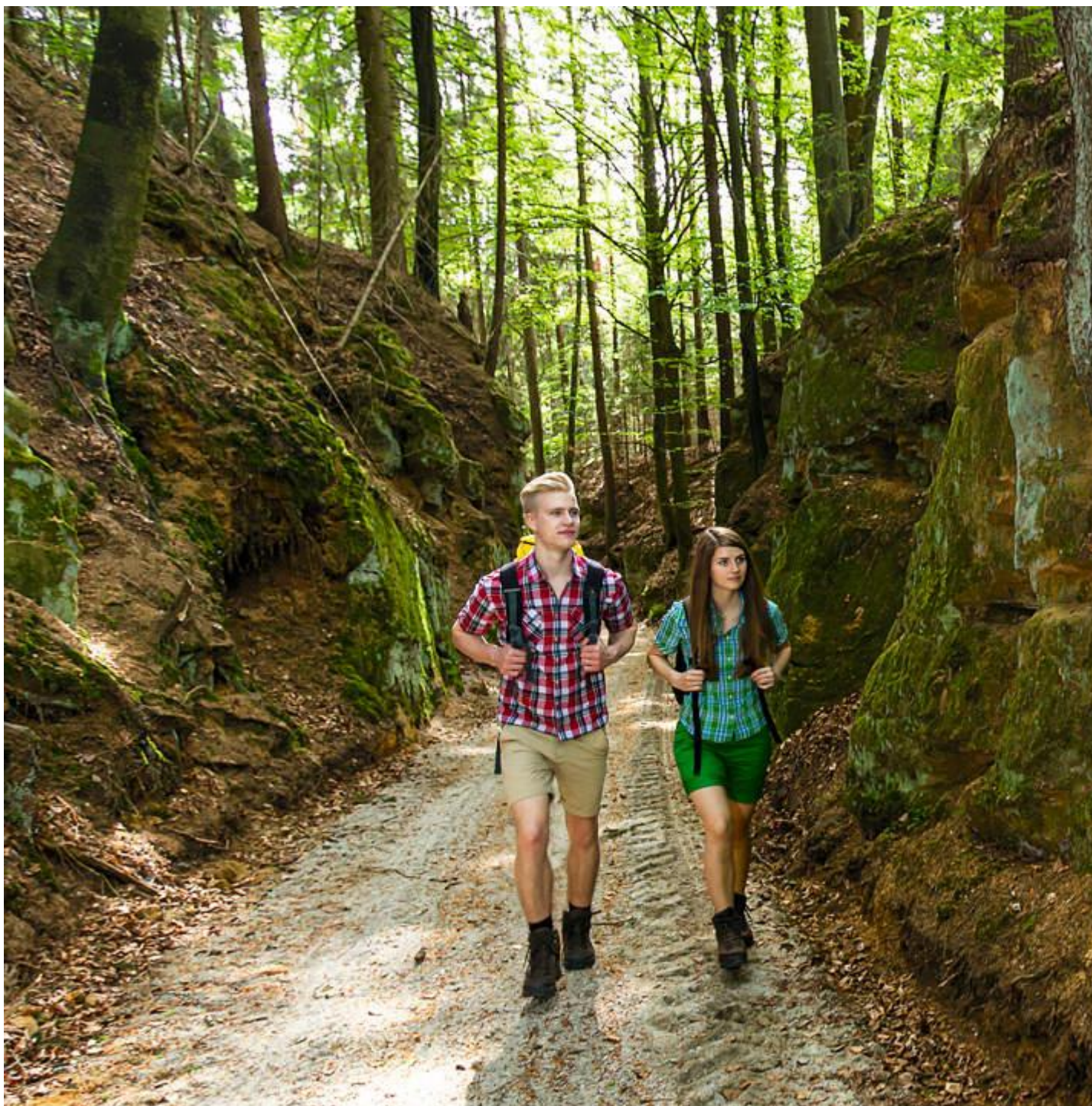


Sunken Roads: Footpaths to the Past

[B2]

In tutta l'Inghilterra si estende una rete di sentieri tracciati durante secoli, o addirittura millenni, dal passaggio di animali e persone. Prima che la modernità li cancelli per sempre, si sta cercando di preservarli e registrarli.



England is famous worldwide for its beautiful green, [rolling](#), wooded countryside. Historic houses, monuments and pretty villages, with a pub on the green beside a [pond](#) full of ducks, are picturesque themes for countless paintings and poems. The English countryside holds a special place in the nation's life and culture.

HUMAN FEET

[Yet](#) there is one ancient element of this archetypal landscape that goes largely [unnoticed](#). Between towns and villages all over the country, there are miles of mysterious [sunken roads](#); [paths trodden](#) into the earth that have been created by the [tramping](#) of human and animal feet over thousands of years. These routes have been largely forgotten. The UK government is now trying to fill this [gap](#) in the country's collective memory.

STEPS IN TIME

England has hundreds of [sunken roads](#), also known as [hollow](#)ays. 'Holloway' literally means a '[hollow](#) way', a path or [lane hollow](#)ed out in the soft earth. They are created through a combination of soft rock, rain and pressure from human and animal feet. Many [sunken roads](#) are old [drovers](#) routes or [trade paths](#), connecting pastures in the hills with marketplaces in towns and villages. The roads link [settlements](#) dating back to Saxon and Roman periods and perhaps even to the Iron Age. Sunken roads can be [up to](#) six metres below the surrounding countryside!

FAMOUS SUNKEN ROADS

The most famous [sunken roads](#) can be found in South West England, especially in the county of Dorset. Shute's Lane and Hell Lane are notable examples. Hell Lane was an infamous [smugglers](#) pathway. Other examples are Newton Hollows in Cheshire (an old Roman road), and the South Downs in Hampshire (especially the road linking the villages of Selbourne and Alton).

UNUSUAL ECOSYSTEMS

The unique topography of the sunken [lanes](#) creates unusual ecosystems allowing the growth of rare [ferns](#) and [mosses](#), as well as providing homes for animals, insects and [fungi](#). Tall trees [meeting overhead](#) in the sky create a [canopy](#), often inspiring a magical Tolkienesque 'Middle-earth' feel.

MAPPING THE ROADS

Natural England, a governmental organisation responsible for protecting the natural environment, is currently [engaged](#) in a 3D mapping project to try [to unearth](#) the deep history of this ancient network of tracks. Natural England is concentrating on Dorset, but then hopes to expand to cover the rest of the country. In the meantime, the best way to maintain this window into the past is by continuing to make use of these [age-old](#) roads. Every time a path is [removed](#) or covered over by [landowners](#) or [local councils](#), hundreds of years of history is lost. If they are to survive, England's [sunken roads](#) must continue to echo, as they have done for millennia, the routes of humans and animals.

Glossary

- **removed** = eliminare
- **landowners** = proprietari terrieri
- **lane** = viottolo, stradina
- **local councils** = consigli comunali
- **hollowed out** = scavare
- **hollow** = cavo, infossato
- **ferns** = felci
- **age-old** = secolare
- **trade paths** = sentieri commerciali
- **canopy** = copertura
- **engaged** = coinvolgere
- **unnoticed** = inosservato
- **paths** = sentieri
- **trodden** = calpestare
- **tramping** = camminare con passo pesante
- **sunken roads** = cammini scavati
- **drovers** = mandriani
- **fungi** = funghi
- **up to** = fino a
- **smugglers** = contrabbandieri
- **meeting overhead** = incontrarsi in alto
- **rolling** = ondulata
- **pond** = stagno, laghetto
- **Yet** = tuttavia
- **settlements** = insediamenti
- **gap** = lacuna
- **mosses** = muschio
- **to unearth** = scoprire