

ANCIENT IFIELD



To the north of the River Mole and south of Ifield Court is a small oxbow pond. An oxbow pond is formed when the path of a river changes, leaving behind a stranded section of water with nowhere to flow. This pond was a part of the River Mole in the past and is the most obvious section of the former path of the river, which actually extends to around half a mile in length, winding its way across the field to the north of its current path from where Ifield Brook joins the Mole to close to the bridge on Ifield Green (the road).

Visually, the former channel varies from barely noticeable to a few feet deep and often in water, particularly at the eastern end and, of course, at the oxbow pond. It is not known exactly when the path of the river changed or whether it was a natural transition, but all the evidence points to it being a man-made adjustment. The OS map of 1795 shows the river taking its old course and, published 45 years later, the tithe map shows the river taking its current course as does a map of the East Grinstead area dating to 1808, so based on these maps we can date the change reasonably accurately to between 1795 & 1808.

The question which remains unanswered, is why? Why would the landowner go to the effort of re-channelling half a mile of river? The obvious explanation would be to add several acres of land to, what was, the park of the Manor of Ifield, but with the now stranded river being left in situ to silt up this makes little sense.

The current high level Homes England plan for West of Ifield appears to show the relief road cutting straight across this field, most likely destroying this visual reminder of the historic path of the River Mole.



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