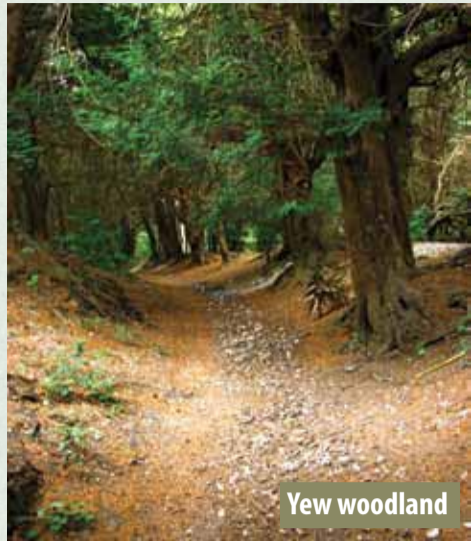


A special place

Boxley Warren's place in the landscape is well recognised. It sits within the protected Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and large parts of the site are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest for the quality of the chalk grassland and woodland. The site also carries a European designation as a Special Area of Conservation predominantly because of the lowland yew woodland.

The site was declared a Local Nature Reserve by Maidstone Borough Council in 2007 which means that the management of the site is now prescribed by a team of wildlife and landscape experts who work with the landowner to ensure that Boxley Warren remains a tranquil haven for wildlife into the future.



Yew woodland

Birds

You can often see buzzards circling majestically above the woodland at Boxley Warren. This is partly because of the thermal currents around the steep slopes. These magnificent birds make their nests in inaccessible woodland and can sometimes be seen in aerial combat or being mobbed by other birds.

Peregrine falcons are occasional visitors and kestrels can also be seen hovering above areas of rough grassland and scrub, seeking out small mammals and other prey items.



Stinking hellebore



Ground pine

A rescued landscape

The landscape at Boxley has changed significantly in recent years from a notorious off-road playground and fly-tippers paradise to the restored semi-natural landscape that you see today.

Access to the site for motorised vehicles has been restricted and fly-tipping has been made more difficult. As a consequence, the footpaths are less rutted and damaged, there is less rubbish lying around and the place is more attractive to walkers. Now the focus is to improve the area for wildlife by actively managing the woodland and maintaining the chalk grassland.



Fly tipping

How we keep Boxley Warren at its best

Since Boxley Warren became a Local Nature Reserve the way the site is managed has been decided by a team of experts including the landowner, Natural England, Maidstone Borough Council, Boxley Parish Council, Friends of Boxley Warren and the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership.

Grazing is used to keep the grassland in shape and a combination of volunteers and contractors manage the rest of the site. We pay careful attention to the plants and animals that depend on the Nature Reserve, to determine the best ways to manage this special place. The Friends of Boxley Warren meet regularly to carry out valuable work to conserve and enhance the site.



Adders

Other wildlife

Boxley is also host to a range of other wildlife including foxes, dormice, reptiles, butterflies, bats and of course the box trees from which it most likely gained its name. More information about wildlife can be found on the website.

Enjoy your visit

The spectacular scenery and network of paths make Boxley Warren and its surrounds a great place to visit. To make the most of your visit please ensure that you keep to the public footpaths and byways and keep dogs under control.

Friends of Boxley Warren

The Friends of Boxley Warren work with the landowner and other organisations to conserve, promote and protect Boxley Warren Local Nature Reserve for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Regular volunteer tasks are held throughout the year and the group also run some guided walks and other events. The group's activities will take you to parts of the site that are not usually open to the public and offer the opportunity to make a difference to the local environment.



If you would like to get involved in the excellent volunteer work that takes place at Boxley Warren or find out about membership then please do get in touch.

Contact details:
✉ friends@boxleywarren.org.uk
🌐 www.boxleywarren.org.uk
☎ 01303 815170
Friends of Boxley Warren
c/o Boxley Parish Council
Beechen Hall, Wildfell Close
Walderslade
CHATHAM
Kent ME5 9RU

About Boxley Warren

Boxley Warren is a very special place in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The 97 hectare (240 acres) site is not only valuable for wildlife but affords magnificent views of the Greensand Ridge and across to the Low Weald. It can be seen from almost the whole of the Maidstone area and countless thousands of people see it from their cars on the M20 every day. Yet it remains an unspoilt part of the Kent countryside that offers a glimpse into the past as well as being an example of forward thinking wildlife conservation.

The majority of the site sits on the chalk scarp slope of the North Downs. These are some of the steepest slopes in the county with very thin chalk soils. These challenging conditions offer opportunity to a stunning diversity of interesting plants, insects and other wildlife.. The northern section of Boxley Warren sits on the gentler dip slope of the chalk downs which is covered by clay with flints and makes it suitable for broad-leaved woodland and more recently for agriculture. It is this combination of geology and the way that the area has been used by people that has created the Boxley Warren we see today.

For more information about Boxley Warren visit the website at www.boxleywarren.org.uk



Wild flowers

The chalk grassland and woodland provide a home for some uncommon plants. Several species of orchid including bee, man, and fly orchids as well as white and broad-leaved helleborines can be found at Boxley Warren. Ground pine is a rare plant that survives on bare patches of soil on the steeper slopes, while wild liquorice grows in the hedgerows alongside the Pilgrims Way. However, it's not just the rarities that make the plant life special at Boxley. Look out for the flushes of colour created by cow parsley and cowslips in Spring and birds foot trefoil and vipers bugloss during the Summer months. The fiery autumn leaves make a fantastic woodland show in Autumn.

Boxley Warren

Local Nature Reserve



- ✦ Wildlife information
- ✦ Local walks
- ✦ Join the Friends of Boxley Warren

White Horse Stone (Scheduled Ancient Monument) ⁸

The Monument was probably associated with a prehistoric burial chamber, similarly to the other monuments forming the chain of Medway Megaliths. Boxley was a very important site in very early history. When the Channel Tunnel Rail Link was built, just to the West of the Stone, a very significant Neolithic Longhouse was also discovered – the earliest well-dated Neolithic structure in Britain, at a likely 6000 years old! This was a very important site through many eras, falling as it does on a crossroads of tracks running East-West and North-South. There are still some people who worship at the White Horse Stone today.



More heritage

Boxley Warren has a history of human activity that stretches back over 5000 years. From Neolithic buildings and megaliths to today's farmed landscape, people have made their mark on Boxley Warren. Ancient 'hollow ways' which are routes that have become sunken over the passage of time still stretch up and down the scarp slope and one of these now forms the public footpath that goes north from the Pilgrims' Way connecting with the North Downs Way. Well shafts, abandoned dwellings and rifle butts used up until World War II are just some of the other historical evidence we know about and there are still a plethora of other features yet to be found.

Yew woodland

Yew woodland is a rare habitat and is the reason why Boxley Warren has European level site protection. The evergreen trees cast year-long shade which means that not many

plants can grow beneath the yew trees. However, this makes the yew woodland of Boxley an eerie and unusual place that has to be experienced. Not much management takes place



Boxley Warren Local Nature Reserve



WALK ROUTES

Old Chatham Road is the start/finish point for all walks. There is free on-street parking. To reach it, head south-bound on the A229 and turn left at the Shell petrol station. Parking in Boxley village is limited - best avoided.

Short and Flat Walk (3 miles/5 km)

Head south along the Old Chatham Rd (1) with the houses on your right until you get to a crossroads (2). Turn left and walk along the road, again with the houses on your right. To your left there are spectacular views of the Boxley Warren Local Nature Reserve and the chalk scarp slope as it stretches out towards Detling and beyond. Turn left at the next crossroads (3) (signposted to Boarley) and follow this small road as it crosses the railway and passes the house until you get to Boarley Farm (4). Turn right and follow the footpath across the field and then left after a small group of trees. You will now be heading straight towards Boxley Warren (5). Head straight up this path towards the hedge-row in the distance. To take on the longer walk turn right at the end of the line of trees and join the 'Long and Hilly Walk' at point (6)

Follow the footpath straight through the hedgerow and you will find yourself on the Pilgrims' Way (7). Turn left with the open chalk grassland field on your right. Follow the Pilgrims' Way all the way through Boxley Warren, past the White Horse Stone (8), until you come out into the open

again and cross the railway bridge. Take the left hand fork (9) and walk down a short path until you come out on Old Chatham Rd once more (10). Turn left to finish off the walk.

Long and Hilly Walk (6 miles/9 km)

Follow the 'Short and Flat Walk' from point 1 to point 6 and then head east across the large arable field all the way to Boxley Village. You will eventually come out at the main road next to the Kings Arms pub (1). Cross the main road and straight on towards the church. Climb over the stile that takes you into the field to the left of the church (2). Follow the footpath diagonally to your left following the overhead cables, over another stile until you reach a third stile (3). After negotiating the third stile the footpath turns slightly left so you are heading straight up the scarp slope. Keep to the left of the field until you get to the road (4). Once over the road head straight up the hill all the way to the top (this bit's going to get the heart rate going a little!). (5) Turn left onto the North Downs Way at the top of the hill until you get to a road (6). Cross the road carefully and turn right for about 50 metres until you reach the signpost for the North Downs Way that takes you left off the road. When you reach another road (7) cross this and follow the signs straight through the farmyard and through the kissing gate back onto the North Downs Way and into Boxley Warren Local Nature Reserve. Follow the footpath as it curls round the edge of the field and into woodland (8). Follow this path for about 750m (½ mile) until you come to

Pilgrims' Way and North Downs Way
The North Downs Way is one of the National Trails and is a continuous route using public rights of way that links Farnham in Surrey all the way to Dover. It roughly follows the route of the Pilgrims' Way that lies at the bottom of the scarp slope at Boxley. History tells us that the Pilgrims' Way was used by those who travelled between Canterbury and Winchester to worship at the shrines of Thomas Becket and St Swithin. This route may indeed be much older, even reaching back to Prehistory. After the Pilgrimages were abolished by Henry VIII in the 16th Century, the route remained well used and the Victorian's formalised the route which is still largely in existence today. Both routes are a fantastic way to explore some of the most spectacular scenery in South East England.



a T-junction and the end of some post and rail fencing (9). Turn left here and descend along the hollow way through the mysterious yew woodland all the way to the bottom of the scarp slope where you will cross a small wooden bridge and go through the kissing gate onto the Pilgrims' Way. Turn right along the Pilgrims' Way where you will rejoin the 'Short and Flat Walk' at point 8.

Short and Hilly Walk (3 miles/5 km)

Head north along the Old Chatham Road (1). Follow the footpath until it bends to the right (2) and brings you out at a bridge over the railway (3). Follow this track (Pilgrims' Way) into Boxley Warren Local Nature Reserve, past the White Horse Stone on your left and then turn left (4) onto the North Downs Way footpath. This path will fork a short distance up the hill. Take the right hand fork (5) and follow the path all the way up the scarp slope. The slope will eventually flatten off and take you through some broad leaved woodland and eventually out into an arable field (6). Turn right and follow the outline of the wood for about a kilometre (just over ½ mile). Shortly after you have gone underneath a pylon turn right down another footpath into the wood (7). Follow this footpath (a hollow way) as it winds down the steep slope through yew woodland all the way to the bottom of the hill. Cross a small wooden bridge and go through the kissing gate onto the Pilgrims' Way (8). Turn right along the Pilgrims' Way where you will rejoin the 'Short and Flat Walk' at point 8.