

Shipwrights way

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Shipwrights way

The route

Shipwrights Way is a new long distance route which links villages and towns in east Hampshire through some beautiful countryside. The name reflects the use of oak grown at Alice Holt Forest for Tudor shipbuilding, linking this site with Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, home of the Mary Rose and HMS Victory.

Starting from Alice Holt Forest, the route passes through Bordon, Liphook, Liss, Petersfield, Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Staunton Country Park, Havant, Hayling Island and continues to Portsmouth via the ferry, finishing at the Historic Dockyard - around 50 miles in all, and including seven rail stations.

There are also twenty stone sculptures along the way, beautifully carved to show the history or wildlife of each place - see if you can spot them all!



As much as possible, the route is off-road, using rights of way and permissive paths.

Section	Section length (approx.)	Rail Stations	Sculptures
Section 1: Bentley Station to Alice Holt Forest	2 miles	Bentley	1, 2
Section 2: Alice Holt Forest and Cradle Lane Section	3 miles		2, 3
Section 3: Cradle Lane to Lindford	2 miles		4, 5
Section 4 - Bordon to Liss	7.5 miles	Liss	7, 8
Section 5: Liphook to Liss	7 miles	Liphook, Liss	6, 7, 8
Section 6: Liss to Petersfield	5 miles	Liss, Petersfield	9,10
Section 7: Petersfield to Queen Elizabeth Country Park	5 miles	Petersfield	11,12
Section 8 - QECP to Finchdean	5½ miles		13, 14
Section 9 - Finchdean to Staunton Country Park	3½ miles	Rowlands Castle	14, 15
Section 10 - Havant	3 miles	Havant	
Section 11 - Hayling Island	5½ miles		16, 17, 18
Section 12 - Portsmouth	5 miles	Portsmouth Harbour	19, 20

Please use the guides to each section: each has a detailed map and information on what you can see and what to expect in terms of surface and gradients. The route is signed, and can be walked or ridden in either direction. It is open to walkers and cyclists throughout, and forms part of the Sustrans National Cycle Network route 22 linking London to Portsmouth. Parts of the route can be used by horse riders and people with disabilities.

Wildlife

Shipwrights Way crosses the South Downs National Park from north to south at its widest point, taking in a wide cross-section of habitats. Starting with extensive areas of woodland at Alice Holt Forest, you then travel across the internationally-important heaths surrounding Bordon. Approaching Petersfield, you will see the chalk downs themselves, stretching across the horizon. Then the route descends gently through farmland down to the sea and the marine nature reserve at Hayling Island.

The purple emperor is the emblem of Alice Holt Forest and generally lives in the tops of oak trees; people travel from far and wide to see its courtship displays in summer. You may also see grey heron, lesser spotted woodpecker, nightjar and willow tit, as well as Roe Deer and Muntjac - and bats if you happen to visit at dusk.



The extensive heathland around Bordon is home to all 12 native species of amphibians and reptiles, including the rare natterjack toad, as well as important ground-nesting birds such as Nightjar, Woodlark and the Dartford Warbler.



Approaching Liss, you will cross the Rover Rother, where you may see Brown Trout, mayflies in spring and the large and beautiful Banded Demoiselle, a damselfly often mistaken for a butterfly. The wet woodland here encourages ferns and mosses and provides a haven for wildlife.



The open chalk downland south of Petersfield is an incredibly rich habitat, supporting up to 50 plant species per square metre, such as round-headed rampion and orchids such as the pyramidal orchid, burnt orchid and early spider orchid. In turn these flowers attract butterflies including the Adonis blue and chalkhill blue. The fine-leaved grasses and low-growing herbs have a herby smell and provide a distinctive spongy feel to the ground.

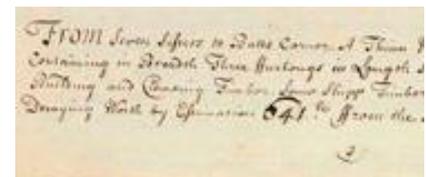
Just south of Havant, you will reach Langstone Harbour, with its internationally celebrated birdlife. During the winter months as many as 40,000 birds may be present in the harbour, either roosting or feeding on the mudflats. Species regularly encountered include Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Ringed Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Redshank and Brent Geese. From May to August Little Tern, Common Tern, Sandwich Tern, Black-headed and Mediterranean Gulls, Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover nest here.

Heritage

The interaction between man and landscape along the Shipwrights Way goes back centuries.

Alice Holt Forest

The clay soils, woodland for fuel and access to rivers for transport gave rise to a thriving Roman pottery industry, supplying three quarters of London's pots.



Bordon area

The heathlands around Bordon were, until just over a century ago, very sparsely populated, used for open grazing as the land was too poor to farm. In the early 1900's the army arrived, bringing people, buildings



and the training activity which continues to this day. The extensive military railway linking to Bentley, Liphook and Liss was used for training and transporting troops. Today, the army shares its ranges with wildlife and (when the red flags are not flying) the public. The area is soon to change again, with the building of the eco-town.

Petersfield area

Petersfield held livestock markets for many centuries and hosted trades typical of a market town of its day: butchers, bakers, brewers, shoemakers, carpenters and blacksmiths. On market day, the town would have been busy, noisy and probably smelly - full of sheep, cattle and horses, and the farmers, merchants, weavers and tanners from the surrounding villages who'd come to trade. At one time, Petersfield's wool industry supported 1,000 poor people in the area, who lived by weaving. Today, sheep remain important to the surrounding area, helping to preserve the chalk downland habitat and providing meat and wool.

There are remains of a Roman farmstead at Queen Elizabeth Country Park.

Rowlands Castle

The area surrounding Rowlands Castle was once part of the huge, medieval Forest of Bere, with the commons being grazed by royal deer and animals belonging to local people. Using local clay, the Romans made brick and tiles there and for centuries it was known for its brick making industry. The village also developed a reputation for smuggling and poaching!

Havant area

Havant housed industries relating to the use of animal skins, including tanning, glove making and parchment making. Parchment was made from the skins of sheep, goats or calves, which were soaked in Havant's pure spring water to produce bright white parchment; a high quality product. Find out more about Havant's history at the Spring Arts and Heritage Centre in East Street.



Hayling Island

Hayling Island was a place of farmers and fishermen for much of its history and there was also a Roman shrine there. It was only connected to the mainland in the 1820's.

In the 1930's, Hayling became a popular holiday resort, with many visitors coming to enjoy the funfair and staying at the new holiday camps. Many arrived by train, on the line which today forms part of Shipwrights Way.

Portsmouth

Portsmouth has an extremely rich history, initially as a merchant port and from 1500 as a naval port, where royal warships were built and repaired. The Historic Dockyard is a fascinating place. Among the many things to see is an exhibition about shipwrights, the new Mary Rose museum containing the ship itself and HMS Victory - ships of the times when large numbers of trees at Alice Holt were felled for shipbuilding.



Sculptures

There are twenty beautiful new sculptures along the route of Shipwrights Way, each depicting a story or aspect of the area where they stand. The subjects were suggested by local people and then carved by artist [Richard Perry](#) from creamy Portland stone. We hope

you will enjoy them.

You can download information on them all to take with you or there are QR codes next to each sculpture giving mobile access to the web-page - although be warned, the sculptures are in rural areas and the signal can vary! They are given below in order north to south, starting at Alice Holt Forest; the Route page lists which sculptures are on each section of the route.

Sculpture 1 - Butterfly, at Bentley Station Meadow

This sculpture shows a Silver-washed Fritillary, a woodland butterfly which uses [Bentley Station Meadow butterfly reserve](#) for gathering nectar and breeding. Look out for a large butterfly with wings a rich orange with dark brown markings which has a distinctive rapid, swooping flight.



This sheltered, herb-rich water meadow lies alongside a tree-lined stream and is probably medieval in origin. Water meadows were deliberately flooded in winter to keep the ground temperature up and encourage grass growth and grazing earlier than was available elsewhere. It is now home to many butterflies.

There is public access through the reserve, which is managed by the Butterfly Conservation Trust and you are welcome to explore.

Most footpaths have been trodden by our ancestors over many centuries, maybe going to and from the fields, blacksmith, ale house or church. The path used by Shipwrights Way here is thought to be part of the old Roman Road from Silchester to London, and if you look you can see that the path is raised, with verges falling away either side and then hedges marking its edge.

[Video of a silver-washed fritillary](#)

Sculpture 2 - Chained Trees, at Alice Holt Forest Visitor Centre

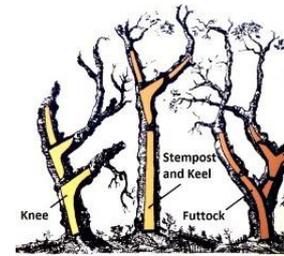
A forest has stood here for over 5,000 years; it still stretches for a mile in any direction but was originally even more extensive. A 1635 survey of the forest recorded that it comprised “oak with some beech of full growth and others decaying”, valued according to its fitness for house building, shipbuilding and cleaving at £9,997 – almost a million pounds in today’s money.



In Tudor and Napoleonic times much of the crop was used to build ships – hence this route being called the Shipwrights Way! Even in the 1860 edition of “The Forester” James Brown described the oak forest north of Portsmouth as key to the shipbuilding industry, and to the Navy in particular.

It took one hundred and fifty thousand cubic feet of timber of different shapes and sizes to build a seventy-four gun man of war, which equates to forty acres of mature oak woodland per ship.

Trees were sometimes restricted by chains to encourage them to grow into the different shapes needed for shipbuilding, for example a 'knee' to support a deck – planning ahead by perhaps 50 years!



Three warships from those times are mentioned in the records: the Warspite, the Sovereign of the Seas and the Nonsuch. To understand what these ships might have been like, visit Henry VIII's contemporary flagship, the Mary Rose, now housed in a museum in Portsmouth Dockyard, at the far end of the Shipwrights Way.

Shipbuilding was again significant for the forest leading up to and during the Napoleonic Wars and between 1777 and 1788 eighteen hundred loads of timber were cut, producing ships similar to HMS Victory, also now housed in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.



There was little public access to the forest and both the trees and the king's deer were protected by keepers. A warrant from 1782 survives, stating that "William Moore hath just cause to suspect, and doth suspect, that venison or the skin or skins of deer...are concealed in the House, Outhouse or other places belonging to the said Houses of James Crofter in the tythe of Dockenfield adjoining to the Forest of Alice Holt" - anyone found in possession of the spoils would be brought before a court of law.

Today at [Alice Holt Forest](#), in the playground next to the path there is a play ship, built by Forestry Commission rangers as a reminder of the strong maritime links this inland place has.

Sculpture 3 - Roman Pot, at Abbots Wood path crossroads

This beautiful, quiet area of [Alice Holt Forest](#) was in Roman times a thriving industrial area, as the raw materials for making pots - clay, water and wood for fuel - were all easily available here. The area supplied local markets and up to three quarters of London's pots as well.



Circular pits were topped by turf and fires were tended day and night. If gases escaped through the top of the kiln they ignited so a flame often burned over the kiln during the firing, hence the reference in the sculpture design. The kilns had to be kept at an incredible 1000°C to produce the grey-ware made there, and they took a week to cool down again.

These photos show a recreation of a Roman kiln at Alice Holt Forest in the 1970s:



Most of the finished pots were taken to London by flat-bottomed barges via the Rivers Wey and Thames, causing much less breakage than if they had to be transported by land and contributing to the success of the industry here.

Today the Forest still has banks and ditches which formed the boundaries of individual pottery workings and the kilns are marked by areas of very dark soil, overlain with mounds of pottery sherds. Fingerprints, patterns and traces of glaze have been found on some of the pottery fragments.

The name “Alice Holt” may be a corruption of Aelfsig’s Holt (Aelfsig being a Bishop of Winchester in the 10th century) but could also be derived from Aishold or Asheshold or Axisholt, all meaning Ash Wood which could well have referred to the ashes from the kilns.

Sculpture 4 - Nightjar, on Broxhead Common

Sadly this sculpture had to be removed in March 2016 following vandalism.

The Nightjar migrates from southern Africa each spring to breed here. It is active at dawn and dusk, when it can be seen hawking for food, whilst during the day its mottled plumage is the perfect camouflage.

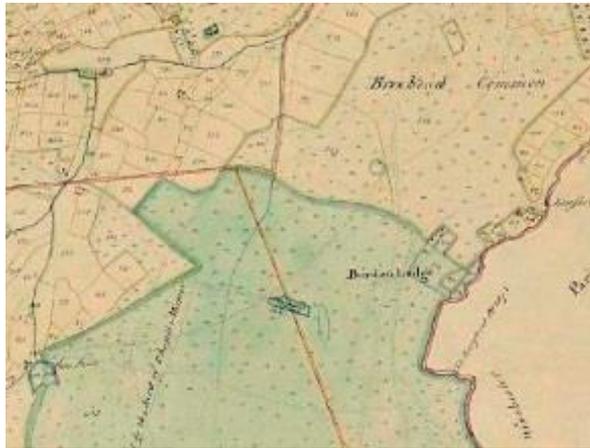


The sculpture shows a Nightjar sitting on its nest during the day; these birds nest on the ground in heathland areas, so are vulnerable to disturbance. It is one of three rare species of ground-nesting bird that use Broxhead Common. The others are the Woodlark and the Dartford Warbler, all protected by European legislation.



The common would have been grazed in the past by animals, such as cows and sheep, belonging to local people. Common land was usually poor ground that was not worth farming. And before that, people were buried here — the common has Bronze Age barrows.

This map from 1787 shows the common and what is now Bordon and Lindford to the south . As you can see, there were very few roads and very few people living here at this time!



Sculpture 5 - Natterjack Toad, in Bordon Inclosure

Whitehill is the only parish in the UK to claim home to all 12 of our native amphibians and reptiles, including the rare natterjack toad. Only 7cm long with a distinctive yellow stripe down its back, it favours sand and heathland and breeds in shallow pools. It eats insects, worms and small reptiles and can live up to 15 years.



Natterjacks have relatively short legs and so waddle rather than hop, but even so they manage to move considerable distances at night across open terrain, enabling the species to colonize new habitats very quickly - it's known as the 'running toad'! They have a very loud and distinctive mating call, so that they can find each other over wide areas. A vocal sac found under the chin of the male amplifies this call.

[Video clip of a natterjack toad, including mating call](#)



The idea for this sculpture came from pupils at Bordon Junior School.

Near the sculpture is a large, beautiful oak tree which is several hundred years old and is thought to have been a boundary marker. It will have seen this very sparsely populated area come alive in the early 1900's as the army arrived, all the training activity and settlement which followed, and it will soon see the building of a new eco-town.

This area will remain a place for people and wildlife to enjoy.



Sculpture 6 - Deer sitting in a book, at Griggs Green

Gilbert White was an amazing man. Curate and lifetime resident of nearby Selborne during the 1700's, his observations and fascination with nature have transformed the way we think and write about the natural world today. His hugely influential book, 'The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne', took the form of letters to friends and naturalists and pioneered the genre of nature writing we know today.



His systematic records about the birds, animals and plants he saw each day, together with measurements of the weather and his observations of the inter-dependence of living things, have led to him being described as one of the fathers of modern ecology.

In his book Gilbert recalls how in 1708 Queen Anne came close to this spot, next to the appropriately named Deers Hut pub, to inspect her royal herds of deer:

'For she came out of the great road at Lippock which is just by, and, reposing herself on a bank smoothed for that purpose, lying about half a mile to the east of Wolmer-pond, and still called Queen's Bank, saw with great complacency and satisfaction the whole herd of red deer brought by the keepers along the vale before her, consisting then of about five hundred head. A sight this worthy of the attention of the greatest sovereign.'



The bank, now in the middle of the Longmoor Ranges, remains as a landmark to this day and is still worth a visit (on foot only) when the red perimeter track flags are not flying. Selborne is not on the route, but is well worth a visit to see [Gilbert's house](#) and the church windows commemorating this great naturalist.



Sculpture 7 - Soldier's helmet and rucksack, at Liss

The disused Liss rail line is today a well-loved path through the nature reserve. It's possible to spot an occasional piece of track or signal in the verges, and you'll certainly see the station platform at Liss and the beautiful modern-day railway-themed bridges.



The railway was built in the early 1900s by the Royal Engineers, for military use. It later became known as the Longmoor Military Railway and played an active part in both World Wars. The layout changed many times and carried a wide variety of engines and carriages, as its major role was to instruct new train drivers. The part of line you are now on was completed in 1933 and was joined to the main line in 1942. At its most the LMR was 70 miles in extent – they even had a machine capable of laying almost a mile of track a day!

In the lead-up to D-day, the south was a hive of secret activity - up to 7,000 soldiers a day would have been transported on this military railway, many of them being brought in for training on how to use tanks. The sculpture shows a helmet and backpack typical of the time, as if set down on a platform while waiting for the train.



[Pathe newsreel of Longmoor Military Railway](#)

Military use declined sharply in the 1950's, and the line instead saw occasional use as a film location, featuring in 13 major films – including a starring role in the 'Great St Trinian's Train Robbery' – before being taken up in the late 1960's. 'Gordon' was one of Longmoor's military locomotives, pictured here, and bears a striking resemblance to Thomas the Tank Engine's friend of the same name; author Rev'd Awdry was born in Hampshire.



There are some excellent new information boards at the Liss end of the line.

Thank you to the [Liss Area Historical Society](#) for the images on this page.

Sculpture 8 – Brown Trout, at Liss

The Liss Riverside Railway Walk winds through a Local Nature Reserve, comprising several wet meadows, the Rivers Rother and Blackwater and areas of mixed deciduous woodland with ferns and mosses. Together these provide a rich habitat for wildlife.

The Rother is home to a population of small wild trout, reflecting the fact that there is good water quality and good habitat, including deep pools that stay cool in summer, shallower gravel areas for spawning and woody debris (logs and fallen trees) that provide places to hide for trout and for the invertebrates that trout eat. When there are insects on the water, trout will come up to feed, creating rings on the surface.



Trout scales have growth rings, as new hard tissue is added around the edges as they grow, so their age can be read in the same way as growth rings in a tree. They are amazingly varied in appearance, adults ranging from 25cm to over 75cm long; their colour changes to match their surroundings with shades of gold, silver, green, brown and blue with black, brown or red spots.



The wild trout in the Rother will have originally arrived as sea trout over 10,000 years ago, after the end of the last Ice Age, and since then they have adapted their appearance, diet and behaviour to their home river.

You may also see mayflies in spring, Kingfishers and the large and beautiful Banded Demoiselle, a damselfly often mistaken for a butterfly.



[Liss Conservation Rangers](#) are a group of volunteers who carry out regular tasks to improve and manage this lovely area, both for wildlife and for the enjoyment of people.



[Video from the Wild Trout Trust](#)

Sculpture 9 – Stack of Books, at Steep

Steep has been home to many interesting people and this sculpture commemorates three of them:

The poet [Edward Thomas](#), described by former Poet Laureate Ted Hughes as “the father of us all”, lived in Steep with his wife Helen and family from 1906–1916. They moved there so that their children could go to nearby Bedales, a liberal, non-conformist school which attracted many artists and craftspeople. Although a writer for years, Thomas only started writing poetry three years before his death, encouraged by his friendship with Robert Frost. Although now known mainly for his WWI poetry, he was also a poet of the countryside. The Edward Thomas Fellowship are an excellent source of more information; Thomas is probably best remembered for “Adlestrop”, regularly voted one of the nation’s favourite poems and which begins:



“Yes. I remember Adlestrop —

The name, because one afternoon

Of heat the express-train drew up there

Unwontedly. It was late June.”



Science fiction writer, John Wyndham, became a pupil at Bedales after a disrupted childhood, moving between several boarding schools following the divorce of his parents. He reputedly blossomed and was happy there. His many influential works of science fiction from the 1950s and 60s, include *The Day of the Triffids*, *the Mydwych Cocks* and *The Kraken Wakes*. He married late in life and returned to live in Petersfield, near perhaps the place where he had been happiest.



Actor Sir Alec Guinness and his family lived in Steep for over 40 years. Their home was alongside the path just north of the sculpture, which is now part of Shipwrights Way. Local people recall that the original path was in the deep hollow, originally a bull drove road, and that the Guinness family provided the upper path as an easier route.



After an early career on the stage Guinness acted in several of the Ealing Comedies, including Kind Hearts and Coronets in which he played eight different characters. He appeared in over 50 films, including The Ladykillers, The Bridge on the River Kwai, Doctor Zhivago and A Passage to India – and became known to a new generation through the Star Wars trilogy, as Obi-Wan Kenobi!

Sculpture 10 – Wool bale, at Peterfield

This sculpture commemorates the weekly livestock markets which took place in and around the town square for many centuries, along with annual markets on the heath.



In medieval times, Petersfield's population would have been around 6-700 people (compared to over 13,000 now), including trades found in any town of the day: butchers, bakers, brewers, shoemakers, carpenters and blacksmiths. On market day, the town would have been busy, noisy and probably smelly - full of sheep, cattle and horses, wool bales like this one and the farmers, merchants, weavers and tanners from the surrounding villages who'd come to trade.

Wool merchants lived in the grand houses in The Spain which were, unusually for the time, tiled - 'Spain' being an old word for tile. Sheep were penned here before being driven up Sheep Street into the market. Petersfield became prosperous through producing and processing wool - in the reign of James 1 (1603-1625) it was said that that Petersfield's wool industry supported 1,000 poor people in the area, who lived by weaving. Most would have lived in surrounding villages; merchants would take them the raw wool by packhorse and collect the woven cloth.



'Tarw' (pronounced 'Taro') is the Welsh shout by drovers for 'Bull' and there is still an annual Taro Fair on the heath, although today it offers fairground attractions rather than livestock!

Petersfield was also an important stagecoach stop on the London-Portsmouth routes; in 1830 some 27 stagecoaches passed through each day. As a result, there were many ale-houses! South of the village of Buriton, Shipwrights Way uses a now very quiet rural lane that was one of the routes used by the stagecoaches.



[Petersfield Museum](#) is well worth a visit and [Visit Petersfield](#) has many more ideas.

Sculpture 11 – Cheese Snail, at Buriton chalk pits

The rare Cheese Snail (actual creature about the size of your fingernail!) now lives in Buriton's old chalk quarry, once a place of work and now peaceful and full of wildlife. They usually live under old decaying logs and have a distinctive flat-topped 'cheese-round' shape. During phases of dormancy such as winter, the cheese snail closes its shell aperture with a chalky white lid, as shown on the sculpture. They are not easy to find but if you do succeed please admire but don't touch – they are protected!



Chalk has been quarried from the South Downs for hundreds of years. Large-scale quarrying and a limeworks began with the coming of the railway in about 1860 and continued for over seventy years up until the end of the Second World War. In those days this now tranquil site was a hive of industrial activity - enormous amounts of chalk were excavated and burnt in a series of lime kilns, lime being used as a building material, soil improver and to purify drinking water.

Standing just below the sculpture, you will be surrounded by steep-sided 'bowls' where the chalk was removed; this and the limeworks employed a substantial proportion of the working population of Buriton village. Trucks carried the chalk downhill to the kilns and were then dragged back up by horses - hard work, rewarded by a bath in the village pond at the end of every day!



Abandoned and left to its own devices, the site slowly regenerated over the years, forming a rich habitat with a high level of chalk-based species. In 2007, Buriton Parish Council successfully campaigned to retain public access and secured lottery funding to improve and manage the site for both wildlife and people. As well as [recording the history and organising local events](#) villagers continue to do practical tasks, such as restoring the pond opposite the sculpture, which is believed to have been used when the quarries and limeworks were active.

[Video clip: importance of chalk to the South Downs landscape](#)

Sculpture 12 – Hampshire Downs Sheep, at Queen Elizabeth Country Park viewpoint

This is a native breed, hardy from a young age and long-lived. It is a relatively new breed, being produced in 1829. Hampshire Downs sheep are still an important part of the landscape today, helping to manage the beautiful chalk downland and maintaining fertility on the thin chalk soils of the area, as well as providing delicious local meat. You may spot some from the viewpoint. Hampshire Downs rams are now often crossed with ewes of other breeds to improve the quality.



At [Queen Elizabeth Country Park](#), the north-south Shipwrights Way crosses the east-west [South Downs Way](#), and if you have arrived from the north in particular you will have seen the distinctive line of hilltops striding across the landscape, and felt the steep climb! It



stretches 80 miles to the east, beyond Brighton to Eastbourne and 20 miles west, to our county town of Winchester.

Listen to South Downs shepherds describing their livelihood and the vital role of the sheep dog: [video clip: sheep and shepherding on the South Downs](#)

Sculpture 13 – Roman villa, at Queen Elizabeth Country Park

The wooded area where the sculpture is situated was once the site of a Roman villa. Evidence shows that it probably consisted of a farmstead with houses, barns and outbuildings arranged around a central, open area.

The land was farmed rather than wooded and so residents would have enjoyed extensive views southwards, perhaps as far as the sea. Archaeological digs have identified earthworks including lynchets, holloways (paths worn into the landscape over many years by feet, wheels and hooves), ponds, drystone structures and possible barrow mounds. Lynchets were the most numerous and prominent of the archaeological features and demonstrate the extent and intensity of past agricultural activity.

Coins, oyster shells and pottery were also found, typical of many Roman sites. One of the most interesting things found here was a small statue of the goddess Venus. This was quite crudely made (look at the length of the hand compared to the body!) and was probably an everyday item used to secure clothing or as a pendant.



The woodland we see today plays an important role for both recreation and wildlife in our relatively crowded landscape. In the past, woodlands in the South Downs were sources of building material, fuel, food and shelter, as this clip describes:

[Video clip: Wood and Woodland – the South Downs](#)

Sculpture 14 - Binding Tree, on the green at Finchdean

This sculpture alludes to the 'Binding Tree', a large elm which stood on the green outside the smithy (still in business today) and reputedly hung with the blacksmith's tools and patterns he used to bend wheel rims into shape. The sculpture was inspired by drawings from the Rowlands Castle brownies.



The area enclosed by a low flint wall was the original village pound, a structure which had several uses. Most commonly, it held livestock which had strayed until claimed by the owner, usually in return for a fine. On occasion, thieves and vagabonds would have been held here, pending attention by the local 'police' – and this may be why pounds were often the site of stocks, where miscreants could be publicly punished. The earliest pounds were simply bounded by briar hedges, but most were built of brick or stone, high-sided structures with a lockable entrance.



This photo shows the small green at Finchdean and is possibly the earliest photograph taken in the village:



Sculpture 15 - Shepherd's Crown, on the green at Rowlands Castle

This flint cast of a sea urchin is known as a Shepherd's Crown, named because the five rays converging on the apex resemble the ribs of a crown. They were often found by shepherds caring for their flock on these chalk downlands.

Rowlands Castle was historically on the edge of the Forest of Bere, a Royal Hunting Forest which stretched eastwards from here to the outskirts of Winchester. The word 'Forest' is actually a legal term meaning land designated for the hunting of game, not trees. It would have been an open landscape of woodland, heathland and farmland. 'Baer' is an old English word meaning 'swine pasture' as many livestock, including pigs, cattle and oxen, would have grazed freely around the commons.



Shown here is a postcard of 1901 of Rowland's Castle green, courtesy of [Rowlands Castle Historical Society](#) :



By the 18th century the village was associated with smuggling and poaching, although today's residents are much more respectable! A tale of gruesome murder from the 1740's illustrates this:

The Hawkhurst gang were notorious smugglers, based in Kent but with interests across the south of England. In 1747 a large amount of smuggled tea was captured in Poole; members of the gang raided the Customs House and escaped with it. While they were riding through Fordingbridge a local shoemaker, Daniel Chater, recognised one of the smugglers, leading to their arrest and detention in Chichester.

Chater was then sent to identify him, travelling with an elderly Customs Officer named William Galley. They unwittingly chose a local smugglers' haunt to refresh themselves, the White Hart Inn in Rowlands Castle. The landlady, Widow Payne, grew suspicious and plied the travellers with drink until they fell asleep and their documents could be examined. Local members of the gang were summoned, tied Chater and Galley on horses and took them north to Rake. Both men fell off and were dragged for several miles under the horses. After burying the Customs Officer alive in a nearby fox earth, they kept Chater chained to a shed for several days, before finally throwing him down a well, followed by some large rocks for good measure.

Sculpture 16 - Oyster, on the northern section of the Hayling Billy line

Oysters have been fished at Hayling Island since Roman times, with shells being found at the nearby Roman temple, itself formerly an Iron Age shrine.

In Victorian times the Hayling oyster beds were created, acclaimed as the largest and best constructed beds in England and used to farm a delicacy known as 'Emsworth natives'. The beds comprised several pens, separated by a series of bund walls, which contained the oysters at varying stages of growth. These gave protection from rough seas, whilst channels cut into them let in the tidal current which carried food for the larvae.



Oysters were exported, via the Hayling Billy railway line, to destinations throughout the country. Unfortunately the local oyster industry was ruined in 1902 after the Bishop of Winchester served Emsworth oysters at a banquet, and several of his guests died of food poisoning.



Local people working in the fields alongside the rail line at harvest time remember having to put out small fires caused by sparks as the trains went by. The [Hayling Billy Heritage](#) website is an excellent source of information on the line.

North Hayling Station (taken by the late Eric Grace); a Terrier class engine was used on the line, as it was small enough to come across the bridge onto the island.



By the 1930's many of the best oyster beds in the wider area had been reclaimed, with one being used for tennis courts and another converted into a swimming pool for a holiday camp!

Today these beds are managed as an important site for seabirds – making this rural area very noisy! From May to August Little Tern, Common Tern, Sandwich Tern, Black-headed and Mediterranean Gulls, Oystercatcher and Ringed Plover nest here. During the winter, vast numbers of waders are to be seen around the harbour, including tens of thousands of Dunlin and hundreds of Oystercatcher, Redshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Curlew.



Sculpture 17 - Little Tern, on the southern section of the Hayling Billy line

Langstone Harbour sees around half of the south coast's breeding population of little tern, and numbers should increase due to recent work by [Havant Borough Council](#), [Hampshire & IOW Wildlife Trust](#) and the [RSPB](#) to provide more suitable habitat. They choose to nest on bare shingle, close to the shoreline, making their eggs and young vulnerable to high tides, disturbance by people and predators.

The Little Tern is short-tailed with a distinctive yellow bill. For both Common and Little Terns, courtship starts with an aerial display involving the male calling and carrying a fish to attract a mate who chases him up high before he descends, gliding with wings in a 'V'. This flight is also associated with territorial disputes: Thank you to Peter Drury for this fantastic photo.



The shape of the wings in this sculpture deliberately resembles a sail because windsurfing was invented on Hayling Island in 1958 by local boy Peter Chilvers, at the age of 12! Unusually, this fact was proved by a court case between manufacturers concerning patents, which easily found in Chilvers' favour. He is still active locally and for 25 years ran a centre promoting sailing and windsurfing to underprivileged children in London. Windsurfing remains a major pastime on the island.



Watch a [video clip of Peter Chilvers](#) on the BBC's One Show, showing the original windsurfing board he built in action.

Sculpture 18 - Brent Goose, on The Kench, Hayling Island

The Solent supports over 10% of the world's population of Dark-bellied Brent Geese in wintertime. It is a small goose, around 2ft long, with a short, stubby bill; the under-tail is pure white, and the tail black and very short. They eat a marine grass called eel-grass, seaweed, sea lettuce and sometimes grass or winter cereal on nearby agricultural land.

A Brent Goose in Langstone Harbour (photo courtesy of Peter Drury)

In the background of the sculpture is a mooring block for a 'Mulberry Harbour', a portable concrete structure developed in WW2 to enable rapid off-loading of cargo onto the beaches during the allied invasion of Normandy. Some were built here on Hayling, from gravel dug here, and one can still be seen near the ferry point.

During WWII, this area was lit at night and used as a decoy site to protect Portsmouth, leading to the deaths of some brave islanders and troops. During the national housing shortage which followed the war, several surplus military boats were purchased and converted into living accommodation in the form of house boats located in this naturally protected harbour. A handful of house boats still sit on their cradles here today.



Sculpture 19 - Cockleshell, at the Rose Gardens, Southsea

The 12 brave Royal Marines whose daring and dramatic raid on German shipping led to them becoming known as the 'Cockleshell Heroes' had their headquarters at what is now the Rose Gardens. Their nickname came from the type of two-man canoe they used.

The sea in front of today's Rose Gardens was the training ground where they prepared for 'Operation Frankton', the World War II raid on Nazi-occupied France in December 1942, under the command of Major Herbert 'Blondie' Hasler (pictured right). Each man knew from the outset that it was unlikely they would survive this perilous mission.

Crossing the channel inside Royal Navy submarine HMS Tuna, the men and canoes, filled with equipment and supplies, launched themselves near the French coast. One canoe was damaged on being brought out on the deck of the submarine and its crew could not take part.

The remaining five canoes and ten men then had to make a journey of almost 100 miles behind enemy lines to attack and sink ships supplying vital cargo to the Germans. Their target was the harbour complex at Bordeaux. Over 4 nights, the heavily-laden canoes progressed up the tidal Gironde estuary to Bordeaux, lying up by day on the riverbank camouflaged as best they could - an incredible physical achievement through dangerous territory. Just two pairs survived to carry out the final attack, succeeding in sinking or damaging four ships.

Admiral The Earl Mountbatten of Burma, then Chief of Combined Operations, stated:

"Of the many and dashing raids carried out by the men of Combined Operations Command, none was more courageous or imaginative than Operation Frankton".

Of the ten men of the Royal Marines who took part in this raid two were drowned, six were caught and executed by the Germans, and only two survived to return safely to England.

This was one of the founding missions of what turned into the Special Boat Service, an elite and resourceful group of men tasked with sabotaging high value targets such as rail and communication lines. In the following decades, the SBS became an elite sub-unit of The Royal Marines and then a highly specialised element of UK Special Forces (UKSF).

Canoe Mark II, nicknamed the 'Cockle' photo on file 'Cockleshell – canoe' pictured above.

In 1955, the film 'Cockleshell Heroes' made their story famous.





Sculpture 20 - Shipwright's Toolbag, in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard

This sculpture stands at the entrance to Boathouse 4 and the Heritage Skills Training Centre.

The Master Rigger and the Master Shipwright were the most important roles in the dockyard and a shipwright was a skilled and respected workman, who worked on everything from design through to delivery of the final ship. The naval shipwright also went to sea, and had to be very resourceful indeed, being responsible for repairing and maintaining all aspects of the hull and fittings; Nelson famously referred to his 'carpenters' (shipwrights) as 'invaluable'.



Shipwrights used a variety of tools for shaping and cutting wood, carried in a canvas bag with rope handles, as shown here. Tools would have included compasses for transferring paper designs to the wood, tools for shaping wood and tools for maintaining specific parts of the ship.

Woodcut of Portsmouth harbour (right)

This sculpture is at the entrance to the Boatbuilding and Heritage Skills Training Centre in [Portsmouth Historic Dockyard](#), supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Regional Growth Fund. Visitors can watch trainees practising traditional boatbuilding skills as well as enjoy fun, tactile and engaging exhibitions, and can get involved themselves through a variety of short courses and family activities, by joining the volunteer team, or even taking on a full time IBTC Portsmouth boatbuilding course.



The Centre uses Boathouse 4, a cathedral-sized, iconic building constructed during the massive 1930's rearmament period.

During WW II the secret three man midget X-Craft submarines were developed here. It is an impressive setting for visitors to see boatbuilding in action and discover the astonishing history of small boats in the Navy, from Captain Bligh, cast off the Bounty in a 23ft launch, to Ernest Shackleton's legendary voyage to South Georgia in the James Caird.

Nearby is St George's Church, known as "the Shipwrights' Church" as it was paid for by shipwrights during expansion of the profession in Victorian and Georgian times, showing the wealth and numbers engaged in this profession.