

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY IN ANSTY

August 2013

**ANSTY PARISH
Public Footpaths**



A SURVEY OF ALL THE FOOTPATHS, BRIDLEWAYS AND OPEN OR RESTRICTED BYWAYS WITHIN THE PARISH OF ANSTY

By

R Wilkinson (parishioner)

I was recently asked to check over the public rights of way in Ansty by Morwenna Brewer and Tim Plumptre and to report my findings back to the Ansty Parish Council.

What better way to do this than to go out and actually walk the lot!

I used the only definitive map that I could get my hands on, dated 1949 no less (courtesy of Aileen Fisher-Roe of Thatchers Cottage). I also consulted a copy of the 'Public Rights of way in Ansty – Last change February 1996. Pc8'. I have used the Footpath Numbers that were used on both maps.

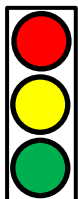
While there were a lot of good things to report, I have to say that my overall impression of our parish footpath system and the immediate surrounding landscape is one of relative neglect by some landowners and Wiltshire County Council, where everybody matters. We are all custodians of our environmental surroundings (be it built or 'natural') and it should be our duty and responsibility to look after, repair and conserve it all as best we can. This takes active and continual management: doing nothing is not really an option.

We are located in one of the most beautiful areas of England and yet there seems to be little pride in 'keeping things' maintained for the benefit of all. One only has to look at the gradual deterioration of all our local lanes and roads to observe this lack of proper maintenance.

I hope this report is of some use. I have adopted a traffic light system to quickly denote whether a footpath needs attention (in my opinion) or not (see legend below).

Some other local Parishes appear to have posted a definitive map of their local footpaths on the Wiltshire County Council web site.

Finally, more needs to be made of the 'Open Access' that is there on our local chalk downs. Some Land Owners that I know of in other areas (including Swallowcliffe) have installed gates/permissive access routes/ and pieces of local wildlife/geographical and historical knowledge on signs – encouraging those out walking to take an interest. I was never an advocate of this 'right to roam' believing it was enough to just to explore our thousands of historical footpaths, bridleways and byways. But 'access land' is there so we ought to appreciate it.



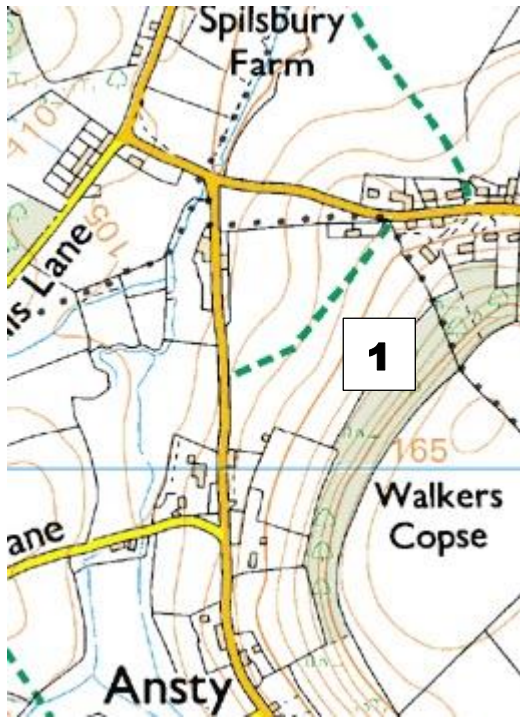
RIGHT OF WAY NEEDS MUCH ATTENTION TO MAINTENANCE

RIGHT OF WAY MAY NEED SOME ATTENTION TO MAINTENANCE

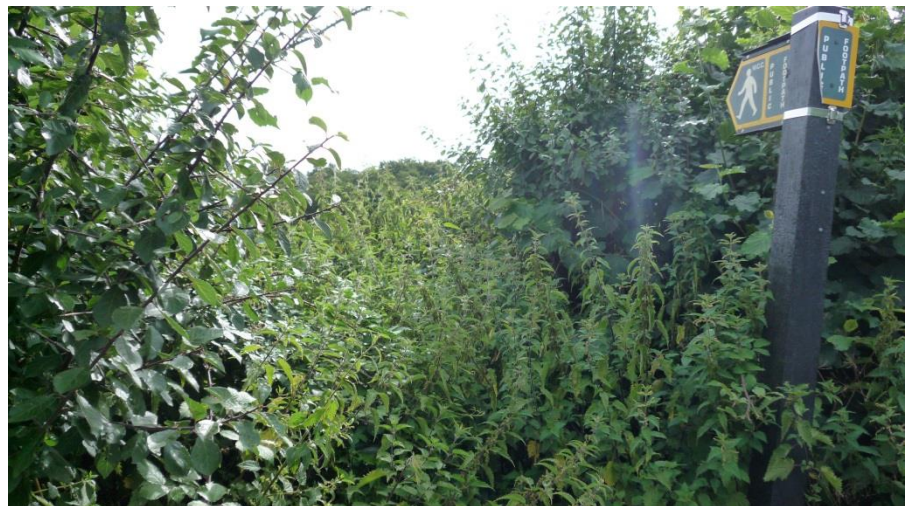
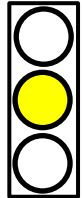
RIGHT OF WAY WELL MAINTAINED

Footpath 1. Ansty High Street to Swallowcliffe (Yule Hill)

On 13th August, this footpath was virtually inaccessible and not very visible from the Ansty High Street End due to overgrown nettle and brambles. It is accessible from the Swallowcliffe end (which is the parish boundary). Obviously few people use it, although I have on a number of occasions. Buggy in winter! Not very safe in terms of access on to and off from the road.



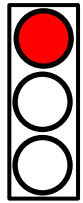
**THIS FOOTPATH TO
SWALLOWCLIFFE JUST NEEDS THE
ACCESS FROM ANSTY KEPT CLEAR
AT ALL TIMES**



Left- fingerpost sign barely visible amongst the greenery; above- access barred by rampant nettles – not easy to plough through unless you have a scythe

Footpath 2. Ansty High Street to Swallowcliffe via Waterloo Barn area

NEEDS CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION AT ACCESS ON HIGH STREET IF ONLY FOR SAFETY REASONS



Currently the access to this footpath at the junction with Ansty High Street is not immediately obvious. Left pictures- It is difficult to spot finger post sign – all overgrown; indeed coming down the other way the trees obliterate the sight lines on to the dangerous road. I suspect once upon a time the access was clear and uncluttered with vegetation and that the post was clearly visible some distance up/down the road.

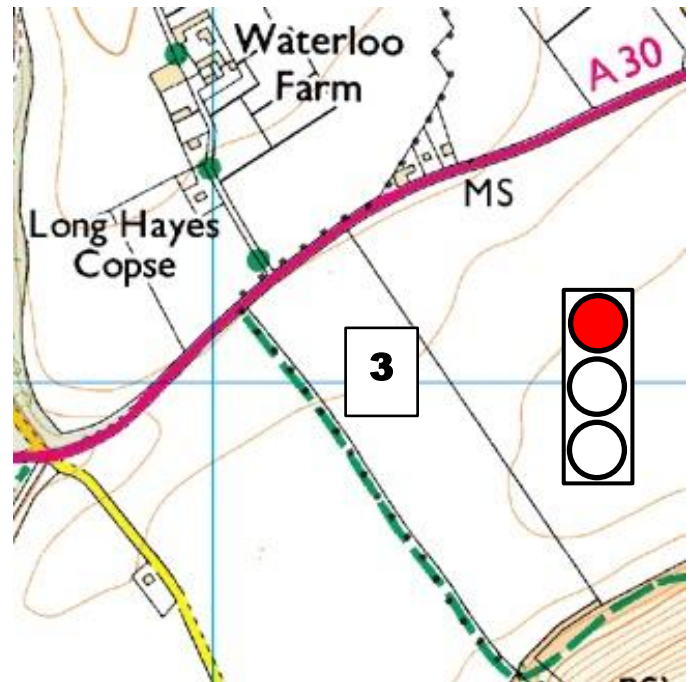
Vehicles passing by will not see walkers stepping out until the very last second and we know that some cars travel at speed along the highway! This is probably a safety issue.



The footpath is overgrown at the base and sides of the path at the start of the climb but then it improves. There are three stiles encountered as we progress to the parish boundary. All stiles are sound; indeed the nearer one gets to Swallowcliffe the better they are! The parish boundary stile is particularly commendable, with access to a gate too. A fine path, clearly waymarked. Indeed the Swallowcliffe end looks cared for. (Left- a neat stile on the parish boundary)

Footpath 3. Bridleway from A 30 to foot of Swallowcliffe Down and beyond

NEEDS ATTENTION TO ACCESS POINT OFF THE A30. IT IS MARKED ON MAP AS A BRIDLEWAY.



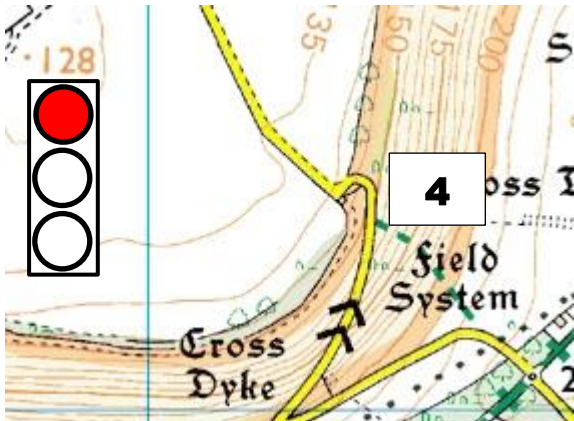
A fine trail if you could access it.



I approached this footpath from the track that passes Waterloo Farm and Barn. Crossing the main A30 road and turning right for a short distance I came up against what I thought should be the access to the bridleway. No finger post, stile or any waymark of any kind. The gate was effectively barricaded. The trail should have run to the right of this fence line. No evidence. **Maybe I was in the wrong location but I don't think so.** Admittedly someone on a horse could face danger here – but even so there still should be a bridleway here. **If the verges and hedges were properly cut along this road** there might be a better chance for a horse and rider, cyclist or even a walker.

**NEEDS ATTENTION TO ACCESS AT
FOOT OF ALVEDISTON ROAD; ALSO
VEGETATION NEEDS TO BE CLEARED
TO FACILITATE WALKING**

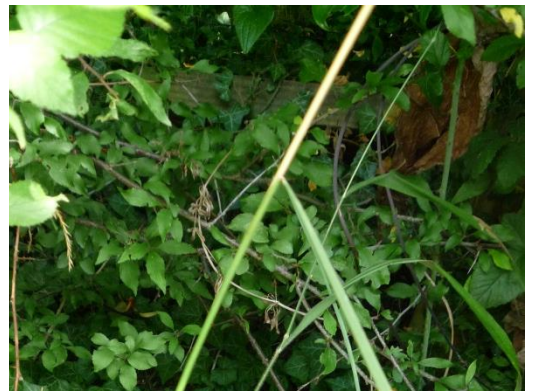
Footpath 4. Top of Alvediston Road to Foot of Alvediston Road



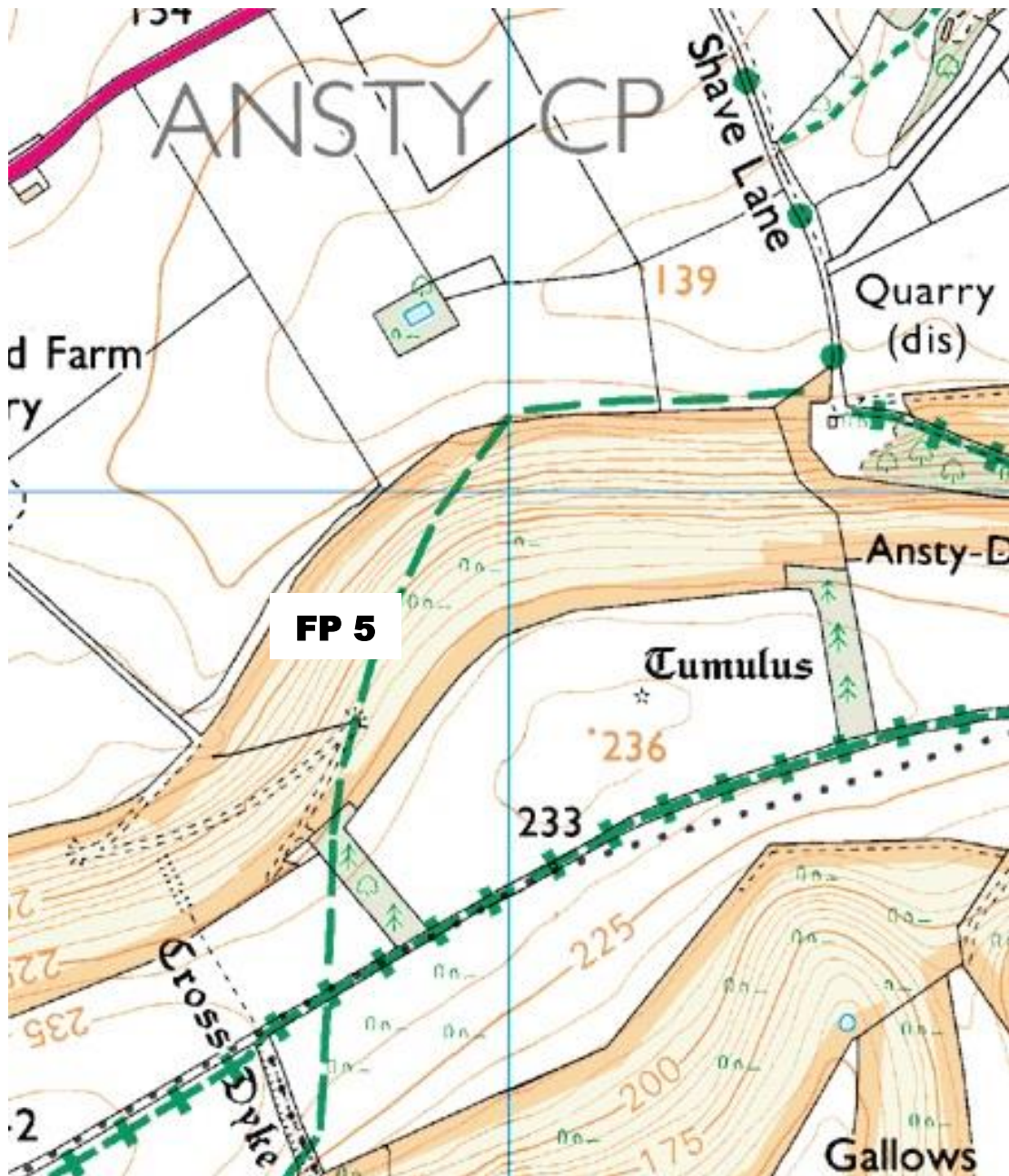
Top right- A neat sign on the top of Alvediston Hill and a sound, easy to get over stile heralded much promise for the short walk to come down the steep scarp slope. I had to use the distant Alvediston road bearing off to Ansty to keep my bearings. I also took a compass bearing just in case which turned out to be a good idea. The first part of the descent was easy over a gentle convex slope; the scarp drop loomed up. The terrain changed. The once short sheep grazed tufty turf so redolent of these ancient chalk slopes was badly invaded by hawthorn and other stuff (middle left). There was no evidence of a footpath; overgrown trees and vegetation made it a difficult walk. When I found the access to the foot of Alvediston hill the stile was near impossible to get on to because of all the vegetation. From the road the finger sign wasn't visible because it was broken on the ground; access was almost impossible and bearing in mind the proximity of the road – dangerous. Another disappointing trek.



Below left- stile barely visible and difficult to use because of overgrown vegetation; below centre- no sign of access from the road; Below right- sign post lying on the ground



Footpath 5: THE MYSTERY OF THE BRIDLEWAY

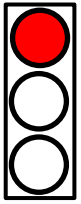


Map extract showing FP5 (Bridleway) from Shave Lane to Ansty Parish Boundary on the Shaftesbury-Salisbury By-way. 2013. This also appears on the public rights of way in Ansty definitive map February 1996 – apparently the last review? Below- part of the Bridleway climbing up the Downs to the middle conifer strip.



NEEDS ATTENTION TO THE MISMATCH OF BRIDLEWAY v FOOTPATHS; SOME STILES, SIGNS, WAY MARKER ARROWS NEED TO BE INSTALLED AND THE BRIDLEWAY NEEDS TO BE UPGRADED. SOME VEGETATION NEEDS TO BE TRIMMED OCCASIONALLY.

**Footpath 5 . From Shave Lane at foot of Ansty Down to the crossdyke on Shaston-Salisbury
ridgeway – just before White Sheet Hill.**



This is quite a complex report so pay attention! Suffice to say that this 'footpath' is possibly the finest of all the many walks within the Ansty Parish. On the original 1949 definitive map and all subsequent maps this foot path is clearly labelled as a Bridleway, yet no such signs acknowledging this could be found – perhaps because there aren't any. Certainly a horse and rider would be hard pushed to negotiate any of this 'bridleway': all the stiles encountered are for walkers only (and small) and the way forward is often unclear. The 'bridleway' leaves Shave lane and traverses along the foot of the Downs west of Ansty Down and then opposite a square shaped woodland copse turns up the slope via two stiles partially contouring across the slope to meet the middle windbreak on top of the ridgeway. Whereupon the trail disappears: more about this later.



Above- Below the dotted line, the Downs slopes to the base here are 'open access' according to the map. No 'open access' signs were readily seen and indeed access is not that easy. The above picture shows part of the original bridleway snaking up the slope overlooking Horwood Farm Dairy. The Windbreak (at least I assume it is a windbreak as well as pheasant shoot copse) can be seen at the top. The following notes report on the various stiles encountered whilst walking from Shave Lane to the Windbreak, none of which were suitable for a bridleway.

Stile 1 (Shave Lane). Best described as very rustic – basically rotten. Loose bottom step. The once overgrown nettles on the site had been grazed/cleared (who knows?) – but no clear footpath on the ground. Gate kept shut by a loop of barbed wire.



Footpath 5 Continued

Stile 2. Very inadequate. No top 'covering' bar – barbed wire therefore exposed. The footpath still not clear; one has to walk through the crop edge because the field 'ledge' where the path may be located is overgrown. See below right.



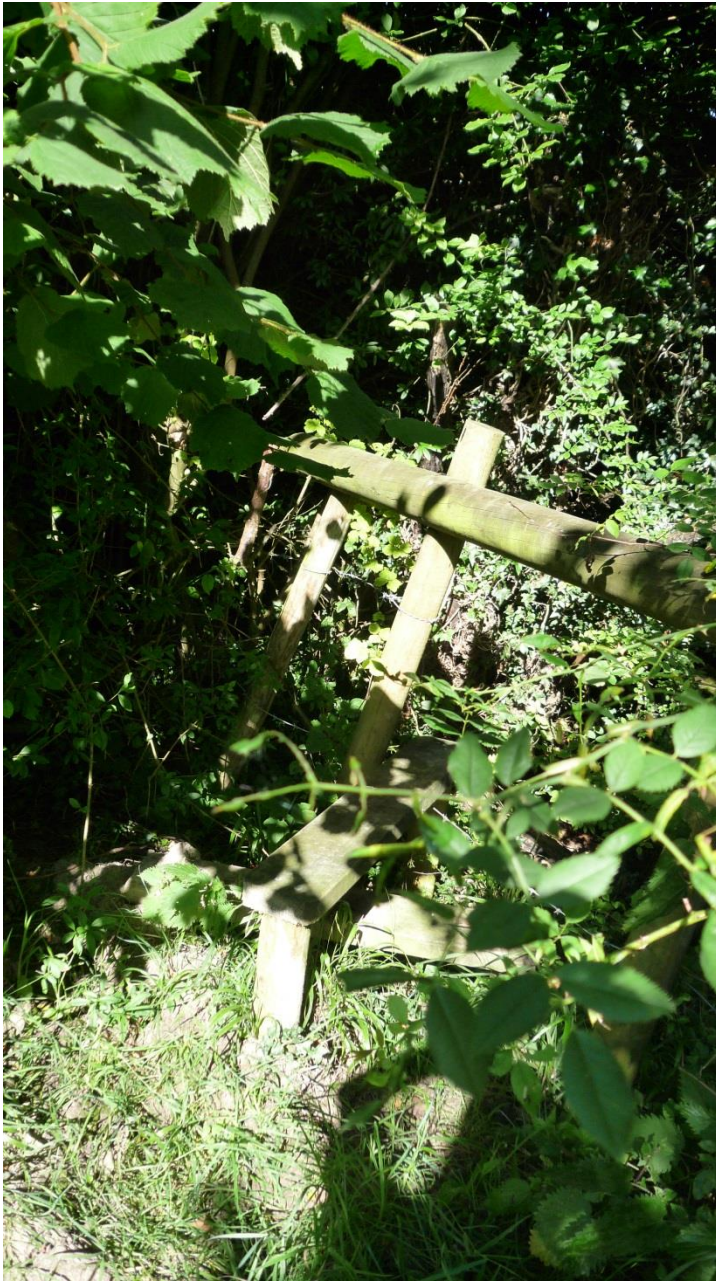
Stile 3 below – Overgrown access but the stile generally sound and safe.



Stile 4/5 below – Allows access to 'East Ansty Down' The first stile is sound although the 'pull up' post is a bit loose and the step plate is very narrow: difficult to step on and swing over. The second stile just visible behind (stile 5 in this case) looks to be a fairly recent refurbishment.



Footpath 5 Continued



Stile 5 continued left – The stile fence poles are out of line with the steps making them difficult to straddle; otherwise sound.



The footpath sign (bridleway?) in the immediate vicinity of stile 5 isn't really clear about the way forward.

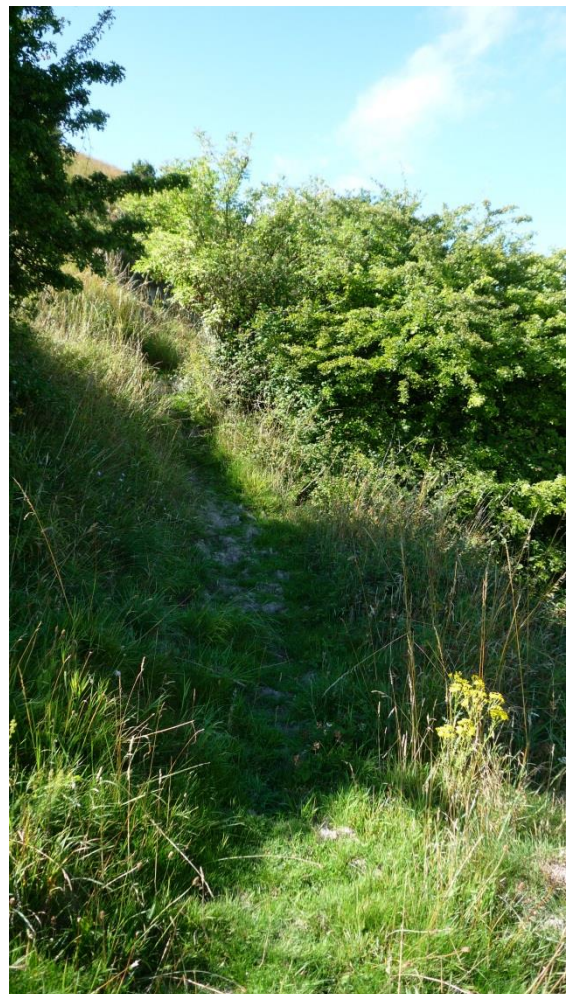
Below- after scrambling through the two foot of scarp stiles this is the view of East Ansty Down, a fine chalk escarpment. On the map this slope is not named so this is what I have called it.



Footpath 5 continued



This is the view just above stiles 4 and 5. Walkers travelling downslope towards Shave Lane are hard pushed to find the exit back on to the fields at the foot of the slope. There is no visible sign of any post, stile or waymark.



Finding the actual definitive trail at this access point is difficult. One could argue that the slope is open access anyway so it doesn't matter. But it does. This is a definitive footpath, sorry bridleway, as marked on the current maps. Looking at an earlier OS map it seems there was a chalk pit in this vicinity. I suspect that these steep slopes are prone to soil creep and this chalk pit cutting may well have collapsed taking a section of the original bridleway with it. It seems it was never reinstated which it might have been by perhaps circumnavigating the slump. So the bridleway seems 'lost by default'. Instead it was called a footpath for any diehard who might want a steep climb. Of which more later.

There is no visible footpath/trail at the early stages of ascent.

Footpath 5 continued



Left- Plenty of evidence of soil creep and erosion hastened by what appears to be cattle hoofs although I would like to think it was sheep. I used these as 'steps' to find my way up the downs.

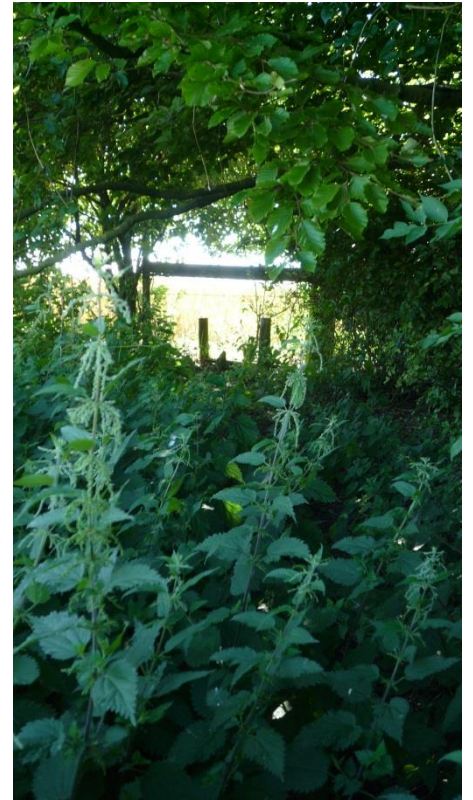


Right- eventually the soft flatness of the original bridleway track begins to appear and one can follow the curve of the path around and up the side of the escarpment. Skirting the fence to the track that descends to Horwood Dairy Farm one makes for the next stile at the foot of the middle conifer strip that stands incongruously overlooking the magnificent Vale of Wardour.

Footpath 5 continued -



Above- a small copse fronting the middle conifer strip high above Horwood Farm Dairy. Somewhere to the left is stile No 6. Right- after ploughing through nettles stile No 6 appears.



Left- basically, stile No 6 doesn't physically exist. It is very difficult and dangerous to climb over .

From this stile, the trail should take the walker into the end of the NW edge of the conifer strip – but it appears to have been fenced off.

Footpath 5 (the saga continues) -



Above- the map directs you through the conifer forest strip and then once through, the path/bridleway should be heading for the trees on the horizon (right) of this arable field. I didn't attempt it! In any case it is all fenced off along the top horizon.



From stile 6 there isn't a hint of what direction you should travel if you are walking south.

Left- So I walked (SE) up and along right hand edge of the conifer line towards the Shaston-Salisbury by-way.

Footpath 5 continued

This part of the Shaston-Salisbury track also marks (to a large extent) the SE edge of the Ansty Parish Boundary. The original bridleway appears from the slopes overlooking Berwick St John, cuts northwards across the southern tip of the Crossdyke ditch, over the by-way and down through the vicinity of stile No 6. There is no evidence from the by-way that this bridleway exists; yet it is clearly marked on the map. (see picture below). This wide angle photo shows the line of the bridleway from the crossdyke on the right to the NW edge of the conifer strip on the downs above Horwood Dairy farm.



So for now the bridleway mystery remains just that. However when I walked this area in 2008 there WAS a footpath clearly signposted running SE to NW along the left hand side (or SW edge) of the conifer strip as seen in the above picture (the same strip that I walked up on the previous page). There was a post and stile there waymarking a footpath. Except that this footpath has never appeared on the OS map! In 2009, the post fell down and stile disappeared and remained like that for a while. Incidentally the footpath took you to stile No 6 through the conifer strip! After a bit of rummaging around I found part of the old way marker that was on this side of the conifers – yes, it is still there! See below.



Right- the footpath line back in 2008/2009. But not on the OS map! The footpath waymarker was buried under vegetation close to where the photograph was taken from.



Footpath 5 conclusion



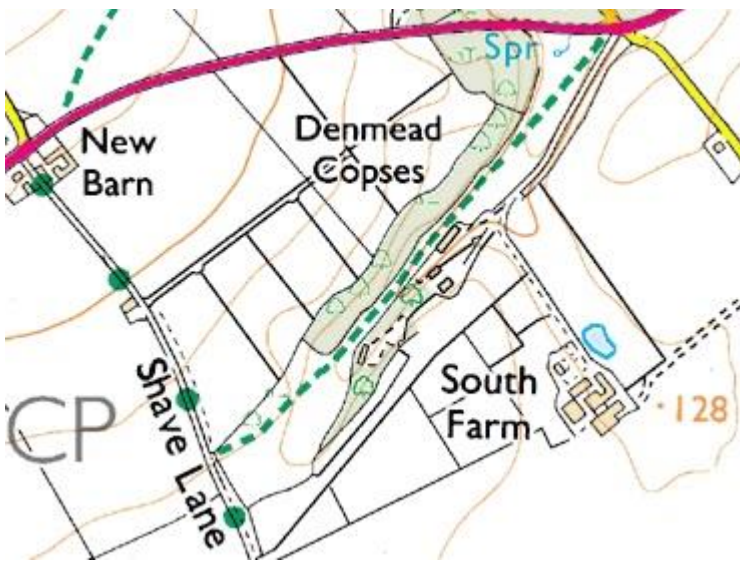
Above, left- the 'new footpath' line along the NE edge of the conifer strip. This joins stile no 6 at the foot of the strip.



Above right- the 'new stile' installed 2 or 3 years ago, maybe slightly longer. It is of sound construction and looks official. But is it legal? No planning signs were ever posted to say the footpath was about to be moved (again!) In any case we are talking about a bridleway here!

In late 2009 or 2010 a new post, stile and footpath waymarker appeared on the other side of the conifer strip. We will call this stile No 7! The footpath links the useless stile No 6. In essence the footpath had been moved! But I do not suppose it matters because the former footpath never appeared on the definitive map and neither does this one! And what happened to the bridleway? It is clearly marked on the most up to date OS maps. Now I never did have much time for the 'right roam access' policy but I do think that the historical footpaths and bridleways should be retained and maintained in perpetuity for present and future generations. Footpath 5 (or bridleway) seems a complete mess. The original bridleway trail was arguably one of the finest trails in the parish with outstanding views from the very top of the Downs. The current non definitive footpath sneaks down the NE edge of the conifer strip (which last winter was difficult to negotiate because of crop cover) and takes out those views to the west and the proper 'way' is gradually being lost forever. Go and have a look for yourselves!

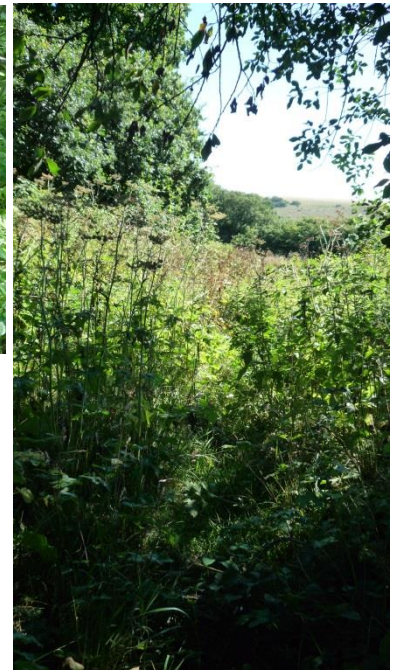
Footpath 6 A30 junction with Ansty Tisbury road and Alvediston road to Shave Lane



APART FROM THE
SOUND A30 STILE
THIS IS A
NEGLECTED WALK

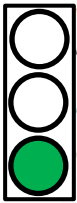
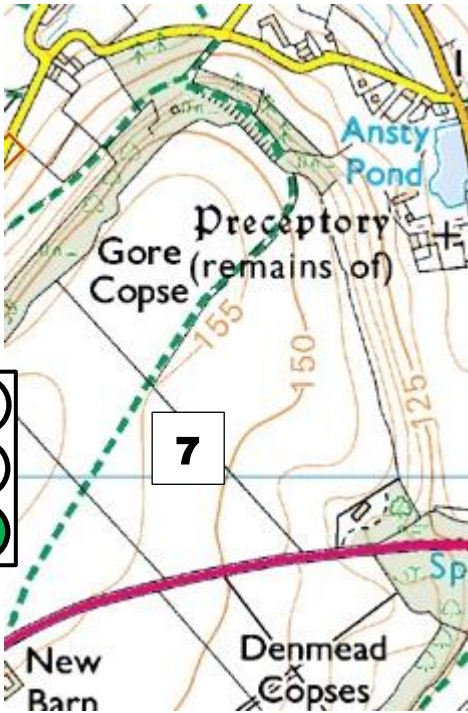


The stile and finger post off the busy A30 on the south side of the road looks quite new and is well constructed. And there it ends. The footpath is nigh impossible to transcend. The little valley has a distinct atmosphere of neglect. This is a recurring theme that keeps popping into my mind as I walk around parts of Ansty and Ansty Coombe. In winter this route is just about navigable with big boots on. In August 2013 it was so overgrown – great for insects and butterflies – but not a shred of evidence of a footpath way and I was unable to locate a stile somewhere along the middle of the footpath. Tackling the path from the Shave Lane End met with similar disappointment. There is no way this footpath should be allowed to get into this state. It is historic and we all have a responsibility to look after it. The footpath at the Shave End access was grim; the stile and finger post and waymarker arrow all missing.



Top left- someone has thoughtfully replaced the step tread of the Shave Lane end stile, but it all still looks a mess; top right-the overgrown field at the A30 end; bottom left-even worse half way from the A30 end; above- the way marker arrow not much help; the 'footpath' from the Shave Lane end.

Footpath 7: Stile off Ansty Coombe Lane near junction with A30 (New Barn) to Ansty Coombe lane crossroad to Blind Lane.



7

On the map the access to FP 7 indicates that it should be on the A30. But I found the stile located just before the junction of Ansty Coombe Lane and the A 30. This is a pleasant walk across paddocks (often filled with horses – but not in mid-August 2013 when I walked this path.) The only slight difficulty was the overgrown vegetation blocking the access stile which in itself was sound although the finger post was practically invisible. Indeed all stiles encountered were sound and way marker arrows were clear. The paddocks leads to an edge of field walk and then down a sunken path. The sunken path down to Ansty Coombe Lane was clear and easy to walk.

The views across the paddocks to the Downs are stunning and this is a lovely short walk.

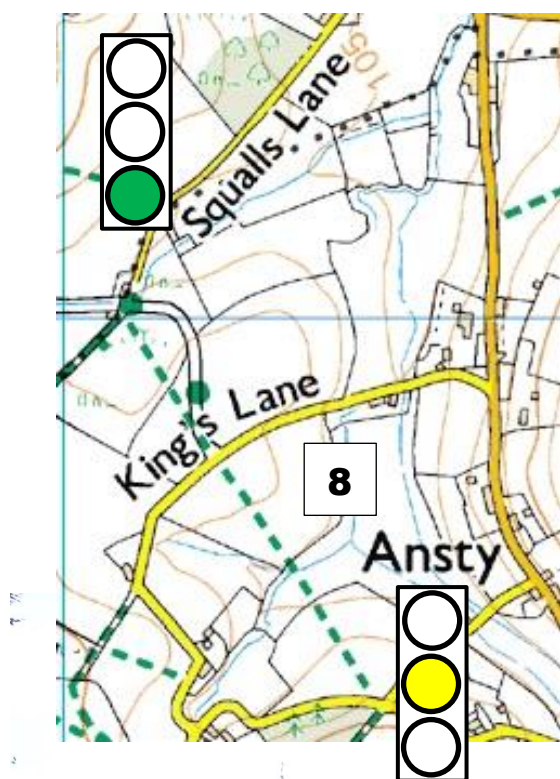
APART FROM A LITTLE PRUNING AT 'NEW' ACCESS STILE THIS IS A WELL MAINTAINED WALK. THE A30 ACCESS APPEARS DEFUNCT BUT NOBODY HAS TOLD THE O.S. MAP PEOPLE. THIS COULD LEAD TO CONFUSION.



Top left- Way marker arrows are very helpful on the paddocks; top right- the overgrown access stile; bottom left- a sturdy stile across the sunken path.

Footpath 8 From Blind Lane/Ansty Coombe Lane junction to Squalls Lane via King's Lane

MISSING FINGER POST ON KING'S LANE, ONE OR TWO WAY MARKER ARROWS NEEDED; AND A REALIGNMENT OF THE 'WONKY' POST ON ANSTY COOMBE LANE; THE SQUALLS LANE SECTION IS FINE



This is another short walk that passes through several very different 'environments' in no time at all. The access finger post is out of line (probably a vehicle struck it). There is no access stile, instead you go through a gate with a tight bungee clip! Then access is through a field with a few friendly sheep which gently drops into a valley. A fairly sound stile is encountered but no arrow way marked. This takes one across a small water meadow which looks a little choked and overgrown to a second sound stile. From here one walks up a pasture field to reach 'pull to' gates onto King's Lane. Here there should be a finger post or at least some kind of way marker arrow but here is no indication of a right of way back across to Ansty Coombe Lane and I am not sure this is the exact line anyway.

We continue across King's Lane on to private property and the Squalls Farm access over a worn stile, across a small paddock on to another sound stile and into a copse which has been cleared and is carefully way marked with posts on to the restricted by-way that links with Squalls Lane. Here we reach the NW edge of the Parish boundary.

The restricted by-way has been wonderfully maintained recently, though this hasn't always been the case – not that this by-way is within our parish boundary!



Left- The wonky post points skywards; middle- the first stile into the water meadow; right- a weed infested water course – beware it can be quite wet underfoot!

Footpath 8 continued:



Top left- stile into field bordering King's Lane, Ansty; Top right- access via 'gate' onto Kings Lane. No sign or way mark visible and not sure if this is in line with the definitive map. Mid left- King's Lane finger post clearly seen pointing down a fence line marking FP 8. The hedge has grown a foot or two since it was put in! From here on the path is well maintained. Mid centre- showing the first stile but most people walk down the private road; Mid right- stile into paddock; note chewed fence! The step posts are a little loose. Bottom left- stile into the small copse, which bottom middle and right is well marked to the boundary post just off FP 64 which is the restricted by-pass leading to Squalls Lane. The restricted by-pass was exceptionally well maintained.



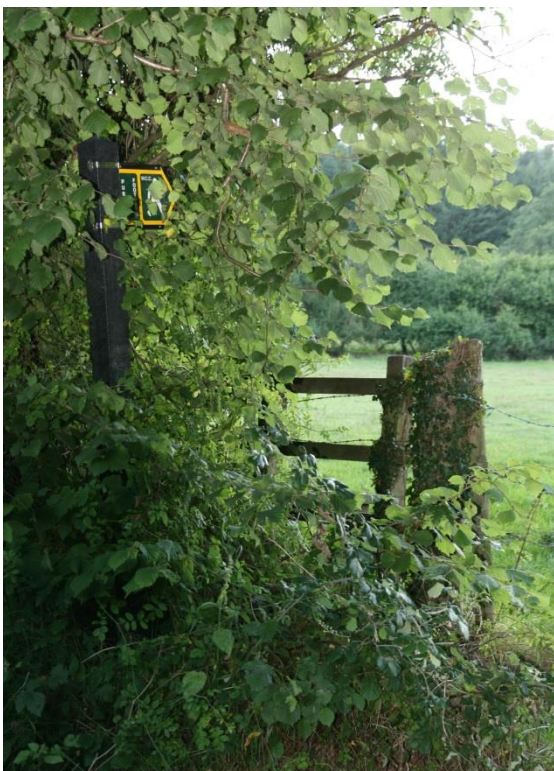
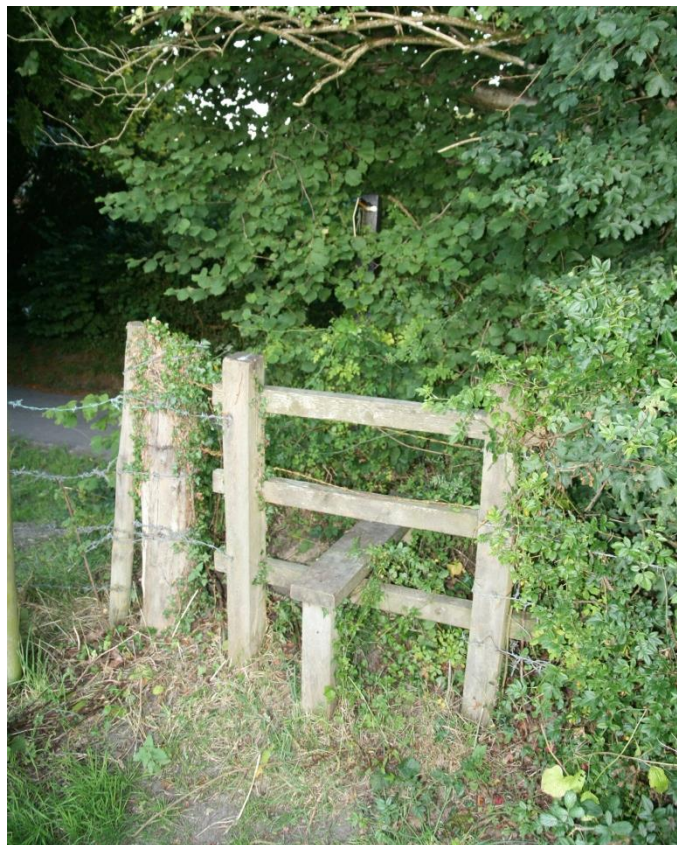
A PLEASANT, RELATIVELY WELL
MAINTAINED WALK



9

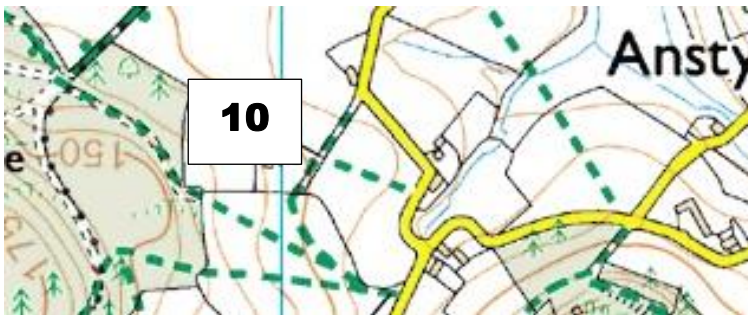
Footpath 9 Thatchers Cottage Lane to King's Lane (south)

This is a delightful little walk across one field! All the stiles are sound (one was a little loose on the uprights, but very adequate). The stile on the King's Lane end suffered from overgrown vegetation but nothing too serious.



Top left- an unusual double stile affair (very stock proof!) and a little difficult to climb over if you are not so agile Top right- the second stile at Thatcher's Cottage end; perhaps a waymark arrow here? Bottom left and right- This is the access stile from the King's Road End. It is perfectly adequate but needs **some of the overhanging vegetation to be cleared.**

**Footpath 10: Ansty Coombe Lane to Turners Copse meeting parish boundary on Squalls Lane
restricted by-way section**



Footpath 10 is one of three short paths that cross the same field off Ansty Coombe. They all join at a stile access on Ansty Coombe Lane which I shall deal with separately. This particular path articulates through a rough pasture field from the lane through a stile (pictured right) and then into Turner's Copse. A short walk through Turner's copse brings you to a junction of several forest tracks including a restricted by-way that takes you on to the Wardour-Hatch road and another one that follows the parish boundary to Squall's Lane and the Ansty-Tisbury road.

It is a short romp that takes you through overhanging laurels and a dark, untidy conifer forest, largely devoid of under vegetation cover. It is one of many short walks that indicate a much busier time when the old Wardour Estate was once a proper Estate and life in the Coombe and Ansty itself was really 'proper rural, with tidy husbandry and semi self-sufficient approach' with many small bustling farms, allotments and allied country crafts. There was never a problem with declining species of wildlife in those days!

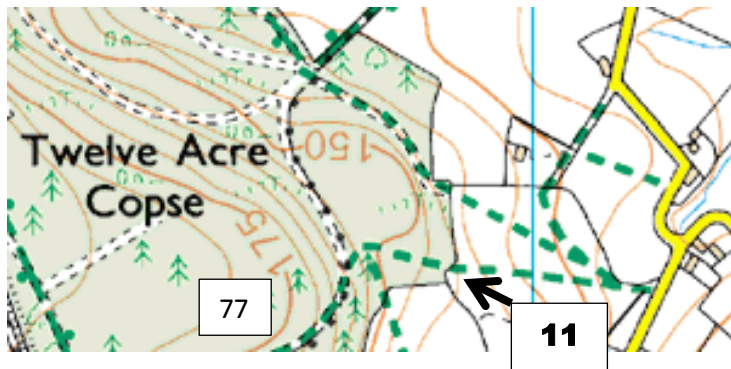


Above- The Turner's Copse stile, above Thatchers Cottage. It is adequate but the step is rotting through (see top left below). Clearly way marked though.

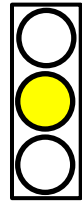


Below right- Looking back along FP 10 towards the overhanging laurels and the conifers beyond. There are no finger posts, signs or anything marking out the entrance to this walk from this junction at Twelve Acre Copse (left)

Footpath 11: Ansty Coombe Lane to Turner's Copse which joins footpath 77 (not our Parish) through Rebbeck's Hill and on to Old Wardour. Ansty parish boundary runs parallel on the inside of footpath 77



SOME SIGNAGE IS NEEDED – PARTICULARLY THE FOREST END ACCESS IN 12 ACRE COPSE. NOT SURE ABOUT THE LOOSE STEPS BUT THEY ARE THERE FOR A REASON



Footpath 11 is another short link in the Ansty Coombe area. Once again this footpath joins a stile on the Ansty Coombe lane (which also links with FPs 10, 11 and 15. We will deal with this stile separately, when we get to FP 15. On walking up in a north westerly direction from the Ansty Lane stile across a rough pasture field we link with FP 12 (next) and the walk then approaches a stile (see picture) which takes you into 12 Acre Copse, where we also reach the Ansty Parish boundary. FP 11 then disappears at a T junction; to the left running towards Old Wardour is FP 77 which is in the Wardour Parish and then on to FP 22 (Donhead Parish).

The Footpath 11 way is reasonably clear via the field and well defined through the forest.



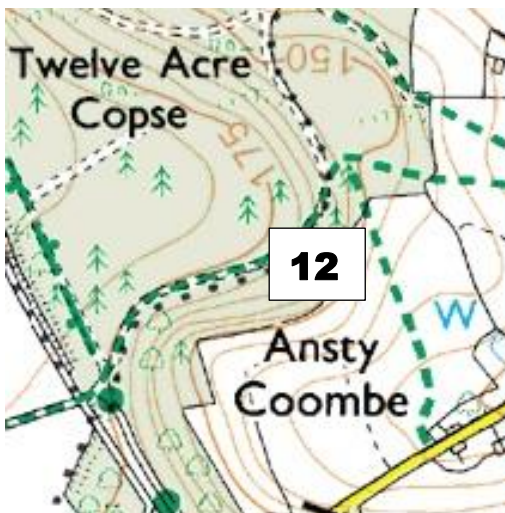
Far left and left- This sagging stile has been bolstered by a couple of uprights and some cross panels; unfortunately the way marker arrow was covered up. A few loose bits of sawn timber provide steps to get over and straddle the cross bars.



FP 11 continues from this stile through a small part of Turner's Copse before joining a T junction (see left). No signs or way marker arrow. This is where Ansty Parish boundary begins. The path is quite well used and defined.

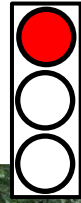
Left Arrow = Forest footpath to FP 64; Right Arrow = FP 77 to Rebbeck's Hill and Old Wardour

Footpath 12: Ansty Coombe Lane to FP 11 and stile access to 12 Acre Copse



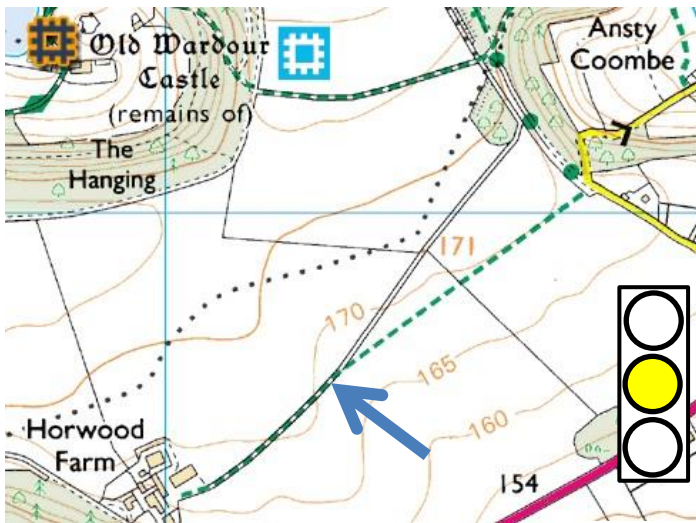
**THE WHOLE OF THIS AREA
IS BEING ALLOWED TO
SLOWLY DETERIORATE.**

**THE STILES NEED
RENEWING/REBUILDING
WITH PROPER POSTS AND
WAY MARKING**



This has the potential to be a lovely walk with fine views over Ansty and of Ansty Coombe itself. It is a straight walk from a stile on Ansty Coombe Lane to a stile on the edge of 12 Acre Copse, whereupon the path links up with FP 11 on its way to the T junction pictured on the FP 11 page. Bottom Left- the wrecked stile at Ansty Coombe Lane. Above this is the Copse stile at the top of the slope at the edge of the woods. Neighbours have attempted to rectify this sagging stile with new uprights and sticking tape. Despite their best efforts it is a bodge. No finger signs or way marker arrows. The field looks uncared for and neglected and access to the top stile is hidden. (See main picture and inset). Not so many years ago this was such a pretty and 'cared for' sight as many 'old timers' of the area tell me.

Footpath 13: Top of Ansty Coombe Lane to Horwood Farm

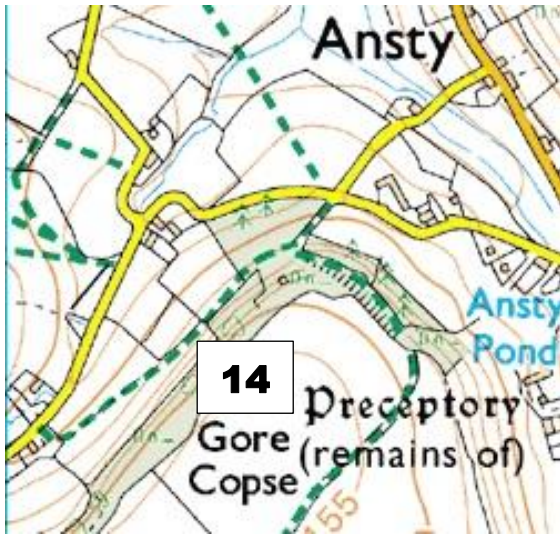


**NOT SURE
ABOUT THE
ACROSS THE
FIELD
ACCESS. THE
ARROW ON
THE MAP
POINTS TO
WHERE
THERE MIGHT
BE A STILE,
FINGER POST
OR WAY
MARKER
ARROW**



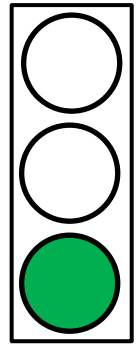
Top left- The view of the stile from Ansty Coombe Lane – a bit overgrown; once over the stile the overgrown vegetation theme continued although a couple of days later after this photo had been taken someone had trimmed this away and the edge of the field. Second down left- small but very adequate finger post; Top right- the actual path should follow the direction of the compass across the field (indicated by the finger post sign). For the last 4 or 5 years I have had to circumnavigate via the edge of the field and down a track because when crops are growing I can't see my way through. There is a catch crop growing in the field now and no indication of where the path is. If I did cross the field I should come out half way down the track to Horwood: the nearest gate to the access point is shown third left picture down – but it is not the right location. Bottom Left- the footpath and track merge about here to wend its way down to Horwood Farm where it just stops. I just learnt from locals that you could access Horwood Bottom and Nowers Copse (Wardour Forest) and indeed walk all the way to Old Wardour. But there are no permissive signs to tell you this. Why not?

Footpath 14: Ansty Coombe Lane/Blind Lane Junction to Badger's Cottage (96 Ansty Coombe Lane)



14

A WELL MAINTAINED WALK.
ALL THE STILES WERE IN GOOD
ORDER; WELL WAYMARKED
AND SIGNED EXCEPT PERHAPS
OFF THE ANSTY
COOMBE/BLIND LANE
JUNCTION – A MINOR DETAIL.



This is a fine little walk half way up the northwest facing valley side of Ansty Coombe, overlooking 12 Acre Copse. The views are exceptional. There is no roadside marker to indicate where the walk starts but there is a discreet waymarker arrow on the post and rail fence ascending up to Keepers Cottage. A neat little stile a few yards further on takes you into a small pasture field. A substantial and well-built stile beckons you on to the bigger field backed by a steeply sloping copse – almost like a beech hangar (except it isn't!) Looking down one can see what was once allotments and looking across orchards would have been visible on the lower slopes. A further substantial stile takes you through private property known as Badgers Cottage. On the lane is a finger post sign marking the way back. A super little evening walk with the dog.

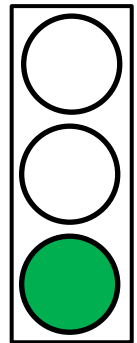


Top left- The discreet way marker! Middle left- the first stile; Top Middle- the second stile; Bottom left- the stile at Badgers Cottage; Centre- The Ansty Coombe Lane finger post at Badgers Cottage; Right- the main view down the footpath towards Badgers Cottage.

Footpath 15: King's Lane Corner (near Thatchers Cottage) to Ansty Coombe Lane, linking in with footpaths 10 and 11



FOOT PATH 15
IS ADEQUATELY
MAINTAINED
EXCEPT FOR THE
ANSTY COOMBE
LANE ACCESS
STILE



Footpath 15 is a short walk from starting from King's Lane Corner where there is an access track running by a private property known as Thatchers Cottage. This access track is well signposted and leads to a substantial and sturdy stile which allows access into a field. Turning to the left and walking down what is often a boggy finger of land you will reach an access stile off the Ansty Coombe Lane which is also way marked with a plastic finger post. Two other very local footpaths link to this stile which is precarious and hidden under a boggy tree area. The stile is examined on the next page. Footpath 15, though not defined on the field; the one field stile at Thatchers cottage and the access track from Kings Lane is adequately maintained. The stile on Ansty Coombe Lane is in a poor state.



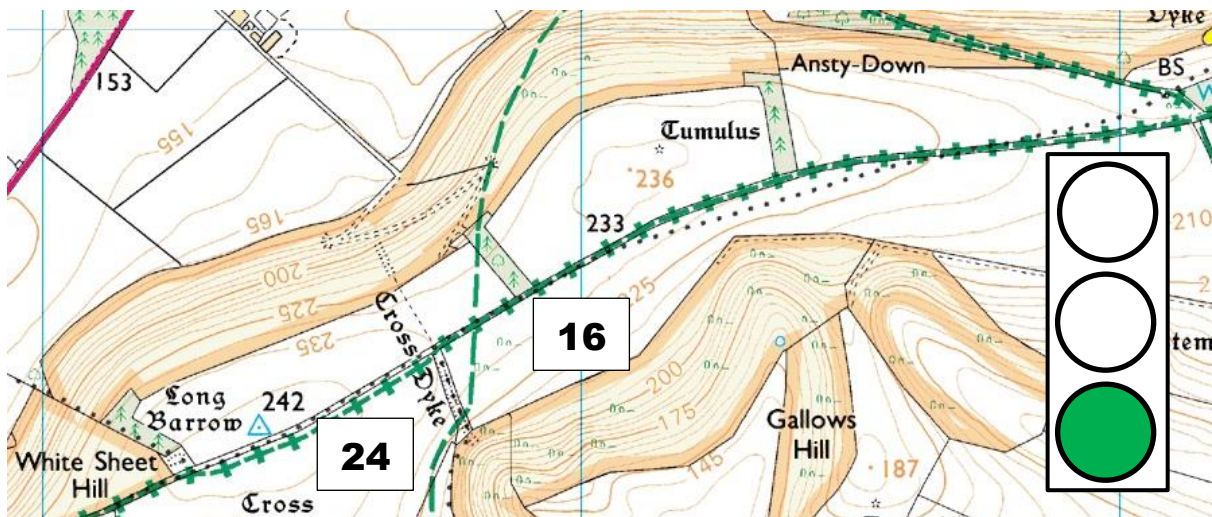
Top left- the track of FP 15 that leads off the corner of Kings Lane. It is partly the entrance to Thatchers Cottage. It is way marked with a finger post. Centre- is the footpath further up from the track approaching a stile. Bottom left- a sturdy stile allows the walker to turn left along and walk parallel with the field boundary. Eventually you funnel down towards the access hole in the distance (Right) which is the Ansty Coombe Lane access stile.

Footpath 10, 11 and 15 to access stile on Ansty Coombe Lane



Centre- A nice plastic finger post on Ansty Coombe Lane pointing in the right direction. The only reason why you see the sign is because I clear the vegetation from around it every year, otherwise it 'disappears'. I also strim the verge when I can because the council fail to do it. Right- a view as you approach the stile from the field via FP 10, 11 or 15. Left- 3 pictures showing the decaying steps on the stile: it is becoming dangerous. Below- a two-step drop on these loose, decaying steps could lead to an accident. It needs refurbishment.

Footpath 16/24: Shaftesbury- Salisbury Byway

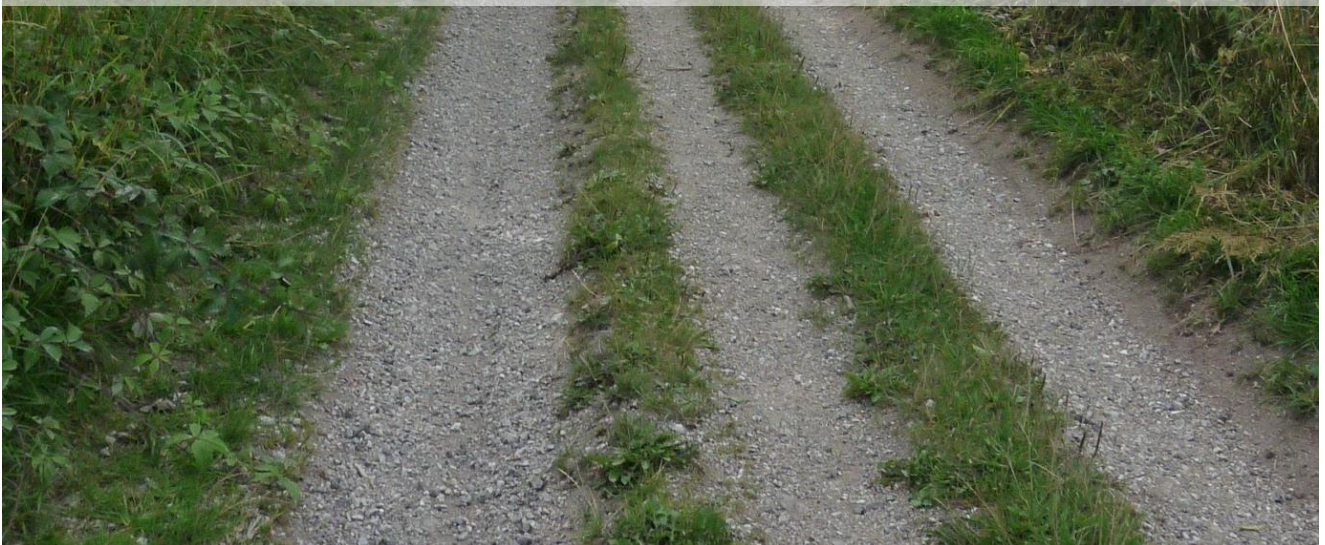


AN ADEQUATE TO WELL MAINTAINED BYWAY WITH APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE

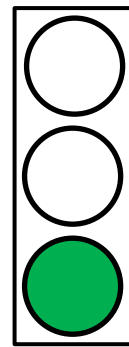
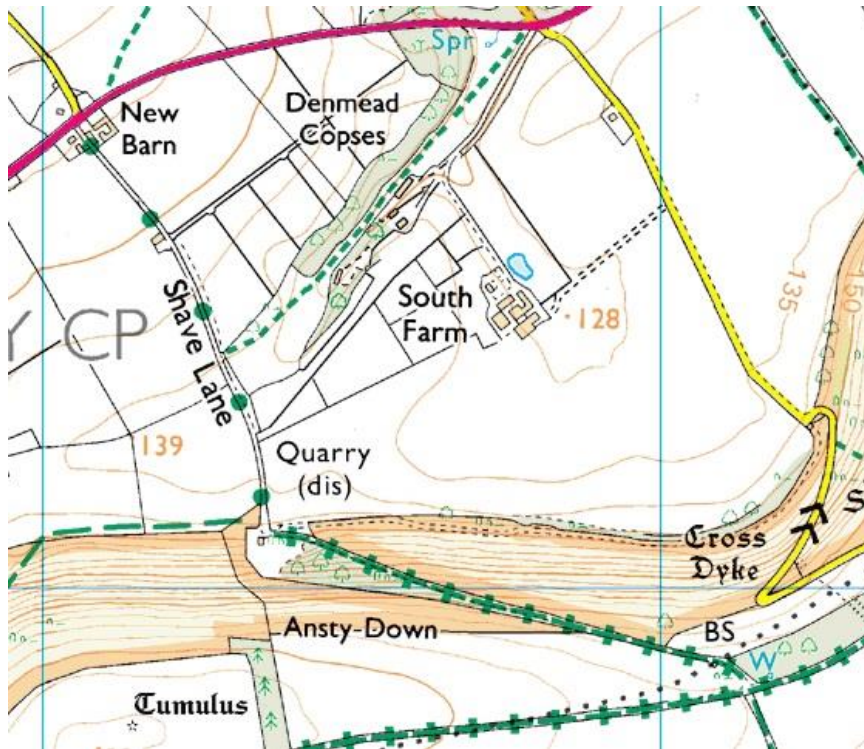
It is not that easy to really pin down where FP 16 is on or within the Ansty Parish boundary. Suffice to say that the boundary (follow the small black dots) weaves in and out in close proximity to the byway. To add to the confusion, just past the crossdyke on the map FP 16 changes to FP 24 before reverting back to FP 16 beyond the White Sheet Hill long barrow. Access to this byway can be via Shave Lane (FP 17), the mystery bridleway (FP 5) and a footpath or two located alongside either side of middle conifer strip overlooking Horwood Farm Dairy. These paths are not marked on the map nor is there an assigned number.

This is beautiful open chalk country with stunning views to the north and south. To the north one can see the Upper Greensand ridges often marked out by brooding coniferous stands; the Vale of Wardour and Salisbury Plain. To the south, below Gallows Hill, is the Ebbles Vale, Berwick St John, Winklebury Hill Fort and the Ox-Drove ridge. Truly outstanding.

The Byway is generally easy to walk, ride a horse, cycle or even motor along. It is not a heavily used trackway, but there is sufficient traffic to warrant a degree of maintenance. The condition of our boundary section is excellent to moderate: some areas wallow with dips which become waterlogged in winter - mostly around the middle conifer strip section. There is good evidence that Wiltshire County Council do maintain this byway unlike Ansty Coombe Lane and all the other local metalled lanes in this part of the world.



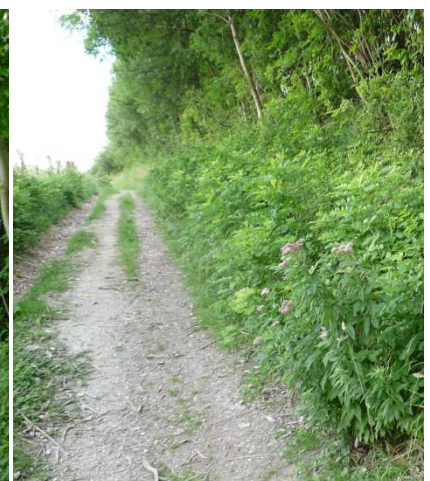
Footpath 17 Shave Lane from A3 0 (New Barn) access to FP 16 (Shaston-Salisbury ridgeway).



FP 17 AT THE MOMENT APPEARS TO BE WELL MAINTAINED. THE JUNCTION OF FP 17 AND BYWAY FP 16 COULD DO WITH A FINGERPOST SIGN OR WAYMARKER – BUT IT IS NOT OUR PARISH – IT IS ALVEDISTON.

Access to Shave Lane is off the A 30, opposite the junction with Ansty Coombe Lane at New Barn. There was a signpost pointing the way but it has become incorporated into a hedge and in any case the finger has dropped off. Shave Lane to the disused quarry area is open to public access but it is not a byway, footpath or bridleway although it seems all classes can use it. At the foot of Ansty Down Shave Lane continues its climb up the side of the forested slopes of Ansty Down as FP 17. To the right is the mysterious bridleway-cum-footpath (FP 5). This section of byway is generally sound, although at the lower end running water has eroded the track into grooves exposing the chalk bedrock. Fallen trees in these lower reaches have thankfully been cutback. Further up it is less demanding and a recent cut back of the myriads of ash saplings and scrub that were encroaching onto the track gives it an air of being better maintained than it had been.

The views of Ansty and Swallowcliffe from the upper slopes are outstanding.



Top left- The invisible Shave Lane Fingerpost; Bottom Left- Shave Lane looking towards Ansty Down; Centre- Shave Lane or FP 17 ascending the side of Ansty Down; Right- FP 17 higher up. The cut back Ash Saplings will soon be making their presence again!



Could this be our inspiration? This beautiful finger post sign recently erected to replace a similar sign that was rotten and falling to pieces is an example of good maintenance. The great thing is that the wood was sourced locally from Ridley's saw mill in Ansty and the man who finished it off and erected it was another long standing Ansty local Mr Geoffrey Feltham. There may have been others involved, I do not know. I think the future is down to us local people to make things like general maintenance happen, often on a voluntary basis and preferably in a partnership with Wiltshire County Council. Just ignoring what plainly needs doing is not really an option is it?