

Title: A village on the edge: Binsted Woods, LiDAR and the Arundel bypass

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Summary: Binsted is truly a village ‘on the edge’. It is on the edge of the Secrets of the High Woods project, on the edge of the South Downs National Park, on the edge of the Downs, on the edge of the Coastal Plain. It may be on the edge of extinction as a village, though it is widely known and loved as a beautiful place. Binsted is not just a village but a historic parish, and its woods – the 250 acres of Binsted Woods – are entirely within the old parish and intimately connected with the village.

As someone living in Binsted, involved with its history since 1989, I signed up in 2015 as an ‘archive volunteer’ to the Secrets of the High Woods project. I wanted to keep abreast of any new discoveries, possibly do some new research, and relate the results of the LiDAR survey to my knowledge of Binsted (parish, village and woods) and their history.

After the Introduction (Section 1), in Section 2 I explore the new historical discoveries at Binsted due to the LiDAR. The main ones are the Anglo-Saxon Moot Mound at Hundred House Copse and the Roman Road in Binsted Woods. LiDAR also throws light on older historical discoveries, such as Binsted’s mediaeval tile kilns and the extent of Arundel Forest. Section 3 is about the little-known art and literature of Binsted Woods, which form part of their history. Section 4 is about the changing definitions of Ancient Woodland and their possible effect on the woods. Section 5 is about the way the changing valuations of the woodland by official bodies have affected the history of proposed Arundel bypass routes through Binsted.

This article is published with the kind permission of the author. This article is the work and views of the author who took part as a volunteer in the Secrets of the High Woods project. The South Downs National Park Authority is very grateful to the volunteers for their work but these are not necessarily the views of the Authority.

Contents

- 1. Introduction: Binsted, the bypass and common misunderstandings**
- 2. The LiDAR discoveries and Binsted's history**
- 3. Binsted Woods in Art and Literature**
- 4. Myths, maps and Ancient Woodland**
- 5. Value and the bypass history**

1. Introduction: Binsted, the bypass and common misunderstandings

Binsted is truly a village ‘on the edge’. It is on the edge of the South Downs National Park, on the edge of the Downs, on the edge of the Coastal Plain, on the edge of the Secrets of the High Woods project.¹ It may be on the edge of extinction as a village, though it is widely known and loved as a beautiful place.

Binsted is not just a village but a historic parish, and its woods – the 250 acres of Binsted Woods – are entirely within the old parish and intimately connected with the village. The woods radiate out into the fields (10 of the 38 houses are within the woods) and Binsted as a place is a combination of woods and village together. See Chapter 1 below for an orientation map.

As someone living in Binsted, involved with its history since 1989, I signed up in 2015 as an ‘archive volunteer’ to the Secrets of the High Woods project. I wanted to keep abreast of any new discoveries, possibly do some new research, and relate the results of the LiDAR survey to my knowledge of Binsted (parish, village and woods) and their history.

In Section 2 I explore the new historical discoveries at Binsted due to the LiDAR. The main ones are the Anglo-Saxon Moot Mound at Hundred House Copse and the Roman Road in Binsted Woods. LiDAR also throws light on older historical discoveries, such as Binsted’s mediaeval tile kilns and the extent of Arundel Forest.

As well as making new discoveries about the archaeology the woodland hides, the LiDAR project is about people’s perception of woodland. Causal connections lead from the past into the future. The perceived historical and conservation value of woodland will affect the ongoing results of the project. The possibilities of excavation resulting from previously unknown features being discovered will affect the future treatment of the woods.

The history of the perception of woods may also affect their future. In subsequent chapters I explore the varying perceptions of Binsted Woods through time. Section 3 is about the little-known art and literature of Binsted Woods, which form part of their history.

¹ ‘Secrets of the High Woods’ was run by the South Downs National Park in 2015-17. It recruited many volunteers for archival research, fieldwork, and oral history, all connected to understanding the new aerial images of the wooded Downs taken by LiDAR which ‘sees through’ woodland.

Section 4 is about the changing definitions of Ancient Woodland and their possible effect on the woods. Section 5 is about the way the changing valuations of the woodland by official bodies have affected the history of proposed Arundel bypass routes through Binsted. First, a brief summary of the present situation is needed here.

Binsted is at present at risk of being divided in two by a route for the Arundel bypass. A scheme for a further bypass of Arundel has existed since the 1950s, when the present bypass of the old town was built (called by some a 'relief road' in expectation of a longer bypass). A route through Binsted Woods was suggested by the Department of Transport in 1987, and made the Preferred Route in 1989.

A different route across neighbouring Tortington Common was supported in 1991 by environmental groups; more routes through Binsted Woods were suggested in 1992 by an Arundel campaigning group, Arundel Bypass Action Committee. The route through Tortington Common was agreed on in 1993, as the new Preferred Route, but never built. That route was the result of years of campaigning, and influenced by environmental groups who wanted to move the Bypass out of Binsted Woods.

The eastern half of the Bypass inevitably crosses the Arundel watermeadows, themselves of great beauty, and divides Tortington village, so debate about alternatives has mainly focussed on the western half. However, the beauty of the watermeadows was given by Alistair Darling as his reason for cancelling the 1993 Preferred Route (which a Government study had recommended should go ahead) in 2003, and calling for less environmentally damaging solutions to be found.

Binsted Woods, and Tortington Common, are now both within the South Downs National Park (created 2011), and the existence of this new line on a map (the SDNP boundary) has led to a new bypass route being proposed whose western half 'avoids' most of the woods with a big southern loop and goes through the middle of Binsted village. It still pierces the National Park at its northern end with a 450m of new road and a new roundabout, and divides Binsted Woods in two. I call this 'the Binsted route'.

A clear map of that route has not yet officially been made public, though it was discussed at length (without maps) in Highways England's three 'A27 Feasibility Study Reports' of March 2015, labelled 'longer to avoid the National Park'. It was first suggested in 2004 and further developed in 2006 in two reports, the Bullen report and the Faber Maunsell report,

commissioned in response to Darling's call for new solutions, but never published. These two reports, including maps of the Binsted route, were obtained in March 2016 by Freedom of Information request through the local Binsted group, the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee (ABNC).

The current situation is that Highways England is due to hold another 'public consultation', i.e. maps with voting, in summer 2017. The old Preferred Route, across Tortington Common, was stated in December 2014 to be the 'starting point' for the new Bypass scheme. Though it now partly crosses the National Park, it is likely to be included. The Binsted route is also likely to be included, since the western half passes along the edge of the National Park, rather than through it – though its northern 450m and roundabout are within the Park.

Highways England and local politicians have tried to rule out any online or part-online improvements at Arundel, though there is ample scope for these and many different such schemes were studied by the 2004, 2006 and 2015 reports. Highways England schemes to improve the A27 and cut traffic jams at Worthing and Chichester – to the east and west of Arundel – have recently been restricted to online or near-online improvements, and it would be consistent to include these in the public consultation at Arundel. The Chichester scheme has recently been cancelled (March 2017).

The battle about whether to 'improve' existing roads or build long, damaging new bypasses rages on, in spite of Britain's commitments to reduce its carbon output, and the many times proved case that building new roads causes more traffic to use the roads and leads to more jams. Long new bypasses through the Downs (now through the South Downs National Park) have been suggested in the past at both Chichester and Worthing.

Whatever the result of the 2017 public consultation about Arundel, and whether or not the Binsted route is included in it, the threat to Binsted is likely to remain unless a bypass is actually built on another route. Given the past history of the scheme, which has come and gone for over half a century, this is by no means certain.

Passions about traffic and about bypass routes run very high, and this can lead to misrepresentations of the truth. Binsted's liminal position, and its role in this controversy, have led to various misunderstandings, about the village, the woods, and this area of the

National Park. Before going on to the LiDAR and what it has discovered in this area, I hope to clear up some of these.

i. Misunderstanding about Binsted as a village

The first misunderstanding is that Binsted is sometimes regarded as ‘not a village’, or thought not to exist at all. Geographically isolated, by woods to the north and watercourses to the west, south and east, it is both a village and a former independent parish (though since the 1980s joined to Walberton Parish for administrative purposes). Like many parishes it includes, longitudinally, different types of countryside, and slopes gently towards the sea. Its northern part is higher and mostly wooded, including an area north of the A27; its southern part once projected into marshes as the name ‘Hoe Lane’ for a southern lane suggests.

As a cut-off ‘peninsula’, it is accessed by just one road, Binsted Lane, forming a U shape and connecting the three main farmsteads and other houses. Its best agricultural land, farmed in strips in mediaeval times, is in the centre of the parish, while wet meadows and a steep wet valley border the brooks.

These geographical facts have led to the present-day shape of the village of roughly 38 houses: it is ‘non-nucleated’, i.e. still reflects its earliest, spread-out, Saxon shape, based on three farmsteads, instead of having a built-up centre. This has led some authorities such as Pevsner to regard the village as non-existent: his comment on Binsted is ‘no village’. One proponent of a 1992 bypass route through Binsted said there was ‘nothing there’.

Others acknowledge its existence but say it is ‘not a village’ because it has no built-up area. Yet the village has a strong community, has published its ‘village Millennium book’, *Binsted and Beyond* (in 2002, still in print), and has raised £100,000 over 30 years for the upkeep of its twelfth-century church by an annual Strawberry Fair. It has its own village Harvest Supper and other seasonal community events. It has a pub and other businesses, and held its own Arts Festival in 2016, with another planned.

The village’s spread-out shape, with its atmosphere of ancient rurality, is one of its attractions. By walking about Binsted (well provided with public footpaths) you can in a sense look back through history to a time before village greens and village streets, as far as the Anglo-Saxon period. Houses, fields and woodland form an unusual unity. Its U-shaped lane, with no through road for cars, means it is quiet and peaceful.

ii. Misunderstanding about the threat from road schemes to the this area of the SDNP in an important planning document

The South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (SDILCA) was last updated in 2011. The SDNP's own website describes it thus: 'It is an aid to decision making, helping us to understand the landscape, what is important and special about it, and how it may change in the future. As a document it is intended to guide change and development so that it does not damage the characteristics or value of the landscape. It also helps us to identify ways that we can maintain and improve the character of a place. Development proposals will be expected to conserve and enhance landscape character within the National Park.'²

It is a very useful document, but contains one glaring error – typical of statements about Binsted. The area of the National Park containing Binsted Woods (and 10 of its fields) and Tortington Common is classified as Landscape Character type B, Wooded Estate Downland. In section B24, under 'Development' it states that 'this landscape type [Wooded Estate Downland] is characterised by the absence of development and strong pressures for further built development are not envisaged'.

When making this statement, the creators of the SDILCA must have been unaware that these two areas south of the A27, now within the SDNP, face very strong pressure from development in the form of an Arundel bypass. They have faced this pressure since the 1950s; the scheme caused controversy in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, as described above, and Highways England is about to apply renewed and very strong pressure with its planned 2017 Public Consultation on possible routes.

The SDNP is a statutory consultee on road schemes. HE has recently published three reports on the A27 Feasibility Study (2015) and held 'stakeholder meetings' at Arundel in 2015 and 2016 to which the SDNPA was invited, and others behind the scenes. The SDNP's major planning document should take into account the threat from the road plans to the area of the SDNP south-west of Arundel.

The SDILCA authors may have had housing, rather than road development, in mind but roads are a type of 'built development'. A revision of this section of the SDILCA is needed.

² <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-advice/landscape/>

iii. Misunderstanding about Binsted being on the Coastal Plain

The SDILCA's inclusion of this area of the National Park (south of the A27) in the Wooded Estate Downland classification is very useful in correcting certain common misconceptions. This area is sometimes labelled by other authorities as being on the Coastal Plain. For instance, the West Sussex Landscape Land Management Guidelines includes this area of woodland (and some north of the A27) in the 'Fontwell Upper Coastal Plain'.³ The classification of the area by the SDILCA as part of the Wooded Estate Downland helps to emphasise its true nature and its links with land higher up the Downs.

The SDILCA's Appendix B2 states that Wooded Estate Downland occurs 'in the central part of the South Downs, on the Upper and Middle Chalk ridge and on the dipslope' (B2, 2011). The slope of the dipslope is very gentle at Binsted and Tortington, and the landscape's connection, in character, to the landscape north of the A27 can be masked by this and by the fact that this area is cut off from the rest of the Downs by the A27. (The slope is more visible when seen from the train.) If walking around the area, its undulating 'dipslope' character, and its slope towards the sea, become more obvious.

iv. Misunderstandings about Binsted Woods

Although classified as one character type (Wooded Estate Downland), this area of the SDNP south of the A27, west of Arundel, is made up of two very different woodlands, Binsted Woods (to the west) and Tortington Common (to the east). Binsted Woods (250 acres) are Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland, while Tortington Common (180 acres), though also Ancient Woodland, was mostly transformed to conifer plantation in the 1970s. It is classified as a PAWS (Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site).

Binsted Woods (atmospheric and mysterious, full of huge, fallen trees, some of which have regrown from a horizontal position) have been left unmanaged in recent times by their owners, the Wishart family, on the advice of the Sussex Wildlife Trust. They extend to the Binsted (now Walberton) eastern Parish boundary, and the change at that point to the more coniferous woodland of Tortington Common is marked.

³ (http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/environment/heritage/SC6_UpperCoastal.pdf).

Tortington Common lost many of its conifers in the 1987 hurricane. It has been allowed to regrow as semi-natural woodland and is now partly owned by small woodland owners who are making great efforts to manage it well for wildlife, with some bringing parties of schoolchildren and people with health problems to take part in managing it. It seems to have been planted with chestnut coppice underneath the conifers in some areas (perhaps for game cover), this has grown tall, and the conifers that remain are now not visually dominant. Some areas have a bad *Rhododendron ponticum* problem (probably also planted for game cover), but together the two woods form a fantastically varied area which is very good for walking, riding and cycling and continues to improve.

In 1993, the Department of Transport commissioned a report by EAULUL (the Environmental Assessment Unit of Liverpool University Limited) comparing bypass routes through Binsted Woods and Tortington Common. The report concluded that Binsted Woods were ‘nationally important’ (and that their national importance would be ‘substantially damaged’ by destruction or fragmentation). It was instrumental in the Department of Transport’s decision to choose the old Preferred Route across Tortington Common. Now both areas are in the National Park, and Tortington Common is continuing to regenerate, the contrast between them is less obvious.

The combination of the two types of woodland at Binsted Woods and Tortington Common is entirely typical of this Landscape Character Type. The description in section B1 (2011) of the landscape’s ‘Integrated Key Characteristics’ includes: ‘Supports extensive woodland including semi-natural ancient woodland plus beech, mixed and commercial coniferous plantation.’ The whole area of woodland is quite rightly now treated (in planning terms) as an asset to be treasured. However, this new attitude leaves nowhere for an offline bypass to go except through the middle of Binsted village – still damaging Binsted Woods by fragmentation.

A problem of naming often obscures the very different nature of the two areas – the nationally important old woodland of Binsted Woods, and the rapidly recovering previously coniferised area of Tortington Common. The Binsted Woods SNCI, when first created, included only Binsted Woods and the southernmost strip of Tortington Common, and a copse to the east called Steward’s Copse. After the 1993 Preferred Route across Tortington

Common was cancelled in 2003, Tortington Common was added to the SNCI, and the enlarged SNCI became known as the ‘Binsted Woods Complex SNCI’.⁴

People (including professional ecologists) sometimes now call the whole area (Binsted Woods and Tortington Common) the Binsted Woods Complex – or, more confusingly, just Binsted Woods. Because the two areas are so different in character and history, it is useful to maintain the distinction between them. So by Binsted Woods, I mean the nationally important, 250-acre semi-natural woodland within the old Binsted parish, not including Tortington Common.

v. Contradictions in the SDNP boundary history at Binsted and Tortington

The history of the SDNP boundary at Binsted and Tortington suggests that more land merited inclusion in the Park than was eventually designated, and that the boundary there was influenced by existing bypass plans – not just the Preferred Route of the time, across Tortington Common, but also the unpublished route through Binsted in the Bullen report.

The Countryside Agency’s initial research into the SDNP boundary had stated that the whole area ‘between Walberton and the River Arun’ (i.e. the whole of Binsted and Tortington) met the criteria for the National Park.⁵ However, the draft boundary (2002) at Binsted included only the main block of the woods and five fields enclosed in the woods.

Friends of Binsted Church, supported by the South Downs Campaign, proposed as a minimum adding the outlying copses and five more fields to the original boundary at Binsted. This, like many other proposed additions, was accepted by the Inspector’s decision on the NP boundary (Inspector’s Report, South Downs National Park, 31 March 2006). But the larger addition of the whole of Binsted, proposed as an alternative by FOBC and supported by CPRE, was not. This boundary that resulted was anomalous, in that National Park boundaries are not meant to split settlements or villages, and this one splits Binsted.

⁴ There are further confusions. Within Binsted Woods is a wood called Binsted Wood. The Binsted Woods Complex is sometimes called the Binsted Wood Complex. And the whole woodland area is sometimes referred to as Binsted Wood.

⁵ See Countryside Agency paper AP01/04 by Marian Spain, 2001, ‘Proposed area of search for a South Downs National Park Boundary’ (which carefully analysed which areas outside AONBs merited inclusion in the Park). Under Landscape Character Area 3, Coastal Lowlands: ‘only two areas meet natural beauty criteria: between West Ashling and Chichester, and Walberton to the Arun Valley’, and ‘superiority of recreational experiences is...limited to the area west of Chichester and the area between Walberton and the River Arun.’

It is possible that the existence of the Binsted Option for the bypass in the Bullen Report of 2004 (then not publicly known) was influential in the final boundary decision. The Countryside Agency certainly knew about the Bullen Report (2004), since it was one of the Report's statutory consultees. In its statement to the 2004 Bullen report (unpublished, but now known through FOI request) the CA saw the Binsted route as 'slightly less damaging' than the 1993 Preferred Route across Tortington Common, because of the lesser effect on the woodland, though it preferred an online solution.

At the 2003-5 South Downs National Park Public Inquiry, the CA argued against including additional land at Binsted - a stance which was a noticeable change from the decision in its 2001 paper quoted above that the area 'between Walberton and the River Arun' met the criteria for inclusion in the Park. Knowledge of the unpublished Binsted route for the bypass (from the Bullen report) may have influenced this change. When I gave evidence to the National Park Public Inquiry, arguing for either the whole of Binsted or the 'small addition' to be included, I quoted the bypass history (especially the declaration of their 'national importance') as relevant to the arguments for including at least the whole of Binsted woods. A spokesperson for the Countryside Agency said 'The bypass will be back!'

The eventual boundary line chosen for the National Park was mostly 'inside' or along the line of the Binsted route, though the Public Inquiry Inspector's report (2006) says nothing about the Bullen report or the proposed bypass route through Binsted. Presumably the Inspector did not know about them. His decision to exclude the 'whole of Binsted' addition was expressed rather weakly and was influenced by his decision that Arundel and the Arun valley should not form part of the National Park.⁶

The SDNP boundary is too often treated as a line on the outside of which development can be allowed that is not acceptable in a National Park. This is despite planning legislation protecting the 'setting' of National Parks, i.e. the area near but outside the boundary. So the above controversial history of the boundary at Binsted has massive implications for this beautiful area. The final boundary is shown in Section 2 below.

⁶ Inspector's Report, 2006, 7.861. 'By comparison to the wider character area, the countryside in the vicinity of Binsted is scenically attractive with few landscape detractors. ... Unfortunately I am not convinced that it should all form part of the PSDNP. ... It may be better than "ordinary" countryside, whatever that might mean, but I doubt if it amounts to countryside of especial importance. It also seems to me that my conclusion that the Arun Valley should not form part of the PSDNP tends to undermine the case for including all of the land in the vicinity of Binsted.' Being of 'especial importance' is not a criterion for inclusion in a National Park.

vi. Binsted's hard-to-see 'ritual landscape' and 'landscape of governance'

The SDILCA makes it clear that Binsted's ritual landscape links it to land higher up the Downs. On this landscape type's Historic Character, SDILCA states 'The land was also valued as a ritual landscape, with a number of different monuments ... including cross-ridge dykes' (B11).

Binsted contains the southern part of a north-south Iron Age bank and ditch continuing to the top of the Downs, where it connects to Arundel's 'War Dyke', and is related to the Iron Age Chichester Dykes or 'territorial oppida' to the west. The purpose of these dykes is not fully understood, but they seem to be related to the late Iron Age enclosures in Gobblestubby Copse (in the northern part of Binsted, cut off from the rest of the parish by the A27). The dykes linked with watercourses, including the River Arun, to define defended areas. It is possible that these relate to the threat of invasion from the Romans, or they may have been enclosures within which trading with Rome was encouraged – a sort of 'mini-Hong Kong'.

Binsted is not often understood as part of a ritual landscape, because its Iron Age dyke has largely been ploughed out and disappeared, except within the woods. Within Hundred House Copse it is quite dramatic, and north of the A27 more dramatic still. It passes across the field east of Hundred House Copse as a visible low bank, and south of there it is almost entirely ploughed out. It passed through what is now the garden of the Black Horse Pub, under Binsted's 12th-century church and south, along the edge of the steep Binsted valley, as far as the southern boundary brook.

Another aspect of Binsted's landscape not easy to see at first is its status in early mediaeval times as a 'landscape of governance', with a Moot Mound (placed next to the Iron Age dyke), and approach lanes leading to it. See Section 2 below for more on this, one of the most interesting of the LiDAR discoveries.

The above misunderstandings continue in various forms. For instance, those advocating a bypass at Arundel through Tortington Common like to say that it is not Ancient Woodland. It is (though as explained above, it is defined as a PAWS). The concept of Ancient Woodland itself can be challenged, as in the book discussed in Section 4 below, *Rethinking Ancient Woodland*, which shows that areas classified as not AW can be as species-rich as areas classified as AW. But it is best to get the facts right first.

2. The LiDAR discoveries and Binsted's history

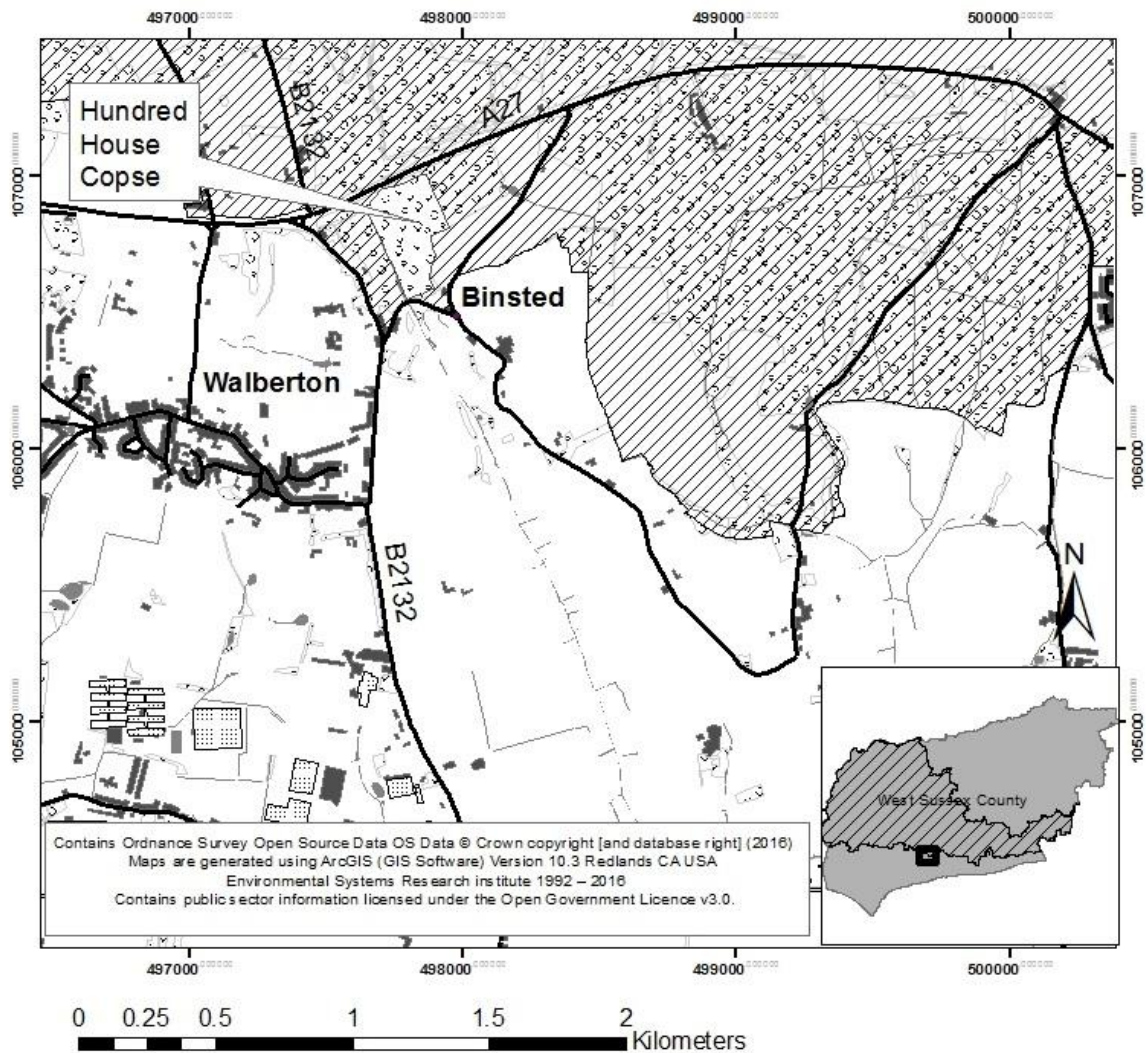


Figure 1: Base map showing most of Binsted, Hundred House Copse, and part of the South Downs National Park (hatched area)

i. The Moot Mound at Hundred House Copse

Hundreds were administrative units of mediaeval England, and the Hundred in which Binsted lies was originally called Binsted Hundred. The Victoria County History (VCH) article on Avisford Hundred gives details of some of its functions. 'The view or court oversaw street nuisances and the maintenance of roads, ditches, streams and fences, pleas of debt, trespass, detainee, and assault were heard between the late 13th and 15th centuries, and in the 16th century cases involving theft, slander, an affray, right to wreck, the use of common pasture e.g. at Rewell in Arundel, and coining' (VCH, Avisford Hundred article).

Binsted Hundred's meeting place or court drew in people from Arundel, Barnham, Binsted, Climping, Eastergate, Felpham, Ford, Madehurst, Middleton on Sea, South Stoke, Tortington, Walberton and Yapton. The same VCH article says that the Hundred was known as Binsted Hundred in 1086, and had its new name, Avisford or Avesford Hundred, by 1166. The place where the Hundred court met is assumed to have been at Hundred House Copse, because of the place name, though the exact site has not been known. The LiDAR has now provided very convincing evidence of a site for these meetings.

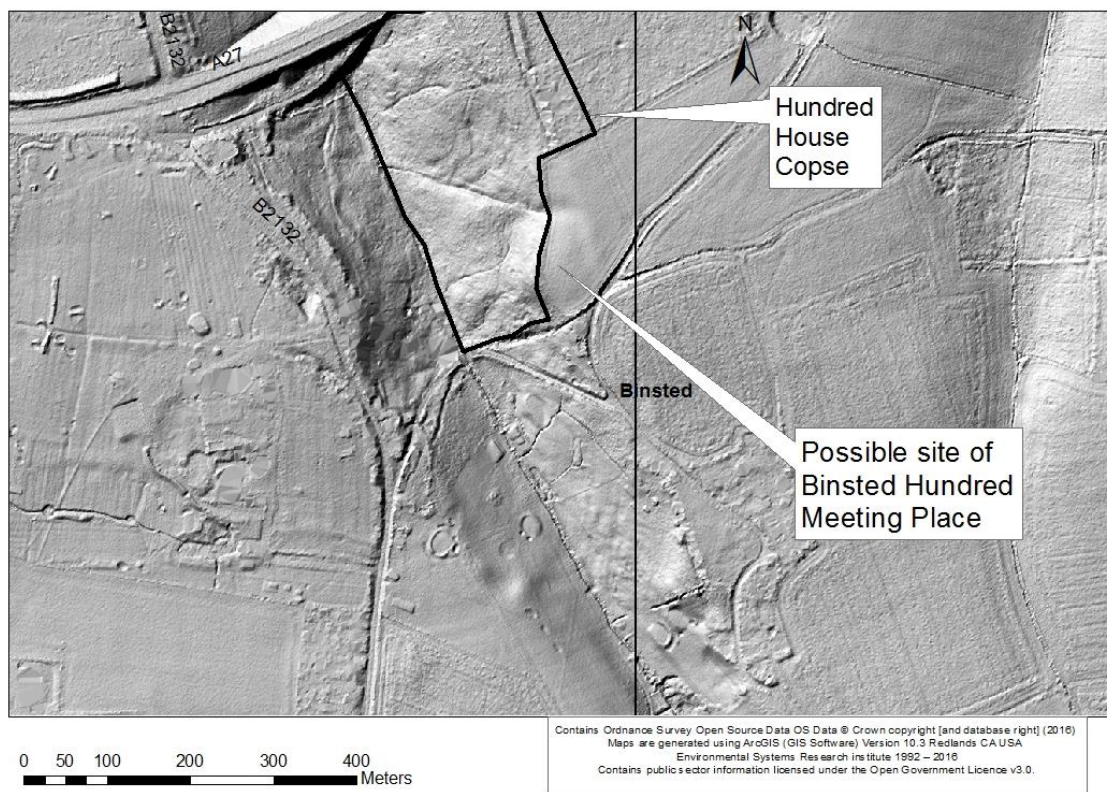


Figure 2: The LiDAR image of Hundred House Copse showing the probable Moot Mound and the hollow way leading up the steep hill north-west of the mound. The Iron Age earthwork running roughly north-south to the east of the mound is also visible.

On a LiDAR image of part of Binsted, I spotted something manmade-looking – an apparent rectangle - in Hundred House Copse. I went to look at it and the first thing I found was a ‘platform’ within the edge of the wood, on the side of a steep hill, bearing many enormous, grotesquely shaped ash coppice stools. I had one of these measured by Bob Epsom, a ranger with the National Trust estate at Slindon, and he calculated its diameter as

2.7 metres. Oliver Rackham's book *The Ash Tree* states that an ash coppice stool 9 feet (2.7m) across is 800 years old or more. So this takes us back to 1217, or earlier.

I then realised that on another version of the LiDAR this 'platform' seemed to be part of a 'domed hillock', partly in the woods and partly in the neighbouring field (called Hundred House Field on early maps), with what looks like a track or 'hollow way' running up the steep hill beside it. The site is also a 'promontory', or projecting area of higher land at the top of a steep hill. An aerial photo of the 1960s excavation of a mediaeval tile kiln just south of the field shows the circular 'hillock' in the field quite clearly – see Section iii below. Above is a section of the LiDAR image showing the 'hillock' and hollow way:

The 'domed hillock' and the hollow way, together with the promontory, were among the features listed in the article 'Identifying outdoor assembly sites in early medieval England', by John Baker and Stuart Brookes (*Journal of Field Archaeology*, 2015, vol. 40, no.1, pp. 3-21) as typical of early outdoor meeting places.

Other features quoted in the article also exist here. The steep slope of the sides of Binsted Rife valley and the brook in the bottom of the valley – and the ford across it – would have helped to make the site recognisable. It would also have made use of the reflective qualities of the valley's steep sides to speak to large numbers of people. South of the 'hollow way', the LiDAR shows ridge and furrow within the woods, so the valley was not as wooded then as it is now.

The roads and tracks nearby are also significant. Baker and Brookes say 'One category consists of hundred meeting places located at significant points on major routes. Significant points include the intersection of two or more routes or a road and a stream (fords routinely feature in the names of hundreds and their probable meeting places), or a marked change in the direction or incline of a path.'

The Roman Road from Chichester to Arundel has now been shown by the LiDAR to pass nearby to the north. The mediaeval track called Scotland Lane (once thought to be the Roman Road) leads from Arundel to the Moot Mound and could have been the approach route from the east. The present-day B2132 is an old north-south route nearby to the west, and possibly the 'hollow way' connected to it on the west side of the valley via a ford of the stream (known as the Binsted rife).

Baker and Brookes also state that parish boundaries are often close to such meeting places. This ‘probably indicates that the parish boundaries, which are often close to meeting places, are administrative features and postdate the establishment of the assembly sites themselves’ (p. 17). The Binsted rife was the ancient Parish boundary. It remained as the western Parish boundary when Binsted was joined to Tortington in 1937, only superseded when it was joined in the 1980s to Walberton. Slindon and Madehurst parishes are nearby to the north.

Another still older boundary is close by: the Iron Age earthwork (bank and ditch), which went from Little Tortington Stream in the south of Binsted northwards to the top of the Downs, passes through Hundred House Field and Hundred House Copse. Baker and Brookes suggest that ‘The reuse of ancient monuments as assembly places might be interpreted as a dialogue with the past, conferring legitimacy and authority to proceedings or oath-taking rituals’.

Since the apparent Moot Mound seen on the LiDAR fulfils so many of Baker and Brookes’s list of identifying features for outdoor meeting places, I contacted Professor Stuart Brookes at UCL with the evidence, and he said he thought I had made a potentially important discovery. With his support, I have now written an article on the Moot Mound for *Sussex Archaeological Collections* which should appear in 2017.

The factors listed above suggest the Moot Mound at Hundred House Copse was a very old meeting place which predated the formation of Binsted Parish as an administrative entity. It may also have been the meeting place of a court connected with Arundel Forest.

ii. The Moot Mound and Arundel Forest

The suggestion that a forest court connected with Arundel forest also met here comes from Heather Warne, author of the VCH article on Binsted. In a letter to me in 2005 she said: ‘Binsted Hundred descended under the name Avisford Hundred, a place name which makes sense if it is derived from *aves* and *ford*, meaning ‘at the ford of the aves’. ‘Aves’ is an obsolete word, formerly signifying a particular kind of court which dealt with Forest regulation – in particular, pannage, or pasturing of animals in the Forest. ‘That the names Binsted and Avisford are alternatives for the same Hundred strongly implies a wood court connection with the locality.’

She continued: ‘Where large forests existed, meetings of people who had common in the forest took place seasonally, at the aves courts. Binsted Hundred (at Hundred House copse), also then known as ‘at the aves ford’, was the venue for such meetings. These people would be the same members of the broad community who had the duty to attend the Hundred court. It would be convenient therefore to deal with both types of business at the same place. Such courts were often held towards the edge of forest areas because at least once a year the business [of the court] was to drive the forest of the outpastured animals and re-allocate them to commoners to take home for the close season – just as they do nowadays on the New Forest.’

An article in VCH, Vol. 5, Part 1, gives further insight into the local forest courts. The section ‘Arundel Rape’, pp. 1-6, says: ‘A forest court called the court of wood pleas of woodplayt, which had previously been held yearly, was held every 3 weeks in 1275, when inhabitants of Avisford Hundred complained of its injustice. In 1301, because of poor administration, its income was only 10s a year. An alternative name in 1435 was woodcourt.’ The first of these three references is to an article by L.F. Salzman, ‘The hundred roll for Sussex’, third part, SAC 84, 68-9.⁷ The section on the Hundred of Avisford states:

‘The successors of William the Butler (le Botyler), who held the castle of Arundel with its appurtenances by the gift of King Henry (II) the elder, have appropriated chaces in the forest. And whereas the lords of Arundel used to hold the court of woodpleas (Wodeplayt) once in the year, now they hold it every three weeks, and this through John of Polingford, now steward, to the grave injury of the whole district. All the foresters are taken from the district without receiving any salary, and everywhere they receive ‘waypeny’ and levy contributions in the woods of free men within the bounds of the forest and for two or three leagues beyond. And if any forester make any presentment at the forest court, however untrue it may be, it is held as true, by which the whole district is oppressed.’

Perhaps as a result of ‘not receiving any salary’, the foresters seem to have been asking for protection money from people moving through and near the forest, and telling lies in the court which may also have been financially beneficial to them. As for the successors of William the Butler appropriating chaces in the forest, this is a grievance harder to understand,

⁷ The hundred roll is a contemporary digest of the results of Edward I’s commission into abuses of 1274. The abuses came about because ‘A great many persons...were exercising various kinds of jurisdiction – always involving financial profit – which had been inherent in the Crown, and to which in many instances their right was questionable’, *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 82, p. 24.

but perhaps it relates to the fact that making a private 'chace' took it out of forest law, which made it more difficult for the local people to exercise their rights in the forest (e.g. of pasturing animals).

It would be useful to the Binsted historian, and perhaps to the whole SHW project, to know where the bounds of Arundel Forest went. The boundary may have included not just the wooded areas of Binsted, but the whole parish, and the parish of Tortington as well.

The best evidence is the lists in the Arundel archives, which are available in 'Two Fitzalan Surveys', Sussex Record Society Vol. 67, edited by Marie Clough, 1969. This contains English translations of three documents, late-mediaeval surveys of Fitzalan estates, known as Books A, B and C.⁸ Book B contains two descriptions of the Forest of Arundel. This is the first one (Clough, p. 92):

'BOUNDS OF THE FOREST OF ARUNDEL. These are the bounds of Arundel Forest, delimited by 24 of the best men of the district [their names are listed], who say on oath that the forest boundaries go from the Forest of Fysshebourne to Crookerhill and to Codelawe, and to Ryham and Avesford, and thence through the marshes of Tortynton to the Ryver, and following it to Hoghton; thence to Papelsbury and thence to Cranbrugge and thence to Berkhale; thence to Nonemaneslond, and thence through Waltham to Babele, and thence to Hayham of Cockyng and Northmerdon; thence to Compton, where the bounds curve down towards the sea.

And formerly they began at Avesford, and thence to Chesseharghes towards the south; thence to Molecoumbe and thence to Wynkyngg and thence to Suuebeche and thence to Crockerhull.'

Old books about the area gave varying interpretations. W.S.Ellis, *Parks and Forests of Sussex*, Lewes, 1885, paraphrased the list, suggesting that after the marshes of Tortington the boundary, instead of going along the river to Houghton as in Marie Clough's version, 'ascended to the hills behind Arundel'. He was possibly influenced by James Dallaway, in *A History of the Western Division of the County of Sussex*, London, 1815, Vol. 1, who quoted

⁸ A can be assigned to 1301 and is mostly about Fitzalan estates outside Sussex. C is almost same as A, possibly the rough copy from which A was made. B, which only deals with the Honour of Arundel, was compiled between 1439 and 1464 from several older documents. These cannot be earlier than c. 1380, and may be about 1405.

the list in the original French; after Tortington he had ‘as far as Bignor’ (a Bignore) instead of ‘to the Ryver’; Bignor is on the north side of the Downs.⁹

A talk I attended in August 2015 at the South Downs Centre about Clarendon Forest showed that that forest included a section of the bank of the river Avon – apparently fishing rights were important in a forest. This made it more convincing that Arundel Forest would have included a section of the bank of the river Arun, from Tortington up to Houghton or as far as Pulborough, without a sudden diversion over the top of the Downs and back again. The boundary even went as far south as Cudlow (‘Codelaw’), on the sea, a village which has vanished due to coastal erosion – and it seemed from the talk that sea fish were also eaten.

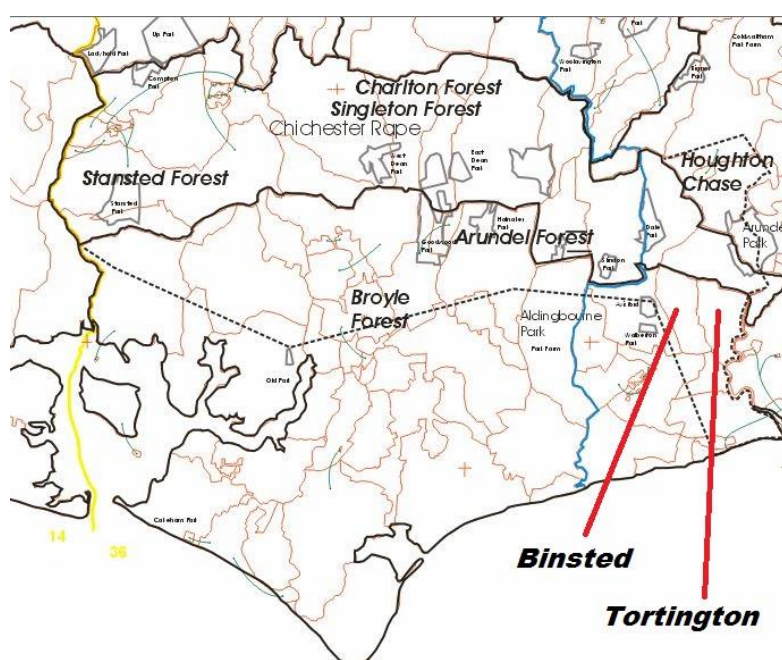


Figure 3: An extract from Langton and Jones’s Arundel Forest map with added annotation showing Binsted and Tortington parishes.

The internet site of John Langton and Graham Jones’s project ‘Forests and Chases of England and Wales c. 1000 to c. 1850’, based at first at St John’s College, Oxford, provided an answer.¹⁰ The site includes an atlas of the whole of England and Wales, which if you click on the relevant panel brings up a map of the forests in that area. The map of Arundel Forest, showing an older and a newer boundary, had information at the side making it clear that it included Stansted, Broyle, Singleton, Charlton and Houghton forests. It also showed parish

⁹ I have now checked the original document – Fitzalan Surveys, Book B – and am sure that Marie Clough’s interpretation of the handwriting as ‘Ryvere’ is correct.

¹⁰ <http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/forests/Index>, now based at the Oxford University Environmental Centre.

outlines; the whole parish of Binsted was included within the older boundary of Arundel Forest (shown by a dotted black line). So was the whole of Tortington Parish, including Tortington Common.

The whole of the Secrets of the High Woods project area is also included in the Forest: this is not a coincidence, since both Arundel Forest, and the SHW project, aimed to include mainly wooded areas on the Downs – for the Forest, because they offered the best hunting and protection for the venison, and the least interference from settlement and agriculture; for the project, because the area offers a rich source of unresearched archaeological remains that have hitherto been hidden in woodland, but can be detected with LiDAR.

Heather Warne's letter to me of 2005, quoted above, included a useful description of Arundel Forest. 'At the Conquest in 1066 Sussex was carved into five north/south slices each based on a Castle with its barony or earldom. Each of these five barons were 'tenants in chief', answerable only to the King. Such high rank always brought with it certain 'perks', known as 'honours', 'liberties' or 'franchises'. An absolute 'must-have' among the perks was the right to hunt, and King William accordingly allowed these chief barons to hunt in the forests local to them. These woods would formerly have belonged to the Saxon Kings, but now they simply became appended to each Barony as one of its liberties. Thus the term 'Forest of Arundel' was created after the Conquest though as an entity it could be very much older. In extent it stretched from Arundel to the Hampshire border.'

Forests and forest laws existed before the Conquest. 'The great grievance of the people in the matter of the forests was not so much the stringency of the forest laws...as the rapid and continual extension of the limits of the forests at the mere will of the sovereign. These extensions absorbed within the forests all the neighbouring manors'. So 'A forest included...not only the King's [or Baron's] lands...but also many manors belonging to private Lords. These lords of manors within a forest could not convert their land from pasture into arable, nor could they cut down their woods, or make any enclosures...which would not admit the larger game to pass freely in or out of the land. As some mitigation of these hardships and disabilities their cattle had the right of pasture within the forest.'¹¹

How does this situation square with the picture given in the VCH Binsted article of a spread-out farming community in mediaeval times, with a central area of arable land, farmed

¹¹ The Introduction to 'Staffordshire Forest Pleas', *Staffordshire Historical Collections*, vol. 5, part 1, ed. G. Wrottesley, London 1884, pp. 123-135.

in strips? Also, we know there were two tile kilns in Binsted – dated to the 14th century, or from the late 13th century to the early 15th century. This farming and commercial activity does not necessarily mean that outside its woodland Binsted was not in Arundel Forest. It seems that if you could pay, you could do almost anything in a forest.

The Royal Forests of Mediaeval England, by Charles R. Young (Leicester University Press, 1979), p. 6, gives a good summary. ‘Royal forests produced timber and other forest products by royal licence, but there was also farming, cattle and horse raising, mining, iron-making, and many other economic activities taking place within forest borders.’ On p. 55 he remarks: ‘A rather obvious illustration that economic factors could outweigh hunting in policy decisions is the routine policy for dealing with assarts by assessing fines and collecting rents rather than requiring that assarts be abandoned in the interest of keeping the area undisturbed for the beasts of the forest.’

According to the VCH article on Binsted, five out of six small freeholds at a later period (the sixteenth century) were ‘likely to have been assarts’, that is, areas taken out of the Forest woodland and converted into arable fields, which resulted in a fine and later in rent to be paid, or re-conversion back into woodland. This is certainly the impression Binsted Woods give now, with their three mysterious fields almost wholly enclosed in woodland. Two of these are no longer ploughed, and are very damp, and full of hundreds of orchids in the early summer. If they were not regularly topped they would soon revert to woodland. It may be that they were some of these assarts.

The small triangular copse at the south end of Hundred House Copse is called ‘All the World Copse’ in the Binsted Tithe Map of 1838. If the Hundred courts and various Forest courts both met here, the crowds at times must have been considerable. The name may date back to the human activity caused by these local courts. The siting nearby of Binsted’s mediaeval pottery kilns may have been influenced by this ready market as well as the nature of the geology and availability of wood for fuel.

iii. The mediaeval tile and pottery kilns in Binsted

Two sites containing mediaeval kilns have now been excavated in Binsted. The first, a combined tile and pottery kiln at SU 978065, is Historic England monument no. 248972. According to their description, it made ‘an extensive range of 13th to early 14th century

pottery, including the well-decorated glazed jugs classified as West Sussex Ware. The kiln produced, in addition to normal roof tiles, decorated floor tiles, ridge tiles, chimney pots etc.’ It is now within (and under) the steeply sloping garden of the house called Ashurst. The house and its garden, including the kiln, are within the National Park boundary (the lane called Hedgers Hill being the boundary), and the LiDAR area. Another kiln site nearby, from the same period, on the opposite side of Binsted Lane on a flatter site, was excavated by Worthing Archaeological Society in 2005-6.

The archaeologist Con Ainsworth excavated the Hundred House Copse kiln site at Binsted in 1963-6.¹² The finds are in Worthing Museum – approximately 4 tons of sherds, consisting of a million sherds, still in store. The Worthing Archaeological Society website summarises the history of kilns in Binsted, given in greater detail in VCH: ‘Pottery was probably made at Binsted in the early 14th century, some inhabitants being surnamed at Potte in 1332 and in the early 15th century. Kilns stood on a pocket of Reading Beds clay where Binsted Lane meets the lane from Walberton. The southward slope has been made steeper by digging clay. Two of the kilns and a workshop there, in use in the later 14th century, produced mainly coarse red or sandy cooking pots. Fragments of Binsted ware, with its distinctive decorations and glazes, are distributed widely both ways along the Sussex coast and to a lesser extent inland. The later kiln continued in production until c. 1425. One man called Tyler was taxed at Binsted in 1332, and making other pottery may have been subsidiary to making floor tiles and crested ridge tiles. (Sherds of green-glazed medieval pottery have been found near the kiln site, at Church farm, and at the former Pescod’s Croft.)’

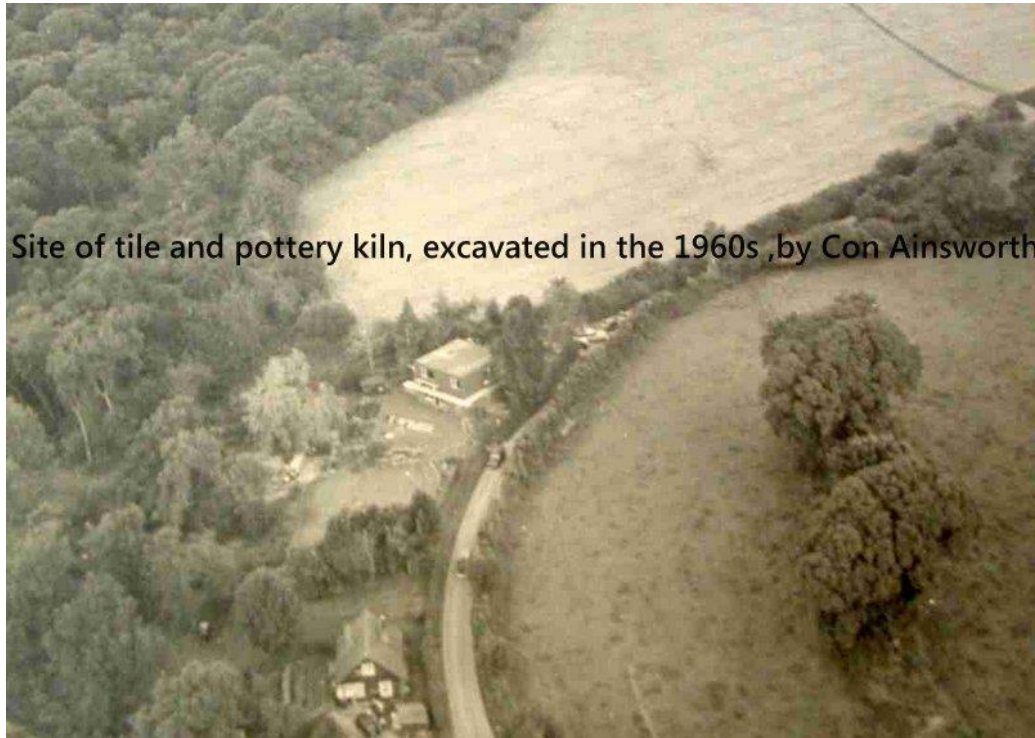
The website also carries many excellent press photos of the kiln dig. Below is one of them – showing the site of the kiln excavation in relation to the house, then a flat-roofed bungalow. If you look carefully at the field north of the excavation (north is at the top), the curved edge of the ‘hillock’ within the field which I have identified as a Moot Mound, and most of the hillock itself, can be clearly seen.

Part of Hundred House Copse is visible west and north of the excavation (under the willow tree in the garden of the house). The line of the Iron Age earthwork, which passes right next to the Moot Mound, is marked clearly by two large trees in the lower field. The way Hundred House Copse falls away to the west (left of the photo), into the steep-sided

¹²The Worthing Archaeology Society website <https://walbertonbinsted.wordpress.com/pottery-kilns-tile-kilnsbrick-kilns> gives Con Ainsworth’s own notes about the excavation. He did publish a short article about it, ‘A tile and pottery kiln at Binsted, Sussex’, *Mediaeval Archaeology* vol. XI (1967), pp. 316-17, and Fig. 91.

Binsted Rife valley, can also be seen. Woodland in the garden of the house down the slope to Hedgers Hill (just out of the bottom edge of the photo) has now mostly been cleared.

Con Ainsworth's pottery kiln excavation – and the probable Moot Mound.



A more detailed photo of Con Ainsworth's excavation of the pottery kiln at Hundred House Copse.

In 2005 Worthing Archaeological Society excavated another kiln site in Binsted, in the field opposite the Black Horse pub (visible in the photo).



Another photo shows more of the structure of the kiln, and the fact that it is entirely built of tile wasters – possibly from the other kiln site nearby.



K.J. Barton's book, *Mediaeval Sussex Pottery* (Phillimore, 1979), includes more information on Binsted Ware. Jugs with faces, known as anthropomorphic decoration, are frequently mentioned and it would be good to know if any were made at Binsted. Unfortunately the book is confusingly laid out and full of proof-reading errors. The illustration on p. 114-15, in the section on anthropomorphic decorations, is supposed to show 12 pieces of pottery to go with the 12 preceding descriptions, but only shows 9. The illustrations of pieces numbered 7, 8 and 9 are missing. Also, the first 5 pieces of pottery shown are not numbered. Careful inspection of the preceding descriptions allows you to number them 1 (the large jug at the top on the left) then 2, 3, 4 and 5 from top to bottom on the right. Thus it is possible to deduce that no. 3 is 'probably a Binsted product'! It is a 'standard West Sussex ware face...slightly sandy buff to pink coloured fabric with an apple-green glaze. Roughly built of applied pieces, the eyes are suggested by horizontally-slashed applied pellets, and the mouth is also slashed, there is also a beard...found: Selborne Priory, Hampshire. Present location: The Curtis Museum, Alton, Hants' (Barton, p. 111).

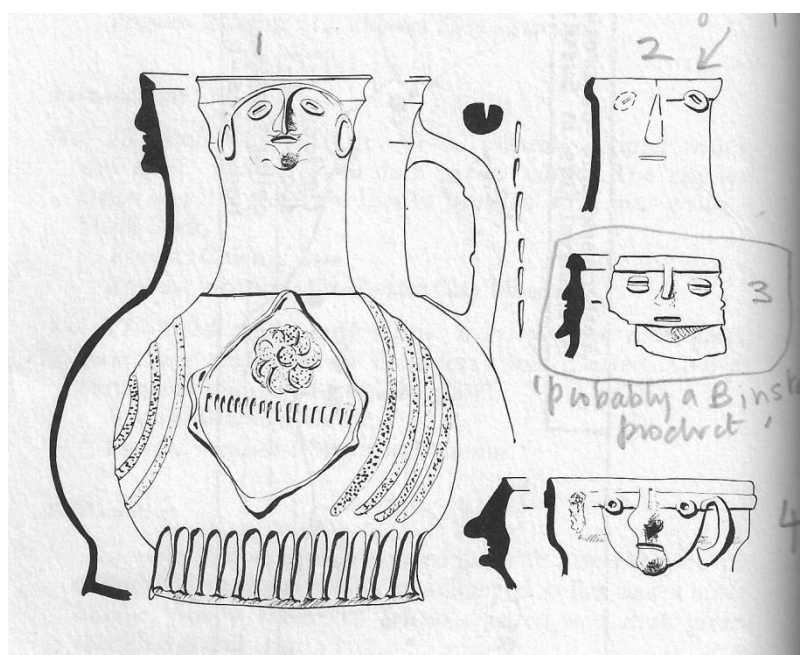


Figure 4: Part of Barton's illustration, with annotation showing Binsted ware

This section on the kilns shows a thriving industry, based on the nature of the site, with water, clay, a road, and woods available, also the possibility of water transport down the Rife to the Arun. Without wood nearby for fuel such an industry would not have been possible. The industry ensured the survival of the local woodland. Oliver Rackham points out that 'the survival of almost any large tract of woodland strongly suggests that there have been

industries to protect it against the claims of farmers.’ He also points out that charcoal, used in iron smelting and presumably used also in kilns, ‘came mainly from underwood and was too fragile to transport far’. ‘Fuel-using industries lived near woods because ores and finished products were easier to transport than charcoal’ (*Trees and Woodlands in the British Landscape*, Revised Edition, 1995, p. 86). The tile and pottery industries at Binsted are part of the explanation of why Binsted Woods have survived millennia of removal of woodland for agriculture and building.

I started this chapter with the extraordinary old ash coppice stools, possibly 800 years old or more, to be found on the ‘platform’ I first identified in Hundred House Copse and now see as part of the Moot Mound. The reasons why they are there need further research, but it is possible that ashes were allowed to grow there – just north of one of the pottery kilns – and regularly coppiced as a ready source of fuel for the kilns.



One of the ancient ash coppice stools at Hundred House Copse, measured by ranger Bob Epsom and found to be 2.7m across, suggesting an age of 800 years or more.

iv. The newly discovered Roman Road

Part of the Roman Road from Chichester to Arundel, newly verified by LiDAR, is visible in Barn's Copse and Brick Kiln Piece, just north of Hundred House Copse. It is also visible further east, where it is alongside the public footpath known as Scotland Lane (the recent report published by Historic England confirms that two water-filled ditches and a causeway which form part of it can be seen there.)¹³ The report adds 'The identification of this hitherto undiscovered (though speculated) section of Roman Road is of considerable importance.' On p. 121 the report says 'More extensive but well-defined sites with a national significance include the fragmented remains of the Chichester to Arundel Roman Road. ... These remains have evidential value but their survival as earthworks allows them to function as a visible link with the past connecting communities with Roman Britain.'

How do these discoveries affect the road campaign? First, the remains at Hundred House Copse (Moot Mound, Iron Age earthwork, mediaeval tile kilns) and Barn's Copse (Roman Road) are physically in danger from the Binsted route for the Arundel bypass. The main Binsted route would pass through Scotland Lane, the approach to the Moot Mound, and through the route of the Roman road. An 'alternative alignment' at the north end, with a flyover instead of a roundabout, described in the March 2015 A27 Feasibility Study reports, would cross the Binsted Rife valley at a high level, very close to the Moot Mound and the nearby pottery kiln, and probably destroy them.¹⁴

Another, more nebulous but important danger is that the link between the woods and their surrounding landscape would be lost. Binsted's historic role as site of the Hundred court and also of the Forest court, with its historic Moot Mound, would mean less if the unity of Binsted as a village, persisting since Saxon times, had been wiped out by a road scheme.

The road route through Binsted, 'avoiding' the woods, would destroy their context. Instead of being part of a whole landscape, in which they played an important role, providing fuel for the pottery and tile industry as well as shelter for the lord's deer and food for the farmers' animals, the woods would be left as views for drivers to look at as they passed by. Their value as habitats, linked to the habitats around them, would be much diminished if they were left as a remnant hemmed in by two roads, the present A27 and the new road.

¹³ 'The High Woods from Above: National Mapping Programme', by E. Carpenter, F. Small, and K. Truscoe, on www.research.historicengland.org.uk, p. 70. '

¹⁴ See www.arundelbypass.co.uk for a map showing the Binsted route and the alternative alignment.

On Moot Mounds and their relationship to Iron Age earthworks, Baker and Brookes stated ‘The reuse of ancient monuments as assembly places might be interpreted as a dialogue with the past, conferring legitimacy and authority to proceedings or oath-taking rituals’. A road route through Binsted would be the opposite – instead of a ‘dialogue with the past’ conferring legitimacy, it would be destruction of the past, and an assertion that the only legitimacy to be found is in the needs of modern transport.

Overall, the historical discoveries in this chapter confirm the importance of thinking of Binsted Woods as part of the historic Saxon village and mediaeval parish of Binsted, not as an entity on their own to be ‘preserved’ as far as possible at the cost of ruining Binsted village. The next chapter illustrates the ways the people of Binsted and surrounding areas have depicted, loved, described, recorded, lived in and made use of Binsted woods, both in art and literature.

3. Binsted Woods in Art and Literature

People's reasons for writing or making art related to Binsted Woods, and their feelings about the woods, were part of the subject of the SHW project. The evidence is there in what has been drawn and written, but it is little known, and this chapter only scratches the surface of a rich resource.

Art related to Binsted includes the treasure trove of 121 drawings of places in the Arundel area, with about 40 of Binsted, from the 1930s and 40s, by local artist W.S.Rogers, now in the West Sussex Record Office; and the artistic dynasty of the Wishart family (the main landowners in Binsted), stemming from Lorna Wishart, lover of Laurie Lee and Lucien Freud. Her son Michael was an artist, as was her daughter with Lee, Yasmin David; Michael was married to artist Anne Dunn; Michael's son Francis is also an artist. While only Lorna painted recognisable pictures of Binsted Woods, her descendants also painted (or continue to paint) nature, woodland, trees and landscapes, in which the influence of Binsted Woods can be seen.¹⁵

Local artists such as Ralph Ellis painted local landmarks – his beautiful watercolour of Binsted House in its decayed state in the 1940s was included in Binsted's Millennium book, *Binsted and Beyond*. Photography, another kind of art, was used early by families in Binsted to capture the local scene, so there are many late 19th century photographs of local people in and around the woods.

The much-loved writer Laurie Lee had a long liaison with Lorna Wishart during the 1940s, and he is the subject of many biographies. He wrote about Binsted Woods in his diary. *Blood Knots*, a memoir about the war, his family and fishing by Luke Jennings, gives many excellent descriptions of places in Binsted Woods, including the Madonna Pond. *High Diver*, a memoir by Michael Wishart, describes the sensation of walking into Binsted Park (within Binsted Woods), and says 'Binsted Park epitomised the vanishing England of my youth'.¹⁶ That was in the early 1940s. Binsted Park, within the south end of Binsted Woods, has survived so far, but its peacefulness and its setting would be irrevocably damaged by the Binsted route passing close by just south of the woods.

¹⁵ www.binsted.org contains a section on the Wishart artists giving dates and more information.

¹⁶ Michael Wishart, *High Diver: An Autobiography*, Quartet Books, 1977, p. 21.

i. W.S.Rogers – who was he?

Rogers drew parts of Binsted many times, mostly views of woods and fields. Some of his drawings are unidentified, but he came back again and again to Binsted Park, the curved field enclosed in the woods which was the parkland of the old Binsted House. He loved drawing trees, and some of the trees in his drawings are still recognisable.

He has been researched by the WSRO and they have found a plausible answer to the question of who he was. Frances Lansley said in an email to me of 30 June 2015: 'The only Rogers I can find with the initials W.S. living in the Arundel/Tortington/Binsted/Lyminster area in the 1939 Electoral Register is a William Smith Rogers of 21 Wood View, Arundel. Also living at this address in 1939 was a Francis Holt Rogers. I have found William Smith Rogers and Francis Holt Rogers in the 1911 Census: they were both sons of John Rogers, a grocer's manager, and living with their parents at Wood View, Arundel. William Smith Rogers was 28 in 1911 and his occupation was given as solicitor's clerk. A William Smith Rogers was buried in Arundel Cemetery in 1951 and a Francis Holt Rogers was buried in Arundel Cemetery in 1953. Obviously I cannot be certain that William Smith Rogers is the same as W.S.Rogers, but it seems possible.'

The drawings themselves do not give much information about him. Quite a few of them are titled 'evening', 'twilight', or 'after sunset' as if going out and drawing the countryside was something he did after a day's work, which would fit with the occupation of solicitor's clerk. Two of them have on the back the words 'in black chalk', as if this was an unusual medium and to be noted. Most of the drawings appear to be in soft pencil. I possess scans of two sheets of brown paper, each with 5 postcard-sized drawings mounted on it, and a price given at the bottom, '1/6 each'. Several of the drawings I possess scans of are duplicated, i.e. are near-copies, so perhaps you could ask for a copy of one of these small drawings and he would make you one for 1/6. So this was not just an obsession with drawing the countryside, but also a way to make a small amount of extra money. Both the sheets contain drawings of the Binsted area: one has drawings titled

Binsted June 10th evening, 1943

April 27 1939, Binsted, showery evening

Study of ash tree

Spinningwheel Copse, Binsted Park

Bean field, Binsted, June 1

And the other:

Harvest at Binsted Park, July 27 1943

Binsted near the Park Pond

Tortington Common (Binsted end of Bridle Road)

Binsted Park, evening, Sep 23 1946

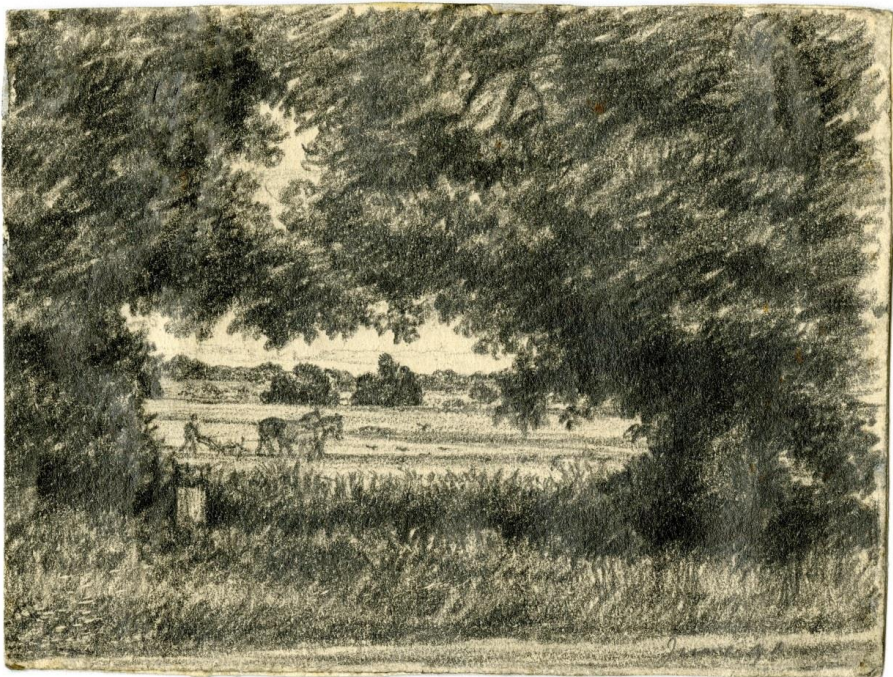
Binsted Park May 28

The captions are not very revealing. But some of these places can be identified and more discovered. The drawing 'Harvest at Binsted Park' of 1943 is significant: it shows corn stooks round the curve of the Park, and I have learnt from Bill Pethers, a local resident whose family lived in the old Binsted House, that Binsted Park was first ploughed in 1943, having been pasture land before that. These stooks are part of the war effort.¹⁷



¹⁷ I contacted Bill (b. 15/8/1940) to check this date and he replied that he thought it was right and 'I was told that I ran away around the big field of corn with ONLY a hat on, which was all my mother could see of me!' He adds that when he was born 'the Black Horse kitten at that time was called Spitfire'. His father's parents, Harry and Win Pethers, ran the Black Horse pub at Binsted.

Rogers's drawings are atmospheric, and he includes sky and weather effects, all in pencil. Just occasionally there is colour, added in chalk. A few of the drawings have tiny human figures, usually no bigger than a match head, perhaps drawn with a sharper pencil. These are doing country things such as working on top of hay ricks or following the plough horses. One particularly nice one shows a tiny plough team seen through a gap in a hedge, framed in foliage. Ploughing – or more exactly, harrowing clods and burning couch grass – were things that Thomas Hardy thought would 'go onward the same, Though dynasties pass', in his poem 'In time of The Breaking of Nations', published in 1916; he implies that rural life and love will continue in spite of the horrors of war. Perhaps the same thoughts were present to W.S.Rogers as he drew a plough team during another war. This could be a view across two fields to Binsted Woods, seen from near the church.



ii. Binsted Park: drawings and photos

Luckily W.S.Rogers seems to have felt about Binsted Park much as Michael Wishart did, and drew it again and again. Both had an emotional attachment to the woods and especially to this wood-enclosed enclave which takes you back in time, partly through the age of the trees, partly through what people have done in shaping the woodland.

Michael's lyrical depiction first describes Church Lane/Muddy Lane: 'From the church, and off the main lane which is all the village offers, there runs a muddy path, through fields, across a bridge in a small, sunken copse, into what was then parkland: a grand, broad, upward slope of green, dotted with ancient trees'. He goes on: 'Hares sliced bluish traces through the green-gold grass. I led my prisoner past the white shell of a manor whose ghostly façade appeared to tremble in the breeze, past a black pool with green waterlilies, far into our dense woodland.' (His 'prisoner' is a German airman, working at Marsh Farm in wartime, whom he intends to seduce. Binsted Woods have a long association with sex, as perhaps all woods do.)¹⁸

The hares have gone, and the white front of the old Binsted House, still a ruin when we first came to Binsted in 1989, has been replaced by a several times larger and very inappropriate new 'mansion'. But I still remember my first entrance into Binsted Park in 1989, along the muddy path, through fields, dipping down to pass through Spinningwheel Copse on the left and the Shaw on the right (though there is no bridge over the stream now), and coming up the 'grand, broad, upward slope' into the old parkland, then growing a crop of wheat, curving away to the right and completely surrounded by woodland. It seemed like an ideal wheat field out of a fairy tale.

Binsted Park has an interesting history. The Sites and Monuments Record no. 1395-WS2354 states 'Site name: Park, Binsted House. Monument type: PARK. Post-mediaeval. 1540 AD to 1900 AD. Documentary evidence...A parkscape is shown at Binsted House on the OS 6 in map of 1813, extended by the OS 6 in map of 1872-4. The ruin of Binsted House is at SU99240607.' John Mills, the County Archaeologist, told me more about the history of Binsted Park, introducing me to the concept of a 'pocket park' - a mediaeval-style park created by removing some woodland and keeping a few large, park-style trees, to make a miniature landscape reminiscent of one around a great house.

This was what the owners of Binsted House did in about 1800 by removing a track which used to pass in front of the house, and cutting down woodland, keeping some magnificent large oak trees, of which one remains alive, another as a fallen mass, and a third as a huge stump. They also built a ha-ha in front of the house to keep sheep out and add to the mediaeval atmosphere, reshaped the nearby watercourse through the woods into three

¹⁸ I think this happened shortly before May 1945. Michael adds: 'That German boy was barely older than myself. It had been his mission to destroy me, but we made a private truce without waiting for the general armistice to be declared, for which I feel toward him nothing but gratitude.'

connected ponds, of which one, the Madonna Pond, remains, and improved a path with post-and-rail fences to make 'Lover's Walk'.

The north end of the Park was one of Rogers's favourite subjects, especially the huge old oak within Spinningwheel Copse, which is on your left when you emerge up the sloping track out of the little stream valley. This enormous oak stands on the corner where the footpath turns round to the left to skirt the Park and lead you further into the woods. Suddenly you are confronted by a great tree, with an old pit next to it where chalk or marl or brickearth might have been dug out, recalling the past activities in the woods to make the land fertile. It may be an old pollard (a type of tree pruned high to keep new growth from animals) dating back to the 18th century when Binsted Park was still common land.



Drawing by W.S.Rogers of the huge oak in Spinningwheel Copse, Binsted, seen across Binsted Park, dated 1943.

'Sunset in Binsted Park', by Rogers, 1945, looking west over the stream valley woodland of the Shaw.



Some of Bill Pethers's large collection of photos show Binsted Park with its huge oaks and 'parkscape' being enjoyed by members of the Read family.



Binsted House in 1866, from the collection of Bill Pethers



*The Read family in their 'pocket park' in about 1870, from the collection of Bill Pethers;
Binsted House in the background*



*The Read family in Binsted Park, c. 1930, from the collection of Bill Pethers; his mother,
Margaret Read, on the right*

iii. Laurie Lee and Lorna

The Staker or, later, Read family (some called themselves Staker-Read during the transition) made a Lover's Walk in their mediaeval-style Park in Binsted Woods. The whole of Binsted Woods acted as a 'lover's walk' for Laurie Lee and Lorna Wishart in the early 1940s. They had met in 1937; Lorna, later a famous beauty, was a young mother of two sons, having married Ernest Wishart in 1927 at the age of 16; Laurie was a young poet (born 1914) recently back from busking with his fiddle in Spain. Their affair lasted for several years, and while Binsted was not the main scene of it, since that was where Lorna's married life was based, this situation led to many outdoor assignations. Laurie and Lorna's daughter Yasmin was born in 1939 and accepted by Ernest (always known as 'Wish') to be brought up as his own child. Laurie rented a caravan nearby at Storrington during 1940-1; he also had a patron, Wilma Gregory, who supported him financially and during the Lorna period rented Glebe Cottage in Binsted.¹⁹

Laurie's account of love-making with Lorna in Binsted Woods comes from his diaries, quoted in Valerie Grove's *The Life and Loves of Laurie Lee* (Robson Press, 2014), p. 118. Michael Wishart was able, near the end of the war, to call his encounter with the German airman in Binsted Woods a 'private truce', before the general Armistice; Laurie makes the guns and bombs of Sunday, 18 August, 1940 into metaphors of an all-consuming love affair. They walk into the woods from Binsted, up Binsted Lane towards Arundel. 'The sky was buzzing with anger again but we succeeded in ignoring it, we were as detached, as otherwise intent as insects there among the broken sticks, the trailing thorn... And we lay together looking into one another's eyes acting our own war and peace, while our bodies listened uneasily. As we kissed there was a burst of machine-gun fire, loud, in the sky... The sky was full, cut, slashed and shattered with noise. The ground heaved with the throb of bombs. We were still kissing.' He goes to the edge of wood (probably the southern edge of Tortington Common, the woodland to the east, not then coniferised but of a piece with the woodland of Binsted Woods) and sees the aerial battle over Ford aerodrome, which then catches fire as they watch. 'We sat down by the roadside and the battle receded into the distance... We

¹⁹ Luke Jennings suggests that Laurie lived in a 'tin caravan' in Binsted Woods (*Blood Knots*, p. 104). Vickie Bryceson, who lived in Binsted for many years, says: 'Yes, Laurie did stay in a caravan in Binsted woods not far from Scotland House. It wasn't an ideal situation being quite so close to the family home but then neither was it terribly convenient for Lorna to drive backwards and forwards to Storrington. Staying in the caravan was damp and cold so didn't do his health much good... the power of love knows no bounds!'

found we were sitting by the gate of the cottage hospital, and very soon the ambulances began to arrive.’ The hospital is on the north side of Tortington Common, so their amorous fugue has taken them across the whole woodland.

Valerie Grove (*The Life and Loves of Laurie Lee*, p. 138) points out that a poem Laurie wrote about this time, ‘Song in August, 1940’, and some of his other poems, ‘only really spring to vivid sense in the context of his pastoral adventures with Lorna while battles raged overhead’:

...I wind my hands around your head
And blow the hollow flutes of love,
But anger sprouts among the leaves
And fields grow sharp with war.
Wheat bleeds upon a wind of steel
And ivy splits the poisoned sky,
While wasps that cannot fertilise
Dive at the open flowers of men.

Your lips are turreted with guns,
And bullets crack across your kiss,
And death slides down upon a string
To rape the heart of our horizon.’

When England was under attack the woods, despite the dangers in the air, provided a safe place for two lovers to be together.

Laurie’s strong words are strangely applicable to the bypass battles that have ebbed and flowed in Binsted through all the years since the war. Binsted Park, with its enclosed beauty and long history, is part of ‘the heart of our horizon’. The Madonna Pond, within the woods close by, one of the ornamental ponds made by the predecessors of the Read family as they created their pocket park, is an essential part of its story.

iv. 'Blood Knots', the Madonna Pond and the ghosts

Luke Jennings's book *Blood Knots* (Atlantic Books, London, 2010) is partly about another sort of passion, his passion for fishing. This combines with his early life and his father's war experiences to make an unusual and beautiful memoir. As a child he lived in Binsted, and his first efforts were at a pond not often noticed, the one near the A27 at the north end of Binsted Lane West. Later he fished in the Madonna Pond.

As he puts it on p. 188, angling has 'a profoundly metaphorical character'. And his encounter with something at the Madonna Pond has in it all the supposed hauntedness of that spot. First he describes the pond as it was when he was working on the farm for Ernest Wishart during WW2. 'No more than fifty feet across, this was hidden in a wood at the end of a rutted track. Whatever the weather, the pond was always sunk in deep and forbidding shadow, and so choked with fallen branches and water plants that it appeared barely fishable. ...The place was said to be haunted, and overlooking it, just visible amongst the lichened branches, was a statue of the Madonna. Faded and peeling, its plaster eyes sad, this statue watched night and day over the motionless surface of the water. It had been placed there, the harvest workers hinted, because of the things that local people had seen – although no one was prepared to go into detail about what these might be' (p. 98).

When I was writing and editing *Binsted and Beyond*, the village's Millennium Book, in 2001-2, I was offered many stories about ghosts in Binsted and even a drawing of one, sent by Mr Eric Phillips of Bognor. This drawing of an old man (who 'disappeared') was identified by Bill Pethers, a rationalist like me, as probably his father, Henry Pethers, who was retiring and could fade away into the woods at the prospect of talking to a stranger. Tales of the pond being bottomless, a coach which disappeared into the pond, a headless horseman, still continue. I went recently for a blood test and the nurse, on seeing my address, said 'Oh you live in Binsted! Isn't it haunted?' She had visited Binsted often as a girl and heard the stories. The suggestion by Luke Jennings that the Madonna was placed there because of the hauntings, in other words as a good influence to drive them away, was new to me.²⁰

Luke waits at the pond for three hours and hooks something large. It is painful to compress his beautiful description of the waiting into such a short sentence; he is so eloquent

²⁰ According to Luke Wishart, Lorna's younger son, she placed it there in memory of her mother.

about his surroundings, his thoughts, the ‘sudden sense of loss’ which can overlay your anticipation, before the present wraps round you again. ‘And then, like the slow emergence of a memory, a blue-grey shadow materialized in the black corridor of water. A carp, broad-backed and deep-shouldered, perhaps eight or nine pounds in weight. In the shadowy light its flanks had the purplish bloom of Muscat grapes. Inch by inch it drifted, infinitely wary. ...It tilted downwards, the blue-black tail waving beneath the surface, and blew at the pellet of bread so that it danced for a moment on the mud. Then, almost casually, it sucked it in’ (p. 101).

He prays to the sad-eyed Madonna to let him land it. But the line breaks. ‘I stared after the fish, aghast, as it bored into the lily stems and vanished. My legs were shaking so violently that I had to lean back against the tree. My hands, I noticed vaguely, were shaking too, with long white line-burns on the thumbs and fingers. I stayed there for several minutes, limp and sick with disappointment... The carp was gone, but I could still see its bluish refracted form in my mind’s eye, still feel that heart-stopping force in my arms and guts. Four decades later I can remember every detail of that fish, and no catch will ever make up for the loss of it. But that’s the way with angling. For every fisherman there’s a ghost fish, that, along with the memory of the knot that slipped, the line that snapped, or the hook-hold that gave, will haunt his dreams for ever’ (p. 103).

At that time I think Luke Jennings was only twelve. As an adult, he discovered the true story of the Wisharts, and he ends his account of the Madonna Pond by quoting (p. 107) this paragraph from Cressida Connolly’s book, *The Rare and the Beautiful*, about the Garman family: ‘Lorna set out to create magic. She gathered glow worms from the side of a stream and put them in wine glasses lined with leaves to make natural lanterns which she’d place all along the mantelpiece. She loved spontaneity and surprises. She went riding on her horse at night, through the steep streets of Arundel where people were sleeping, a tame goat following behind. Years later, when she had grandchildren, she would go alone into the woods and decorate a Christmas tree, complete with candles, before leading the children out to find it glowing mysteriously. In the middle of these same woods was a clearing with a pond, and this she transformed into an enchanted glade, with lanterns and her own carvings draped in beads.’ He continues: ‘It was Lorna, I discovered, who had carved the Madonna by the pond, and it was in the same wood, all those years ago, that she had conducted her passionate affair with Laurie Lee. The locals were right about one thing. The place was haunted’ (*Blood Knots*, p. 107).

The legends of haunting still persist. Sue Elphick of Kent's Cottage, Binsted Park, adds: 'We had our septic tank emptied yesterday and the man, unaffected by the awful pong, talked to Tony about riding his bike with a friend through Binsted woods. They both heard the sound of something following them through the trees but when they stopped the sound also stopped. He said it sounded big like a horse. They raced on further and the sound carried on. He said they were terrified and hid for a while but again the noise came back when they travelled on! He couldn't understand how we could live in such a spooky place! The legends go on. May be it was Lorna coming back from Arundel with her tame goat.'

Ghost stories permutate in the telling. James Kenny, Archaeology Officer for Chichester District Council, remembers playing in the ruins of the old Binsted House as a boy. (Before it was replaced by the present huge house, he headed an archaeological project to record its remains.) He was about 12 and he and his brother were trying to get into the ruins. There was barbed wire and holly bushes to deter trespassers, but they saw a man with a 'tall hat' with a brim go in, so they followed him in. A Guy Fawkes hat, according to James. Another man, who was doing the garden, appeared and told them to go away. (Probably Henry Pethers, who worked in the garden at Binsted House, which was how he met Bill's mother, Margaret Read.) They mentioned the man they had followed and he said don't be silly, there's no man, now go.

I first heard of this story from John Mills, County Archaeologist. According to him, James and his brother suddenly saw a man in a frock coat and top hat glaring at them, and ran. In the version James told me, there is no frock coat, the top hat is a 'Guy Fawkes hat', and the 'man' or ghost is not threatening, but rather a benign presence helping them to get into the house and play.

For me the woods are not haunted in that sense. But the whole of the woods are haunted by their history as a background for love; and Binsted Park especially is haunted by a boy fishing in wartime, by Bill Pethers running into the cornfield naked aged 3, and by other children playing in the ruins of the old Binsted House. The original Madonna (carved by Lorna) was vandalised, and replaced; the current Madonna is cheap plastic, but in her brick shrine with a safety grill is still visited. Flowers are sometimes left there. It is a place of pilgrimage. Last time I passed, a couple from Middleton were sitting on the log bench by the shrine having their picnic lunch.

v. The artistic Wishart family

Lorna Wishart (1911-2000), loved and painted by Lucien Freud, was herself a painter, though her art is not known – it is overshadowed by her role as a muse and mistress. This painting by her (in a private collection) shows herself on her horse returning from Arundel.



She often rode there through the woods. The fairy-tale castle on the right seems to represent Arundel Castle, the young trees the plantation woodland of Tortington Common, and the gnarled old tree on the left the mysteriousness of Binsted Woods. Within the woods is a pool with a religious vision – the deer with a crucifix between its antlers, as seen by St Hubert in his legend – and Lorna is about to encounter it. Lorna was a Catholic, and St Hubert's relics were kept at Arundel Cathedral. Lorna's 'secret gardens' within Binsted Woods included figures of deer and owed much to the ideas in this painting.

Lorna's liaison with Laurie Lee in the late '30s produced a daughter, Yasmin (1939-2009), who devoted her life to painting transcendent, semi-abstract landscapes, sometimes with a small animal figure.²¹ The one below may recall the grand old trees of Binsted Woods.

The elder of Lorna's two sons with her husband Ernest Wishart was Michael Wishart (1928-1996). He was a wit and bon viveur as well as an artist and writer, and his art is becoming better known. His memoir *High Diver* has recently been translated into French.

²¹ Her paintings can be seen at www.dropbox.com/s/2ka8nqiwk9lwczt/131126e%20Yasmin%20v15.pdf?dl=0.

Untitled painting by Yasmin David



Michael grew up painting in Binsted, and though many of his paintings are semi-abstract, some of them seem to show its influence.²² For instance, ‘Moths on a blue path’ recalls the elusive Purple Emperor butterfly, which lives in Binsted Woods but frequents the tops of the oak trees. The path called Scotland Lane is a place where they can sometimes be seen.

‘Moths on a blue path’ by Michael Wishart



²² Michael’s paintings can be seen at www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/artists/john-michael-wishart.

Michael married Anne Dunn, also an artist, and their son Francis Wishart is a noted conservationist and painter of trees.

'Leaves' by Francis Wishart, 2010



In the light shining through the leaves, Francis's monoprint seems to echo the same effect in his grandmother Lorna's painting. And Yasmin's small animal in a huge landscape recalls her mother Lorna on her horse riding home to Binsted. Lorna's quite specific religious vision is replaced in Yasmin's and Francis's paintings with a devotion to depicting the natural world more generally, but it has a similar visionary intensity.

A fuller study of the artistic Wishart dynasty may one day be made. Pallant House, the art gallery in Chichester, is at present (January 2017) planning an exhibition of paintings by Michael Wishart and Lucien Freud.

In this way the ancient woods of Binsted can be seen to have an artistic influence that has lasted and is still continuing. In the next chapter I explore the concept of 'ancientness' when applied to woodland and research the latest understanding of it, especially the much-misused category of 'Ancient Woodland'. Such classifications may have an effect on the subsequent history of the woodland and whether Binsted Woods are chosen as the route of the bypass.

4. Myths, maps and Ancient Woodland

Much (though, as we shall see, not all) of Binsted Woods is classed as ‘Ancient Woodland’. This is defined as woodland that has been wooded since 1600 (1750 in Scotland). The whole of Tortington Common is also Ancient Woodland, although much of it was transformed into a conifer plantation in the 1970s and is only now recovering. (The Ancient Woodland Inventory has a special term for such woodlands – PAWS, Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites.)

The term ‘Ancient Woodland’ tends to make people believe that existing woodland classed as Ancient has been there since prehistoric times looking exactly as it does now. This is a myth. A new book, *Rethinking Ancient Woodland: The archaeology and history of woods in Norfolk*, by Gerry Barnes and Tom Williamson (University of Hertfordshire Press, Studies in Regional and Local History, Volume 13, 2015), is among many to correct this. Their book is primarily about Norfolk, but the points they make in their conclusion apply to a wider area, including the woodland of Sussex. ‘It is sometimes assumed, or at least implied, that ancient woods represent a direct link with the ‘natural’ vegetation of England, as this existed before the Neolithic clearances. It is probable that later prehistoric, Roman and early mediaeval settlement...was on such a scale that woodland vegetation would have been extensively modified, primarily by grazing, but also by exploitation for wood and timber’ (Barnes and Williamson, p.150).

i. Wood-pasture and Domesday

Barnes and Williamson point out that woods by the time of the Conquest were everywhere intensively grazed (p. 15). They were ‘less stable features of the landscape than is usually suggested’, and could come and go relatively quickly. ‘There are good grounds for believing that the overwhelming majority of this late Saxon woodland was grazed wood-pasture, rather than the kind of enclosed and coppiced woodland common in later centuries...One of its primary uses was as swine-pasture, with herds of pigs being driven into the woods in the autumn to fatten on acorns and nuts.’ The Domesday book says that at Binsted there were eight acres of meadow, and wood for six swine. This does not mean that the wood only

supported six swine, but that the wood paid a rent of six swine. This was likely to have meant that it supported feeding about 42 swine.²³

The land exploited for wood-pasture was likely to have been ‘agriculturally marginal’ land which was not used for arable (Barnes and Williamson, p. 111) – in Binsted, the land on heavy clays in the northern part of the parish which is now covered by woodland. So the woods that did exist were probably in some of the same places as now. In the wood-pasture system of ‘wooded commons’, ‘use rights were shared rather than properties intermingled’ (p. 108) – the opposite of the system used in Binsted’s agricultural land, where strips in different ownerships were intermingled in the centre of the parish (VCH). In other words, the woodland was owned by a landowner, but rights to use the woods in various ways were granted to some of the local inhabitants – not just pasturing their animals but also collecting fuel. The fact that Binsted was, it appears, within Arundel Forest meant that the rights were administered under forest law, by meetings of the forest courts that met at Hundred House Copse. There could also be private wood-pasture – that was in essence what Parks provided.

As Barnes and Williamson put it: ‘Well into the post-mediaeval period wooded commons and parks collectively covered much more ground than enclosed woods’ (p. 87). They also point out that ‘the wholesale destruction over the last 3 centuries or so has ensured that we now tend to think of enclosed and coppiced woodland as the only, or at least the principal, form of semi-natural woodland. Up until the 15th century, and conceivably till the 17th, such woods covered a smaller area of ground, at least in Norfolk, than woodland pastures’ (p. 87). Wood-pastures ‘declined steadily through the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries’ (p. 109) then enclosure destroyed the rest. This means that until relatively recently the landscape looked very different from the way it does now, with less density of trees, and a far greater intermingling of ‘woods’ and ‘fields’.

As for who actually owned the land, Domesday records that the hundred (i.e. the Saxon administrative unit, much larger than the later parish) of ‘Benestede’ was held by Earl Godwin in the time of Edward the Confessor, and was given with nine other hundreds to Earl Roger to constitute his Earldom of Arundel. Dallaway comments: ‘It [i.e. Benestede] appears to have remained as annexed to the earldom, and to have been first aliened to Sir William Fitz-Alan, Knt., whose right was confirmed by patent in 1400, 1 Henry IV.

²³ *Domesday England* by H.C. Darby, p. 178, suggests a ratio of 1 in 7 for the relationship of the ‘render’ or rent to the actual number of pigs.

Considerable lands were held by the priories of Tortington and Calceto, and the dean and chapter. Of present [1832] proprietors, the principal, with the advowson of the vicarage, are Anne Countess dowager of Newburgh...Edward Staker, and Thomas Fowler, Gents' (Dallaway, p. 83). VCH comments that these three ownerships have lasted until recently as the Church Farm, Marsh Farm and Binsted House lands, though most of Binsted is now owned by the Wishart family.

ii. Enclosing woods: a still-existing wood bank

In case we are still reluctant to accept the wood-pasture concept, Barnes and Williamson emphasise in their conclusion that '*all* primary woods must occupy land that was, with varying intensities, subject to grazing before it was enclosed and managed as coppice' (p. 154). 'Coppiced woods were enclosed, so far as the evidence goes, in the course of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. ...The enclosure of woodland was an act of unilateral lordly privatisation, and this may explain the massive size of many early woodbanks, far larger than would be required merely to prevent the accidental straying of stock from surrounding land' (p. 150).

The conclusion for Binsted Woods is that all of Binsted Woods were at one time wood-pasture. Once woods started to be enclosed and managed as coppice or coppice with standards, some of Binsted Woods remained as wood-pasture. VCH gives some indication of which woodland in Binsted was still common or wood-pasture at a later date. 'The most northerly woods were demesne woods of Binsted's main estates. ... The demesne woods were apparently separated by Scotland Lane [the ancient east-west track, thought by Margary to be the Roman Road from Chichester to Brighton] from common woodland and pasture to the south.'

Under 'Economic History' it gives more detail – reflecting the creation of their 'pocket park' around 1800 by the owners of Binsted House: 'The woodland and pasture commons of the parish were divided and inclosed gradually from the late 16th century, and the process may not have been completed until c. 1800. A common called Binsted Ball, on the east side of the parish, was mentioned in 1601, but by 1614 at least part of it was in several ownership; later it became the western part of the parkland of Binsted House. Woodland occupying 70 a. immediately north of Binsted Ball was common in 1600 and common was claimed there in 1789, but by c. 1815 it was part of the Binsted House estate. West of that woodland there

was a tract of common called Binsted heath in 1647, later belonging to Marsh farm and described in part in 1840 as Furze field.’

What can be found on the ground, within the woods as they are at present, to reflect this historical background? Two things – wood banks, and ancient pollards. A long, continuous wood bank, now quite low, exists just within the woods on the east, north and west sides of the field now called Broad Green, immediately north of the field now called Binsted Park (shown on the map below), both within Binsted Woods. It is listed as a Monument in the Historic England list of monuments, no. MWS4191, described as ‘A possible park boundary and ditch at NGR SU 9890 0620 A1. The ditch is on the inner (park) side.’

I think it is more likely to be a wood bank enclosing the woodland surrounding Broad Green on three sides, by the process described in VCH above, and demarcating it from the common wood-pasture.²⁴ If the bank is regarded as a boundary to the woods on three sides of the field, as above, the ditch is (at least in Spinningwheel Copse) on the outer (field) side, as it would be if it were a wood bank. Further round, the ditch is hard to see and may have become filled in. This may be an example of Barnes and Williamson’s ‘unilateral lordly privatisation’.

There are two very old, very large oaks near this wood bank which appear to be old pollards – one at each end of it. Pollards, where trees are coppiced at about head height and the new growth harvested, were used on commons as they kept the young growth out of reach of the animals. These trees may have been kept as markers pointing out where the common now ended and the private, coppiced woodland began. One of them is the huge oak at the south end of Spinningwheel Copse described in Section 3, and illustrated there by W.S.Rogers’ drawing. The other is on the west side of Broad Green field, within the woodland and near the wood bank. These trees could be 300 years old, taking us back to 1715, before the common there became part of the Binsted House estate and before the owners of Binsted House made their ‘pocket park’.

There are many many other banks and ditches within Binsted Woods, now revealed by the LiDAR survey, which could give much more information about the process of enclosure of the common wood-pasture. That would require surveys on the ground, which would also

²⁴ Possibly the surveys of the woodland in the early 1990s for the Arundel Bypass, by SGS and EAU, which are the documents cited for this monument, mistook ‘Binsted Park’ – still marked as parkland on recent maps – for a mediaeval deer park.

give some idea of the age of the banks and ditches. But a comparison of old maps with maps of the present-day woodland gives another, very interesting insight into the fortunes of the woods through history.

iii. Yeakell and Gardner and the disappearing fields

In order to write about the various different woods within Binsted Woods, I have made the following map. Note that the map includes Tortington Common, that is, areas 12, 19, 20 and 21, as well as Binsted Woods (all the other areas).

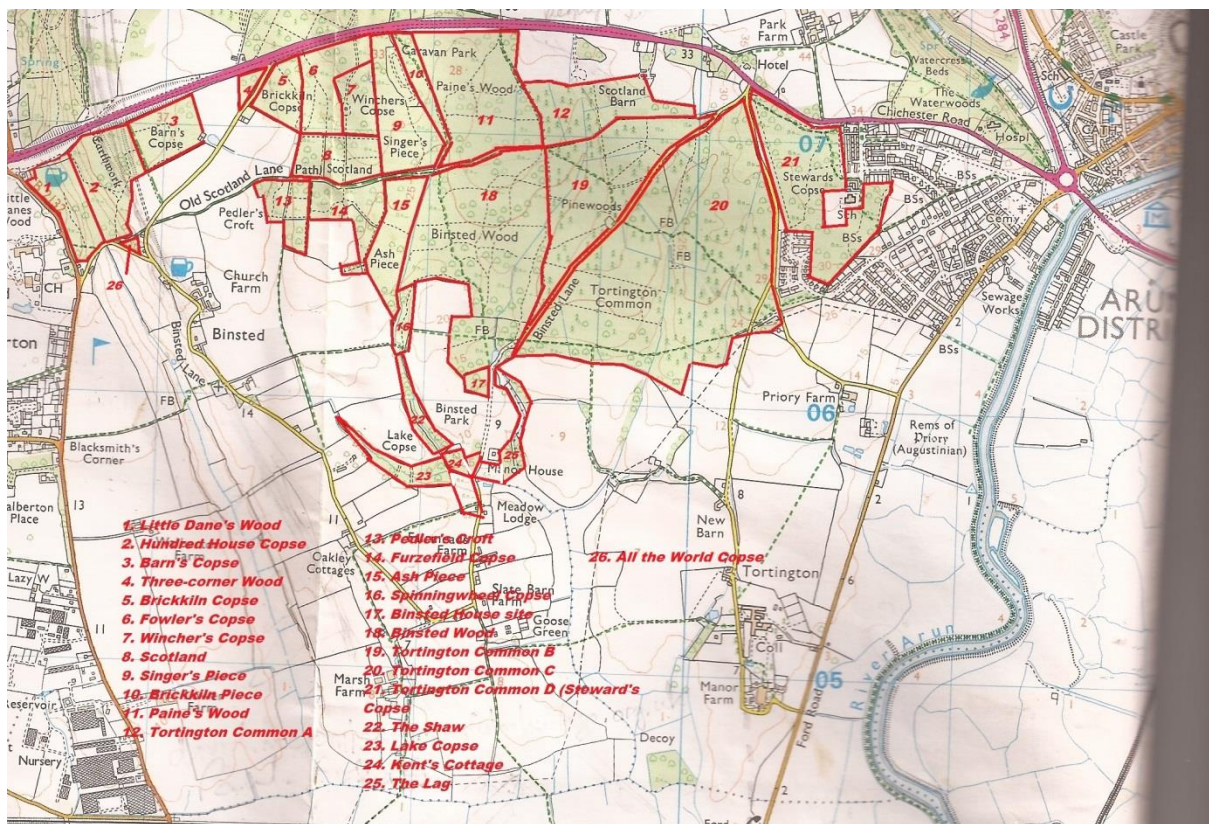


Figure 5: Binsted Woods and Tortington Common split into woodland parcels

Many of these names are the modern names for particular copses. Some are shown on maps, others are the locally used name. One, 'All the World copse', comes from the Tithe map of 1838, as it is now the site of a house and garden but has a history as a wood.

The names of many of the woods are informative. The present-day 'Wincher's Copse', no. 7, was in the time of the Tithe Map 'Minchin's Copse'. According to Oliver Rackham, any wood with the name 'Mincing' or 'Minchin' must be pre-Conquest, since it uses the Anglo-Saxon word for a nun, 'Mynecen'. This wood, then, dates back to the time before

1066. But that was before wood-pasture was being enclosed into coppice woodland. It may be relevant that the local name for this wood used to be ‘the Minchins’. A sculpted stone head on one of the cottages in Binsted, thought by locals to be Roman but probably (according to an informant at Fishbourne Roman Palace) from the Renaissance period, was according to local legend ‘found in the Minchins’. This may be an earlier name than ‘Minchin’s Copse’, which became the name when the wood was enclosed and coppiced.

In Brickkiln Copse (no. 5) there are extensive, large pits which were caused by digging out of material to make bricks in the 17th and 18th centuries, with the kiln in the same wood as the pits. Remains of what look like 18th-century bricks, without frogs, can be found in the wood. Brickkiln Piece (no. 10) does not have noticeable pits, but the next wood to the east, Paine’s Wood, does have extensive pits, which were probably the site of the diggings out of material for the kiln in Brickkiln Piece. This industry was probably fuelled by furze faggots, rather than charcoal.



Figure 6: *Excerpt from Yeakell and Gardner showing Binsted Woods and Tortington Common*

An interesting map to compare with this map is the map of Sussex made by Yeakell and Gardner in 1778-83. Above is an excerpt of the Binsted section: A comparison section by section shows:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 16, 11 and 12 are wooded in Yeakell and Gardner as they are now, except for the easternmost section of 12 which is part of Y and G's non-wooded area called 'Brick Kiln'.

3, now called Barn's Copse, is called Pain's Wood in Y and G. This is now the name of a wood further east.

13 is wooded in Y and G except for two small fields within it.

14, Furzefield Copse, is fields in Y and G except for a small wood at the south end. One field has thin trees – wood-pasture? The name suggests it was used to grow furze (gorse) for faggots for the brick kilns.

8, 'Scotland', is fields in Y and G.

15, Ash Piece, is fields in Y and G.

18, Binsted Wood (a wood within Binsted Woods), is wooded in Y and G except for two small fields south of Scotland Lane, just east of the Havenwood crossroads. The N/S Public Footpath there is shown as a road, which passes west of the Binsted House site. The south end of Binsted Park is wooded, south of the Binsted House site. This was the woodland which the owners removed, leaving some huge oaks, to make their 'pocket park' with its park-like big trees. They also removed the road that passes west of the house, to make a park-like prospect to look at over their new ha-ha.

22, the Shaw, is only wooded on the west side of the stream, and south of the adjoining hedge. East of the stream it is thinly wooded or pasture.

19, 20 and 21 are wooded, as now – though the woodland is now not broadleaved woodland, but recovering pine plantation.

26, All the World Copse, is fields in Y and G. It is the site of the mediaeval tile and pot kiln excavated in the 1960s and now a house with its garden.

This exercise shows that several areas which were fields in 1778-83 are now woodland. This means that, according to the current definition of 'Ancient Woodland', those areas are not 'Ancient Woodland'. According to that definition, woodland that is 'ancient' is woodland that has been wooded since 1600 (1750 in Scotland). If it has had periods of not being wooded, it is not 'Ancient Woodland'.

The history of the ‘Ancient Woodland’ definitions in Sussex is particularly interesting as the Ancient Woodland Inventory has been revised and updated. The AWI and its record of Binsted Woods, and indeed the whole concept of ‘ancientness’, are worth looking into further, not least because the woods’ perceived ‘ancientness’ will affect how they are preserved from the intense development pressures all round them.

iv. The Ancient Woodland Inventory and its problems

The Ancient Woodland Inventory was trialled in Norfolk in the 1970s by the then Nature Conservancy Council. Barnes and Williamson record that ‘because its main aim was to quickly establish the extent and quality of the ancient woodland remaining at a time when much had recently been grubbed out for agriculture or damaged by replanting with conifers, [it] was initially compiled employing a ‘desktop’ methodology’ (p. 122). Woods were identified as ‘ancient’ using evidence from Ordnance Survey maps, according to criteria such as name, position in the landscape, and shape. This process was meant to be supplemented by surveys on the ground, but these were not always carried out.

As a result, it over-estimated the amount of woodland which was actually ‘ancient’ by about ‘a fifth of the total, possibly more’ (p. 130). ‘In highlighting this fact the intention is, however, emphatically not to criticise the manner in which the Ancient Woodland Inventory was compiled, nor to diminish its value as a tool for conservation management’ (p. 130). As they point out, ‘current work on updating the Inventory, so far carried out only in south-east England, will doubtless correct some of the ‘erroneous’ inclusions...Much more interesting is the fact that a significant proportion of these woods, when examined on the ground, display many of the features usually associated with ancient woodland’ (p. 131).

Figure 7 shows the Binsted Woods and Tortington Common section of the revised Ancient Woodland Inventory map (*A Revision of the Ancient Woodland Inventory for West Sussex*, Report and Inventory Maps, January 2010, Weald and Downs Ancient Woodland Survey, hosted by the Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre).



Figure 7: The revised Ancient Woodland Inventory for West Sussex, Binsted Woods and Tortington Common section. Green indicates woodland classified by the AWI as Ancient.

The revised AWI was created by comparing the original ‘dataset’ with early Ordnance Survey maps, Tithe maps, Yeakell and Gardner’s map, some estate maps and the results of some surveys on the ground. Still, there seem to be some anomalies. My plot 13 (Peascod’s Croft) is shown as Ancient except for one very small square area, while in Y and G it has two larger small fields within it. The easternmost section of my plot 12, ‘Tortington Common A’, is shown as Ancient, though in Y and G it is unwooded as far south as Scotland Lane and appears to be part of the ‘Brick Kiln’ area.

These apparent anomalies may be connected to the Inventory’s treatment of ‘wood-pasture’. Apparently this is counted as Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland if there is at least 20 percent tree cover shown on 80 per cent of the site on the Ordnance Survey First Edition County Series maps (produced for Sussex between 1869-75) (p. 14). This seems a very likely explanation of the variations in the recording of Peascod’s Croft; it is south of Scotland Lane, so on the ‘common’ side, and part of a mosaic of small areas with a changing and mixed history. However, it does not seem so likely an explanation of the recording of the southern part of the Brick Kiln area, open in Yeakell and Gardner, as Ancient.

More important than the apparent anomalies, where apparently younger woodland is recorded as ‘Ancient’, is the problem of the whole concept of Ancient Woodland. The sentence I quoted above, *‘Much more interesting is the fact that a significant proportion of these woods, when examined on the ground, display many of the features usually associated*

with ancient woodland', suggests the problem. It is that woodland classed as not 'Ancient' is often indistinguishable on the ground from Ancient Woodland (p. 156). Barnes and Williamson conclude that 'the evidence and arguments presented here suggest that we should be wary of seeing 'ancient woodland' as a distinct, definite category' (p. 157). Their evidence about the 'pseudo-ancient' woodland of Norfolk 'raises the question of whether the term 'ancient woodland', with its implication that biological character is principally dependent upon age, is entirely appropriate or useful'.

Others have pointed out that ancient woodland is a successful 'brand', evoking a vivid image, and appealing to psychological motivations. But to point out these problems, and suggest there is something wrong with the 'brand', is obviously dangerous when 'many areas of ancient woodland, especially in the south and east of England, are under severe threat' (p. 158).

Barnes and Williamson add that more work is needed to establish exactly how quickly the more obvious characteristics of Ancient Woodland are acquired. They also point out that 'Even the 'pseudo-ancient' woods discussed in this volume have been in existence for more than a century and a half, usually for more than two centuries. Indeed, blurring the neat distinction usually posited between 'ancient' and 'recent' woodland does not so much reduce the importance of the former as raise the potential status of the latter. If the features we value in ancient woods can be found in some recent ones, then we should value these in a similar way. The clear implication of the Ancient Woodland Inventory that woods not included in it are of little conservation value is arguably the real problem here' (p. 159).

They end 'woodland in England requires more, not less, protection. ...Woodland makes up such a minor part of our countryside that small losses, even of relatively recent stands, have a significant environmental and cultural impact. ...The arguments in this book, far from suggesting that 'ancient woodland' is dispensable or replaceable, imply instead that all our woods have a greater value and importance than is currently suggested by our emphasis on one particular variety.'

With these controversies going on in the background, the supposedly 'non-Ancient' parts of Binsted Woods are vulnerable. Now that the government is trying to introduce legislation to water down even the protection afforded to Ancient Woodland, the arguments will become more important. But this new thinking suggests there is now some academic support for what local people already know, that the parts of Binsted Woods that were not wooded in the

late 18th century, according to Yeakell and Gardner's map, are just as valuable in historic and conservation terms as the parts that are recorded now as Ancient Woodland. Barnes and Williamson's book also emphasises the importance of linking woods to the surrounding landscape, and taking into account the sociology and psychology of woods, including the uses of woodland in the 18th and 19th centuries (such as 'beautification', as in the making of the 'pocket park' within Binsted Woods by the owners of Binsted House).

Two images to end this section: Brickkiln Copse, plot 5 on my map at Figure 5, has a fantastic carpet of wood anemones each spring, visible from Binsted Lane just before it joins the A27. There is a similar, but smaller carpet on the other side of the Lane in plot 4, Three Corner Wood.

Anemones in Three Corner Wood, Binsted Lane



These two woods are shown as woodland in Yeakell and Gardner, and as Ancient on the Revised Ancient Woodland Inventory map, although the existence of the excavation pits for the 17th and 18th century brick kilns must mean that many of the trees there now – which are growing in the pits – have grown up since the brick kiln period. These areas have probably not been woodland since 1600, which is what would be required to make them 'Ancient'. Trees must have been cleared to dig the pits.

Many smaller pits are revealed by the Lidar, and one researcher (Vivienne Blandford) has suggested to me that the landscape of Brickkiln Piece and the other woodland just south of the present A27 in Binsted Woods was an ‘opencast landscape’ at that time. This industrial history has not prevented these particular plots in the woods from being accepted as Ancient; and the wood anemones seem to signal this every year. Wood anemones are a classic Ancient Woodland indicator.

Finally an image from Furzefield Copse, a parcel of woodland classified as ‘non-Ancient’ by the AWI, shown as a field (as the name suggests) in Yeakell and Gardner. As those who go to admire the bluebells in Binsted Woods each year know, sometimes the richest areas for wild flowers are these supposedly ‘non-Ancient’ sections of the woods. Orchids mingle with celandines, bluebells with stitchwort. In the dappled sunshine, just before the leaf cover closes over, the effect is of a flowery meadow within the woods.

Bluebells and stitchwort in Furzefield Copse



The supposedly non-Ancient parts of Binsted Woods are just as valuable, scenically, historically, and ecologically, as the Ancient parts. This is relevant to the history of the bypass, which I examine in more detail in the next section.

5. The bypass history and the value of woodland

Writing a narrative about a place may affect the place, in ways which may be controversial.²⁵ The very existence of the Secrets of the High Woods LiDAR project itself suggested a narrative – and a value which was being given to the area. Uncovering ‘secrets’ sounds exciting and like an unmitigated good, but the knowledge itself can, actually, be problematic. The landowners might not want the discoveries known, because the result could be lots more visitors - trespassers, dog walkers, metal detectorists, archaeologists, English Heritage advisers. They might prefer that the knowledge remained ‘secret’.

The phrase ‘high woods’ also has meaning and values to unpack. Just how ‘high’ are those woods, on Downs which never go above 270m (the highest point at Butser Hill)? The phrase is a quote from Belloc’s ‘The South Country’, which says ‘And it’s there, walking in the high woods, /That I would wish to be’. Is the title therefore invoking a romantic, sentimental attachment to the landscape? Are the woods ‘high’ in the sense of ‘sublime, transcendental’, like the forests of Caspar David Friedrich? Whatever its further implications, the phrase suggests ‘we are concentrating here on the woods on the highest parts of the Downs, which are more interesting, more beautiful, more remote and more unknown than the woods on the lowest slopes’.

Perhaps, even, ‘we are high above such things as planning controversies’. From the political point of view, the higher the better, as height seems to be associated now with inviolability and therefore with distance from the infection of planning controversy. Binsted Woods, on the lowest slopes of the Downs, therefore only just squeeze in, and typically the boundary of the LiDAR area cuts off the southernmost parts of the woods – long narrow copses that reach out into the fields and give the woods their interpenetrated quality with the countryside around them.

The boundaries of the LiDAR project itself are problematic too. As with any project that values a particular area with a definite boundary, this causes a problem to arise instantly by implying that areas outside the boundary are less valuable. We saw this above, where Barnes and Williamson have contested the Ancient Woodland concept for implying that all that is outside its definition is of no value and does not need to be preserved.

²⁵ This became clear from the talk in the Secrets of the High Woods project given by Professor Simon Barker on 7 December 2015. Professor Barker was looking for stories about ‘borders and peripheries’; the story of Binsted Woods is one of these.

I am a local person and my narrative about Binsted Woods must include the story of my involvement, for nearly 30 years, in campaigns to save the woods (and the village which is partly within the woods) from plans for a new bypass at Arundel. My contribution in this section is not a campaigning chapter, so much as a narrative about the long-running conflict about the bypass, as seen by someone who has observed and recorded it, and an attempt at understanding the different values attributed to the woodland.

i. The Arundel bypass plans of the 1980s and early 90s

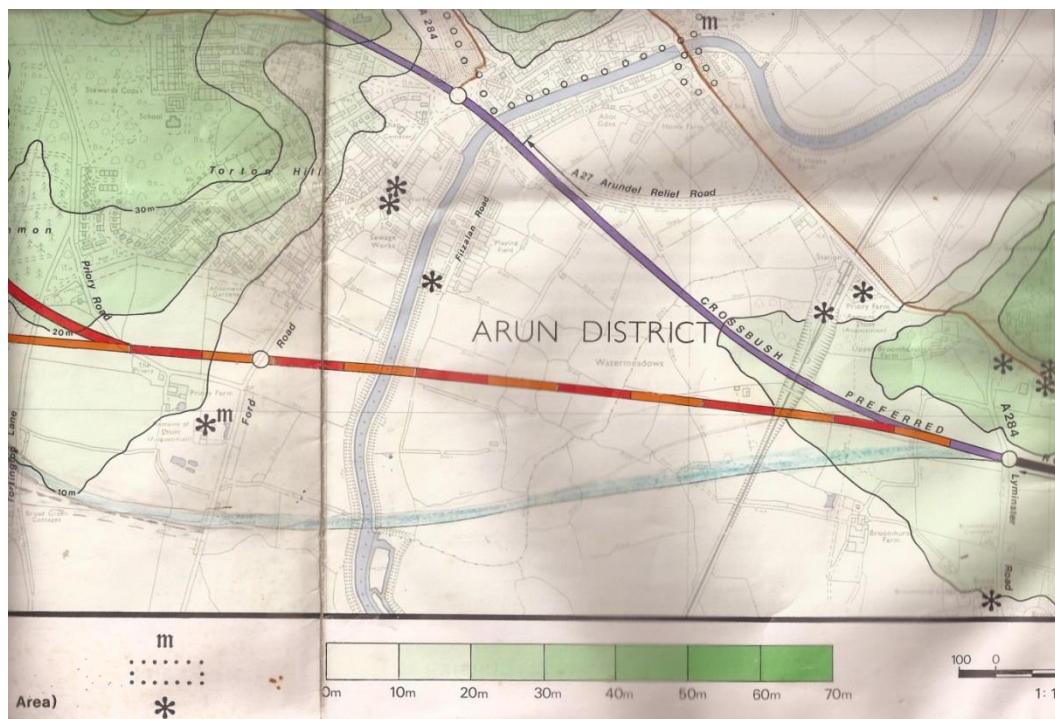


Figure 8: Department of Transport Arundel bypass options map 1987, right half (part), with annotations

In 1987 there was a ‘public consultation’ about the Arundel bypass, with a large map showing three options delivered through letterboxes throughout the area. These were Purple, Red and Orange. The above map, a slightly cropped version of the right half of the consultation map, shows most of Arundel at the top of the map; the eastern part of the Purple, or near-online route; the eastern part of the Orange and Red routes (two routes shown as combined into one, since they are the same at the eastern end); added by hand, most of the more southerly ‘Blue route’ asked for by the Arundel group ABAC in 1990; and a short

section of the Crossbush bypass (the black section of road at the far right of the map). The Crossbush bypass was treated separately from the Arundel bypass, and built, ending in half of an elevated junction (at the circle on the map), by 1990. The shades of green are contour lines, not – as we have become accustomed to seeing – anything to do with the National Park. Asterisks show listed buildings.

‘Beauty’ or subjective evaluation comes into the story of this part of the bypass. The drawn-on, Blue line, pushed further from the town by lobbying, became part of the second ‘Preferred Route’, sometimes called Pink/Blue, chosen in 1993. The ‘outstanding beauty’ of the watermeadows was given by Alistair Darling, then transport minister, as the reason for cancelling that plan in 2003. But that Preferred Route remained in the Local Plan, and reappeared as ‘Option A’ in the 2014 ‘A27 Feasibility Study’. The Blue and Red routes shown here for the eastern half of the bypass are still being put forward by the continuing A27 Feasibility Study. Highways England have tried to rule out an update of the Purple route, though many people, and all environmental organisations, would prefer it to an offline bypass. A new group, Arundel A27 Forum, is promoting a single-carriageway version.

The left half of the map (Figure 9 below) brings in the subject of valuation of woodland. The printed map, without annotations, showing the three routes available to be consulted about in 1987, indicates the lack of value attributed to the woodland by the Department of Transport. Its Orange route was planned to go through all the best parts of Binsted Woods, mostly just inside or outside the south-western edge (the quietest, sunniest part, best for wildlife which hunts outside the woods and retreats into them to roost, best for walkers with its changing views). It cut off the Madonna Pond, Binsted Park, and Spinningwheel Copse with its famous bluebells. It destroyed Hundred House Copse, the site of the Hundred meeting place, the Aves court and the pottery and tile kiln excavated in the 1960s.

The results of the consultation were another kind of valuation. 616 voted for Orange, 223 voted for Purple and 142 voted for Red. In 1989 the Department of Transport announced that Orange was the Preferred Route.

1989 was the year I moved to Binsted. A group had already formed (the Arundel Red Route Campaign, a name soon changed to the Arundel Bypass Neighbourhood Committee) to resist the Orange route and I became its secretary. Between 1987 and 1989 the Committee had been promoting a route called the Modified Orange Route – the western half is shown on Fig. 9 as a line of circles.

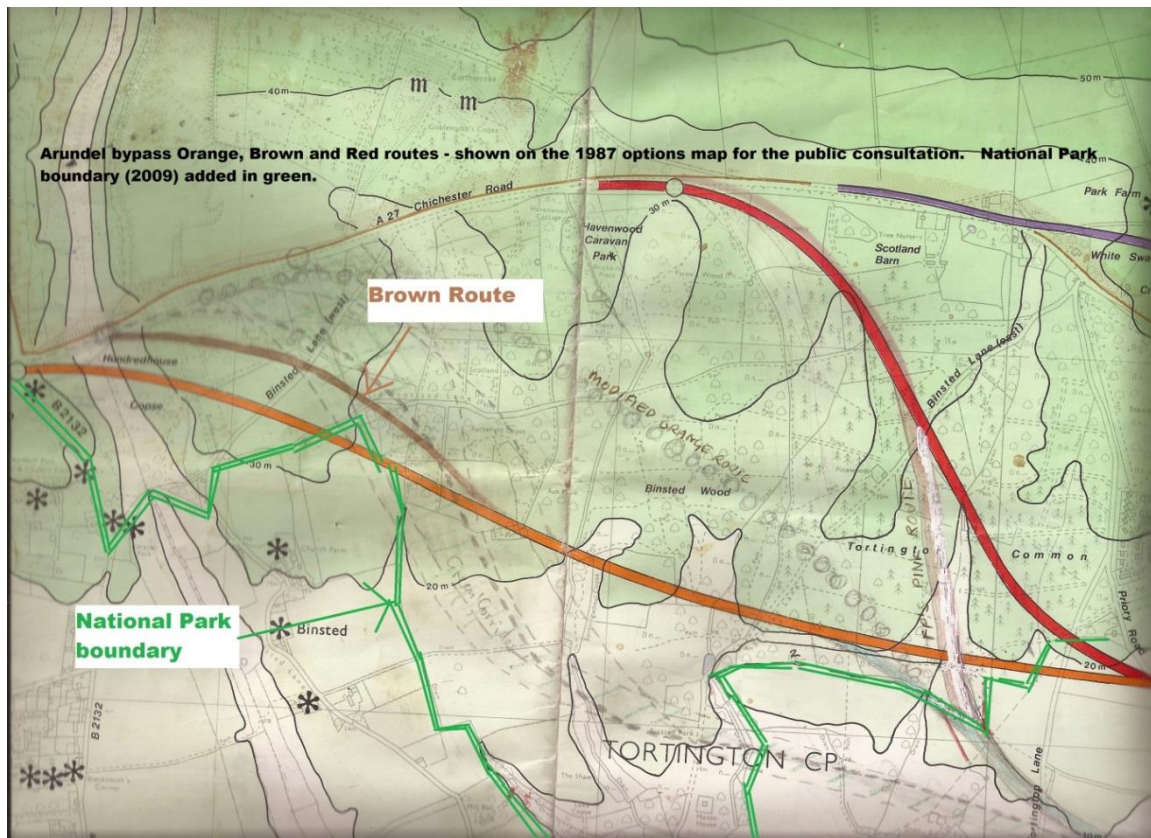


Figure 9: The left half of the Department of Transport Arundel bypass options map of 1987, with annotations

The advice from wildlife organisations such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust was that the further north and east this part of the route went, the less damaging it would be for the woods. (This valuation reflected the fact that Binsted Woods have never been coniferised, while much of Tortington Common has.) The idea of the Modified Orange Route had been to find a route acceptable to wildlife organisations, to Binsted and to Havenwood (the mobile home park in the woods) which would join onto the route which Arundel Town Council were asking for at the eastern end, at that stage not quite as far south as the subsequent Blue route. ‘Modified Orange’ was originally the name for the whole route, west and east, with Binsted and Arundel working together. It was approved at a crowded public meeting in Arundel Town Hall on 23 June 1987. But the Department of Transport rejected it.

The Department did its best to respond to the campaigning that followed the announcement that Orange, its original straightish line through the woods with the good views for drivers, was the Preferred Route. In 1991 there was another Public Consultation. At the Arundel end, the Blue route (suggested in 1990 by the Arundel Bypass Action

Committee) was accepted. But at the Binsted end, all that was offered was a small variation on Orange called the Brown route – as drawn onto the map above in brown. This took more woodland and hardly reduced the devastating effect on Binsted as a place.

In September 1991 the Pink route was born. This suggestion, by Frank Penfold, founder and Chairman of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, moved the bypass out of Binsted Woods (except for a small corner of Paine's Wood) and onto Tortington Common. Originally, it was a short new section of road, joining the north end of the Red route to the Blue route asked for at Arundel. It is shown in the map at Figure 9 as a line of Tipp-Ex joining the two. Support for this route came from CPRE, English Nature, and bird and butterfly groups. The Binsted group promoted it with a leaflet delivered to all houses in Arundel. The group also met with a representative from Havenwood. It had been assumed that Havenwood dwellers would prefer the Modified Orange Route, 250m from their southernmost home, to upgrading the present A27, a few feet from the northernmost home. This turned out not to be the case. Their representative supported the Pink route.

In July 1992 the Binsted group met Kenneth Carlisle, then Junior Minister for Transport, to argue for the Pink route. Having inspected Binsted Woods, he wrote us a letter saying 'Ancient woodland of this quality must be left alone' – a prescient statement, acknowledging different qualities of ancient woodland. There was a third Public Consultation, in the form of an announcement in January 1993 that the Minister was 'minded to adopt' the Pink route for the western end of the bypass, and a request for comments. The response by the Arundel group, ABAC, was to suggest the 'Green routes' through Binsted Woods. These are marked faintly on the map at Figure 9 in pencil. The concept started as a 'corridor' and evolved at the request of the Department of Transport into four routes.

This new idea was extremely damaging to Binsted Woods and was not supported by the environmental groups which were supporting the Pink route. Andrew Lee, then Director of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, wrote to the 'West Sussex Gazette' stating that it was 'anything but green in environmental terms'. It was also even more damaging to Binsted village than the Orange route. The Department of Transport commissioned a study by EAULUL, the Environmental Assessment Unit of Liverpool University, comparing Green with Pink on environmental and ecological grounds. In July 1993 the Department announced that Pink, combined with Blue at the Arundel end, was the new Preferred Route.

Pink/Blue, as it was known, with its pronounced (and rather impractical) S shape, due to lobbying by Arundel dwellers at the eastern end, and lobbying by Binsted and environmental groups at the western end, became well-known, was made part of the Local Plan, and is still in the running. Despite the upheavals of the 2000s, when it was first endorsed by a Government study and then rejected by Alistair Darling in 2003, and then partly included in the new South Downs National Park, it is the ‘starting point’ of the current consultations in the continuing A27 Feasibility Study.

Figure 9 above contains traces of all the events described, and also, added much later, part of the boundary of the South Downs National Park, created in 2011. This was another exercise in valuing, which has to be treated more fully.

ii. The National Park boundary negotiations

EAULUL, the consultants who compared Pink with Green, had concluded that Green was more damaging than Pink, because Binsted Woods were more valuable than Tortington Common on environmental and ecological grounds. Further, though Green did not destroy much of Binsted Woods, they were found to be ‘nationally important’ and their national importance would be ‘substantially damaged’ by destruction or fragmentation. This had led to the Pink route across Tortington Common being chosen as part of the Preferred Route. But the creation of the South Downs National Park had the extraordinary result of overturning the result of this comparison, as far as the bypass is concerned, by including both areas (Binsted Woods and Tortington Common) in the new National Park.

At first (in their ‘draft boundary’) the Countryside Agency did not even include the whole of Binsted Woods – just the main block, rather as the LiDAR project did, without the projecting shaws and copses, but including five fields within the woodland. The eventual boundary chosen is shown drawn by hand in green on the map in Figure 9 above.

The Countryside Agency were lobbied heavily both by entities such as West Sussex County Council, desperate for new roads, who argued against the creation of the National Park as a whole, and by groups such as CPRE and the South Downs Campaign who wanted to preserve countryside and include more in the Park.

At the Public Inquiry of 2003-5, the Countryside Agency themselves argued against adding any more land at Binsted to the National Park than the ‘core’ of Binsted Woods as suggested by the Draft Boundary of 2001. As I described in the Introduction to this paper, their attitude then was a change from their attitude in the 2001 paper quoted in the Introduction, which stated that the whole area between ‘Walberton and the river Arun’, i.e. all of Binsted and Tortington, met the natural beauty and recreation criteria. This change may be connected to the fact that they had been made aware of the Bullen Report’s unpublished ‘Binsted route’, since they were statutory consultees to that Report, presented to the Department of Transport in 2004.

Among those lobbying for additions to the National Park was the Binsted organisation, Friends of Binsted Church. On behalf of Friends of Binsted Church I wrote two proofs of evidence for the Public Inquiry, asking for either a small addition (the omitted parts of the woods and five more fields) or a larger addition (all of Binsted). We were supported by other campaigning organisations. CPRE wanted the whole of Binsted (and Tortington, and the river right down to the sea) to be included. The South Downs Campaign supported our smaller addition. The result was that all the woodland was included in the National Park, but very little of the attached countryside – only those fields (10 in number) which were within or part-surrounded by woodland.

A map I created in 2004 for Friends of Binsted Church to show the options (see Figure 10 below) gives some idea of the complexity of the process and the way it interacted with the road story. The draft boundary of 2001 included Tortington Common. The Designation Order of 2002 left it out, as a Government study had recommended in June 2002 that the bypass go ahead (on the Pink/Blue route across Tortington Common). In July 2003 the Bypass was cancelled by Alistair Darling on environmental grounds. The Variation Order of 2004 proposed putting Tortington Common back in.

At Binsted, the South Downs Campaign’s boundary (red on Figure 10 below, including the dashed line) was accepted, but not CPRE’s large addition of the whole of Binsted. At Tortington and Arundel, the 2004 ‘Variation Order’ was accepted, and the whole of the Common was included, but not CPRE’s large addition of the whole of the Arun valley watermeadows. Neither Arundel town nor any of the watermeadows were included. So east of Tortington Common the boundary now goes up behind the town.

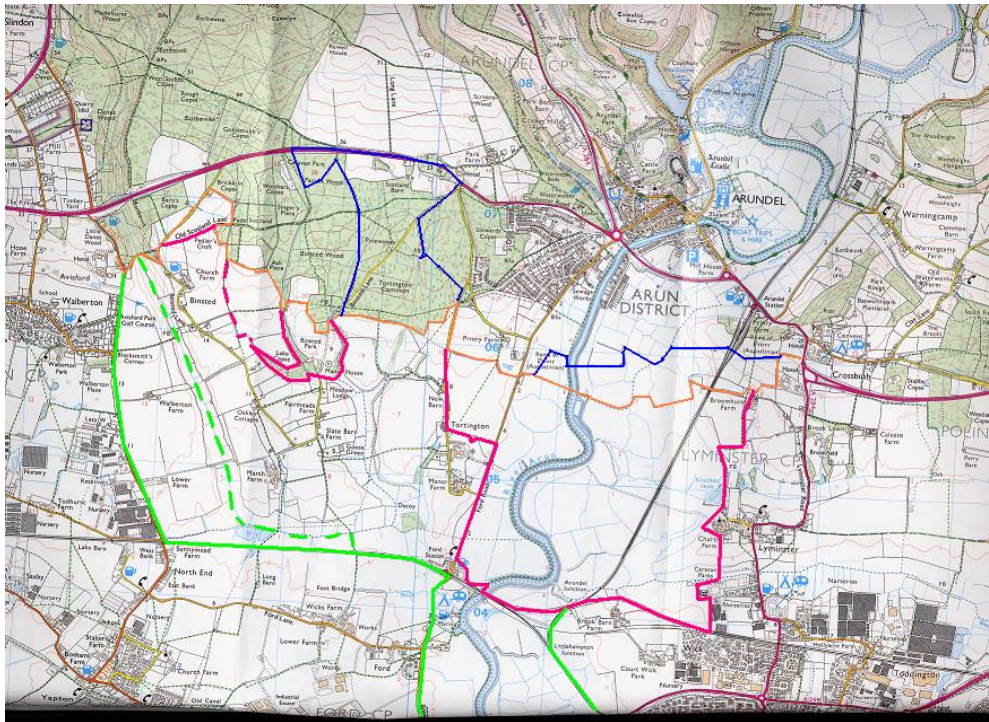


Figure 10: 2004 map for Friends of Binsted Church of National Park boundaries being but forward

Orange: The original Draft Boundary of 2001.

Blue: The areas omitted in the Designation Order 2002. After cancellation of the bypass in 2003, these areas were then proposed for re-inclusion by the Variation Order 2004.

Red: The boundary proposed by the South Downs Campaign. (Dashed line: more inclusive boundary then under discussion – taking account of new hedge planting by Walberton Action Group.)

Green: The boundary proposed by CPRE in a paper to its Policy Committee 17.11.2003. (Dashed line: stronger boundary, under discussion in 2004, following Binsted rife rather than including a transitional area.)

The bypass saga of the 1980s and 90s had been resolved by comparing different types of woodland. In this ‘battle of the woodlands’; Binsted woods with their many ancient oaks, carpets of bluebells and wood anemones, and deep penetration into the countryside had been seen as more valuable by EAULUL, both for wildlife and for recreation, than the mainly coniferised woodland on Tortington Common. The National Park changed all that. All the woods were now in it, so the woods themselves became the overriding value.

iii. The revived bypass plans of 2014-15

Gloomy people in Binsted predicted that including all the woods in the National Park would lead to a road plan that came through the middle of the village. They were right. In August 2014, a meeting of the ‘Stakeholder Reference Group’ of the new ‘A27 Feasibility Study’ (a closed group to which the public were not invited) was shown a map of routes which included an ‘Option B’ which curved south to avoid the National Park and the woodland, and went through the southern part of Binsted and part of Walberton, the neighbouring village, instead, crossing the beautiful rife valley where there is now a golf course. These were leaked. What was ABNC, the Binsted group from the 90s, to do? Could it still support the Pink/Blue route through Tortington Common?

Many things had changed, and its policy had to change as well.

- Many conifers on Tortington Common were toppled in the 1987 hurricane. These areas have regrown as semi-natural woodland. Only about half of the Common is now conifers, and ten new small woodland owners there are helping regenerate it.
- Some had always wanted to campaign against having a bypass at all, but in the 90s that did not seem to be an option. The few who dared do this were voices crying in the wilderness. Now it was much more of a possibility, with both local and national organisations campaigning against roadbuilding.
- The main campaigning group in Arundel was not asking for a route through Binsted – as in the 1990s – but for no offline bypass.
- The environmental groups who had supported the Pink/Blue route in the past, such as the Sussex Wildlife Trust, no longer supported it.
- Supporting a bypass through Tortington village (where all the offline routes would go) did not seem logical as part of the case against a bypass through Binsted.
- We now have the internet, transponders in cars, Satnav, instant traffic news, and the possibility of managing congestion some other way rather than by building new roads.
- We also have climate change, which new roads will worsen.
- We also have the SACTRA report of 1994, and other studies, which show that building more roads leads to more traffic and more congestion.
- New planning policies strongly protect Ancient Woodland and National Parks.

At a packed meeting in Binsted church the group decided to concentrate on opposing Option B. A few voices asked to continue to support the Pink/Blue route, but instead ABNC's campaigning since then has been against an offline bypass.

That version of Option B, through Binsted and Walberton, has disappeared from Highways England's latest plans. A new Stakeholder Group in July 2015, a new map to be leaked; only this time Highways England were careful not to show actual routes, but only conceptual ones. Even though it was conceptual, the new map confirmed that the Binsted route was the 'Option B, longer to avoid the National Park' of the Feasibility Study's March 2015 Reports. Those reports contained large amounts of analysis of Option B, but no maps (except an earlier version of this map, with the National Park boundary shown incorrectly).

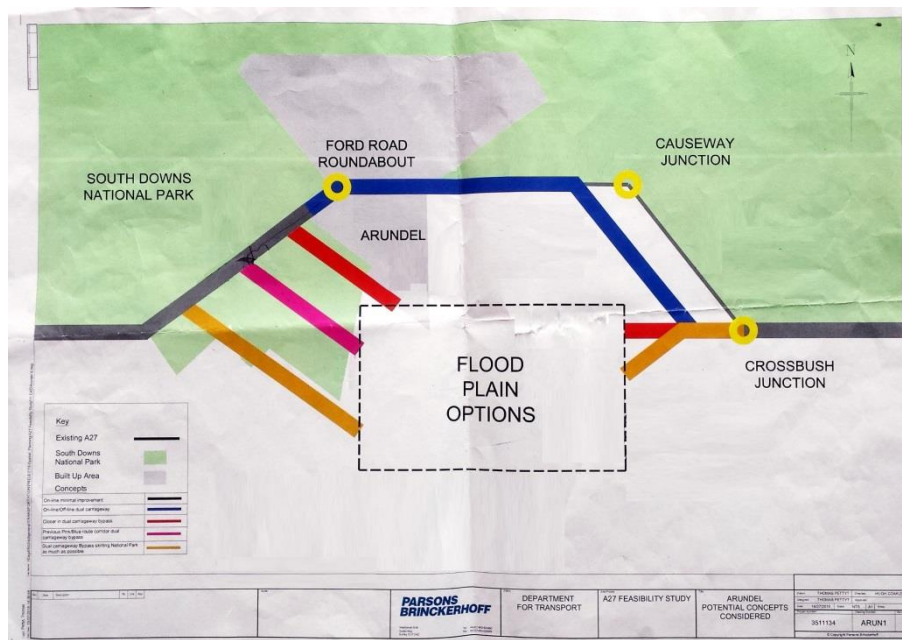


Figure 11: July 2015: Highways England's 'schematic' map of Arundel bypass options, shown at a Stakeholder group meeting. A corrected version of the only map of bypass options shown in the 2015 A27 Feasibility Study Reports.

iv. March 2016: maps of the Binsted route are discovered by Freedom of Information

The Bullen report of 2004 was listed as a source of information by the March 2015 Reports of the A27 Feasibility Study. In March 2016 a Freedom of Information request by a member of ABNC acquired this report, which has never been made public before. It was clearly commissioned in the wake of Alistair Darling's 2003 decision to cancel the 1993 'Preferred Route' and his request for less

environmentally damaging solutions. Among the solutions it looked at were a large number of online improvements, and a route round the edge of the woodland, through Binsted.

The Bullen report discovery made available a clear, detailed map of the route through Binsted that had only been indicated schematically by Highways England in its Reports of 2015. A further request, for an up-to-date map of the 1993 'Preferred Route', resulted in an email from Highways England attaching in error another, still clearer map of the Binsted route, from another unpublished report, by Faber Maunsell (2006).²⁶ Members of ABNC could then ask for that report through Freedom of Information, read it at Highways England's headquarters and photograph its maps.

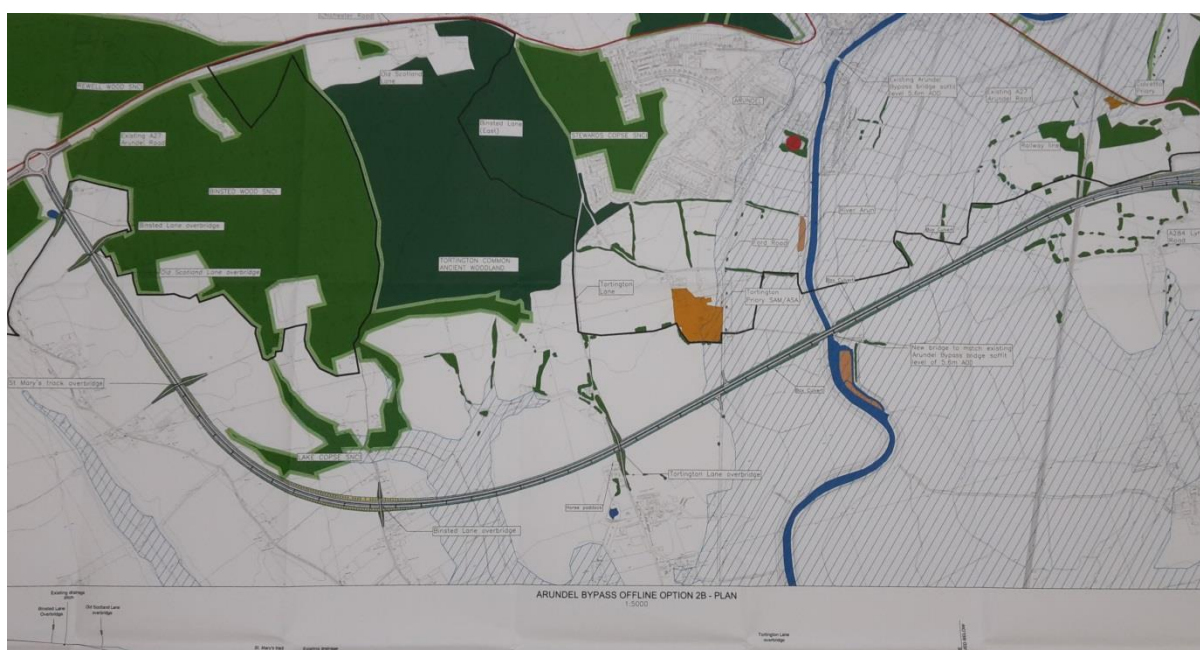


Figure 12: The Faber Maunsell report's map of the Binsted route (2006). Light green line shows the Binsted Woods SNCI. Black line shows a draft National Park boundary.

It is clear that this is the Binsted route analysed in the March 2015 A27 Feasibility Study reports and called there 'Option B, longer to avoid the National Park', though there may be minor differences. The Feasibility Study did describe the route (in a garbled paragraph which does not allow a map to be drawn), and added a description of an 'alternative alignment', with a flyover junction further west, instead of a roundabout, which would be even more devastating to the village, if that were possible.

²⁶ The error shows that someone in Highways England thinks the Binsted route is the 'preferred route' even though maps of it have never been published and it has not yet been subject to public consultation.

Faced with this clear evidence of the route, ABNC prepared a long ‘Evidence Report’, showing the planning reasons why this route through Binsted is too damaging to be included as an option in the proposed Public Consultation about the Arundel Bypass in summer 2017. The supporting evidence includes a professional ecologist’s Environmental Impact Report on the route, commissioned from MAVES²⁷ by ABNC, showing that this under-surveyed area is extremely rich in wildlife and would be seriously damaged; a report on the first Binsted Arts Festival and other evidence of Binsted’s cultural life; the 2016 petition against the route with 1300 signatures; community publications and news of historical discoveries.

The Evidence Report (now on the www.arundelbypass.co.uk website) was submitted to Highways England in October 2016. In January 2017 an email of acknowledgement stated that Highways England could not tell us anything about what routes would be included in the consultation, but they would meet with the group at the start of it. This might mean that the route (or something very close to it) will be included in the public consultation.

v. March 2017: The planned public consultation

Highways England’s planned public consultation is sure to include the old Preferred Route (Pink-Blue) as the Minister stated in 2014 that it was the ‘starting point’ for the current Feasibility Study. If, as expected, the Binsted route or a version of it is also included, comparing the route through Binsted with the old Preferred Route through Tortington Common will be a difficult decision for those taking part. Those who don’t know Binsted may be tempted to choose the Binsted route because it passes through less of the National Park (though still destroying part of its setting, cutting into it for 450m, and fragmenting its woodland). This may be balanced by the indubitable fact that the Pink-Blue route cuts through one village (Tortington) instead of two (Tortington and Binsted).

The comparison is rather like being asked whether you would rather have your arm or your leg cut off. They are both massively destructive. If in the ‘battle of the woodlands’ Tortington Common is now seen as more valuable (for recreation and wildlife) than it was in the 1990s, Binsted Woods have not become less valuable – only more so, with the MAVES

²⁷ Mid Arun Valley Environmental Survey, a local group organising wildlife surveys (including undergraduate projects), and conservation work such as pond clearance, hedge laying and removal of invasive species, with the help of volunteers and National Park rangers. www.maves.org.uk. Its declared aims are ‘to understand, conserve and enhance the Mid Arun Valley environment south and west of Arundel’.

surveys finding more and more unexpectedly rich results. Thirteen of the 17 British species of bat, two of them Annex II listed, one of them only recently discovered, were recorded in a short two-night survey. Wildlife habitats, and foraging bats, do not conveniently stop at the edge of the woodland: the fields, hedges, ditches and streams of Binsted's countryside are an integral part of the habitat.

The arguments against building a far-offline Arundel bypass at all mount up every day. The latest development in the Chichester road plans (March 2017) – complete cancellation of the improvement scheme, due to 'lack of consensus' according to the Minister of Transport – makes building a long, damaging, expensive new bypass at Arundel look even more unwise than before. It will attract more traffic to this part of the A27 and this will cause even worse traffic jams at Chichester.

At Worthing, as at Chichester, there have been many suggestions of new bypasses through beautiful land which is now part of the South Downs National Park. A Downland route is not being officially proposed at either place at the moment, though inevitably there are campaigns (by those affected by current traffic) to bring them back. It is therefore inconsistent, in the present situation, to insist on a new bypass damaging the National Park at Arundel, as Highways England and local politicians have been trying to do.

At Arundel, although the Town Council has supported the Pink-Blue route for many years, there are groups arguing for improvements to the present A27 to be included in the consultation as an alternative to far-offline bypasses. One possibility they would like to see included is a new 'short bypass', a new wide single carriageway section of road connecting the half-completed flyover junction at Crossbush to the Ford Road roundabout. This is known as 'new Purple'. The new Arundel A27 Forum includes organisations such as the South Downs Society and CPRE which support this proposal. Arundel SCATE, affiliated to the wider organisation South Coast Alliance on Transport and the Environment, has held public meetings, walks, and an election 'hustings' to spread information and allow these ideas to be put forward.

One must be glad that all the woodland at Binsted and Tortington is included in the National Park. But it would be very sad if that valuation, laudable in itself, led to the destruction of Binsted, a beautiful village which is partly in, partly outside the National Park. It would hardly be keeping to the statutory Purposes of the National Park, which are:

1. To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area,
and
2. To promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the park's special
qualities by the public.

New decisions about the value of woodland, mixed with politics, have put those Purposes in danger. It is a salutary story, and not ended yet.