

**AREA 7: RYTON WOOD 14/37, THE COPPICE 21/37, RYTON HEATH WOOD 53/37 and WOOD  
IN RYTON VILLAGE 88/37 (PARISH OF RYTON ON DUNSMORE),  
ROCK SPINNEY (PARISH OF BAGINTON)**

**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) plus a separate account of the History of Ryton Wood ,undated.*
6. *Morfitt (1988b) A short summary of evidence for the 'ancient' status of Ryton Wood - documentary, archaeological and ecological ( there is a copy in the WWT archives, according to Ben Wallace...information here is taken from a summary in the ecosite folder.)*
9. *Richard Wright: Management plan for Ryton Wood,*

**ECOLOGY**

**Ryton Wood:** a Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Reserve and SSSI since 1973 as it is extensive and important for wildlife especially insects. An unplanted damp oak/hazel wood with small-leaved lime coppice (**Source 1**). .

- Bluebell, wood anemone, red campion, common dog violet and wood sorrel, primrose, devil's bit scabious and broad helleborine, and 3 ferns wide spread - bracken, male fern and broad buckler (**Source 1**).
- Noctule bats and over 30 spp. of butterflies including purple emperor, white admiral (first recorded colony of in the county - **Source 2**) purple and brown hairstreak, silver-washed fritillary and wood white. Also of high local importance for saproxylic and other invertebrates.
- The wood is of ornithological interest, having 87 spp. of birds and a diverse population of breeding birds including six species of warblers. Nightingales have bred regularly as have tree pipits and the three woodpeckers (green, great spotted and lesser spotted). The site also supports breeding birds of prey, including hobby? (**Source 9**).

**The Coppice:** coppiced pedunculate oak and hazel with wood sorrel and primrose.

**Ryton Heath:** planted ash with birch.

**Wood in Ryton Village:** Royal British Legion Club plantation with understorey of rhododendron and laurel.

**Rock Spinney:** not an ecosite.

**HISTORY: Ryton Wood:**

**Source 6:** There is relatively little documentary evidence for Ryton Wood so its history has to be constructed from the wood itself. Dating of the banks is difficult, the size of the largest suggest medieval. **Shrubs Wood (see area 10) and Forest Wood (see area 13) in the SE corner are** in different parishes and have large wood banks on their side of the parish boundary. An acute bank marks the boundary between Forest Wood and Ryton Wood, probably 18<sup>th</sup> or early 19<sup>th</sup> C.

**ECOLOGY: sources 1 and 2**

A Warwickshire Wildlife Trust reserve, and part a Geological SSSI 1996 for the uniquely preserved interglacial deposit. Mature mixed deciduous woodland, Pedunculate oak, silver birch, ash, gean, maple, honeysuckle and poor hazel coppice as it was neglected and overgrown until managed **since ?? by Hansons**. Previous owner took out all mature timber in the 1960s. Poor ground flora ...bluebell, primrose. It has records of nightingale and woodcock; also green hairstreak and silver washed fritillary (now extinct) and sawfly *Arge panana* (also now extinct).

**Source 2:** where woods have expanded from their medieval boundaries, the original wood bank remains inside with a new one typical of its period constructed at the new edge. A whole sequence of differently aged wood banks can therefore be seen in one wood, recording the changes in its size and shape. This is seen at Ryton where the central embanked third of the wood of about 70 acres may well be the same wood noted for Ryton Parish in the Domesday Book.

**Source 9: Areas north and south of the eastern half of the wood are surrounded by large wood banks,** typically 7-10 m across bank and external ditch. Smaller banks and ditches surround much of the rest of the wood. It is likely that the main use of the wood for many years was as coppice with standards to provide timber and firewood. The woodland has obviously been managed for many centuries and the structure may therefore be considered artificial, but less so than in most local woods. There are few if any examples of comparable size which are undamaged by inappropriate plantings. Of particular interest is the occurrence of several areas of small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* in the form of coppice stools, relict coppice, small trees derived from layers and isolated maidens. In more recent years the wood appears to have been used primarily for sport shooting, the maintenance of the system of rides reflecting this use. Part of the wood was lost to sand and gravel extraction in the 1960s and a gas pipe laid through the central ride in 1971. When the Trust acquired the wood in the 1980s it was dominated by neglected coppice and uniform age stands of oak. There has been a policy of eradicating all non-native species e.g. 35-40,000 sycamore have been removed along with many turkey oak and the only sweet chestnut

**Source 4:**

- **1086: In Domesday Book** Ryton Wood is included under the manor of Ryton, held by Turchil of Warwick, with a record of some woodland (in Latin *silva*) half a league long by two furlongs wide. If the *silva* had been rectangular in shape it would have covered about 120 acres, (using Rackhams calculation this would be 80 acres but if the measurements related to the longest and broadest points of an irregularly shaped area of woodland then the amount would have been somewhat less).
- **Between 1238-9 and 1245-6** Thomas de Ardern held a total of 120 acres of woodland in the parish, part freehold and part by rent. **In 1239** there was a deed involving 80 acres of wood and in 1246 another agreement including 40 acres of wood.
- **In 1282** he handed over land including 10 acres of wood to the Hospitallers and in 1286 the whole manor; in the Hospital of St John still owned the manor of Ryton in 1547.
- Towards the **end of the 13<sup>th</sup> C** there was a reference to **100 acres of wood in Ryton**. These are suspiciously round numbers. A grant of land under the wood was made in 1335.
- **In 1593** a lease recorded three coppices, the **Great Coppice, Hales Coppice, and Murrin Slade**. The two-year lease of these coppices reserved the great trees and oak saplings; they were destined for timber.
- The coppices also appear in Ryton estate accounts **from the early 17<sup>th</sup> C**, either in rentals or in lists of sales of wood. Between Christmas and Candlemas of 1607 “in the whomeward parte of the great Coppice woode”, and in the “further parte” of the same, wood was sold by hags, acres, or poles, all ways of describing areas of woodland marked for cutting. Buyers of the wood came from Eathorpe, Stretton, Wolston, Grandborough, Leamington, Marton, and Thurlaston. The accounts of 1607 also refer to the sale of 3460 faggots (bundles of sticks, twigs and small branches, used as fuel).
- **Ryton Wood appears in its present site on a map of 1726** where it is shown next to the parish of Bubbenhall. The extension of the present wood into Bubbenhall was called Shrubs Wood in 1726 (**see Area 10**).
- **The Inclosure Award of 1763** shows coppice called the Great Wood (=Ryton Wood) with William Dilkes name; also **Hale Coppice** (W Dilke) the present Coppice. There is no mention of Murrin Slade (**Source 3**).

**The Coppice:** called **Hale/s Coppice** on the Inclosure Award map of 1763, belonging to William Dilke (Source 3).

**Ryton Heath:** not on the Inclosure map of 1763, just open fields (Source 3).

**Source 3: map of the Tithe apportionment 1841** shows 4 woods ...only one left, rest gone under the airport

- **Rough Wood 2 acres ( Rev. Bromley) = Rock Spinney**
- 3 cornered spinney...( Rev. Bromley) now gone
- Grove 28 acres (William Grimes) ...now gone
- Vicar Whitmore Wood 10 acres now gone