



TILLINGBOURNE TRAILS

Gomshall

This heritage trail takes in the scenic village of Gomshall, set in the heart of the Valley. Explore the historic houses, milling sites and tannery buildings within the village as you walk along the Tillingbourne, before absorbing the beautiful open countryside and wooded paths as you walk into the hills.

Length 4 km Duration approx. 1.5 hours

Easy level of difficulty



START from Gomshall station car park (GU5 9NX), off of the A25.

Follow the road back towards the A25, and turn right at the T junction, walking towards the village.



There was a corn mill at Gomshall from the time of Domesday in 1086, probably at the same site as the current mill building, though it was re-built extensively in the following centuries. By the 18th century it housed four corn mills, making it one of the most important corn-milling sites in the area, but by 1953 it was closed, remaining derelict until its conversion to a restaurant and antique shop a decade later.



Walk along the pavement, passing such historic buildings as Gomshall Mill and the Tillingbourne itself. Cross over to the south side of the road at the crossing by the Compass Inn. (*note there may be parked cars on the pavement, and you may need to cross beforehand*)

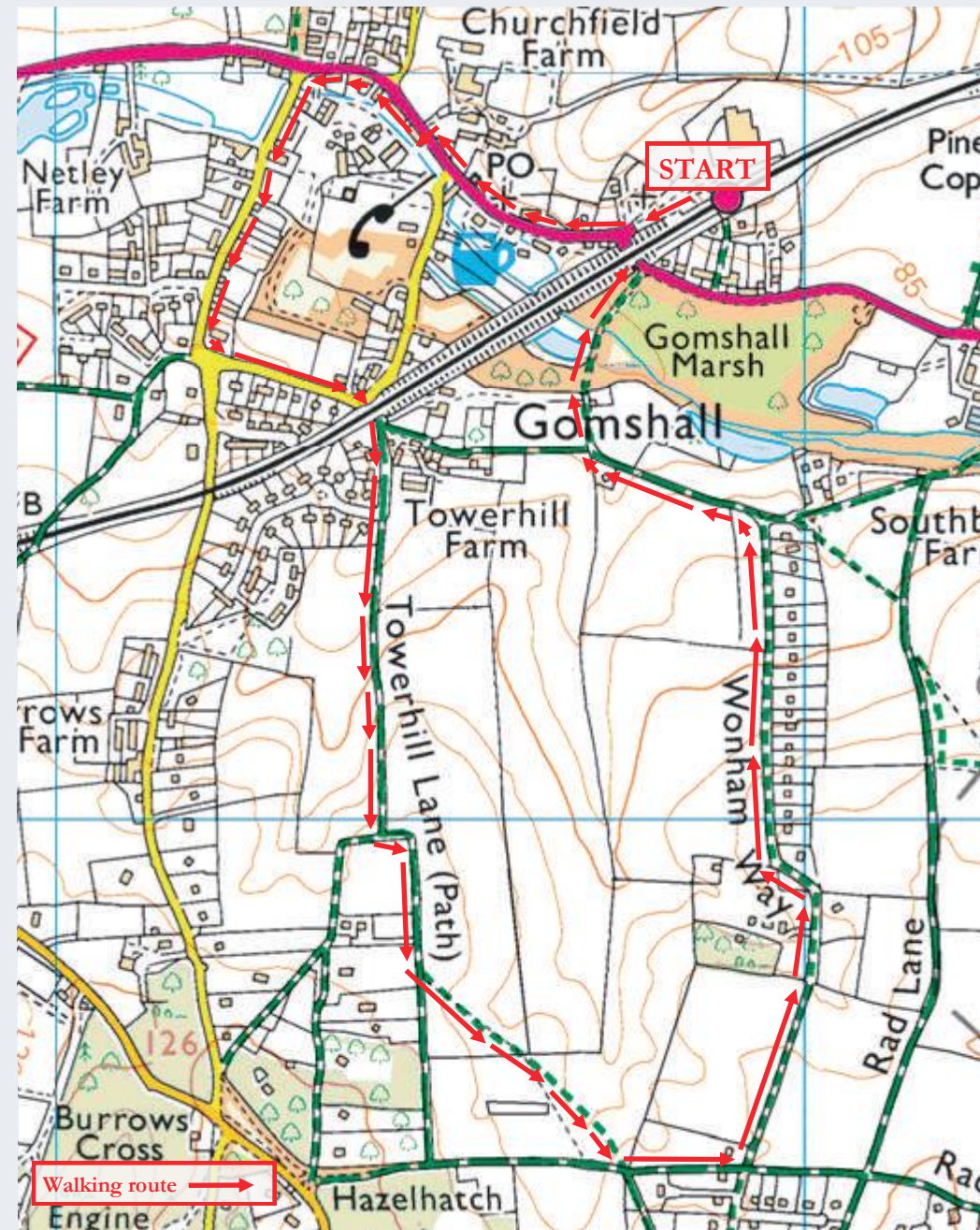
Turn right, continuing along the A25 until you reach the petrol station. On the left, look out for Tanyard Hall, which is one of the few remaining buildings from the Tannery, as well as the Victorian cottages fronting the street.



Turn left onto Queen Street, passing the King John House on the corner.

The King John House, formerly known as the Old Tannery House, is mainly Jacobean in date, built by the Bignold family of tanners around 1620. However, timber-framing in the interior may date to the early 16th century, disproving the tradition that the house was built after the London Great Plague of 1665 from hide profits.

For more details, download the printable pdf (www.tillingbournetales.co.uk/places/trails)



© License No. 100019613

Continue on Queen Street, following the Tillingbourne on the right (*be careful as there is no footpath for a section*). At the top of the hill at the T junction, turn left onto High View.



Follow the road to the bottom of the hill, and turn right under the railway bridge, onto Towerhill.

Towerhill Manor was described in 1568 as 'a house within a motte', with much of the rear open hall house still of this date. Likely built by the first Sir Edward Bray, it was occupied by the Bray family until 1803.

Follow Towerhill until it bends right. Straight ahead is a narrow footpath (Towerhill Lane), marked Shere Millennium Trail, which you follow.



After 100 yards the path turns right, eventually coming out onto the top of a hill. Continue along, looking for two stout wooden posts marking a diagonal path across the field on your left.

Cross the field, and continue on this path through the next field, where the path starts to ascend.



At the T junction at the top of the hill (turn right for a few yards for the view of the North Downs Way at the back of the field, but then go back), turn left and stay on the bridle path.



At the top of the field you will meet another path, where you turn left and immediately meet another path on your right (but keep left on the main path). You will pass a large house and garden on your right.

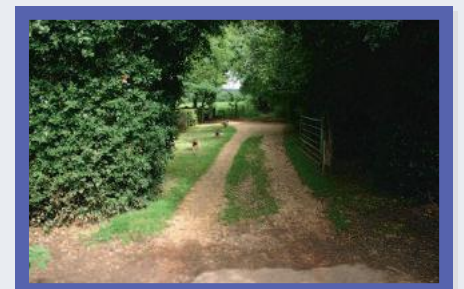
After about 250 yards you will come to a tarmac road on the right. Turn left onto the gravel drive with a house on the left, onto the public footpath.

Walk down the hill, as the path widens out and eventually veers to the left around Southbrook Copse, then right at Southbrook House.



At the bottom of the hill you will meet 'Path 22', but ignore this and stay on the main track which bends right and passes over the Tillingbourne again to meet the A25.

Turn left under the railway bridge and cross-over the A25, returning back to the Start Point at Gomshall station.



Gomshall Tannery

Wildlife of the Tillingbourne



Kingfisher

The kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*) is a small colourful bird which is distinctive for its bright blue back, copper breast and black beak (the female with an orangey-red patch at its base).

The kingfishers’ main habitat is along rivers and streams, where they can often be seen sitting quietly on low-hanging branches over the water, able to dive in suddenly for small fish.

With a lifespan of about two years, kingfishers breed near lowland watercourses which have suitable banks for burrowing nests and shallow edges for feeding.

The Surrey Wildlife Trust manages almost 8,000 hectares of land in Surrey (5% of the county) with the aim of creating a better future for the local wildlife, and for the enjoyment of local people.

To get involved, whether through volunteering, donating or adopting species to protect, please find out more and visit www.surreywildlifetrust.org



Get involved

Despite the tranquil beauty of the Tillingbourne, recent investigations by the Environment Agency showed its ecological status is still in need of improvement. The Surrey Wildlife Trust’s River Search project teaches volunteers to manage invasive non-native species during conservation action days, in order to survey, monitor and improve the river habitat over time.

To find out more, visit www.surreywildlifetrust.org



The Surrey Hills Society is an independent charity which encourages people to explore, protect and enhance the local landscape, including that of the Tillingbourne. In order to do this, volunteers are needed to help organise and support walks, talks and events for members, as well as various conservation projects within the AONB.

For more info, see www.surreyhills.org/society

Other links

Shere Parish Council - www.shereparishcouncil.gov.uk
Surrey Hills AONB - www.surreyhills.org
Surrey Heritage (Exploring Surrey’s Past) - www.exploringsurreypast.org.uk/

Tillingbourne Tales HLF project - www.tillingbournetales.co.uk

1st ed Ordnance Survey map 1870

Find out more...

Harris, Nigel (2005), *Gomshall Mill, the Harris Millers & their Shere Connection*

Noyes, Ann (1997, 2003), *A Tannery in Gomshall*

Shere, Gomshall, and Peaslake Local History Society (1981, 2003), *Shere, Gomshall & Peaslake: A Short History*

———— (1981), *Old Houses in the Parish of Shere*

Tarplee, Peter (1992), *Gomshall Mill and the Tillingbourne Valley*

1086 - ‘Gomesle’ listed with mill and over 40 families in Domesday, a larger population than Shere

c.1240 - West Gomshall Manor granted to the Abbey of Netley in Hampshire

c.1376 - East Gomshall Manor granted to Abbey of St Mary Graces, Tower Hill, becoming Gomshall Towerhill

1568 - First mention of a named tanner, Anthony Bygnall, in Shere parish, presumably from Gomshall

1611 - Both corn and malt mill recorded at Gomshall Mill

1620s - King John House, which has remains of its early tanyard in the back garden, first built

1690 - Malthouse associated with the Black Horse built

1819 - James Neale killed by bark mill at Tannery

1849 - Station at Gomshall built shortly after opening of Redhill to Reading line, increasing labour mobility

1886 - The Compasses becomes an inn, some fifty years after its beginnings as a beershop

1891 - Case brought to Guildford Assize Court against Tannery concerning death of fish stocks, later discovered to be due to mud outflow from watercress beds upstream

1892 - Damaging fire at Tannery on 26th June, causing an estimated loss of £30,000 to the company

1928-33 - Fall in demand during depression closes Tannery

1971 - Fire station in Gomshall opened, staffed mainly by Tannery employees

1992 - Now derelict buildings at Tannery destroyed in fire

1893 illustration of tannery works (from *Leather Trades Circular & Review*)

Toggling the drying skins to stretch them (courtesy of Stanley Knapp)

Shere Lane today

Putting hides into a pit to soak (from Pyne 1808)

From the 1950s, sophisticated machinery took over, to include overshot wheeling/ buffering the suede finishes (K Reid in Noyes 1997)

thereafter.

World War, and suede garments the main output in the Second

leathers, with camouflage leathers concentrated on sole and light club room and library. From the 20th century, production included an irrigation farm, co-operative, coffee house, when owned by Gilligan & Son in the 1880s, the site and attracted employees from beyond the county, and as a family-run undertaking, by the 19th century it grew the village, dates from the 17th century. Whilst beginning the village, in the centre of What would become Gomshall Tannery, the centre of Tillingbourne, the settlement of Gomshall was well-suited for the tanning trade. Although named tanners, such as those of the Bygnall family, did not appear until the 16th century, ‘pelleters’ were listed in a document of 1380, attesting to their presence in the parish.

With its plentiful availability of sheep and cattle for skins, oak bark from the Hurtwood, and water supply from the Tillingbourne, the settlement of Gomshall was well-suited for the tanning trade. Although named tanners, such as those of the Bygnall family, did not appear until the 16th century, ‘pelleters’ were listed in a document of 1380, attesting to their presence in the parish.

What would become Gomshall Tannery, in the centre of the village, dates from the 17th century. Whilst beginning as a family-run undertaking, by the 19th century it grew and attracted employees from beyond the county, and included an irrigation farm, co-operative, coffee house, club room and library. From the 20th century, production concentrated on sole and light leathers, with camouflage leathers the main output in the Second World War, and suede garments thereafter.

1893 illustration of tannery works (from *Leather Trades Circular & Review*)

Toggling the drying skins to stretch them (courtesy of Stanley Knapp)

Shere Lane today

Putting hides into a pit to soak (from Pyne 1808)

From the 1950s, sophisticated machinery took over, to include overshot wheeling/ buffering the suede finishes (K Reid in Noyes 1997)

thereafter.

World War, and suede garments the main output in the Second

leathers, with camouflage leathers concentrated on sole and light club room and library. From the 20th century, production included an irrigation farm, co-operative, coffee house, when owned by Gilligan & Son in the 1880s, the site and attracted employees from beyond the county, and as a family-run undertaking, by the 19th century it grew the village, dates from the 17th century. Whilst beginning the village, in the centre of What would become Gomshall Tannery, the centre of Tillingbourne, the settlement of Gomshall was well-suited for the tanning trade. Although named tanners, such as those of the Bygnall family, did not appear until the 16th century, ‘pelleters’ were listed in a document of 1380, attesting to their presence in the parish.

With its plentiful availability of sheep and cattle for skins, oak bark from the Hurtwood, and water supply from the Tillingbourne, the settlement of Gomshall was well-suited for the tanning trade. Although named tanners, such as those of the Bygnall family, did not appear until the 16th century, ‘pelleters’ were listed in a document of 1380, attesting to their presence in the parish.

What would become Gomshall Tannery, in the centre of the village, dates from the 17th century. Whilst beginning as a family-run undertaking, by the 19th century it grew and attracted employees from beyond the county, and included an irrigation farm, co-operative, coffee house, club room and library. From the 20th century, production concentrated on sole and light leathers, with camouflage leathers the main output in the Second World War, and suede garments thereafter.



Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the family

- ◆ Born December 1925 in Hambleton to Charles Jones* (cabinet maker) of Cranleigh
- ◆ In 1945 married Royal Canadian Engineer Tom Jackson* (1922-2004) in St James Church, Shere
- ◆ Had two children (b. 1946 and 1952)
- ◆ Mostly worked in toggle shop at Gomshall Tannery during the war from age 17, stretching out skins to dry, or cutting out bands for tin hats
- ◆ Grew up on Shere Lane before emigrating to Frederickton, New Brunswick in 1946 with her family

Maggie Jones*
1925-present
Worker at Gomshall Tannery



TALES & TRAILS
of the
TILLINGBOURNE VALLEY

TILLINGBOURNE TRAILS

Gomshall



Explore more than 4km of historic sites and scenic countryside, including one of the most complete Tillingbourne mills

1st edition 2016

