

Additional Information

Herlingdone (later Harlington), in the Hundred of Manshead, is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, when it was held by Nigel de Albini, a Norman baron. Harlington had been held by four Saxon thanes during the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066). The literal meaning of the place name is 'hill of Herela's people'.

Harlington Vale is bordered on the south by the chalk downland of Sundon Hills (designated as an area of outstanding natural beauty) and to the north the sandy outcrop of Harlington Hill. The streams run into the River Flit.

Many road names in the village are connected with John Bunyan and Pilgrims Progress. John Bunyan was arrested at Samshill in nearby Westoning for preaching. He was brought before the magistrate Francis Wingate at Harlington Manor and sent to Bedford Gaol.

Sundon Rubbish Dump is to the right of the Bridleway between ❹ and Dyer's Hall Farm. The Dump was started towards the end of the nineteenth century, rubbish being brought from London by the trainload and tipped from special sidings. Some of these wagons spent the night in sidings at Harlington Station. Without doubt you will see large patches of hemlock which was not common until the 1950's but has now dramatically spread from the Dump.

The old Piggeries are close to the site of the original Dyers Hall Farmhouse. Our route soon crosses the old road to Sundon

which emerged by the Red Lion in Upper Sundon.

At ❺ you will hear running water because in this small copse a spring rises. In times of severe drought in the past, when all the village wells had dried up, this spring was essential. The private trackway up the hill via the green iron gate was once used for transporting chalk and lime from the quarry. The trackway to the right at ❻ leads to further disused chalk workings on the Sundon Hills.

At ❽ we cross the Mill Stream which flows to Harlington Mill half a mile further down. When you cross the Bottoms Lane near Willow Farm you are at the eastern end of the old hamlet of Harlington Lower East End. The Bottoms Road was once known as Hoardfield Lane which led to Common Fields. Looking north towards the ribbon development of Barton Road you will see a very large field devoid of hedges which have been removed since the 1950's.

The topmost branches of the trees in the spinney on the left house a large noisy rookery. These trees are growing on the site of a disused gravel pit.

The three houses grouped in the corner by the spinney are situated on Hornes End. The remains of the orchard belonging to one of the cottages can be seen beside the wall as you enter Bury Orchard. ❾ This large recreation ground has not always been a village amenity. Many villagers who strayed from the path in days gone by can remember being chased off by the owner as previously it was used for grazing. However, the local farmer laid a cricket pitch near the school.

The large depression on the right is a result of nineteenth century gravel workings. The original Village Pond, known as Bacchus Pond, was slightly further to the north and stretched across the road.

Of course one cannot fail to notice the 15th century tower of St Mary's Church and the line of the earlier mediaeval nave roof. Much of the surrounding area has produced pottery probably evidence of a mediaeval settlement. So check the molehills!

At the end of the path behind the railings stands the east room of the old village school founded in 1859 now the Parish Hall. Once back at the car park you will be able to see the new cricket and football pitches (New Grounds) once known as Vineyards.

Car Parking: Sundon Hills Country Park open all year - free. Village Hall Car Park free. Station Car Park cost £3.40 per weekday. Saturdays £1. Sundays and Bank Holidays free.

Places to eat: Harlington Swimming Club 'The Garden Rooms'. Tea, coffee, home-made cakes and biscuits, full meals and hot snacks. Mon-Fri 9.30-7.30 Sat/Sun 8.30-5.30. Telephone 01525 872029.

The Carpenters Arms. Restaurant open Wednesday to Saturday 6.30pm-9.30pm. Bar snacks and Sunday lunches available. Telephone 01525 872384.

The Old Sun Public House. Meals served Tues-Sat 12.30-2.30 and 6.00-9.00, Sun 12.30-2.30 Trad Sun Lunch. Telephone 01525 872417. Walking Parties welcome. Parking by arrangement.

Strong footwear advisable.