The stone structure in the field in front of you is a watch house. It is one of six such structures originally built in the mid 19th century to provide weather protection for a watchman guarding valuable linen cloth spread out on the grass for bleaching. A few fields away there is a second watch house to a different design (see photos).

Until the advent of more sophisticated technology, the bleaching of linen was a long-drawn-out process, requiring the rolls of cloth to be repeatedly treated with bleaching agents and ‘grassing’, the exposure of the material to daylight out in the bleach fields adjacent to the mills. This practice continued into the 1950s.

This field and adjacent ones formed part of the Springvale and Mill Park bleach works owned by the Uprichard family. The Mill Park bleach works became derelict in the 19th century but Springvale only closed down in 1955.

Only two of these six watch houses have survived in their original setting, with a further one having been taken away and rebuilt at the Ulster Folk Museum at Cultra.

In 2013, the Follies Trust (www.follies-trust.org) restored the two remaining structures, with grant aid from the Community Landfill Fund and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

Please do not trespass.

For more information about these watch houses see www.follies-trust.org

It is possible for a group to visit these watch houses by prior arrangement through contacting the Follies Trust website info@follies-trust.org or on European Heritage Open Days.

This picture, probably dating back to the 1930s, illustrates rolls of cloth being laid out at the former Stanmore bleach works, a short distance from here, as shown on the Ordnance Survey map. The chimney and some of the buildings here survived and now house the Pot Belly restaurant and Tullyhills pottery.