

## 5. Ancient Woodlands

Sites which have been continuously wooded for at least the past 400 years are described as Ancient Woodland. These are shown on our earliest reliable maps. Many of these woodlands will be much older and some will be directly descended from the 'wildwoods' that covered Britain at the end of the last Ice Age. Woodland which is still composed of species native to the locality is termed Ancient Semi Natural Woodland (ASNW). Those sites that have been managed as plantations, often with conifers, are called Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS). ASNW makes up about 18% of England's woodlands, with an additional 13% being PAWS. Though felling of trees within these woodlands may have taken place many times, ancient woodland sites are, by definition, irreplaceable.

### Ancient Woodland Indicator Species

Certain plants can suggest that you are in ancient woodland. Known as ancient woodland indicator species, these plants are usually very poor at colonising new habitats, which means that they tend to only be found in very old woodland. For example, widespread ancient woodland indicator species include wild service tree, lily-of-the-valley, herb paris and wood anemone. A comprehensive list of ancient woodland indicator species can be found in *The Wild Flower Key* (Francis Rose, updated by Clare O'Reilly), and Rose's original article in *British Wildlife* (with original list) can be found here: [www.britishwildlife.com](http://www.britishwildlife.com) A picture guide to some of the most widespread ancient woodland indicator species is available on the Natural History Museum website (<http://nhm.ac.uk/nature-online/britishnatural-history/survey-bluebells/bluebell-identification/ancient-woodland/index.html>). It is important to remember that the presence of an ancient woodland indicator species does not necessarily guarantee that you are in ancient woodland. Some species are able to colonise secondary woodland, especially if it is near sites of ancient woodland. However, the more indicator species you find, the more likely you are to be in ancient woodland.



Wild Service Tree



Wood Anemone



Herb Paris

<https://www.rfs.org.uk/learning/forestry-knowledge-hub/woodland-management/so-you-own-a-woodland/>