

## SHORWELL

The parish is five miles south-west of Newport with a southern seaboard, comprising the tithing of Atherfield and the hamlet of Billingham. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book as *Sorewell*, from the Old English *scora* and *wella* meaning 'the spring or stream by the steep slope'. The name refers to the site of the village in a deep valley at the foot of the downs, and the stream rising from a spring in the grounds of North Court manor called Shor Well flowing into the sea at Grange Chine.



Shorwell 1905

The approach to the village from the north is very picturesque, with the road taking the form of a deep "shute" spanned by a rustic bridge. The cottages are thatched and mostly built of stone. It became a parish in its own right in the reign of Edward II, when it was separated from the priory of Carisbrooke and, in addition to Billingham, also includes the hamlets of Kingston, Atherfield Green, Little Atherfield and Yafford.

## PARISH CHURCH OF ST PETER

The earliest part of the Grade 1 listed church dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with the small church built for the Northcourt family in 1100 forming the north-east corner. The present building was practically rebuilt in the 15<sup>th</sup>

such, just a few scattered cottages. The manor house lies under the knoll on which stands the little church. It was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century on the site of an earlier house, and remodelled in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The church of St James remains much as it was when built in the latter part of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It is a plain rectangular structure without a dividing chancel arch and of the original features, only the double hollow lancet windows, the lower portion of the east window and a trefoiled credence in the south wall remain.

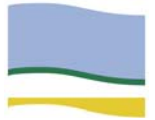
## YAFFORD

This hamlet is located close to Wolverton Manor, and the name is said to have been derived from the Anglo Saxon word "hecce" meaning a hatch or sluice. It has a non-operational water mill, which ceased working in



1970. The mill has an overshot water wheel, powered by the flow of water from a millpond, which is fed by a stream from the village of Shorwell. The mill was a grist mill, working to grind corn (wheat, oats, barley) to create animal feed; it did not have the machinery to produce fine flour for people.

# STRIDING OUT IN SHORWELL



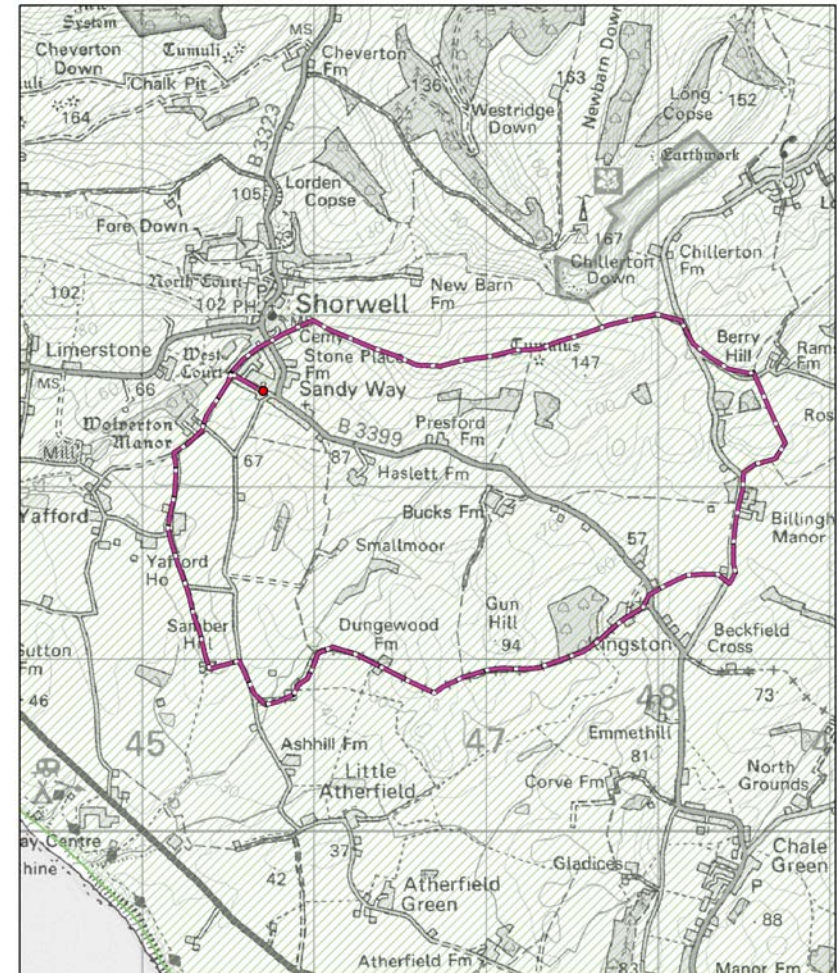
Shorwell 1906

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The Isle of Wight Partnership is jointly supported by Natural England and the Isle of Wight Council



1:24,000

- Walk Route
- Start Point
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The whole of the nave arcades are an interesting instance of early Gothic revival, probably built at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Above the north door is a fine tempera painting of St Christopher, and an elaborate early 16<sup>th</sup> century window in the south wall.

There are many interesting memorials in the church, the earliest of which is a brass to Richard Bethell, a former vicar, who died in 1518. There are also the Jacobean tombs of Sir John Leigh and his wife Elizabeth, and in the north aisle an alabaster tablet to John Merris who died in 1692. There is an interesting brass attached to the east wall of the north aisle in memory of the two wives of Barnabas Leigh, eldest son of Sir John. The first wife is depicted with her “fifteen hopeful children”, the second, who had none, stands alone, but from her mouth come the words “Am I not more to thee than ten sons?” In the wall spaces of the nave arcade are circular tablets to members of the Bull and Bennett families, former owners of North Court.

It also contains three rare bibles - a chained copy of the Great Bible printed in English in 1541 by order of Henry VIII, a Vinegar Bible and a Breeches Bible.

## MANOR HOUSES

The fine Grade II listed Jacobean manor-house of North Court, known as *Northsorewelle* in 1285 meaning ‘the north manor of Shorwell’, lies back from the road to the west at the bottom of the “shute” where it enters the village. Having never been relegated to farm uses like many others, it still retains its position as a gentleman’s seat, is the largest ancient dwelling on the Isle of Wight, and recognised by English Heritage as being one of only eight on the Island of national importance. It is a stone structure built in 1615 by the deputy Governor of the Island, Sir John Leigh, and extended by Lord Burgh in 1905 with the addition of a music room. The garden front with its canted bays and mullioned windows is very beautiful, and in times gone by Turner painted here while Algernon Swinburne wrote one of his epic poems in the library.



Northcourt

Approximately half a mile from the village on the Brighstone road, is the earlier manor house of West Court, which was originally called *Suthshorewelle* ‘the south manor of Shorwell’. The house is of three distinct dates, the earliest portion being the east wing dated at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with the main part added in 1579, and the north and south wings built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

After the Norman Conquest, Gozelin Fitzador owned the manor of South Shorwell, and it became common practice amongst Norman landowners who settled on the Island, to become known by the name of their possessions. The Fitzadors became known as “de Insula”, later translated into “de l’Isle” eventually becoming Lisle, and the family still have Island connections.

Behind West Court to the east lies Wolverton Manor, whose name in old English means ‘the farmstead or estate belonging to a man called Wulfweard’. However, at the time of Domesday Book, the manor seems to have been called *Vlwarcumbe* ‘Wulfeward’s valley’ from the Old English

cumb, referring to the valley in which Wolverton is situated.

The original house was built on an island and the outline of the moat, which is a Scheduled Monument, can still be seen together with the nearby grove of ancient cobnut trees. Sir John Hammond, a physician to James I, had the current manor built in an E type design with central porch and projecting wings. The materials were ferruginous sandstone quarried near Brighstone and green sandstone quarried at Quarr, with the mullioned windows bought ready-made from Portland.

New architectural styles and ideas which became fashionable at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, led to the house being altered to a Queen Anne style. From outside you can see the large glazed sash windows in the south wing, and the inside proportions were changed to create rooms with splendid doors, architraves, cornices and windows with shutters. However, the project was never completed, and the house is now a perfect harmony of two different styles.

The farm outbuildings are very special, and used for the working farm. The large thatched shearing barn is one of the best examples in the south of England, and the Granary and old chapel are very important parts of a wonderful complex of historically important buildings.

Billingham, near Kingston has a settlement going back to at least the twelfth century, with the present manor house dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was reputed to be the most haunted house on the Island and according to tradition, the fair lady of Billingham was wooed and won by a gentleman of culture and refinement. Some time later a new suitor, rich, young and handsome, also pursued the lady. As a consequence of the subsequent duel the younger man won, but the lady and her new love did not enjoy much happiness, for shortly afterwards he was drowned while crossing to France. The beautiful widow lived the rest of her life in remorse and even after death, could find no peace.

## KINGSTON

This is one of the smallest rural parishes in the Isle of Wight, wedged between the parishes of Chale and Shorwell. There is no village as

century in the Norman style, with the nave, chancel and aisles being of equal width, and a continuous arcade from west to east giving the church a spacious appearance.

The square tower is in three stages with the lower part vaulted, and is completed by a stone tower gifted by Sir John Leigh of North Court in 1617. It has an embattled cornice, angle buttresses and a stilted arched opening connecting it with the nave. The tower originally held three bells, which were augmented and re-hung as a ring of five in 1893, but were notoriously hard work. The addition of a Whitechapel treble in 1998 when the bells were tuned and re-hung as a six, has meant they are now very pleasant to ring.



In around 1620, the west end of the south aisle was extended to provide space for the parish gun, with its blocked entrance still visible. The interior has many interesting accessories, the most noticeable being the stone pulpit, which has a semi-octagonal base corbelling out to an octagonal panelled body and ending in a simple cornice. Over it is a graceful oak canopy of the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, having six faces.