

## A Country Break in the Elham Valley

### introductory information & itineraries

- *Area coverage – sits between Hythe/Folkestone and Canterbury, affording scenic views between the city and coastal town, following the Elham Valley Way and the source of the Nailbourne which eventually feeds into the Lesser Stour and Great River Stour*
- *Area type – rural, unspoilt, chalk grassland, woodland and farming – not developed*
- *Key themes – the Elham Valley Way – tranquillity, nature, wildlife, arts & crafts, health & wellbeing*
- *Main activities – walking, cycling, wildlife viewing, crafts, beauty and alternative therapies, golf*

### **Background information**

- The Elham Valley is a quiet, peaceful area of downland situated between Canterbury and Folkestone and is acknowledged to be one of Kent's most precious assets. The valley lies within the [Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty](#), a nationally important protected landscape.
- The Elham Valley carves its way through the centre of the East Kent Downs in a wide sweep up to Barham and Patricbourne, criss-crossed by a maze of tiny, sunken, one-track lanes. To the west lies a heavily wooded plateau, where expanses of conifer plantations are interspersed with remnants of ancient woodland. This is one of the most densely wooded ridges of the Kent Downs AONB. The eastern side of the valley is predominantly arable plateau, with a few smaller woodlands on the steep valley sides. The less exposed, northern slopes around Denton are still dotted with pockets of historic parkland and orchards.<sup>1</sup>
- The villages of the Elham Valley are traditionally built of local flint, brick and tile. The Valley is named after the settlement of Elham, a picturesque village in the heart of the Valley.
- One of the best ways to explore the valley is to follow the Elham Valley Way, a long distance route that takes in the entire valley. Joining the North Downs Way at its northern end, and the Saxon Shore Way at its southern end, it connects Canterbury with Hythe, Folkestone and the coast. Some of the route follows the old Elham Valley Railway, opened in 1889 and closed in 1947, meandering through ancient woodlands, secret byways and the Valley's villages. Between Peene and Lyminge is the best section of the route for walking the old track bed of the railway, passing over old bridges which were provided to enable farmers to move their livestock. Along the whole route you will be taken through some of the most enchanting countryside the Garden of England has to offer, with scenic views between the city and coastal towns.
- In the dry valleys of the Kent Downs, the valley bottom chalk streams or 'bournes' are underground, only flowing at the surface occasionally during periods of wet weather. Locally, bournes are also referred to as 'winterbournes' or 'woe waters', due to the distress they've caused in times past.
- There are many legends about the **Nailbourne** stream in the Elham Valley, one being that it flows once every seven years. But in fact, as with all winterbournes, it appears overground following heavy rain. The source of the Nailbourne is at Lyminge, where it appears beneath St Ethelburga's Well.

Whilst the stream often holds a plentiful supply of water from Lyminge to Elham throughout the year, it rarely holds any water from Elham to Bishopsbourne, even in the winter months. However, in wet years the normally dry ditch can turn into a fast flowing torrent, flooding the fields. The Nailbourne is a tributary of the River Great Stour – it continues its course from Bishopsbourne to Littlebourne where it becomes known as the Little Stour, and on to join the Great Stour at Plucks Gutter.

- As you rise up through the Elham Valley you reach Newington where you will gain magnificent views from the scarp across fields and woodlands around Hythe to the coast and English Channel, and on a clear day, France. From Lyminge and the Hythe Escarpment you can appreciate panoramic views over the Romney Marsh.

**Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- Kent Downs AONB - <http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/>

## **The Villages of the Elham Valley**

- After departing Hythe, the first villages reached on the Elham Valley Way are **Newington** – a tiny village which dates back to Roman times – and **Peene** which originally comprised one farm. It is at Peene that you will find the Elham Valley Line Trust, established to preserve former railway buildings, with a recreated station housing memorabilia, photographs and historic artefacts associated with the old Elham Valley Railway line.
- [Lyminge](#) is one of the larger villages located within the valley. It was the site of an ancient monastery and nunnery founded by Ethelburga, daughter of the King of Kent and married to the King of Northumbria. You will find St Ethelburga's well in the village playing field, close to the school. The parish church of St. Mary & St. Ethelburga dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century and Lyminge was the site of a discovery of a 6th century Jutish cemetery containing high status jewellery, weapons, swords and shield bosses. Lyminge has a pub, cafe and restaurant, and a number of shops in the village centre. Lyminge Village Hall has a skate park and other play equipment to entertain children. The old railway station building (which fell into disuse with the closure of the Elham Valley branch line many years ago) now houses the village library. There is a splendid cricket pitch and modern pavilion on the outskirts of the village at **Sibton Park**. At nearby **Etchinghill** you will find the New Inn, and the Etchinghill Golf Club with club house and restaurant.
- Between Lyminge and [Elham](#) lies the hamlet of **Ottinge**. An old railway bridge spans the trackbed at Ottinge and carries a quiet lane eastwards over the hill to Shuttlesfield. In times past, Elham was the most important settlement in the valley and once a flourishing market town. It retains a genuine 'old world' feel with its many characteristic buildings and inns. Elham's 43 listed buildings illustrate its long history, from the late medieval Church of St. Mary in the village square and fine Tudor timber-framed houses, to the former coaching inn of the Rose & Crown. You will also find the Abbott's Fireside and Kings Arms here, and Elham has a village stores, gift shop and the Cosy Tea Room. Beyond Elham you will come to **North Elham**, an ancient settlement dating back to pagan times, its roots lying in farming.

- The Parish of **Acrise**, just above Elham, takes its name from the presence of the mainly 18th century manor house Acrise Place, in the grounds of which stands the mediaeval church of St Martin. This is an atmospheric church hidden away in the undergrowth of the 'big house'.
- The tiny village of **Paddlesworth** is located near Hawkinge and Densole. The Early Norman parish church is dedicated to St. Oswald and is reputedly the highest in the Kent Downs. Opposite you'll find the Cat and Custard Pot pub which contains a varied collection of aviation memorabilia and photographs that represent the history of the area during the last 100 years. It also holds the key to St. Oswald's. The Kent Battle of Britain Museum is nearby at Hawkinge.
- The various villages with '**Minnis**' attached to their names are former common lands. Most of the 'minnisses' in Kent occur in a small corner of the East Kent Downs. As you explore Natural East Kent you will come across Stelling Minnis, Rhodes Minnis, Ewell Minnis, Swingfield Minnis and River Minnis.
- All are now farmland except [Stelling Minnis](#), which is privately owned by trustees of the estate and one of the last remaining manorial commons in Kent. Perched high on the Kent Downs plateau and close to the old Roman Road of Stone Street, the 124 acre Minnis at Stelling is a stunning area worth exploring. The Rose & Crown on the Green makes a convenient stop for refreshments, and nearby you will find the village stores. Stelling Minnis is also the site of a Grade 1 listed four storey smock windmill known as Davison's Mill. For many years it was powered by a Hornsby oil engine which you can still see today. The mill, its museum and tea room is open to visitors at Easter, then every Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday from 2pm – 5pm until the end of September.
- [Rhodes Minnis](#) is a small village situated next to Lyminge Forest. It is the location of the well known animal charity the Lord Whisky Sanctuary, which has a gift shop and tea room serving a wide choice of homemade food from a full English breakfast to afternoon cream teas. If you are around on a Friday evening (6 – 9pm), you could try a Fish & Chip supper. Jubilee Farm is an organic farm with a shop onsite selling eggs, a range of meat, vegetables and other produce. The village also has a children's play area and the village hall hosts the popular Rhodes Minnis Spring and Summer Flower Shows.
- [Barham](#) dates back at least to 799AD and contains 77 listed structures, not only buildings but walls, a footbridge and a 1936 classic telephone kiosk. At the main road in the village you will see the school with its distinctive Gothic bell tower, whilst across the road lays the old village of Barham where you will find the Duke of Cumberland. Set upon the eastern side of the valley, it nestles around the church of St. John the Baptist, which sits majestically among the trees. The church contains many fine artefacts, including a beautiful window depicting St. George slaying the dragon. On the edge of the village is Broome Par which was once owned by Lord Kitchener of Khartoum and is a fine example of a Carolean mansion dating to circa 1635. It is now run as a golf and country club.
- The first glimpses of **Kingston** are of the church tower of St Giles, partially hidden by mature trees. First built by the Saxons and rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it has a 13<sup>th</sup> century font, a Jacobean pulpit and 14<sup>th</sup> century wall paintings. A large part of the village (population approximately 450) lies within a Conservation Area overlooking the Nailbourne stream. From the valley bottom, The Street leads up the valley side to reveal fine views south-westwards across Barham Downs. Covet Lane is a fine

vantage point for appreciating the beauty of the landscape and variety of flora. The world renowned sculptor Henry Moore lived in Kingston from 1934 – 1940. The village sign depicts the Kingston Brooch, the valuable Anglo-Saxon artefact discovered on the Downs in the 1760s. The Elham Valley Way passes through Kingston and the Black Robin (named after a local highwayman) makes a convenient refreshment stop.

- The small village of **Bishopsbourne**, perhaps the most unchanged in the area, lies in a quiet hollow in the Nailbourne valley (at the northern end of the Elham Valley) just 4 miles from Canterbury. Bishopsbourne was on the Elham Valley Railway until traffic stopped in 1947. You can still see the original railway station which is now a private residence. The Mermaid, built in 1861, is part of the Shepherd Neame brewery and has been featured in CAMRA's Good Beer Guide for 18 successive years. Former residents of Bishopsbourne include the novelists Jocelyn Brook and Joseph Conrad, who lived in 'Oswald's next to the Church.
- Bishopsbourne's 13<sup>th</sup> century Church of St. Mary's has a number of noteworthy features such as its 14<sup>th</sup> century wall paintings on the upper arcading of the Nave which are currently undergoing restoration, and a considerable amount of mediaeval glass. The Reverend Richard Hooker lived here and was buried in the Chancel. The Reverend was one of the foremost Anglican theologians and writers who played a major part in the development of Anglicanism as the 'middle way' between Protestantism and Catholicism. A memorial to him can be seen on the south wall. The walls around the altar are covered in mosaic tiles, many of gold, by or in the style of William Morris, and depict natural shapes, leaves and grapes.
- The Elham Valley Way passes through the beautiful open parklands of Charlton and Bourne, either side of the village of Bishopsbourne. The course of the Nailbourne is easily traced through both parklands. Bourne Park dates back to Domesday, the house is of the Queen Anne period yet excavations here revealed Iron Age remains. The mansion house dates from the Tudor period but was greatly extended in 1810. The cricket ground within the park is used by the Bishopsbourne Cricket Club.
- The village of [Bridge](#) grew up around the crossing of the Nailbourne by the old Dover road and is situated on the old coaching route from Dover to London. It has been an important settlement since Roman times and contains some interesting buildings of varied architecture, from Tudor to Victorian. The village centre is designated a Conservation Area. Nearby on the Barham Downs the armies used to assemble for campaigns abroad such as "The Field of the Cloth of Gold", the Seven Years War and also India in the mid 19th Century. A characteristic of Bridge is its large manor houses such as Higham Park House, Bridge Place, Bridge Hill House and East Bridge House – and it was also home to one of the first work houses in Kent. Higham House has been home to many important and colourful characters, including in the 1920s Count Zborowski, who conceived and built the first aero engine powered racing cars there, later immortalised by Fleming's fantasy film Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. Bridge has three pubs – the Plough & Harrow, the Red Lion and the White Horse Inn. The Post Office in the centre of the village was used by Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, then living at Broome Park, to send his first despatch in 1914.
- Outside Bridge is Bifrons Park, with its imposing avenue of Limes and Wellingtonias. The Park once had a magnificent mansion but apart from the moss covered foundations, only a gate lodge

survives. Beyond the park is the village of **Patixbourne**, a small collection of beautiful cottages built in the 19th Century for employees on the Bifrons estate. The south doorway of St. Mary's indicates a wealthy past in mediaeval times, and there are outstanding examples of mediaeval Flemish glass, as well as 18 panels of 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Swiss glass. With the exception of Temple Ewell this is the largest collection of pictorial Swiss glass in a Kent church. From Patixbourne, the Nailbourne heads north towards Bekesbourne, Littlebourne and Wickhambreaux.

- The name of the Hardres family is perpetuated in the twin villages of **Upper Hardres** and **Lower Hardres** (pronounced 'hards'), on the Roman road, Stone Street, south-west of Canterbury and west of Bridge and Bishopsbourne. The name is supposedly derived from the Saxon word meaning 'flinty' and is a reference to the local soil. Within the parish of Upper Hardres is the village of **Bossingham**, where you will find the Hop Pocket pub. The Norman church of St. Peter & Paul has a large Norman font and 14<sup>th</sup> century windows which originally came from St. Mary at Stelling in 1791. At Lower Hardres you will find the renowned Granville, the Lower Hardres Farm Shop and the ancient church of St. Mary's, part of the Bridge Benefice. Just outside Lower Hardres is the hamlet of Pett Bottom and here you will find Hode Pottery.

**Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- Lyminge - <http://www.lyminge.org.uk/>
- Elham - <http://www.elham.co.uk/>
- Stelling Minnis - <http://www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/>
- Rhodes Minnis - <http://rhodesminnis.org.uk/>
- Barham - <http://www.barham-kent.org.uk/>
- Bridge - <http://www.bridgevillage.org.uk/>

## References

<sup>1</sup> extracted and/or adapted from Landscape Character Assessment for Kent 2004

Village information taken from the Elham Valley Way guide, village websites, Barham Downs Churches, Kent Churches, tourism business websites and where all else fails, Wikipedia.

## Itinerary ideas

*Following are a few suggestions for things to do and see in the Elham Valley to help you truly experience this special area of Kent. These are just a few ideas so feel free to mix or swap around, combine with any events that are on in the area (remember to check the calendar) and do look at all the other information provided on these pages. Please note those activities that need to be booked in advance. See the accommodation listing for ideas of where to stay.*

### **A family fun break**

There are many things to do in Canterbury and Folkestone that will keep the children – and adults – happy for hours. The first point of call in Canterbury must surely be the [Cathedral](#), but it is also important to seek out [Rupert Bear](#) at the [Museum of Canterbury](#) and explore bygone eras at the [Canterbury Tales Museum](#). Canterbury also has a great variety of family friendly restaurants or cafes.

Folkestone also has a great selection of restaurants and cafes, and you can explore the old harbour and the Creative Quarter. Don't miss the award winning Lower Leas Coastal Park, with formal and semi-formal gardens, picnic areas, walkways, amphitheatre with tiered grass seating and the largest free children's adventure playground in the south east. Further along in Hythe, you can hire a boat on the Royal Military Canal, or take a ride on the world's smallest railway – the [Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway](#).

But there are also plenty of opportunities for you to explore our countryside and following are a few suggestions for the whole family to experience the Elham Valley. During your stay check the village websites or local parish magazine (your accommodation and the local pubs may well have a copy) for details of fetes, fairs, barn dances and other country events.

### **Suggestion One / Day One – Bushcraft**

How about learning some bushcraft skills? Whether you want to learn how to create fire with only natural resources or gain a deeper knowledge of bushcraft survival techniques, [Natural Pathways](#) provides opportunities to do all this and more through a broad range of Survival Bushcraft and Nature Awareness courses in woodland outside Barham.

Natural Pathways offers a number of different day activities for the whole family to enjoy, such as the Fire & Shelter Day and the 'Discovery Basic Survival' course. If you can spend longer in the Elham Valley, why not book a Two Day Wilderness Families Camp during which you will learn how to make and light a fire, three ways to construct a 'natural debris' shelter, where to find and gather dry firewood, identify plants and trees, make cords, string and rope, make utensils and cook on an open fire. A variety of nature awareness games link all these skills together.

Check dates and availability and make your booking through the [Natural Pathways](#) website.

### Suggestion Two / Day Two - Safari

You can easily spend a whole day at [Port Lympne Wild Animal Park](#). The park is set in 600 acres of parkland and with over 650 animals living at Port Lympne you'll encounter everything from African elephants to cats, dogs, primates and apes, antelope and even tiny zebra mice. The Park offers a number of different safaris as part of the African Experience, including the 90 minute safari running throughout the day, a sunset safari, and overnight safari staying in the Livingstone Lodge.

The magnificent Port Lympne Mansion House with its extravagant interior design and stunning mural art is an attraction in itself, as are the 15 acres of landscaped gardens with their series of terraces and separate enclosed gardens hedged in yew. Explore the Glasshouse, Trojan Steps, Square Pond Garden, Lime Tree Walk, Western Terraces and Vineyard.

After your visit to Port Lympne continue to the village and visit [St. Stephen's Church](#), set high on a hill, with commanding views across to Romney Marsh.

### Suggestion Three / Day Three – Railways and Crafts

Visit the [Elham Valley Railway Museum](#) in Peene and experience the golden age of the railway set in pleasant gardens. There are plenty of things for children to do and see, including the signal box, a steam engine and the Channel Tunnel Model. The Museum is open April to August, on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, from 10am – 5pm and has a cafe serving tea and coffee, soft drinks and ice cream.

After visiting the museum, you could walk to Etchinghill by following the Elham Valley Way along the old railway line (if you come by car, you can leave it in Peene). Enjoy the fantastic views across the valley and at Etchinghill stop for lunch or refreshments at the [New Inn](#), a country pub and restaurant.

If your afternoon is free you could book a pottery making class with [Annie Begley](#) in Wingmore just outside Elham, or a pottery painting workshop at [Roseneath Ceramics](#) in Rhodes Minnis. Alternatively, how about a Felted Jewellery Workshop with the [Hilltop Spinning and Weaving Centre](#) in Lyminge? All are suitable for adults and children. Check their websites for details of what they provide and how to book.

### Suggestion Four / Day Four – Aviation and Green Gang

Visit the [Kent Battle of Britain Museum](#) at Hawkinge (accessible by bus) and see the oldest established, largest and most important collection of Battle of Britain artefacts on show in the country, including aircraft, vehicles, flying equipment, weapons, prints and more. The Museum is privately run by enthusiasts and volunteers and is administered as a charitable trust. It is open from Easter Good Friday through to October, every day except Monday, from 10am until 4pm and until 5pm from June to September.

From Hawkinge, you could walk to Paddlesworth by following the public footpaths, and have lunch at the [Cat & Custard Pot](#). The pub contains a varied collection of aviation memorabilia and photographs that represent the history of the area during the last 100 years. It also holds the key to St. Oswald's Church opposite – reputedly the highest church in the Kent Downs.

If you have time in the afternoon, join a **Green Gang** event run by the [White Cliffs Countryside Project](#). The **Green Gang** is a programme of activities for children and their families, organised during each school holiday. Each year around 150 Green Gang events take place providing fun as well as educational experiences, including science, wildlife and art activities such as kite making, fossil forays, mini beast hunts, pond dipping, rock pooling, seashore games and woodland activities. Regular visitors to the area can also take part in their **Junior Rangers** programme, for children interested in learning more about wildlife and ecology, whilst earning special badges and certificates.

Please note children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. The [Guided Walks Spring/Summer 2010](#) brochure includes Green Gang dates and you can download the Green Gang magazine from the WCCP website. Alternatively call the WCCP office on 01034 241806 to request copies by post.

**Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- *Canterbury Cathedral* – <http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/>
- *Rupert Bear* – <http://www.canterbury.gov.uk/main.cfm?objectid=256>
- *Museum of Canterbury* – <http://www.canterbury.gov.uk/main.cfm?objectid=48>
- *Canterbury Tales Museum* – <http://www.canterburytales.org.uk/>
- *Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway* – <http://www.rhdr.org.uk/>
- *Natural Pathways* - <http://www.natural-pathways.co.uk/>
- *Port Lympne* - <http://www.totallywild.net/>
- *St. Stephen's Church Lympne* - <http://www.lympne-st-stephens.org.uk/>
- *Lympne Castle* - <http://www.lympnecastle.co.uk/>
- *Elham Valley Railway Museum* - <http://www.elhamvalleylinetrust.org/>
- *The New Inn Etchinghill* - <http://www.new-inn.info/>
- *Roseneath* - <http://www.roseneathceramics.com/>
- *Hilltop Spinning & Weaving Centre* - <http://www.handspin.co.uk/>
- *Annie Begley* - <http://www.anniebegley.co.uk/>
- *Stelling Minnis Windmill* - <http://www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/windmill.htm>
- *Battle of Britain Museum* - <http://www.kbobm.org/>
- *Cat & Custard Pot* - <http://www.catandcustardpot.co.uk/>
- *White Cliffs Countryside Project* - <http://www.whitecliffscountryside.org.uk/>
- *Guided Walks Spring/Summer 2010* – *leaflet embedded (copy on CD)*

## **A romantic break in Elham**

### **Day of arrival**

There are plenty of good quality places to stay in and around Elham. Check the accommodation listing for details of bed and breakfasts, guest houses and inns. If you are keen to stay a little closer to the great outdoors, there are also some good campsites.

After you've checked into your accommodation, explore the village by following the heritage trail in the Elham Country Break leaflet which you can pick up at the Rose & Crown. Have dinner at one of the three pubs in Elham – the [Abbott's Fireside](#), the [Rose & Crown](#) or the [Kings Arms](#).

### **Day one – (pampering & walking around Kingston & Bishopsbourne)**

#### **Pamper or meditate**

If you are visiting the Elham Valley to feel refreshed and relaxed, you may want to consider a yoga or meditation session, or a selection of the many therapies available here. See the spa, beauty and therapies page for details of the wide range of service available in the Elham Valley, ranging from beauty treatments, aromatherapy and reflexology to a range of different massage, reiki, sound therapy and yoga classes. A number of practitioners run regular workshops so check their websites for details.

#### **A country walk around Kingston and Bishopsbourne**

After your treatment, you could visit the village of Kingston and take a walk in the surrounding countryside, following the Elham Valley Way through Charlton Park to Bishopsbourne. Bishopsbourne was once home to the writer Joseph Conrad (you will see his former home 'Oswalds' next to the church) as well as Reverend Richard Hooker who played a major part in the development of Anglicanism in the 1500's. A memorial to him can be seen on the south wall of [St. Mary's](#), which is noted in particular for its remains of early 14<sup>th</sup> Century wall paintings, its mediaeval glass and William Morris mosaic tiles around the altar.

Bishopsbourne has a delightful pub called the Mermaid, renowned for its ales, so depending on the time of day you reach the village stop by for a drink or something to eat.

On your return to Kingston, take a look at the church of [St Giles](#). We suggest you time your walk so that you can have lunch or dinner at the [Black Robin](#).

### **Day two (golf and walking around Elham & Park Gate Nature Reserve)**

#### **A game of golf**

How about a game of golf together? The Elham Valley has two golf clubs that welcome visitors to either turn up and play or book up to seven days in advance, and a private golf club that can accommodate visitors at certain tee times:

- [Etchinghill Golf Club](#) welcomes visitors seven days a week, provides full catering facilities in the club house and has a restaurant. The main course is 18 holes played in a downland setting and the valley course is 9 holes played from 18 tee positions to give the option of 9 or 18 holes. The additional 9 hole par three course is popular with families and beginners and you can also use the driving range. You can book in advance up to a week ahead and lessons can be booked with golf professionals.
- [Roundwood Hall Golf Club](#) has a pay and play 9-hole course suitable for beginners and those new to the game while still offering a challenge to the more experienced golfer. It is a quiet golf course that can be played in a couple of hours, so leaving you plenty of time to continue exploring the Valley. Club and trolley hire is available, along with a range of tees balls and refreshments for purchase. The licensed clubhouse and courtyard opens during the spring and summer.
- [Broome Park Golf Club](#) is a private golf club with an 18 hole course, open 8 bay driving range and separate practice grounds. Visitors are welcome to play on certain days and tee times. Contact the Pro Shop on 01227 831126 for details of green fees, tee times, the dress code and the level of play required. There are restaurant facilities in the Mansion House.

### Explore the nature and wildlife around Elham

After lunch at the golf course or a local country pub, explore the countryside around Elham by following one of the Elham Walks (which can be purchased at the Rose & Crown in Elham, the Elham Valley Stores and a number of other establishments).

We suggest following Walk 3, a circular walk starting at St. Mary's Church in Elham Square, which takes you up to the [Park Gate Nature Reserve](#), managed by the [Kent Wildlife Trust](#). This reserve is rich in flora and in particular cowslip and violet, as well as early purple, common spotted, fragrant, monkey, man, lady, bee, greater butterfly, late spider and musk orchids. There are also several other unusual flowering plants, such as columbine and slender bedstraw.

#### **Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- *Abbot's Fireside* - <http://www.abbotsfireside.com/>
- *Rose & Crown Elham* - <http://www.roseandcrown.elham.co.uk/>
- *Kings Arms Elham* - <http://elham.co.uk/Elham/Business/KingsArms/KingsArms.htm>
- *Yoga4Freedom* - <http://www.yoga4freedom.co.uk/>
- *Yoga Nature* - <http://www.yoganature.co.uk/>
- *Wholistic Works* - <http://www.wholistic-works.co.uk/>
- *St. Mary's Bishopsbourne* – <http://www.barhamdownschurches.org.uk/>
- *St. Giles Kingston* - <http://www.barhamdownschurches.org.uk/>
- *The Black Robin* - <http://www.theblackrobin.com/>
- *Etchinghill Golf Club* - <http://www.pentlandgolf.co.uk/etchinghill/etchinghill-golf-club>
- *Roundwood Hall* – <http://www.roundwoodhall.co.uk/news.html>
- *Broome Park Golf Club* - <http://www.broomepark.co.uk/>
- *Park Gate Nature Reserve - Kent Wildlife Trust* - <http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/east-kent-downland/park-gate-down-hector-wilks-reserve/>
- *Kent Wildlife Trust* - <http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/>

## **The Great Outdoors**

### **Option 1 – a more strenuous option based on walking and cycling, staying in Elham**

#### **Day One (Elham to Kingston and back – walking and bus)**

From Elham, follow the Elham Valley Way to Kingston. Enroute you will pass through Covert Wood and by '[Jumping Downs](#)'. Take time to explore this Local Nature Reserve, which belongs to the Jumping Downs Trust who purchased the site from a local farmer in 2000. It is managed jointly by the trustees and the [Kentish Stour Countryside Project](#). The 14 acres of south facing chalk downland contains a rich diversity of chalk downland flowers, birds, small mammals and reptiles.

When you reach the village of Kingston, stop off at [St. Giles Church](#) before making your way to the Black Robin for lunch or a drink. From Kingston, you can take the number 17 bus back to Elham.

At the [Rose & Crown](#) in Elham you can pick up a copy of the Elham Country Break leaflet and follow the heritage trail around the village. Have a look at the Cosy Emporium gift shop and perhaps have afternoon tea at the Cosy Tea Room. Elham has three pubs where you can have dinner - the [Abbott's Fireside](#), the [Rose & Crown](#) or the [Kings Arms](#).

#### **Day Two (Elham to Lyminge Forest, to Stelling Minnis, to Lyminge, to Elham – walking & bus)**

Explore Lyminge Forest on the network of public footpaths that wind their way through West Wood and Park Wood.

From here you can continue on the public footpaths to [Stelling Minnis](#) where you can have lunch at the Rose & Crown, visit St. Mary's Church and the [Stelling Minnis Windmill](#). This is a Grade One listed wooden smock mill open on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays 2-5pm from Easter Sunday to the end of September. Have tea in the cafe and then go for a walk on the Minnis.

The bus 558 passes through Stelling Minnis and on to the village of [Lyminge](#). This is one of the larger villages in the Elham Valley and the source of the Nailbourne stream. One of the oldest standing structures in Lyminge is the 11<sup>th</sup> century parish Church and a 6<sup>th</sup> century Jutish cemetery was discovered here. Next to the playing field you will find St. Ethelburga's Well – the village was the site of an ancient monastery founded by Ethelburga, daughter of the King of Kent. From Lyminge it is possible to take bus 17 back to Elham, but if travelling on a Sunday, note the reduced timetable when buses run every two hours during the day time, instead of hourly.

#### **Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- [Jumping Downs - http://www.kentishstour.org.uk/jumping\\_downs.htm](http://www.kentishstour.org.uk/jumping_downs.htm)
- [Kentish Stour Countryside project – http://www.kentishstour.org.uk/](http://www.kentishstour.org.uk/)
- [St. Giles Church - http://www.barhamdownschurches.org.uk/](http://www.barhamdownschurches.org.uk/)
- [Rose & Crown Elham - http://www.roseandcrown.elham.co.uk/](http://www.roseandcrown.elham.co.uk/)
- [Stelling Minnis - http://www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/](http://www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/)
- [Stelling Minnis Windmill - http://www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/windmill.htm](http://www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/windmill.htm)
- [Lyminge - http://www.lyminge.org.uk/](http://www.lyminge.org.uk/)

## Option 2 – a less strenuous nature based option, staying in Barham

### Day One (Barham to Jumping Downs, Elham Valley Vineyard, Park Gate – walking and bus)

From Barham follow the Elham Valley Way to 'Jumping Downs', near Covert Wood. Take time to explore this Local Nature Reserve, which belongs to the Jumping Downs Trust. It is managed jointly by the trustees, who purchased the site from a local farmer in 2000, and the [Kentish Stour Countryside Project](#). The 14 acres of south facing chalk downland contains a rich diversity of chalk downland flowers, birds, small mammals and reptiles.

Upon returning to Barham, you can take bus 17 to the [Elham Valley Vineyard](#) for lunch or afternoon tea. The Vineyard has been growing Muller Thurgau, Reichensteiner, and Seyval Blanc grapes since 1979. Since 1995 the vineyard has been run by the Vale of Elham Trust, which was established as a charity to provide work and recreational opportunities in the East Kent area for adults with learning disabilities. The Trust's workers are responsible for all aspects of the business. Tours of the vineyards and wine tastings can be arranged, and visitors will find a number of other attractions, including a plant centre, a shop selling wine and crafts, and a tea room serving home baking, light lunches and cream teas.

Take the bus back to Barham and in the evening have dinner at the [Duke of Cumberland](#) or the [Black Robin](#) in Kingston.

### Day Two (Elham to Lyminge Forest, to Stelling Minnis, to Lyminge, to Elham – walking & bus)

Take number 17 bus to Elham for the [Farmers Market](#) which is held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of every month from 10am – 12pm in the courtyard of the Rose & Crown. Fruit, vegetables, eggs, cheese, fresh meat, fish, bread, cakes and pies, honey jams and pickles and wine are available here – well worth the visit if you are staying in self-catering accommodation or want a picnic. If you're there on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the month, you can also join in a pottery workshop run by [Annie Begley](#).

If you've remembered to dust off and bring your set of boules how about a game of Pétanque? The [Elham Valley Petanque Club](#) holds melées on the Petanque Terrain, The Triangle in Elham on the same days as the Farmers Market throughout summer and autumn. These club events start at 11am and are open to everyone. The Triangle is a public space so is open for play at any time.

It is worth taking the short walk up to the Chalk Pit, a local beauty spot on the edge of the village, for the views of the valley and the village.

There are three pubs in Elham where you can take lunch – the [Abbott's Fireside](#), the [Rose & Crown](#) or the [Kings Arms](#). Or have a light lunch or tea at the Cosy Tea Room.

If you not carrying too much shopping you could take bus 17 to Lyminge, see the church and Ethelburga's Well. Alternatively, continue to Etchinghill and have a game of golf at the [Etchinghill Golf Club](#) which welcomes visitors seven days a week. Full catering facilities are available in the club house. You can book in advance, up to a week ahead.

It is possible to take the bus back from Etchinghill (the bus stops at the New Inn) to Barham, but if travelling on a Sunday, note the reduced timetable. Buses run every two hours during the day time.

**Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- *Jumping Downs* - [http://www.kentishstour.org.uk/jumping\\_downs.htm](http://www.kentishstour.org.uk/jumping_downs.htm)
- *Kentish Stour Countryside project* – <http://www.kentishstour.org.uk/>
- *Elham Valley Vineyard* – <http://www.familyinvestmenthomes.com/index.php/day-services/vineyard/>
- *Duke of Cumberland* - <http://www.dukeofcumberland.co.uk/>
- *Black Robin Kingston* - <http://www.theblackrobin.com/>
- *Elham Farmers Market* - <http://www.elhamfarmersmarket.co.uk/>
- *Annie Begley* - <http://www.anniebegley.co.uk/>
- *Elham Valley Petanque Club* - <http://www.elham.co.uk/Elham/Community/Clubs/Elham%20Valley%20Petanque%20Club.htm>
- *Abbott's Fireside* - <http://www.abbotsfireside.com/>
- *Rose & Crown Elham* - <http://www.roseandcrown.elham.co.uk/>
- *Kings Arms* – <http://elham.co.uk/Elham/Business/KingsArms/KingsArms.htm>
- *Etchingill Golf Club* – <http://www.pentlandgolf.co.uk/etchinghill/etchinghill-golf-club>

## **An active break**

This break is based on exploring the Elham Valley by bike, which you could hire from Downland Cycles in Canterbury. [Downland Cycles](#) has a large fleet of bikes for hire in sizes to suit all riders, male, female and children. They have also compiled a number of routes in the area, utilising both national and local promoted routes and a lot of local knowledge!

A number of the routes they have published take in the Canterbury end of the Elham Valley, passing through the villages of Barham, Kingston, Bishopsbourne and Bridge. Here we suggest their 'Three Day Ride' which includes the full length of the Elham Valley. **Please note this ride would suit experienced cyclists who are confident enough to include some sections of busy roads on their itinerary.** The full route description can be downloaded from the [Downland Cycles](#) website, but it is worth discussing the route with their staff when hiring your bikes.

Accommodation can be booked enroute so that you can break this 57 mile route over the three days and spend time exploring the villages you will pass through, their pubs and their ancient churches. Check the accommodation listings for details of b&b's, guesthouses and hotels in each stopover point.

### **Day One**

On day one, you depart Canterbury for the ancient Cinque Port of Sandwich, passing through the villages of Littlebourne and Wickhambreaux, following the course of the Little Stour River and Great Stour River, past the remains of Richborough Roman Fort before entering Sandwich. From here you will continue on past the Cinque Ports Golf Course to Deal.

### **Day Two**

On day two, you will leave Deal to follow the coast along to Kingsdown, cross country to St. Margaret's Bay, Langdon Cliffs and the Port of Dover. From Dover you will follow cycle route 17 as it climbs out of Dover towards Folkestone. This section of the route is quite strenuous in short stretches. Pass the Battle of Britain Museum at Hawkinge and eventually descend into the Elham Valley and to the village of Elham. Check the accommodation listings to see the wide range of places to stay in the Valley, including bed & breakfasts, inns and campsites.

### **Day Three**

On day three, you will follow the road along the Elham Valley and up to the Elham Valley Vineyard at Breach. Ride with care as the road can attract an amount of traffic. A short off-road route from Kingston will take you to the small village of Bishopsbourne. Climb out of the village to Higham Park House and Gardens. Descend into the village of Bridge and follow the cycle route back into Canterbury

If you want to reduce this to a two day ride, you could miss out day one by cycling from Canterbury directly to Dover on route 16, and then join route 17 to head towards the Elham Valley.

#### ***Web addresses for hyperlinks:***

*Downland Cycles* - <http://www.downlandcycles.co.uk/>

## **Buying local produce in the Elham Valley**

Much of the Elham Valley is a farmed landscape and this area is renowned in particular for its beef, lamb and fruit. If you are staying in self-catering accommodation, remember the local farm shops, butchers, bakers and farmers markets where you can get your supplies for breakfast – and for a picnic.

The [Elham Farmers Market](#) is held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of every month in the courtyard of the Rose & Crown, selling a selection of produce including fruit and vegetables (some organic), eggs, cheese, fresh meat, fish, bread, cakes and pies, honey, jams and pickles, and wine. The list is not exhaustive and the selection varies according to season and availability. If you're here on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday, you will have the opportunity to join in on a pottery workshop, run by [Annie Begley](#).

The [Etchinghill Farmers & Craft Market](#) is held on the first Saturday of every month in Etchinghill Village Hall.

At the [Jubilee Farm Shop](#) in Rhodes Minnis you can buy quality produce into which their efforts and adherence to organic principles have been channelled. You will find fresh beef, lamb, pork and chicken, eggs, bacon and sausages simply displayed and readily available.

The renowned [Laurie Wakeham Family Butcher](#) in Bridge also sells a wide range of fresh meat, as well as eggs, bread and deli items.

The **Lower Hardres Farm Shop** has a full butchery selling meat from their family run farm including pork from rare breed saddleback pigs, Angus beef, free range eggs from their own hens and lambs from their own flock. Fresh fruit & vegetables are sold and they have PYO in season. They also stock local cheeses and have a full off license for beer, wine and local cider. Close by is [Hode Pottery](#) in Pett Bottom – the creation of a husband and wife team who produce decorative and functional garden pottery.

To try our local fish you can go to Hythe where you will find [Griggs of Hythe Ltd](#) on the Fishermans Landing Beach, and **Cooks** on the High Street. Alternatively go to the Fish Market at Folkestone Harbour.

You will find grocery/convenience stores and Post Offices in Barham, Bridge, Lyminge and Elham (Elham's post office services are at the [Kings Arms](#) on the Square). Lyminge also has a very interesting hardware store.

To explore the wild side of food you could join a fungi or food foraging walk with the [White Cliffs Countryside Project](#). Call the office on 01304 241806 to request a copy of their Countryside Events leaflet. You could also join Fergus Drennan – the [Wild Man of Wild Food](#) who will teach you to identify and harvest all manner of wild plants, herbs, mushrooms and fruits which you will then cook together. Starting at 9am, the courses which take place around the Canterbury area, typically last around 12 hours so this is a full day of activity.

### **Web addresses for hyperlinks**

- *Elham Farmers Market* - <http://www.elhamfarmersmarket.co.uk/>
- *Etchinghill Farmers Craft Market at Etchinghill Village Hall* - <http://www.etchinghill.org/>
- *Jubilee Farm Shop* - <http://www.jubilee-farm.co.uk/>
- *Laurie Wakeham Family Butcher* - <http://www.family-butcher.co.uk/>
- *Griggs of Hythe* - <http://www.griggsofhythe.com/>
- *Kings Arms Elham* - <http://www.elham.co.uk/Elham/Business/KingsArms/KingsArms.htm>
- *White Cliffs Countryside Project* - <http://www.whitecliffscountryside.org.uk/>

- *Wild Man Wild Food* - <http://www.wildmanwildfood.com/>

## Ideas for a ½ day visit, 1 day visit, weekend or longer

### If you have just half a day to visit the Elham Valley:

1. Visit the village of [Elham](#). Pick up the [Elham Country Break](#) leaflet at the Rose & Crown and follow the heritage trail. See the interesting buildings and houses of Elham before stopping off for lunch at the Rose & Crown, the Kings Arms or Abbots Fireside. Or why not have afternoon tea at the Cosy Tea Room.
2. Visit [Lyminge](#), one of the larger villages in the Elham Valley and the source of the Nailbourne stream. One of the oldest standing structures in Lyminge is the 11th century Parish Church and a 6<sup>th</sup> century Jutish cemetery was discovered here. Next to the playing field you'll find St. Ethelburga's Well – the village was the site of an ancient monastery founded by Ethelburga, daughter of the King of Kent. There is a cluster of shops in the village centre and the old railway station building (which fell into disuse with the closure of the Elham Valley branch line many years ago) now houses the village library. There is a splendid cricket pitch and modern pavilion on the outskirts of the village at Sibton Park and a golf course at nearby Etchinghill.
3. If you are visiting the area on a spring or summer Sunday, visit the [Stelling Minnis Windmill](#) and Museum and have afternoon tea in their cafe. This is a Grade One listed picturesque wooden smock mill open on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays 2-5pm from Easter Sunday to the end of September. Have tea in the cafe, visit St. Mary's Church and take a walk on the Minnis.

### **Web addresses for hyperlinks and brochures to embed:**

- *Elham* - <http://www.elham.co.uk/>
- *Elham Country Break* – brochure to embed attached
- *Lyminge* – <http://www.lyminge.org.uk/>
- *Stelling Minnis Windmill* - <http://www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/windmill.htm>

### If you have a full day to visit the Elham Valley:

1. Visit the village of **Bishopsbourne**, once home to the writer Joseph Conrad as well as Reverend Richard Hooker who played a major part in the development of Anglicanism in the 1500's. Hooker was buried in the Chancel of the village church of [St. Mary](#), and a memorial to him can be seen on the south wall. St. Mary's is also noted for its remains of early 14<sup>th</sup> Century wall paintings, its mediaeval glass and William Morris mosaic tiles around the alter.

Next to the Church you will see Oswalds, once the home of Joseph Conrad and from behind the Church you can follow the path to see Bourne Park.

After lunch at the Mermaid, renowned for its ales, you could follow the Elham Valley Way in the opposite direction to **Kingston**. Along the way you will cross through Charlton Park. At Kingston, take a look at [St Giles](#) and stop for a drink at the Black Robin. The walk back to Bishopsbourne is not too far!

2. There are plenty of opportunities for learning **arts or crafts** in the Elham Valley. Join a pottery making working with [Annie Begley](#) in Wingmore, or a pottery painting class with [Roseneath Ceramics](#) in Rhodes Minnis. Stop off at [Hode Pottery](#) in Petts Bottom where you can buy garden pottery. Alternatively, attend a workshop with the [Hilltop Spinning & Weaving Centre](#) in Lyminge where you can learn hand spinning, weaving, dyeing with natural dyestuffs and felt making.

**Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- *St. Mary's* - <http://www.barhamdownschurches.org.uk/>
- *St Giles* - <http://www.barhamdownschurches.org.uk/>
- *Stelling Minnis Windmill* - <http://www.stelling-minnis.co.uk/windmill.htm>
- *Annie Begley* - <http://www.anniebegley.co.uk/>
- *Roseneath Ceramics* - <http://www.roseneathceramics.com/>
- *Hode Pottery* - <http://www.hodepottery.co.uk/contact.html>
- *Hilltop Spinning & Weaving Centre* - <http://www.handspin.co.uk/>

**If you have a weekend to spend in the Elham Valley – Family Weekend Bushcraft:**

If you are coming to the Elham Valley for the weekend then you obviously want to experience the great outdoors. What better way to do this than to learn some bushcraft skills. [Natural Pathways](#) provides a broad range of Survival Bushcraft and Nature Awareness Courses for children and adults, including learning about fire and shelter. The courses are held in woodland around Barham and range from flint knapping, wildlife tracking and a Family Weekend Bushcraft camp.

**Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- *Natural Pathways* - <http://www.natural-pathways.co.uk/>

**If you have a few days to spend in the Elham Valley – walking and horse riding holidays:**

1. Why not take a walking holiday with Derek Bright of [Walk Awhile](#). Book the seven day, six night 'Discovering Rural Kent' package, with five full days of walking starting and finishing at the cathedral city of Canterbury. You will follow the Elham Valley Way through Bridge, Bishopsbourne and Elham before continuing on to Postling and Wye. Accommodation in the Valley can be arranged for you, as well as luggage transfers. A variety of activities enroute could be booked too so if you fancy learning bushcraft and survival skills, attending a pottery workshop or a yoga class during your tour, let Walk Awhile know and Derek may be able to build it into the package.

Derek operates a Responsible Travel Policy that is supportive and in sympathy with local communities and the environment. Walk Awhile has also achieved a Silver award from the [Green](#)

[Tourism Business Scheme](#) and is featured on [www.responsibletravel.com](http://www.responsibletravel.com). You can read his Responsible Tourism Policy on his website.

2. Bring your own horse and [Have Horse Will Travel](#) will organise everything for you – stabling, accommodation in local b&b's, food and drink and a guide for the duration of the holiday. The three day ride incorporates the Elham Valley, Crundale Downs and Lyminge Forest (approx 52 miles), taking you through beautiful valleys, forest and across open downs. The majority of riding will be on tracks and bridleways but where this is not possible you will be travelling along quiet and minor roads. Where main roads have to be crossed, assistance will be on hand. The pace will be dictated by the desires and abilities of the riders and usually includes a mix of all speeds to suit the group.

Have Horse Will Travel makes a strong commitment to responsible tourism and to ensure their rides in Kent are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, they aim to bring economic business to local suppliers by using local accommodation and pubs, and buying products from local farmers. Educating visitors about the area and promoting the local countryside are also important aspects of what they do. You can read the full extent of their activities in their Responsible Tourism Policy.

**Web addresses for hyperlinks:**

- Walk Awhile - <http://www.walkawhile.co.uk/>
- Green Tourism Business Scheme - <http://green-business.co.uk/>
- responsibletravel.com - <http://www.responsibletravel.com/>
- Have Horse Will Travel - <http://hhwtravel.co.uk/>