

**AREA 4: BRANDON WOOD 1/37, BRANDON LITTLE WOOD 545/47,
BRANDON HALL 20/47, LAWYERS, SIDENHILL and BRICK KILN SPINNEYS,
PRIVET, LONG and SQUARE COVERTS, THE POOLS 66/37, BLACK SPINNEY AND LONG SPINNEY 86/37 (PARISH
OF BRANDON & BRETTFORD)**

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)*
11. *Friends of Brandon Wood leaflet 1982*

ECOLOGY

Great Brandon Wood: considered for SSSI status. A remnant of the Forest of Arden. a mosaic of coniferous and deciduous, planted and semi natural. extensive fires on the south side of the wood, notably the west end in the early 20th C. In 1960s extensive planting of conifers, leaving deciduous strip along the southern margin. In 1980 the then owners the **Forestry Commission** decided to sell the wood and proposed extension of mineral extraction led to the formation of FOBW which purchased it in 2000. Since 1981 it was managed by FOBW, gradually being reverted to mainly broad leaf woodland by thinning which has brought the proportion of Corsican pine down to 40% of the total trees cp. original 48%. Further reduction to 32% will be achieved by the 2021. Good ground flora with bee and spotted orchids. Butterflies include white admiral and purple and white hairstreak. Ponds with great crested newt, dragon flies. Rare hoverflies, sawflies and beetles. Dormice recorded in 1999, not seen since. 69 spp of birds including goldcrest and firecrest, stonechat, reedpoll, linnet, woodcock, great grey shrikes, hobby (**Source 1**). Previously only recorded in the Scottish pine forests of Inverness is the the **giant woodwasp**, a harmless 25mm long mimic of the hornet. The ovipositor is for boring into wood to lay eggs. Also **small black sawfly** (*Microdiprion pallipes*) sighted in 1987 and a first for England (**Source 2**).

Little Brandon Wood: possibly never felled, predominantly ancient semi-natural woodland with hazel coppice and a small area of conifer, abundant bluebell. Greater stitchwort. There is a plan to join it up with Brandon Great Wood by planting up the field. (**Source 1**)

The Pools: Much undisturbed **mixed ancient woodland** with impeded drainage. Well-developed canopy of oak larch alder and willow. Ground flora poor with bluebell and wood sorrel (**Source 1**).

Black Spinney: wet woodland with alder and rich ground flora. Derelict hazel coppice with standards (**Source 1**).

Long Spinney: open canopy birch, ash and pedunculate oak. NW section has old open cast coal site (**Source 1**).

Long, Square and Privet Coverts: secondary woodland adjacent to Sunrise Fm, north of Brandon Village (**Source 1**).

Sidenhill Spinney: secondary woodland 0.5km east of Brandon village (**Source 1**).

HISTORY

Brandon Hotel Wood: woodland appears to be round edges but there is no map with HBA target notes which record several woods. **Is this the Park of Brandon which stretched to the boundaries with Willenhall and Binley parishes?** The Hundred Rolls of 1279 records 2 acres of Binley Wood taken into it. The old part of the hotel was built in the 1600's as a shooting lodge. James Beech bought it in the late 1800's. With his family he moved into the shooting lodge after improving it and it became known as Brandon Hall. The Manor House deteriorated into ruins. A descendant of James Beech commissioned the building of Brandon Club and Brandon School and another descendant set up polo grounds at the Hall. In **Brandon Little Wood, formerly part of the Hall, there is an ice-well**, used for preserving game shot in the Manor Grounds (**Source 4**).

- **1086: Domesday Book** records '*silva*' 4 furlongs long and 2 wide, probably covering only about **50 – 75 acres**, owned by Saxon Thorwell. Northern boundary bank with its 18ft freeboard and double ditch is evidence of its antiquity. **The wood and heath of Brandon** mentioned in 1226 stated that they were separated by a heath from the enclosed wood of Burleigh (Birchley.) In 1279 is a record of a 40 acre *boscum forinsecum* (= outside; extraordinary, cp. *Forinsecum manerium*, the manor, or that part of it which lies outside the bars or town, and is not included within the liberties of it) (**Source 11**).

- A survey of by Mayor of Brandon in 1571 recorded a park of 102 acres - **is this Brandon Hotel Wood?** Also the 'great coppise in the parke,' **after 18ft to the pole** measures 107 acres (today 104 acres) and the 'little coppise' of 37 acres. These total 246 acres, 3-5 x the estimated area of the Domesday *silva* (Source 4).
- A survey of the late 16th to 17th C records the great coppis and the ditch (136 acres), describing in detail the wood bank which forms the boundary between the great coppis and the 'Cottigers part' (Little Brandon Wood); it can still be seen **with its 18ft freeboard**. A multitude of species in the bank attest to its antiquity, including Wild Service Tree, now rare in the county (Source 11).
- An estate map c. 1630 confirms the location, shape and area of Great Coppis. The nomenclature of **Thickthorns** suggests the area was carved out of waste / primary woodland and put to arable pasture possibly in 13th or 14th C. It is later postulated that it fell out of cultivation and returned to woodland, possibly as a result of the Black Death. 'Cottigers' suggest this part of the wood was part of the Manorial waste over which villagers exercised rights of common. The **tithe map of 1849** confirms the near completeness of the Great Coppis, with the exception of 2 acres which were converted to arable, since reverted to woodland (Source 11).
- Map of Brandon and Bretford 1630 (Source 3) shows :
 - Little Coppis in the 'right' place along a road the same shape as the Pools but not Black and Long Spinneys, nor 3 spinneys and 3 coverts in east of Parish so not old woodland...though map may not be complete??.
 - Great Coppis with Thickthorn Wood, Cottigers Part, Spyers Park and another area (cannot read) all in the area of the present Brandon Wood. **Perhaps Brandon Wood was more extensive?**
 - Broomshill, not woodland, could be Long Spinney
- Parish of Brandon & Bretford was enclosed in 1692 (Source 3)
- The tithe award map of 1849 (Source 3) shows:
 - Great Brandon Wood now its current shape and also Little Brandon separated by a field. **Now see all the spinneys and coverts:**
 - Black, and Long Spinneys and the Pools in 3 legged shape between Willenhall Wood and Piles Coppice, with R. Avon through Black Spinney and the Pools.
 - Square,Privet and Long Coverts, Lawyers, Brick Kiln and Sidenhill spinneys.
 - Lawyer's and Brick Kiln Spinney are recorded in the written award as the site of a brickworks