

Kingswood Way and Bridleway 155

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Introduction



Kingswood Way runs roughly south from Old Farleigh Road in Selsdon and heads towards Limpsfield Road in Hamsey Green. After a distance of just over a kilometre (about three quarters of a mile) it merges into Kingswood Lane, part of which is Bridleway 155, before arriving at Limpsfield Road. The total distance is about 2.5 km (1.5 miles). In the map shown on the left (from Google Maps) the bridleway is seen as a narrowing of the road between Kingswood Way and Kingswood Lane.

The first part of Kingswood Way as far as the sharp bend in the road (just at the ‘K’ of Kingswood) consists of houses on both sides. The rest of Kingswood Way consists of housing to the east and Kings Wood itself to the west.

The boundary between Sanderstead and Selsdon runs along Kingswood Way from the north through the sharp bend and along the bridleway into Kingswood Lane. So the wood lies in Sanderstead while the houses are in Selsdon.

“Kingswood Way is an all-purpose highway not maintainable at public expense to a point in line with the southern boundary of No. 79. At this point it continues as Kingswood Lane, a public bridleway with the benefit of private vehicular rights, to the Croydon borough boundary and

thence into Tandridge district where it becomes an all-purpose highway maintainable at the public expense” (Crossby B, 2016). The maintenance of Kingswood Way is the responsibility of the frontagers. The maintenance of the bridleway is the responsibility of the London Borough of Croydon.

The word ‘bridleway’ derives from its original meaning as a path for riding a horse which is controlled by a bridle. The use of a bridleway now extends to walkers, cyclists and, in some circumstances as with Bridleway 155, to vehicles that have a

right to use the route. The right exists for residents whose property fronts on to the bridleway or who have it written into the deeds of their property.

This is a brief description of Kingswood Way and the bridleway as they are now. The origin and purpose of Kingswood Way are, however, uncertain. The reason for the uncertainty is not obvious without going back into some history and looking at the reasons why we have roads at all.

Roads

Starting point

The origin of roads lies in pre-history. The first tracks through the land were almost certainly made by animals. As human beings evolved they would follow these tracks in search of the animals themselves and eventually as a means of communicating with each other. Other tracks would have appeared as humans looked for easy ways to cross rivers, mountains and swamps. Domestication of horses and oxen led to bigger loads being carried and hence the need for wider trails with higher clearance.



Vehicular traffic probably started with a travois, a triangular frame dragged by a horse as shown on the left.

Wheels are much more complex and were probably developed in the Middle East around 5000 BC while ancient Britons were chipping flint to make stone axes. Nevertheless early Britons did move around, not with wheeled traffic but with pack animals and on foot.

The more long-distance paths developed along ridges to avoid rivers and swamps. Remnants of these Ridgeways are still evident in the naming of roads such as *The Ridgeway* in South Croydon.

Transport and Communication

There is some evidence of deliberate building of roads in England in the 1st century BC but roads came to England on a larger scale with the Romans. To move their troops as quickly as possible, they needed to go straight and avoid mud particularly in our wet northern climate. Aiming in a straight line is easy enough as long as the men were prepared to march up hill and down dale - the men themselves probably had no choice in the matter. So as to avoid men and chariots getting bogged down in mud, the Romans learned how to prepare roads with crushed stone that allowed water to drain away.

When the Romans left, the roads deteriorated although the alignment of many of them remained as with the A1, the Great North Road. In medieval times roads were developed between market towns to trade goods such as wool, sheep and cattle. As the unification of the country grew so did the need for better administration, more services and hence communication by road.

Homes

Human beings started out as hunter-gatherers. A family would establish itself in one place and hunt and forage for what they needed. For economy of effort and for added protection individual families would join together to form tribes, and hunting and foraging would continue but on a larger scale. The families would live in caves or huts, and paths would form between one family and another.

With the invention of agriculture and the establishment of farms, communities would grow centred on the farm. These communities became hamlets and villages with roads joining the homes of the farm workers and, often, the church.

Industrialisation accelerated this growth and large-scale building of homes and connecting roads took place eventually to give us the system that exists now. Roads have two main functions: giving access to homes, offices and factories within a community, and connecting one community to another to enable the transport of goods and services.

Selsdon

The roads in Selsdon fall into one or both of the above two categories. For example Farley Road leads from Croydon to Selsdon, and Addington Road running through Selsdon connects Sanderstead with Addington and places further east. Both roads also have homes built on each side. Other roads such as Rylands Road, Dulverton Road and Benhurst Gardens are used just to give access to homes. Indeed, they were built for that purpose as the population of Selsdon increased.

Old Farleigh Road

Old Farleigh Road is one of the end points of Kingswood Way and is one of the oldest in Selsdon. It leads from Selsdon to Farleigh and was probably established originally to connect the two places when Selsdon was just a farm and there was a need to transport produce and animals southwards.

Walter de Merton, Lord Chancellor and Bishop of Rochester, purchased Farleigh sometime in the second half of the thirteenth century. Merton College in Oxford is named after him and, in its statutes of 1274 he endows the manor of Farleigh to the college (*Merton College, 2015*). It is possible, therefore, that Farleigh Road existed as far back as 1274. (The word 'Old' was added to the road some time after 1924 when the Selsdon Park Estate was sold.) Early maps (e.g. *Roque 1768* (sometimes spelt Rocque), *Bowen 1777*; *Lindley & Crosley 1793*) show a road that could be identified as Farleigh Road.

Kingswood Way

(For convenience in what follows I use the term "Kingswood Way" to refer to what we now know as Kingswood Way, Bridleway 155 and Kingswood Lane).

While places are mentioned in old documents, the names of roads tend to be omitted unless there are issues concerning such things as rights of way and boundary disputes. The first real sign of roads appears in maps. The earliest map I have found of Selsdon is in John Roque's Map of Surrey dated 1768 (*Roque 1768*). A section of Roque's map taken from Sheet VI, K7 is reproduced below. This shows 'Sandersted', 'Hamby' Green and Farley with Selsdon existing just as a farm.

To the east of the road running south from Sandersted is a patch of woodland that is in approximately the same place as is Kings Wood now but is not the same shape. (There is no sign of Kingswood Way).



I guess one has to be careful when interpreting these old maps. This one shows details such as the position and shape of fields that it would be difficult for Roque to determine at the time. It also shows a road running south through Selsdon Farm to Farley. It appears to come from a crossroad that we would now identify as the traffic lights where Farley Road meets Old Farleigh Road. However, what we know as Farley Road was not built until much later than 1768. This junction probably shows the Upper Selsdon Road coming from Croydon and continuing through the grounds of what is now The Selsdon Park Hotel. This arrangement was changed when the estate comprising Selsdon Park, Selsdon Farm and Selsdon Woods was purchased by William Coles in 1809. He became bankrupt a year later and the estate was sold to George Smith, an MP, banker and director of the East India Company. Smith transformed the farm house into a mansion (later to become the Selsdon Park Hotel) and made many changes to the estate, among them moving the farm along the Addington Road to what is now the location of Aldi's supermarket. He also landscaped the park and re-routed the Farleigh Road so that it didn't go through his mansion but met the Addington Road further east at its present position. (See *Friends of Selsdon Wood*)

It is worth noting that Kings Wood has nothing to do with royalty. Writing in the local history records of the Bourne Society, Joy Gadsby says: "In a tax return of 1332 a woodland is recorded as owned by a man named King of Selsdon, and the name Kingswood rightly belongs to a smaller wood to the north-east of Kingswood Lane and was accidentally switched when the first Ordnance Survey map was made in 1871. Before that date the woodland was known as Sanderstead Wood or Court Wood named after the Lord of the Manor's house, Sanderstead Court." (*Gadsby, J 1988*)

Kingswood Way is not named as such on old maps. However, it did exist and is identified on these maps by its route that runs along the eastern boundary of Kings Wood. While not on Roque's map, it is shown forty years later on the Ordnance Survey map of 1805 (*Ordnance Survey 1805*) (See next page)



It can be seen that Kingswood Way runs off the road leading from Selsdon to Farley Green (Old Farleigh Road) and its existence indicates that it is at least 200 years old. This makes it one of the oldest roads in Selsdon but its purpose is unclear. It suddenly branches off from Old Farleigh Road, curls round the wood and ends up in Hamsey Green. Other roads behave similarly in that they have no identifiable reason for starting or for ending where they do; for example the one that goes through Beers Wood and Publet Wood. Perhaps these roads were established to give access to the woods themselves so that timber could be harvested for, say, house building or making charcoal. Kings Wood has two paths running through it meaning there was some kind of use requiring access. In addition Kingswood Way starts in the bottom of the valley in Old Farleigh Road. This would make it easier to bring loaded carts from the wood down the rough track of Kingswood Way on to the better 'main' road.

Notice also that the OS map shows the changes made by George Smith. Selsdon Farm is now on the Addington Road and the Old Farleigh Road is straighter and ends at its present position on the Addington Road.

The brief history of Kings Wood given in the Croydon Council web site: (www.croydon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/articles/downloads/kings-wood-history.pdf)

says the wood was laid out for shooting and the keeper's cottage still stands. It doesn't say who did this but the two roads shown on the map might have been made for this purpose.

In a communication (*Crossby, B. Undated*) sent to the secretaries of the Upper Road Committee and the Lower Road Committee Crosby says:

Kingswood Way and Kingswood Lane were in the late 18th century shown to form a public carriageway linking Limpsfield Road to Old Farleigh Road. It is known from evidence statements submitted to the former UDC that the ways were used by troops including their wagons, etc. for the carriage of equipment. Gates had been erected at both ends of Kingswood Way, with or without the consent of the local inhabitants, but it should be borne in mind that the majority of the local inhabitants were prior to 1924 (when development first commenced along the way) either working for or upon the estates of the large landowners and that the total number of persons interested in the use of the way was extremely small (i.e. An occupation road) as compared with that when development commenced in 1924.

In her account (*Gadsby, op. cit*) mentions the use of the wood for shooting and for supplying wood for charcoal, chalk for marling fields and flint for building, all of which would have needed transportation and hence a road.

Charcoal

Charcoal has long been used for domestic fires and Gadsby mentions Croydon as a major supplier of charcoal for London.

Before the invention of the blast furnace and the industrialisation of iron making, small local iron foundries existed near deposits of iron ore and, usually, near a source of running water to power the bellows for blowing air through the furnace. Charcoal was needed to reduce the ore to iron and to produce a temperature high enough to melt iron. These conditions existed in the Sussex Weald but not near Selsdon, particularly there were no deposits of iron ore. However, the *Friends of Selsdon Wood* in their history of the wood say, "The section of Old Farleigh Road on the south west

border of Selsdon Woods is an Iron Age track way to the Sussex ironfields via Farleigh, Titsey and Limpsfield Common...”

The demand for charcoal to make iron became so high that in the 16th century a law was passed in England to prevent the country becoming denuded of trees, so access to Kings Wood might have been a part of this demand although Roque’s 1768 map does not show Kingswood Way. In the 19th century charcoal for iron making was replaced by coke obtained from coal.

Chalk

Chalk was spread on fields to reduce the acidity of the soil (a process known as marling). A common cause of acidic soil is the breakdown of organic matter. Organic matter can, of course, occur when trees shed their leaves. As forests and woodland were cleared to provide fields for growing crops, the resultant topsoil might, therefore, be acidic. It so happens that in and around King’s Wood the sub-soil is mainly chalk. (This can be seen if you come across a badger sett or dig deep enough in your own garden.) So chalk could have been obtained from the wood and transported to the surrounding fields and even further.

Flint

As many gardeners around Kingswood Way know, cultivating the soil with a spade is almost impossible because of the prevalence of flint and stones. A garden fork is the preferred implement. However, flint was a good building material and evidence of this can be seen in some old buildings and walls in and around Selsdon. A good flint wall can be seen on the right-hand-side as one goes down Old Farleigh Road.

Gadsby (op. cit) suggests that King’s Wood could have been a source of flint. Indeed, the edge of the wood that borders Kingswood Way consists of a bank made up mainly of flint for much of its way. Flint could have been piled up on the edge of the wood ready for removal and this bank is what remains after the best pieces have been removed.

Cattle

Another reason for establishing roads in the countryside is to enable cattle to be moved around. With the population increasing there was a growing demand for meat, and drovers would move their herds to places where they could be collected for slaughter. There is a pond in Hamsey Green at the end of Kingswood Way that might have been used as a watering hole. The Croydon Internet web site suggests the pond possibly existed as far back as Neolithic times. It was mentioned in the Elizabethan Manor Rolls for Sanderstead Manor when it was referred to as “Wychmere” and has been in many boundary disputes dating back to the 13th Century. Sanderstead was a hamlet at a time when Selsdon was simply a farm. The nearest collection point for cattle might, therefore, have been on the Sanderstead road, and Kingswood Way could have been a drover’s road making use of the Hamsey Green pond which at the time would have been larger than it is now.

(Intriguingly, in the 1805 Ordnance Survey map just to the east of Kings Wood on the other side of Kingswood Way, there is a strip of land marked out whose meaning is not known. It coincides roughly with what is now numbers 63 -79.)

Selsdon Park Estate

Kingswood Way gradually became a residential street when the Selsdon Park Estate was sold. The Estate remained in the Smith family (see above, page 4) until 1890 when it was sold by George Smith's great-granddaughter to William Stevens. Nine years later it was sold to Wickham Noakes, a brewer. He died in 1923 and a year later the estate was offered for sale in lots by Messres Percy Portway Harvey Estates Ltd. The present properties on Kingswood Way take their title from the sub-sale of the available plots.

Percy Portway Harvey

There is information on the Internet about Percy Portway Harvey but nothing I can find about the sale of the Selsdon Park Estate. The history of the Harvey family is given in an account of the Break-up and Sale of the Felbridge Estate of 1911 (*Clarke, S., 2011*). In this account there is mention of "the purchase of the 318 acre Monks Orchard estate in Croydon, Addington, Beckenham and West Wickham in 1921. The latter purchase subsequently and rather rapidly caused him to go bankrupt and was sold off on behalf of Percy Harvey Estates Ltd by 1925."

Among the restrictive covenants attached to the deeds of some, if not all, of these properties is the following:

Each house erected on land with frontage upon the Sanderstead Addington Road (Plots 87 to 99 inclusive) shall be of the net prime cost for materials and labour of construction only of not less than £1000. Similarly houses with frontage upon Farley Road (Plots 100 to 103a and 143a) shall each be of the net prime cost as defined above of not less than £850 and similarly houses erected upon Plots 104 to 112 and 113 to 117 (inclusive) fronting Farley Road on the East and Kingswood Way on the South respectively shall each be of the net prime cost of not less than £750 Materials used in the construction of the houses on the above mentioned frontages and plots shall be as to the outside walls of brick or roughcast of an approved type and as to roofs of tiles made from natural clay or slates.

(Note that the mention of Farley Road refers to what is now Old Farleigh Road.)

These restrictions are designed to ensure that the houses erected on the land do not fall below a certain standard. Currently the value of some of these properties is edging towards one million pounds.

The Future

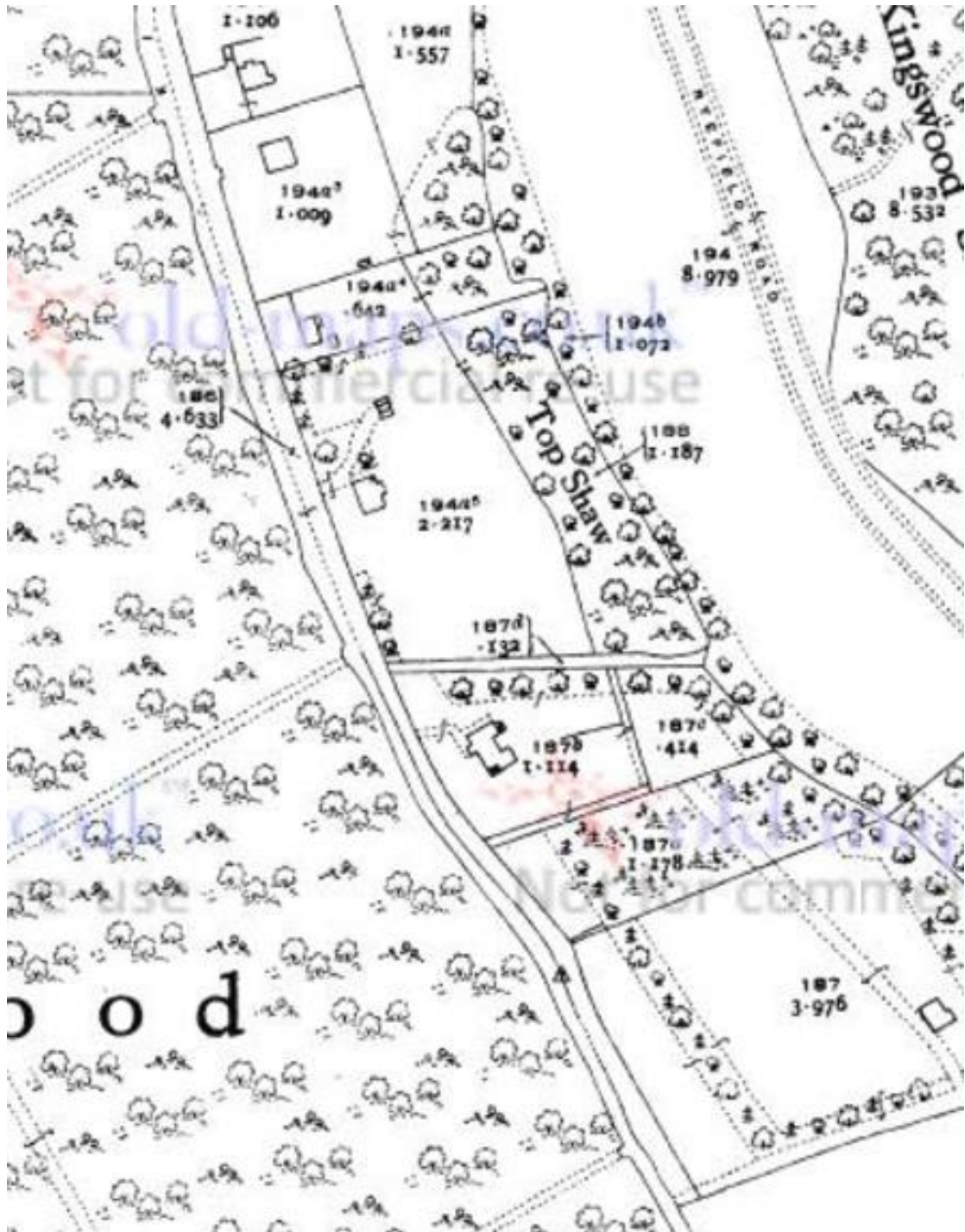
Who knows? Some of it will depend on the effects of the Croydon Local Plan currently being discussed. Hopefully Kingswood Way will continue to exist for at least another 200 years.



Lower Kingswood Way (Date approx 1934)



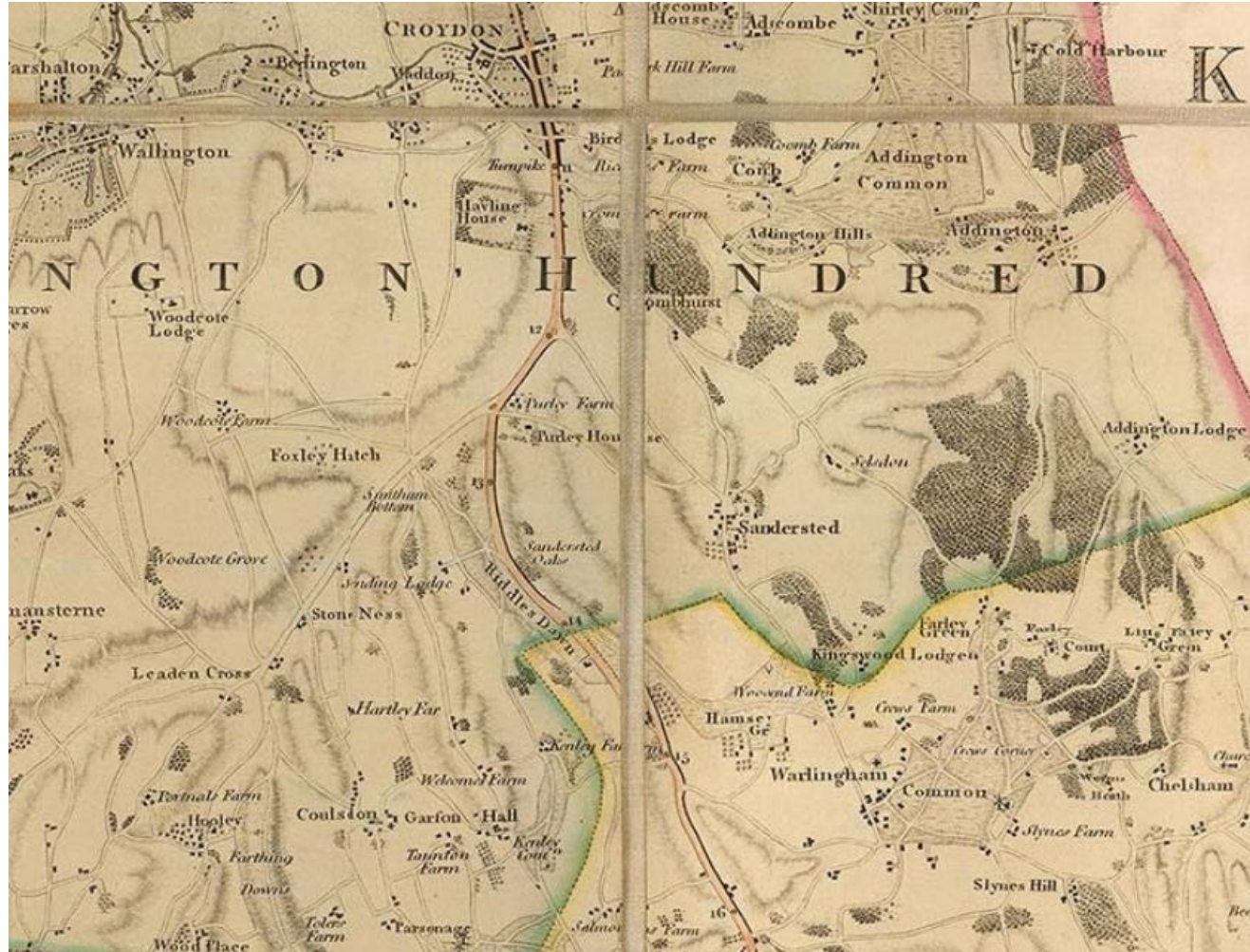
Middle Kingswood Way (Date approx 1934)



Top Kingswood Way (Date approx 1934)

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J & W Lindley and Crosley 1793