

Earlswood—Salfords—Horley ancient trackway

With the kind assistance of Deborah and Michael Ford, a survey has recently been carried out on the hedges bordering an old trackway now abandoned, metalled or ploughed out in parts, which can be traced from Earlswood (TQ 276493), through Salfords eg (TQ 285466) to the northern edge of what, anciently, was Horley Common (TQ 288441).

A shrub count was taken from twelve 30 yard sections of the few remaining well preserved stretches of hedge and an average of 12.3 species was obtained. From this result the controversial hedgerow dating technique denotes a Saxon origin for the trackway.

However inaccurate this method may be (Bird, 1981) an ancient origin is indicated by the direct route across country with all field boundaries abutting the trackway rather than being intersected by it. The lack of undisputed late prehistoric and Roman finds from the vicinity implies that the track and adjoining roads originated in Saxon and later times. The later roads, which were probably established during the increased colonisation of the Weald clay during the 12th-14th centuries, followed indirect routes dictated by the newly formed field and property boundaries. An example of this is indicated by the kink in Cross Oak Lane at TQ 288453 where it intersects the trackway, confirming a later origin for the lane.

If, as suggested, the trackway is of pre-conquest origin it would seem possible that it is only part of a north-south route linking the known Saxon associations of the area east of Horley and those of Burgh, Banstead and Sutton, the latter holding Thundersfield, perhaps synonymous with Horley common, in the 10th century if not earlier.

The classic interpretation of this trackway would be a drove road connecting the settled manors to the north of the Downs with the Weald primarily for the pannage of swine. Indeed, in 967 a grant of lands in the Manor of

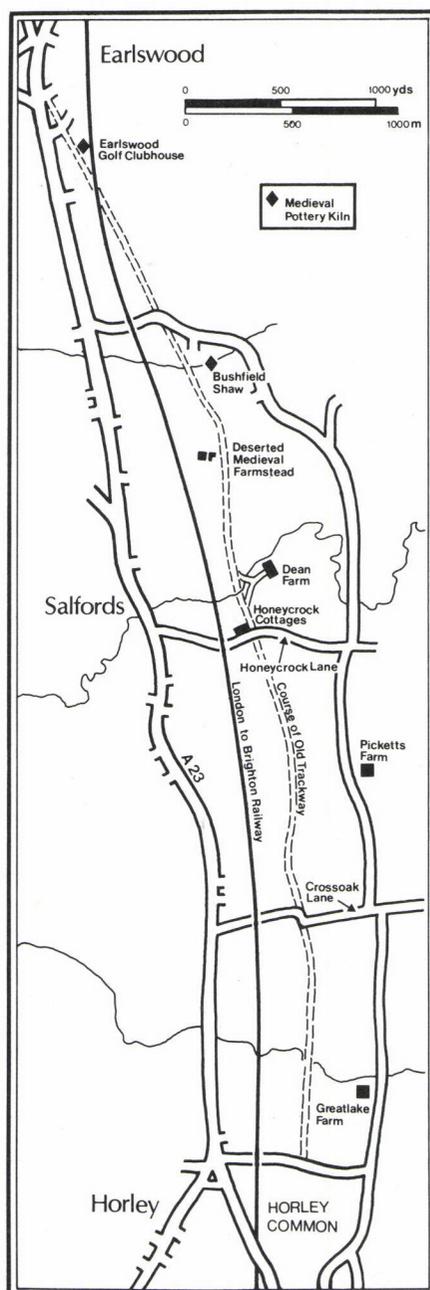


Fig 1 Route of ancient trackway from Earlswood to Horley.

Sutton confirmed by Edgar to Chertsey Abbey makes direct reference to the pigs held in Thundersfield (*VCH* 4, 292).

Of further importance, however, is the apparent later use of the trackway by medieval potters. Both the Bushfield Shaw kiln (TQ 284479) and the probable site at the Earlswood Golf Clubhouse (TQ 278490) are situated very close to the track, and further south (TQ 286466) are Honeycrook Cottages which abut on the trackway. The name, which can be associated with a nearby field (Honey Crook Long Field, Horley Tithe map 1848) could be suggestive of pottery kilns in the vicinity.

This Wealden section of the track would appear to be the southern extension of the lane mentioned by D J Turner (1974, 50) from Cheam to Earlswood which also has strong potting associations. Considering the fragility of the products it is not unlikely that kilns were always set up close to routes which linked centres of raw materials for potting with those of trade. It is therefore possible that further kilns might be found along this ancient way.

In September 1977, immediately west of the trackway, at TQ 284474, a further suggestion of antiquity was made as a result of the discovery of a deserted medieval farmstead site. (Ellaby 1978).

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