

## SOUTHBOROUGH COMMON CIRCULAR WALKS

### 1 Whortleberry Woodbank



### 2 Veteran Pine



### 3 The Windmill Site



### 4 Horse Ring



### 6 Heather and Ant Hills



### 7 Ancient Oak



## WALK 3 • VETERANS TOUR

### 5 Veteran Oaks

Many examples of veteran oak trees populate the northern half of the Common in what was formerly wood pasture. The trees are characterised by fractured limbs, branch scars and some dead wood thereby exhibiting some of the traits of ancient trees, albeit not so ancient in years. This area used to be wood pasture, where cows and sheep would graze under the canopies of mature oak trees until this type of management expired on the Common around the early part of the 20th century.

### 6 Heather and Ant Hills

This small area of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) provides a valuable nectar source for a wide variety of bees, hover flies and butterflies throughout the summer months. Predatory migrant hawk dragonflies (*Aeshna mixta*) dart around the edge of the surrounding oak trees in the late summer, swooping low to pick off insects as they rise from the heather. Although it is a modest area of heathland, it adds to the diversity of habitats on the Common amongst ancient ant hills which indicate its uncultivated history.

### 7 Ancient Oak

This impressive oak measuring a girth of just under 7m at 1.5m height is probably the oldest of the many veteran examples that populate the northern half of the Common. It is deemed ancient based on its age comparative to local examples of the same species and could be over 500 years old. Notice the fractured limbs, branch scars, decay holes, dead wood and even concrete visible in the lower branch scar applied to increase the tree's stability!

### 8 Gravel Pit

A stone quarry which is first recorded on maps in 1860 and may have been the source of some of the stone for St Peter's Church which was built in the 1830s. Stones, gravels and road scrapings were stored in the quarry under permission granted by the then landowners (John Deacon of Mabledon and Robert Pott of Bentham Hill) when local roads were being repaired or built. This was possibly its last use and where the name Gravel Pit was derived from although it was subsequently enjoyed by generations of children as a play area.

### Management of Southborough Common

The Kent High Weald Partnership have been carrying out management work on the Common with volunteers since 2012 with the aim of thinning saplings, removing invasive laurel and smothering dense holly to create vistas and improve habitat diversity. It's hard to imagine how open the Common used to be when it was a mix of heathland and wood pasture although the objectives in the management plan aim to enhance this.



## WALK 2 • HABITATS CIRCULAR

### 1 Whortleberry Wood Bank

A substantial man-made bank built to enclose Whortleberry Wood from the adjacent wood pasture and prevent grazing animals from browsing coppiced woodland. The enclosure dates from the early Medieval period (AD 410-1066) and latterly formed part of the Bounds Estate. It was topped by an iron fence before the Second World War, the remnants of which can still be seen today in a few places.

Whortleberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) is another name for bilberry (or huckleberry) which grows well on the sandy sloping soils in the wood – a shrub whose berries are rich in Vitamin C and would have been picked as a dietary supplement. The wood is dominated by mature beech trees, planted for their wood product and is quite different in character from the remainder of the Common.

### 2 The Pineys

Notice the notable veteran multi-stemmed pine tree amongst others in "the Pineys", a grove of Scots pine trees probably planted in the Victorian era as a visual feature.

### 3 The Windmill Site

The site of a post mill which was operational here from the 1790s and used to grind local farmers' corn for flour. It would have been similar to the windmill at Nutley (East Sussex) which is still in working order today.

Evidence suggests the mill was moved to nearby Cade Street, Tonbridge in the 1820s when competition from local water mills became too strong.

The site is identified by a raised level platform on which the windmill would have stood. After it moved, the plot known as "Mill Platt" was retained in private ownership

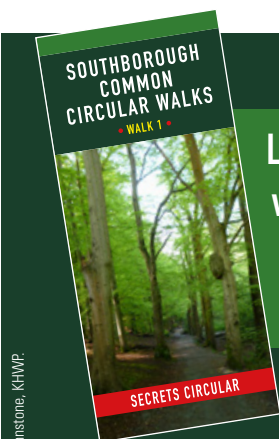
as an allotment until 1948 when it was sold to the then Southborough Urban District Council. It was marked by a hedge, parts of which can still be seen today as mature Ash, Yew and Sycamore trees growing on the plot boundary.

### 4 The Horse Ring

A famous picture by John F Herring from 1857 entitled "An English Horse Fair on Southborough Common" captures a local activity held each spring where horses were paraded and traded. One could imagine the fair taking place here in this circular enclosure, devoid of any mature trees.

### Location

Free parking is available opposite the cricket ground on Church Road and by the side of St Peter's Church, TN4 0RU. The walks begin and finish at the far end of the car park.



All photographs taken by Ian Johnstone, MHWP.

Look out for the other walks in this series –  
**SOUTHBOROUGH COMMON CIRCULAR WALK 1**

You can find more information on the following website:

[www.southboroughcommon.co.uk](http://www.southboroughcommon.co.uk)

## SOUTHBOROUGH COMMON CIRCULAR WALKS

### • WALKS 2&3 •



## HABITATS CIRCULAR VETERANS TOUR



# SOUTHBOROUGH COMMON CIRCULAR WALKS

The highlighted trails cover the key features, but they are only suggestions – all the main paths are marked on the map, so it is easy to alter or combine the routes, pick your own starting point, or choose your own walk.

The trails use a variety of paths, including some unsurfaced ones.

Please cross the roads with great care.

## FEATURES KEY

- 1 Whortleberry Wood Bank
- 2 The Pineys
- 3 The Windmill Site
- 4 The Horse Ring
- 5 Veteran Oak
- 6 Heath/anthills
- 7 Ancient Oak
- 8 Gravel Pit



- Habitats Circular
- Veterans Tour
- Path (unsurfaced)
- Gravel pit
- Pub/Bar/Eatery
- Parking

Please note: this map is not a legal record of the alignment or existence of a public right of way. No measurements should be taken from it. © Crown Copyright and database right 2018. Ordnance Survey 100019238