

AREA 1: PARISH OF COOMBE FIELDS: COOMBE WOODLAND, LITTLE WOOD AND HIGH WOOD 19/47 & 3/48

Sources of information are:

1. *Ecosite notes (HBA)*
2. *Tasker 1990 The Nature of Warwickshire*
3. *Local Record Office 2017/8 (RM)*
4. *Wager 1998 Woods, Wolds & Groves (Ph.D thesis)*

ECOLOGY

COOMBE ABBEY has probably the best range of species of **bats** in the county due to the proximity of wood / grassland / water and suitable buildings. Also of note is the **giant woodwasp**, a harmless 25mm. long mimic of the hornet and the **heronry**, one of only half a dozen in the county (**Source 2**)

- **High Wood:** (125 acres) Ancient semi natural, centre felled 1972, edges retained as woodland belts but are of secondary origin. Formerly nightingale! Possibly some derelict hazel coppice. (**Source 1**)
- **Little Wood:** (7.5 acres) Ancient woodland, oak/hazel coppice with bramble and bluebell. (**Source 1**)

HISTORY

Coombe Abbey was in the southern half of Smite, a now deserted medieval village (**Source 4**)

- Recorded in Domesday 1086, is *silva* (probably wood pasture) measuring 250- 350 acres. Roger de Moubray endowed the Abbey with all the land of Smite which Richard de Camvill held of him and had given for the foundation of an abbey.
- In the 12thC. Henry de Rokeby gave Coombe Abbey half his wood which was in Binley.
- The Cistercian monastery at Coombe Abbey was broken up in 1589 in the Dissolution of the Monasteries by Henry 8th.
- It was given to Earl of Warwick who sold it to Robert Kelway whose heiress married Lord Harington. The Haringtons were guardians of Princess Elizabeth, sister of Charles 1st and future Queen of Bohemia. Sold to the Craven family in 1620 and lived in by Elizabeth and her 12 children after the Restoration in 1660. She died in 1662 and the Cravens lived there till 1923 when sold by auction.

There are no detailed records of the Abbey's lands until the 16th C but the following woods have been identified; several seemed to have survived into the 20th century (**Source 4**):

- earliest record is **Combe Woods** in 1261
- a wood called **Wodegrange** in 1333 (is this **Swynstie Grove** in Wood Grange 2 acres = **the Grove 1823** between New Close Wood and Birchley Wood– see Area 2)
- **Hill Park Wood** 1537, a wood or copyes lying next to Hill Field
- the **Frith Wood** 1652 of **170 acres** near the grange pool on Wood Grange and by the ground called the **Parke** = the modern **High Wood which is smaller so plus Little Wood?**

In the Award map of 1742 for Brinklow shows that High Wood is called **Comb Wood** but the typed award (1995) uses 'High' Wood (**Source 3**).