

# HISTORIC VILLAGES

*Historic Country Trail*



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The rural area of East Kent around Canterbury, Sandwich, Deal and Dover is dotted with ancient villages. Over the centuries these little communities witnessed the passage of Kings and Queens, Princes,

Archbishops, soldiers and sailors. Today many old churches, half-timbered houses and other monuments stand in these villages to remind the visitor of the history of this corner of England.



We invite you to use this booklet as an introduction to this part of the Kent countryside. Sited prominently somewhere near the middle of the villages listed you will find **Historic Village Information Panels**. These have been erected by Dover District Council in partnership with local Parish Councils to provide a detailed and illustrated history of each village.



There is a small map on the back page of this booklet showing the approximate location of all the villages and a more detailed map on each page to show the location of the Historic Village Information Panels.

EWELL, DOVER.

## 1. CAPEL-LE-FERNE

The Battle of Britain memorial, on the cliffs beside the Folkestone/Dover road at Capel, commemorates the 1940 air battle which took place in the skies over this section of the coast. The memorial was funded from donations and represents a young pilot looking out to sea. The village's name comes from a chapel (now St. Mary's church) which stood beside the road. The Warren, a wild area below the village, is home to a variety of rare flowers and plants.



## 2. ALKHAM

At one time it was proposed to turn this charming village, nestling in the steep Alkham valley, into a housing centre for thousands of coal miners working in the then expanding East Kent coalfield. This never happened and the village remains much as it has been for centuries with its Norman church, 18th century Rectory, Coaching Inn and variety of other old houses. Alkham is a good base for walks in the pleasant countryside around the coastal chalk downland.

## 3. TEMPLE EWELL

Situated in the valley of the river Dour above Dover, Temple

Ewell has an ancient history. It was mentioned in a charter of 772 and came under the control successively of the religious orders of the Knights Templars and the Knights of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. Unusual stained glass windows from Switzerland are worth looking at in the church. The river powered one of two mills which still stand in the valley.



CAPEL-LE-FERNE ALKHAM TEMPLE EWELL

#### 4. KEARSNEY

Although Kearsney Abbey is no more, its extensive gardens now constitute a very attractive public park including a large pond with ducks, geese and swans. The so-called Abbey was actually a private house built between 1820-22 for the Dover banker John Minet Fector. The house is now demolished except for the remains of its west wing, now the park café. On the other side of the road to Kearsney Abbey are Russell Gardens also a park open to the public.

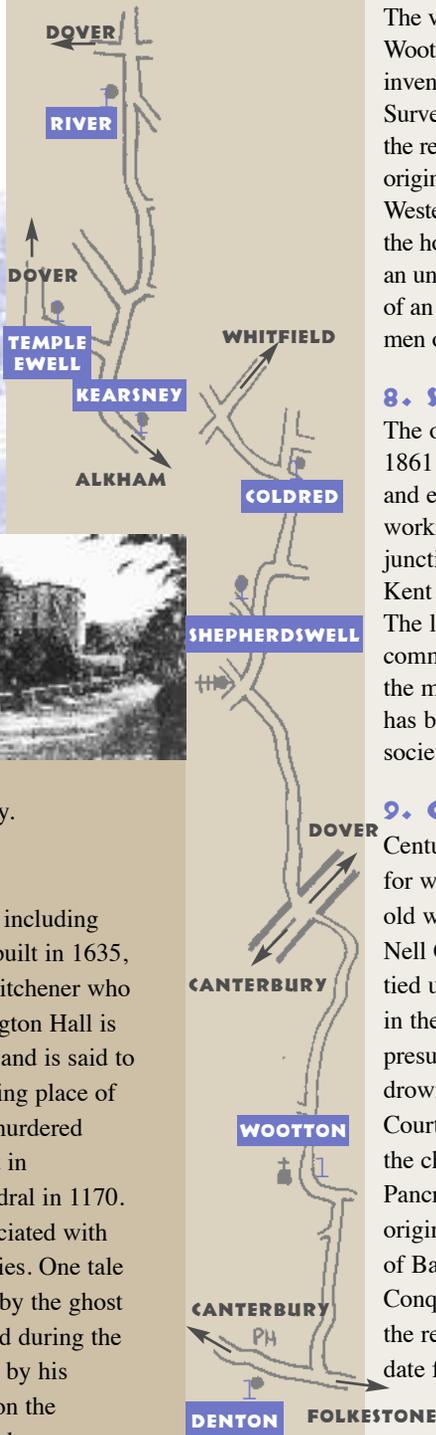
#### 5. RIVER

The village stands on the river Dour, which powered a number of mills on its way out to sea. One of these, Crabble Corn Mill, dates from 1812 and is open to visitors at certain times of the year. It contains a unique set of automatic 19th-century flour milling machinery. In ancient times the Abbey of St. Radigunds, founded by French monks in the 12th century stood nearby. Only ruins survive today.



#### 6. DENTON

Several historic houses are located near the village including Broome Park and Tappington Hall. Broome Park, built in 1635, was at one time the home of Field Marshal Lord Kitchener who was drowned after a U-boat attack in 1915. Tappington Hall is reputed to be the oldest inhabited building in Kent and is said to have been the hiding place of the knights who murdered Thomas a Beckett in Canterbury Cathedral in 1170. The house is associated with various ghost stories. One tale says it is haunted by the ghost of a Royalist killed during the English Civil War by his brother who was on the Parliamentary side.



#### 7. WOOTON

The village was part of the former Manor of Wooton, at one time home of Thomas Digges, inventor of an early telescope. Digges was General Surveyor and Engineer at Dover Harbour during the reign of Elizabeth I. He was the builder of the original harbour complex which now forms the Western Docks. Unfortunately nothing remains of the house which was demolished in 1952. There is an unusual war memorial in the village, consisting of an oak wayside seat, made to remember the nine men of the parish who fell in the First World War.

#### 8. SHEPHERDSWELL

The old village grew rapidly after the arrival in 1861 of the London - Chatham - Dover railway, and expanded later with houses for miners working in the Tilmanstone colliery. A railway junction was established in 1911 for the East Kent Light Railway which serviced the coalfield. The last passenger train ran in 1948 and commercial services ended with the closure of the mine in 1987. In recent years part of the line has been restored by a railway preservation society and is open to visitors at certain times.

#### 9. COLDRED

Centuries ago, the pond in the village was used for witch trials. In the 1640s it is recorded that an old woman called Nell Garlinge was tied up and thrown in the water where, presumably, she drowned. Coldred Court Farm, next to the church of St. Pancras, was originally a manor house owned by Bishop Odo of Bayeux, half-brother of William the Conqueror. The church and the farm stand inside the remains of a fortified Saxon camp said to date from the 8th century. Archaeologists have made numerous finds from the Saxon and Roman periods here.



## 10. WHITFIELD

This has long been an important crossroads where the roads to Canterbury, Dover and Sandwich meet. Modern Whitfield stands on the site of several old manor houses including Linacre, Bewesfield, Pising and Archer's Court. In ancient times the Lord of the Manor of Archer's Court had to provide an unusual service – his duty was to hold the King's head while crossing the Channel and support it during vomiting.

## 11. GUSTON

The village is just east of the old Roman road from Dover to Richborough and has been settled since very early times. The church of St. Martin of Tours has a Saxon chancel but the rest is Norman. The parish extends to the coast, and cliff top land was used as an aerodrome in the early days of aviation. The Royal Flying Corps used the Swingate field as a staging post for aircraft joining the British Expeditionary Force in France in the First World War (1914-1918). The Royal Naval Air Squadron also had an airfield nearby.

## 12. EAST LANGDON

Among the interesting items in the Norman church is a piece of 15th-century embroidery, originally worn as a cloak by the Rector. There is also an hour glass stand dating from Elizabethan times which was used by the Rector for timing his sermons. In the Middle Ages the

area around Langdon was run by the St. Augustine's Brotherhood. This lasted until 1538 when Henry VIII dissolved the Abbey and sold the lands. East Langdon was acquired by the Masters family who built on the site of the abbey.



## 13. WEST LANGDON

This small settlement lies close to the site of Langdon Abbey, founded by Premonstratensian Canons in 1189. The Abbey was dissolved during the reign of Henry VIII. Inspecting it in 1535, the Kings Commissioners reported that the Canons were ignorant, behaved immorally and that the Abbot kept a mistress. Much of the stone used in the Abbey was carted off and used



for other constructions including Henry VIII's coastal fortifications. Later a farmhouse was built on the foundations. The population of the village has shrunk with the decline of employment in agriculture. Throughout the 19th century about 120 people lived here, but by the 1990s there were less than 40.

## 14. MARTIN

In the Rev. Richard Harris Barham's book of mythical stories 'The Ingoldsby Legends', written in about 1840, there is a character called the Leech of Folkestone who was supposed to have lived at Marston Hall in Martin. The Hall was built in the 18th century on the site of an ancient manor house. The village also had a workhouse constructed in 1790 to house the poor from the surrounding area.

## 15. MARTIN MILL

The mill dated from the 18th century and stood on the site of the present bungalow 'Millstone'.



The ruins of the mill were demolished in the 1960s. The present village of Martin Mill was developed after the

construction of the Dover to Deal railway in 1881. Martin Mill was the stopping off point for the fashionable seaside location of St. Margaret's Bay. Horse drawn transport to the beach was provided from the Station Hotel (the present Ugly Duckling pub). There used to be a railway junction nearby from which a works line ran down to Dover Harbour. This was used for the construction of the Eastern Docks sea defences and the Southern Breakwater completed in 1909.

## 16. ST. MARGARET'S AT CLIFFE

During World War II several long-range guns were positioned near the village to fire at German-occupied France, as well as enemy shipping in the Channel. The 12th-century St. Margaret of Antioch church features rounded arches and an interesting doorway. The present Cliffe Tavern Hotel was formerly part of a successful private school, the Cliffe Academy.



## 17. ST. MARGARET'S BAY

Before World War II the Bay was a busy seaside resort with a number of hotels along the beach. They were severely damaged during this period and the ruins were cleared after the war.



South Sands House at the foot of the access road was acquired in 1962 by Mr Fred Cleary, a wealthy builder and philanthropist. He established the Pines Gardens and Bay Museum opposite. Famous residents of St. Margaret's Bay have

included Noël Coward, who later sold his beach house to Ian Fleming, author of the James Bond spy novels.

## 18. KINGSDOWN

For centuries this picturesque village owed its living to the sea. Although there is no fishing fleet today, locals can remember the time when over twenty boats set out daily to bring in their catch. Kingsdown House, a large building on the hillside, was the home of wealthy ship-owner, William Carling. He endowed the village's church in 1850. Numerous ships have been wrecked along this part of the coast, particularly around the Goodwin Sands, 5 miles (8km) off shore. Until 1927 Kingsdown had a lifeboat with a crew of volunteers from the village.



## 19. RINGWOOLD

In ancient times Ringwoold stood at the edge of a vast forest which extended almost to Canterbury. The oldest building in the village is the church of St. Nicholas, dating from the 12th century, although it has a brick tower built in 1628. Later an onion dome turret was added which served as an aid to navigation for ships in the Channel. The Old Forge House was the place where iron carriage wheels and chains were made for use at the former naval dockyard in Deal. Nearby is the Old Bakehouse of 1737 which produced bread for Ringwoold and surrounding communities.

## 20. WALMER

It was on Walmer beach that Julius Caesar and his legions are believed to have landed in 55BC. The ruins around old St. Mary's church in upper Walmer are those of the former manor house which originally belonged to the Auberville family who came with the Norman conquest. The yew tree in the churchyard is believed to be 1,000 years old. Walmer Castle was part of a chain of coastal fortifications built during the 16th century. Walmer barracks were built in 1794 and a Royal Naval hospital was added in 1800-12. These buildings later became the Royal Marines School of Music.



## 21. RIPPLE

Field Marshal Sir John French, Earl of Ypres, Commander of British forces on the Western Front during

World War I was born at Ripple Vale, a large house which is now a school. He died in 1925 and is buried in the churchyard. Ripple has had military associations for a long time. The Romans built a camp (near the site of the present church) supposedly during Julius Caesar's invasion of 55BC. A little way from the village stands Ripple Court, formerly the manor house. The church of St. Mary the Virgin was built in 1861, in mock Norman style, on earlier foundations.

## 22. SHOLDEN

In the 1700s Sholden was quite a lawless place and was a centre of smuggling activity. At one stage a battle took place between the Revenue-men and 150 villagers who had just landed a consignment of contraband on the coast at Deal. Highwaymen also frequented the road here. The Tudor house of Hull Place contains a smuggler's hide with a secret door in the dining room. In 1797 a new turnpike road was opened between Sandwich and Deal and toll gates were placed in the village.

## 23. MONGEHAM

Mongeham is close to the sea and the village has various maritime connections. In the 15th century the Fogge family of Mongeham were listed as having the exclusive right to brew beer and provide it for consumption by the English garrison in Calais. High on the wall of the north chancel of St. Martin's church, a helmet hanging on an iron pole is claimed to have been worn at the battle of Hastings (1066). Another item of interest is a brass plaque on a pillar in the nave which bears some lines written in Greek by the poet Robert Bridges for his nurse, buried here.



TILMANSTONE

DOVER SANDWICH

BETTESHANGER

BETTESHANGER COLLIERY

NORTHBOURNE

SANDWICH

SHOLDEN

GREAT

RIPPLE

PH

DEAL

RINGWOULD

DOVER

## 24. NORTHBOURNE

Northbourne Court, a large estate next to the village, was the home of Sir Edwin Sandys who drew up the constitution of Virginia in America. There is a monument to him in the village church. His son, Colonel Edwin Sandys, was a prominent commander on the Parliamentary side in the English Civil War who was feared for his cruelty. He died here in 1642 from wounds received at the Battle of Worcester. This house was demolished in the 18th century, but the ornamental gardens survive as part of Northbourne Court, home of Lord Northbourne. The gardens are open to the public on certain Sundays between May and September. (Telephone 01304 611281 for details.)



## 25. BETTESHANGER

This quiet place is noted for a grand building, Betteshanger House, which is privately owned and occupied today by Northbourne School. The nearby church was built in 1853. The house was erected for the Boys family and several prominent members of that family are buried in the graveyard. It is said to be the spot where Rupert Brooke wrote the famous poem 'The Soldier' during the First World War. The design of the small stone church is inspired by the Norman church at Barfreton, a few miles away, and the carvings around the door echo those found there. In the 20th century the name Betteshanger became associated with the coal mine, although this was actually situated 2km. away near Northbourne. The colliery was the last operating pit in the East Kent coalfield and closed in 1989.

## 26. TILMANSTONE

Until relatively recent times there was a vast private estate near the village around the imposing mansion of Dane Court. This great house (today converted into flats) was formerly the home of the Rice family. Edward Rice was MP for Dover between 1837 and 1857. The Rice coat of Arms consisted of three ravens and this is commemorated in the name of the village pub. Tilmanstone colliery, at one time the biggest mine in the East Kent coalfield, was located south-west of the village. It closed in 1987 and the site has become an industrial estate.

## 27. EASTRY

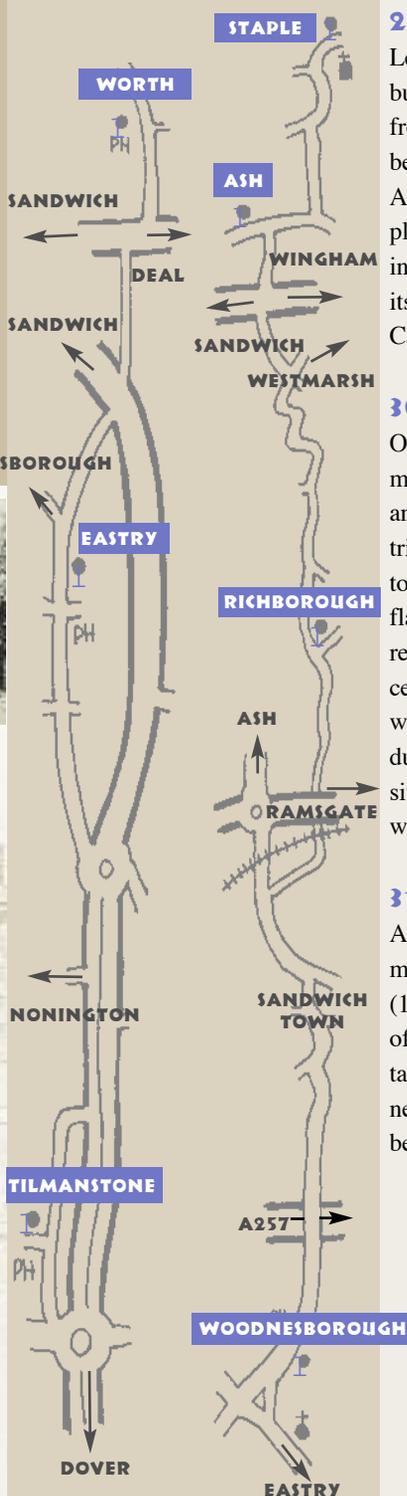
Eastry has been a sizeable settlement on the main road between Dover and the Isle of



Thanet since Roman times. In 1164 Thomas Becket hid for a week at the manor house, Eastry Court, while he awaited a passage to Flanders following his quarrel with King Henry II. The fine Norman church of St. Mary the Virgin (13th century) has an imposing tower constructed of flint and Caen stone.

## 28. WORTH

The picturesque pond in the centre of the village was once part of a navigable creek leading out to the sea. Among the old houses is Worth Farm (1675), an attractive brick building with Dutch Gables. It was one of several local buildings constructed by Flemish and Huguenot refugees who fled persecution in the 17th century. The spire of St. Peter and St. Paul was mainly rebuilt in the 19th century on Norman foundations. It has an unusual shingle (wooden tile) spire erected in 1888.



## 29. WOODNESBOROUGH

Legend had it that the large mound the village is built on is the burial heap of the dead collected from the 'Battle of Wodnesbeorh' of 715AD between the Saxons and the West Mercians. Another ancient story states that this is the burial place of Vortimer, King of the Saxons, who died in 457AD. The village's importance was due to its location at the junction of the Dover and Canterbury Roman roads.

## 30. RICHBOROUGH

Once the site of the most important Roman military base in Britain, the camp developed into an important town with an amphitheatre and vast triumphal arch, of which only foundations remain today. High walls still dominate the surrounding flat landscape, part of the fortifications built to repel Saxon raiders during the 3rd and 5th centuries. The estuary of the river Stour nearby was developed into a huge military harbour during the First World War. Today most of the site is occupied by the Pfizer pharmaceutical works.

## 31. ASH

Ash is situated on a ridge beside the ancient marshes of the Stour river. St. Nicholas church (13th century) contains an interesting collection of stone effigies. Sailors in the Channel used the tall church spire as an aid to navigation. Orchards nearby produce what have been said to be the best apples in England.



### 32. STAPLE

The church of St. James the Great at Staple dates from the 14th and 15th centuries. A curiosity is the one-handed clock, installed in 1789. Interesting buildings in the village include Crixhall Court (a Tudor mansion) and the timber framed Black Pig public house, formerly a brewery. There is a vineyard at Church Farm, first established in 1974. A white wine called Staple St. James produced here won a medal at the 1988 Wine International. The cultivation of hops, once very widespread in this part of Kent continues today at Pedding Farm.

### 33. WESTMARSH

Westmarsh sits on what was once a promontory into the sea channel which separated the Isle of Thanet from the mainland. This waterway, the Wantsum Channel, gradually silted up and the resulting marshes

were drained by Flemish refugees in the 16th and 17th centuries.

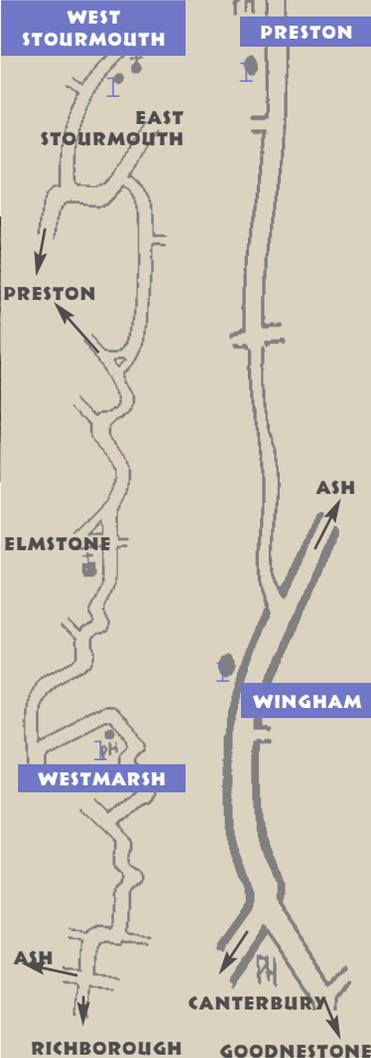


This area, criss-crossed by a network of drainage ditches, is highly fertile for the cultivation of market vegetables, fruit and hops, and market gardening is still the main livelihood of the area. The former parish church of Holy Trinity (1841) is currently used as a barn. Wingham Barton Manor and Barton Farm are superb examples of medieval buildings.

### 34. STOURMOUTH

Centuries ago, this was where the river Stour escaped in to the Wantsum Channel which separated the Isle of Thanet from the Kent coast. A naval battle took place near here in AD885

WEST  
STOURMOUTH



between ships under King Alfred and Danish raiders who had attacked Rochester. Some of the Danish ships were trapped in the Wantsum channel and defeated. By 1500 the sea had receded and the village found itself a long way from the coast. Among notable buildings is Stourmouth House in East Stourmouth, which includes parts of two Tudor timber framed buildings. The 'Rising Sun Inn' was originally built as a bakery in 1372.

### 35. PRESTON

The village is listed in the Domesday Book as Prestetune which means 'priest's farmstead or manor'. The house in use as the vicarage was left to the parish in 1711 on condition that two services were held in St. Mildred's church every Sunday. Previously the church had suffered a period of neglect, records stating that horses, cattle and pigs grazed in the graveyard, and that services were conducted improperly or not at all.

### 36. WINGHAM

A 'Tanner of Wingham' is mentioned in Shakespeare's play Henry VI. As well as the church, this attractive village has a number of historic buildings including the half-timbered houses on the High Street, the Medieval Canon's Row (opposite the church) and the handsome 18th century Delbridge House nearby. There has been a tradition of rebellion amongst the

villagers: they were active in the Peasants revolt (1381) and other popular protests, the most recent



being the Swing Riots of 1830, following which several Wingham inhabitants were transported to Australia.

WESTMARSH

STOURMOUTH

PRESTON

WINGHAM

### 37. GOODNESTONE

The village adjoins Goodnestone Park, home of Lord and Lady FitzWalter. The estate was purchased in 1700 for Brook Bridges who held an important post in the Treasury of Charles II.

During the 18th century the novelist Jane Austen was a frequent visitor to Goodnestone Park and her brother Edward married Brook Bridge's daughter. The house Bridges built was extended in 1791. During World War II the house was requisitioned by the army and the grounds were used as a tank repair depot. The house is surrounded by fine gardens which are open to the public in the summer months.

### 38. CHILLENDEEN

A windmill stands in a prominent position outside the village. It was built in 1868 for Brigadier Speed who lived at the nearby mansion of Knowlton Court. The mill, of the trestle and post type, has been

recently restored and is open to the public on certain days of the year (see the notice board for details). In the village are All Saints' church, restored in 1871 by Sir George Gilbert Scott, and the Griffin's Head Inn, originally a medieval timber framed house.



### 39. KNOWLTON

The street through the village leads to Knowlton Court, home of the Royalist commander in the English Civil War, Sir Thomas Peyton. The house and its 300 acres of parkland passed to Admiral Sir John Narborough. In 1707 Sir John's two sons were drowned in a naval disaster: a navigational error caused the English fleet under the command of Sir Cloudesley Shovel to be wrecked at night on the Isles of Scilly. This event is depicted in a relief by Grinling Gibbons on a tomb in Knowlton Church.



### 40. NONINGTON

Imposing private estates with grand houses stood on each side of the village: on the northern side was St. Albans Court, formerly Easole Manor, which belonged to Bishop Odo of Bayeux, the half brother of William the Conqueror. In recent years St.

Albans Court became a Teachers Training College but it



closed in the 1980's. The southern end of the village adjoins Fredville Park. A fine Georgian house stood in the grounds until 1939 when it was destroyed by fire. The estate is owned by the Plumpton family who live in Little Fredville, built in 1921. The park is renowned for its fine oak trees including the Fredville Oak, 11 metres in circumference and hundreds of years old.

### 41. AYLESHAM

The village was developed in the 1920s as a housing development for miners working in the East Kent coalfield, particularly Snowdown colliery 1km. away. After the First World War, an eminent town planner, Professor Abercrombie, laid out an ambitious scheme for a new town with a population of about 15,000. It was only partially built and the population today is no more than 4,000. Abercrombie's plan provided for houses with gardens and plenty of open space as well as seven schools, four churches and two hospitals. Development of a shopping and commercial centre in Aylesham was never completed and the Boulevard only runs for half the extent originally planned. The nearby coalmine closed in 1987.



## 42.

### BARFRESTON

The small Norman church (11-12th century) is remarkable for its detailed stone carvings. The best preserved ones are around the east door and represent an array of creatures, scenes of Medieval life and religious symbols.



An explanatory booklet is normally obtainable from the public house nearby. The church bell is in a curious position - attached to a yew tree in the churchyard.

## 43. EYTHORNE

The village has a strong tradition of religious non-conformism. The large Baptist Chapel was built in 1804. It was paid for by Peter Fector who lived in a mansion in Eythorne, supposedly because of his irritation at the loud singing of hymns from the previous chapel which stood next to his home. The Fector and Minet families had long connections with the village. They were descended from French Huguenot refugees who came to live in England in the 17th century. Eythorne and the nearby village of Elvington expanded during the 20th century to provide housing for miners working at Snowdown and Tilmanstone collieries. Both mines closed down in 1987.



CHILLENDEN

NONINGTON

EASTRY



BARFRESTON

PH

EYTHORNE

COLDRED

## TOWN TRAILS AND PANELS

Explore the fascinating towns of Dover, Deal and Sandwich with Historic Town Trail Leaflets, available from Tourist Information Centres. You will find history panels, similar to the ones in the villages, at points of interest, and the leaflets feature maps and additional information to help you to enjoy your visit.



## MAP OF AREA

1. Capel-le-Ferne
2. Alkham
3. Temple Ewell
4. Kearsney
5. River
6. Denton
7. Wooton
8. Shepherdswell
9. Coldred
10. Whitfield
11. Guston
12. East Langdon
13. West Langdon
14. Martin
15. Martin Mill
16. St. Margarets at Cliffe
17. St. Margarets Bay
18. Kingsdown
19. Ringwould
20. Walmer
21. Ripple
22. Sholden
23. Mongeham
24. Northbourne
25. Betteshanger
26. Tilmanstone
27. Eastry
28. Worth
29. Woodnesborough
30. Richborough
31. Ash
32. Staple
33. Westmarsh
34. Stourmouth
35. Preston
36. Wingham
37. Goodnestone
38. Chillenden
39. Knowlton
40. Nonington
41. Aylesham
42. Barfreston
43. Eythorne



*All maps used are for reference only and we would advise that you purchased a map of the area.*