



Secrets of Coldfall Wood

By Daphne Chamberlain

Hidden in Coldfall Wood is one of the few surviving remnants of Finchley Common. "We used to call it Lovers' Lawn", said one of my companions on the guided walk.

Our guide, Haringey's Conservation Officer David Bevan, had led us to the western edge of the wood, to a ditch that marks the Barnet/Haringey border. This ditch is what remains of an ancient ha-ha, dug to prevent animals kept on the Common from straying into the wood. On the other side we saw the historic patch of grass.

The evening was a lesson in looking. Coldfall Wood (main entrance in Creighton Avenue) has been voted London's best woodland walk by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, but many of us whizz through it from time to time without understanding why.

The answer is in the coppicing, or management. Like most of us, Coldfall needs help to look its best. "Fall" in the name means "managed", and this ancient wood was coppiced for centuries for heating and furniture. Right up until the 1930s, in fact.

How can we date that so accurately? The hornbeams, some of them 700-800 years old, give the game away. Left to



David Bevan divulges the secrets of Coldfall Wood.
Photo by Daphne Chamberlain

themselves, they have a single trunk. When they are cut back, several pole-like trunks grow from the same stump. Analysis by the 'ring' test shows when this happened.

Into the light

Then, for 60 years, Coldfall Wood was in a dark age. A canopy of leaves from the oaks and hornbeams shut out light, meaning bare earth beneath, until in 1990, the Haringey Con-

servation Unit started coppicing again. Thickets of undergrowth and new wild plants and trees show where they have worked.

We were shown dog-violets, Spanish bluebells, wavy bittercress, garlic mustard and yellow-flowered strawberry plants, as well as the rare and ancient wild service tree. If you're lucky, you might see a woodpecker or a tree-creeper, birds encouraged by the new environment.

"Coldfall Wood", said David Bevan, "is very special. Half the other ancient woods listed in 1940 have disappeared." Watch out for his next guided walk.

All of a Quiver

By Diana Cormack

Did you know that there is a reservoir in East Finchley? If you walk to the end of Southern Road you come to a wire fence and a gate which is locked most of the time, except when the huge expanse of green beyond it is occupied by aficionados of the ancient sport of archery. The grass beneath their feet grows on land which belongs to Thames Water Board and which covers an extensive collection of water. Presumably the Victorians, who constructed it in 1895, were carrying out their custom of making things look like something else, just as they did with the pumping station opposite on Woodside Avenue which represents a steam ship.

From 1923 there were tennis courts on the land, both grass and clay, but their costly upkeep and a decline in membership of The Aquarius Lawn Tennis and Social Club after the second World War brought about the introduction of archery in 1966. The tennis section became defunct, though four of the courts remain; overgrown and having become a nature reserve, providing homes for all sorts of wildlife.

The area adjoining, opposite Tetherdown School, has been taken over by humans in the form of gardeners. Their thriving allotments are living proof of their hard work. A few years ago that could also have been due to the availability of manure provided by horses which used to be kept nearby. These have long since disappeared and the field is now covered by the Greenfield Drive estate.

There appears to be little danger of building on the rest

of the land, so The Aquarius Archers Club, one of the biggest in London and the Southern Counties, can continue unchallenged. Except, that is, for the matches which they regularly hold against other clubs.

On target

Some club members have gone on to county and country status. Beginners' courses are run, even for children from around the age of eight. The club, which is open all year round, weather permitting, has its own clubhouse on site with kitchen and bar facilities, a pool table and darts and can be hired out for events. Relevant details can be obtained by phoning club secretary Alan Lake on 8440 1558 or the clubhouse on 8883 7212, email info@aquarius-archers.fsnet.co.uk or visit www.aquarius-archers.fsnet.co.uk or write to Fortis Green Covered Reservoir, Southern Road, East Finchley, London N2 9LN

See photo on front page

Woodland Battle

By Anne Lalaguna,

Secretary, Friends of Cherry Tree Wood

Cherry Tree Wood is a very popular public park as well as a unique green space containing valuable fragments of ancient woodland, which have probably been in existence since pre-historic times. At the beginning of the last century the local authority bought it and added tennis courts and a playground, and many more people came to enjoy the park. Unfortunately this had a detrimental effect on the woodland areas, a process that continues today.

The woodland is dominated by Oak and Hornbeam, but you can also find Ash, Birch, Field Maple, Cherry and Sycamore. The Oaks range mainly from about 100-150 years old. Wildflowers include wood anemones, Arum lilies and bluebells. Dog mercury, lesser celandine, dog violet, foxglove, cow parsley and enchanter's nightshade. There are many wild birds including, blue tit, robin, wren, blackbird, greenfinch, chaffinch, nuthatch and tree creeper as well as greater spotted woodpecker and green woodpecker; not to mention owls, bats grey squirrels and foxes.

Friends undeterred

The Friends of Cherry Tree Wood are dedicated to encouraging an interest in the preservation of the woodland and they work alongside Barnet and Countryside Management Service. They are taking an active role in implementing the Woodland Management Strategy, now in its first year, and designed to encourage a

natural regeneration of the trees and wild flowers in the Wood. They have planted indigenous oaks and shrubs and a wild flower meadow and created a quiet area with picnic tables on the site of the old putting green. They raised the money to buy the 'Millennium Bench' and also organise 'Litter Picks' and encourage irresponsible dog owners to clean up after their pets. Finding ways of preserving ancient woodland while keeping a very popular local park clean and safe is a challenging task. It is a continuous battle against litter and vandalism, as well as the long-term dangers posed by global warming and the ever-present threat of developers. They remain undeterred, the preservation and regeneration of such a valuable green space is vital to the health and well being of our community.

Application forms to join FOCTW are available from the Park-Keeper's office on the Tennis Courts.

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