



# Lepe to Fawley Trail

A walk of wildlife and wartime



**3 miles circular or 8 miles total / 3.5 hours**

## Trail route summary

This trail has a central circular section with connective 'branches' to Langley, Blackfield, Fawley, Exbury and Lepe. Many of these routes (now Rights of Way) can be seen on maps dating from the mid to late 1700s.

P Parking



## Trail Stats:

<b>Trail length</b>	3 miles (5km) circular section. 8 miles (13km) total)
<b>Time to walk trail</b>	3.5 hours
<b>Starting point of trail</b>	There is no singular starting point. However, Fawley or Langley are good options.
<b>Car parking</b>	There is no formal car parking for this trail. There is very limited on-street parking. Our suggested locations are Fawley, Chapel Lane and in Walker's Lane South.
<b>Bus Stop</b>	Fawley Square. For more information please check <a href="http://myjourneyhampshire.com">myjourneyhampshire.com</a>
<b>Terrain (hilliness)</b>	Fairly flat
<b>Surface type/s</b>	Gravel tracks and some muddy patches
<b>Stiles / gates information</b>	Some stiles, gates, wooden footbridge, and stepping stones across Dark Water stream. Short section on road
<b>Notes</b>	Do check yourself for ticks on your return to the car.

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## Trail route summary

This trail has a central circular section with connective 'branches' to Langley, Blackfield, Fawley, Exbury and Lepe. Many of these routes (now Rights of Way) can be seen on maps dating from the mid to late 1700s. They cross parts of Cadland and Exbury Estates, revealing a historic and modern working landscape. The rights of way are mostly surfaced but muddy patches are likely.

During recent years efforts to regenerate dwindling, and rare, habitats have been successful and we are slowly beginning to see threatened species like migratory Nightjar and resident Dartford warblers return, as well as Grayling and Silver-studded blue butterflies.

To help look after this rich but delicate habitat and the species that rely on it please keep to the rights of way particularly during the ground nesting bird season 1st March and 31st July and please keep all dogs on a lead or under very close control.

## Trail route directions

This is one of our largest trails, the central circular section can be accessed from one of three suggested parking spots.

From Chapel Lane, Fawley: walk down Chapel Lane following the Bridleway fingerpost. Go past the Waterside Methodist Church and bend right past Blackbird cottage and then left (passing the kissing gate) and onto the Manor of Cadland track.

From Walker's Lane South, Blackfield: at the end of Green Lane by the recreation ground go through the kissing gate onto the Manor of Cadland track on the left following the backs of the houses.

From Fawley Bypass: take the track towards Fields Heath.

There are multiple interconnected tracks in this area. Try our Mobile Walking App to help keep you to this Historic Routes trail.

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### 1. Nr Fields Farm

The Cadland Estate originally consisted of monastic lands and was bought by The Hon. Robert Drummond in 1772. The original Estate stretched from Hythe pier southwards, but some land at Hythe was sold during the agricultural depression of 1895. In 1947 a third of the estate was subject to compulsory purchase for the oil refinery north of Fawley leading to the destruction of the mansion house, Capability Brown park, model farm and 40 estate cottages.

Cadland House was an elaborate Georgian beach-hut-style thatched cottage, designed by Henry Holland, that burnt to the ground in 1785. The current Cadland House which overlooks the Solent was built in 1935 in the same position as the original cottage.

From 1954 to 2017 the Estate was owned and home to Maldwin Drummond, a well-known New Forest figure, the estate is still owned by the family. Maldwin was a former High Sheriff of Hampshire,

served as chairman of the New Forest magistrates and was head of the New Forest Verderers for three years. The Verderers of the ancient Verderers' Court (dating back to the 13th century) are the guardians of Commoners, common rights, and the Forest landscape, they can also make and amend byelaws. Commoners of the New Forest are those who occupy land or property to which are attached one or more rights over the Forest.

## 2. Badminton Common by PLUTO tank (site of)

Evidence of Second World War installations can be found at end of Badminton Lane in an area known as the Common. Large oil storage tanks were installed here for the PLUTO project, an acronym for Pipe Line Under The Ocean, which supplied Normandy with fuel for the Allied armies.

The tanks measured about 180 metres by 100 metres and stood about three or four metres

high. They were located in open heathland so were covered over with soil and sand and then grassed over to conceal their position and purpose. The removal of the sand and gravel left a huge scar on the landscape about a metre deep that also needed to be camouflaged. This was achieved by lopping off the top two metres of pine trees, positioning them in the manner of plantation trees and securing them

in position with wooden pegs and galvanised iron wire. The miniature, dead forest soon became a local feature.

Badminton Common was used for common grazing land in the 18th century. Gravel has been extracted from this area for years. The now flooded Badminton gravel pit is a haven for all sorts of wildlife.

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## 3. Badminton Plantation

Three centuries ago Fawley was a hotbed of smuggling. Sprat's Down Wood hid the 'caves' used by smugglers, which probably consisted of pits with reinforced sides, capped with timber and earth. Folklore tells of a visit by the local Revenue Officer to an old couple's cottage, apparently on a social call to his friends. But on hearing his heels ring hollow on the flagstones of the floor, he summoned aid and searched until he had found the entrance to the cottagers' contraband cellar. Friends or no, he soon had them bundled off to Winchester Gaol as the secret room was stuffed full of recently smuggled goods.

Sprat's Down grew from housing for construction workers that built the Naval Air Station on Calshot Spit. Construction of the Calshot Airbase started in 1912 and was fully functioning by 1914 and remained as an RAF base until 1961.

## 4. Floating Island

The route runs over an earthwork dam, south of here is Lower Stanswood Mill (formerly Ower Mill). The dam formed a millpond that held water for the mill downstream but was drained in 1866. Features of the pond (its bay and sluice) can still be seen today.



## 5. Stanswood watermill

The Domesday Book recorded Stanswood as a manor with a mill and population of 33 households, putting it in the largest 20% of settlements recorded in 1086. On

Milne's map of Hampshire c1791, it is shown as Ower Mill but all other records have it as Stanswood Mill within Stanswood Manor.

Now a private home, the machinery in this small brick building was removed, the mill leat filled in and its pond drained in 1866. The site of the old millpond is now marshy land known as 'Floating Island'

Bridge of Floating Island sluice.

© NFNPA

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## 6. Bog Cottage, Badminton and WWII air raid shelter

South of Badminton Common, northeast of Dean's Bridge, are the visible remains of some old cob cottages (farmsteads). Only one of the houses gained a name; Bog Cottage, which was the westernmost house listed in the 1901 census.

The other houses were gone by 1939. Bog Cottage remained occupied by various members of the Saunders family until after 1939 with many of the women described as laundresses and the men as labourers. It was later occupied by the Corner family, renaming the cottage 'Dingley Dell', eventually being demolished in the early 1950's after the family had left.

There is also a small Second World War brick air-raid shelter. The reason for the shelter being here is unclear, as only Bog Cottage was still standing and occupied during WWII. Were there other temporary or secret WWII buildings nearby?

## A tale of relief that brings no relief

This is a story about smuggling, and a place called Bog Cottage, which was a simple, thatched, cob house between Badminston Common and Spratt's Down, on the left of the track going down to Dean's Bridge.

The lower portions of the walls can still be seen, and a brick air raid shelter still stands there.

The last people to live in Bog Cottage were the Corner family. They renamed the place Dingley Dell. Mr Corner earned a living by selling firewood, although this might have been a means of supplementing another income. Mrs Corner is probably the lady in the accompanying photograph (taken by a member of the Mudge family around 1949/1950 and displayed for sale in their shop window). When the Corners left, the roof fell in and the unprotected cob walls rapidly disintegrated in the rain. A brick privy and a well, together with the air raid shelter, were the most substantial remains of occupation there.

Long ago, according to folklore, the Whitecaps – the Excise men – were sure that a contraband cache existed at Bog Cottage. The area was well known for smuggling activities in the past.

Although they searched the house and garden thoroughly, the Whitecaps found nothing. It was thirsty work, and they had refreshed themselves to the extent that one, at least, needed to relieve himself. As he did so, behind a tree, he heard water dripping into a cavity below ground which, on investigation, proved to be stuffed with contraband. The fates of the occupants of Bog Cottage are not recorded.



Bog Cottage later Dingley Dell, c1950.

© Waterside Heritage

## 7. Fawley, Mopley Pond

Now a fishing lake, Mopley Pond was formed by damming the valley where two streams met to form a mill pond for the Mopley watermill on the Bourne. The earliest known reference to a mill here is 1626 but the mill referred to under Woodington in 1555 is almost certainly Mopley. The mill appears on the Fawley tithe map of 1838

Mopley pond.

©NFNPA



but it has been removed by the OS Survey undertaken in 1868.

The PLUTO pipeline ran from the fuel holding tanks on Badminston Common to a pump house at Mopley pond constructed to look like a domestic garage. All that is left today is the concrete base hidden in the vegetation.

From Mopley to Stone Point on the Lepe foreshore, the PLUTO pipeline ran underwater across the Solent to Thorness Bay on the Isle of Wight, crossing the island to Shanklin Chine, then under the Channel to the Cherbourg Peninsular.

## 8. Lost hamlet of Woodington

The lost hamlet of Woodington is recorded in 1379 as having 10 tenants. Part of Stanswood manor, along with Rue, Dean, Field, Cadland and Hythe, by 1555 tenancy had dropped to just six but a mill (Mopley mill) had been established. Woodington slowly disappeared with most of the residents moving to Langley.

## Wider estate history

### A. Langley Lodge (site of)

Now a modern housing estate, Langley Lodge was once the home of Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935), a British archaeologist, army officer, diplomat, and writer. He lived there with his unmarried parents between 1894 to 1896. The house was isolated, and young Lawrence had many opportunities for outdoor activities and waterfront visits. Gussed who we are talking about? Lawrence of Arabia.



T. E. Lawrence. British archaeologist, military officer, and diplomat.

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### B. Exbury & Lepe, Chale Wood

Chale Wood is an area of ancient woodland. See if you can spot the old yew tree. Yew is historically significant as the wood was used in the making of the English longbow.

### C. Fawley, Whitefield Farm

To the east of Dark Water, between the stream and Lepe Road is Whitefield Rough. Historic maps show the brickworks, kilns and claypits of Whitefield Brickworks, which were active during the late 1800s before gravel and sand extraction took over in the early 1900s. The bricks were used across the whole of the Southern Waterside.

There is evidence that the modern road from Lepe Country Park to Totton travels on, or very close to, the course of a Roman road which can still be seen in the landscape where the modern road diverts away.

Where you crossed Lepe Rd. an unimposing layby is a reminder of the important role the New Forest played during the Second World War. Hundreds of troops, equipment and vehicles travelled down this now quiet country lane in June 1944 to take part in D-Day and laybys were built to manage the immense volume of traffic to the embarkation point at Lepe, now Lepe Country park.



### D. Eaglehurst Camp

East off Stanswood Road is one of this trail's branch routes toward the old Power Plant, the coast and the NFNPA walking trail Ashlett Creek to Calshot Spit.

To the south of the route was Eaglehurst Camp. It was built in 1917 during the First World War to accommodate the ground staff and sea plane aircraft crews based at RNAS Calshot. The site was modified in World War II with the addition of defensive trenches and camouflage on the building's roofs. The camp was connected to RAF Calshot by a light railway (also built in World War I) and by 1940, the camp accommodated 500 trainee airmen.

Eaglehurst was used as an officers Mess during the second world war. Eaglehurst Cottages were occupied by Wrens.

### E. Fawley, East end

Calshot Marshes is an area of mudflats at the southern end of Southampton Water. It forms part of the Hythe to Calshot Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its nationally important numbers of migratory and over-wintering waders and wildfowl. There is a view from the water's edge across to Calshot Castle built by Henry VIII as part of the Solent defences.

Curlew on Calshot Marshes

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