



NetworkRail

Network Rail (CTRL) is committed to a policy of sustainability development and is proud to be sponsoring The Darnley Trail Leaflet. The green space surrounding the railway is often referred to as a green corridor because it is an area for wildlife to either live in or pass through. The design and operation of High Speed 1 includes features that protect natural resources and conserve and enhance biodiversity along the route.

Useful Information

Shorne Woods Country Park (Kent County Council)
Tel: 01474 823800
E-mail: country.parks@kent.gov.uk
Web: www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent

Jeskyns Community Woodland (Forestry Commission)
Tel: 01474 825118
E-mail: jeskynsranger@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Web: www.forestry.gov.uk/jeskyns

Ashenbank Wood (Woodland Trust)
Tel: 01476 581111
E-mail: enquiries@woodlandtrust.org.uk
Web: www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

Darnley Mausoleum (National Trust)
Tel: 01304 207326
Web: www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Cobham Hall
Tel: 01474 823371
Web: www.cobhamhall.com

Ranscombe Farm Reserve (Plantlife International)
Tel: 01722 342730
E-mail: enquiries@plantlife.org.uk
Web: www.plantlife.org.uk

How to get there



By car

Signposted off the A2 between Gravesend and Rochester at the Cobham/Shorne junction (DA12 3HX).



By bus

Red Route 416/417 service between Meopham, Sole Street, Higham and Gravesend runs Monday to Saturday four times daily return. Bus stops at the park entrance. Enquiries to KCC travel service telephone 0871 2002233 or telephone Red Route directly on 01474 353896.



By train

Regular services from London and Kent to Meopham, Gravesend and Higham. All stations served by taxis and Red Route 416/417 buses, which also stop in Cobham. For rail enquiries telephone 0845 7484950.



By foot

Shorne Woods Country Park is located on Brewers Road adjacent to the A2 between Gravesend and Rochester. It is a short stroll from Shorne Village.

Produced by the Cobham & Shorne Countryside Partnership



THE NATIONAL TRUST



Gravesham Borough Council



WOODLAND TRUST



Communities and Local Government



Forestry Commission England



Kent County Council



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Explore the

Darnley Trail



Explore Cobham & Shorne's Countryside

The Cobham and Shorne area contains some of the most stunning countryside that you will find in North Kent. With most of the countryside within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, you will be able to discover richly diverse landscapes throughout the area. Experience ancient woodland, over 400 years old and home to some of Kent's biggest trees; open grassland with towering veteran trees scattered along the horizon; acres of coppice woodland, filled with bluebells in the springtime; and newly planted orchards and grazed meadows.

The Darnley Trail

Named after the Earls of Darnley, who previously owned Cobham Hall and much of the land that you will see en route, the Darnley Trail is an excellent way to see the highlights of this area. This is a circular route for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians that links Shorne Woods Country Park with the gently undulating countryside on the other side of the A2, over a distance of approximately 10km. From the Country Park, the Darnley Trail takes in Cobham Park, Ranscombe Farm Reserve, Ashenbank Wood and Jeskyns Community Woodland, with several entry points and various short cuts that make up a varied and interesting route. Horse box parking is available at Shorne Woods Country Park by arrangement (tel: 01474 823800).



Shorne Woods Country Park

Shorne Woods Country Park is the ideal place to base yourself when planning to explore the area. With plenty of parking, a dramatic, eco-friendly visitor centre full of useful information, toilets and a café, it provides all the facilities you need to set you up for your day of discovery.

Within the park itself, there are seven waymarked trails of varying lengths and difficulty to help you make the most of all that the park has to offer. With 288 acres of woodland, heathland and wetland, you will find ponds and lakes rich with

reeds and teeming with colourful dragonflies. The medieval remains of Randall Manor, the original seat of the De Cobham family, are hidden in the woods. Or simply relax in the picnic area while the children let off steam in one of the two play areas on site.



Cobham Park

Cobham Hall, a grand Elizabethan mansion, was the home of the Earls of Darnley from the 1730s to the 1950s. The Hall is at the heart of Cobham Park, originally a medieval deer park and redesigned by the renowned landscape designer Humphry Repton in the early 19th century.



Within the park are picturesque pleasure gardens, rolling parkland, and scenic woodland. Almost hidden in a quiet corner of the park is the famous Darnley Mausoleum, an internationally important building completed in 1786.



The Park now has several owners. The largest area open to the public, Cobham Wood, belongs to the National Trust. The wood, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, is open all year but the Darnley Mausoleum is open only on certain days.

Now an independent school, Cobham Hall and its colourful gardens are open to visitors on certain days throughout the year.

Please keep to the waymarked trails and keep dogs under control at all times.



Ashenbank Wood

The Woodland Trust owns 29.5ha of Ashenbank Wood, the majority of which was bought in 1984. Ashenbank Wood is part ancient woodland where it was traditionally managed as coppice, and part wood pasture where historically the wood was grazed by livestock. There are many examples of veteran trees and pollards to see as well as relics from Ashenbank's social history - a Bronze Age Barrow and structures from the Second World War when the RAF accommodated personnel from the Gravesend Airfield in the wood. Interpretation panels are placed along two waymarked routes, which are passable with sensible footwear.



Jeskyns

Opened to the public in 2007, Jeskyns is 360 acres of greenspace that has been specially created by the Forestry Commission.

Land that was previously under intensive agriculture has been converted to a mixture of traditional habitats. Over time the key historic landscape features of North Kent will reappear.



There will be traditional orchards of apples, cherries and cobnuts, open parkland, grass and wildflower meadows and native woodlands.



Almost seven kilometres of fully accessible hard trails and grass paths across the site have been created for pedestrians, wheelchair users, buggy pushers, cyclists and horse riders.

Extensive circular trails take in all of the most interesting features on site. Children will enjoy the innovative natural play features that have been designed to stimulate the imagination including a fun tree house. A range of newly created habitats including four new ponds provide the opportunity for wildlife to flourish.



Ranscombe Farm

Ranscombe Farm is a botanical gem, described by experts as a 'very unique place'. It is a square mile in total and it has been a favourite haunt of wild plant enthusiasts for hundreds of years.

Managed by the charity Plantlife International in partnership with the tenant farmer, Ranscombe is now a country park. It combines a place for quiet walks in attractive countryside with a fascinating flora on the slopes of the North Downs.

There is a five-year plan to restore coppicing, an ancient Kentish trade, to the woodland and to improve conditions for wildlife. These woodlands are best in spring with early-purple orchids and bluebells.

The excellent work begun by local volunteers in 2005 will be continued. Plantlife is organising volunteer workdays, talks, free guided walks and other events throughout the year.



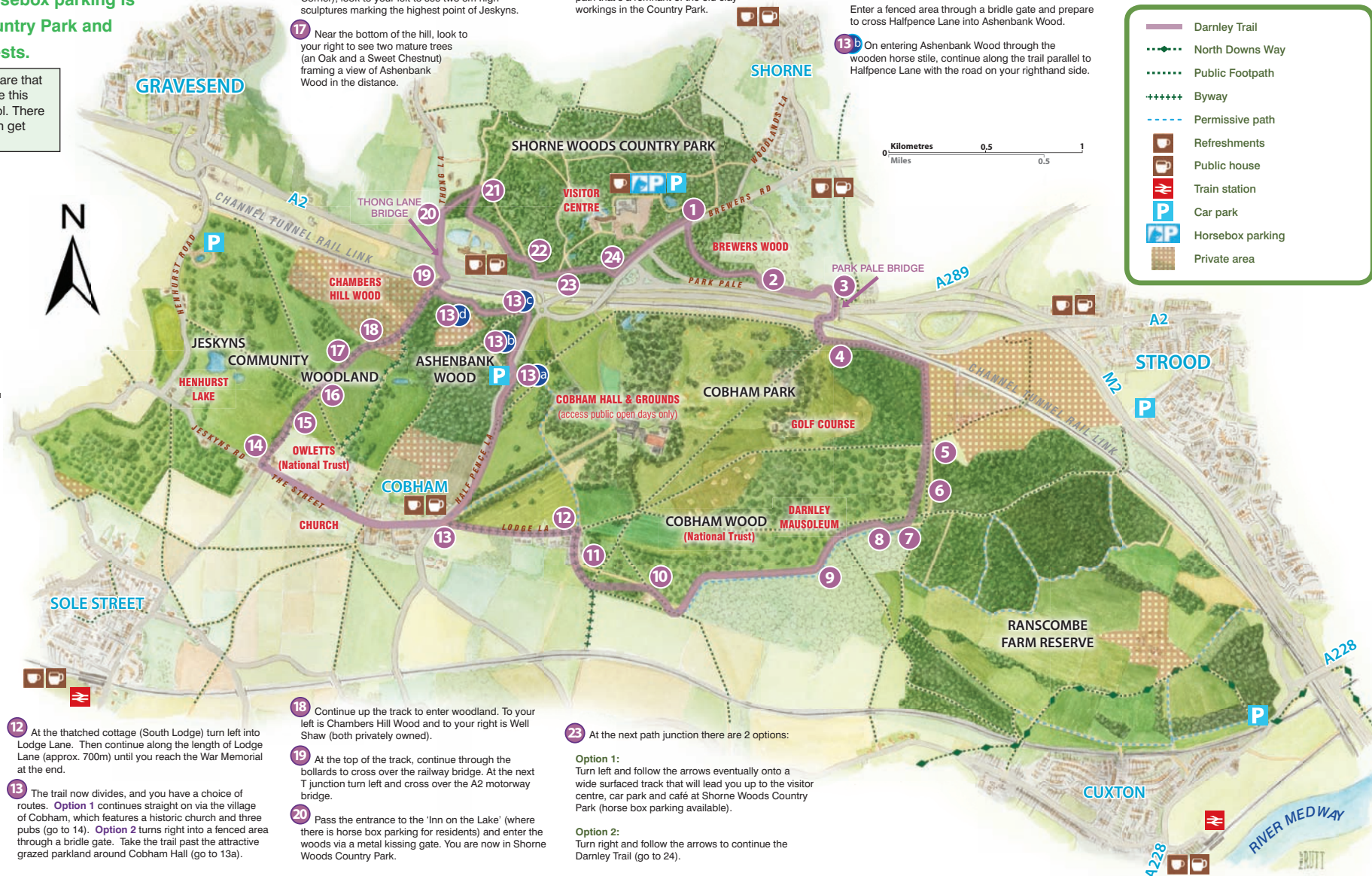
FINDING YOUR WAY

...around the Darnley Trail

Our trail description starts at the main entrance to Shorne Woods Country Park on Brewers Road and takes you in a clockwise direction, so you can start and finish wherever you like and you can travel in either direction. There are lots of entrances and some other places to park. Horsebox parking is available at Shorne Woods Country Park and at 'The Inn on the Lake' for guests.

This is a shared user route so please be aware that cyclists, horse riders and pedestrians all use this path, dogs must be kept under close control. There are steep slopes and in the winter areas can get very muddy so take care.

- 1 Taking great care, use the Pegasus crossing over the road and enter Brewers Wood, following the wide track through the coppice woodland. At the next main crossroads turn right following the trail that meanders through the woods for some distance. Continue heading downhill through an area rich with wildflowers in the spring until you eventually reach the Shorne Woods Country Park boundary next to Park Pale Road.
- 2 Exit through the gate then turn left along Park Pale Road.
- 3 Following the signs to Cobham Golf Course, take the first left road turning that takes you up over the A2 across Park Pale Bridge.
- 4 Go under the railway and turn left through the swing gate, following the footpath with the railway on the left, and the golf course over to the right. Continue until you reach the point where the Darnley Trail forks right near the boundary fence with the open fields.
- 5 Continue keeping the fields on your left and woodland on your right until you reach a narrow grassland area between two fences, cross this, then bear right just after the kissing gate keeping the wire fence immediately on your right.
- 6 Continue up the steep slope for approx. 300m until you reach the top.
- 7 At the top of the slope, you will see a field gate and large cattle grid on your right. Continue forward, crossing the track, and entering the more dense woodland.
- 8 Bear right and follow the undulating and winding trail for the next 800m, keeping the post and wire fence on your right at all times. Pass three kissing gates, and look out for the Darnley Mausoleum, visible through the trees on your right. Descend a steep slope, partially along some wide steps and take the right hand track at bottom of the steps.
- 9 Continue, passing a small gate and cattle grid on the right. Carry on for another 650m and pass a small clearing of beech trees where a public footpath joins from the left. Keep right next to wire fence, and then on past an abandoned quarry to your left.
- 10 Reaching a kissing gate, do not go through but turn left where the trail continues through coppice woodland for approx. 300m.
- 11 Pass through a bridge gate and horse stile (adjacent to a field gate), bear right along the track, heading toward the collection of buildings.



- 12 At the thatched cottage (South Lodge) turn left into Lodge Lane. Then continue along the length of Lodge Lane (approx. 700m) until you reach the War Memorial at the end.
- 13 The trail now divides, and you have a choice of routes. **Option 1** continues straight on via the village of Cobham, which features a historic church and three pubs (go to 14). **Option 2** turns right into a fenced area through a bridge gate. Take the trail past the attractive grazed parkland around Cobham Hall (go to 13a).
- 14 **Option 1: via Cobham Village**
Continue through the village for approx. 1km and at 'Owletts' (a National Trust Property) turn right up the public byway entering to the left of the house drive, before the small cottage. You are entering Jeskyns Community Woodland. Please note vehicles may be present on this track.
- 15 To your left in the distance, you can see the tree house and the newly created Henhurst Lake with its wooden boardwalk.
- 16 At the brow of the hill (locally known as Hollybush Corner), look to your left to see two 6m high sculptures marking the highest point of Jeskyns.
- 17 Near the bottom of the hill, look to your right to see two mature trees (an Oak and a Sweet Chestnut) framing a view of Ashenbank Wood in the distance.
- 18 Continue up the track to enter woodland. To your left is Chambers Hill Wood and to your right is Well Shaw (both privately owned).
- 19 At the top of the track, continue through the bollards to cross over the railway bridge. At the next T junction turn left and cross over the A2 motorway bridge.
- 20 Pass the entrance to the 'Inn on the Lake' (where there is horse box parking for residents) and enter the woods via a metal kissing gate. You are now in Shorne Woods Country Park.

- 21 Follow the path through the woodland, passing fields on your left, until you rise up the hill to a path junction. (This junction connects the Darnley Trail with additional waymarked routes through the country park, for which a separate leaflet is available). At the junction, turn right and up hill, and follow this path through Shorne's ancient woodland. Look out for views of the QE2 Bridge through clearings on your right.
- 22 At the next major path junction turn right, where the route doubles up as the Explorer and Heritage Trails, and follow this route bearing left along a concrete path that's a remnant of the old clay workings in the Country Park.

- 23 At the next path junction there are 2 options:
Option 1:
Turn left and follow the arrows eventually onto a wide surfaced track that will lead you up to the visitor centre, car park and café at Shorne Woods Country Park (horse box parking available).
- 24 Continue on the trail bearing right and following the waymarkers until you reach the park boundary. Do not leave the park, but turn left just in front of a kissing gate onto a path that weaves through the woodland running parallel to the road for a short distance, and eventually crosses the main country park entrance drive. Cross the drive carefully and follow the path to the traffic lights (Pegasus crossing) and point number 1.
- 13b On entering Ashenbank Wood through the wooden horse stile, continue along the trail parallel to Halfpence Lane with the road on your righthand side.

- 13c Turn left onto the public right of way as way marked for about 50 metres and then at the wooden 'squeeze gap' fence turn right off the public right of way following the woodland track and way marked direction.
- 13d Pass through the horse stile turning right onto a surfaced vehicle track and walk on towards point 19. At the T-junction (point 19) turn right and cross over the railway bridge. At the next T-junction turn left and cross over the A2 bridge towards the Inn on the Lake and Shorne Woods Country Park (point 20).