

A fascinating walk through the hop farming and brewing industry in and around Hadlow, past and present.

# The Hadlow Hop Tour

Duration: Half day+

Distance: ±8 miles

Full tour unsuitable for those with mobility difficulties

Suitable hiking clothing recommended



[www.hadlowpc-kent.org.uk](http://www.hadlowpc-kent.org.uk)

## Introduction

This leaflet guides you on a tour of artefacts of the brewing industry in and around Hadlow. The process of brewing beer involves the malting of barley grain in water, followed by fermentation with yeast and the addition of hops for flavour. Brewing developed in Hadlow mainly because the valley of the River Bourne provided both an ample supply of water and fertile soils suitable for hop growing.

Although this tour is fairly level throughout, it is largely on unsurfaced rural footpaths and involves the use of stiles and kissing gates. It is not therefore suitable for those with mobility difficulties, or without suitable walking shoes and clothing. The 'Hadlow Village Amble' and the Hadlow Access Trail would be more suitable in such circumstances. Wheelchair accessible individual points of the 'Hadlow Hop' could, however, be incorporated into the 'Village Amble' where indicated (with other advice) in shaded text.

As alternatives to arriving in Hadlow by car, the village can be reached easily by bus from Maidstone, Kings Hill or Tonbridge using the 7, 77 or 147 services along the main A26 road. Cycle stands (combined with planters) are also located in and around The Square, and provided by Hadlow Low Carbon Community.

The tour is illustrated in map form on the reverse side of the leaflet, with numerals 1-10 correlating to the written navigational directions and narrative (which continue overleaf). The numeral 1 indicates a suggested start and finish at St Mary's Church, but the tour is a circular route enabling you to join and leave at any point or pause for lunch or tea wherever places of refreshment are identified. Thus, if starting from Hadlow Manor Hotel, walk to the left along the far side of the main road (where there is a continuous pavement) towards Hadlow. The tour can then be joined at the public house, formerly The Harrow, now closed (numeral 3). If starting from The Carpenters Arms Hotel, turn left along Three Elms Lane and join the tour at numeral 10, by The Bell Inn. For those starting from Hadlow College/Broadview Tearooms, join at The Maltings (numeral 2). Or from the Rose and Crown PH turn right along Carpenters Lane to join A26 at The Maltings (numeral 2).

Expect the whole of tour by itself to take about half a day (or more if you stop for lunch or linger at other points of interest).



Explore Hadlow with the help of these leaflets



## Welcome to Hadlow

An illustrated guide to local attractions, businesses and services in and around Hadlow.



## The Hadlow Village Amble

A leisurely circular tour through the village of Hadlow and around the immediate environs.

Distance: 1 - 2 miles



## The Hadlow Parish Ramble

A minimum half day tour around Hadlow and the surrounding countryside, using predominantly rural footpaths.

Distance: ±8 miles



For all enquiries please contact:  
The Hadlow Parish Office  
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Hadlow Parish Council • Parish Office Hadlow Old School Hall Hadlow Kent TN11 0EH

More information about the history of our village is contained in the other walking leaflets in this series, as well as from the village library.

## THE TOUR

To reach the suggested starting point (St Mary's Church), walk to the far end of Church Lane (off the south east corner of The Square between La Portuguesa Restaurant and the Bakery). Then make your way from the church entrance to the hop-pickers' memorial in the south east corner of the churchyard (wheelchair users - this requires navigating across grass).

### 1. The Hop pickers' memorial

Thirty hop-pickers drowned at Hartlake Bridge on 20 October 1853 when the farm cart on which they were travelling toppled into the swollen River Medway. The complete story of the tragedy and its aftermath (with other information) can be found on [http://www.bbc.co.uk/kent/romany\\_roots/hartlake](http://www.bbc.co.uk/kent/romany_roots/hartlake).



The story of the accident is also summarised in the church porch. The monument in the churchyard is designed to represent the kiln of an oast house, and the names of those who perished are carved on its various sides. A 150th anniversary service was held in St Mary's Church and a new commemoration plaque was installed alongside the memorial and dedicated to mark the 160th anniversary. Both events were attended by descendants of the families involved.

Leave the churchyard by walking along Church Lane to The Square. Turn left past La Portuguesa Restaurant and cross the A26 (High Street / Tonbridge Road) to the Post Office. Turn left, keeping to the right hand side of the A26 and continue to Carpenters Lane. The Maltings stand on the corner here. With the narrative below, circle the Maltings in an anti-clockwise direction (wheelchair users - this part is all accessible).

### 2. The Maltings/The Close Brewery

The earliest reference to a brewery in Hadlow is in 1710 when John Barton, Yeoman of Hadlow, is mentioned in connection with a newly erected malt-house in Hadlow Street. In 1851 the brewery was being run by Messrs Harrison & Taylor and in 1858 they sold the business to Edward Kenward of Marden in Kent and William Barnett of Willingdon in Sussex. In 1859, a new 15 quarter malthouse was erected, this being the one to the rear of the site, parallel to the High Street. In October 1871, Trayton and Charles Kenward entered into partnership with John Court, the business operating under the name of Kenward & Court.

Sometime after this a second maltings was added, this being the one to the left of the site, at right angles to the High Street. By 1881 the brewery was supplying 68 public houses and was listed as 637th in the list of the first thousand limited companies. Kenward & Court was taken over by Charles Hammerton & Co. Ltd. in 1945. Beer was last brewed in September 1949. In 1952 Hammertons was bought by Watney's, who then sold the brewery to Charringtons. Malting continued for several years until the brewery closed in the late 1960s.

The buildings gradually became derelict through the 1970s, and the Hadlow Society pressed for the buildings to be listed, which was done in July 1979. The buildings were converted into flats in 1990.

Return along A26 / Tonbridge Road towards The Square, re-crossing the A26 at the traffic lights by the post office and continue northwards to cross Court Road to the Two Brewers Public House (wheelchair users - this part is all accessible).



### 3. Hadlow Ale

The Two Brewers PH (formerly called "The Fiddling Monkey" and before that "The Albion") was reopened by Harveys of Lewes (Sussex) in January 2009. Its name reflects both Harveys Brewery and Hadlow's own original Kenward and Court Brewery. To commemorate the event Harveys introduced "Hadlow Ale", which is brewed using hops grown locally (in Golden Green - see text prior to numeral 7).

Carry straight on along the right hand side of the A26 Maidstone Road. You will pass twin oasts away to your right, now a house called "Fuggles" after a variety of hop. Just past the pond you will come to The Harrow Public House, only recently closed (wheelchair users - this part is all accessible, but not beyond).

### 4. Kent Beer

The brewer for many local public houses, including the 'Rose & Crown', is Shepherd Neame. This is England's oldest brewer, based in Faversham, Kent. Its beers are noted for their distinctive toasted hop flavor.

Turn around and walk a few steps back towards the village. You will pass the pub car park and a terrace of four cottages on the left. Between the last of these cottages and the pond there is a footpath to your left, signposted for East Peckham. Take this footpath. **N.B. Keep dogs on a leash through the pastures ahead, because sheep and lambs may be present.**

The path initially follows a fence on the left. When the fence ends, carry straight on along the side of the pasture, keeping the ditch and hedgerow to your right. As you approach the end of the pasture, cross the ditch using the wooden bridge, immediately turning left to continue straight on across the next pasture to the corner of a hedgerow in front of you. Then keep straight ahead with the hedgerow to your left and follow it around the edge of the pasture first to your right, then left and then right again. About half way along the pasture on this last side you will see on your left a stile through the hedgerow. Cross this stile into an orchard but immediately bear right on the well defined route, between birch trees to your left and a scrubby hedgerow to your right. Keep straight on along the left hand edge of a second orchard to a kissing gate onto Cemetery Lane. Go through the gate and cross Cemetery Lane to the footpath directly opposite (shared with the entrance to the Goblands Farm business units). Stop after a few paces.

Staying on the main entrance drive, look to your left, where you will see some business units called "The Hoppers" tucked against the hedgerow. On the far side of these (still plainly visible from where you are standing on the footpath/drive) are some disused "hoppers kitchens", identifiable by their surviving brick chimneys. **N.B. Do not seek to approach or enter these buildings, which are on private land away from the footpath.**

If you wish to inspect hoppers huts more closely, the best place is at the Kent Museum of Rural Life in Aylesford. These at Hadlow, however, are in their original location and typical of a sheltered field-side location.

### 5. Hop Pickers and Hoppers Huts

Hops ripen and become ready for picking in September. Before the invention of hop-picking machinery, harvesting of the crop was very labour intensive, with the bines having to be cut, dragged to the side of the field and stripped of their ripe flowers by hand. This work (taking about 6 weeks to complete) was most usually undertaken by nomadic farm workers. Those involved in the 1853 Hartlake tragedy, for example, were taken from a small number of extended Romany families and Irish travellers. For most of the last century the task passed mainly to families from London and throughout the south east, who would decamp from their permanent urban homes to live in huts like these at Goblands. This annual pilgrimage to the hop fields was often the nearest the families came to a summer holiday. It was actually very hard work for men, women and children. Once the hops were picked, they were taken into oast houses for drying. A little further along the main drive the large building to the right is a hop kiln. In this, the hops were laid directly on to a horsehair mat which was secured on a roller turned by handles and cogs. The dried hops fell into a lifting cloth laid on the cooling floor below. A moveable carriage also spanned the upper drying floor to allow progress of drying to be checked without damaging the hops.

Turn around and return to Cemetery Lane. Turn left along Cemetery Lane to the cross roads with Court Lane. *If you wish to "breakout" here by returning to the village, turn right along Court Lane back to The Square.* Otherwise, to continue, turn left along Court Lane (signposted for East Peckham) and after about ¼ mile (400 m) turn right into Caxton Place (*don't take the signposted path diagonally across the field*). Continue along Caxton Place, which curves to the left and then to the right, whereupon it reaches the group of buildings historically known as Style Place.

### 6. Style Place Brewery

The large building (a maltings) in the centre of the development reveals the former presence of another brewery here. This was started in the 1830s by William Simmons, being in partnership with Henry Simmons in 1852, and William Martin joining them by 1855. Messrs Style and Winch bought the brewery in the early 1900s and closed it down. The brewery buildings have been converted to housing and are now known as Caxton Place. The surviving building is Grade II listed.



Leave Style Place by continuing along the driveway in a zig-zag down to the pond, where there is a wide gate with a stile on its right hand side. Cross the stile onto the footpath beyond and proceed between hedgerows. You will shortly approach a high mound surmounted by fencing. This is an earth bund forming the side of a farm reservoir. The path divides here.

Take the left fork at the reservoir and when you meet the farm track, turn left to pass through a hedgerow and then immediately turn right (do not go straight on) to follow the left hand side of this hedgerow down the side of the field. At the end of this side of the field, the path divides. Follow the curve to the left along the bottom of the field and beside the River Bourne (*not right along the side of the river unless you want to take a short cut to Golden Green*). After about 20 yards (25m) you will come to a right hand limb of the path, which crosses a footbridge over the river. Having crossed the footbridge here, continue straight ahead on the trodden path across the field in front of you, aiming to the left of the twin oasts beyond. On reaching the hedgerow on the far side of the field, turn left on the path alongside the hedgerow (*do not cross the bridge through the hedgerow towards the twin oasts*). The path shortly curves to the right alongside a brook and continues out onto Three Elm Lane. (*Those wishing to extend The Parish Ramble south of Three Elm Lane should now continue as below, having first visited, and returned from, the nearby site of the former Crystalate Works, now Sherenden Close*).

Cross Three Elm Lane and immediately turn left along the signposted footpath opposite the high tiled gable end of a large double-door barn conversion - "The Barn". At the end of this short section of path, cross the stile to the left of the gate to enter a small enclosed barn area. Continue straight ahead to the field gate on the far side of this area. Do not cross this gate. Instead, turn left in front of it, and go through the next gate on the right, (not crossing the brook or entering the main farmyard), which is signposted "footpath". Continue southwards along the path here beside the right hand side of the brook. The path continues alongside the brook into an open pasture. **N.B. Keep dogs on a leash through the pastures here and south of the River Medway until you are beyond East Lock, because sheep and lambs may be present.** You will shortly see (through the hedgerow to your left) a hop field. This is the field in which hops are grown for Harveys brewery and used in their Hadlow Ale.

Hops are a costly crop to cultivate, very delicate plants while growing and also readily susceptible to a disease called verticillium wilt. **N.B. It is essential for the well being of the crop and its continued production here that you do not try to enter this, or the next, hopfield.**



## 7. Hops

Traditional varieties of hops (like those here) are climbing plants which have to be trained up strings or wires supported on tall wooden "hop poles". The plants are typically grown in rows about 8 feet (2.5m) apart and "stringing" the poles was originally done by skilled men working from stilts. Because viable seeds are undesirable for brewing beer, only female plants are grown in hop fields, thus preventing pollination. Each Spring, the plants set new shoots, quickly growing into tall "bines". This particular hop field and that adjoining to the south, are the last remaining hop fields in Hadlow Parish and for some miles around. Disease and competition from "dwarf" varieties of hop mostly imported from Europe have resulted in the rapid decline of hop farming in Kent, with consequent changes to the agricultural landscape.

Continue straight on along the footpath to the gate in the south east corner of the pasture. Go through the gate and continue straight ahead keeping to the right hand side of the hedgerow. (*Do not attempt to use the farm track to the left side. Not only does it involve trespassing into a second hop field, it also ends at a locked gate, causing a long hike back*). A good place to see the hop field close up without trespassing into it, is to continue along the footpath on the right hand side of the hedgerow and, just before you come to the bridge over the River Medway, take a view looking back from across the locked field gate to the east of the path.



Cross the footbridge over the River Medway and turn right keeping to the trodden path along the water's edge. At the first lock (East Lock) go through the kissing gate and re-cross the river, sluice and race using the three footbridges. Continue to the left, keeping to the river edge and passing both World War II pillboxes (gun emplacements) on your right. Continue for some distance passing a red-tiled house in the field away to your right and, as the river curves to the left, you will see Hartlake Bridge in front of you. Continue along the riverside path to pass under the bridge.

## 8. Hartlake Bridge

This was the scene of the 1853 hop-pickers' tragedy. There is a plaque under the bridge commemorating it. At the time, the bridge was a wooden one and its poor repair was heavily criticized at the Inquest. The present Hartlake Bridge was built in 2004 and replaced that which was constructed after the tragedy.

Emerging from the underpass beneath the bridge, take the path immediately to the right up onto Hartlake Road. (Wheelchair users wishing to visit Hartlake Bridge are best advised to travel by car via Three Elm Lane and Hartlake Road, parking at the lay-by mentioned above. Then return along Hartlake Road to Golden Green to see The Bell Inn and chapel.)

## 9. Oast Houses

From the car park lay-by on the north side of the bridge there is a good view northwards of the wider landscape, illustrative of the density of oast houses that populate the area. All that is now missing are the extensive hop-fields. Hops were spread out on the upper floor of oast house roundels and dried by a gentle fire lit on the ground floor, smoke passing out through the wooden cowl that rotates with wind direction. The vanes that steer the cowls into the wind typically include traditional ornamentation. The dried hops were taken to the maltings in large sacks called "hop pockets".

Continuing northwards along Hartlake Road, you will pass Hartlake Oasts on the right (with a maltings), then Thompson's oasts and a further group of oasts on the left, just before the imposing Goldhill House. All are now in residential use. Note the ornamentation on their vanes. Approaching Golden Green, take the limb of Hartlake Road to the right of the grassed traffic island and continue to the right along Three Elm Lane past Bell Cottages to The Bell Inn.

## 10. The Bell Inn

The Inn was used as a temporary mortuary for those who perished in the Hartlake Bridge tragedy, the then landlord having organized a team of rescuers. The pub was later used as the venue for the inquest. Opposite, the green corrugated iron chapel was often used as a field medical centre for hop pickers.

*Note: the return leg of this walk (below) is shared with the 'Parish Ramble'.*

Turn into Victoria Road alongside the Bell Inn. Continue along Victoria Road for about 100 yards (100m) towards the bridge over the River Bourne. Just before the bridge, take the footpath on the left, which follows the left bank of the river. You will shortly come to Gold Mill, now converted to residential use. Here the path crosses the river. Having crossed, turn left to follow the path along the right side of the river (left side of the field) to a paddock enclosed by a fence. Turn right alongside this fence and then follow the path round to the left alongside a field hedgerow. The path soon curves sharply to the right around the edge of the field. Immediately beyond the curve take the left fork into woodland and follow the path (bordered by woodland to the left and hedgerow with field beyond to the right) uphill. As the ground levels out there is a path across a field to your left. Take this path along the right hand side of the field. After passing through the next kissing gate turn left onto the well-defined path that is part of the **Hadlow Access Trail** and leads back into The Forstal. When you come to the end of this limb of the cul-de-sac, go straight ahead along a clearly defined path (that may once have served as part of a "coffin route" from Golden Green) back to St Mary's church. The tour finishes.

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