

Walderslade Woodlands Round Wood

This small valley is part of a complex of steep valleys incised into the chalk of the North Downs at the end of the last glacial period. Other evidence of the effects of glaciation include the sarsen stones which are glacial 'erratics' - stones from far away which were dropped here by glaciers.

The valley sides and bottom are covered in various of deposits, including clay with flints. Where chalk is near the surface soil conditions tend to be alkaline and neutral where the deposits are deeper.

The valley has almost certainly been wooded since the last glaciation, right up until relatively recent times. When parts were cleared for gardens or small scale farming. There are still some 'open' areas where woodland has not regenerated. Despite this the woodland areas can still be classified as semi natural ancient woodland.

Man's influence has included coppicing of hornbeam, hazel and the valley also contains remnants of scattered settlements.

Much of the valley floor is covered in what might be described as woodland regeneration, where hazel coppice and

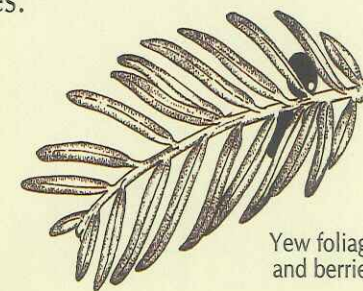


other saplings are developing a thick low level canopy.

At the southern end of the valley and on the valley sides the woodland is more mature and contains a lot of hornbeam and ash, with some oak and beech. Throughout the woodland there is a good under storey of young saplings.

Of particular interest is a growth of yew on the valley sides, probably growing in shallow soil directly over chalk.

The ground flora are typically dominated by bramble, with dog's mercury or drifts of bluebell and wood anemone. You will also find moschatel, lesser celandine, toothwort and a range of other woodland species.



Yew foliage
and berries

The Walderslade Woodlands Group is comprised of local residents who care for these woods.

Walderslade Woodlands - Species

ASH - *Fraxinus excelsior*



ASH - Many large standards, younger trees and saplings throughout the woods. Ash is an early coloniser and provides food for privet hawk moths.

BEECH - *Fagus sylvatica*



BEECH - There are still a few large beech standards left within the woods, but many were destroyed by the 1987 hurricane. The beechnuts are eaten by mammals and birds. Instantly recognisable by its smooth bark.

OAK - *Quercus robur*



OAK - Most of the oak in the woodlands is common or *Quercus robur*, also referred to as Pedunculate oak (because its acorns are carried on long stalks). Oak is an excellent tree for wildlife and supports a wide range. Oaks have separate male & female flowers appearing in the same tree.

FIELD MAPLE - *Acer campestre*



FIELD MAPLE - These generally form a smallish tree and are found scattered through the woodlands, especially near the edges. Good for wildlife and lichens.

BIRCH - *Betula pendula*



BIRCH - Tends to be found on more acid soil areas of the woodlands. Birch is relatively quick growing and is excellent for moths and its seeds are eaten by many birds.

HORNBEAM - *Carpinus betulus*



HORNBEAM - Very common in the woodlands, mostly as overstood coppice - that is old coppice. It is likely that hornbeam coppice was used to produce charcoal - perhaps for gunpowder production at the dockyards. Hornbeam readily propagates from seed and plenty of saplings can be found in the woods. The fruits of the hornbeam are favoured by Hawfinches.

SWEET CHESTNUT - *Castanea sativa*



SWEET CHESTNUT - Found in just one area of the woodlands, this tree was introduced by the Romans. It was planted extensively and coppiced for firewood and fencing stake production. It flowers after its leaves have opened - usually late May or June.