

Welcome to Judy Woods

The Woods

The name Judy Woods refers to a number of woods around the valley of Royds Hall Beck which is the boundary between Bradford and Calderdale. These comprise Royds Hall Great Wood, Jagger Park Wood, North Brow Wood, Old Hanna Wood, Judy Wood, Low Wood, Doctor Wood, and John Wood.



Ancient woodland has been present in the steep valley since just after the last Ice Age, 10,000 years ago. Originally it consisted of trees native to northern Britain but about 200 years ago it was replanted with beech and some sycamore along the edges. (In several places it is obvious that the trees have been planted in lines, often running diagonally to the path.)

Careful management of the woods over an extended period will involve the removal of some of these older trees to allow the natural regeneration of tree and shrub species which are typical of the region such as oak, birch, heather and bilberry.

Flora and Fauna

There are a number of resident birds in the woods. In addition to the more common species you may see nuthatches, tree creepers, green woodpeckers, greater spotted woodpeckers and tawny owls, whilst grey wagtail and the occasional dipper patrol the beck.

The woods are rightly famous for their display of bluebells and wood anemones, which form an extensive covering in some parts of the woods. These are indicators of ancient woodland. Bradford Council's policy of leaving felled trees in situ is paying off as they are soon colonised by insects and fungi. Some years the not very common fungus *Strobilomyces strobilaceus*, popularly known as the Old Man of the Woods makes an appearance.

There are also several colonies of bats within the woods; the Brown Long-eared, Daubenton's, Noctule and the tiny Pip-strelle. A good place to spot bats is on the bridge at dusk when they fly under the bridge catching insects which hover above the water.

The clearing under the electricity pylons in Royds Hall Great Wood is periodically coppiced to prevent the trees growing too close to the cables and this is an excellent area for



Geology

The rocks underlying West Yorkshire were formed in the Carboniferous period, some 310 million years ago. At that time Britain was near the equator and the area was low-lying, hot and wet. The coastal lowlands had swamps and deltas which from time to time were inundated by the sea until the deltas built up again and the swamps reformed.

The rocks formed in these environments were all sedimentary in origin - formed by deposits of layers of mud and sand. Vast forests provided lots of carbonaceous material which subsequently became coal. Also in these sediments are occasional lumps and bands of ironstone, which became the raw materials for the iron industry during the Industrial Revolution.

Not many of these rocks are exposed in Judy Woods, except along the banks of the beck which has cut a deep valley into the landscape. However, at the southern end of the woods the beck side is accessible and the sandstones, mudstones, ironstone and thin coal seams can be seen.

Friends of Judy Woods

The Friends of Judy Woods group was formed in 2002 and works with Bradford Council and other local bodies to make the woods more accessible to the public whilst conserving them for the plants and animals which live here.

The Friends hold regular walks and other activities and are engaged in research into the history of the woods and have a Practical Tasks Group which meets regularly to tackle rubbish removal, footpath maintenance, drainage and other issues.

See our Notice Board for up-to-date information and details of how to become a member.

Our website www.judywoods.org.uk is regularly updated and contains masses of extra information. You can download copies of walks leaflets and get details of our publications and our events programme.



Royds Hall Estate

On the ridge to the north of the woods lies Royds Hall (in private hands), the ancient home of the Rookes family. They originated at Rookes in Norwood Green. There was probably a timber house on the site in the 1400s and the present stone structure was begun in the 1600s.

The woods were part of the Rookes' extensive estate and some of the woods are named in documents of the 16th. century.

They 'farmed' the woods using the coppicing with standards method. The area would have been divided into compartments and on a 7 or 21 year cycle most of the trees would have been cut back to boles and the sticks and poles used for farm implement handles or for legs etc in furniture making. Some of the coppiced wood would have been used in charcoal making and although we have found no physical evidence of charcoal burning, there are documentary references to Royds Hall selling charcoal to the foundry at Colne Bridge in 1770. Some trees, the standards, chosen for their shape, would have been allowed to



grow to maturity and then be used as timber for house building or larger pieces of furniture. The bark would have been stripped and used in the manufacture of leather.

The Rookes leased parts of their estate for coal mining and there are records as far back as the 1500s, although none of them mentions mining within the woods.

People

The present name of 'Judy Woods' comes from Judy North (1795-1870) or 'Gurt Judy', who lived in a cottage near Horse Close Bridge, now also known as Judy Bridge, in the 1850s and 60s. Her maiden name was Judith Stocks and she was the second wife of Joseph North (1790-1850) whose family had tended the 'pleasure gardens' on the hillside by the bridge since the early 1800s. Following Joseph's death in 1850, first Judy herself and then John Barraclough (1823-1869), Judy's son by her first marriage, took over as gardener. In the 1861 census Judy is described as 'a seller of sweet meats'. Local tradition says she sold sticks of spice (sweets), parkin and ginger beer. The local historian James Parker mentions Judy Woods in his books published at the beginning of the twentieth century but he gets some of the facts wrong. For the real story of Judy North see our website.

www.judywoods.org.uk



Low Moor Company

The last member of the Rookes family to live at Royds Hall was Edward Rookes Leedes (1715 - 1784). He realised the potential of the coal deposits on the estate and mined in several places himself and also leased mineral rights to others. There are two deep pits near the woodland edge below Woodside Farm in Low Wood which belong to this period. These were identified during our Roots of Judy Woods archaeological project and more information is available on CD and on the website.

Following the bankruptcy and death of Edward Rookes Leedes a partnership bought the Royds Hall Estate in 1789. This became the Low Moor Company, one of the largest iron manufacturers in the world. They extensively mined the woods, particularly parts of Old Hanna Wood and Royds Hall Great Wood, for both coal and ironstone. You can still see evidence of this in the form of depressions, often called bell pits, or in larger scale disruptions of the surface. In Jagger Park Wood there are a further three deep, brick-lined mines, which belonged to the Low Moor Company.

The Low Moor Company prospered during the French wars when it manufactured cannons and other munitions for the government. It also made boilers for textile and sugar mills, tyres for steam locomotive wheels, castings used in the structure of buildings and ships (including Brunel's *Great Eastern*) along with smaller items for the domestic market.

The route of an old mineral line runs through the woods from the lower entrance on Station Road and exits via a field path towards High Fernley. It came from Flathers' Pit in Norwood Green, through the woods and up to the stationary engine which stood at the top of High Fernley Road on what is now Woodside Road. From there lines led to the ironworks in Low Moor off New Works Road. The fields around the woods were criss-crossed by mineral lines in the mid 1800s.

When the company was taken over by Robert Heath and Co of Sheffield in 1925, the woods were sold to Bradford Corporation and opened to the public.



We want to leave the woods for future generations to enjoy as much as we do.