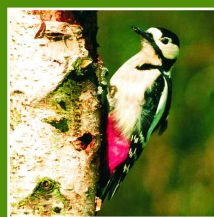


Court Wood

Bredwardine SO328448 (Outdoor Leisure 13)

Ancient woodland, modified by planting



Visitor Guidelines

There are paths around the reserve that give access to all areas. These can be very muddy in spring and autumn so waterproof footwear is advised for most visits. Also take note that, in very wet periods, the steep access field can be very slippery and hazardous on the way down; beware of rapid and unexpected descents!

Description

The wood spreads down a steep N.E. facing slope underlain by Old Red Sandstone marls and sandstones. A deep gully almost splits the reserve in two, and the sandstone is exposed to some extent here and there. A spring issuing from the head of the gully contains *tufa* deposits, due to its waters passing through cornstone beds deep within the hill and becoming lime-enriched. Land on Bredwardine Hill was enclosed in 1819 and Court Wood was certainly present then. Its position on a steep slope and the nature of the ground flora are further pointers that the wood has an *ancient* origin.

There is evidence of earlier *coppicing*, long since defunct, of Ash and Hazels, but the main recent changes in the wood's history have been due to planting. Most of the Oaks have apparently been planted in the last century, together with some Beech, Sycamore and various conifers. Elms used to thrive, but suffered badly from elm disease during the 1960's. Regeneration is proceeding well but most of the Elm is being replaced by Ash. Today, Court Wood is predominately Oak and Ash, with Hazel and Bramble important in the understorey. Honeysuckle is particularly abundant. The drier upper slopes of the wood have large drifts of typical *ancient woodland indicators*, such as Bluebell, Sanicle, Primrose and Wood Sorrel. General thinning of the wood took place in 1999/00 and these spring-flowering species have generally benefited from the extra light now reaching the woodland floor. The damp lower slopes tend to be dominated by Bramble, while Elder and Honeysuckle are both common. The permanently moist slopes of the gully are ideal for ferns, including Male Fern, Hard Fern, Hart's Tongue and Common Polypody. Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage occurs abundantly along the edges of the stream. The reserve provides nesting sites and shelter for a number of woodland birds species,

including Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker, three warblers, and five tit species.

Present Management

Management aims to retain the wood as *high forest* of mixed age trees, allowing most of the Oak and Ash to develop into large specimens. There is some *coppice*.

Acquisition Details

A gift to the Trust in 1977 as a memorial to the late Dr. Madeline Malcomson by her family.

General Information:

Best time to visit: Spring and Summer.

Habitat: *Ancient* woodland, modified by planting.

Size: 2.4 hectares (6 acres).

Specialities: Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Marsh Tit. White-letter Hairstreak butterfly (7-8). Bluebell (4-6), Sanicle (5-7), Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (4-7).

Parking: Very limited parking opposite cottage.

Nearby reserves: Wern Wood, The Sturts and Waterloo.

