

BIRDS

rare and special
to heathland



Sandlings
WALK

Walk 3

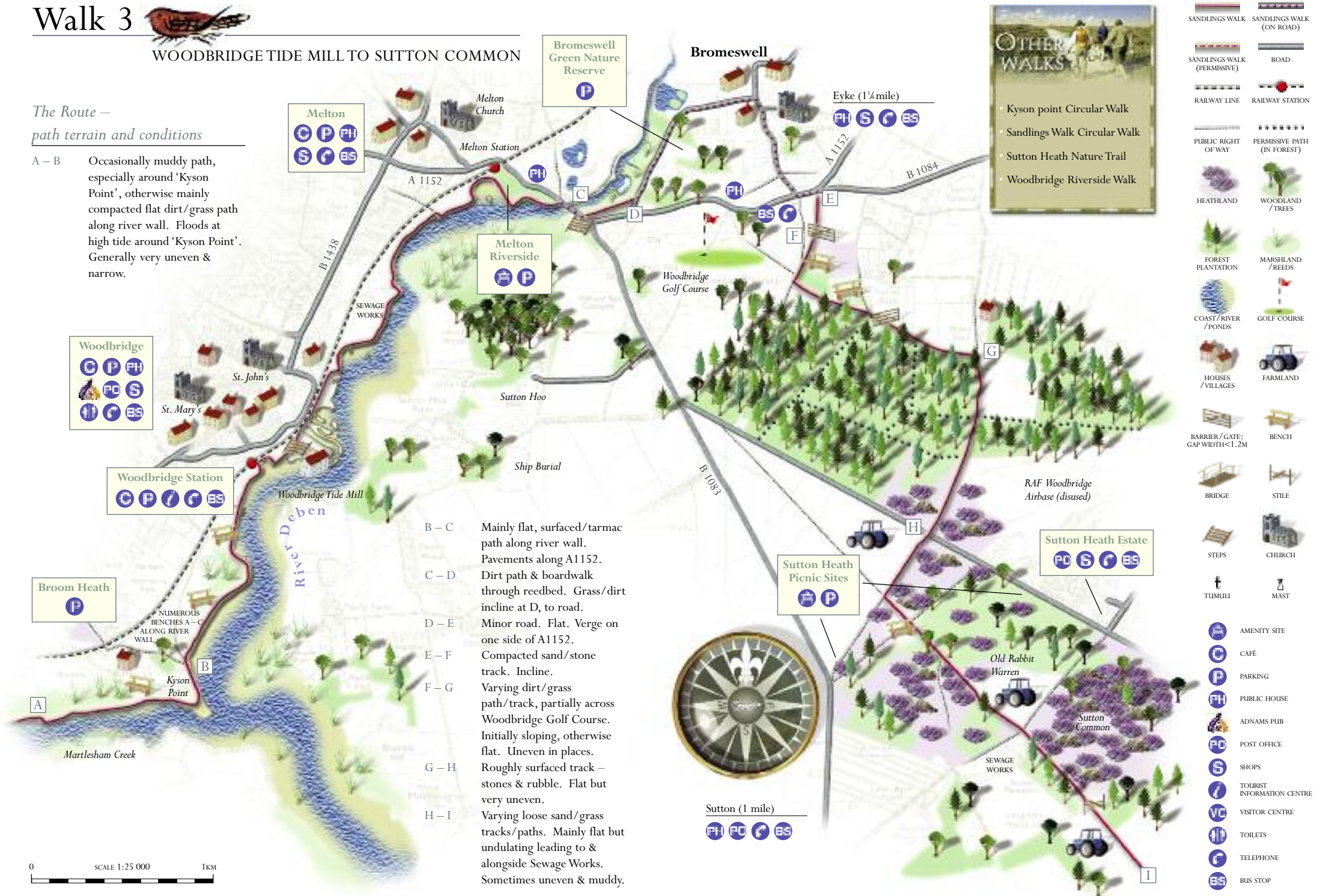


WOODBIDGE TIDE MILL TO SUTTON COMMON

The Route –
path terrain and conditions

A – B Occasionally muddy path, especially around 'Kyson Point', otherwise mainly compacted flat dirt/grass path along river wall. Floods at high tide around 'Kyson Point'. Generally very uneven & narrow.

B – C Mainly flat, surfaced/tarmac path along river wall. Pavements along A1152.
C – D Dirt path & boardwalk through reedbed. Grass/dirt incline at D, to road.
D – E Minor road. Flat. Verge on one side of A1152.
E – F Compacted sand/stone track. Incline.
F – G Varying dirt/grass path/track, partially across Woodbridge Golf Course. Initially sloping, otherwise flat. Uneven in places.
G – H Roughly surfaced track – stones & rubble. Flat but very uneven.
H – I Varying loose sand/grass tracks/paths. Mainly flat but undulating leading to & alongside Sewage Works. Sometimes uneven & muddy.



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The Sandlings heaths are home to some very rare and special birds. For most of the year there is something interesting to 'spot'. Look out for Hen harriers roosting on Dunwich heath in winter, woodlarks singing in spring and nightjars 'churring' on a summer's night. Most of these birds would be even rarer without their heathland home.

Woodlark

The woodlark is a relative of the skylark. To spot the difference, look out for its flight, tail and song. A good time to see woodlarks is in March, usually on open heathland areas or in forest clearings. The male woodlark circles at a constant height over



WOODLARK

heathland. It can look like a bat with its jerky flight and short tail. It is easier to spot when singing, perched on the top of a tree or bush. Listen out for its mellow, fluty song, often on an interrupted descending scale.

Dartford Warbler

Dartford warblers are true heathland birds, relying on areas of gorse and heather to survive. They are one of only a few warblers that can be seen in England all year round. They had not nested on the Sandlings for about 70 years until a pair reared some young on Dunwich Heath in 1995.

Numbers have now increased to over 30 pairs on the Sandlings. This is probably due to milder winters.



Look out for them on Dunwich Heath and Aldringham Walks, especially in early spring when the males sing their scratchy song from a low, but obvious perch.

Hobby

Hobbies come all the way from southern Africa to the Sandlings in May, before returning in September. Their breeding season is late, with young in the nest from July onwards. This coincides with the appearance of their prey, swallows, swifts, house martins and dragonflies. Hobbies resemble large swifts and are similar to kestrels, but with a smaller tail, dark face hood and white neck. If you are lucky you might see a hobby in flight with outstretched talons, catch its prey and then pluck and eat it in mid-air.

Stonechat

A stonechat perched on top of a gorse bush and outlined against the sky must be one of the most enduring heathland images. From this perch they defend their territory, keep watch for predators and look out for a meal. In spring they will catch and eat beetles and spiders scurrying on the ground and in summer, flying insects. Stonechats are very good watchouts. Their 'chack, chack' alarm call is a good warning sign and other small birds will often stay close to stonechats as an insurance against surprise attack.



DARTFORD WARBLER

HOBBY
Illustration by A. Hobday



Spotting birds

These are just some of the birds you might see on the Sandlings. Take a pair of binoculars and a good field guide with you to identify even more.



MALE AND FEMALE STONECHAT



HEN HARRIER
RSPB