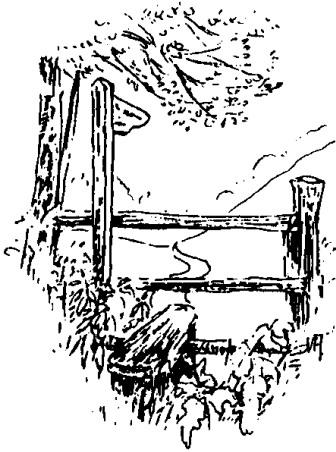


# THE EDWARD THOMAS FELLOWSHIP



... Now, a statue of Frederick Bettesworth might well be placed at the foot of Castle Street [Farnham], to astonish and annoy, if a sculptor could be found.

*'In Pursuit of Spring'*  
(1914)

## *The Birthday Walk - Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2024*

*As in previous years, there will be two walks during the day, and you are welcome to join either or both walks.*

*The walks will be led by Mike Cope and will start in the car park of Bedales School, Church Road, Steep, GU32 2DG. Parking and toilets will be available throughout the day.*

*Those coming on the morning walk should meet in the car park at 10:15 am for a safety briefing. The morning walk (a fairly strenuous 4 ½ miles) will start at 10:30 am prompt and will include a visit to The Bee House (Edward Thomas's former hill-top study) and the memorial stone on the Shoulder of Mutton Hill.*

*The afternoon walk will start at 2:30pm from the car park of Bedales School and will be a more leisurely stroll of around 2 ½ miles; it will include a visit to 2 Yew Tree Cottages – the Thomases' final home in Steep.*

*Members of the fellowship will read appropriate poems and prose during the walk. There will also be opportunity for participants to volunteer for a reading. This year, the theme will be: 'George Sturt and his influence on Edward Thomas'.*

*Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear (walking boots or wellingtons) for both walks. We would also strongly advise walkers to read the Health and Safety procedure on the Edward Thomas Fellowship website.*

***All those participating in the walks do so at their own risk.***

*This year our lunch stop will be the Reading Room, Bedales School (1:30 pm). Please bring your own packed lunch and a drink.*

*We shall end the day at Steep Church around 3:30 pm, where tea will be available at a modest cost. This will be followed (at 4 pm) by the Fellowship's short AGM. We should be ready to depart by 5 pm.*

## ***The Morning Walk (10:30 am)***

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*Leave Bedales School via the footpath on the right-hand edge of the car park. Turn left when you reach Church Road and then right along Mill Lane. Pass the war memorial where Edward Thomas (Lieutenant R.G.A.) is numbered in the roll of honour for Steep. Proceed downhill and bear left along Island Farm Lane. Continue up this steadily rising slope, past the livery, until the gradient levels out and the lane becomes enclosed with high banks on both sides. At the end of the road, bear right past 'Byways' (former home of Muirhead Bone – Britain's first official war artist).*

*On the high banks of the lane you can see the exposed strata of local malmstone, with tree roots entwined around it. When the road bears sharp right, keep ahead along the Hangers Way into Ashford Hangers National Nature Reserve. To the right of the track are the shallow clear waters of the Ashford Stream. Pass Lutcombe Pond, with water of amazing clarity, which has been filtered through the chalk of the surrounding hills.*

*In due course, the rising path meets a junction that was the setting for the poem: 'The Tale'. You may still find fragments of blue plate here, if you look carefully. When you see a wooden fingerpost, bear left up a bridleway. Shaped like a water chute, the path proceeds uphill with a steep hanging wood on the right. The abundant ground cover here is hart's-tongue fern, a species that prefers alkaline soil and damp conditions. At the top, turn right along Cockshott Lane and past the Edward Barnsley Workshop (makers of bespoke furniture).*

*We will be stopping at The Bee House (Edward Thomas's former hill-top study) for readings in the garden.*

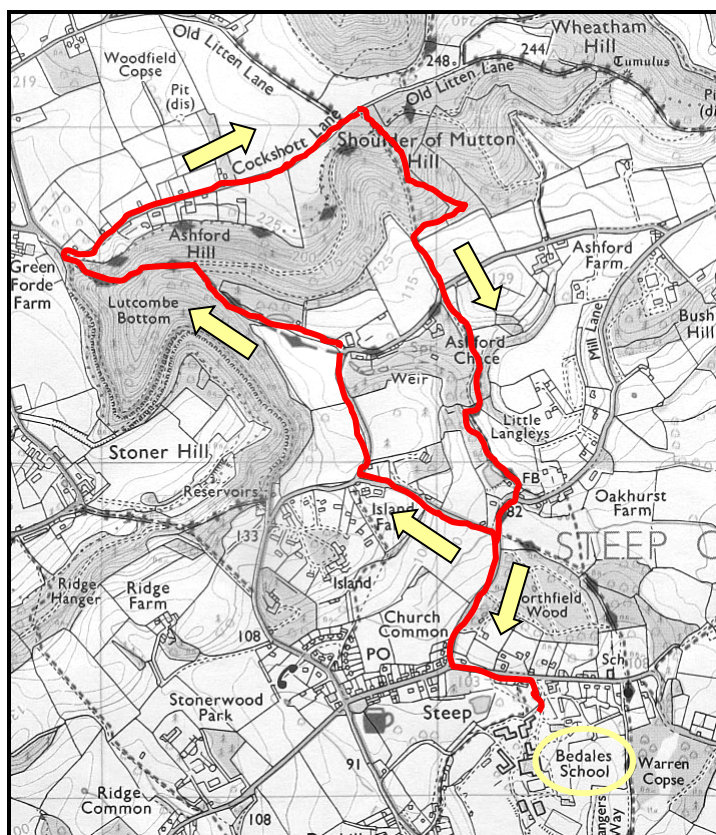


*The adjacent house (The Red House) was the Thomases' second home in Steep. When the houses and tarmac peter out, continue up the untarred lane with bushes and trees on both sides. Pass Old Litten Lane on the left and after 100 metres turn right (at the wooden fingerpost) towards 'The Shoulder of Mutton'. Continue past a bench and a small information board describing the Poet's Stone and proceed downhill following the yellow arrow. The eye is irresistibly drawn to the rolling hills of The South Downs, the highly wooded middle distance, and the dark yews and junipers in the near distance. If you lower your gaze you will be rewarded with a view of Berryfield Cottage (the Thomas family's first home in Steep) nestling at the foot of the hill. Majestic beech trees line the route to the memorial stone - erected in 1937 to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Edward's death.*

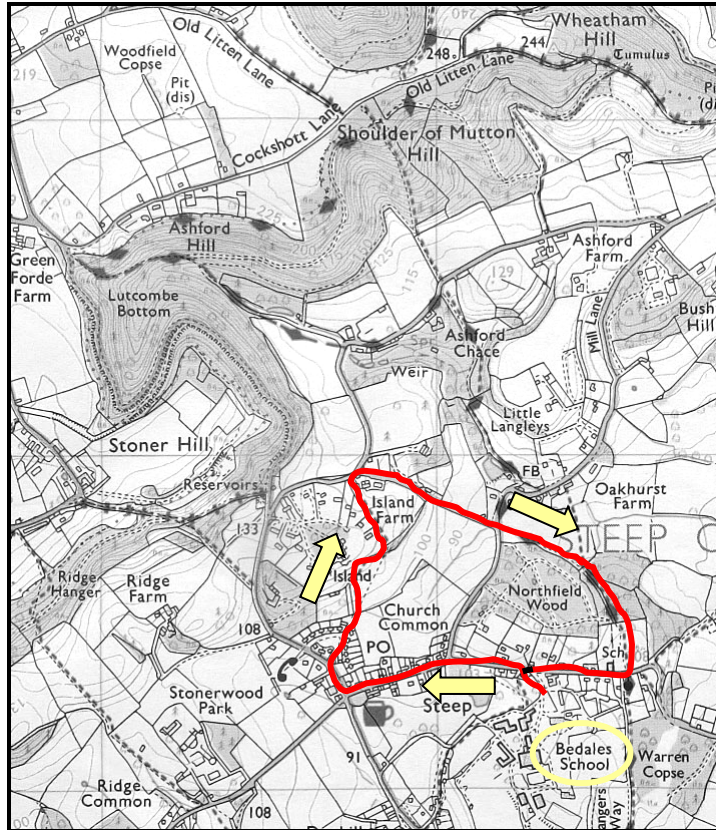
*We shall pause at the memorial stone for some readings.*

Follow the lightly worn path that hugs the left-hand edge of the hillside and threads its way past shrubs and bushes and then under yew and beech trees. Bear left through a wooden swing gate and proceed downhill to a fallen beech tree and another swing gate. Go right here and continue along the track with field to your left, on a lower level. When you reach a junction (where there is a wild apple tree that bears fruit in autumn), go left and proceed along right-hand edge of a ploughed field. At the road, go right and then immediately left along a tarmac drive (The Hangers Way). When the drive ends, bear half left along path, whose muddy sections have been recently refurbished with stones and sand. Follow the path as it zigzags right and then left, across a sloping meadow. Pass Little Langleys bird hide, then turn right down steps and past a spectacular waterfall. Gain the road, and maintain direction up Mill Lane and past 'Oakridge' - the former home of sci-fi writer John Wyndham. Bear left at the T-junction and take the first footpath on the right, to return to the car park of Bedales School.

### The Morning Walk (4 ½ miles)



## The Afternoon Walk (2 ½ miles)



### The Afternoon Walk (2:30 pm)

Leave Bedales School via the footpath on the right-hand edge of the car park. Turn left when you reach Church Road and continue past Steep Memorial Village Hall. When you see two pairs of grey pebble-dashed cottages, turn right up the narrow alleyway between them (marked with a 'No Parking' sign). This leads to another pair of cottages, set back from the road. One of these - 2 Yew Tree Cottages - was the Thomas family's third and final home in Steep.

We shall pause here for some readings.

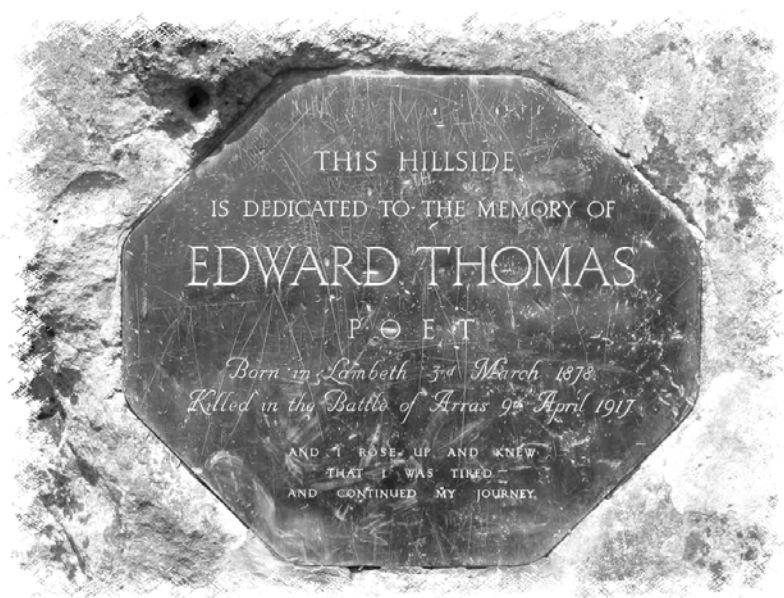


*Retrace your steps to the road and bear right along it. Go right at the T- junction past The Cricketers Inn and then take the first right along a narrow-hedged avenue and keep ahead across a green. Pass a row of garages before you reach a wooden swing gate. Follow path as it arcs around the field edge. Look back (after 50 metres) to see a large oak tree in the centre of a square sloping field and beyond it the back garden of 2 Yew Tree Cottages. Eventually the path doubles back on itself and swings right through ninety degrees. Continue along narrow fenced path until you reach a road. Bear right and then right again down Island Farm Lane and keep going until you reach a T-junction.*

*We shall pause here for a reading.*

*Keep ahead through metal swing gate and follow gravel path around field edge, with woodland on right. Maintain direction at field corner through another metal swing gate and into woodland. Continue up rising path until you reach a bench and information board.*

*Fork right across green and towards the spire of All Saints Church, Steep. When you gain the road, bear right and keep going until you reach the car park of Bedales School.*



MJC 2024