

What's in a name? It is thought that the origins of the village name is from "Boc Leah" which is an Anglo Saxon name for a glade in a woodland where box trees tend to grow. The Box Trees seen today in gardens and hedges is not the native box tree which grows low and is ever green. Native Box Trees are slow growing and prized for their hard wood.

St Mary the Virgin and All Saints Church (grade I listed).

There is no evidence of a church on the site in Saxon times or before 1100AD. The main part of the building dates from the 13th Century and contains many interesting architectural examples.

It is a fine example of a ragstone and flint building. The remains of the earliest church is now part of the bell tower. It is thought that the Church, which is in line with Churches at Detling and Thurnham, is on the line of an old roman road.

A number of memorials exist in the church and with the quintessentially English styled graveyard there are many interesting tombstones.



Wildlife in the area.

Rabbits. To the North of the Village are 2 warrens (Boxley and Boarley) that gave a continual supply, even in winter, of rabbit meat for the Abbey. Rabbits are seen in the surrounding fields especially on the front lawn to Boxley House.

Boarley Warren is a Site of Scientific Interest (SSI) and managed as chalk grassland. Rare plants include several orchids, stinking hellebore and meadow clary. As it is south facing it is also home to adders that bask in the sun.

The abundance of open space and rabbits means that sparrowhawks, kestrels and buzzards are often seen in the area.

A series of ponds lie to the south of the village (on private land) and herons, dragonflies and other aquatic life flourish there. These ponds originally belonged to the Abbey to provide fresh fish for the Monks.



Water and Boxley. Boxley Village is on a natural spring line that runs the length of the North Downs. Boxley Valley is an important area for water collection, hence the water station (north of the Village). The water soaking through the ground feeds the aquifers from which water for the area is drawn. The building was erected in 1939 and the original shaft was 245 feet deep. Subsequent shafts were then added and it is recorded that in 1943 66,000 gallons per hour were being extracted and that this was having a detrimental effect on local wells and springs.

Was it something in the water?

In 1802 the Maidstone Journal had a number of articles on the ages that residents of the North Downs Villages lived too. Boxley Village was specifically mentioned as the average age of death was 79.25 years in a time where many children did not live long and where the life expectancy of an adult was 40 - 50.

War Memorial.

This was erected by public conscription and is now the responsibility of the Boxley Parish Council. Its stone is an unknown composite material and it records the names of parishioners who perished in the first and second World Wars. An 1844 tithe map records a large building at this site.



Listed buildings

Within the village there are 12 listed buildings most predominantly made of redbrick with peg tile roofs. Ragstone is extensively used for walls although there are examples of walls being constructed with flint, notably the wall around St Mary and All Saints Church.

The Victorians changed the look of many of the original timber framed houses in the village by hanging them with tiles.

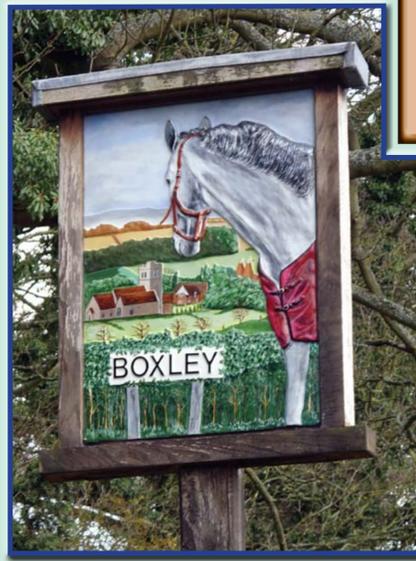


Boxley School.

The first school, a rented house probably in Forge Lane, was set up by Lord Romney and the Vicar Rev. Griffin in the early part of the 19th Century. Education then lasted only about 3 years as from the age of 10 children would be required to work in the fields or in the households of the privileged classes.

Various properties were rented around the village until a traditional building with a single hall for the lessons and a head master's house attached was built in 1846.

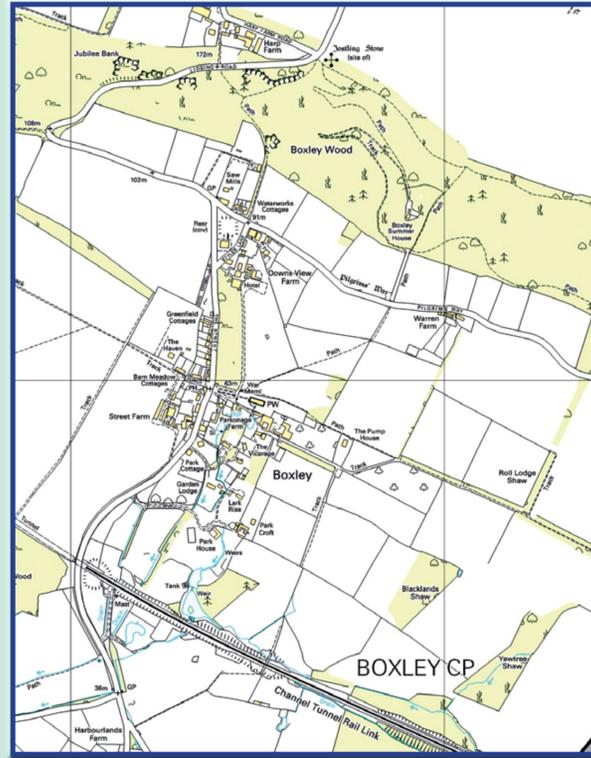
In 1872 a new school master took over. A strict authoritarian he was not adverse to taking a scrubbing brush to pupils who he considered were unsatisfactorily grimy. The school was closed in 1945.



Boxley Village

Boxley Village Green.

This was designated in 1970 as a village green and forms a central part of the village's conservation area. Part of the charm of the area is the cobbled path that runs across the central area to the church entrance.



Boxley Village nestles at the bottom of the North Downs escarpment and is part of the North Downs Area of Outstanding Beauty. It is just north of the natural spring line of this area. The immediate area has been occupied since prehistory and it is a man made environment. Centuries of woodland clearance and grazing gives the Boxley Valley its special character. The grassed views you see around the village are therefore entirely man made.

The village was thought to have been properly established by 825 AD and in the Domesday records shows a population of 76 (at the same time Maidstone had a population of 108). Boxley Abbey (now privately owned) was founded in 1146 and played an important part in the shaping of the village and surrounding area.

Apart from farming the area was important for fuller's earth which is found at the base of the scarp. This substance could be dug out and its main use was to remove the natural oils from sheep's fleece which was an important part of the cloth production industry.

Boxley Abbey – Cistercian Foundation. Founded 1143 - 1146.

The site of this lies to the south west of the village and is now a private residence with a magnificent grade I listed barn that is clearly seen from the M20. This was the hospitium to the Abbey. The founding Monks of the Abbey journeyed from Clairvaux Abbey, France. Monks from Boxley Abbey were part of a group that travelled to Europe to locate and arrange the release of the captured King Richard 1 (Coeur de Lion).

The abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII in 1538. It was famous for its 2 miraculous images.

- The Rood of Grace was a Crucifix with a head that bowed, mouth that opened and closed and eyes that rolled and wept. Seen as a miraculous object at the time it attracted hundreds of pilgrims. On the dissolution of the Abbey the Bishop of Rochester used the image as propaganda against the Pope and after a public denouncement it was hacked to pieces and burnt probably in the Courtyard of St Paul's' in 1539.
- St Romauld's statue could only be moved by those who lived clean or chaste lives and who had coincidentally made a generous donation to the Monks. It was due to suffer the same fate as the Rood of Grace but it is believed to have been lost off the cart on the way to London.

The Importance of the Abbey prior to Henry VIII's reformation can be gauged by the fact that Abbott Walter undertook the burial of the murdered Thomas a Beckett, also a Cistercian.

In 1890 information produced for the sale of the site included the fact that the kitchen garden wall had 2 entrances to underground passages leading to the Church at Boxley (east) and Allington Castle (south west).



Pilgrims Way

This attractive track way/route is ancient indeed, dating back well before the Iron Age. Its "pilgrim" name was probably attached by an over-zealous Ordnance Survey Officer in the 1860's as none of the great historians of Kent mention it in their works before this date. The real Pilgrim route from London closely followed what is now the A2.



The **Lych Gate** at the entrance to the Churchyard is dated 1875 and is Oak on a stone base. The date is on the West face of an internal beam.

A Lych (a Saxon word meaning corpse) Gate is the point where the ground becomes sacred and in medieval times is where the shrouded corpse was greeted by the clergy. The corpse would be placed on a funeral bier and the first part of the funeral service would be conducted at the sheltered gateway.

The Church still has a wooden wheeled bier in use but now the full service takes place in the Church.



Channel Tunnel Rail Link and M20.

Recent additions to the story of the village are the high speed rail link to the Channel Tunnel and the M20. The millionth tree planted as part of the landscaping for the rail link was unveiled just south of the village.

Kings Arms.

Records from 1608 record that there was a stable on the site, in 1634 a Maidstone Brewer purchased the property. Records then start to refer to a public house in the village called The Sun (Ye Sunne) and other records refer to a public House called The Woodman.

The current Kings Arms property dates from the late 15th Century. At one time the southern end of the property was the village shop and post office hence the post box in the wall and also red telephone box in Forge Lane.

Sacred Yew

In the churchyard and in private gardens around the area there are a number of fine Yew Trees. Investigations show that the specimen to the left of the Lych Gate is an Ancient or Sacred Yew thought to be about 1,300 – 1,500 years old.



This predates the Church but often Christian Churches were built on sites already related to worship and Yew Trees were often planted or worshipped near springs. The current spring line for the North Downs is very close to the church.



Forge Lane.

The Village Pump protected from the elements within a building called the round house was located at the end of this lane. Prior to the village well being sunk residents relied on the local springs. A forge was present in the lane from 16th Century to the mid 20th Century.

