

Inkpen Trailways & Interconnections

- **The Ridgeway National Trail:**
A prehistoric route linking Wayland's Smithy, Uffington Castle & White Horse, and Avebury. It acts like a cultural spine through the Downs.
 - **Ancient Trackways** near Walbury Hill:
Wayfarer's Walk and Test Way connect settlements like Inkpen, Combe, and Kintbury—potentially used across eras for movement, trade, or military regrouping.
 - **Sacred Geometry:**
Sites like **Silbury Hill**, **Avebury**, and **West Kennet** may have been deliberately aligned across astronomical or spiritual coordinates—encoding landscape as cosmological memory.
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Folklore & Continuity

- **Wayland's Smithy:** Linked to Saxon legends of Wayland the blacksmith, evoking transformation and hidden craft.
 - **Combe Gibbet:** A place where ancient burial mounds meet Restoration-era justice—a collision of time, belief, and spectacle.
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Mesolithic Period (c. 10,000–4,500 BC)

- Earliest known habitation in Inkpen dates to the Mesolithic era.
 - A single artefact was found west of the gibbet, suggesting small nomadic groups traversed hilltops and forest trails.
 - Similar artefacts were found between what is now that Crown & Garter and The intersection of Folly and Post Office Roads
 - These hunter-gatherers likely followed seasonal cycles of wildlife and plant growth, possibly manipulating the landscape through forest clearance.
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Neolithic Period (c. 4,500–2,500 BC)

- Neolithic people buried their dead in **round barrows**, some of which still survive west of the gibbet.
 - Excavations in 1908 revealed **urns with burnt human bones**, indicating cremation practices.
 - Flint tools and early pottery suggest a settled lifestyle, with round houses near water sources like the ancient Ingeflood brook.
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Bronze Age (c. 2,500–800 BC)

- Inkpen's **Beaker People** left behind beautifully intact clay pots, flint tools, and bone implements.

- Communal **long barrows** were used for burials, including the one beneath Combe Gibbet.
 - Evidence of early agriculture and field systems near the long barrow points to a shift from nomadic to farming life.
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Iron Age (c. 800 BC–50 AD)

- The **Walbury Hill Fort**, built around 600 BC, dominates the landscape and remained active until the Roman arrival.
 - This massive fortification, covering 80 acres, was likely defended by timber palisades and housed round dwellings.
 - Its strategic location suggests importance in trade and livestock movement across hilltop tracks.
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Roman Period (c. 50–410 AD)

- Roman presence in Inkpen was modest but notable.
 - Finds near Lower Green in 1984 suggest a Roman dwelling.
 - A Roman burial was uncovered near Combe in 2003, and a silver denarius from the reign of Commodus (c. 187–188 AD) was found locally.
 - Hypocaust flue tiles were found near St Michael's Church and other Roman items were found within the bounds of Rolf's Farm.
 - Trade routes like the Bath Road and Ermin Way linked Inkpen to broader Roman Britain.
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Saxon Period (c. 410–1066 AD)

- After Roman withdrawal, Saxons settled and cleared much of the forested landscape.
 - The **Wansdyke**, a linear defensive earthwork, runs from Inkpen Beacon westward and may date to around 470 AD.
 - The earliest written record of Inkpen appears in the **Cotton Charter viii (AD 931–939)**, detailing land ownership by the Saxon thegn Wulfgar.
 - There is a clear Saxon settlement immediately to the East of St Michael's church.
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Norman & Medieval Periods (1066–1500 AD)

- Inkpen appears in the **Domesday Book (1086)** as Hingepene, held by two thegns under King Edward the Confessor.
- The manor later passed to William Fitz Ansculf and became part of the Honour of Dudley.

- Medieval Inkpen retained its Saxon hub and developed Roman and Norman manorial structures.
 - St. Michael’s Church, dating to the 13th century, anchors the village’s medieval identity.
 - The **double gibbet**, a relic from the 1670s, stands atop a long barrow and became a local landmark and film location.
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Historic Landmarks in and Around Inkpen

Landmark	Period	Description
Walbury Hill & Camp	Iron Age	Largest hill fort in Berkshire; strategic high ground with flint tools and fortifications.
Combe Gibbet	Neolithic / 1676	Erected atop a long barrow; used once for execution, now a folkloric landmark.
Inkpen Long Barrow	Neolithic	Communal burial site beneath Combe Gibbet; aligned east–west.
Round Barrows (west of Gibbet)	Neolithic / Bronze Age	Burial mounds explored in 1908; cremation urns and tools found.
Wansdyke Earthwork	Early Medieval	Defensive ditch and bank; possibly built around 470 AD.
St. Michael’s Church	13th Century	Medieval parish church with Victorian restoration; Grade II* listed.
Inkpen Crocus Field	Medieval	Believed to be planted by Knights Templar for saffron production.
Inkpen House & Kirby House	17th–18th Century	Historic residences with listed status and unique gardens.
Inkpen Primary School	1850	Designed by G.E. Street; Grade II listed.
Pottery Kilns (Crocus Cottage area)	16th–20th Century	Site of local pottery industry; kiln bricks and wasters found.

Notable Archaeological Finds

Find Type	Location / Context	Period / Notes
Mesolithic artefact	West of Combe Gibbet	Earliest sign of habitation (10,000–4,500 BC).
Beaker pots	Craven Road & Inkpen Downs	Near-intact pottery from c. 3000 BC; museum-held.
Flint tools	Folly Road & Walbury Hill	Scrapers, arrowheads, and manufacturing evidence.
Bone tools & bronze knife	Inkpen (museum collection)	Beaker period craftsmanship.
Cremation urns	Round barrows west of Gibbet	Neolithic burial practice confirmed in 1908 dig.
Animal & human bones	Sadler’s Farm (ploughed barrow site)	Mixed remains with early pottery sherds.
Roman silver denarius	Inkpen (Commodus, c. 187–188 AD)	Indicates Roman presence and trade.
Roman burial	Near Combe (2003)	Confirmed Roman-era interment.
Saxon coins (sceattas)	Walbury Hill area	Early medieval currency; hints at trade or tribute.
Geophysical survey finds	Fields near Spray Road & Trappshill House	Multi-phase building remains, possible mill site.
Pottery wasters & kiln bricks	Crocus Cottage area	Evidence of post-medieval pottery industry.

Listed buildings in and around Inkpen - reflecting Inkpen’s rich architectural heritage and historical continuity:

Grade II Listed Buildings*

These are particularly important buildings of more than special interest.

Building	Description
Church of St. Michael	13th-century parish church with Norman and Gothic features.
Inkpen House	Elegant historic residence at Lower Green.
Kirby House	Distinguished manor with formal gardens and architectural detailing.

Grade II Listed Buildings

Buildings of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them.

Building	Location / Notes
Barn 20m West of Inkpen House	Lower Green
Barn at Belvedere	Lower Green
Box Cottage	Lower Green
Brays Cottage	Upper Green
Bread Oven Cottage	Lower Green
Bridgemans	Lower Green
Church Farm House	Lower Green
Cruck Cottage	Lower Green
Garden Retaining Walls at Kirby House	Trapshill
Garden Wall North of West Court House	Lower Green
Garden Walls North of Kirby House	Trapshill
Inkpen Primary School	Historic Victorian school
Malt Cottage	Upper Green
Manor Farm House	Lower Green
Pond Cottage	Upper Green
Puddle Wharf	Lower Green; associated with weaving and milling history
Stable Block near Kirby House	Trapshill
The Old Craven Arms	Former inn at Lower Green
The Windrush Cottage	Inkpen
Thornton Cottage	Trapshill
West Court House	Lower Green; linked to medieval manorial history
Windrush Cottage	Inkpen

Wartime History of Inkpen – A Compressed Chronicle

- **Ancient Defences:** Inkpen's strategic hilltop location made it a natural stronghold, evidenced by the Iron Age Walbury Hill Fort and Neolithic long barrows that likely signified territorial control.
- **Roman and Saxon Transitions:** Though not heavily militarised, Roman artefacts suggest subtle governance and movement along nearby military routes. The Saxon-era Wansdyke earthwork hints at early defensive infrastructure against rival groups.
- **Medieval Power Struggles:** With its inclusion in the Domesday Book and manorial evolution, Inkpen weathered shifting feudal allegiances and social unrest, with fortified dwellings anchoring its resilience.
- **Civil War and Symbolic Justice:** While Inkpen saw no direct combat during the English Civil War, its proximity to Newbury positioned it as a passive observer. The erection of Combe Gibbet after the Restoration era became a grim reminder of authority and public justice.
- **19th Century and Recruitment:** During the Napoleonic and Crimean Wars, rural parishes like Inkpen contributed manpower and may have been considered for logistics given their geography.
- **World War I:** Inkpen's contribution came through both sacrifice and sustenance—young men fought and fell on foreign soil while farms and families kept Britain fed. The village likely saw early forms of the Women's Land Army.
- **World War II and the Merville Offensive:** In 1944, Inkpen hosted a replica of the German Merville Battery, becoming a covert training ground for the 9th Battalion, Parachute Regiment under Lt. Col. Terence Otway. This training was vital for the D-Day assault. The area also saw civil defence activity, evacuee sheltering, and rationing.

Inkpen's wartime history reflects quiet strength—a place that prepared, sheltered, and supported conflict from the hill forts of prehistory to the parachute drills of World War II.