

Danehill Old Trackways Walk

Danehill Parish Historical Society

The walk is approximately 3 miles and takes in 4 old trackways. Start at the layby. We recommend using a compass to make sure you have selected the right footpath



Set off north along the minor road past The Granary. This Victorian house replaced an older cottage called Paygate

Cottage. This is where you paid the toll when the A275 was a turnpike road.



Just past the house turn right (East) into the driveway. The first clue that this is an **old track-way** is the bank on the right, 100m from the road. This is an old track boundary. It was important to keep grazing animals out of woodland, to protect the

trees. The bank would have been topped by a hedge. The massive distorted trees were the layered hedgerow that has been left to grow.

Many of these trees are hornbeam.



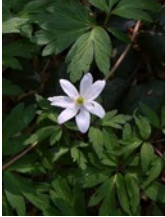
While still on the flat you can see Colin Godman's farmhouse in the middle distance on a hill top on the left hand side (North East). This is one of the oldest local settlements.

As you go down the hill we see the next clue to the age of this track. The huge mature oak trees are at least 300 years old and there is an even older **veteran tree** close to the track in the field.





The third clue is in the hedgerow plants. Plants such as bluebell, wood anemone and primrose are associated with ancient woodland and these are abundant in the hedgerow in Spring.



Anemone
Primrose
Bluebell
Celandine



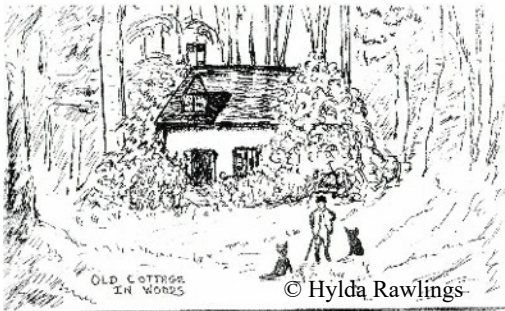
Mill in the late nineteenth century, Drawing by A Cooke

The final clue comes from the building at the bottom, which is an old water powered mill. This mill has been in existence since Saxon times and is mentioned in the Domesday Book. We can now see that this track provided access to the mill from the village of Furners Green

Cross the mill pond bay (dam). Middle-sized children watch out for the turnstile, which can give a nasty bang on the head. Turn left (North) onto a new track



This is a second old track coming from Fletching via North Hall. The path does not look old here, but as you head away from the lake look out for the old 'hollow way' in the wood to the right (East) of the modern path



If you leave the path here and make your way through the laurel undergrowth to the right you will find some good scrambling rocks. The exposed rocks mark a geological fault line and the quarry from which the stone for Sheffield manor was hewn. You may even find the remains of the **old sweetshop!**



Return to the footpath and walk north looking out for a small footpath on the left, heading north going down to a stream. Cross the stream and on the way up take a **left fork**. The track takes you up and over a ridge and down to another stream with a small pond on either side. Up through the pasture then down to the angling ponds through the Wood. Turn left at the stream

onto the road, where a cafe awaits (with a tasty plate of maggots if you wish!) should you be in need.



As you cross the wooden bridge, look for old stonework from the bridge that has fallen in. A sign of the former importance of this route.

Follow the anglers access road, but take the grassy track south west at the bend along a small stream. This track looks very ordinary today, but it is part of an old, important long distance route from the River Ouse at Sheffield Park to Chelwood Corner and the Forest.



This path also boasts a tremendous display of snowdrops in February, celandines and wood anemones in April. At the end of the track you will find the gem, which is Great Portmansford Farm.



The farmhouse, which dates back to before 1597, is being gradually restored by the new owners after many years of neglect. Notice the old stone barn remains beyond the house.

Finally head south down the metalled road to where you began, admiring the cottages, one of which (Chandlers), was the post office and grocers and even a draper for a short time. It still has the old Georgian postbox in the house wall - now oddly painted black



Great Portmansford

The timber framed part of the farmhouse dates back to medieval times. The other part of the house is a Victorian addition.

Portmansford is mentioned in the Buckhurst Terrier in 1597: *'Richard Michelborne, in the right of Anne his wife, holds by deed land called Potmanford, 8 acres, and other lands called Potmanford, 22 acres*

Rent 5s. 4d., 1 hen, 5 eggs, and one days work in Harvest'

We hope you enjoy the walk. Get the full details of this walk from the Danehill Parish Historical Society website at dphs.weebly.com/, or at <http://danehill-pc.org>, 'Community' tab. Thanks to the council for hosting this website. We also wish to acknowledge the work of the late Derek Rawlings, who first investigated these old trackways.