

SOUTH DOWNS WALKS

THE SERPENT TRAIL

OFFICIAL GUIDE



SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

THE SERPENT TRAIL

From rolling hills to bustling market towns, the South Downs National Park's (SDNP) landscapes cover 1,600km² of breathtaking views, hidden gems and quintessentially English scenery. A rich tapestry of wildlife, landscapes, tranquillity and visitor attractions, weave together a story of people and place in harmony.

Embodying the everyday meeting of history and the modern world, the South Downs tells a story of people shaping and being shaped by their environment. Heathland is no exception to this as a landscape created thousands of years ago by man. The clearing of trees and working of the land exhausted the soil and eventually these open areas were colonised by certain plants. Heathlands are now rarer than rainforest and one of our most threatened habitats covering a mere 1% (1,595 hectares) of the South Downs National Park.

Discover this rare habitat by following the 64 mile long Serpent Trail which showcases the heathlands of the South Downs National Park. Designed to highlight the outstanding landscape of the greensand hills, their wildlife, history and conservation, you'll pass through the purple heather, green woods and golden valleys of the Sussex greensand hills. Simply follow the Serpent Trail way-marker discs to explore some of the most breathtaking countryside in the South East.

The name of the Trail reflects the serpentine shape of the route. Starting with the serpent's 'tongue' in Haslemere High Street, Surrey; the route leads to the 'head' at Black Down, West Sussex and from there the 'body' turns west, east and west again along the greensand ridges. The trail 'snakes' by Liphook, Milland, Fernhurst, Petworth, Fittleworth, Duncton, Heyshott, Midhurst, Stedham and Nyewood to finally reach the serpent's 'tail' at Petersfield in Hampshire. Public rights of way, private permissive routes and a few quiet roads link much of the access land in this area.

On this walk you will see the beautiful and internationally rare lowland heath habitat, 80% of which has been lost since the early 1800s, often through neglect and tree planting on previously open areas. The Wealden Greensand natural area stretches through Kent, Surrey and north-east Hampshire into Sussex. It is based upon the sandy rocks and soils from which its name derives and has characteristic habitats of heathland, woodland, acid grassland and acid bogs. In 2002, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) provided a grant to restore this rare habitat and conserve existing areas within West Sussex. The Serpent Trail and the corridor of heathland habitat created along part of it is also important in linking up isolated heathland sites to encourage the recolonisation of once common species, such as the green tiger beetle and Dartford warbler.

Please use the map on the back of the guide to locate each section of the trail.

HOW TO GET THERE

ON FOOT

The Greensand Way (running from Ham Street in Kent to Haslemere in Surrey) finishes on the opposite side of Haslemere High Street from the start of the Serpent Trail. The Hangers Way (running from Alton to the Queen Elizabeth Country Park in Hampshire) crosses Heath Road in Petersfield just along the road from the end of the Serpent Trail on Petersfield Heath, before heading south to join the South Downs Way.

BY RAIL

The train stations of Haslemere, Liss, Liphook and Petersfield are all close to the Trail. Visit nationalrail.co.uk to plan your journey.

BY BUS

Bus services run to Midhurst, Stedham, Trotton, Nyewood, Rogate, Petersfield, Fittleworth, Petworth and Haslemere allowing easy access to the Trail. Visit traveline.info/se to plan your journey.

OPEN ACCESS



Open Access land gives you the right to explore more of the outstanding South Downs landscape. Where you see the Open Access symbol you can leave the footpath and walk, sightsee, picnic, watch wildlife, run or climb within the mapped area. Cycling, horse riding and driving are not permitted on access land.



© SDNPA/Mischa Haller

COUNTRYSIDE CODE RESPECT. PROTECT. ENJOY.

Respect other people

- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Keep to the paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment

- Take your litter home
- Keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors

- Plan ahead and be prepared
- Follow advice and local signs

TAKE THE LEAD

For a safe and fun visit with your dog please remember to keep them on a lead around livestock and wildlife. Always bag and bin your dog poo – any public bin will do!

Three types of heather grow on the Sussex heaths. *Calluna vulgaris* (common heather or ling) dominates the heath with tiny mauve flowers in late summer. *Erica cinerea* (bell heather) and *Erica tetralix* (cross-leaved heath) have larger bell shaped flowers. Cross-leaved heath prefers damp ground and has grey-green leaves arranged in a cross around the stem and pale pink flowers in bunches at the stem tips. Bell heather has deeper mauve flowers along the stem and at the tips and grows on drier areas.

Bog cotton, as common and hare's tail cotton grasses are known, grows on damp acidic soils, especially peat. The "cotton" seed-head fibres are not great for spinning but were used to stuff pillows, in the absence of other fillings. They tend to absorb water and get lumpy though! During WWII this fibre was used as a cotton wool substitute in field dressings where its absorbency paid dividends.

The National Trust has been managing the local countryside for many years and the Serpent Trail passes through a number of its sites. Founded in 1895 by three Victorian philanthropists concerned about the impact of industrial development on the countryside, it remains independent. Its sites along the Trail include Black Down, Marley Common, Woolbeding Common and Lavington Common. Visit nationaltrust.org.uk for more information.

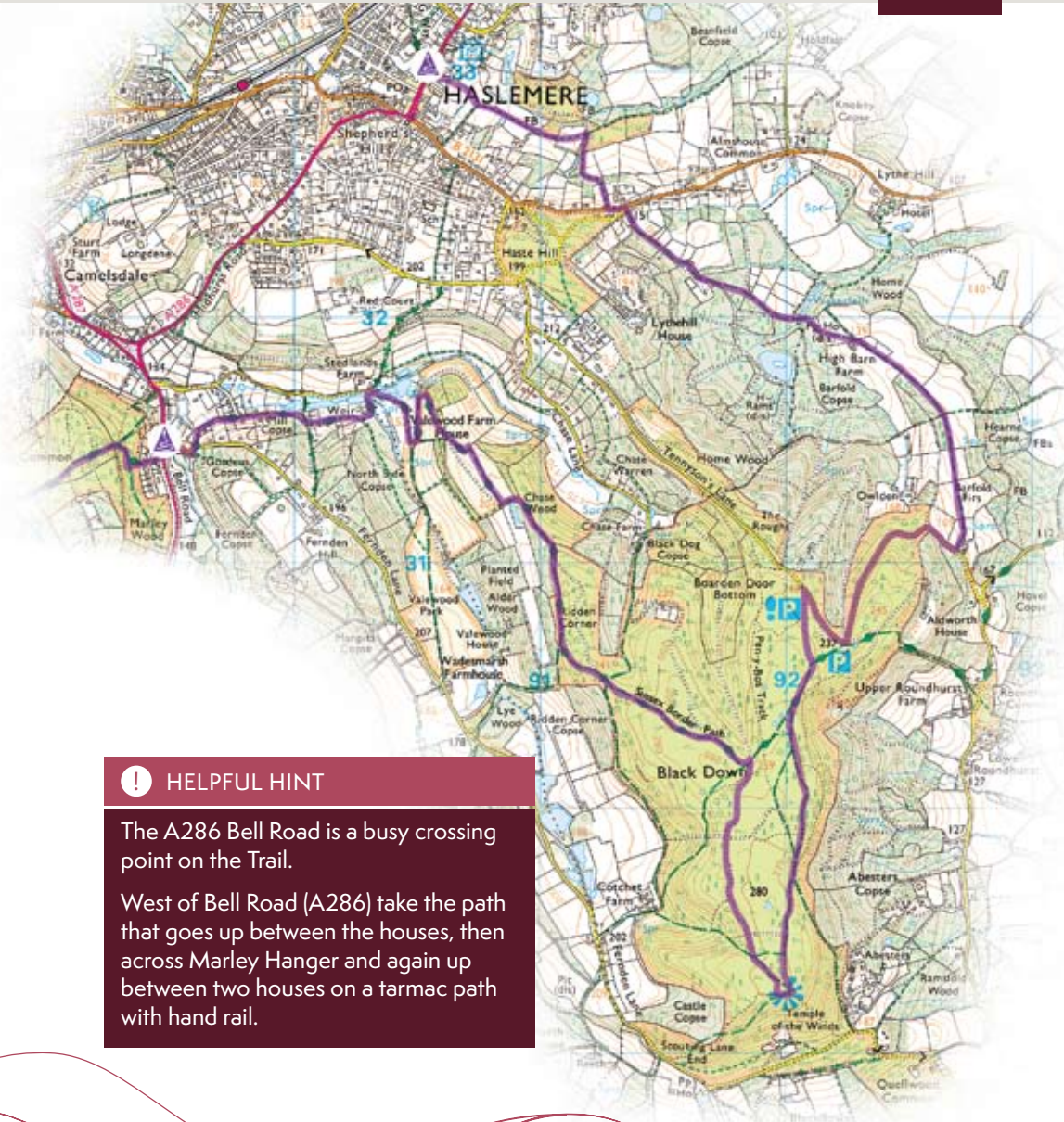


National
Trust



Common Cotton Grass © Bruce Middleton

Our smallest dragonfly, black darters are acid heathland and wetland specialists. More common in the West Country, we are fortunate to have them here too. They are black with yellow on their bodies.



! HELPFUL HINT

The A286 Bell Road is a busy crossing point on the Trail.

West of Bell Road (A286) take the path that goes up between the houses, then across Marley Hanger and again up between two houses on a tarmac path with hand rail.

Heathlands were an integral part of pastoral farming until the 20th century, providing different resources throughout the year. In long winters, fodder ran out and grazing the heaths was a vital stopgap until spring. Long thin parishes show the historic apportionment of downs, river pasture and heathland for each village. Grazing and harvesting materials kept the heaths open, providing diverse habitats for wildlife and plants.



! HELPFUL HINT

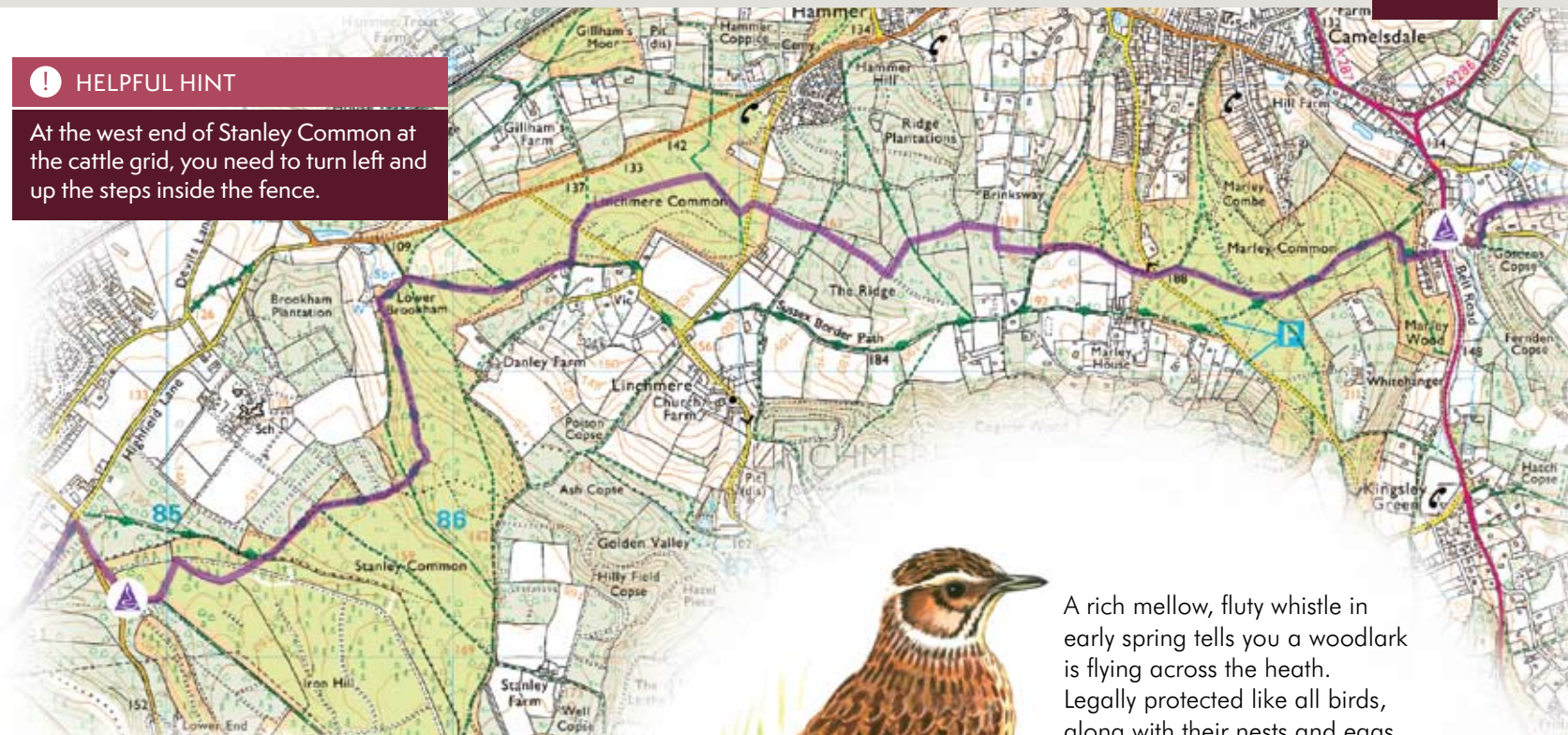
At the west end of Stanley Common at the cattle grid, you need to turn left and up the steps inside the fence.

Without traditional management since WWII, Lynchmere and Stanley Commons became covered in trees and scrub and lost their heathland wildlife. In 1998, The Lynchmere Society bought the common and with Heritage Lottery Funding, began to restore the heath. Cattle returned to the commons in 2005.



Belted Galloway Cattle. © Mark Monk-Terry, Sussex Wildlife Trust

Birch has 50 different uses including soap, horse jumps and preserving fishing nets. Birch cut for conservation mainly goes for firewood or paper. Low, scattered birch scrub is an important home for invertebrates, but if allowed to mature it shades out the low-growing plants and diverse animal life. Individual trees are often associated with nightjar nesting and give song posts to tree pipits that “shuttlecock” off the top.



A rich mellow, fluty whistle in early spring tells you a woodlark is flying across the heath. Legally protected like all birds, woodlarks have nevertheless been a conservation concern for many years. Sussex Ornithological Society volunteers monitor the breeding populations of key birds including woodlark, nightjar and Dartford warblers so conservationists know if they are managing the heaths properly.

The poplar beetle links a complicated web of life. Its larvae feed on young aspen shoots and creeping willow leaves. A potter wasp preys on the beetle larvae as food on which it lays its eggs. A second cuckoo wasp then sneaks in its own eggs, its larvae feeding on both the poplar beetle larvae and the potter wasp eggs.



Poplar beetle © SDNPA



The Roman road from Chichester to Silchester runs across Fitzhall Heath, Iping Common, over the River Rother and north-westwards through Chapel Common and Weavers Down to the Hampshire border. Traces of the posting station where messengers changed horses can be seen near Milland.

If you look carefully among the grasses on Chapel Common, you can see orchids in the spring and summer. Southern marsh orchids grow on damp acid soils along with heath spotted orchids. The latter are very similar to common spotted orchids, but that species tends to avoid acidic soils. The two species hybridise readily, which confuses even the experts, though you don't need expertise to enjoy their beauty.



The skylark's high warbling song is a sure sign of summer. They fly so high they become virtually invisible. Like many birds of open landscapes, they nest on the ground and are easily disturbed by careless people or poorly controlled dogs. Please keep your dogs under close control when walking in the countryside, especially when on heathland sites where rare birds struggle to survive.



Scots pine dominated the wildwood 9,000 years ago but then a wetter, warmer climate favoured broadleaf trees and few pines remained in the south by the time people crossed from Europe. Plantations since the 18th century have made pine a dominant feature on sandy soils. The timber is lightweight and easy to work and the resin is harvested to produce turpentine and rosin for violin bows. Medicinally, the vapour from boiling fresh shoots was said to relieve bronchial congestion and the new needles make a refreshing tea.



Scots pine trees © SDNPA



Adder © Bruce Middleton

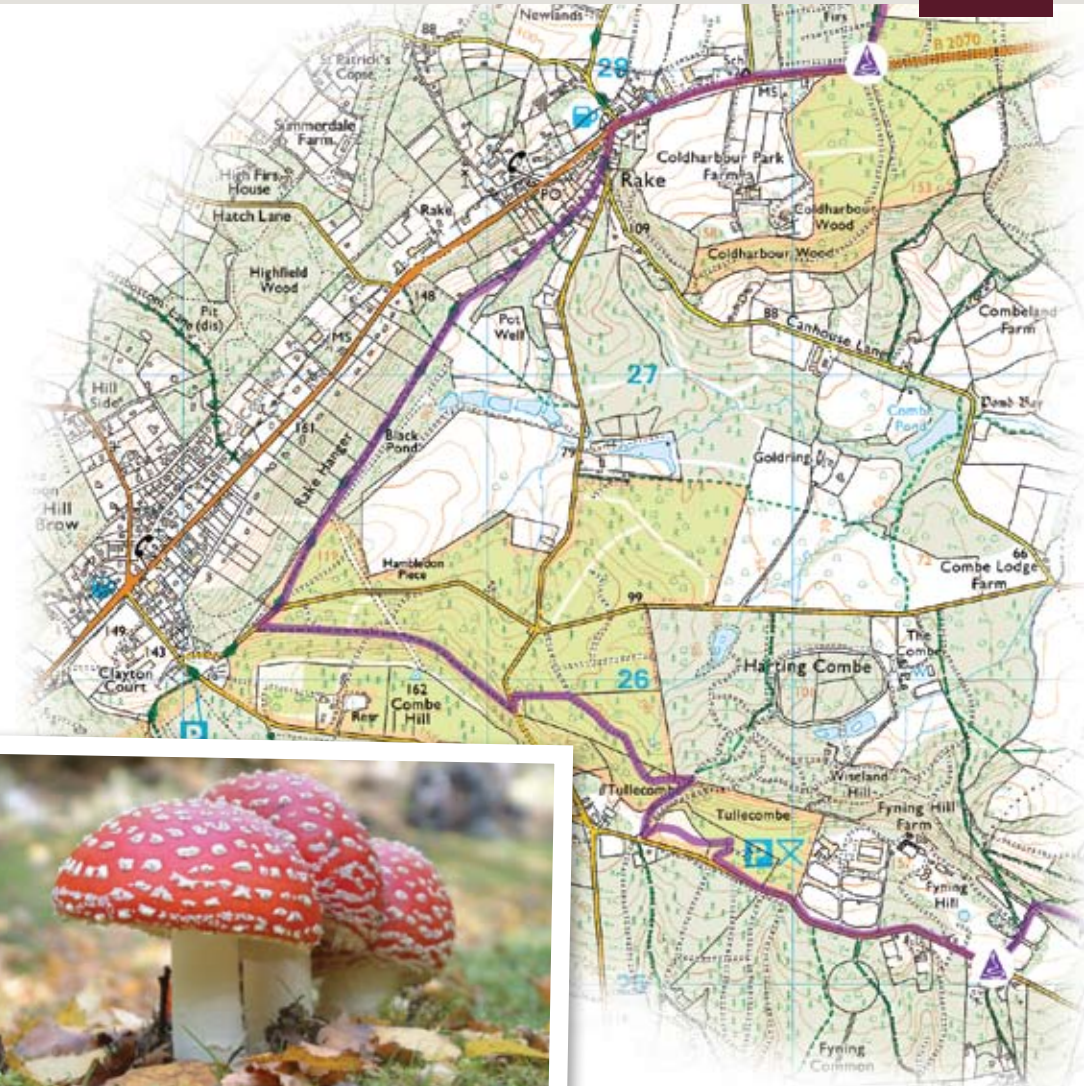
Adders get a bad press but rarely trouble people unless being handled, which is unwise. Adders are sensitive to vibration and hide quickly from approaching footfalls, unless the snakes are cold and therefore slow. This makes mornings in early spring the best time to see these beautiful animals. You may be lucky enough to see a group basking together in the sunshine, newly emerged from hibernation.

An amazing range of fungi can be seen on the Trail from edible penny buns and parasols to toxic fly agaric and poisonous sulphur tuft! They add a breath-taking range of colours in

autumn from oranges through reds and browns to lilac, pink and slimy greens! Keen-eyed walkers will see fairy rings, but the fairies won't show unless you've stopped at a hostelry on route...

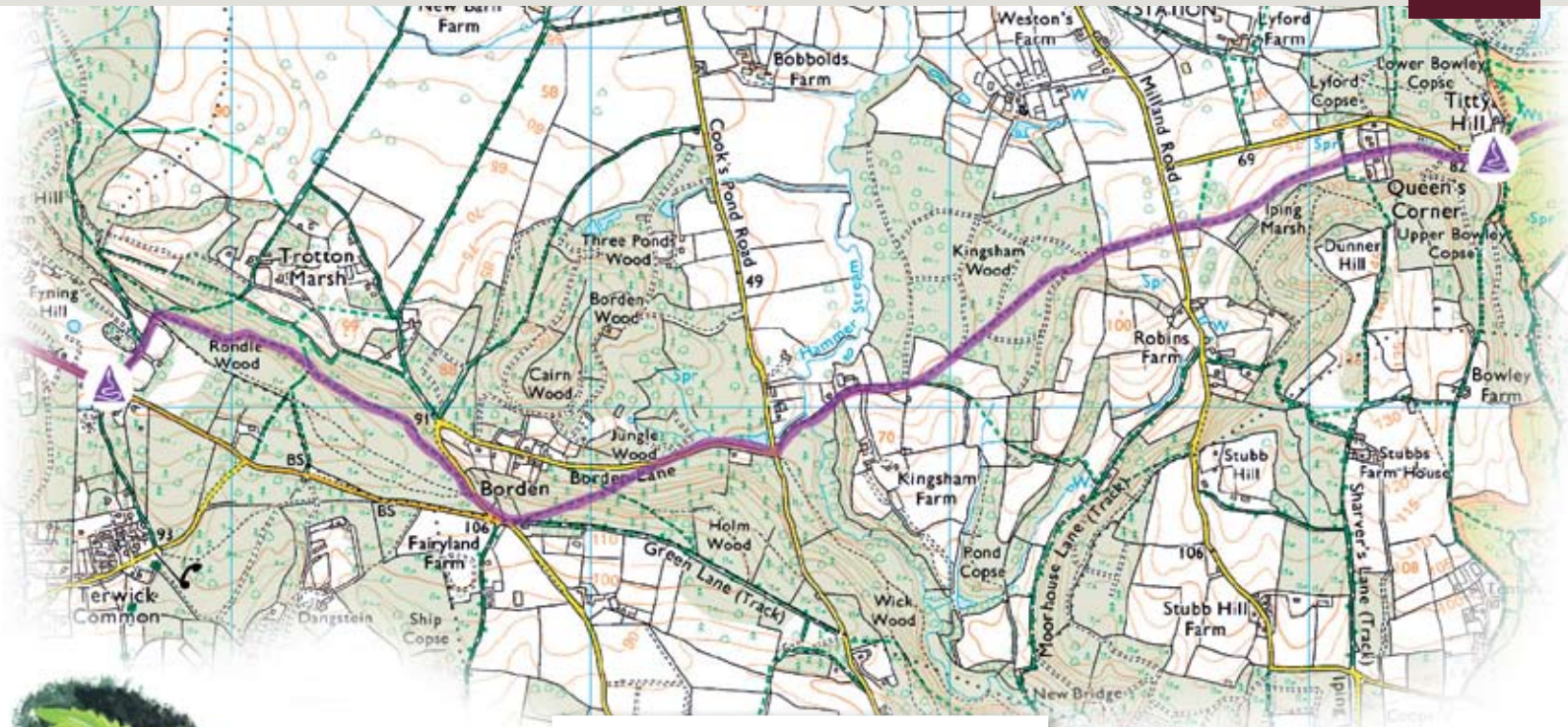


Fly agaric © Bruce Middleton



The graveyard is all that remains of the Church of the Good Shepherd at Iping Marsh since the building was demolished in 1982. Volunteers rebuilt the perimeter stone wall using traditional methods to retain the benefits for wildlife. Churchyards are important for wildlife as 'habitat islands' protected from outside influences. As the countryside becomes fragmented by roads, agriculture and development, churchyards become more important still. Even the walls provide a habitat for reptiles with adders and slow worms in the cracks and niches.

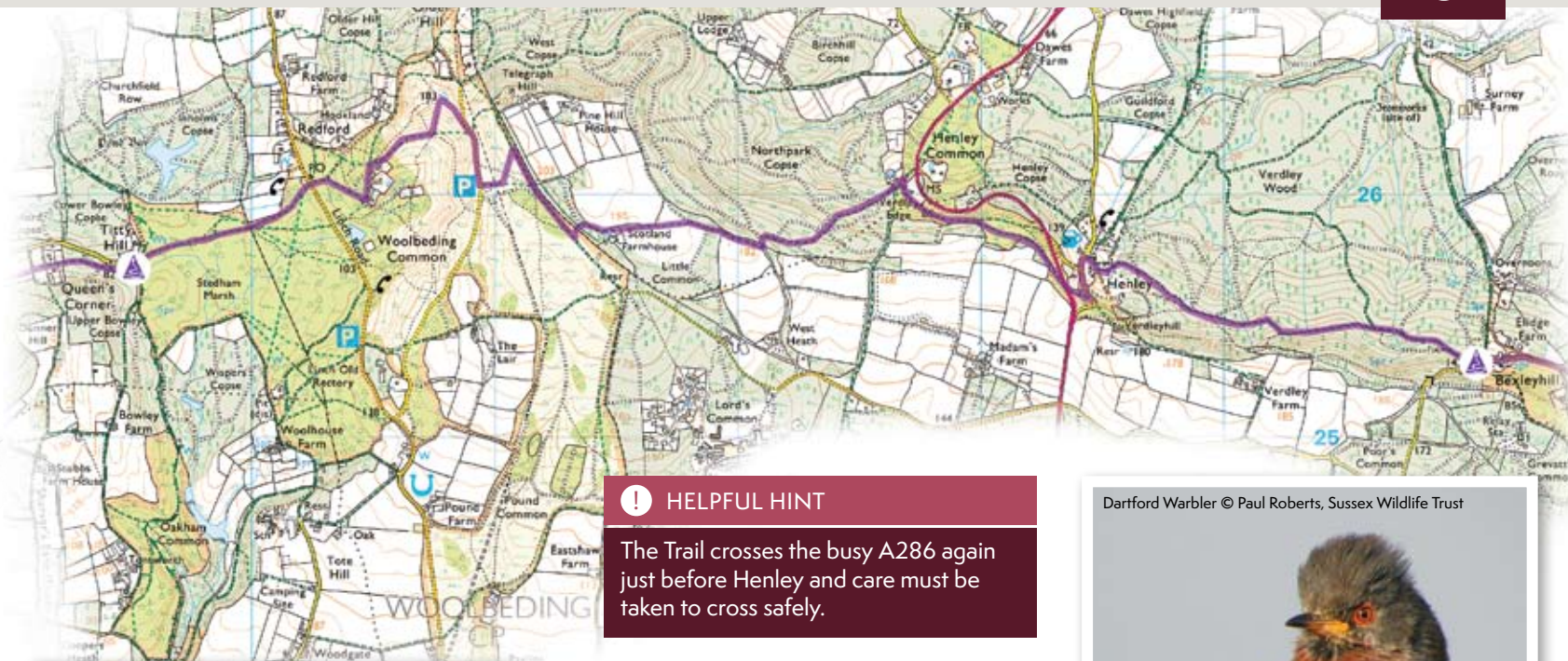
The rowan is instantly recognisable from late summer by its bright red berries, its graceful beauty and manageable size making it a popular urban tree. Rowan has a relationship with man dating from Celtic times when it was considered sacred and was believed to have protective powers against witchcraft. This might explain why you can find them planted in graveyards. On Midsummer night, doors, windows, chimneys and wells were dressed with rowan to ward off evil. It was also planted around old field boundaries to protect livestock and crops.



Bog bush-cricket © SDNPA

Wet heath is a favourite haunt of the bog bush-cricket, which has characteristic long antennae that distinguish crickets from grasshoppers. In favoured spots many males can be heard chirping in the summer. A similar species, Roesel's bush cricket has recently colonised some drier sites.

On Halloween, children (and some adults) look out for witches on broomsticks. Besom brooms are made from birch handles with either birch twigs or long heather stems for the brush. The people on the heaths were literally “heathens” and socially undesirable so it was no great leap of imagination to put witches on brooms. Rural craftspeople took many resources from heathland commons because the poor people traditionally had commoner’s rights over this land.



! **HELPFUL HINT**

The Trail crosses the busy A286 again just before Henley and care must be taken to cross safely.

Dartford Warbler © Paul Roberts, Sussex Wildlife Trust



Spiky gorse, furze or whin is recognisable by its yellow coconut scented flowers and noisy bursting seedpods. A resilient plant, it survives drought, frost and fire and thrives on acid sandy heaths. Its thorns shelter rare birds like stonechats and Dartford warblers. At least one species of gorse is in flower year round, so the famous saying goes... “When gorse is out of flower, kissing is out of season!” Gorse was once so important as fuel for getting baker’s ovens going in the morning that harvesting it was a full-time job.



Gorse © Bruce Middleton

Dartford warblers are year round residents of our heaths. They became scarce by the 1960s following harsh winters and the decline and fragmentation of heathland. Their range shrank to the southern edge of the UK and they were no longer found in Dartford. Numbers have since recovered and you may spot them on several sites along the Trail, including Iping and Ambersham Commons. Easier to hear than to see, they flit about the heather and gorse bushes. The song is a scratchy, grating sound over a musical chatter.

The greensand hills are crisscrossed with old drovers' lanes where sheep and cattle were moved between the chalk downs, river valley meadows and open heaths, all parts of the traditional grazing cycle. With the passing of time and many feet, the lanes are now often worn down several metres below the surrounding fields. Sunken lanes are a wildlife haven with sandstone cliffs, damp nooks and over grown hedges, where ferns, mosses and woodland plants can thrive.



We now know that the nightjar migrates to Africa for the winter and has a diet consisting mainly of moths. Because of its activity at dusk, our forebears assumed it was an owl and gave it various names such as the fern owl, churn owl and goat owl. The Latin name is *caprimulgus*, literally meaning "goat sucker" – nightjars were believed to drain goats of their milk, in part due to their large gape but also because their churring call sounds a bit like a kid suckling. You are likely to hear or see nightjars between April and September.

The Weald was once a thriving centre of iron and glass making industries. Iron smelting used coppice woodland charcoal and glass making used potash to lower the melting point of the sand used. The sand came from the hills around here but an unlikely industrial component was the bracken from the heaths which, when dried and burnt, was an essential source of potash. There were many other uses for fern and bracken including pig food, and its still good for swishing the flies away on hot summer days.



© SDNPA/Mischa Haller

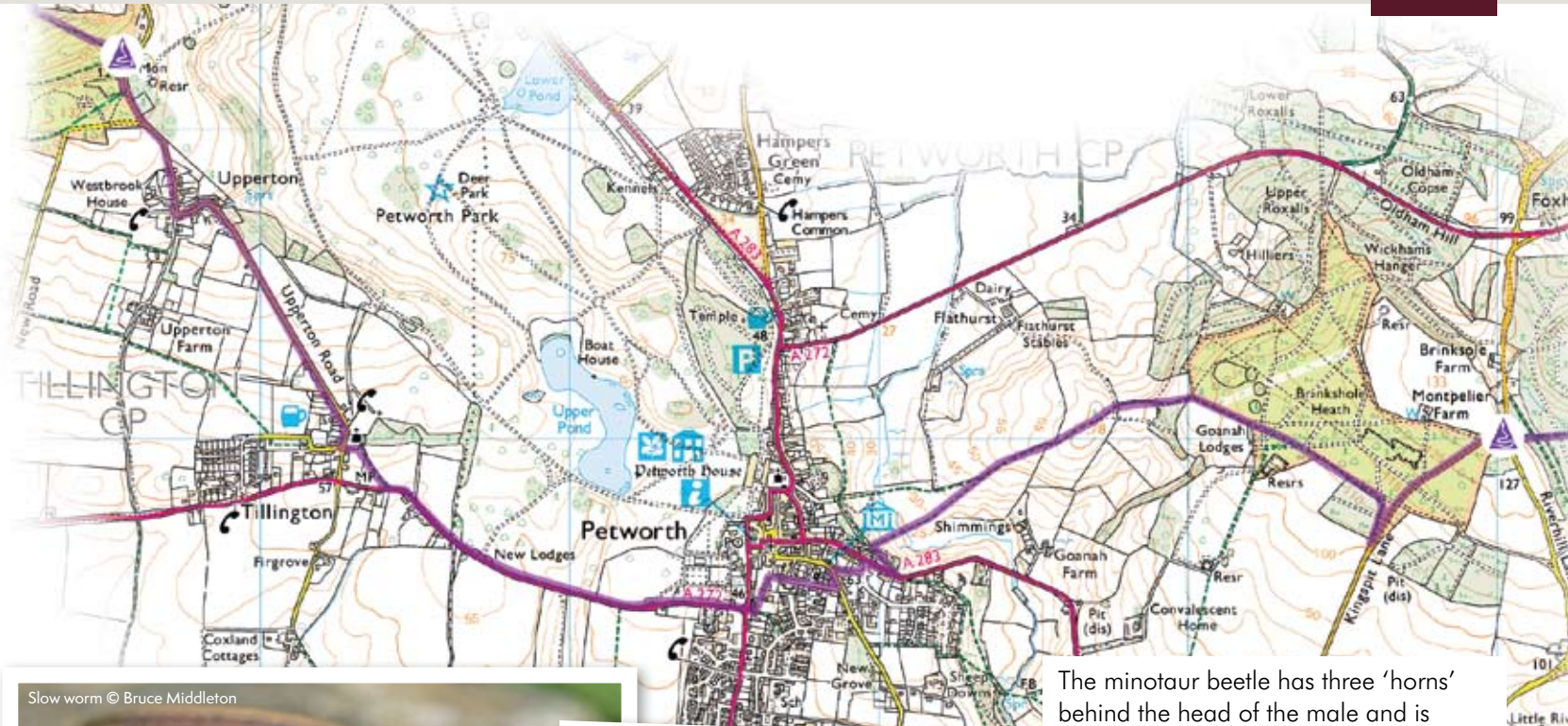
The Trail leaves Upperton Common to follow the wall round Petworth Park, a famous “Capability” Brown landscape, given to the National Trust in 1947 by Lord Leconfield. An alternative route through the park enters at the Upperton gate (left and down some steps by a garage as you leave the village) and rejoins the Trail in Petworth centre. Allow time to cross the Park before the gates are locked at dusk or you will be there until 8am the next morning!

Slow worms are well named in the spring when these reptiles are sluggish after hibernation. Luckily they only hunt slugs! They are a legless lizard and, like all lizards, have a defence mechanism – when caught they can shed their tails. The shed tail wriggles and confuses the predator allowing time for the slow worm to slink off. The tail re-grows but you often see them with stumpy replacements so its best to leave them alone – it takes many slugs to re-grow a new tail!

! HELPFUL HINT

On crossing the roundabout at Petworth, follow the Trail between the antique shop and the garage forecourt.

As the Trail bears right at Kingspit Lane you encounter the main road and turn sharp left back up the road, not through the gate.



Slow worm © Bruce Middleton



Minotaur beetle © SDNPA

The minotaur beetle has three ‘horns’ behind the head of the male and is named after the legendary Greek half-man, half-bull. The beetle has Hercules’ strength too, able to roll balls of dung 50 times its own weight over long distances! Its home is a 1 cm wide and up to one metre deep hole in the ground. Larvae hatch in the burrow and the minotaur gathers dung (such as rabbit droppings) for the larvae to feed on.

Chestnut coppice often covers the slopes of greensand hills. When cut low to the ground, young broadleaf trees shoot prolifically to give a renewable timber resource. Coppice workers use this material to make useful things from fence-posts to the charcoal that fuelled the Wealden iron industry, as well as clogs (birch), hurdles (hazel) and walking sticks (chestnut and holly). Well-managed coppice like that at Flexham Park is great for wildlife, offering different homes as it grows taller but always having a mix of newly cut stands or coups.

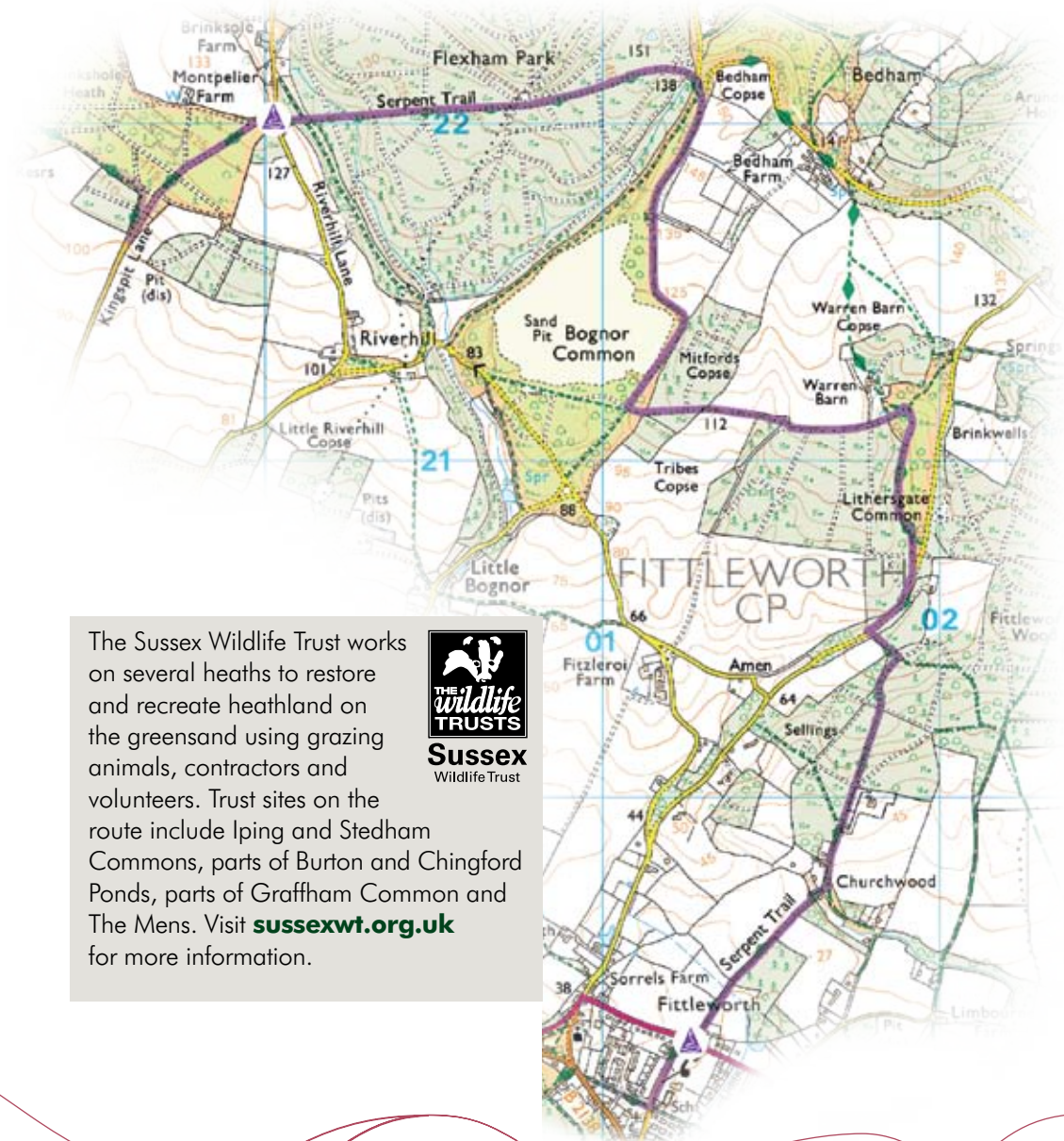


Lousewort was once much-maligned and blamed for infesting sheep and cattle with lice. This belief may arise from the fact that sheep grazing the damp pastures and wet heath where it grows can eat tiny snails on the plants which carry the liver fluke. A sheep with 'gut-rot' is then susceptible to lice.



Evidence now suggests that lousewort actually repels insects. Lousewort is a 'semi-parasite', attaching itself to the roots of grasses and 'borrowing' their water and minerals.

Bilberry (whortleberry) is our native version of the blueberry. It is delicious and made a welcome summer addition to the diet of our forebears who shipped cartloads to London. In Siberia, the Evenk people scoop the bushes efficiently with a basket, a technique that might have been used here. Look out for the berries along sunny woodland edges round our heaths. Your blue stained mouth and fingers show what a good dye they make!



The Sussex Wildlife Trust works on several heaths to restore and recreate heathland on the greensand using grazing animals, contractors and volunteers. Trust sites on the route include Iping and Stedham Commons, parts of Burton and Chingford Ponds, parts of Graffham Common and The Mens. Visit sussexwt.org.uk for more information.



HESWORTH COMMON AND LORD'S PIECE 6.3km 3.9 miles

Like most beetles the green tiger beetle has hard, toughened wing cases known as Elytra, covering its abdomen and meeting neatly in the middle. Bright green with cream spots, they are highly visible and can frequently be seen sunning themselves on heathland. They move quickly, running or flying if disturbed and have fierce jaws and an aggressive, predator lifestyle. The larvae are predators too, lying in wait for prey concealed in a vertical sandy burrow with only their jaws protruding.



Green tiger beetle © SDNPA

Bog asphodel is rare in Sussex due to wet heath and bogs drying up and becoming dominated by scrub and purple moor grass. It grows at Hesworth Common and can be recognised by its spike of bright yellow star-like flowers. It was used in the 16th Century as a yellow hair dye and called 'Maiden Hair'. Once thought to cause brittle bones in grazing stock its Latin name *ossifragum* means 'bone-breaker', but this is really due to low calcium levels in the acid soils where it grows.

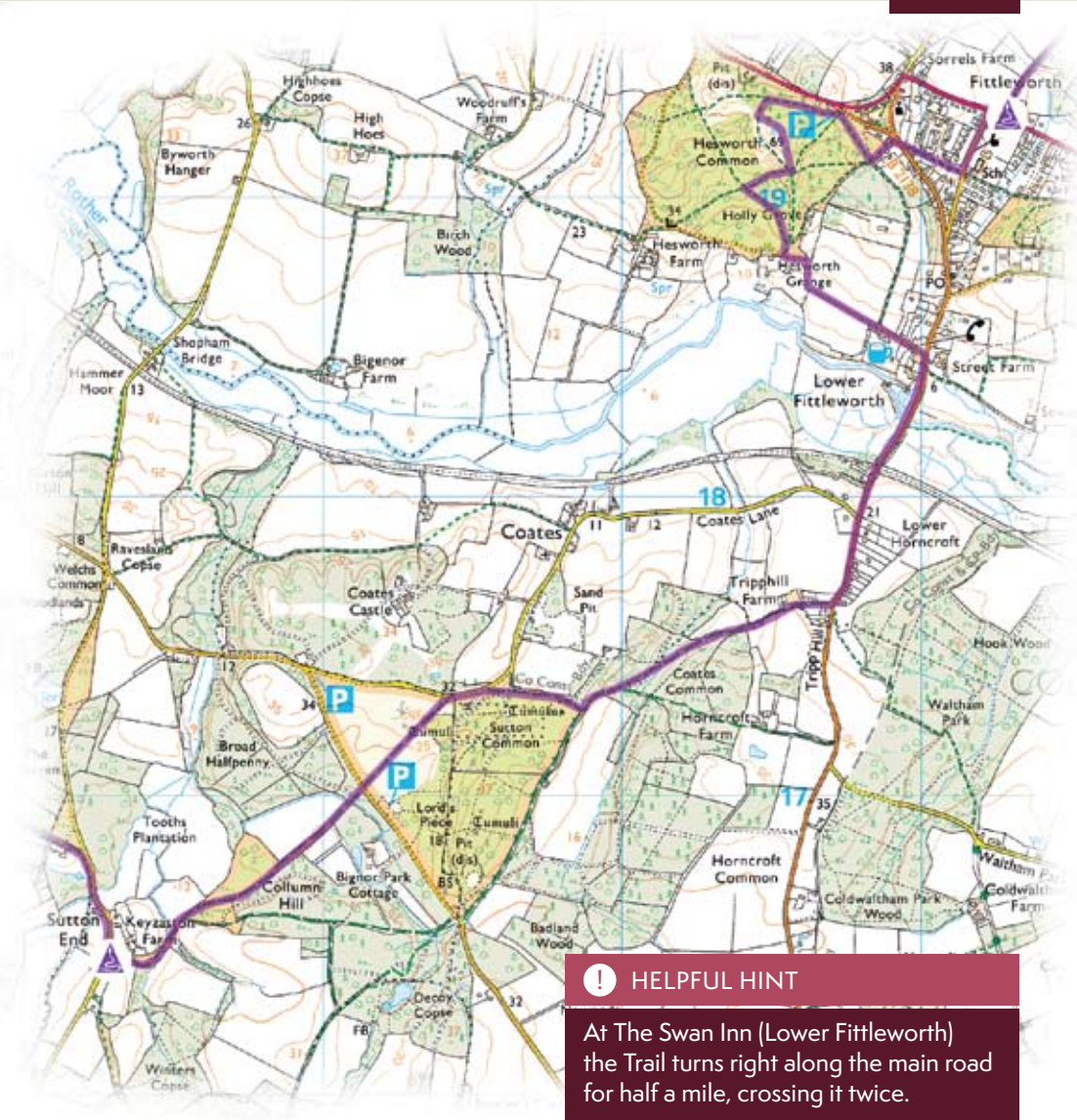
Lord's Piece is an important place for a very rare species, the field cricket. Ecologists only recently realised that there were less than 100 left in the UK. Captive breeding at London Zoo and a careful re-introduction programme is slowly turning the tide. Careful management of the site includes appropriate grazing. On a warm, early summer evening you can hear the field crickets chirruping song. You can also hear them on Iping Common where they were re-introduced in 2007.



Bog asphodel © Neil Fletcher, Sussex Wildlife Trust



Field cricket © SDNPA



! HELPFUL HINT

At The Swan Inn (Lower Fittleworth) the Trail turns right along the main road for half a mile, crossing it twice.

If you're lucky, you can spot up to 24 species of dragonfly at Burton and Chingford Ponds Local Nature Reserve, including the emperor dragonfly and the scarce hairy dragonfly. The reserve contains two large ponds where bats, wildfowl and water lilies can be seen. The surrounding habitats include bogs, mixed woodland, dry and wet heath and wet alder carr woodland and is well worth a separate visit.



Dragonfly © SDNPA

The soft green cushions of sphagnum moss are a sign you are about to get wet feet! Among the first plants to colonise Britain, we have thirty kinds in colours from golden-yellow to rusty-red. A ready-made dressing, it is sterile, anti-microbial, soft and highly absorbent, able to soak up 16 times its own weight in water! Used since the Stone Age, it is still used as a surgical dressing in Germany. It was also used as nappy liner in Britain until the 1950s.



Hobby © SDNPA

Although rare in the 1950s with under 90 UK pairs, the hobby has dramatically expanded in range and population and now Sussex boasts over 150 pairs. They return to breed in April from African woods and wetlands, staying six weeks longer than in the '60s. This echoes migration of their main prey, swifts, swallows and martins, which stay into October. Hobbies also eat dragonflies on the wing, the original fast food!

The delicate pink cyclamen-shaped flowers of the cranberry are a rare sight in South East England. Only the wettest pockets of bog can support these low-growing shrubs with their tiny red

berries. Their culinary use is well known and even Queen Victoria had cranberry tarts when staying at Balmoral. Its affinity with damp ground echoes in its common names – marsh-whort, fen-berry and moss-berry. The cranberry flowers between June to August and fruits during September and October.



Cranberry © SDNPA



The stonechat is named after its call, a sharp noise like two flints being struck together. The robin-sized males also have distinctive orange-red breasts and a striking black head. They nest on or just above the ground in scrub or gorse, making them vulnerable to disturbance by walkers and dogs. A year round UK resident, they feed on invertebrates, seeds and fruit, and can often be seen calling or singing from the top of gorse bushes.

Stonechat © Ben Hall (rspb-images.com)



Winter visitors also come to our heaths. For example, hen harriers can be seen flying low, intently scanning for small rodents, almost unaware of the quiet watcher. An experience well worth a cold nose and ears.



Sand lizard © Hugh Clark/Sussex Wildlife Trust

In the spring the bright green mating plumage of male sand lizards advertises their health and vitality to the choosy females. However, they are still well camouflaged until they move.

Gallows Hill has a gory past as the site where felons were executed on the gallows of the Liberty of Lodsworth. Further back, 3–4,000 years ago, the Bronze Age burial mounds were visible for miles in the open heathy landscape. Maybe mediaeval people were suspicious of the mounds and so chose them as a place for the gallows.

“Gallows bird” was an old Sussex name for the green woodpecker as it was rumoured to frequent these spots to feed on maggots from the rotting corpses.



Where the route crosses Bepton Road onto Midhurst Common, it is worth a brief detour in July to see the yellow loosestrife flowering in the wet verge 100m to the west. Used by Alexander the Great's general, King Lysimachos of Thrace, the plant was used to pacify a bull and named *Lysimachia vulgaris* in his honour.



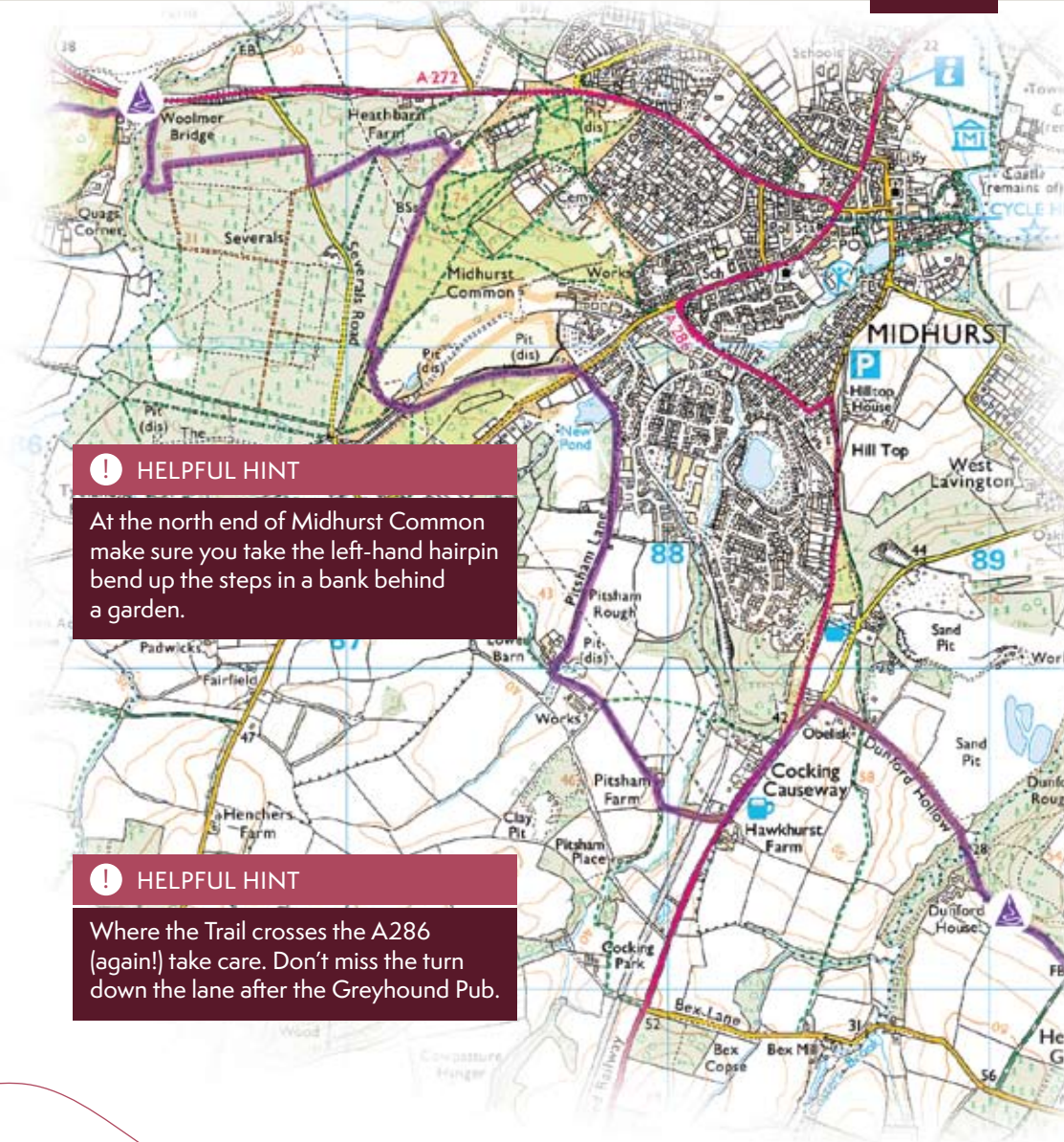
Sundew © SDNPA

Round and oblong-leaved sundews are found on damp heaths and bogs. The dew on their leaves is sticky and contains glues and enzymes which trap and digest insects. Our ancestors thought that because the dew lived on after the sun had risen, the plant had alchemical properties and held the "elixir of life". Extracts were used in herbal remedies for chest complaints including whooping cough and asthma. It was also used to kill streptococcus, which causes pneumonia and fevers.



Roe deer © Elliott Neep, neepimages.com, Sussex Wildlife Trust

Our smallest native deer, the roe, thrives in the mixed landscape of the greensand. The bucks sport short, three tined antlers from early to late summer when they rut. A rich rusty coat and a round biscuit coloured bottom may be all you see as they bound across the heather. They are browsers and eat herbs, brambles, ivy, heather, bilberry and pine seedlings. Over-hunted to near extinction by 1800, they are now abundant following re-introductions from the remaining northern populations. If alarmed, they give a short repeated bark.



! **HELPFUL HINT**

At the north end of Midhurst Common make sure you take the left-hand hairpin bend up the steps in a bank behind a garden.

! **HELPFUL HINT**

Where the Trail crosses the A286 (again!) take care. Don't miss the turn down the lane after the Greyhound Pub.

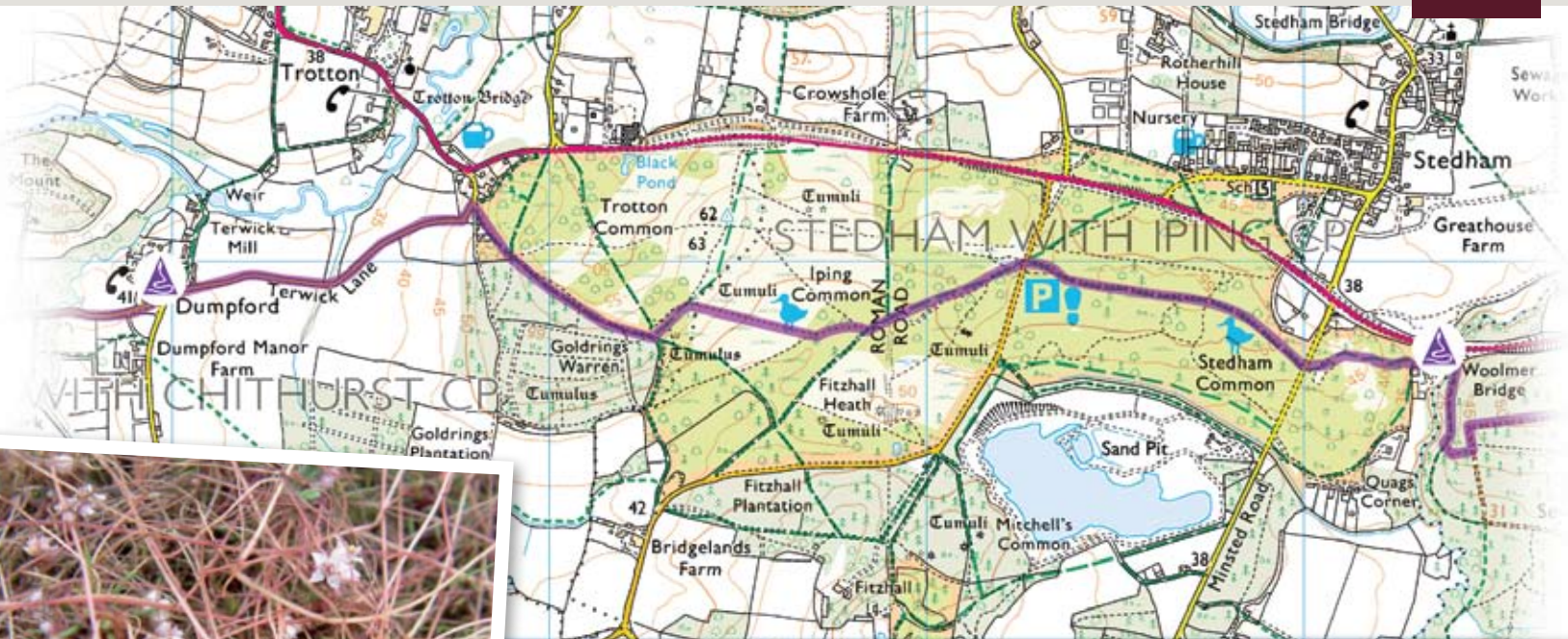
The genteel public face of butterflies hides a devious nature. The silver-studded blue caterpillar feeds on young shoots of bell heath, protected from predators like sand wasps by black ants. The ants even ferry it into their nest to pupate, but why? The grubs secrete sweet honeydew which the ants "milk" as payment. The adult butterfly emerges from the cocoon safe in the nest and crawls into the light to let its wings unfurl, protected until it is able to fly off and start the sneaky business all over again. You are likely to see this butterfly between June and July.



Dodder © SDNPA

Tangled, pink spider webs sprawling over the heather in early summer are the first sign of dodder. This parasitic climber grows from seed annually and quickly attaches sucker roots into heather, gorse and clover stems from which it obtains water and food. A lack of green

chlorophyll pigment prevents photosynthesis and accounts for its bright colour. The "treacherous embraces" it inflicts can kill the host and make it unpopular in arable land, giving it names like hellbind, strangleweed and devil's guts.



! HELPFUL HINT

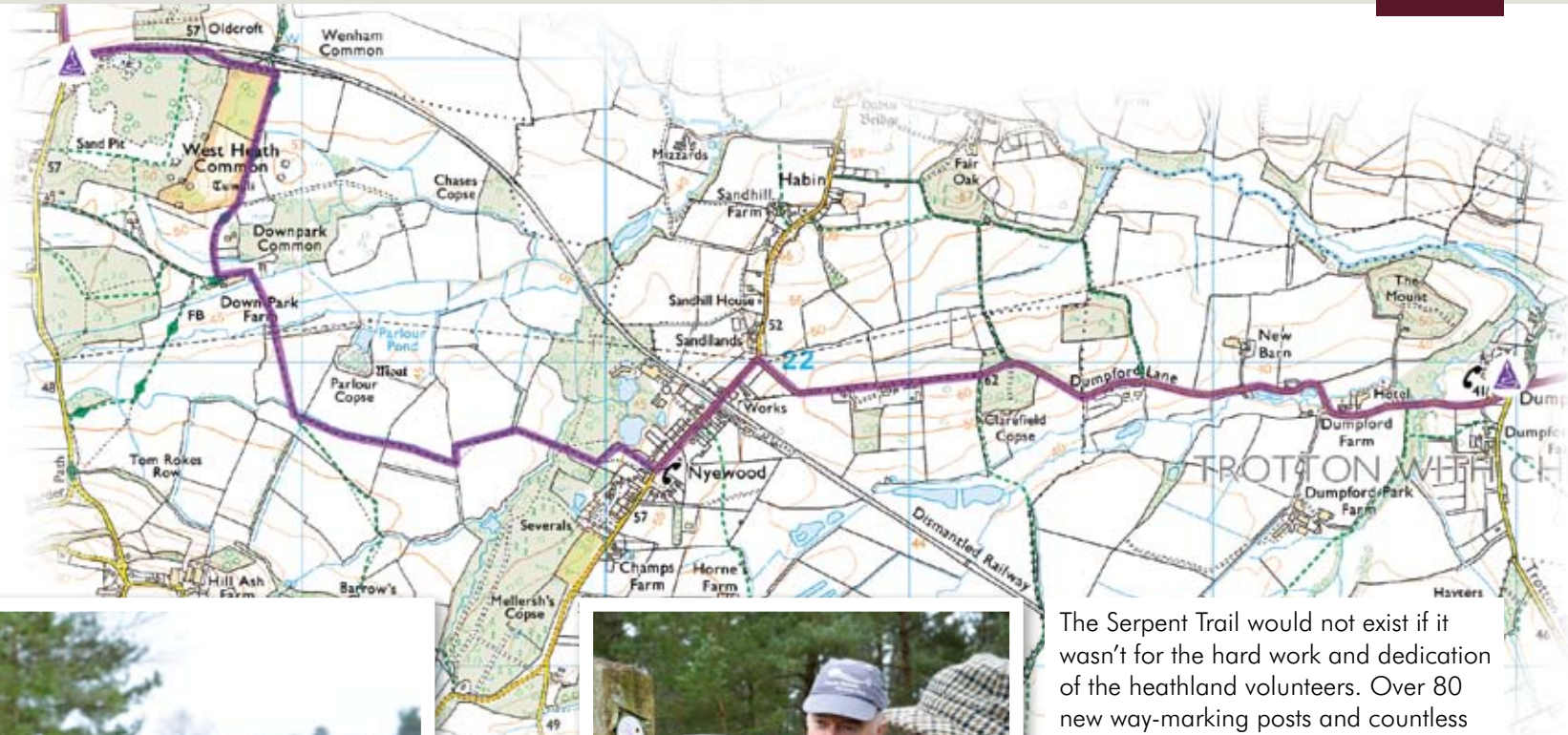
Take care when leaving Trotton Common as the Trail follows a narrow lane for two miles.

The Bronze Age burial mounds on many of our heaths illustrate the spiritual role they played for thousands of years. The importance of open country continues today as many of us take to the hills to think and breathe. This was enshrined in law with the creation of Open Access areas under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act.



Burial mound © SDNPA

Today the buzzard population is increasing in Sussex, but this was not always the case. Persecution of raptors and myxomatosis wiping out their main prey item, the rabbit, in the 1950s saw this bird disappear from the county. As carrion eaters, buzzards are vulnerable to pesticide contamination which can impact on their reproduction. Since the banning of organo-phosphates in the 1970s and the recovery of the rabbit population, the buzzard has seen a steady increase in numbers and their mewing cries can be heard as they soar on warm air currents.



© Anne Purkiss



© Anne Purkiss

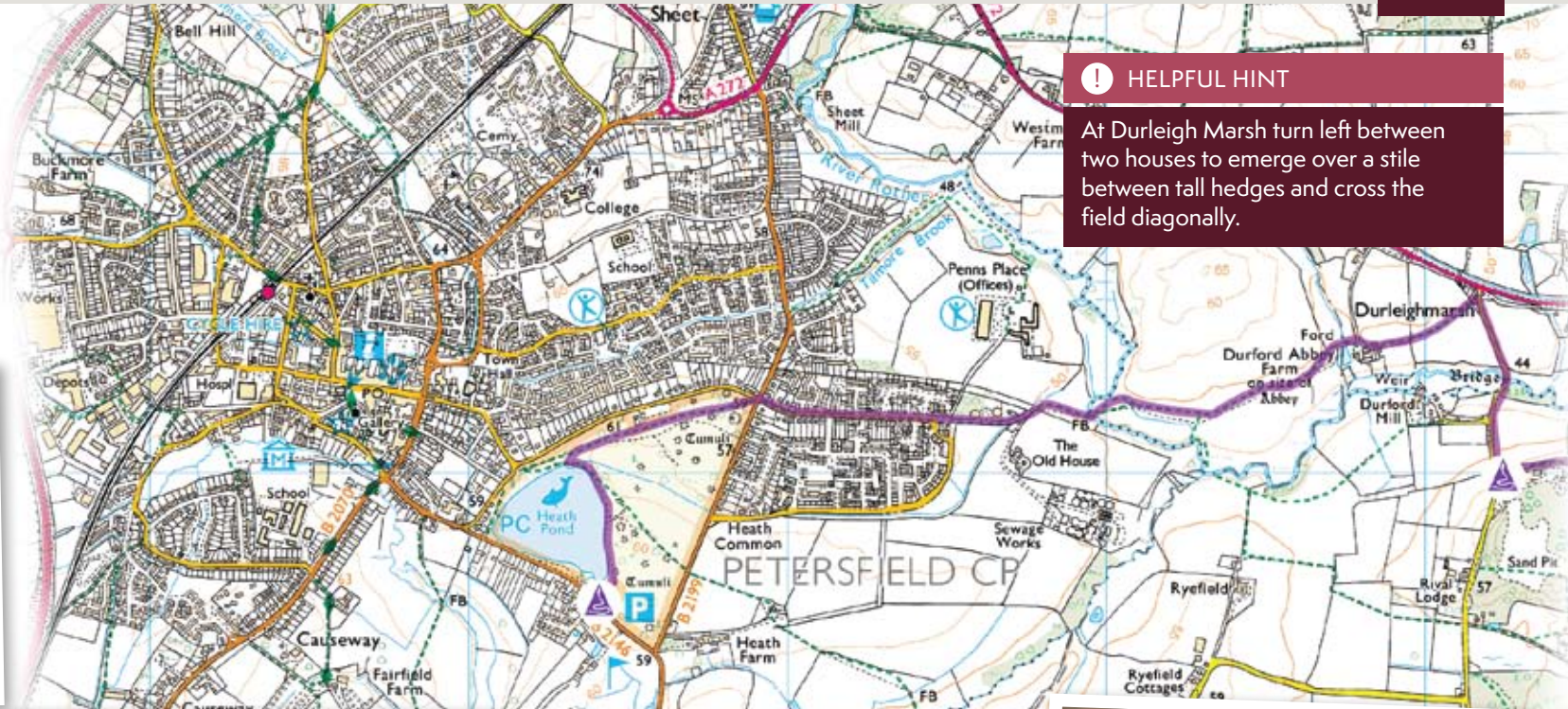
The Serpent Trail would not exist if it wasn't for the hard work and dedication of the heathland volunteers. Over 80 new way-marking posts and countless discs went up across the 64 miles, leaving behind a lasting reminder of their achievement.

If you're interested in helping to make a difference on these heathlands why not become a volunteer. Visit southdowns.gov.uk to find out what volunteering opportunities are available.

Petersfield's quiet exterior belies a feisty spirit. For five years after the heath was enclosed in 1867, the townsfolk burnt the fences they thought were built to keep them out! Luckily the Council bought the land in 1913 and it has since been used for quiet leisure activities. Wildlife has been co-existing with man here for at least 4,000 years as there are 21 Bronze Age barrow mounds in the grassland, wood and heath.



Petersfield Heath © Anne Purkiss



! HELPFUL HINT

At Durlough Marsh turn left between two houses to emerge over a stile between tall hedges and cross the field diagonally.

You may see the female sand wasp dragging an immobilised caterpillar several times her size across the heath. This is typical behaviour for this distinctive solitary wasp! She needs sandy areas to dig a burrow where she stores the caterpillar as live food for her young. Sand wasps grow up to 24mm with a distinctive narrow 'waist' and red and black abdomen.



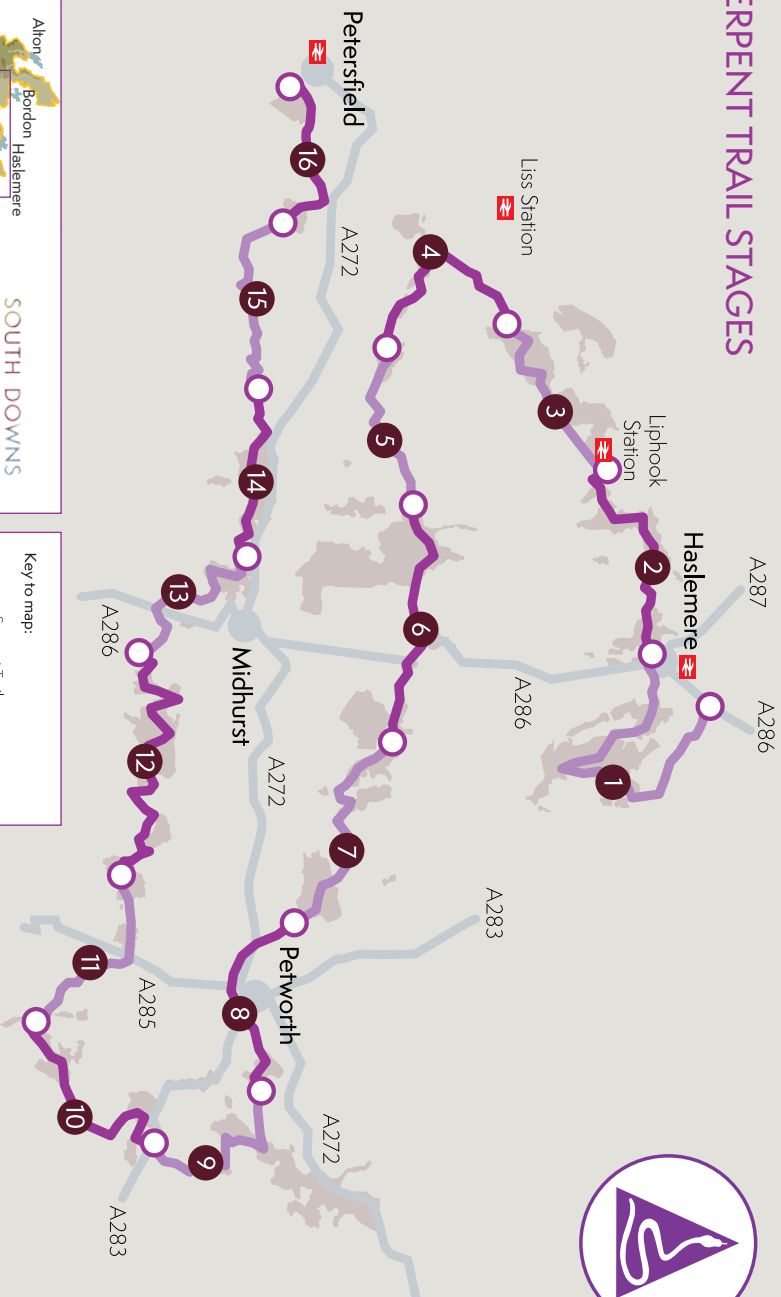
Sand wasp © SDNPA

Bloodroot, thormantle or shepherd's knapperty, whichever name you choose, tormentil is a useful plant. A safe, powerful, aromatic astringent, its tonic properties give it the name 'English sarsaparilla'. It has been used to treat gingivitis, haemorrhoids, acne and even plague! "This tormentil, whose virtue is to part. All deadly killing poison from the heart." – John Fletcher 17th Century dramatist.



Bloodroot © SDNPA

THE SERPENT TRAIL STAGES



Key to map:

- Serpent Trail
- Serpent Trail stage start/finish
- Stage number
- Railway Line/Station
- 'A' road
- Heathland

