Points of literary interest

East Hampshire has a wealth of literary associations. The literary walks have been devised to illustrate the work of six important writers who were close observers of their natural (and social) environment. Their combined experiences span more than two centuries of East Hampshire life.

William Cobbett was born in Farnham, west Surrey. He had a varied and colourful career in the Army, in publishing, politics and farming. He once farmed near Botley, Hampshire, and was a Member of Parliament in his later years. This walk includes places he visited in *Rural Rides*.

The journey down the Hampshire hangers was made by Cobbett on Sunday 24 November 1822, and published in his newspaper *The Political Register* later (1830) included in his book *Rural Rides*. Cobbett set our from East Meon on horseback to go to Thursley in Surrey but because of his obsessive dislike of heathland, and especially Hindhead, he decided to take a more adventurous route via Hawkley and Headley:

"The map of Hampshire (and we had none of Surrey) showed me the way to Headley, which lies on the West of Hindhead, down upon the flat. ...I, therefore, resolved to go to Headley, in spite of all the remonstrances of friends, who represented to me the danger of breaking my neck at Hawkley and of getting buried in the bogs of Woolmer Forest. My route was through East-Meon, Froxfield, Hawkley, Greatham, and then over Woolmer Forest, (a heath if you please) to Headley."

"Upon my asking the way to Hawkley, the woman at the cottage said, 'Right up the lane, Sir: you'll come to a hanger presently: you must take care, Sir: you can't ride down: will your horses go alone?'

"I inquired simply, whether people were in the habit of going down it; and, the answer being in the affirmative, on I went through green-lanes and bridle-ways till I came to the turnpike-road from Petersfield to Winchester, which I crossed, going into a narrow and almost untrodden green-lane..."

a   Cobbett followed the chalk escarpment at the top of Stoner Hill and took in the view from Shoulder of Mutton Hill, impressed with the scenery:

"...out we came, all in a moment, at the very edge of the hanger! And never, in all my life, was I so surprised and so delighted! I pulled up my horse, and sat and looked; and it was like looking from the top of a castle down into the sea..."

Stoner Hill is sometimes referred to locally as "Little Switzerland" and was part of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Shoulder of Mutton Hill inspired the poet Edward Thomas – a memorial stone is dedicated to him on the hill.

The foot of the chalk escarpment is usually muddy and slippery:

"After crossing a little field and going through a farm-yard, we came into a lane, which was, at once, road and river."

b   Approaching the steep Upper Greensand escarpment above Scotland Farm, Cobbett descended down the hanger to the Gault clay vale on his way to Greatham: "...at last, got us safe into the indescribable dirt and mire of the road from Hawkley Green to Greatham. Here the bottom of all the land is this solid white stone, and the top is that mame [malmstone] which I have before described."

Scotland Farm and the area in the fields around it shows the remains of the massive 1774 landslip in Hawkley, here described by Gilbert White in his book *The Natural History of Selborne* (Letter 45 to Barrington):

"About fifty acres of land suffered from this violent convulsion; two houses were entirely destroyed; one end of a new barn was left in ruins,... a hanging coppice was changed to a naked rock; and some grass grounds and an arable field so broken and rifted by the chasms as to be rendered, for a time, neither fit for the plough or safe for pasturage..."

c   The church of St. Peter and St. Paul was built in 1865 in Neo-Norman style with walls of random stonework (crazy paving) and tower with a Sompting top. It is an unusual example of Victorian ecclesiastical architecture. This would not have been seen by Cobbett as he died in 1835.

How to get there

Warren Corner is 3½ miles north-west of Petersfield on the road up Stoner Hill linking with the A32 at Hedge Corner. There is a limited pull in for a couple of cars at the end of the green lane. Do not block the lane or entrance to field. For the shorter walk alternative, roadside parking is near the church in Hawkley village, approached from Greatham but note steep hill and narrow road from Scotland Farm.

Transport
Rail: Liss Station (3 miles): www.southwesttrains.co.uk
Bus: No regular service.

Places to visit
St. Peter and St. Paul's Church, Hawkley.

Refreshments
The Hawkley Inn.
The Trooper Inn.

Further Information
Walks in East Hampshire: www.easthants.gov.uk/walking
Petersfield Tourist Information Centre: 01730 268829.
Follow the Countryside Code: www.naturalengland.org.uk
The Hangers Way: www.hants.gov.uk/walking
William Cobbett Society: www.williamcobbett.org.uk
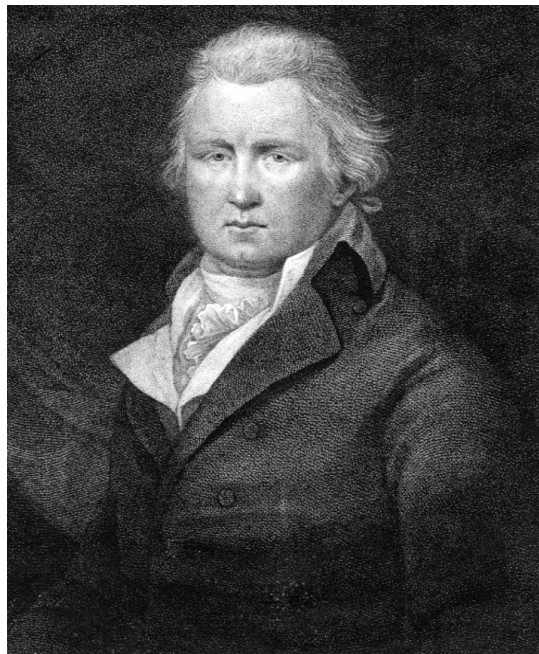Farnham Museum: 01252 715094.

Maps
Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 133 Haslemere & Petersfield (1:25,000).

East Hampshire DISTRICT COUNCIL

William Cobbett
1763–1835

A walk around Hawkley

"…the beauties, the matchless beauties of the scenery."

From *Rural Rides*

Literary Walks in East Hampshire

Route

The full route is about 6 miles (4 hours). The first circuit is 4 miles (2½ hours); the second is 2 miles (1 hour).

The route is moderately strenuous if completed in full, but can be divided into two circuits.

The first circuit (1–5 then 9–10) is 4 miles long and includes some steep inclines.

The shorter second circuit (5-9) is 2 miles long (1 hour) and less arduous. Park near the church at Upper Green, Hawkley.

1   Cross the Petersfield Road and take the lane at Warren Corner. Opposite the first of the houses, take a bridleway on the right, going through fields to a track.

2   Turn right, then shortly left into Old Litten Lane. Turn left at junction with Cockshott Lane and follow this track for a short way. Make a detour right (signposted) to Shoulder of Mutton Hill, with the view and the memorial stone to the poet Edward Thomas (see a). Retrace steps to the track and continue (right) along Old Litten Lane (Hangers Way signs). A detour straight ahead, signposted Cobbett's View (¼ mile), leads to another viewpoint.

3   Retracing your steps back to Old Litten Lane, take the footpath on the right (Hangers Way), going downhill and along the side of Oakshott Hanger woodland, to a track leading to Oakshott and the roadway.

4   At the junction of lanes, take footpath ahead that follows a stream (on your left). Cross at the footbridge, walking below a wood, before steadily climbing through a meadow. Cross the stile into a hollow lane, then keep left into Hawkley village.

5   At the road, turn right and go past the Hawkley Inn to a T-junction. Cross the road and continue ahead, along the footpath to a lane.

6   Cross the lane and go right for a short distance, looking for a footpath and stile on your left. Here make a detour to view the eighteenth century landslip (see b). Go over the stile and follow the footpath to the top of the wooded hanger. Continue along as it descends to the base for a different view of the landslip. Retrace your steps to the road.

7   From the stile, turn right. At the bend, take the footpath (right) across fields. At the lane near Mabbotts, turn left into Lower Green.

8   Follow the road left and then take the next road on right into Hawkley village. At crossroads, keep right, passing St. Peter and St. Paul's Church on your left (see c).

9   Continue ahead on the road that becomes a sunken lane to a turning on your left (Warren Lane).

10 Follow this track through yew trees to the surfaced part of Warren Lane (past Warren National Nature Reserve on right). Continue ahead to the starting point on the Petersfield Road.

Map

miles

0   ¼   ½

N

To Empshott
and Selborne

Hawkley Hanger

Lower Green

8

Mabbotts

7

b

HAWKLEY

St. Peter & St.
Paul's Church

c

18th century
landslip

Scotland
Farm

9

6

PH

5

Oakshott Stream

10

Nature
Reserve

Warren Lane

To Alton
and A32

Warren Corner

1

Hill Farm

To
Stoner Hill
and
Petersfield

PH

2

Old Litten
Lane

Oakshott
Hanger

4

Cobbett's View

3

Old Litten
Lane

a

Shoulder of Mutton Hill