



Self Guided History Walk 4

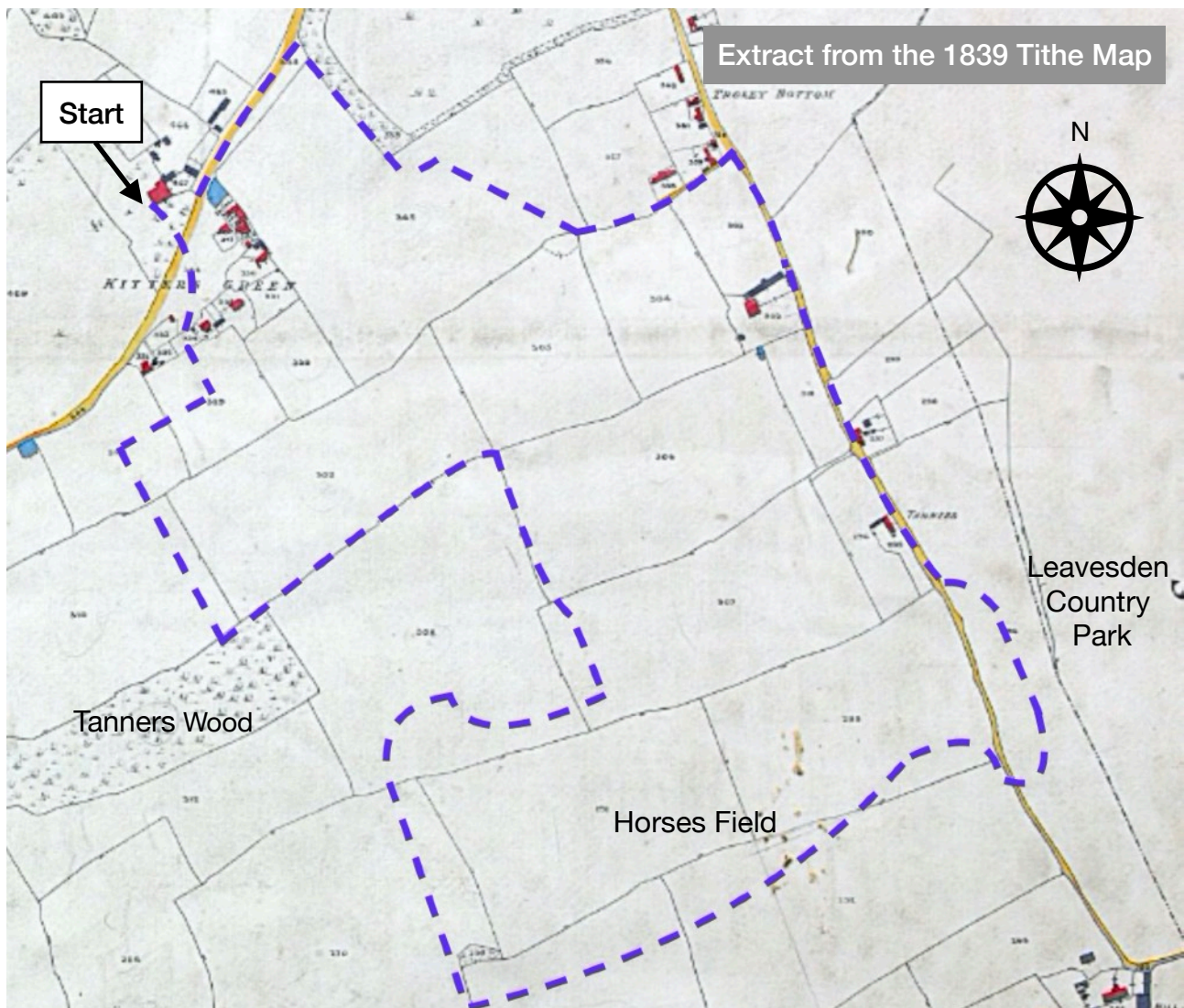
Ancient Fields and Hedgerows

A gentle walk of 2.33 miles over the fields and along the hedgerows of the Tithe Map published in 1839

Introduction

The Tithe Map of 1839 can be viewed on this website by clicking the Projects tab and scrolling to The Tithe Map. Once there you will be able to view the Tithe Map and download the Award spreadsheet which describes the land and lists the occupiers and owners of the fields numbered on the map.

If the Tithe Map is viewed alongside modern day satellite images, or better still, if one is overlaid by the other, it is possible to identify hedgerows that have survived for at least 180 years, weaving between today's homes and gardens. This self guided walk follows a series of such hedgerows and fields on a circular tour from Kitters Green to Leavesden Country Park and back.



Kitters Green to Tanners Wood

The walk begins at the Community Centre in Manor House Grounds, WD5 0AP. In 1839, Kitters Green was a small hamlet and the Manor House was a 17th century three storey house set in parkland and gardens. An early incumbent was Francis Combe, a wealthy miller from Hemel Hempstead, who in 1641 bequeathed the Manor House and its estate of 142 acres to the university colleges Sidney Sussex Cambridge and Trinity College Oxford. During the early part of the



The Manor House

19th Century the house was let to various gentlemen of means who would have been regarded as Squires of Abbots Langley. During the second world war the building became neglected and it was demolished in 1953. Only the billiard room survives which is now the community police station.



The village pond and Pound Cottage

Cross Gallows Hill Lane and observe the village pond reinstated by the Parish Council in 1984 (further information can be found on page 7). Pound Cottage dates from the mid to late 17th century and in 1839 comprised three cottages. Servants and staff working at the Manor House once lived in the flint and brick terraced cottages on the left, and the red brick May's Cottage at the end was traditionally home to the head gardener. Behind pound Cottage is The Royal Oak which dates from 1827 when it was a cottage and a beer

house. To your right is Yew Cottage, a timber framed building which dates from the 17th century and behind it once stood the village laundry.

Now head past Yew Cottage into Garden Road which in 1839 was a meadow numbered 329 on the Tithe Map owned by Sarah Smith and occupied by Benjamin Toovey. At the end of Garden Road turn right into Breakspeare Road and then left into Popes Road. This would once have been located in the middle of field number 328 which was a meadow in



Yew Cottage

the same ownership. Now head along Popes Road to its junction with Greenways and Trowley Rise which was arable land known as Wood Field numbered 310 on the map, owned and occupied by Robert Hall Atkinson.

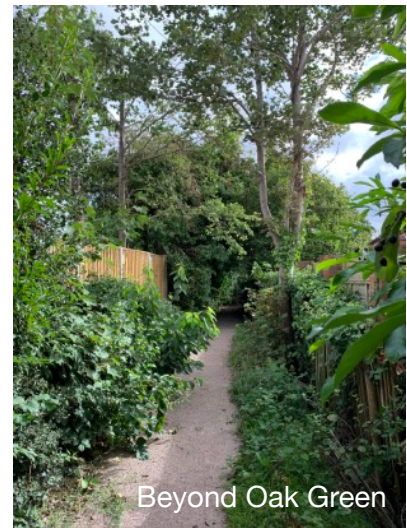


Tanners Wood to Oak Green

From Greenways, follow the wide footpath between the houses towards Tanners Wood and then turn left. You are now walking along an alley behind the gardens of Trowley Rise and the remnants of an ancient hedgerow are visible to your right. Cross over Oak Green and follow the hedgerow behind the houses until you reach the alleyway that crosses your path. Confusingly, this was once the corner of another

field also called Wood Field but on a different farm occupied by Benjamin Toovey. To your left would have been Pond Field (No. 309) once farmed by Robert Hall Atkinson, and straight ahead were two fields both known as Cross Path, which today are crossed by two paths, one linking Marlin Square to Keble Terrace and the other to Shirley Road.

You will have realised that the trees and hedges you have passed along the way are not part of the original hedgerow. Like the monarchy, individual specimens have withered and died. Occasionally, like King Charles I, a tree may have had its crown removed and a lot more besides, but its progeny live on.



Oak Green to Furtherfield

The surviving remnants of the hedgerow have been scrappy so far, but turn right and you will pass a substantial line of trees including many ancient oaks. Continue across Wadham Road and follow the tree-line until you reach Keble Terrace where you should turn left and then immediately right into the drive between Sabine House and Burley House. Here you would once have encountered a field known as Bare Bones described as arable. This name implies that the land was unproductive. Turn right into De Havilland Way and observe the ancient hedgerow behind Sabine House. As you pass through the hedge line you will note that it has been grubbed out up to the boundary with what is now called Horses Field, an extension of Leavesden Country Park, but in the days of the Tithe Map, this was part of Hill Farm owned by

Elizabeth Sherwood. The hedgerow that has been followed so far bounded field number 308 which today is part of a modern housing estate comprising Oak Green, Furtherfield and De Havilland Way. In 1839 it was part of a farm occupied by Benjamin Toovey and owned by Trinity College Oxford, Sidney Sussex Cambridge and Thomas Greenhill. It was named Wood Field presumably because of its proximity to Tanners Wood. In the Tithe Award it was described as arable.



The remains of the hedgerow behind Sabine House

The rent charges for Benjamin Toovey's farm of 48 acres, 3 roods and 9 perches were £2 11s. 9d. payable to the vicar and £11 10s. 6d. payable to the impropiator who was Sarah Smith. In the Middle Ages, the greater part of tithes were reserved for monasteries, in this case St Albans Abbey, but following the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII between 1536 and 1541, the rights to collect these tithes were sold to laymen whose successors were known as lay impropiators.



Furtherfield

Furtherfield to Langley Lane

Follow De Havilland way into Furtherfield and turn left towards South Way. Furtherfield follows the route of another ancient hedgerow which is now bounded by an industrial estate on the right and Horses Field on the left. The Industrial estate occupies part of field 207 once known as Great Sandpits. Despite its name it is listed in the Tithe Award as arable land and was an extensive field of 18 acres. In the 20th century it became a municipal tip and sewage

treatment plant. When this was decommissioned the land was so contaminated that access has been denied to the public ever since.

On the left as you approach the gate into the Horses Field you pass by a dense thicket of trees and brambles which on the Tithe Map is listed as a spring. There are many springs depicted on the map, but the term did not have the same meaning then as it does today. In 1839 it was used to describe a copse or a small wood.



Gate into The Horses Field

Similarly, if you come across the name “Hanging Wood” on a map (e.g. on Millhouse Lane, Bedmond), this does not necessarily mean that villains were hanged from the trees, it simply describes a wood hanging over a road or track alongside.

Look over the gate into the Horses Field and the extensive land that you see once comprised four fields, all under cultivation. In 1839 the population of London was nearly two million or about one tenth the population of Britain and it was the largest and most powerful city in the world. The farmers of South Hertfordshire found a cheap source of



Wild flowers in The Horses Field

top-dressing, or manure which they used to fertilise their soil. Carts carried grain or fodder into London and returned with night soil (sewerage) and stable manure, but were also loaded with domestic refuse, rags, coal ash, chimney soot and industrial waste such as calcined bones, hair, soiled hooves, horn shavings, oyster shells and leather cuttings. People in the city were relieved to be rid of their London muck and farmers welcomed it. This obviated the need to keep livestock and enabled farmers to concentrate on grain production.

The Horses Field (known in 1839 as Upper Bennetts, Lower Bennetts, Barn Field and Pond Field) is now an extension of Leavesden Country Park and is managed with a light touch. During the spring and early summer it is a spectacle of meadow grasses and wild flowers.

Walk through the field towards the children’s play area and follow the path behind it towards the exit onto Langley Lane.

Langley Lane to Old Trowley

Cross the road by means of the pelican crossing and enter Leavesden Country Park. After about 25 metres branch left onto the grass path and follow the dense plantation on your left comprising a variety of trees including oak and field maple. These species would have been common varieties found in hedgerows, but the specimens here are of recent origin.



The Wooden Wonder, Leavesden Country Park

This field was once named Main Spring and was described as arable. As has already been mentioned, a spring once referred to a copse or wood, so this suggests that it was wooded before it was used for agriculture.

Pass the Wooden Wonder which is part of the Leavesden Country Park Heritage Trail and leave the park by means of the concrete steps on the left to rejoin Langley Lane. On the other side would have been Tanners described on the Tithe Award as a homestead with a meadow occupied by William Bunker. Turn right and cross the road at the bollards. Here there would have been three cottages occupied by Arthur Ellingham, William Brown and Timothy Kimpton. Continue past Shirley Road. On the left was a farm owned by Robert

Hall Atkinson which on later maps is named as Trowley House. This was built c1820 and was demolished in 1958 to make way for the houses in Follett Drive.



Kingsfield Cottages

A little further on there was a small hamlet called Trowley Bottom (sic) with a beer shop and garden, The Compasses and several cottages. Alongside The Compasses was then, as today, a cul-de-sac now named Old Trowley. Turn left along this alley to Kingsfield Cottages. In 1839 these were occupied by Samuel Knowles, George Crockett, William Parkins and Sammy Hill.

Beyond the Cottages was a meadow called King Field owned and occupied by Robert Hall Atkinson who, as has already been mentioned, lived in Trowley House. The land became Kingsfield Allotments in 1920 and was taken over by the Parish Council in 1958.

Old Trowley to Kitters Green

From Old Trowley, follow the alleyway past the allotments to Marlin Square and continue along Langley Road towards the High Street. All of this land was once called Marlin's Field (No. 345) which was owned by Sarah Smith and farmed by Benjamin Toovey. Sarah was a widow in 1839 and died in 1863. In 1867 her executors sold her estate to The British Land Company Ltd who laid down Breakspeare Road, Adrian Road and Garden Road and then sold parcels of land to local builders who constructed houses, many of which we see today. Langley Road and Marlin Square were added later.

As you reach the High Street, the land on your right was once an ornamental plantation within the grounds of Langley House. In 1839 this was owned by William Bagot and by 1906 it was in the ownership of Sir Robert Molesworth Kindersley (Lord Kindersley). Amongst other things he was Director of the Bank of England, Member of the Fishmonger's Company, Lieutenant of the City of London, Governor of the Hudson Bay Company, President of the National Savings Committee, High Sheriff of Essex and Officer of the Legion d'Honneur. In 1929 the house and grounds were purchased by the Salvation Fathers of Wealdstone and later became Breakspeare



Langley House c1950

College, a Roman Catholic Seminary. The house was eventually converted into apartments and the extensive grounds and the plantation were sold. They became The Crescent with new housing, a Catholic Church and a row of shops, from the Kings Head (now Pin Wei) to Abbots Supermarket in Langley Road. Also part of the same development were the semi-detached houses in Langley Road up to and including the 1st Abbots Langley Scout Hall and bowling green at the rear.



When you reach the High Street, turn left into the Millennium Garden. This was classified as Roads and Waste on the Tithe Award in no-one's ownership. On the opposite side of the road was Causeway House where Benjamin Toovey lived. This was demolished in 1957 and the land together with the adjacent meadow were redeveloped to become two blocks of flats named The Grange and Causeway House together with the parade of shops from Abbots Langley Pharmacy to Simmons Bakery.

The Village Pound is nowhere to be found on the Tithe Map in either Abbots Langley or Kitters Green, but it appears on the 1874 and 1898 editions of Ordnance Survey maps roughly in the location now occupied by the mosaic remembrance poppy in the apex of the Millennium Garden triangle. There is no way of telling whether this was the original pound or whether it was a replica and by 1905 it had been relocated to Kitters Green alongside Pound Cottage as can be clearly seen in photographs taken at the time.

Before fields were enclosed in the 18th century, animal pounds were used to impound stray livestock until claimed by their owners on payment of a fine or levy. If not claimed, the animals were sold to cover the cost of impounding. They are known to date from medieval times and by the 16th century most villages and townships would have had one. The person in charge of impounding was the Lord of the Manor and the animals were fed and watered by a pound keeper until they were claimed or sold.



Millennium Garden Remembrance Poppy

Continue along the High Street into Gallows Hill Lane to finish at the Community Centre.

References for this walk: [The Tithe Map and Award spreadsheet] [A Concise History of Abbots Langley by Clive Clark] [Abbots Langley, A Hertfordshire Village by Scott Hastie & David Spain] [Abstract of Title of The British Land Company Ltd dated 1867] [Monochrome photos are from the Parish Archive allhs.org.uk].