



# "The Canon and HIS CANNONS"

The two parishes of Buxted and Framfield were granted to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Ownership did not, however, stop the collapse of Framfield church tower with all its bells in 1667 due to poor repair work. Nor did it stop the activities of William Levett, rector of Buxted from 1533 to 1545 who sponsored his "servant", Ralph Hogge, to cast the first iron cannons to be produced in this country.

**Length 7 Miles - 11 Kilometres**  
**Approximately 5 hours - Grade 3**

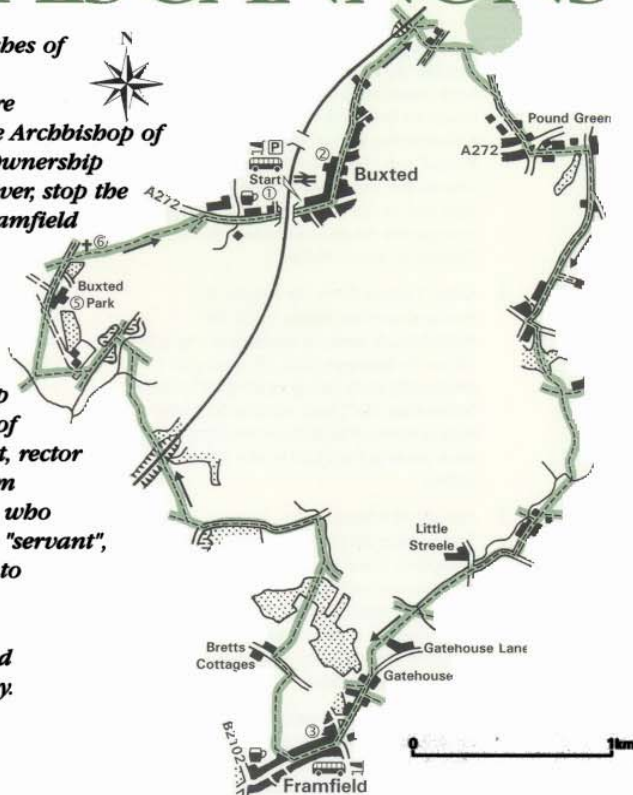
**START** - Buxted Station (O.S. Explorer 18 - NGR 497234)

**ACCESS** - Car - On-street parking off High Street (A272), Buxted  
Bus - 248 and 249  
Train - Buxted Station

**PUBLIC TOILETS** - Nil

**REFRESHMENTS** - Pubs at Buxted and Framfield  
Village shops at Buxted

**CAUTION** - This walk includes two crossings of the A272 road



7  
Miles



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- Following the Norman Conquest, William I granted the Archbishop of Canterbury a huge estate in Sussex, stretching from near Lewes to the Kent border at Wadhurst, and including the parishes of Framfield, Buxted and Mayfield. Administered by the church, the area nevertheless seems to have had its fair share of incident, perhaps appropriate for an area known as the Peculiar of South Malling.
- Great Totease Farm, on the left, is a medieval survival. About 1300 the Archbishop's steward was able to record "Roger de Totehease holds 28 acres and renders 28d yearly namely at Easter 14d and at Michaelmas 14d". Such incomes from the huge number of tenants on the Archbishop's lands provided a boost to the church's coffers.
- Almost all villages in this area are situated on the drier ridge tops and Framfield is no exception. Here too the villagers were taxed to support the church and had to pay to the canons of South Malling "all tithes (a tenth of the amount produced) of corn, hay, cheese, lambs, pigs, goats and all other titheable articles".
- Perhaps the loss of tithes from Framfield contributed to the state of its own church. In 1509 "the church was now of late infortune of fyre clearly wasted burnt and consumed". A new tower was eventually built, but in 1667 it collapsed again, bringing down with it the west wall of the church and all six bells. Despite selling the largest bell to raise money, only the west

pigeon house". Eventually, in 1891, the tower was rebuilt, although its completion was marred by the death of its principal benefactor who went to view it on a very cold day and died of the resulting chill.

- In 1722 a new owner, Thomas Medley, built himself a new manor house south of Buxted church and village and landscaped the grounds around it in the latest style. In 1828 the manor passed to another new owner - the Earl of Liverpool. Offended by the sight of villagers so close to his new property, he began to move the village. At first, householders were bribed with offers of new houses, then repairs to existing property ceased and finally strong-arm tactics succeeded in moving the whole village to its present location a mile away. Today, only the isolated house remains, now used as a conference centre.
- In the 1540s the vicar of Buxted, Parson William Levett, had matters other than religion on his mind. Himself a skilled ironmaster and producer of arms and ammunition, he decided to employ one Ralph Hogge as his works manager. He was rewarded by posterity as Hogge went on to produce the first cannon in England to be cast in one piece (thus greatly reducing the danger of the gun exploding rather than firing) in 1543. Both men prospered greatly from this work and Hogge went on to build his own house on the road to Levett's church marked by an iron hog as a pun on his name.

wall was rebuilt and the tower was to remain unfinished with the other bells lying on the floor until 1779 when they were sold. The tower was replaced at the same time with "a small steeple which looks like a

7  
Miles

