

A Short Walk around WEST HOATHLY VILLAGE



A beautiful hilltop village
set in the heart of the
Sussex countryside

Most of the **Village** described here has been designated a conservation area due to its historical significance and its attractive appearance.

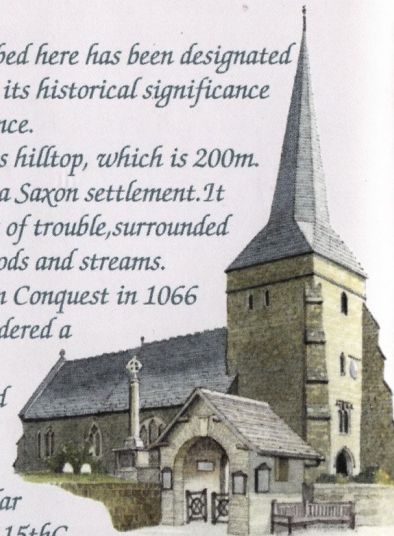
Many centuries ago on this hilltop, which is 200m. above sea level, there was a Saxon settlement. It served as a refuge in times of trouble, surrounded as it is by steep ghylls, woods and streams.

Not long after the Norman Conquest in 1066 one of William's barons ordered a

church to be built here. It was gradually enlarged and now has many interesting features. The tower, with its broach spire clad in cedar shingles, was added in the 15thC.

In the course of time the village grew up around it. The unusual churchyard has been extended more than once. In the 1920s the terraces on the hillside, originally probably a medieval vineyard, were included. From above them there is a fine view over the Weald to the South Downs. Amongst the variety of tombstones the oldest is dated 1679. The great yew tree is about 850 years old. Note the two mass or scratch dials by the window near the porch, now eroded by time, but useful before a clock was installed in the 17thC. The churchyard wall has straight joins marking the lengths to be maintained by local landowners, some of whose initials remain on the coping. The War Memorial and lychgate were built by Adin Lewis, stonemason, of West Hoathly. The gate was the gift of William Robinson, the renowned gardener who lived at Gravetye Manor.

Across the road, historically known as the Street, on the west side, building plots were laid out in the 15thC. At the south end stands the **Priest House**, now a museum. Its cottage garden contains many plants of medicinal and culinary value. The house is a good example of a medieval timber-framed dwelling which had a central open hall and rooms at each end with chambers above. One of these was designed to accommodate



an important visitor in more comfortable style—a rare feature. In the early 20thC it was restored and later given to the Sussex Archaeological Society.

Looking south, at the corner is the **Vineyard**, once a 2-bay weatherboarded cottage but much enlarged. Next to it is **Luctons**, early 20thC, where the village Constable's cottage stood, with its prisoners' cell. The story goes that a smuggler, apprehended, tricked the Constable, locked him in, and made good his escape. The Lane leads on to the **Bowls Club**, the cricket field and further to **Hook Farm**. Westward a pathway runs down to the **Quarry** and **Philpots Manor School**. Returning to the Street, opposite the **Priest House**, is **Upper Pendent**, a 17thC 3-storey timber-framed house now clad in brick and tiles. It became a grocery which closed in the 1970s.

Rose Cottage, of a similar date next door, recently extended, has a large cellar cut from the rock, like many houses here. Deep wells behind are no longer in use. Next to the **Priest House**, behind the brick wall, stands the fine stone **Manor House**, earlier known as the **Great House**. There may have been a medieval house here because Mrs Infield intended to modernise an old one, but finished by building a new one. In 1627. She disputed the cost of £1,000 with her son-in-law, **Henry Faulkner** of **Gravetye**, as recorded in the surviving proceedings of the case. The house was in a poor state when bought by **Mr Godwin King**, in 1900, who had it carefully restored.



Note the elaborate roof finials, Horsham stone roof tiles, the elegant archway with the initials of John and Catherine Infield and the 17thC handmade bricks. Mr King and his daughter, Mrs Ursula Ridley, also a great benefactor, are commemorated by the bus shelter and a bench near the lychgate.

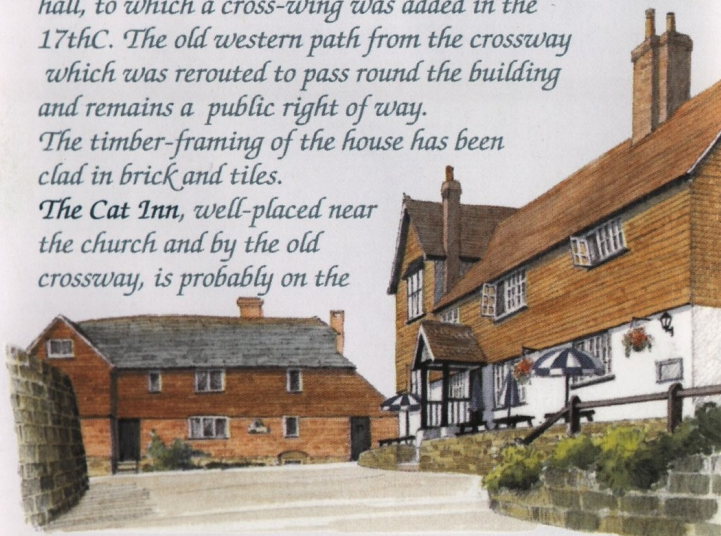
The Old Parsonage, just north of the Manor House, was also restored and now has a late Victorian facade. Behind it is a 17thC range with elegant stone hearths, while beyond, part of the medieval house survives, with a crown post roof and jetty. The curate may have lived here in the 1600s.



Beside this house is another medieval dwelling Combers, named after a long-lived resident, which once had an open hall, to which a cross-wing was added in the 17thC. The old western path from the crossway which was rerouted to pass round the building and remains a public right of way.

The timber-framing of the house has been clad in brick and tiles.

The Cat Inn, well-placed near the church and by the old crossway, is probably on the



site of even older alehouses.

Its name comes from the heraldic leopards on the Earl of Dorset's coat-of-arms. The medieval building was altered by inserting a chimney with the two hearths in the 16thC; later, in the 19thC, a wing was added on the west side.

The Inn had a reputation as a smugglers' haunt. The row of cottages which once stood nearby was known as Smugglers' Row.

Next to the Inn stands The Strakes, built in about 1600, with later additions at each end. Sold to George Coppard, shopkeeper, in 1815, by 1896 it was a grocer's shop and Post Office, only closing in 1924. The unusual name may derive from making iron straps or wooden staves. The houses of medieval origin are near the church. Those in the lane running north are of later date. Upper Barn, on the left, is a 20thC house on the site of Manor Farm barn and yard.



Fountain Cottage on the right was once the Fountain Inn, where beer was brewed. An 18thC building, it had a skittle alley at the rear. Manor Pound, as the name



indicates, is where stray animals were impounded in earlier times. The wooden-fenced enclosure was later moved to Finche Field. St Dunstan's, the Catholic Chapel was once two cottages but was altered for its present use in 1957. The Village Hall started life as a late 19thC Reading Room built by men of the village. The hall at the rear was added some 30 years afterwards. Used by many organisations, it also includes the Parish Council Office. The white weatherboarded Old Timbers dates from the 18thC. It has winder stairs at each end and was enlarged at the south end, when it housed two families. Next to it is Bowfield Cottage, a butcher's shop until recently. Bow Cottage is early 18thC, with a cross-wing and a modern extension at the north end. The tenant had the right to carry water from the pond behind.

The public toilet, beside the recreation ground, was built in 1913 as a shelter for the fire engine. Up until 1938 the village band used to practise here. When sewers were laid it was converted to its present use.

The Primary School was newly built in 1874 when it opened with 73 pupils, soon increasing to an average attendance of 80. The previous school had become inadequate. Now modernised and extended, there are 18 staff and 94 pupils (2009). At the end of North Lane is Cobwebbs, earlier known as



Cobwebbs, which belonged to the Infield family in the 16thC. They were wealthy landowners with profitable ironworks who built Gravetye in 1597. Next to Cobwebbs stood the blacksmith's forge, now replaced by modern dwellings. The wrought iron West Hoathly sign won an award for Mr Newnham, the smith, in 1936.



Across the road, where there was once a crossway, the Chapel stands on land by the West Hoathly garage set up by the family who ran the forge. The Chapel, no longer in use, was built for the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion in 1826.

Following the road westwards, Chapel Row includes New Inn Cottage, which became a private dwelling at the end of the 19thC. The Potters House overlooks steep land known as Knave's Acre, probably a joke name. This unique 18thC house should be seen from the footpath below. The rock foundation supports four storeys with a stair turret. The wheelwright lived here in 1840.

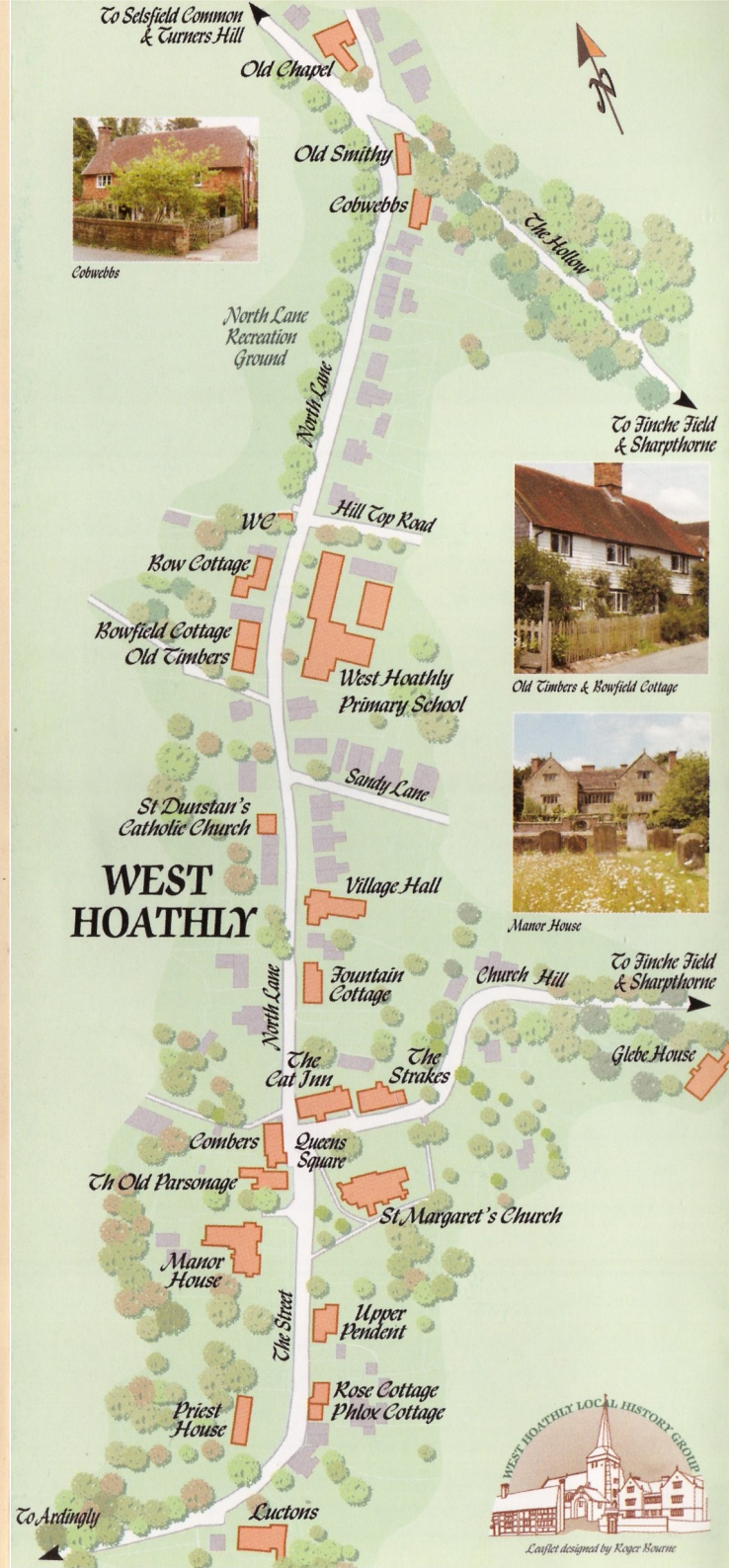
Ducky's Holt on the other side of the road is a 16thC house, once the Three Tuns Inn. The Providence is yet another chapel, on the north side, dated 1867, but today privately owned.

East of the village lies Finche Field, given as public ground, but partly used for garden allotments. The Toposcope, or viewing table, a millennium project, indicates landmarks in four counties up to 20 miles away. The pine clump commemorates the coronation of George VI in 1937.



Further information may be found in the Parish Guide, in booklets in St Margaret's Church and the Priest House Museum.

West Hoathly Local History Group 2010



Cobwebbs



Old Timbers & Bowfield Cottage



Manor House