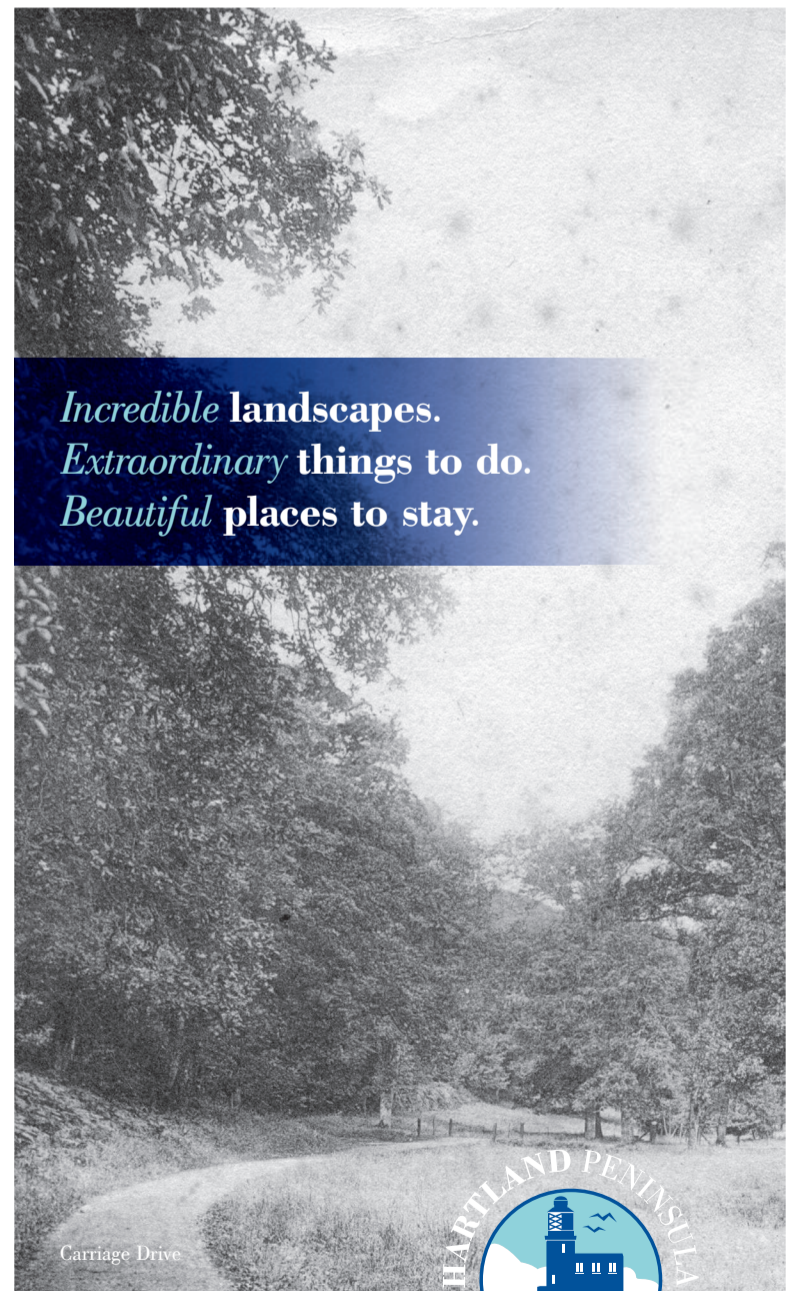


This is one of a series of four Heritage walks that uncover some of the fascinating history across the Hartland Peninsula. The walk will take you through the parklands of Hartland Abbey and that of the previous manorial owners, both of which are a display of the statement of status within their historic periods.

The walk is on variable terrain including footpaths, green lanes, meadowland and road, and can sometimes be muddy. The surfaces are not appropriate for wheelchairs. The walk starts and finishes in Hartland where there are shops, cafes and pubs for refreshments, and interesting galleries and potteries to visit. There are toilets, including disabled toilets, by the main car park where the walk begins.

Please download the associated map of the walk from www.hartlandpeninsula.co.uk, where you can also download the audio version of this walk and find other Heritage Trails, walking routes and information on places to stay, eat and explore.

The Parkland Heritage Walk



*Incredible landscapes.
Extraordinary things to do.
Beautiful places to stay.*



The Heritage Trail Series
**The Parkland
Heritage Walk**

The Walk

We will take a while to consider two aspects of status in Hartland before we continue this walk. Hartland since the 11thC has been divided into two distinct sets of ownership – Religious and Secular, the religious land holding being based on the Augustinian Monastery, while the secular or manorial was in the possession of the Dinham family of Norman descent. Although to be seen as distinct entities they were heavily inter-related, the Dinham being the 'benefactors' of the Monastery. In the first instance we will look at the expression of status displayed by the Dinham. A family came into existence in the 13thC. Although the Dinham left Hartland in favour of their properties in south Devon they held the manorial rights until 1501 after which date, due to failure of the male line, the manorial rights became dispersed.

Similarly the religious element was in place until the Dissolution when the majority of the land holding passed into secular hands – The Abbott family. With careful marriages the Abbey Estate expanded and the owners gained a status which was to replace that lost from the failure of the Dinham's

2. Turn right at the bottom of The Square and walk on to Springfield (SS 225.807 124.399).

The Dinham household accounts show that they hunted extensively and displayed themselves with gold tipped arrow heads and fine feather flights. No doubt their Deer Park was used for entertainment, being viewed from platforms erected to allow shooting or from their house, thus giving a clean 'drier' valley. Some maps give a position just over this bridge as being the site of a mansion. There is little to support this archaeological in the landscape, or indeed at another alleged site some 500m west. There was a gamekeeper's lodge sited off Cutcliffe Lane which may have been a substantial building and thus gave the idea of a mansion within the park.

1. Start from the car park off The Square in Hartland Village (SS 225.922 124.448).

Exit west through the car park entrance onto The Square. This is the traditional centre of what was the ancient Borough of Harton established in c.1290. The large building on the right (west) now being the St John's Arts & Music Centre, was previously the site of St John's Chapel of Ease. In turn this chapel was built on the site of the earlier Town Hall, this being the focal point for administration of the parish and Hundred of Hartland from possibly the late medieval period. Hartland retained its Borough status until the end of the 19thC when 'it displeased Queen Victoria' to allow it to continue as a Borough. At this point the administration passed into the hands of the newly established Parish Councils, the end of 600 years of managing its own borough affairs. Note the public clock which is one of the oldest in the country still in continuous use having been purchased by the Borough in the early 17thC and still chiming the hour.

3. Take the gate into The Vale (SS 225.798 124.387) and walk on to the next gate.

Although the valley is now becoming overgrown, it once gave extensive vistas enhanced by the careful planting of specimen trees and discrete usages of fencing, thus giving the appearance of parkland stretching far into the distance rather than being confined to the valley. The woodlands on the north valley side were cut by Italian Prisoners of War for use in the 'War Effort' and have re-grown in a coppice style. An aspect of this walk is picking out the specimen trees used as plantings throughout the full distance of the carriage drive with such as Black Lime, Scots Pines, Oak, Beech, Maple, Cherry, Chestnut, Rhododendron, Laurel and no doubt many more.

Continue on ahead. Walking the route of the carriage drive down into 'The Vale' you will notice a few of the remaining colonnade of beeches and rhododendron bushes. As you walk into the valley floor note how the river has been diverted and channelled under the bridge thus giving a clean 'drier' valley. Some maps give a position just over this bridge as being the site of a mansion. There is little to support this archaeological in the landscape, or indeed at another alleged site some 500m west. There was a gamekeeper's lodge sited off Cutcliffe Lane which may have been a substantial building and thus gave the idea of a mansion within the park.

is one of the most complete medieval deer parks in the West Country which possibly was sited against the park on its eastern boundary. This is and a remarkable survival. We will view aspects of this at various stages of this walk.

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divided inheritance. It is this 'new' display that gives us the extensive parklands which are part of Hartland Abbey today. This walk is through that parkland which incorporates the medieval Deer Park.



You can also download:

- **Three more walks in the Heritage series**, in both print and audio format
- **Six printed walking routes and two video walks** to explore the beautiful Peninsula countryside
- **The Hartland Treasure Trail**, for families, from the award winning Treasure Trails company

All available from www.hartlandpeninsula.co.uk

The Hartland Peninsula Association is grateful to Stephen Hobbs for supplying the heritage content for this walk.

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4. Continue walking as the carriage drive hugs the southern valley side, until you reach a footpath signed Elmscott on the left (SS 225.295 124.149).

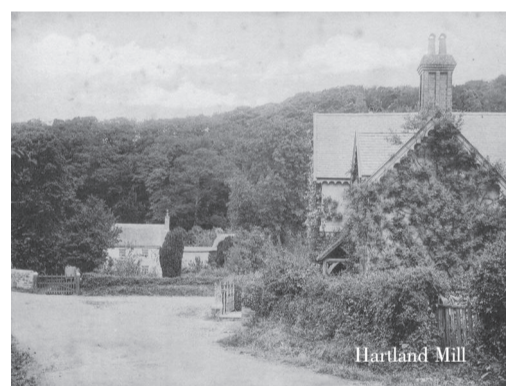
Before crossing the bridge look up the side valley (south) and see the banking that carried the Deer Park enclosure across the valley. All bridges within the Vale have no side walls often only a metal fence. This style of iron fencing is a feature of much of the Abbey Estate many having been made by the Dayman family of smiths who also held an annual contract to tar the fencing.

5. Take the Elmscott footpath (left) until you reach the stone stile (SS 225.171 124.110).

This is the closest point at which you can easily access the remains of the medieval Deer Park wall. Look to your left and see the fine built wall that runs along the edge of the woodland and note the difference in ground levels, it is much higher in the field on the other side. This allowed 'wild' deer to jump into the park, but no deer could jump out. At various points along this wall are simple stone step stiles giving access.

6. Cross the stile into the green lane.

Take the stile into the lane. You can see how the green lane approaching from Cuckoo Wood takes a severe left turn and the lane then passes through a sunken section down into the valley. This is a deliberate diversion of an ancient way to prevent access to the interior of the Deer Park. If you wished to trace the original way you would need to retrace your path back down into The Vale and across a now lost river ford and up the companion sunken path on the opposite valley side exiting into the field above and then on into Harton. However, to continue our walk proceed down through the sunken lane, back into The Vale, note the method by which sections of wall have been incorporated into the banks to form a boundary.



11. Turning left (north) from the front of Hartland Mill take the public footpath towards the river.

You now re-join the carriage drive in front of a white cottage (Glen Cottage), once home to the Abbey head gardener but previously a second mill house. Note the channel dug across the frontage which took the used water back to the stream. The last actual mill on this site was a single storey building now converted into a garage on the northern boundary of Glen Cottage. The only evidence of the mill is at its rear where the water channel can be seen which fed an undershot mill wheel with water stored in a pond east of the building. It is possible that an earlier mill existed in the remains of buildings now within the cottage garden.

If you wish, at this point you can take a short diversion from this walk by continuing along the carriage drive to the road and the present entrance to Hartland Abbey (SS 224.568 124.842). Until the late 18thC a small farm was located in the field immediately south of the Abbey gates but was cleared to improve the vista from the drive and house. The Abbey gardens are on your right, further up the hillside, set out with the assistance of Gertrude Jekyll who was often a house guest at the Abbey. Beside the Abbey Lodge is the green lane running down from Cheristow. Note from this point the number of tree species that can be seen and how these were also present within the length of the walk so far. Hartland Abbey and Gardens are open to the public between Easter and October each year.

12. Continue a short way along and then turn right on the track running behind Glen Cottage.

This track is not an extension of the carriage drive but until the late 20thC was what would be today described as a small bridle way. The track was enlarged to allow mechanical removal of the mature timber.

7. Continue walking the carriage drive until it crosses the river again at the next bridge. (SS 225.103 124.203).

This is another typical bridge with no sides. If you stand at the bridge and look in the direction of all four compass points it becomes a central feature of the parkland taking in both the medieval and 18thC landscape. You are now standing at the western edge of the medieval Deer Park, by then looking south east, back along the drive towards Hartland, one would see the approaching open spaces of the parkland which formed part of Ford Farm, all with fine specimen trees and decorative plantings.

Turning south you now look up a small valley which runs towards Cuckoo Wood or St Leonards. This valley was once dammed and held a shallow pool of water sufficient for water fowl and water plants. A small track on its western edge leads to the Kennels where the Abbey pack was once kept and Cuckoo Wood Cottage for a time was home to the Abbey gamekeeper. The damming of this valley was two-fold, first retaining water for the water fowl then it also provided a controlled supply of water via a sluice for a splendid water feature further down the drive. You can pick out a leat which runs down the valley side (northwest) from this point towards the water feature.

Turning north you can see the green lane wind its way up Cutcliffe Lane as it skirted the Deer Park on its way to Hartland. It is worth walking up this hill and looking at the stone work of the walls and the later boundary ditch that enclosed a reduced Deer Park at a later date. Return to the valley path.

Turning northwest the carriage drive continues its way towards the Abbey - but now the scenery changes. The valley becomes narrow and very wet from this point with a lot of rising water. To counteract this, numerous stone drains were laid and the rising water channelled into ponds on either side of the drive. The river itself was contained within stone walls which can still be seen. It is still possible to see the remains of the ponds and at appropriate seasons they still display their plantings such as water iris and yellow flag. The area now has become overgrown with such as willow,



13. Follow this track for some distance, until you reach a small stand of yew trees on your right next to a ruin (c.SS 225.003 124.803).

If you look into the woodland opposite you can see the ruins of the Abbey workshops which until sold to the owners of Hartland Mill still housed some of the Abbey carriages in a tumbledown lean-to. Many Hartland children have enjoyed 'wild west' stage coach games in this building. In the river below the workshops once stood a substantial weir to feed a leat which crossed the meadow to the 'Glen Cottage' mill often known in historic documents as Cheristow Mill. The weir was washed away in a storm and the leat has become redundant, although it is easily possible to see the cutting in the river bank from where it started. The ruinous building by the yew trees has been used as a deer shelter, cow shed, kennels etc at various times.

14. Climb over the stile into the meadow (SS 225.316 124.803).

On your right is a footpath that returns to Hartland via Sawpit plantation. This is also the site of a further weir, which complemented the one by the carriage drive and fed Hartland Mill.

15. Continue walking straight ahead (eastwards) through this meadow until you reach the gate.

At this point view the substantial wall running north from the gate up the hill and similarly down to the river and up the opposite valley side. This is the eastern boundary of the second but larger Deer Park, the south boundary runs along the hedge-line on the horizon in front of the housing and encompasses the site of the Magnetic Survey Station, returning down the valley and across north taking in what is today an area of woodlands and fields, a total of some 80 acres. The woodlands in this area are mainly oaks and remind us of the thriving trade in oak bark stripped from trees and sold to the tannery in Hartland for crushing to extract tannin. A further flourishing trade was the collection and sale of gorse, or as commonly called furze, this was sold as a crop and used as firing locally, or transported into Bideford or even Barnstaple to fire the pottery kilns.

16. Continue through the woodland until you reach the road (SS 226.070 124.932).

This road is a fine example of a Devon sunken lane and is allegedly the home to one of the few ghosts Hartland has: a monk appears walking the lane but for what reason is a fact lost to memory.

17. Turn right and cross the road bridge.

On your left across the meadow is Tucking Mill, the last such mill carrying this name in the parish. It was once a site of industrial activity as it worked to pummel the woven cloths produced by Hartland weavers, the cloths being hung out on racks in the meadows running up the valley. The path in front of Tucking Mill (SS 226.264 124.948) is a public footpath and can be walked if one wishes to view the buildings and the leat.

thorn, hazel etc, the drains are silted and thus the ground has again become waterlogged. Before this growth it would have been possible to see up the valley sides and therefore view the fine trees planted on the hillsides and again the illusion of distant parkland. Also notice the mentioned water leat as it appears to rise up the hillside on the southwest valley side.

8. Continue walking until the drive crosses the river at the next bridge.

This area gives a glimpse of how water was harnessed to provide the power to drive machinery. Although having recently become severely damaged by motor cycles, the weir here is almost complete. The sluice is now sealed but the leat is still very clear. This is one of two that provided the water for Hartland Mill. A short distance further along the drive and on your left hand side (west) you will notice that the leat we have followed now ceases. At this point was a stone cascade over which the water was allowed to flow down into a pond before returning to the river, a rather dramatic but popular feature of landscape design.

9. Continue walking through a meadow until you reach the point where the carriage drive passes under the main Stoke road (SS 224.791 124.762).

The carriage drive at this point is surrounded by Laurels, Rhododendrons and recently Himalayan Balsam. It then sweeps along the valley, under the main Stoke road, before entering the Abbey Grounds.

The bridge over the drive was rebuilt in the 19thC and is unusual in that it spans both a river and a drive. The road was the turnpike road from Hartland Quay to Bideford, established in the early 18thC, which, through its associated road improvements, gave us the main road we use to this day. Whilst driving along the road it is possible to see the diversions, widening, easing of gradients etc. that were undertaken in the pursuit of profit from road traffic. In very general terms, the turnpikes were seldom profitable and were dealt a death blow by the advance of the railways.

10. Instead of going under the road, take the small slip path up onto the road and carefully cross over to the other side.

This point on the walk is the industrial heart of the Abbey Estate. Immediately facing is the reconstructed facade of Hartland Mill, a rather grand building now but which housed, at the rear, all the mechanism for an overshot grain mill (grist mill). Originally a track passed the mill, into what is now woodland, beyond to the Abbey workshops. On the right of the mill can be seen the mill leat, which emerges from a tunnel under the road carrying water from the weir we previously saw. The large set of houses above the mill ground to the right is the site of the parish workhouse which was operational until the mid-19thC, holding up to sixty unemployed or impoverished parishioners. Previous to being a workhouse this was the site of a number of alms houses, but the land was exchanged for a more convenient site at Well Lane, Hartland.

18. Walk until you reach the fork then take the left hand road and proceed up the hill towards Hartland.

As you pass the small number of cottages on this hill you may like to consider that each was given permission to be built by the Governors of the Borough, and from its wastes. The lease stated that a substantial house had to be built each by a specified date and then an annual rent paid to the Borough. If the rent failed to be paid the house became the property of the Borough.

At the top of this hill is a concreted lane (SS 226.172 124.645) leading to Hind Harton Farm. Although the farm is private it is public until the farm gate, if you walk that short distance it is possible to see one of the two remaining Harton Borough marker stones still existing. For the Millennium Celebration the Harton Town Trust recreated a 'Beating of the Bounds' which attracted a large crowd of eager walkers who on completion were given a commemorative medal and certificate. Please observe the privacy of Hind Harton Farm.

19. Return to the road and continue until you arrive at Hartland Primary School (SS 226.099 124.524), then turn right and follow this road back into The Square and the car park.



This is the end of the Parkland Heritage Walk. We hope you enjoyed it.