

## AREA 11: WAPPENBURY WOOD 3/37 (PARISH OF WAPPENBURY)

Sources of information are:

1. Ecosite notes (HBA)
4. Wager 1998 Woods, Wolds & Groves(Ph.D thesis ) plus a separate account of Wappenbury Wood undated, sent to WWT.
10. Richard Wright (2008) management plan and archaeological survey.

### HISTORY

Source 10: Medieval ridge and furrow plough markings found to the north of the woods, ancient bank boundaries, and the age-old pathway known as Nunwood Lane all provide further evidence of the woods' age. In the NW of the wood there is a small area outside the original boundary which is obviously a later addition. This is divided into two parts by a natural ditch. The northern section is a very recent addition which is marked as a field even on modern maps. The southern part is more established woodland, which lies on shallow ridge and furrow running more or less parallel with the original boundary.

An external woodbank and ditch known to date back at least to medieval times is still found around part of the site, almost certainly marking the original medieval boundary. although some of the surrounding boundaries seem to be more recent. To the south-west there is an excavated pit, with elongate mounds nearby, possibly representing a site where clay was extracted.

However, the historic record states that: "much of the wood has a woodbank of medieval type" which would seem to be an overstatement since only part of the present boundary would appear to be of this type. A woodbank of 'medieval type' is here considered to be one that:

- has a definite bank on the inner (woodland) side so that the ground is higher than the general level
- has a distinct ditch on the outer side
- does not follow a straight line over any distance
- often has distinctive trees, here mainly old ash stools, on the bank
- does not have an extant or effaced laid hawthorn hedge on the bank

A simple system of three major internal woodbanks and ditches also exists with another short minor one in the south east which is definitely artificial and appears to have no connection with other features.

Source 4: it is possible that Wappenbury Wood is far older than its recorded history. There was a pottery industry in Wappenbury during the Romano-British period, suggesting that ample supplies of wood were available in the vicinity for firing the kilns. Wappenbury Wood may even occupy land which is primary woodland, i.e. has been woodland without interruption though subject to human intervention, since the last Ice Age.

1086: included in Domesday Book under the manor of Wappenbury with a record of some woodland (silva) half a league long by two furlongs wide. If the silva had been rectangular in shape it would have covered about 120 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.

1208: a record of a wood of Wappenbury confirmed that Richard of Wappenbury, who had undertaken not to alienate his lands or woods from his heir, should have reasonable estovers (rights to collect fuel and wood for hedging and housing) for himself and gift in moderation to his friends from his wood of Wappenbury. The agreement of 1208 suggests, but does not prove,

that wood, rather than pasture, was the main product.

c.1500 Medieval records are silent on the extent of the wood, but the reference to a coppice hedge of an estimated 2 miles in circumference suggests that by it was pretty large. We do not know how long before 1500 it was managed as a coppice wood.

By the end of the 15th C the name Wappenbury Wood was in use, providing a source of fuel, building materials and hunting opportunities for the local community. It was owned by Nicholas Catesby: in a suit in the Star Chamber against Nicholas Broune, Gerard Danet and Richard Cotes, he claimed that they had entered his lands and tenements in Wappenbury and 'distroyed the sprynge forever'. This is the new growth of underwood which springs up from the stump of a tree after coppicing, and tells us that the wood was a coppice wood by this date, if not before.

1549-51: the wood had recovered and was divided into at least 25 hags, or areas for cutting or sale from which made about £100 per annum. The accounts described these in 1550 while in 1549 they recorded simply a great parcel of the high wood in Wappenbury and another, adjoining piece. The purchasers of the wood came from 25 places, mostly to the south and east of Wappenbury, including Warwick, Burton Dassett, Harbury, Avon Dassett, Southam, Bascote, Long Itchington, Eathorpe, Stockton, Marton, Grandborough, Sawbridge, Draycote, Frankton, Dunchurch, Stretton, Rugby, Clifton and Wolston and a few places in Northamptonshire.

1668: a survey listing the various areas of woodland suggest that the wood remained sub-divided into coppices.

1726: a map shows that the wood adjoins Bubbenhall parish. An 18th C. sketch shows the wood having its present shape and comprising c. 172 acres.

Ruth Moffatt 2018

## ECOLOGY

A Warwickshire Wildlife Trust reserve with a long history of entomological interest which lies in its continuous history for at least 1000 yrs. and proximity to other woodland sites. The ancient woodland has been clearfelled and then regenerated naturally since its purchase by the Forestry Commission in the late 1940s. Now a canopy of oak/ash/hazel and understorey of maple, holly, hawthorn and holly, the site comprises 71ha of ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW).

Although classified by Natural England as a plantation on an ancient woodland site (PAWS), only a very small part has been planted with conifers and the vast majority of the reserve has all of the characteristics of natural ancient woodland. Ground flora includes broad-leaved orchids and helleborine, bluebells and primroses. 88 spp. of birds, including woodcock and nightingale, 22 spp. butterflies, 7 spp. dragon/damsel flies and lizard are recorded (Source 1).

White admiral and silver-washed fritillary are the most obvious true woodland species. Moths were recorded in the past, but there is little recent activity. Many other invertebrate groups were

surveyed in the 1980s and 1990s although there has been little subsequent work on most of these groups. Only beetles have more recent records. Numerous nationally scarce beetle species have been recorded, including two nationally rare Red Data Book species which have only been found at this site in the county. While the total number of nationally scarce invertebrates is considerably lower than at Ryton Wood, this appears to be due to under recording, and where the recording level has been similar, as for beetles, the reserves are of approximately equal importance (Source 10).