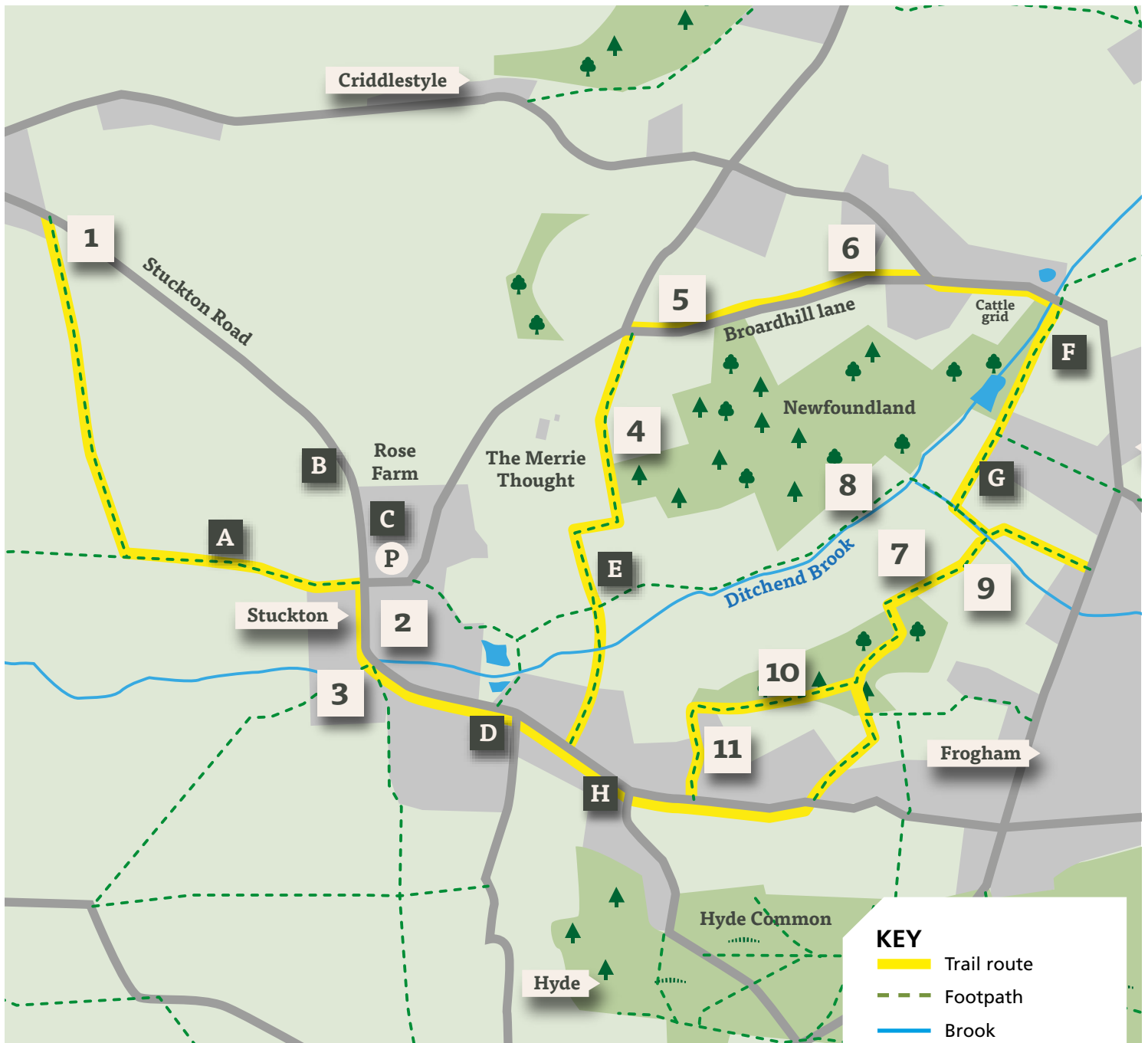




Stuckton Iron Works Trail

Swing riots and smallpox



4.5 miles / 3 hours

Trail route summary

This trail takes in a tranquil New Forest valley, with views across the Avon Valley and Dorset. The area is a working landscape, with a surprising history of heavy industry and riots.

- Stop spots
- Points of interest
- Parking



Trail Stats:

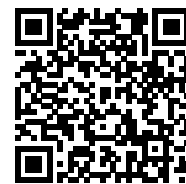
Trail length	4.5 miles (7.2km)
Time to walk trail	3 hours
Starting point of trail	Opposite the Fordingbridge Bowling Club house or the Three Lions (car park), Stuckton Rd.
Car parking	<p>The public car park beside Fordingbridge Park on Ringwood Road. The start of the walk is a short distance east along Southampton Rd onto Stuckton Rd.</p> <p>The Three Lions, Stuckton, SP6 2HF. The owners have granted permission for their carpark to be used by trail walkers.</p>
Bus Stop	Stuckton, Three Lions, Hyde Lane; Check myjourneyhampshire.com .
Terrain (hilliness)	Mostly flat E-W, hilly N-S
Surface type/s	Unsurfaced path with some muddy to very muddy patches when wet. Short section on road.
Stiles / gates information	There are stiles and gates.
Notes	Sections of this trail can get very muddy; wellies are definitely advisable. Do check for ticks when you get home.

Trail route directions

There is no fixed direction to this route once in Stuckton. There are several other Rights of Way that join to and cross this trail.

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1. Fordingbridge Cemetery, Bronze Age

The trail passes Fordingbridge (St Mary's) Cemetery. People have been laying their dead to rest here for thousands of years since the Bronze Age (2100 to 750BC).

Marks in the grass show the locations of ploughed out Bronze Age round barrows. Later in the Bronze Age and into the Iron Age (750BC to AD43) it was common practice to place additional burials in and around these barrows. These later burials were in the form of large upturned pottery urns containing cremated remains.

A. Possible smugglers route

Smuggling, the act of secretly bringing legal and illegal items into the country, was widespread in the Forest during the 1800's. There are several so-called smugglers routes that snake their way across the Forest from the coast. It is said that this part of the trail is on one of those smugglers' routes, in this case, to Fordingbridge.

B. Old Police House

As you approach the village you may be able to see the houses and buildings along the east side of Stuckton Rd. A few houses down, from the north, the setback house is the old police house and was occupied into the 1990s by the local beat officer.

C. The Three Lions

Continuing south from the old police house is The Three Lions. First recorded in local estate records of 1832 as a house and barn, by 1875 it was listed as the 'Three Lions', tenanted by Henry Hockey as Inn Keeper and grocer. It is now a restaurant run by a former Michelin starred chef.



Left: St Mary's Cemetery Chapel.
Example of a cremation urn burial, photo taken at a different site during excavation.
© NFNPA

2. Iron Works

The house opposite the exit of the public footpath onto Stuckton Rd was the home of Thomas Sheppard, who started the Stuckton Iron Works in 1790. From a family of flour millars, he invented and produced mill components, expanding into agricultural machinery.

The business was passed down the Sheppard family and a foundry was built in 1807 to supply castings for agricultural tools and grain milling equipment. A Cornish steam engine was installed for power and its 15m (50ft) tall brick chimney must have been a local landmark.

In 1830 the foundry was targeted and badly damaged by agricultural workers rioting against the mechanisation of farming during the 'Swing Riots' named after Captain Swing, a political agitator.

By 1854 George Sheppard formed a partnership and products were marked SHEPPARD AND INGRAM, including a decorative 'gas pillar' (lamppost) in Church Street, Fordingbridge.

In 1872 the site was bought by Joseph Armfield who developed an award-winning business with international reach.



Above: Old Gas Lamp made by "SHEPPARD AND INGRAM" Fordingbridge.
© NFNPA
Left: An original portrait of Captain Swing, print, satirical print, popular print, London.
© The Trustees of the British Museum



Above: Armfield's Foundry buildings in 1959 with chimney. Courtesy of Mary Baldwin

Right: Rioters arrive at William Shepherd's mill, in Stuckton. 23 November 1830.

© Wessex Archaeology, by Jennie Anderson.



The foundry in Stuckton closed in 1908, while the Cornish steam engine was removed around 1920. Business continued at the site through the 1950s with Armfield Agricultural Engineering Company supplying agricultural tools and equipment.

The chimney collapsed in the 1960s, and its triangular bricks can be found around the parish as garden features. The site finally closed in the 1990s.

A dramatized account of the 1830 rioting at the Stuckton Iron Works

by agricultural workers has been produced. You can download the written version or the audio book version to listen to whilst on your walk.

Visit this trail's webpage for more details: newforestnpa.gov.uk/historicroutes



Stuckton Church.
© NFNPA.

3. Old Post Office & Stuckton Evangelical Church

Follow Stuckton Road south and cross the bridge over Ditchend Brook. Look out for the Old Post Office which was the local shop for the hamlets of Blissford, Frogham, Hyde and Stuckton.

Stuckton Evangelical Church was built in 1856. Its story starts in Hungerford in 1831, where a 'preacher' Mr Thomas Grant

was given land by the 'Lord of the Manor' to establish a chapel. Some years later the son and inheritor to the estate ignored this gift and evicted Grant. After a fundraising campaign in "every county of England" and a large donation from India, Grant was able to purchase this plot of land in Stuckton and build a new church. Reverend Thomas Grant is buried in the graveyard to the left of the entrance.

D. Cattle grid, preambulation

In the road is a cattle grid which marks the perambulation (the legal boundary) of the New Forest and stops the livestock straying from the Commons. The name perambulation comes from early boundaries not being defined by a map but by a walk with directions and description of the journey its landmarks. The earliest perambulation of the New Forest dates from 1217-18, describing the area to which Forest law applied. The most recent perambulation was defined by the New Forest Act of 1964; this set out the area within which the Verderers can exercise their bylaws.

E. Views of Avon Village and Dorset

Beyond the cattle grid is the public footpath taking you north, running along field edges to the stream, Ditchend Brook, where you cross and go up the hill. At the top are views of the Avon Valley and across into Dorset.

4. The Merrie Thought

After climbing the hill, the trail continues north past Broadhill Woods. After the woods is a large house 'The Merrie Thought' built in the 1930s 'Arts and Crafts' style. It was built for Lady Hulse, one of a wave of wealthier people retiring

to the New Forest as roads and railways improved.

A local resident recalls; "My father told me that to have water for the house on the hill, a well was dug down to the water table and he went to have a look, describing the men digging were like ants at the bottom of a hole."



View to west over the Avon Valley with "The Merrie Thought" to the south.

© NFNPA

5. Broadhill Lane

Once through the field head east along Broadhill Lane. This track was a drove track for moving animals from pastures by the River Avon into the open Forest. It appears on Isaac Taylor's one-inch map of Hampshire, from 1759.

Local folklore suggests this track is an old smugglers' path, used to carry contraband across the Forest to places like Fordingbridge. The town was a major hub of the free traders (smugglers) in the late 18th century and was the scene of battles between free traders and customs men.

6. Cob cottage, encroachment

Continue along the lane to where it joins Blissford Road. On its northern side is a little cob cottage. Shown on an OS map of 1872 it is probably much older and is an example of many cottages around the New Forest that are encroachments.

F. Cottages (site of), encroachment

The trackway drops down and joins Blissford Road. Heading downhill is another cattle grid, marking the edge of the New Forest preambulation. Past this we cross Ditchend Stream again via the ford or narrow footbridge. Just beyond this is the public footpath, heading southwest.

Beside the stream and just within the woods are the remains of more cottage encroachments, marked on OS maps of 1872, but hard to spot on the ground today.

These encroachments were into a purlieu area before 1800's. Purlieu's were open forest land owned by the estates around the New Forest. Over the last 200 years they have been enclosed as farmland.

G. Old orchard

The path continues in a straight line, past the end of a track (Blissford Cross) and on through an old cider orchard, now covered in scrub, known as Orchard Ground. Look out for a row of very old pollarded oak trees. A local resident recalls, "my grandfather and father were rick builders up to WW2. When you build a rick you go to the hedge and cut branches as a base to keep the rick off the wet ground. Over a few hundred years you get pollards and where you find pollards on the sides of fields - you know it was a hay field."

7. (Site of) Smallpox Hospital

Cross the narrow-planked bridge towards a 'T' junction where we take the south eastern path. To the south west is a long field divided by a section of Ditchend Brook stream. This area has a hidden history and is known as Smallpox.

The area is the presumed site of 'Blissford Smallpox Hospital', an extensive site of wooden huts, built in 1903 with the support of Fordingbridge and the estate owners. It was built during an outbreak of smallpox in the local gypsy community, but no records remain of its exact location. After the outbreak was contained the whole field was closed off and it was not until the late 1940's that the field was cleared and turned back into pasture.

Despite its history, the area has over 120 recorded plant species and over 250 fungi in these fields and are now recognised as a SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation).

8. Watercress beds

On the far side of the stream are two watercress beds, which appear on OS maps from 1897. There is little information about them but growing watercress was common around Fordingbridge. Watercress prefers to grow in clear chalk streams, so its success here is surprising. However, these beds are close enough to the Dorset Downs to have chalk springs and watercress still grows there today.

9. Traces of the Bronze Age

The fenced path runs next to a field called Blackiemoor, indicating it had good cultivated soil. Metal detectorists searching the field found Bronze Age slag suggesting the valley has been occupied for thousands of years.

At the top of the path the view across the valley gives views of the watercress beds.

The wood on the opposite hill was heathland until the 1850's when it was drained and turned into a cornfield. Later the stream was dammed and modified to create the watercress beds.

10. Views over the Avon valley & Dorset

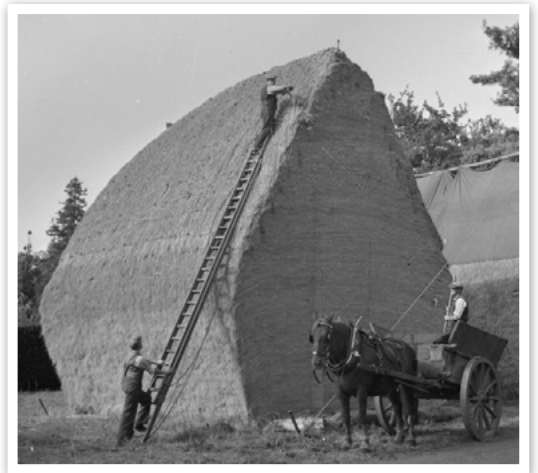
Follow the trail route up into the woods and the southern side of the valley. This area was once heathland but now has established young trees. At the top of the hill turn right.

11. Little hamlet

Leaving the wood, head through a small hamlet of houses which includes some old thatch cottages built in the 18th century. Follow the trail down the slope to join up with Frogham Hill road.

Do take care as you walk back along the road.

There is a mix of houses of different ages and styles, the oldest a thatch cottage called 'Chase End' which is Grade 2 listed. Following this route will take you back to where you first left the road up to The Merrie Thought.



Top left: View across fields once over the narrow-planked bridge.

© NFNPA

Above: Example of a large hay rick.

This one at Kew Gardens, 1943.

© IWM D 16508

Left: Keepers Cottage.

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