



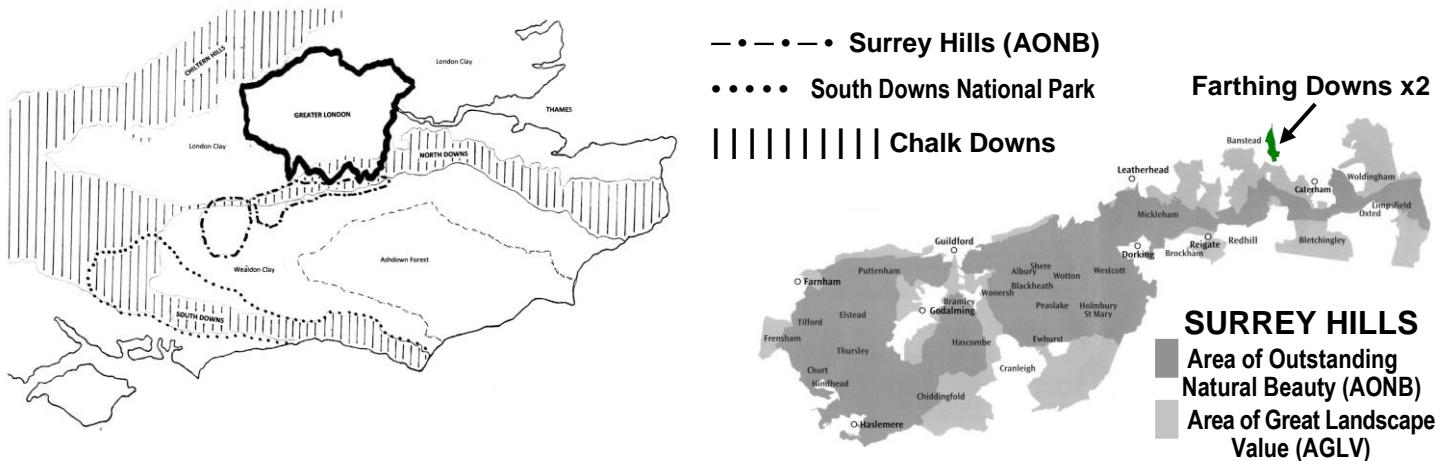
Valuing Your Local Environment

"Last weekend we drove to Farthing Downs, a rolling chalk escarpment in Coulsdon with breathtaking views. Along with New Hill, Devilsden Wood, Eight Acres Common, and the aptly named Happy Valley, it's a real rural idyll, and on a fine autumn day it's impossible to believe that you're in Greater London at all". *

[* Melissa Harrison Nature Notebook, *The Times* 10 October 2015]

The article goes on to say this rural idyll, hidden away in the urban jungle, "is just as much a part of London nowadays as the Shard". On a fine day you can actually see the Shard! But being embedded now in London's suburban spread inevitably brings a host of pressures. This display of images is to get you thinking about how we can best sustain this precious local environment for future generations.

Farthing Downs is the highest stretch of land in the whole of Greater London – topped only by the airfield at Biggin Hill – and all part of the chalk North Downs which stretch from beyond Guildford in the west, to the white cliffs of Dover in the east. Purchased by the City of London Corporation, through a special Act of Parliament 130 years ago, the newly protected Farthing Downs was intended to give quality open space to people trapped in murky London – then way to the North. Coulsdon was a tiny village of 2300 people. Today it's a town of 85000 and still growing; because the London conurbation seems set to house three million more people by 2036.



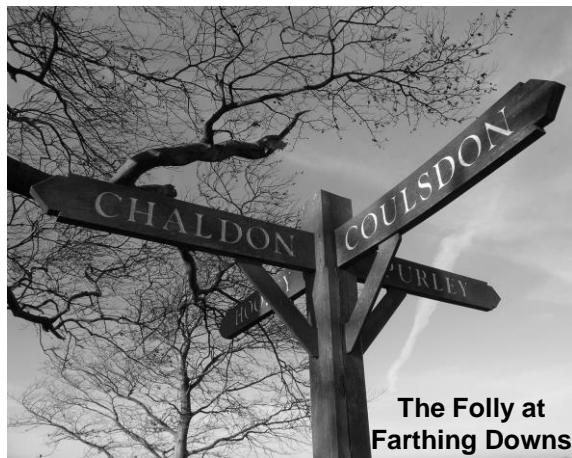
Both Farthing Downs, and Happy Valley (the latter owned and managed by Croydon Council) are green belt in local plans, with each having added protection as sites of nature conservation importance, and special scientific interest. Farthing Downs is also a scheduled ancient monument (early historical burial place). And as the maps show, much of the North Downs along London's boundary has further protection either as Outstanding Natural Beauty or Great Landscape Value. The Surrey Hills has a Management Board, and a Society to encourage corporate and individual involvement. The Friends of Farthing Downs support the City's rangers, and encourages interest in the Downs.

See over for 'Dangers to the Downs'

Photo Display at Coulsdon South

The purpose of this display of images about our precious landscape is to encourage your interest in its continual care and conservation.

The Friends of Farthing Downs are grateful to Rod Swain (rodsworld@hotmail.co.uk) who lives close to the Downs and provided images from his considerable collection. Thanks also to Jayn Harding for two images taken at 'The Folly'. Gary Beckett at Advanced Print in Coulsdon undertook the printing. The Friends are also grateful to Stephen Norris, Manager Southern Rail for permission to display these photographs.



FOR MORE INFORMATION AND ADVICE

- www.friendsoffarthingdowns.co.uk
- www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/citycommons
- www.downlandsproject.org.uk
- www.accs-croydon.co.uk
- www.old surreydowns.org.uk
- www.surreyhillsociety.org
- www.naturaltrail.co.uk/northdowns

Valuing Your Local Environment – Dangers to the Downs

(Continued from overleaf)

The Health Boards 130 years ago were building isolation hospitals and asylums way out along the pollution-free North Downs – Queen Elizabeth (Banstead), St. Lawrence (Caterham). Netherne and Cane Hill. All now given over to housing, or soon to be.

Cane Hill is immediately opposite Farthing Downs on the other side of the Brighton Road. Coulsdon South station (originally called Coulsdon and Cane Hill) was a special stop on the Brighton Line so relatives could visit inmates. The 670 dwellings now being built there will extend over an area three times the hospital's footprint; and development still to be framed may well require de-designation of Cane Hill's remaining green belt.

Hemming the Downs with housing and traffic inevitably raises the risk of pollution, and affects the delicate balance of flora and fauna. Quadcar racing, horse-riding, and even cycling can affect bridleways and footpaths. Croydon Council, and the City Corporation, now have severe resource pressures – with a landscape free of commercial farming needing continual upkeep. We need to be ever vigilant to safeguard our precious heritage.