

Colerne 'Donkey' Heritage Trail

This waymarked walk follows Public Rights of Ways (PRoW). It is a moderate walk, on footpaths and bridleways with some slopes and across fields with a number of stiles to climb over. Suitable footwear and clothing are required as parts of the walk are through woodland and occasionally muddy footpaths.

The walk starts at the Fox and Hounds public house on Colerne High Street, SN14 8DB. On street parking is limited and the nearest bus stop is at the Market Place, Colerne.

Introduction

According to village legend, a Colerne parson in former years owned a donkey to which he was much attached. While the clergyman was away, the unfortunate ass died, and the sexton felt it proper to have the beast buried in consecrated ground.

But the undertaker, inexperienced in interring specimens of donkey neglected to dig the grave wide and deep enough, so the donkey was buried feet-up with its hooves sticking out. The parson upon his return was so vexed by this discovery that he had the animal reburied.

However, the story was already out, and well into the 20th century young men from the nearby villages of Box or Marshfield who were at a loose end needed only visit Colerne and mention the word Donkey sufficiently loudly to be rewarded with a violent altercation on a moment's notice.

It was also the habit for visiting footballers unacquainted with Colerne history to be dispatched to the home dressing room with a piece of sandpaper and instructions to ask to polish the donkey's hooves, resulting in antisocial behaviour probably needing a red card.



Elmsleigh

▶ Starting at the Fox and Hounds turn right down the High Street towards the Market Place. At the Market Place on the left is a house called Elmsleigh.

1 Elmsleigh

Elmsleigh house was the site of a former brewery. It was said the building was higher than the Church. The adjacent tree is known as the 'Cross Tree' where again it said in 640AD the body of St Aldhelm rested overnight en route to Malmesbury. The War Memorial is close by where Remembrance Day Parades are held every year.

Looking to the right the large white house next to the village store was once the Rectory but now has been sold off as 2 private houses.

Take note of the St John the Baptist that dates from the 13th century. The church tower dating back to the 15th century has a very early clock with only one hand. The clock dates back to 1685 and is one of a few in the country.

Next to the church on the left is the impressive driveway into the Manor house which bears a date of 1689. A large proportion of the houses along the High Street were either partially or totally destroyed as result of a large fire of 1774.

▶ Following Quarry Lane on the left past the Public Conveniences take the path on the right past the Village Hall across Martins Croft to a path that passes the School Field to the left before entering a field via a kissing gate. To the southeast there is Franks Wood and on the horizon to the northeast can be seen Euridge Manor.

2 Euridge Manor

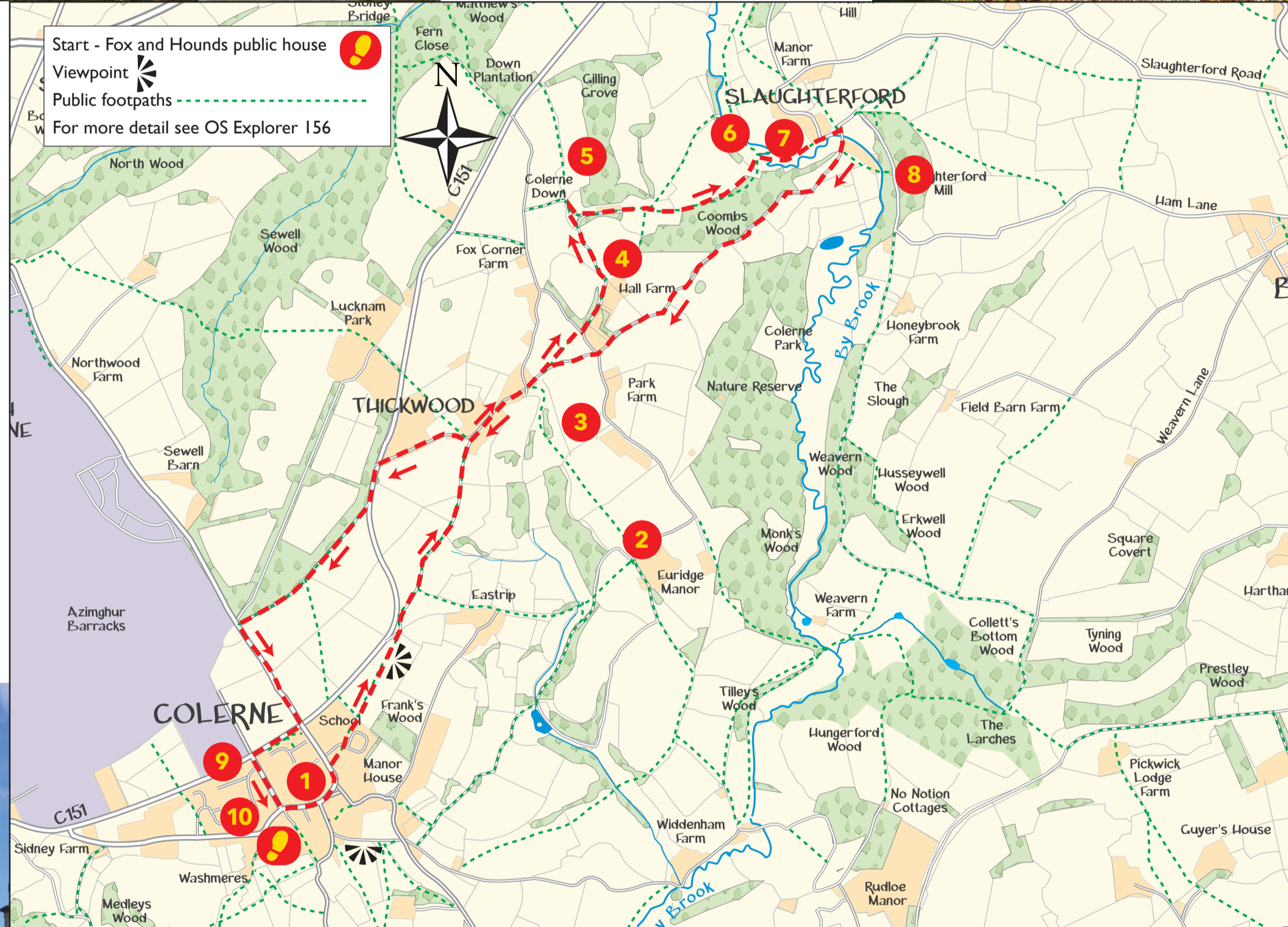
Sir Walter Raleigh once owned Euridge Manor. It is rumoured that Sir Walter Raleigh smoked his first pipe of tobacco at the Manor. The Manor farm's long cattle shed is built on a specially excavated low-level foundation minimising the impact of its profile on the landscape.

The manor is currently owned by Mr John Robinson of Jigsaw fame, who bought the farmhouse and the 300-acre 'two-overcoat' farm - so called because it's always a few degrees colder than anywhere around. The Farm is now a wedding venue and event's location.

▶ Cross the field to emerge at a Bridleway/track. To the northeast can be seen some low-level buildings of Jetway Engineering, formally BERWYN Engineering.



Euridge Manor



Start - Fox and Hounds public house
Viewpoint
Public footpaths
For more detail see OS Explorer 156

3 Jetway formally Berwyn Engineering

Berwyn derived from the names of Beryl & William Winter. Bill was a talented engineer who won a lucrative prize awarded by the Admiralty for a device that would inflate a life raft automatically when it was at 2 fathoms.

The versatility of the product design of this device allows for modifications to operate a range of other devices. The engineering works manufactured the components and Bill designed a lot of the equipment himself. He was an avid collector of clocks and had a model steam railway around his garden with a fine collection of engines. He also had a Sentinel Steam Lorry that regularly appeared at Colerne events. When Bill died in 1977 the business was sold off and it became Jetway from 1978 and is still a thriving manufacturing unit today.

▶ Follow the bridleway to Thickwood passing badger sets that are still active. At the exit turn right onto the lane passing Laundry Cottages

appropriately named by their previous function generated by Luckham Hall.

▶ Passing St Martins House on the left take the right-hand fork to leave Thickwood and cross over the stile on the left into a field. Exit the field cross over the road towards Hall Farm.



St Martins, Thickwood Lane



One handed clock, dating back to 1685



Colerne Market Place



Manor House

Safety Information

Please be aware that you are walking this route at your own risk. At all times you are expected to use your own judgement regarding personal safety before proceeding along any of the routes on the Colerne Heritage Trail. A separate section in this leaflet refers to extracts from the Countryside Code that provides general advice on walking in the countryside. The PRoW used are shown on OS Map Sheet 156, Chippenham & Bradford-on-Avon.

It is advisable to use Ordnance Survey map Explorer No. 156 Chippenham and Bradford-on-Avon (1:25,000) in conjunction with this leaflet.

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Text and photos by Russell Harding and Bob Child
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Other Heritage Trails:
• Biddestone Heritage Trail • Corsham Heritage Trails
• Box Heritage Trail • Corsham Peacock Heritage Trails



Colerne Heritage Trail



This circular 5.7-mile walk connects with Colerne's industrial archaeology past by a visit to the water mills at Slaughterford whilst still offering outstanding views of the far-reaching landscapes of the surrounding area. The walk seeks to explore Colerne Village Centre, Eastrip, Thickwood, Colerne Down, Rag Mill and Slaughterford Mill and will explain the heritage associated with the buildings and landscape. Colerne sits within the beautiful countryside of the Cotswolds National Landscape and has a population of 3000 people.

4 Carpenter Oak

On the right-hand side there is Carpenter Oak, specialising in design and manufacturing by master craftsmen of structural timber framed buildings. These buildings are mainly in oak framing and use timber engineering and integrated glazing to the latest modern architect concepts. They have been featured on TV "Grand Designs" and have won many awards for their work.

▶ At Hall Farm, where the path divides take the left fork, crossing the field to emerge at an intersection of paths, noting the views to east. Take the path on the right through Colerne Down and passing Colerne Down House.



Carpenter Oak

5 Colerne Down Stow-Ball

Taken from an old manuscript, date unknown, but mentioned in the Diocesan News of 1922 was the game of Stow-Ball being played on Colerne Down that was very similar to Golf. Apparently, the turf was within 1.5 inches from the bedrock that gave the ball excellent rebound characteristics. The ball about 4 inches in diameter and made with an outer skin of leather and hard as stone was struck by a staff made of withy about 3.5 feet long.

▶ Follow the path downhill, where the ground levels out and take the right-hand fork that eventually follows alongside Coombs Wood on the right. The views to the north and east are superb. Cross the meadow to the By Brook, turn right crossing the footbridges and passing the derelict mill site on the left known as Rag Mill to emerge into Slaughterford.



Chapps Mill

▶ Continuing along the enclosed wooded path, looking to the left is a tall chimney, which is part of a defunct Slaughterford Brewery. The path exits onto the road and there proceed to the right onto the bridge.

Enjoy some quality time in peaceful surroundings of Slaughterford leaning on the bridge and observing below the water wending unhurriedly along. Brown trout can often be seen swimming gently against the current, sufficiently to hold station, awaiting a tasty morsel to come their way.

▶ Move on and have a look in Chapps Mill, on your left. There is a right of way to the right of the main entrance, which cuts through the mill site on the way to Biddestone.



Slaughterford Bridge



Thickwood Lane

▶ The walk now ascends along the lovely country lane that twists and turns providing sights and sounds for investigation at every gateway back to Thickwood.

It passes the entrance to Calder House School, a small co-educational, day school where children with dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and language difficulties learn the skills they need to fulfil their potential.

▶ Continue along the lane through Thickwood until reaching the main Ford to Colerne Road. Turn left and follow the road for 170m. Cross with care to enter the bridleway known as 'The Old Road'.

Continue along the bridleway until you reach Doncombe Lane. Go left along lane to the crossroads. Cross the main road with care. Turn right and follow the main road for 200m until reaching Silver Street turn left. Continue down Silver Street past a road on the left called Hitchens Skilling.



Colerne from 'The Old Road'

8 Chapps Mill

The mill was producing paper from 1827 until closing in 1994. It is becoming a haven for small business enterprises including cider making, wooden structures, woodturning, fabrics and vehicle restoration.

Other Mills along the By Brook had activities ranging across fulling (cloth), grist (flour) and gig milling (napping cloth). Waterpower came from either under or over shot wheels together with some turbines.

All the power was free, just using the natural kinetic energy of running water and no climate changing side effects, although contamination by the various processes has never been quantified.

The water mills respected the natural wildlife that abounds including a member of the buttercup family, Common Water-Crowfoot that displays white, buttercup-like flowers with yellow centres, often forming mats in ponds and ditches.

A population of rare white-clawed crayfish can be found which is still under threat from otters and the American Signal Crayfish. Bird life habitat includes dippers, grey wagtails, kingfishers, and reed buntings.

Downstream, the river passes through two important SSSIs containing rare plants including meadowsweet, and golden saxifrage.



By Brook

6 By Brook

The By Brook River rises in South Gloucestershire at an elevation of 575 feet until it enters the Avon at Bath at 66 feet with an average flow rate of 58 cu. feet per second, recorded 1990, and has been the power source for at least 20 mills along its length of 12 miles.

7 Ragmill

Initially the mill had an overshot type wheel fed by a mill leat, now filled in, which ran from over three quarters of a kilometre from the sluices just downstream of the Doncombe Brook confluence, near Ford. The original mill wheel was replaced by an undershot type, which is clearly visible from the path. This mill wheel was fed from a much shorter leat just upstream at the sluice gate. There is an excellent view of the old boiler just as the scrap merchant left it in a partially dismembered state. The boiler was used in the rag production. The mill wheel itself is a quite substantial device of 15 feet in diameter and 5 feet wide that has been partially renovated to prevent it collapsing.

The mill was active until the 1890s and demolished in 1964. Every effort has been made to keep the site clear of undergrowth so that the old workings can be seen from the path.



Ragmill

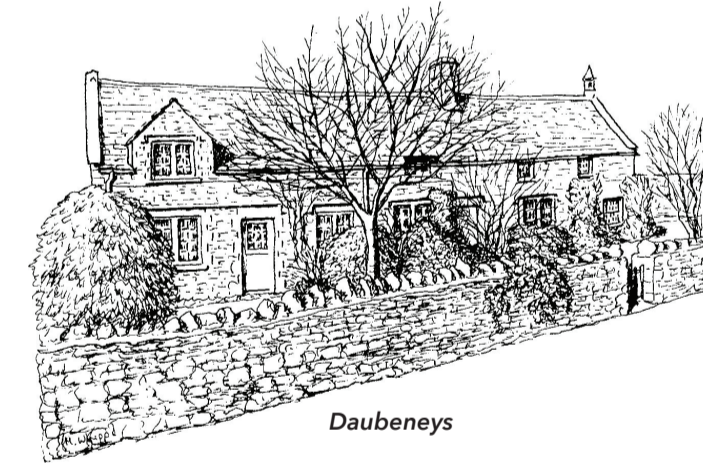
9 Hitchens Skilling

There is a road named Hitchens Skilling (or Hanging Skilling). This is where there was a barn probably used by carter to store all the tackle used by the horses were hung up. A tragedy occurred in 1862 when a man estimated age early 40s was found hanging there. He was identified as a deserter from the army.

▶ Continue down Silver Street until reaching the High Street turn right pass Daubeney's.

10 Daubeney's

This building is simply one of its kind with its stone tiled roof and not a straight line anywhere. Many features can be seen from the road. It is a Grade 2 listed building and a Long House dating back to the 13th Century.

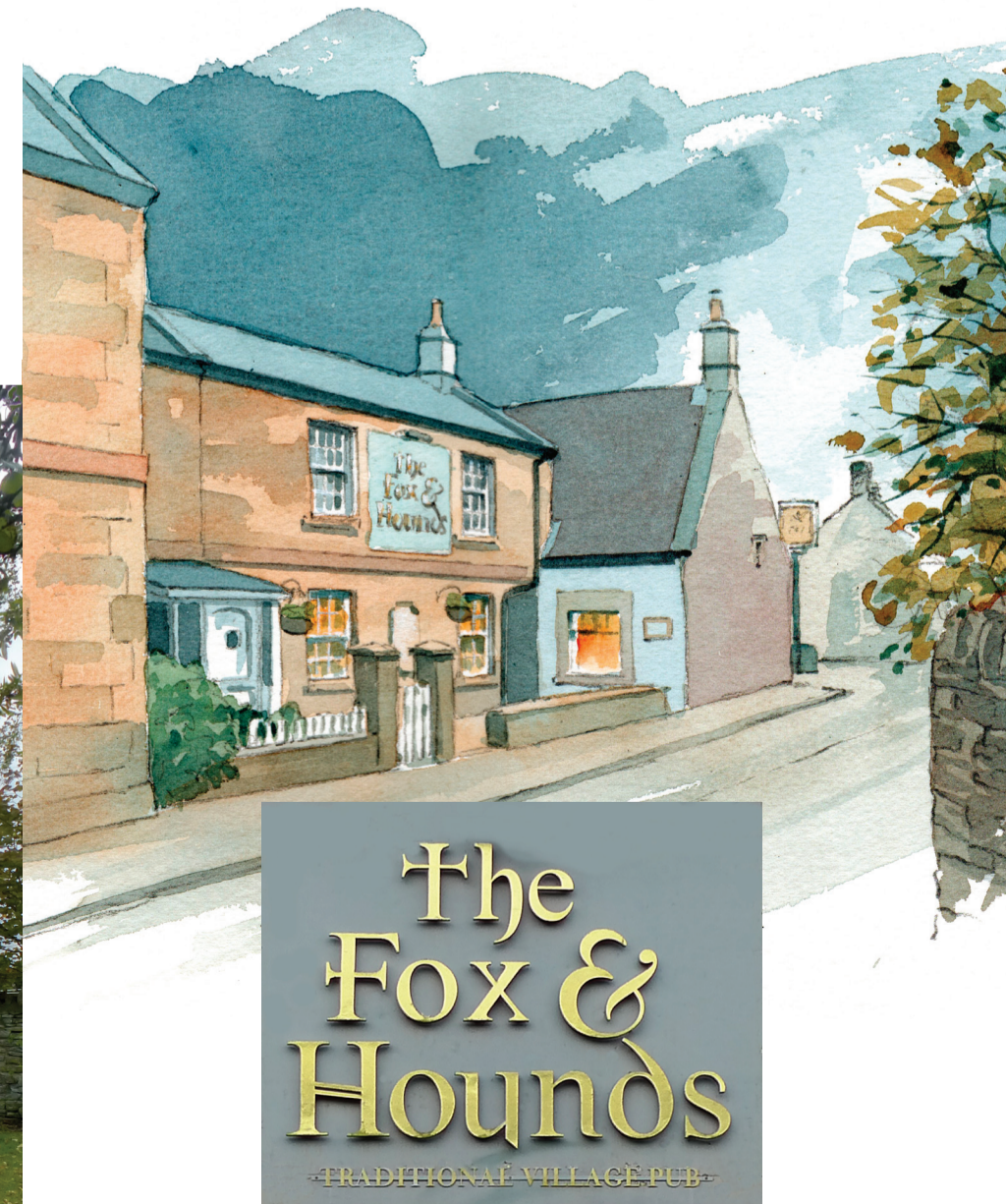


Daubeney's

▶ Continue along the High Street until reaching the end at the Fox and Hounds



Daubeney's



The Fox & Hounds
-TRADITIONAL VILLAGE PUB-