

**N Church Hill to Finche Field**

Remember to walk on the right hand side facing any traffic en route to Finche Field Car Park.

Half way down Church Hill can be seen "The Old School House". This was the first village school and was built in 1839. Although the new school in North Lane opened in 1874, the original school remained open for infants until 1901.



**O New Stile**

Delightful views across the Sussex Countryside towards the South Downs can be captured from the footpath at New Stile. Ahead you can see Highbrook Church which, as a United Benefice, is served by the Vicar of St Margaret's. A walk back up the steps opposite Finche Field will take you to the Toposcope which points to other local towns and villages.

In 2018, a beacon was built to mark the Centenary of the end of World War One and is lit on special occasions forming a chain of beacons across Sussex.

**Historic West Hoathly**

Our beautiful village of West Hoathly has many historic buildings worth exploring. In the village centre we have the 11th Century St Margaret's Church which has seen the village grow around it, including the Manor House and the Priest House museum.

Once, the village shops were able to supply everything required. These included a butcher, baker, general stores and haberdashery. There were five village pubs in 1899 and West Hoathly had its own band and even its own Fire Station.

Farmers would often walk their cattle to East Grinstead market, some five miles away. Then in 1882, the railway arrived in West Hoathly on the line from Lewes to East Grinstead, part of which is now the famous Bluebell Railway.

There were many sporting groups and clubs and the village school regularly won competitions against neighbouring and county schools.

The Village Hall developed from a reading room and was used for a time during the Second World War as a school for the children evacuated from London. In 1946 West Hoathly had its own cinema when Granada set up a mobile cinema that toured around Surrey and Sussex.

Today the Parish has over 2000 residents and although many shops and facilities have been lost, it retains its charm and appeal. We hope you enjoy our Heritage Trail around the centre of the village which will take between 20 and 30 minutes to complete.

**We would like to thank the following for their help and contributions to our Heritage Trail:**

- West Hoathly Bonfire Society for their kind sponsorship of this leaflet.
- West Hoathly Local History Archives.
- Roger Bourne (Map).
- Royal Observer Corps Heritage Collection, Newhaven.
- West Hoathly Parish Council.
- Gatwick Airport Community Trust.

**Other places to visit in the Parish:**

- Selsfield Common towards Turners Hill for delightful walks.
- The old station site in Station Road, Sharpthorne, where you can view the Bluebell Railway steam trains passing through the village.
- The Church and Smokery in the hamlet of Highbrook.



# West Hoathly Heritage Trail



#### A Finche Field

Near to the car park in Finche Field is the site of a Royal Observer Corps Nuclear monitoring post. Built in 1962 and in operation until 1992, the post was manned by volunteers whose task was to measure the force of any nuclear attack on Sussex and report back on conditions in the area. There were some 40 monitoring posts in Sussex, part of the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation Posts which were manned by teams of three during times of serious threat during the Cold War. Today, the monitoring post, which was built to withstand a nuclear attack, is covered over and used as a picnic area.



**B Coronation Clump**, these were planted in 1937 to commemorate the Coronation of King George VI. The chosen site stands at one of the highest points of the village and can be seen from the South Downs and East Grinstead.



**C Steps to Church Hill** at the entrance to Garden Mead from Finche Field were built for the villagers during the Second World War by Prisoners of War who were based at the prison camp at The Beacon. At this time only half of Garden Mead had been built as the houses on the Church side were built on allotments after the end of the war. The Italian prisoners were used for a number of jobs around the village. They mixed well with the locals and were probably pleased to have been out of harm's way!



#### D Garden Mead and Sandy Lane

A small housing estate was built on the field known as Garden Mead commencing in the mid 1930s and completed after the war.

In Sandy Lane, near to the junction of North Lane, two new houses now stand on what was once a wheelwright's yard in use until the 1930s.

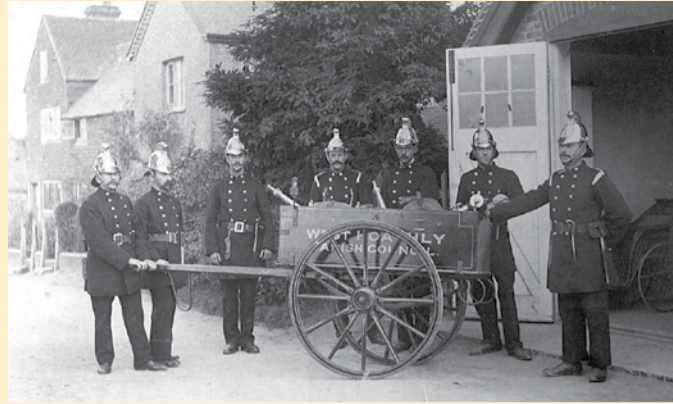


#### E North Lane

West Hoathly Church of England Primary School was on the east side of North Lane built in 1874. The first school is now a private residence on Church Hill.

The school was extended just 16 years later but the original

classroom on the right hand side can still be seen. Various extensions have taken place over the years as the population of the village expanded and it became compulsory to attend school.



**F The Lavatory** at the entrance to the recreation ground was originally the village Fire Station. Operated by the Parish Council, a hand cart was pulled around the village as required by volunteers who formed the local Fire Brigade.

When disbanded, the building became a store and was used by the local band to store their instruments. It was then used as a garage by the village nurse.

As we turn around and return towards the Church, several private houses still show signs of their previous use as shops or public houses.

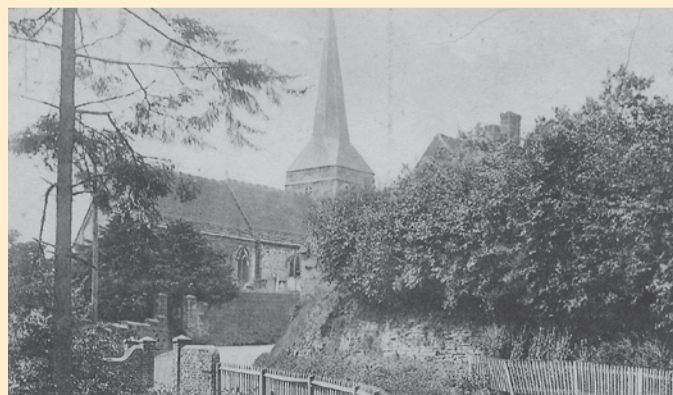
The building opposite the school was once the village butcher shop where Roy Maynard became the last butcher in West Hoathly. The butcher relocated to this shop in 1927 from premises further down the road which is today the Catholic Chapel.



**G** When the Chapel became a butchers shop, it was operated by the "Smith" family who today still have descendants living in the village. The photo taken in 1910 shows a different spelling of Hoathly on the butcher's bike advertising panel.



**H** The building next to the Cat Inn car park, now **Fountain Cottage**, was also once a public house and then became a tea room. In the actual village, rather than the outlying area, there were once five pubs, The New Inn, The Fountain, The Cat Inn, The Vinols Cross (now The Fox) and the Railway Hotel better known as the Bluebell, opposite the old station. The ability to travel by train or bus to local towns like East Grinstead and Haywards Heath with their many cinemas and evening dances, as well as the introduction of television, had an impact on the social scene of a small village.



#### I St Margaret's Church.

St Margaret's Church is over 900 years old and has been extended a number of times. The original Norman Church consisted of the section next to the tower, which was added around 1500. Standing outside The Cat you can see the next two extensions of the Church including a blocked up window next to where the altar once stood. A Chapel was built on the south side which was then extended towards the porch to give the church you see today.

The Church is open every day from around 9am until 4pm and there is an excellent guided tour leaflet. The views from the

Churchyard over the South Downs are outstanding and a special viewing area has been built.

The village centre is Queens Square at the front of The Cat Inn. The end of the Second World War witnessed dancing in the Square until the early hours of the next day. It is also said villagers held bonfires in the Square.



**J The Cat Inn** is a sixteenth century building with a Victorian extension opposite the bus shelter. There are a number of unproven local tales including a secret smugglers' tunnel between the pub, the Church and the Manor House! There is in fact an underground stream with a well which you can see today inside the restaurant area. The well is in line with others at Fountain Cottage, Upper Pendent and Rose Cottage which could be where the tale originates. It is also said the last villain to be hanged in Sussex was captured in The Cat. There is some truth in this as he stopped for refreshments whilst being chased by the local authorities, however was actually captured whilst still in the Parish but at Selsfield House.

The name The Cat is believed to have come from the arms of the Dorset family which included spotted leopards.

The Cat staff will also tell you about the ghost they have seen – pop in for a pint and keep your eyes open!



**K The Manor House** was built in 1627 and was originally known as The Great House.

The Court of the Rectorial Manor of West Hoathly, the Court Baron, was held in the Court Room. The Lord of the Manor would sit on the dais in the Court Room where copyholders could address him.



**L The Priest House** was built in 1430 by Lewes Priory. This hall house has been altered many times and was once a derelict building that was finally restored and opened as a museum in 1908. The museum is open from March until October each year and well worth a visit.



**M Upper Pendent** was probably built in the seventeenth century. It was once two shops with one being a general purpose store built alongside. 'The Tin Shop' was demolished around 1956 when the general store was moved into the main building. Next door stood the undertaker's.