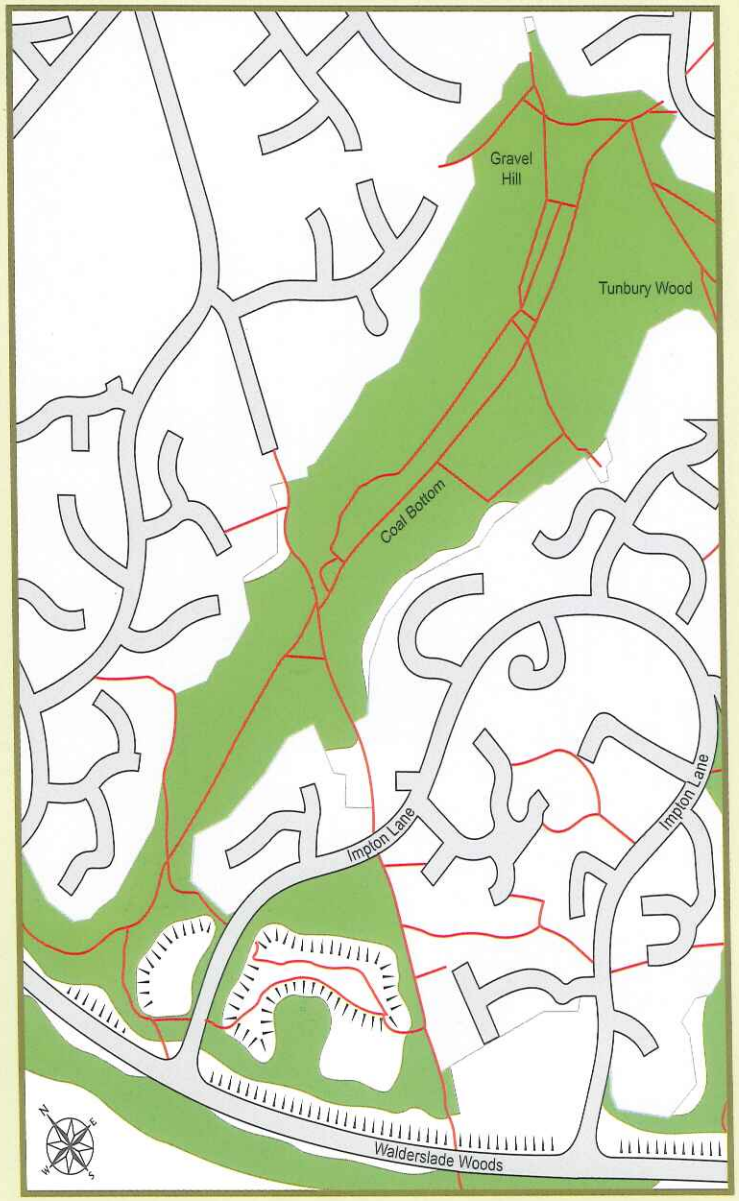
# Walderslade Woodlands
# Tunbury Bottom

This is the largest of the three valleys that comprise the Walderslade Woodlands. The valleys were 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 thickness of deposits. 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, but it has also been much modified by man. The woodland is therefore classified as semi-natural ancient woodland.

Man's influence has included coppicing of hornbeam and hazel. It is possible that the hormbeam coppice was used to produce charcoal for the many forges and smithies in Chatham Dockyard and surrounding villages. It was also an ingredient of gunpowder and there were gunpowder works at Faversham, Oare and Dartford.




At the eastern end of the valley hornbeam is probable the predominant tree and is mostly represented by 'over-stood' coppice. As you move towards the western end of the valley birch becomes more common, indicating more acidic soils. Ash and oak standards are common throughout and there are still a few isolated large beech trees (most were lost in the 1987 hurricane). There is a reasonable population of young oak, ash, beech and hornbeam.

The shrub layer typically contains hawthorn (Midland and Common), rosa, elder, etc. The ground flora is typically dominated by bramble, but there are drifts of bluebell and wood anemone in the spring. You will also find lesser celendine, toothwort and a range of other woodland species, including wood sorrel and wood sanicle.

You will also see lots of 'dead' wood lying around, this is an important habitat for insects and fungi - it is part of the natural woodland cycle. Look carefully and you will see plenty of 'bracket' type fungi on the dead and decaying wood for example, the gelatinous "Jew's Ear Fungus" common on dead elder.

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

# Walderslade Woodlands - Species

ASH - *Flaxinus 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 refered 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.

Local Heritage *initiative*

Heritage Lottery Fund

Nationwide

The Countryside Agency

Walderslade Woodlands Group