

LOCAL INTEREST

The Drift

This was once a green lane used for driving livestock between the common grazing land north of Southey Woods and the water meadows in the Welland Valley. A clue to its antiquity is the great variety of tree, shrub and climbing species in the hedges and the bluebells beside the track.

The field on the left was once called High Field, one of Ufford's 3 large open fields. It extended as far as King Street, the parish boundary. For centuries the village people cultivated crops in long strips, for themselves, the lord of the manor and the parson. Even "the queane" (Queen Elizabeth I) owned strips in Ufford's open fields. They formed part of the flat, mainly limestone country, known locally as "heath", extending from Helpston to Wittering.

The field on the right was once part of Church Field. Lambpits Spinney on the right was shown in the Enclosure Map of 1799 and may take its name from a sheep pen.



Oak & Ash by Old Stone Pit

The next group of trees on the right, including a large oak and ash, have grown over an old stone pit. Limestone is classed as a permeable rock, meaning that rainwater seeps down through cracks and joints. It appears that this may be a swallow hole, which acts like a colander. After heavy rain water can be seen running into the pit but never forms a pond.



Black Bryony & Old Man's Beard

The next field on the right was named on old maps as "The Shrubbes" and used for communal village grazing before the enclosure of the open fields.

Southey Woods

They were once part of the Royal Forest of Rockingham and, in the lord of the manor of Ufford's land inventory of 1566, they were called Southehawe. Parts are described as "ancient woodland" because the land has never been cultivated, but over the years it has been cleared and re-planted many times. The largest trees are oak, beech and pines and there is an under storey of hazel, birch, blackthorn, elder, dogwood, guelder rose and wild privet. There are also some surprises such as the large wild cherry trees, maples and hickory.

In a recent year, over 50 kinds of wild flowers were identified in the woods, including less common flowers such as early purple orchids and fritillary.

Wildlife is abundant but may remain in hiding on summer afternoons. Mammals – fallow deer, muntjack, fox, grey squirrel, rabbit, 3 bat species, shrews and voles. Birds – spotted woodpecker, green woodpecker, goldcrest, wren, tawny owl, crossbill, several birds of prey including red kite, and all the common birds; also many butterflies and other



Fritillary

insects, as well as amphibians in the wetland. Southey Woods are now managed by the Forestry Commission as a source of timber. they are a popular destination for family walkers, dog owners, cyclists and horse riders. Tree felling may seem destructive but it opens up the woodland rides and the small annual plants soon recover.

John Clare used to walk through these woods on his botanical rambles. In December 1824 he was there hunting for ferns. He saw a branch of blackthorn, dog rose and elder in full leaf in one hedge row as well as a bum-barrel (long tailed tit) with moss as if building a nest.

Langley or Langdyke Bush

All that is visible now is a circular mound of unploughed land. Growing on it is a hawthorn bush, planted by the John Clare Society in 1996. Situated at the junction of the parishes of Ufford, Upton, Ailsworth and Helpston, this was a pagan religious site. For centuries it was the open air court of the Langdyke Hundred, which met twice a year to judge serious crimes. It was attended by parish representatives and presided over by the Abbot of Peterborough. It was the site of the gibbet until the early 1700s. About this time the court moved to the Exeter Arms at Helpston.



Hawthorn on Grassy Mound

It was the destination of many of John Clare's favourite walks and he used to meet the gypsies there. He immortalised the old hawthorn which grew there in one of his poems, "O Langley

Bush! The shepherd's sacred shade". He wrote in his Journal in 1824 that the hundred year old hawthorn tree had been cut down by vandals.

King Street & "protected" road side verges

The straight section of Langley Bush Road is part of the Roman Road, now known as King Street, which went north from the Roman town (Durobrivae) near Water Newton to Lincoln. The verges on Langley Bush Road and Marholm Road are designated as County Wildlife Sites because of the variety of limestone tolerant plants which grow there. Look out for example for cowslip, bird's foot trefoil, lady's bedstraw, field scabious, rest harrow, knapweed, broomrape, salad burnet, bladder campion. The verges act as corridors for seed dispersal and many kinds of wildlife. Except at road junctions, only a one metre wide visibility strip is cut in summer. In early autumn, the whole verge is cut.

The wide verges on High Field Road are also "protected" and are ablaze with wild flowers in summer.



Millennium Trees & Ufford Church

One of a series of circular walks issued by parish councils in Barnack Ward

John Clare logo by Roe Yates

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SOUTHEY WOODS AND LANGLEY BUSH

Start and finish: Ufford, about 5½ miles from Stamford and 10 miles from Peterborough.

Parking: Ufford - roadside in Main Street, by church gate or in Hillside Close; or roadside near Southey Wood entrance in Langley Bush Road, as the car park is closed at present.

Refreshments: White Hart, Ufford, 01780 740250.

Distance: 4-5¼ miles, depending on route.

OS maps: 234 and 235 Explorer, 1:25,000.

Warning: strong shoes or boots are recommended in wet weather.

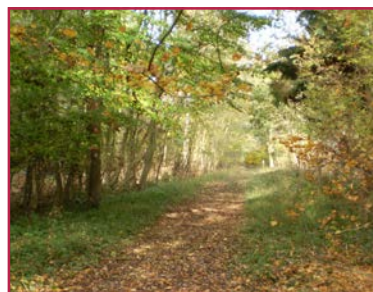
THE WALK

1 Start walking through the village in the Peterborough direction. The map on the Millennium Stone at the top of the hill shows the main points of interest. The footway ends at Hillside Close but it is only a 400 yard road walk to the track on the right.

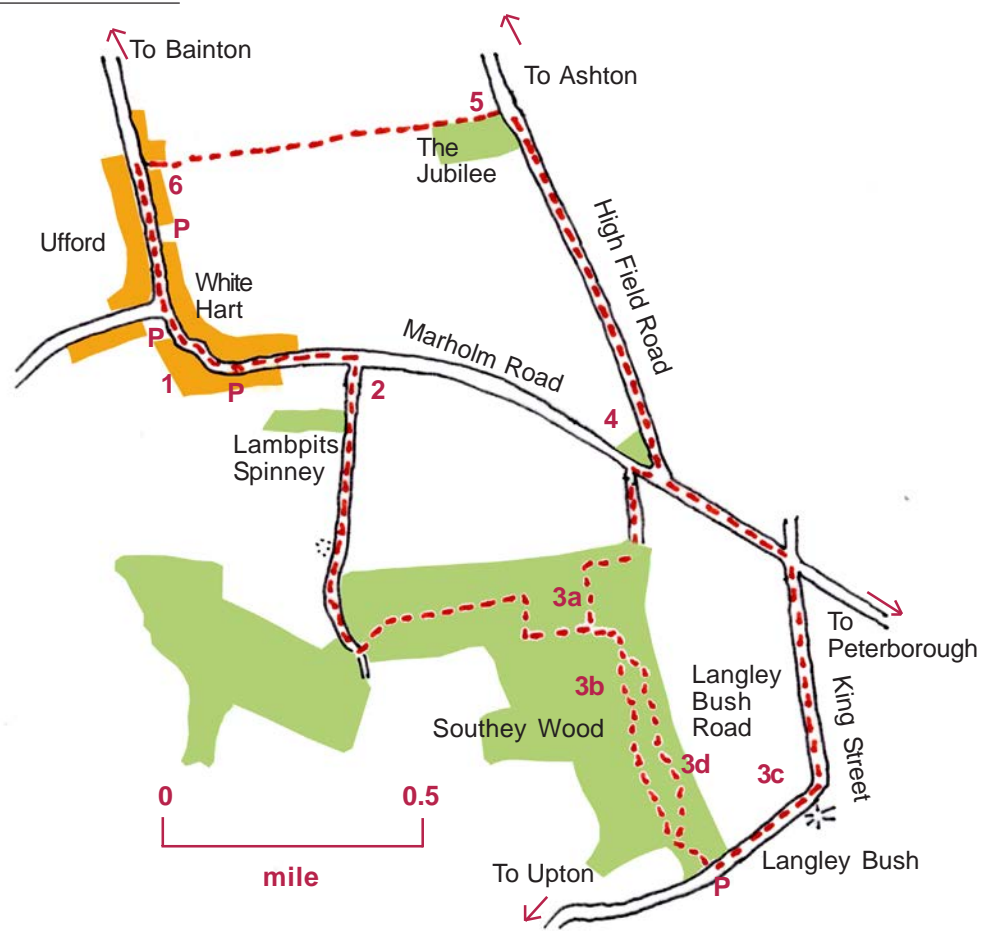
2 The track, known locally as "the drift" leads into Southey Woods. Turn left at the crossroads and walk round the barrier which is there to exclude mechanically propelled vehicles. Clay soils result in standing water in ditches and clumps of reeds. There are some gorse bushes which grow in acid, often sandy soils. Notice how the ages and types of plants change as you continue along the main track.

3a For the shorter walk, turn to the left and follow the trail through an archway of trees,

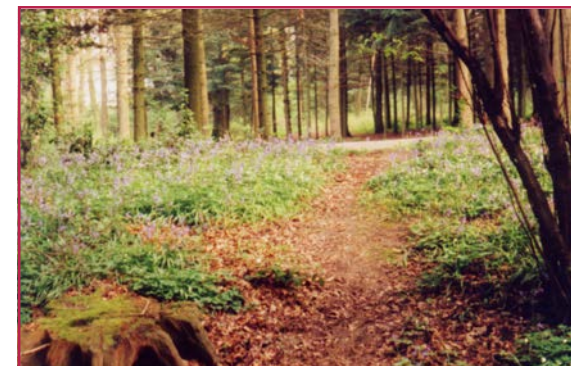
shown on the photo, and on the map. This continues round a bend to the right to a gateway at the northern edge of the wood. Keep left on the narrow path between two overgrown hedges on to the road between Marholm and Ufford. Walk right for a few yards and then turn left into High Field Road.



Trail through tree archway



3b For the longer walk, continue walking on the main track through Southey Wood, noticing the various types of trees and woodland management. Before the gate at the entrance there are tall Corsican pines and some majestic oaks.



Bluebells & Wood Anemones

Turn left on Langley Bush Road. Just before the road bends to the left, Langley Bush, a single hawthorn on a grassy mound, can be seen on the right through the gate and fence.

3c Either continue down King Street to the crossroads, and then turn left on Marholm Road and walk a short distance to High Field Road, or...

3d Retrace your steps back to Southey Wood, go round the gate and this time follow the path through the forty year old beech plantation. This leads on to the main track. Follow this round the left hand bend as far as the trail on the right. Continue as described in 3a.

4 Then turn down High Field Road, a narrow lane between wide verges, for about ¾ mile. There are good views over the wide Welland valley. Turn left on the footpath beside the wood, planted to commemorate Queen Victoria's jubilee in 1893.

5 Follow the path to Ufford, which crosses what was once one of Ufford's 3 large, open fields, called Clay Field. The row of young trees was planted by the farmer for the 2000 millennium.

6 Turn left on to Main Street and continue through the village.



John Clare Country Southey Woods & Langley Bush



Southey Woods

One in a series of circular walks issued by Parishes in Barnack Ward