

## Down Grange Meadow

Park in Homesteads Road below St Mark's Church and enter at the five bar gate. The meadow was part of Down Grange Home Farm and originally cultivated, but has been laid to meadow for the last 40 years.

- 1 The mature spiny in mid-field, of Beech & Ash, would be cattle shelter in former times. If you are lucky you may see a Sparrowhawk fly to or from these trees.
- 2 The soil hereabouts is clay-with-flints on underlying chalk. In the bottom right corner of the field is a fenced-off disused chalk pit, surrounded by mature Beeches.
- 3 On the tree lined pathway between the A30 and the belt of young trees look out for some of the 15 species of butterfly recorded this year, such as skippers, browns, blues & commas feeding on a variety of nectar plants. Also look out for dragon flies!
- 4 Here you can make a detour into Down Grange Home Park which has a number of mature specimen trees such as Copper beech, Scots pine etc.
- 5 To continue the walk, turn left and walk up the field with the tree belt on your right. Planted 35 years ago we have Cherry, Beech and Norway Maple with self sown Oak and Ash. Along the belt we are opening up embayments to provide a variety of aspects and new shrub planting.
- 6 As you reach the top of the field you will see the beginnings of the new copse on your left between the path and St Mark's church.

- 7 To reach the Old Hedgerow walk through the tree belt into Down Grange Sports fields.

## The Old Hedgerow

This old hedgerow is a remnant field boundary from the days of Down Grange Home Farm and is at least 150 years old. It was originally planted as a hawthorn hedge inter-planted with English hardwoods – Oak, Beech, Ash and Elm.

- 1 Sadly we lost all the elm in the 1960s as did much of England. Elms sucker, so new shrubs grow at intervals along the hedge line. As they are not yet immune from Dutch elm disease, they each die when they reach about 10 feet high. Note the dead elm at the first pathway through the hedge.
  - 2 A hedge naturally acquires a variety of other species over time, brought in by birds or the wind. Lookout for Elder, Dog rose, Damson, Goat willow & Wayfarer tree. The hedgerow has not been managed for decades and therefore the hawthorn is often 20 feet high and heavy with ivy, which can provide berries for the Blackbirds in winter and summer roosts for bats.
- In some cases these trees decay and fall in winter storms. This is not entirely a bad thing as it provides a good opportunity for a variety of lichen, invertebrate life and cover for nesting birds.

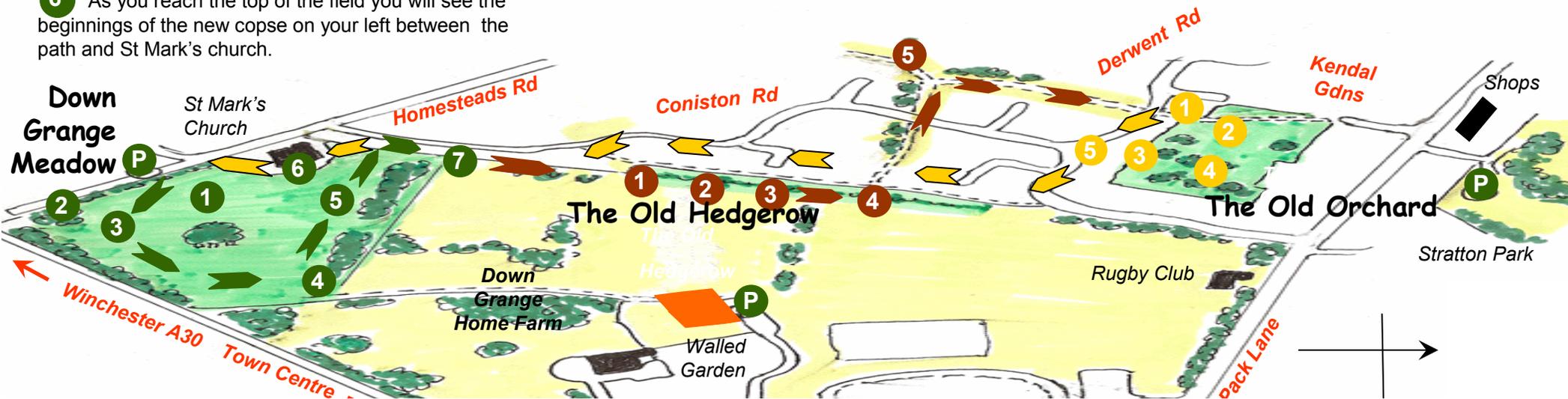
- 3 Look out and listen for the Green Woodpeckers' distinctive 'yaffle' call and signs of Sparrowhawk hunting!

Here you can make a detour to visit the Walled Garden (originally servicing Down Grange House). This contains a dipping pond, demonstration kitchen garden beds and a herbaceous border walk.

- 4 The hedgerow also unfortunately has a large amount of self seeded Sycamore or Norway maple, which we are gradually thinning out.
- At this point turn through the hedgerow and follow the footpath between the houses and which crosses Coniston Road, to the Scots Pine Walk.

- 5 The Scots Pine Walk trees are approximately 100 years old and planted in late Victorian times when they were much in vogue. The lines of trees represent boundary lines to the original small holdings on Kempshott Lane.

Turn right at the fork in the path. After crossing Derwent Road the path leads you to The Old Orchards, Kendal Gardens.



## The Old Orchards

To find out what the Old Orchards site offers, turn right off the footpath and follow the boundary fence which encloses the site. We have a variety of mature trees:

- 1 The Horse Chestnuts and the line of Oak trees stretching across the site are over 100 years old; as is a fine specimen Walnut tree 25 yards further on. Look out for a Greater Spotted Woodpecker checking out the oak trees.
- 2 The central part of the site reflects the varied fruit trees planted by the smallholders at the beginning of the 20th Century. We have an original Conference pear and a Bramley's Apple Seedling. They are now joined by our new fruit trees: Crab apples, Medlars, Victoria plum, Quince, Greengage, Williams & Conference pears and the next generation of cooking and eating apples.
- 3 In the more wooded east end of the site look out for Holly, Cherry, Damson & Hawthorn. There are a number of Hazel stools which have been coppiced at irregular intervals. We have now reinstated a coppicing programme.
- 4 Also lookout for a circle of very old hawthorns of indeterminate age. The original "mother" hawthorn probably died 100 years ago. The line of mature Beeches complete the woodland area.  
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- 5 Leaving the Orchard by the same path as you entered, turn left into Derwent Road, continue left into Coniston Road and in a few yards cross the road and join the tarmac footpath which leads back to the Old Hedgerow and follow the path which takes the western side of the hedgerow.

Lookout for the Turkey Oak (note the acorns, a little different to acorns of English oak). This side of the hedge has Elder, Bramble and ivy covered Hawthorn. Pass the Beech trees and Horse Chestnuts which trace an old field boundary and finally cut back through the hedge to the sports

pitch and turn right to retrace your steps to the Meadow where you should take the path towards St. Mark's which will lead you back to your starting point.

### Walk Options

The complete walk as described starts from Homesteads Road and covers all three sites. This is 2.5km. (1.6 miles) in length.

Alternatively park in Stratton Park and walk just the Old Orchards or the whole walk in reverse sequence.

Yet another option is to park by the Walled Garden.

**The majority of the complete walk is over rough grass or playing fields. It is recommended that stout footwear be worn, or wellies if wet! Because of this, only a small part of the walk is accessible by wheelchair.**



## Kempshott Conservation Group

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For more information on other conservation groups and activities in Basingstoke go to the website <http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/browse/environment-and-planning/conservation/nature-conservation/>



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