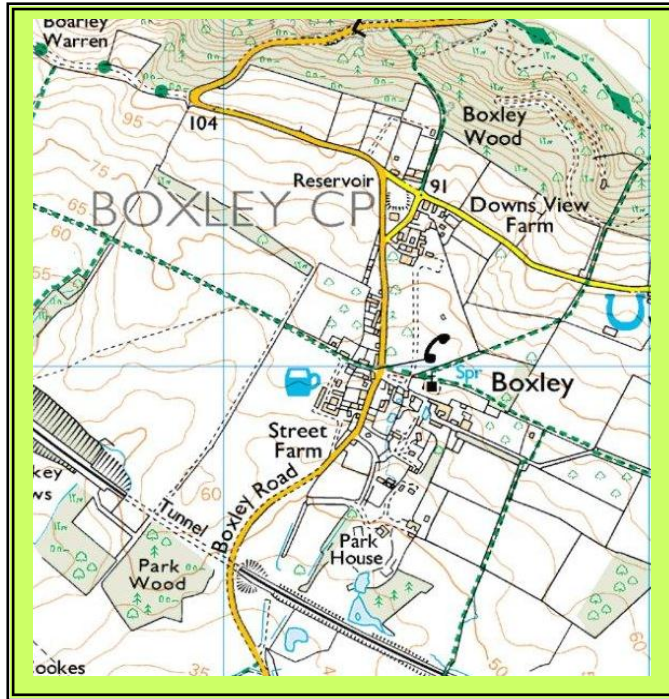


A short guide and walk around Boxley Village



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.

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

To the north of the village is **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.

To the North of the Village are **2 warrens (Boarley and Boxley)** that gave a continual supply, even in winter, of rabbit meat for the Abbey. Boarley Warren is now an SSI and managed as chalk grassland. 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 sparrow hawks, 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.

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.

St Mary the Virgin and All Saints Church. There is no evidence of the church existing before 1100 AD. Most of the listed areas are from the 13th to the 15th Centuries and it is predominantly made of ragstone.

There are a number of memorials within the Church to notable local families including

- A tablet in memory of Sir Edwin Wiat of Allington Castle Knight Banneret who was imprisoned and tortured in the Tower of London in the reign of King Richard III.
- George Sandys (1577 – 1643) a respected traveler and poet and a gentleman of the Privy Chamber.
- Alfred, Lord, Tennyson is mentioned in his sister's memorial. She lived at Park House to the south of the village.

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.

Boxley Village Green. This was designated in 1970 as a village green but 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.

Forge Lane. The Village Pump protected from the elements within a building called the round house was once 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.

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.

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.

Public Rights of Way link Boxley Village to Walderslade, Detling, Maidstone (at Penenden Heath) and Sandling. Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 148 Maidstone and the Medway Towns cover this area. Local footpaths are often muddy and have stiles/kissing gates. Walks along the valley have gentle gradients. Walks to Walderslade have steep gradients up the North Downs escarp and walks from Maidstone have a steady upward gradient.

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