

## **INTRODUCTION TO HERNE & BROOMFIELD**

### **1 Location and Size.**

The parish of Herne & Broomfield is situated in south east England on the north Kent coast. The parish has good road and rail links to London and Thanet. Herne is 22 miles from the main port of Dover.

To the north and bordering the parish is the coastal town of Herne Bay on the Thames estuary. The parish is separated from the town by the A299 dual carriageway.

Sturry Parish is immediately to the south, with the historic City of Canterbury seven miles away.

To the west is Chestfield parish and further north Whitstable, renowned for its fishing and oysters. To the east are the rural parishes of Hoath and Chislet and further on, the seaside towns of Margate and Ramsgate.

The parish falls within the Canterbury City Council (CCC) administration area. It is within the Kent county division of Herne & Sturry, in the North Thanet parliamentary constituency.

Herne & Broomfield Parish is the largest parish in the district. The CCC Housing Survey lists 4,440 households, with a population of approximately 11,900.

### **Early beginnings**

Herne was developed as the first landfall along the coast from Reculver. The medieval street pattern is still apparent today. The village grew slowly until the C18 when there was an influx of people. Wealthy families from Canterbury migrated to Herne to lead a healthier life near the sea. Herne became affluent at that time, as the nearby bay was an important outlet for trade to and from Canterbury and its hinterland; Herne village acted as the control for goods passing through from the bay to the city.

The village was the principal settlement and the parish of Herne reached all the way to the sea. Herne Bay as a separate town did not yet exist. The first foundations for the town now known as Herne Bay were laid as a result of this migration to the coast and the population figures for Herne (and later Herne Bay) reflect it. In 1801 Herne's population stood at 1,232. In the 1831 *Topographical Dictionary*, Herne was described as, a parish in the hundred of Bleangate, lathe of St. Augustine, county of Kent, 5¾ miles (N.E. by N.) from Canterbury, containing 1675 inhabitants.

In 1847 the population of the now detached Herne Parish, including the hamlets of Eddington and Broomfield, stood at 1,469. This had risen to 1,716 persons by 1901. It increased massively 60 years later when it reached 4,576. Today the population of the combined settlements of Herne and Broomfield has exploded to nearly 12,000!

### **2 Physical Environment.**

The geology of the Herne area of the parish consists of Head brick earth, Head gravel, London Clay. Broomfield area, further east, includes Oldhaven Beds, Woolwich Beds and Thanet Beds.

The urban area of the parish is bordered on three sides by mainly arable farmland and woodland.

The south of the parish is designated as Special Landscape Area and is bordered by East Blean Woods, a National Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The woods cover over 122 hectares of ancient semi-natural woodland, situated on poorly drained London clay, with a small area of gravelly soil in the south. The wood has been heavily managed in the past and was a prime source for sweet chestnut. When conditions are open, after the coppice is cut, much of the ground is colonised by common cow-wheat, which is the food plant of the caterpillar of the nationally rare heath fritillary butterfly. It is a key site for nesting birds such as warblers and insect eating birds such as woodpeckers, nuthatches and treecreepers. The soil is mostly fairly acid, as shown by the carpets of bluebells and patches of heather but more alkaline elsewhere, with characteristic species such as spurge laurel, sanicle and common spotted-orchid present across the site. It is also notable for fungi in the autumn months.

West Blean Wood (including Thornden Wood) forms an important part of a wider conservation jigsaw, linking the Blean Woods National Nature Reserve in the west with East Blean Wood in the east and thereby establishing a continuous nature conservation complex, owned and managed by a partnership of local and national bodies. Nightjars and nightingales are present.

The parish is well served with Public Rights of Way; these are maintained by Kent County Council (KCC).

### **3 Built Environment.**

The village is centred upon the Parish Church of St Martin, which dates from the C14, 'a large handsome structure consisting of three aisles and three chancels with a noble tower'. The centre of the village today contains a wide variety of buildings dating from 14<sup>th</sup> Century to the present day and includes 31 listed buildings. These are still able to give the village a distinctive feel.

Strode House was the main residence, set in a landscaped park which stretched southward up the hill to the edge of Herne Common; much of the land towards Broomfield was part of the Strode Park Estate. Other principal buildings are the Windmill, the former Workhouse and Hawe Farm.

Herne Windmill is a Grade 1 listed building and is situated on high ground overlooking the village. It dates from 1789 and the Mill house next door is of a similar date. In 1856 the Mill had to be raised on a brick plinth by 17' 9" (5.41m) to catch the wind. The Windmill is still a landmark, visible from the east and west and is a recognised seamark shown on nautical maps. Although no longer a working mill, since 1959, the sails do still turn and the former engine room now houses the parish office. Modern bungalows now surround the windmill and much of its setting has been eroded. The Mill is looked after by a team of volunteers and is open to visitors on Sundays during the summer. There are spectacular views from the top.

The amount of development since the late 50's has changed the whole area, with both Herne and Broomfield merging together with no distinct areas separating the two and from certain viewpoints the modern development dominates the old village.

The parish has an Infant and a Junior School, cemetery, a sports field and six public houses. Industry within the parish is mainly centred in two or three areas, there are post offices/village stores, in both Herne and Broomfield, the newer development in Broomfield has several shops; a general store, fish and chip shop, off-licence, Chinese take-away and hairdressers.

A new doctor's surgery was built 5 years ago in Broomfield Road with an adjacent pharmacy. Alternative therapies such as osteopathy and acupuncture are also available.

In Herne Village itself, as well as the post office, there is a dentist, two pubs and a micro-pub.

Lower Herne has a small engineering plant – Flexicon (Europe) Ltd. Strode Park Foundation for Disabled People is the largest employer, with nearly 200 staff. There is also a farm shop.

Some of the roads are still without footways, but many people feel this adds to the rural feel, although with the increase in traffic, safety is a concern.

**Herne Conservation Area** was first designated in 1970. The boundaries were tightly drawn and included the historic core of the village, the medieval street pattern and the early 16<sup>th</sup> century buildings. The conservation area was amended in 1990 to cover all the older parts of the village, extending to the north to include the more interesting housing along the main road, the playing field, Strode House and Herne Hospital, the former workhouse and the Common. The new boundary took into account the importance of the surrounding parkland, as a setting for the village and the historical importance of the common land as part of the village economy and now extends to 114.62 ha.

**Herne Windmill Conservation Area** of 0.43ha covers the area immediately adjacent to the Grade 1 listed mill (designated 1990), including the Mill House and the former Jersey Farm.

**Hawe Farm Conservation Area** of 7.11ha (designated 1990) a medieval site, includes the Hawe Farmhouse, barn and moat. The C18 barn is Grade 11 Listed.

**Broomfield Conservation Area** of 8.31 ha (designated 1972, amended 1997) includes the original scattered houses of the hamlet of Broomfield and the pond.

**Eddington Conservation Area** includes a small portion of the north west of the parish, known locally as Links.

The parish has seen a sharp increase in house prices over the last 10 years, mainly due to the fact that the road and rail links to London have been greatly improved, allowing people to buy properties outside their work area at cheaper prices. As many of our residents are commuters they do not have the time to get involved in community matters. The majority of people involved in local organisations and volunteering tend to be over 50.

Due to the increase in building, there is much less farmland in the area. The number of farms and the rural economy has decreased considerably.

Congestion on the roads is a problem now; with increased car ownership. Many parents drive their children to school but a Walking Bus Scheme has just started, so hopefully things will improve.

Many of the older properties were built without garages and on street parking is now causing a problem, especially as many households have more than one vehicle.

We are fortunate to have a good local bus service and Herne Bay and Sturry railway stations are about 2 and 3 miles respectively, from the centre of Herne village.

With the increase in development, lack of facilities has been exacerbated. For instance there is just one decent children's play area, for the whole of the parish. The parish council has worked hard to improve the facilities. We worked in partnership with Canterbury City Council and contributed to the new play area, in the Cherry orchard Playing Field. We also independently installed a multi-games ball court and an outdoor gym there, with the aid of grant funding.

The Parish Council has re-generated and transformed the former land-fill site into Broomfield Community Park and BMX racing track. This was opened by BBC weather girl Kaddy-Lee Preston in May 2008.

*Compiled by Carol Davis  
January 2010*