

Discovering the past

Hockeridge and Pancake Woods provide several clues to its historic past, with a centuries-old bank-and-ditch surrounding the woods and a double-bank mound near Hockeridge Bottom demarcating the Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire county borders.

The woods were home to a thriving timber industry throughout the 19th and early 20th century. Timber from the woods was even taken for decorations to mark King George VI's coronation in 1936. However the next few years were devastating for the forest – it was clear felled for timber to help the war effort, and then was designated as land on which future building would occur to extend nearby Berkhamsted.



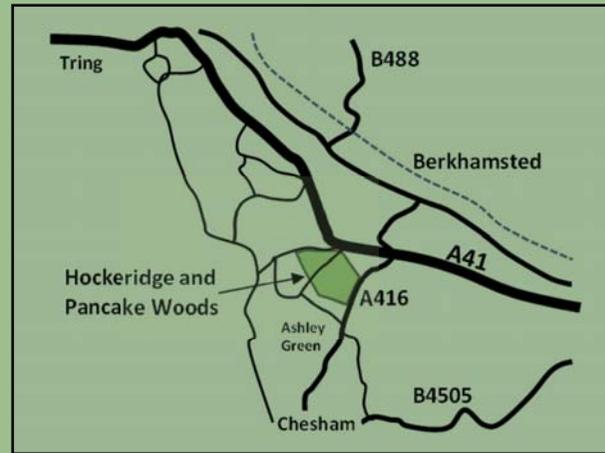
In 1952 Mary Wellesley, great-great-granddaughter to the Duke of Wellington, purchased the woods and set about rescuing them from neglect. She was a keen arborculturalist, and replanted with many 'fashionable' forestry trees including conifers, and also many non-native species which are still seen today. She was 'ahead of her time' in respect to the management techniques employed at the woods.

Miss Mary Wellesley



In 1986 Mary Wellesley generously gifted the woods over to the Royal Forestry Society and we still own and manage them to this day. We aim to demonstrate the wise management of woodlands by balancing the interests of commercial forestry, habitat conservation and public recreation.

How to find us:



The Royal Forestry Society

Having enjoyed visiting the woods you may wish to become a member of the Royal Forestry Society.

The RFS is one of the largest woodland educational charities in the UK, founded in 1882 and now with over 3,500 members sharing an interest in trees. We aim to *promote the wise management of trees and woodlands so they can be better protected, improved and expanded.*

Regular field meetings will give you the chance to visit woods around Britain and meet with other enthusiasts. The Quarterly Journal of Forestry will help you learn about trees and their management, while there are also award schemes for students and woodland managers.

Membership is open to everyone, so if you love Britain's trees and woods and would like to learn more about them then please contact us via the details below, or for more information visit us at www.rfs.org.uk



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Welcome to

Hockeridge and Pancake Woods



"A Showcase Woodland"



A Diverse Environment

The woods play host to 50 different tree species as well as a rich variety of wildflowers which illustrate its long and chequered history.

Spring is characterised by ancient woodland flowers such as primroses, bluebells and yellow archangel, with the best displays found near Hockeridge Bottom.

Widespread felling in the 1930s encouraged heathland to spread on the more acidic soils. Occasional clumps of heather still border the woodland rides, serving up a summer feast for bees, butterflies and other insects.

Varied Habitats >>>

The open rides provide sheltered sunny flight paths for 17 butterfly species including the peacock, red admiral and gatekeeper. The pond also attracts frogs, newts and three species of dragonfly.



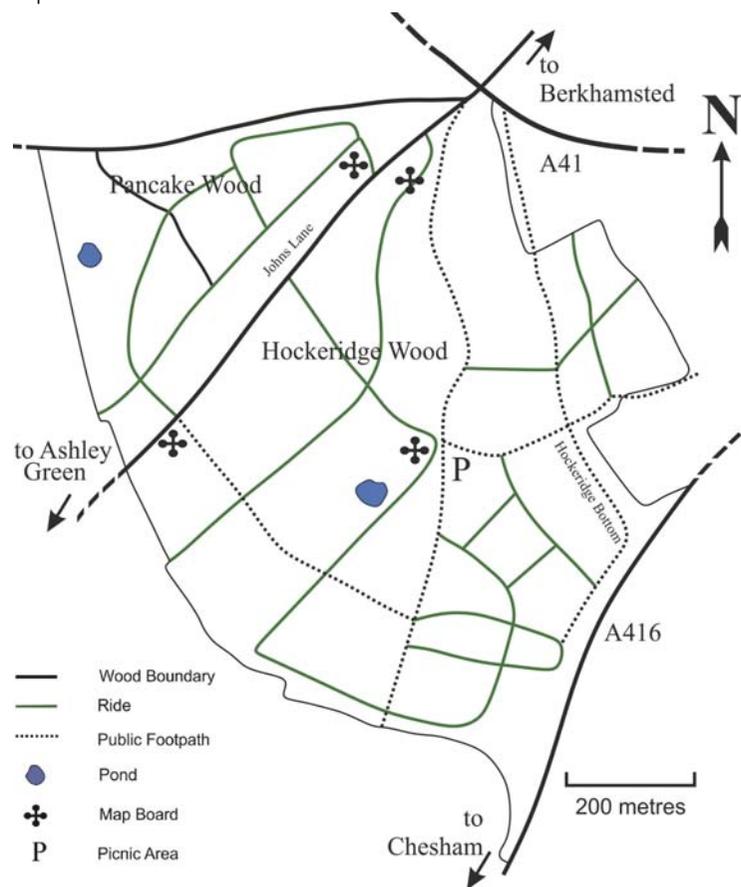
The varied woodland ensures that food and shelter is available to a range of woodland birds.

Sparrowhawks, buzzards and red kites are frequently seen, and mixed flocks of tits can also be seen at certain times of the year. Four species of owl are found in the woods, including the ever-popular barn owl and the rare long-eared owl.

As well as the edible dormouse (see below) many other mammals including badgers, stoats and hares live in the forest, while roe, fallow and muntjac deer are increasingly common and causing some issues with their grazing of ground flora which restricts woodland regeneration.

Hockeridge and Pancake Woods

Explore the wood using the paths and rides shown below, with a separate leaflet available online at www.rfs.org.uk for those interested in seeing all 50 of our tree species. Map boards help plan your visit, and why not rest for lunch at our picnic site too?



The Highest Standard of Woodland Management >>>

The woods are a showcase for the RFS, with the high standards of woodland management winning the site a prestigious Forestry Authority Centre of Excellence award.

Sixteen tree species are grown commercially on the 74 hectare site, including beech, oak, ash, Scots pine, Norway spruce and European larch. The age diversity of the stands enhances the visual and conservation interest of the wood. Specimens of 50 different trees are also planted along the rides, all labelled and mapped for easy identification.



Selective thinning and harvesting aims to produce a final crop of hardwoods, with some stands of pine. We aim to provide a good example of forestry practice by growing good quality timber, protecting the flora and fauna, and also encouraging recreation. Grey squirrels, edible dormice and tree diseases are a threat to the future of the wood, so active management is crucial to maintain and enhance the value of the wood for its owners, visitors and wildlife alike.

Notable Species



Wellingtonia (Giant Redwood) holds the distinction of being the largest living thing on Earth – growing to 80m high and living for over 3000 years in their native habitat on the Sierra Nevada slopes, California. After being introduced to the UK in the 1890s, Mary Wellesley planted the Wellingtonia Avenue at Hockeridge in memory of her great, great grandfather, the Duke of Wellington, in the 1950s. It still stands today – a tribute to not only the Duke of Wellington, but also to Mary Wellesley who transformed these woods into what they are today.



Edible Dormouse (*Glis glis*) – introduced to the UK in 1902, and now exists in a few dense populations around the Chilterns. It is much larger than the native hazel dormouse, and inhabits mature high forests such as those at Hockeridge. Despite its innocent looking exterior it causes a lot of damage to forests, gnawing tree bark, especially larch and spruce, which can result in significant damage to the forests and timber quality. However the edible dormouse is a protected species, making controlling it very difficult.