

Grange Park Woodlands

11



Wildlife in the woods

Wildlife in the Grange Park woods is prolific and varied. There is a wide variety of trees and shrubs, both native and planted. Large sessile oak trees grow in Walkworth Wood and Gallery Bottom. Ash, hawthorn and holly are also found throughout the woods. Less common are rowan, whitebeam, wild cherry, crab apple and guelder rose. There is an area of wet woodland (alder carr) in Ockley Bottom which is rare in Rotherham. Planted trees and shrubs include sweet chestnut, beech, rhododendron, Scots pine, hornbeam and larch. These are left over from the landscaping of Thundercliffe Grange parkland.

The woodland flowers are an attractive feature in late spring and early summer, including the widely distributed wood anemone, bluebell and yellow archangel and the less common wood melick, golden saxifrage and townhall clock.



Bird life in the woods is rich. Breeding birds include nuthatch, tawny owl, great and lesser spotted woodpeckers,



green woodpecker, sparrowhawk, chiffchaff and blackcap. Willow warbler and white-throat breed on the woodland fringes.

Butterflies include the once rare but increasingly common speckled wood.

Management of the woods

As a part of the Fuelling a Revolution project a new management plan has been drawn up for the period from 2005 to 2010. The emphasis is on continued selective thinning of trees and creating new and enlarging existing canopy gaps. This will encourage new tree growth and create a better habitat for wildlife. Some of the rhododendron in Barber Wood will be removed to diversify ground flora. Improvements will be made to rights of way.

General information

To find out more about the woodlands' management and maintenance contact: the Woodlands Officer on 01709 822177; or look on www.rotherham.gov.uk or www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk.

Thanks to Mel and Joan Jones for their help in creating this leaflet. Mel's book 'Rotherham's Woodland Heritage' is available from Rotherham Arts Centre.



FUELLING A REVOLUTION

the woods that founded the steel country

Ancient Woodland Heritage

The five Grange Park woods – Gallery Bottom, Kennel Wood, Walkworth Wood, Barber Wood and Ockley Bottom are all ancient woodlands (they have been in existence since before 1600).

Land Use History

By the time of the Domesday Book (1086) a large part of Kimberworth Parish was wood pasture, an open type of wood where animals were allowed to graze. In 1161 Kirkstead Abbey monks began mining ironstone here, building forges at Kirkstead Abbey Grange. Later, Gallery Bottom marked the boundary of Kimberworth Deer Park.

As the local population grew the Park became more important for coppice wood (trees were periodically cut at ground level and allowed to grow back) to make different products. In a document written for the 7th Earl of Shrewsbury (died 1616) 'Walkworthe Wood' was referred to among an inventory of coppice woods.

The Earl of Effingham owned the woods from 1727 after the division of the Duke of Norfolk's estate. They remained as coppice until Thundercliffe Grange was rebuilt in 1777 when several were incorporated into the landscaping for the Grange.

A deep shaft mine at Grange Colliery operated between 1845-1962. It employed 800 people and had its own railway branch line that ran through Ockley Bottom.

Rotherham Borough Council bought Kennel Wood, Gallery Bottom, Walkworth Wood and Ockley Bottom from the Earl's estate in 1929, Barber Wood being purchased in the 1940s.

After World War Two open-cast mining had a major effect and part of Gallery Bottom and the whole of Brown Spring were lost as a result.

Walkworth Wood was first recorded in the late 16th century. It is one of Rotherham's old spring (coppice) woods. There are foundations of a charcoal maker's hut in the north of the wood. Old boundary walls from past management still survive. Mining was once common and over 100 bell pits and several quarries can be seen.

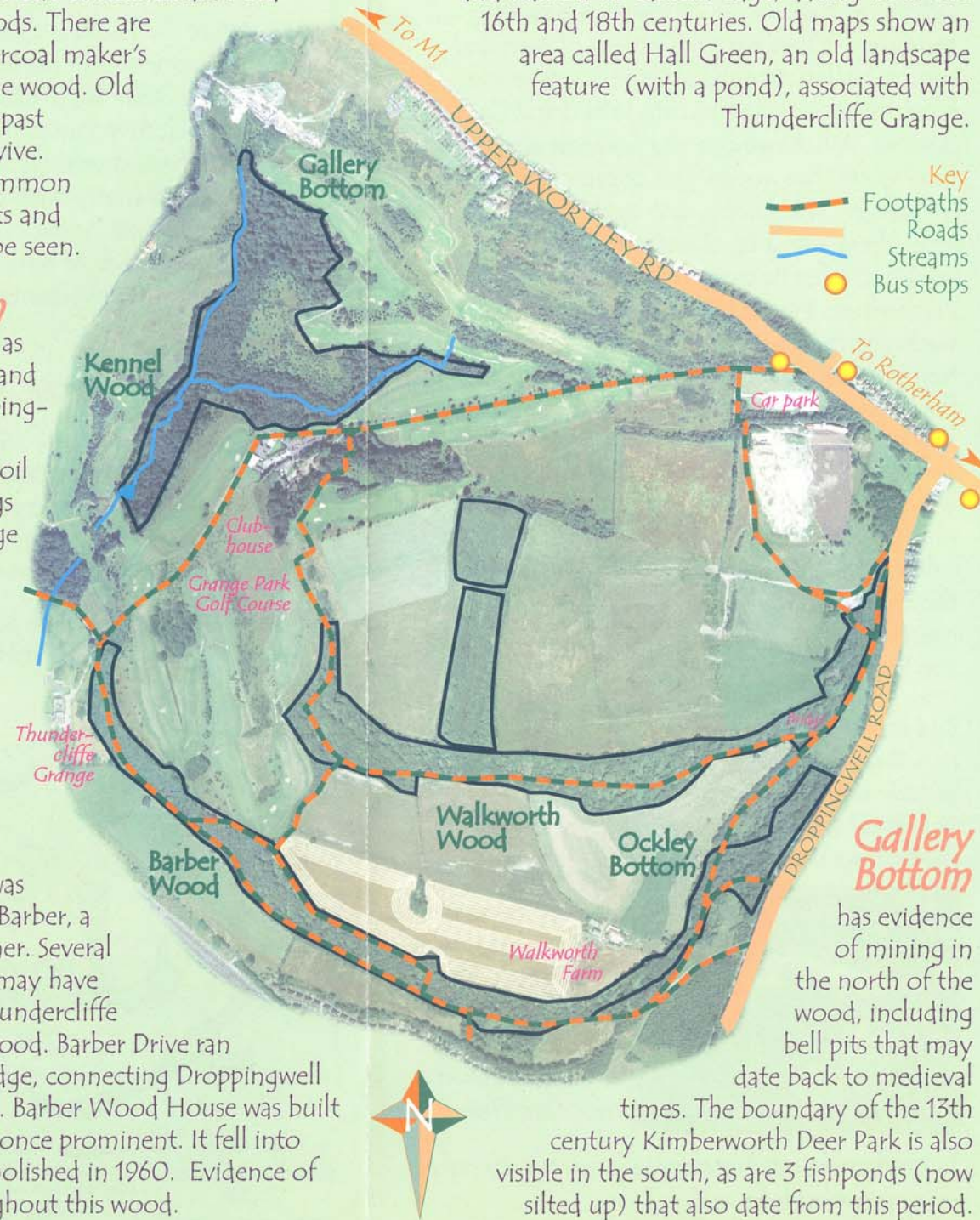
Ockley Bottom

was originally known as Droppingwell Wood and was larger until Droppingwell Lane bisected it. Much of it overlies spoil from colliery workings and its ancient heritage can only be seen in less disturbed areas. A disused railway is located in the north of the wood, which served Grange Colliery. A sculpture trail was recently created in the wood.

Barber Wood

was named after Thomas Barber, a 16th century landowner. Several disused quarries that may have supplied stone for Thundercliffe Grange exist in the wood. Barber Drive ran along the southern edge, connecting Droppingwell Lane with the Grange. Barber Wood House was built in the 1840s and was once prominent. It fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1960. Evidence of mining occurs throughout this wood.

Kennel Wood has a large boundary ditch and wall on its eastern edge, dating from the 16th and 18th centuries. Old maps show an area called Hall Green, an old landscape feature (with a pond), associated with Thundercliffe Grange.



Gallery Bottom

has evidence of mining in the north of the wood, including bell pits that may date back to medieval times. The boundary of the 13th century Kimberworth Deer Park is also visible in the south, as are 3 fishponds (now silted up) that also date from this period.