 'coppice'. The map clearly shows the relict field system within the woods. Hammer Lane is misaligned with the fields, proving that the fields are older than the lane. The walk route is in purple.

furlong - and separated by cross-banks. You can check this by counting paces or sat-navving from the entry point - if you have keen eyes you'll spot the cross-banks. They're rather broken down by the path, and much more prominent from Hammer Lane. Each field tips over the lip of the valley, a strange arrangement which may originally have been to give each tenant a portion of arable and some woods.

The name of the first old field isn't known. Some of it is occupied by the house of Boscobel, which was one of those arising from the Grayshott Estate plan. Onwards you'll walk through Penyfield, Brodfield, Grenefield, Rayfield and Denefield. These names are from the 16th century and that of Grenefield, meaning permanent pasture, hints that even then they were becoming too tired for arable farming and reverting to grass. Incidentally, all of this was part of the Warners' property.



By about 1800 the fields were exhausted and the squire, Miller, planted trees over them. Plantations were popular then, the Royal Navy having an insatiable appetite for oak and pine. Today Flat Wood is still commercial woodland, but through being removed from industrial agriculture its ancient earthworks have largely survived. The current crop of pines has been thinned as it matures. Glades have opened up and biodiversity is creeping in – birch, rowan, broom, oak, hazel and holly all make an appearance. It's a very pretty and peaceful place. On the hanger (right hand) side some old coppice still survives, remnants of the pre-plantation era, and there are at least two charcoal hearths. Also a WW2 bomb crater.

Continue the full length of the woodland path, dodge round an iron gate and meet a broad cross-track. Turn left.

The last field you walked through was Denefield. Dene is Old English meaning a valley. It's on your right. Look also at the height of Flat Wood's bank on your left, and where the path cut through it - pretty substantial even now. Grayshott wasn't a castle but plunderous visitors were unwelcome.

Continue along the track to Hammer Lane.

7. Hammer Lane

From hereabouts, when all around was heathland and before plantations grew up, the view north stretched across the valley of the Wey to the ridge of Beacon Hill beyond Farnham. Recall from Walk 2, the view from Ludshott to the South Downs, then factor in Old Land's dominance above Whitmore, and it's easy to see how a community of early settlers here could have kept a watchful eye across a huge tract of land.

The north end of Hammer Lane, the sunken part off to the right, was in the 16th century called Gravat Lane. Gravat derives from the Saxon *græf*, meaning dug out or hollow. It's a lane of considerable antiquity.

Here you have another choice. If you're taking the level walk, or if you fancy more earthwork spotting, then turn left and walk along Hammer Lane. All along the left hand side you'll see the old banks slanting into the woods. They match up exactly with the OS map, very exciting. Be watchful along here, there's no footpath, but the verge is walkable in places. At a right hand bend, take the track off to the left, opposite the House of Barn Hatch. You're back on Bull Lane, continue past the entrance to Boscobel and rejoin the outbound route at Point 6.

For the main walk:

Don't go through the gate to the lane. Turn sharp right and take the path downhill.

This is the parish boundary. A garden will appear on your left. Continue to the bottom where you'll join the tarmac lane of Whitmore Vale. Pause here.

8. Low Leg

Opposite you'll see Gallup House. The house is modern but its plot is very old indeed. In the 16th century this place was called Low Leg. 'Leg' is a Middle English word, from the time of Chaucer, and it means a waterside meadow, which is exactly what it used to be. It's remarkable how modern gardens can fossilise landscape boundaries from hundreds of years ago; in this case that of a 13th century purpresture. The part on this side of the Southwater is marked by 'LL' on the map on page 35.



Purpresture was the act of clearing a plot for house or farm out of the common land. Usually the perpetrator would declare their action to the lord of the manor, who would then formalise their tenancy by charging rent and tax. In the 13th century the population of England was growing. All of the prime farmland had been taken, and people had to colonise marginal land. The situation here appears to be that during the early 1200s settlers began to occupy Whitmore from the Barford end, nibbling out little plots along the valley. The prime candidate for this one is Henry of Playstowe (now Plaster Hill in Barford), in 1246, for which he was charged three shillings by the Bishop of Winchester. The land remained as meadow for centuries, always until recent times associated with the parent farm in Barford. There's not much to see from the road, but much of



the medieval boundary bank still survives within the garden. The parish boundary and that of Henry's meadow follows down the fence, but we have to take a detour.

Turn left along the lane (heading north).

If you're doing this walk in late spring

you'll soon come across a lovely spread

of wild garlic on the verge. Your nose

may find it first. After about 100 yards

on the lane, turn right on a signposted

footpath down the verge. Cross a stile,

continue through a bamboo tunnel,

and emerge at the Southwater Stream.

Pause by the bridge.

9. Southwater

This is the Southwater. It's fed by countless little springs which trickle out of the valley slope, the water being ejected from the greensand by an underlay of Atherfield Clay. The Southwater didn't make this valley, rather, it inherited it from the crashing streams of glacial meltwater that scoured through the greensand

and cut through to clay. It's a modest little stream but it never dries up, being supplied by the mass of water held within the big hump of greensand above. And here, it is very, very pretty.

In Saxon times the Southwater marked the frontier between the great kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia. Around the year 688, Caedwalla, King of the West Saxons, conquered the Mercian territory of Surrey. To commemorate his victory he granted some Surrey land at Farnham and Churt for a minster. The grant is recorded in a charter, a copy of which made in the year 965 traces the boundary from the head of Whitmore to Barford. It's written that Caedwalla liked to ride the bounds of his gifts himself. The scribes failed to record whether he did so here, which leaves our imagination free to enjoy at least the possibility of a Saxon king paddling this way. To this day the Southwater preserves the boundary between Hampshire and Surrey, and into the latter we must soon venture.

Downstream, the Southwater feeds three mills at Barford. The upper and lower mills date from the 18th and 19th centuries and were made for paper and textile milling. The oldest, Middle Mill, always for grain, is first recorded in the 13th century. The Bishop's records note that in 1425 it was in the hands of 'John Plonker, a felon'. An image comes to mind of the greedy miller cheating villagers of more than his fair portion of their flour. Further, beyond Barford, is the possible site of Richard Drake's 'mill for working iron' of 1529.



Cross the stream, and continue through a gate and up steps. At the top turn right

along a gravel track (bridleway) until it joins the tarmac lane of Whitmore Vale Road.

Beyond the last house on the track there's a wire strand fence to the right. As the track levels, and the fence ends, look down into the woods. About thirty

yards down you can see a bank, which eventually turns a right-angle and heads downslope. That is the medieval boundary bank of Low Leg purpresture. At the bottom of the steep slope is the stream, which here carves quite a notch in the valley floor. You can't see it from the track but either side of the stream there appear to be the remains of a dam, now broken. This is a little unsolved mystery; it would have inundated quite a large area, and the only guess at the moment is that it once formed a reservoir for the mills.



The water on this day was low. It's much more fun after a storm.

Continue along the road for a short way, taking care, there is no pavement. After about 250 yards, before the house of Woodland View, take a signed footpath down to the right.

This wonderful little packhorse path descends a deep-worn cutting back to the Southwater. At the bottom, on the left, is another little mystery. A sluice empties from a stale, man-made pond. It's large and quite old, mid-19th century. Downstream there were watercress beds – you can still find watercress growing – and we think this pond was part of their system.

Cross the Southwater on the bouncy planks and continue a few yards up the far side. Pause by the little hollow on your right.

You are now safely back in Wessex, Hampshire, and Grayshott. That said, the hollow is part of Surrey. The Southwater once made a tight little loop here, a miniature ox-bow bend, with its centre on the Surrey side. One day the stream

decided to take a short cut across the bend's neck and left a little blob of Surrey marooned on our side. From its edge there erupts a lovely clear spring, one of the Southwater's many tributaries. This boggy little oasis is a gentle place to pause for a few moments; on a sunny day it's often alive with birds and insects.

Continue up the leaf-tunnel track.

Shortly on your right you'll arrive at a magnificent beech pollard. This monster, probably at least 250 years old, as a young tree had its head lopped off – polled. From that point grew sprays of vigorous young branches well above the reach of grazing livestock. Every ten years or so they would have been harvested for construction wood or fuel. It's living evidence that Whitmore was once the commoners' wood-pasture.

Carry on up to the tarmac of the lane, and pause.



10. Smallholder Lands

As you emerge from the path you will hopefully see Grey Cottage opposite, still standing at the time of publication but approved by planners for demolition. This part of Whitmore is a more recent zone of smallholder occupation. The land-grab of the 1200s fizzled out by the end of the century, after which the combined effects of famine, pest and plague reduced the population by 50% and relieved the pressure on land for centuries afterwards. Low Leg seems to mark the upper limit of encroachment at that time. In the upper part of Whitmore a second phase occurred during the early 19th century, when population growth combined with the coalescence of farms on the high ground edged small-time cultivators back into the marginal areas.

Although much extended in the 20th century, Grey Cottage and its large surrounding plot is (currently) one of the very few intact smallholder cottages of this period. The original early 19th century part is made of local rubble, the walls unlined inside, low-eaved and with a massive fireplace at the gable. In the 1860s

it was occupied by descendants of the Cane family of High Graveshott.

These families survived by market gardening. The railway arrived at Haslemere in 1859, which connected the area to urban markets. Soon after, the Hindhead tourist boom spilled over into Grayshott, which became a local service centre (Walk 5 will explore this in more detail). In the days before refrigeration, Grayshott's Victorian traders needed a constant supply of fresh veg, fruit, meat and dairy for the new urban population and its tourists. The smallholders in



Whitmore tapped into this. The soil here is a little more fertile than on the high ground, nourished by alluvium and clay, and watered by springs. By the end of the 19th century the valley floor and lower slopes were a patchwork of gardens, orchards and emerald meadows, speckled with little cottages like Greys.

Turn left and walk along along the tarmac lane.

After about 200 yards, on the left after the entrance to Starfields, there's a lovely collection of gnarly-root beeches, the remains of a grown-out hedge at the entrance to another former smallholder plot.



A short way after Starfields, take the signed footpath to the right through trees, which takes you obliquely up through the hanger to emerge back at Point 5. If you want to make a much longer walk then you can continue along the lane for about half a mile and join Walk 4.

Pause at the top for a moment to recover, and to reflect that the tiny Southwater has a surprisingly big impact. Apart from keeping the Mercians in their place it provided power to three mills and a Tudor forge, lush meadows for medieval farmers, water for the charcoal burners and irrigation for Victorian market gardens.

11. Back to Barneland

Continue straight across the clearing and take the signed footpath through the gap between trees. Follow the path to the left, through a gate, to a small copse where the path kinks over a shallow hump.

If you've done Walk 2, you may remember that the little hump in the path and the rocky heap under the trees is the stump of Barneland's boundary bank. It survives inside the hanger.

Immediately after the copse turn right up a gravel path and meet the estate road of Tennyson Way. Turn left, then bear right before Canes Close, and continue past Beechen Row. All now familiar names from nearby history. This will lead you back to the car park.

This final stretch takes you through the old fields of Barneland. Here it was that John and Elizabeth Warner ploughed, sowed, harrowed, weeded and reaped; a life of some material comfort earned through unrelenting hard labour. Hopefully they found at least some time for happiness amidst the toil; to love and laugh, enjoy wildflowers, watch butterflies and listen to birdsong, all things which we can share with them across the centuries.



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Acknowledgements

When writing about Grayshott one is standing upon the shoulders of others.
Here are some sources of additional information.

Books

Grayshott: The Story of a Hampshire Village, by Jack H Smith.

Churt: A Medieval Landscape, by PD Brooks.

These are published by John Owen Smith and usually available from Grayshott Pottery.

Web Sites

www.grayshottheritage.com Dozens of articles written by expert local historians.

www.johnowensmith.co.uk/headley/index.htm A wealth of transcribed documents.

Thank you also to Sally Wadsworth and Jane Brayne
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