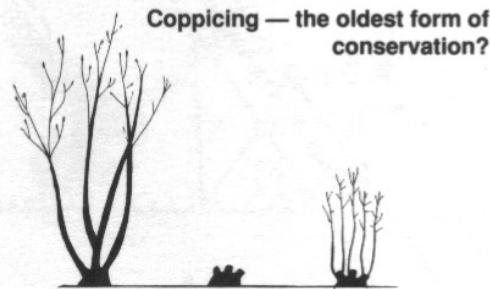


## Woodmanship

for hundreds of years most of the trees in Shadwell have been coppiced. They were cut back to the stump or stool every 10 years or so, and the poles sold to craftsmen such as hurdle makers or thatchers, or to villagers as firewood. This craft of coppicing or woodmanship is very old, having started in Neolithic times. It is probably the oldest conservation process known to man, for coppicing not only preserves trees where they grow, it also enhances the richness of the wildlife in these woodlands. Cutting small areas of the wood in rotation creates a mosaic of young and old trees, of deep shade and bright sun, providing habitats for the widest range of plants and animals. In Shadwell Wood today this process is carried on: there are blocks of wood at all ages, including unmanaged areas where trees will age and die naturally, providing a succession of precious dead-wood habitats.



All felled wood is sold, and the proceeds ploughed back into the Trust's conservation work. It goes to Audley End House Kitchen Garden as peasticks and stakes, to morris dancers as staves, to local residents as firewood, and we try to supply anything our customers require. Around the huts are various devices, known as 'brakes' or 'horses' to help cut, split and shape wood to make products.

## Woodland Products

Should you wish to support the Trust by buying any of the products made at Shadwell, or have any particular requirements, please contact the warden, Tony Morton,

☎ 01799 523489

✉ [tonymorton.net@gmail.com](mailto:tonymorton.net@gmail.com)

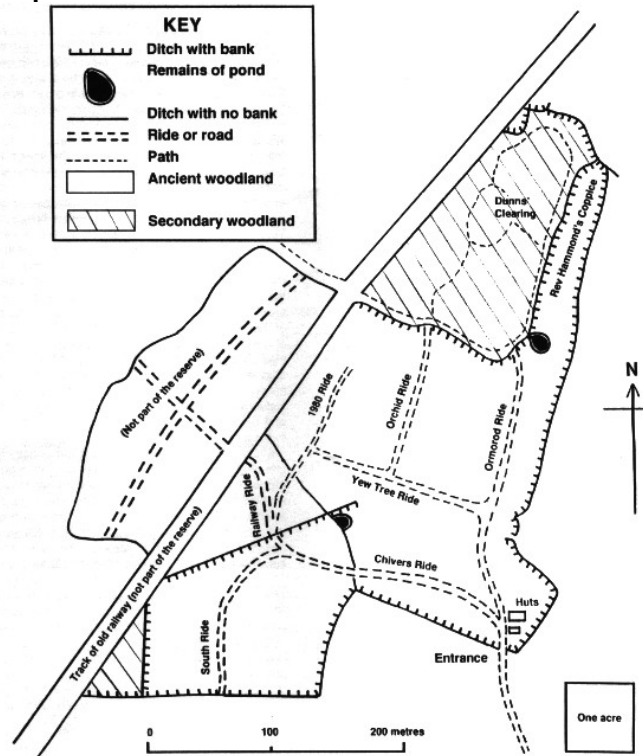
## Deer

Muntjac, Roe and Fallow deer live in the countryside surrounding Shadwell Wood, their slot marks and tracks are easy to see outside the wood. Unfortunately they browse the young tree shoots and oxlips, so the wood has had to be enclosed by a fence to prevent browsing damage.

## Wildlife Reports

We are always keen to increase our knowledge of this wood. Please help us by recording anything you see in the visitors book on the wall of the hut.

## Map of the Reserve



## Essex Wildlife Trust

The support of our 32,000 members enables the Trust to manage 87 nature reserves 9 visitor centres and 2 nature parks in Essex. Support the Trust by becoming a member. Details of membership, and information about some of the Trust's other nature reserves are available from the website >> [www.essexwt.org.uk](http://www.essexwt.org.uk)

Or write to ; Essex Wildlife Trust  
Abbots Hall Farm  
Great Wigborough  
Colchester CO5 7RZ

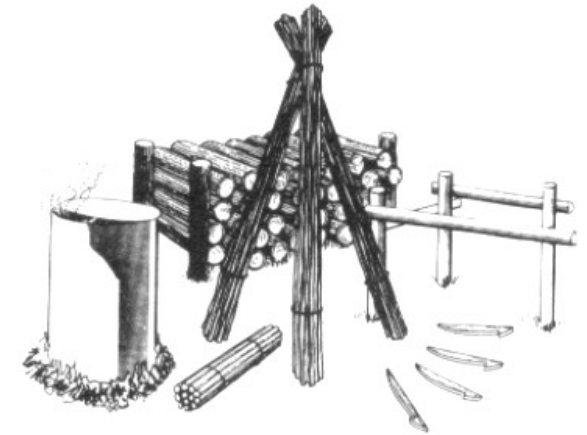
# SHADWELL WOOD

## GUIDE TO THE NATURE RESERVE



**ESSEX**  
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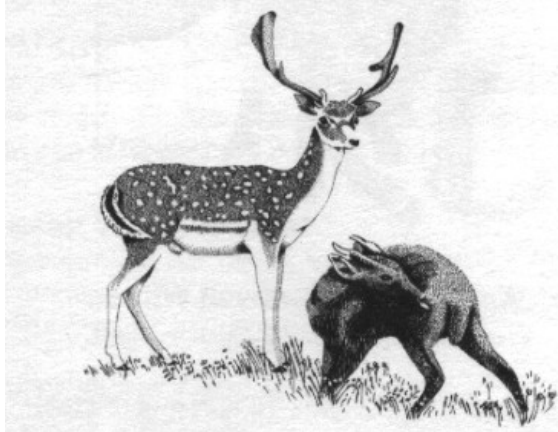
**Welcome to Shadwell Wood.**  
**We hope you enjoy your visit.**

The reserve comprises 14 acres of ancient woodland and three acres of secondary woodland. To ensure its continuing protection, it was passed to the Trust in 1969 by a Deed of Gift from Miss R H Chivers and Miss D Ormerod. It is now designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Please keep to the paths and observe the guidelines on the information board at the main entrance.

## History

Mystery shrouds the early history of Shadwell Wood. The name of the wood is thought to derive from Chadwel, meaning cold spring. It sits at the head of a valley in the chalk-rich boulder clay, from which position a cold spring still runs after wet weather.

Although the sinuous boundary ditch with its woodbank, and the unique flora confirm it is an 'ancient woodland' (at least pre-dating 1600), the earliest written record so far discovered is the name Shodewell in a sale document dated 1529. A dispute over access to the wood on June 1st 1581 led to a murder, and a court case now archived in the County Record Office. A valuation was carried out in 1801, during the Napoleonic Wars. Some few years later, nearly 400 oaks were removed to provide the "wooden walls" of England's navy.



Fallow and muntjac deer, beautiful creatures, but sometimes a problem in coppice woods

In 1865 a branch line of the Great Eastern Railway passed through the wood, leaving four acres to the west of the line (not part of the reserve); the survey map shows the narrow strip of coppice at the north of the reserve in the ownership of the Rev. William Hammond - a name we have perpetuated. In 1910 the wood passed to the Bell family, who planted yew and box trees in the centre of the wood, laurels around the hut and mahonia beside some rides. The hut was used for shooting parties, and still contains an old wine-cooler, now used more

practically for storing tools. Serious management of the wood ceased during World War II after 200 oak trees had been removed, and began again under the Trusts' ownership in 1972 when coppicing was begun anew.



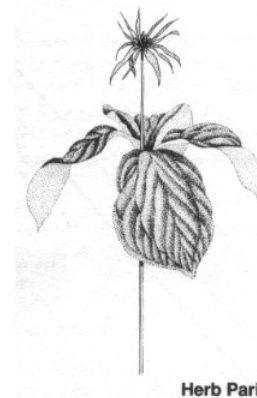
### The Ancient Wood

Ash, maple and hazel are dominant among the smaller trees. Their moderate shade and fast decaying leaves allow a rich diversity of plants to grow, many of which are special to ancient woodlands. The oaks display a wide range of shapes, heights and burrs upon their stems, indicating a natural (unplanted) population. Although some of these are probably 150 years old, they are not the oldest trees in the wood: the largest ash stools at 4

ft in diameter are probably 400 years old. Among the coppice are some magnificent apple trees, tokens of earlier management, quite unforgettable in May, whilst the rare bird cherry can be found in the wood.

### The woodland Year

The Spring ground flora includes some real local specialities. Oxlips occur only in this region of England, mainly in ancient woods. It was an Essex man, Henry Doubleday, who first identified the species in 1842. Shadwell contains tens of thousands of oxlip plants, many of which now fail to flower because they are eaten by deer and rabbits



Herb Paris grows in large numbers, often producing its single poisonous black berry. These spring plants flower early to profit from the sun before the shade deepens; they are joined by early purple orchid, twayblade, bugle, dog's mercury and bluebell to produce a memorable vernal display.

As spring gives way to summer, the coppice floor is overshadowed, and the sunnier rides become a magnet for insects. Brambles, woundwort, common spotted orchid and meadowsweet all attract many of the common butterflies, hoverflies and beetles. The delicate speckled wood butterfly and darter dragonflies prefer the shadier rides.

Autumn sees a profusion of berries on the shrubs. Woodland hawthorn is typical of old woodlands, recognised by the shape of its leaf and a double style on its haw. Guelder rose has great clusters of sticky red berries, while those of its close relative the wayfaring tree are a dull purple. Spindle - named from the use to which its dense white wood was put - has a beautiful pink lobed fruit; dogwood has dark berries on lovely red twigs so useful in basket making. By the huts grows the uncommon butchers broom whose fat scarlet berry grows on a leaf-like flattened stem.

### The Old Meadow

When the new railway line left a small triangle of meadow too small for grazing, neglect soon allowed trees, seeded from Shadwell, to grow. Today it is woodland, with oak, hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn and aspen as the main species - far fewer than the ancient wood. A very rare native shrub of wet woodlands, Daphne mezereum, surprisingly grows here. The gladdon or stinking iris, another rare Essex plant, also occurs at the edge of the clearing. Those special plants of ancient woodlands - oxlips, herb paris, etc - have hardly colonised this new woodland; they still grow no further than a few metres from the old bank after nearly 150 years.

Fortunately the seed of many meadow plants survived, so that when Dunn's Clearing was made a rich flora appeared, including common spotted orchid, pyramidal orchid, bee orchid, ox-eye daisy, adders tongue fern, hairy violet, cowslip and primrose, though in recent years these have all declined, despite mowing every year to maintain meadow conditions. Other species seem to come and go, like Meadow Vetchling which has appeared more recently. Nature is always changing.