

Discover Perry Wood Pocket Book



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Perry Wood in the Landscape



Perhaps the most key thing about Perry Wood in the landscape, is that it just keeps popping up! The photos below show views of Perry Wood from all around. Perry Wood is a very visible, unique and imposing place . . 2 jutting mounts of gravel and sand that rise unexpectedly out of the rolling chalk of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).



Perry Wood lies within the Faversham Fruit Belt landscape character area, and as such is surrounded by a landscape still rich with typically Kentish orchards and hop-gardens. In contrast the woods themselves offer an open wildness, and an opportunity to reflect on the busy countryside all around.



In fact the area is more similar in geology and nature to the hilltops at the Blean National Nature Reserve to the East, and like these hills, Perry Wood has a very rich history harking back to the era of Earthworks and hilltop communications. The panoramic views from the site remain today . . . and are one of the top attractions for visitors to the woods.



This special place has always drawn people, as visitors, workers and residents. It falls on a crossroads between the villages of Shottenden and Selling, there are many residences throughout and a welcome pub. Perry Wood also forms part of a network of promoted walking and cycling routes. See Explore Kent for further details, www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent.

What Type of Woodland?

Most of Perry Wood is 'Ancient Woodland', meaning that there has been consistent tree-cover since at least 1600AD.

This does not mean that Perry Wood is just a natural wild place, infact much of the area has been replanted, for example with sweet chestnut coppice and pines; but there are still areas of native broadleaved trees which are similar to our native 'wildwood'.



*above and right,
credit Naomi Betts*

There are also patches of the site not classified as Ancient Woodland, suggesting that they have been open areas for at least some of their recent history. These areas fall on the tops of the hills, where some patches of heather still persist, again, similar to the nature of the Blean area to the East.

There may have been multiple reasons for the open hilltops: viewing the surrounding landscape, peat-cutting, the 1987 storm, the old windmill . . . whatever the reasons, this openness has become part of the character of the woodland as it's known today.



Woodland Management

Much of Perry Wood is owned by Swale Borough Council (maps pages 5, 6, 10). There are two carparks and plentiful public rights of way, which make the site a popular destination for visitors.



Whilst there is some timber extraction, the site is managed mainly for its wildlife and amenity value. There is increasing involvement from the local community by means of the Friends of Perry Wood group and Selling Parish Council.

The woodland is designated as a Local Wildlife Site, and forestry operations are certified by the Forestry Stewardship Council.

The areas of sweet chestnut coppice are harvested in a 12 to 15 year rotation. Whilst the market for hop-poles is not what it once was, the woodfuel industry is picking up in Kent, and more and more coppice sales are now being made. This is good news for the woodland as a whole as coppice increases light and sheltered glades for wildflowers and other wildlife.



Other key woodland management objectives are:

- to gradually thin some areas of pine to increase the area of native broadleaves
- to increase the cover of heather on open areas of the hilltops
- to control the bracken and rhododendron that are preventing other plants from growing



Rhododendron sapling (left)



Heather

Where you can go and what to see . .

The hill where the old windmill stood in Perry Wood has a very rich history indeed. It is the site of an early Earthwork, possibly Roman, a semaphore tower stood here in the 1700s, and there were even some Victorian cottages. A mill stood here for at least 300 years before the last one was finally taken down in the early 1900s.

You can see the banks and ditches of the Earthwork clearly when the bracken is low.

Heather still clings to the edges of the old mill path . .



The Pulpit is a main attraction at the Southern end of the wood. The structure has been replaced several times, and is thought to be so-named because sermons were once preached from here!

No-one is sure but it's likely that there was a structure here in the 1800s used to survey the grand Sheldwich Lees Court Estate to the West.

Please note this map is a guide, it is not

To Selling
and Sheldwich



Windmill Hill
'The Earthwork'

The Old
Quarry

To Shottenden

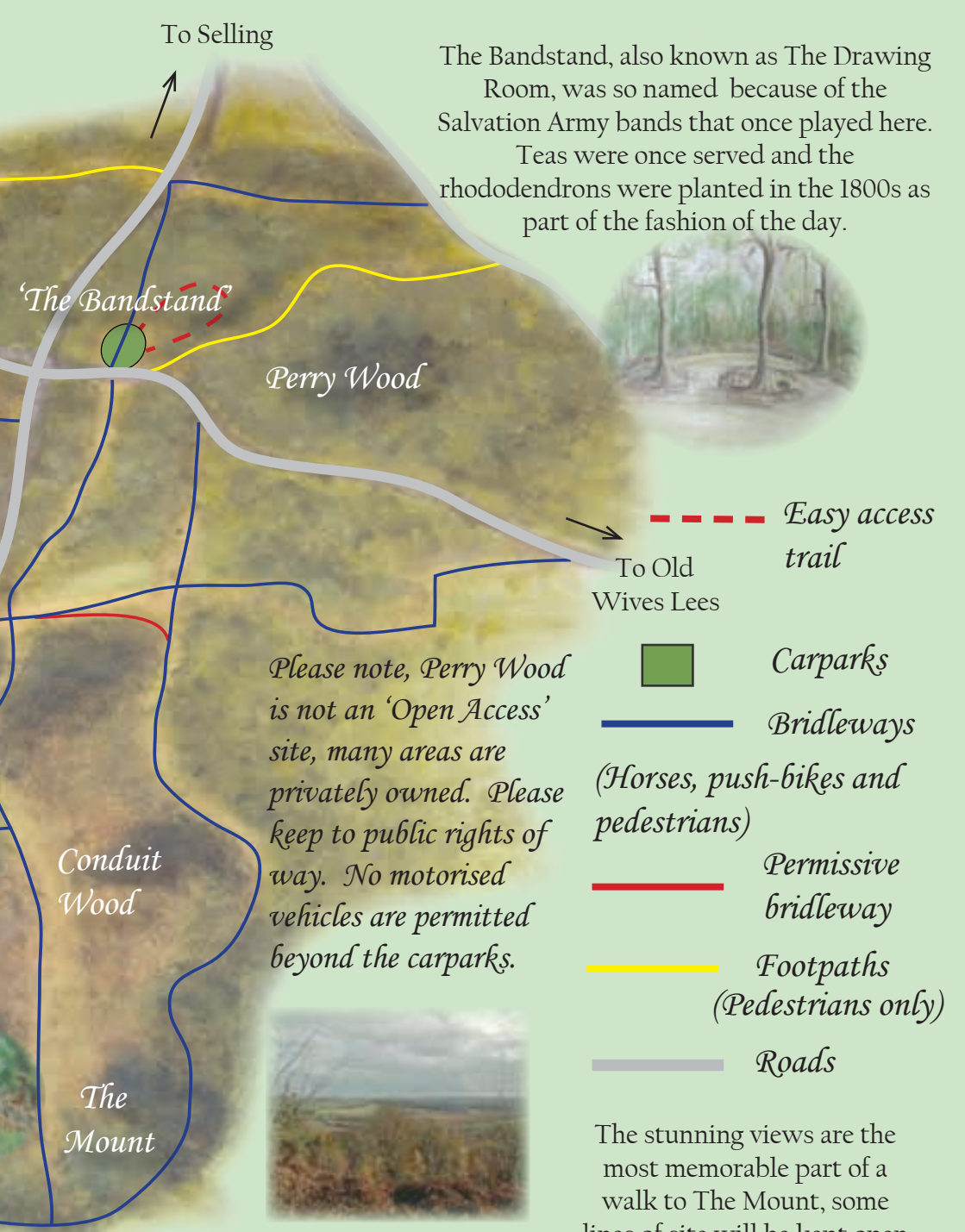


The Rose
& Crown



The Pulpit





The Bandstand, also known as The Drawing Room, was so named because of the Salvation Army bands that once played here. Teas were once served and the rhododendrons were planted in the 1800s as part of the fashion of the day.



Please note, Perry Wood is not an 'Open Access' site, many areas are privately owned. Please keep to public rights of way. No motorised vehicles are permitted beyond the carparks.



- - - Easy access trail
- Carparks
- Bridleways
(Horses, push-bikes and pedestrians)
- Permissive bridleway
- Footpaths
(Pedestrians only)
- Roads

The stunning views are the most memorable part of a walk to The Mount, some lines of site will be kept open also enabling patches of heathland restoration here.

Wildlife Conservation

Perry Wood is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and is important for all sorts of plants and animals, from important woodland wildflowers and a vast array of tiny insects and fungi, to large excavations by badgers, and stands of rare hybrid trees . .



Fly Agaric



Bluebells



Speckled Wood butterfly



Bracken and pines

Some areas of the woodland, particularly under the rhododendron, bracken and pines are currently quite species poor, and future management will focus on improving these areas for wildlife. Meanwhile, surprising areas can offer much greater diversity. For example, some of the banks around the lanes are designated as a Roadside Nature Reserve.



Common lizard



Bird's nest orchid



A 'County rare' Hieracium

One recent and exciting discovery is that dormice appear to be resident and breeding in the woods. This European Protected Species hibernates in coppice stools and leaf litter over winter and makes Summer breeding nests higher off the ground in honeysuckle and other shrubby areas.

The dormouse population will be closely monitored and protected.

You can help!
Contribute your Perry Wood
wildlife sitings at:

www.perrywoods.org.uk



*Honeysuckle
(left)*



Dormouse

Please note, you need a special
license to handle dormice!

The Discover Perry Wood Project

In 2008 the Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership started work on a project to uncover and celebrate more of the secrets of Perry Wood, and to interpret the value of this special place to visitors.

This project has involved an array of different events and activities, including wildlife walks, community archaeology, art events, a Summer Celebration of Perry Wood through the Ages, an education pack, a website and new wood-carved infrastructure for the visiting public.

Some things we discovered . .

Deer pool!



Some brilliant local artists



When encouraged, people will make tiny windmills !



Community consultation display

Dormice, as well as wood mice and yellow-necked mice too.



Yellow necked mouse, credit David Butcher

Some fantastic local exhibitionists with community spirit!



The Ages of Windmill Hill Outdoor Performance

No trace of heather seed near the pulpit, but lots of bird-life throughout the woods . .



Nuthatch

Chiffchaff

Fascinating fragments of the past . .



Mesolithic flint tool

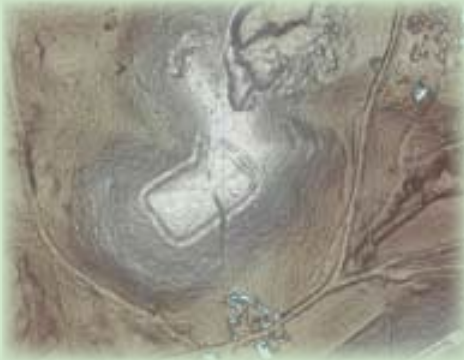
Archaeological Discoveries

Whilst all of Perry Wood has a very rich history, one of the most exciting opportunities for investigation was the mysterious 'Earthwork' on Windmill Hill, just up from the Rose & Crown.



We were lucky enough to employ the Trust for Thanet Archaeology to work with volunteers from the local community to explore the nature of the Earthwork and to map it. LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) images have also been produced which clearly show the banks and ditches of an impressive rectangular structure on the hilltop.

LIDAR image



Outline archaeological plan from community survey work



But while the Earthwork remains, so does the mystery . .

Whilst the ditch and bank profile could be Roman, there have been no specific Roman finds from the site, just tantalising signs of where the Old Windmill and Semaphore Tower may have stood, a rare German coin and some very early pottery



Early pottery, thought to be Neolithic, c3400BC, found on Windmill Hill.

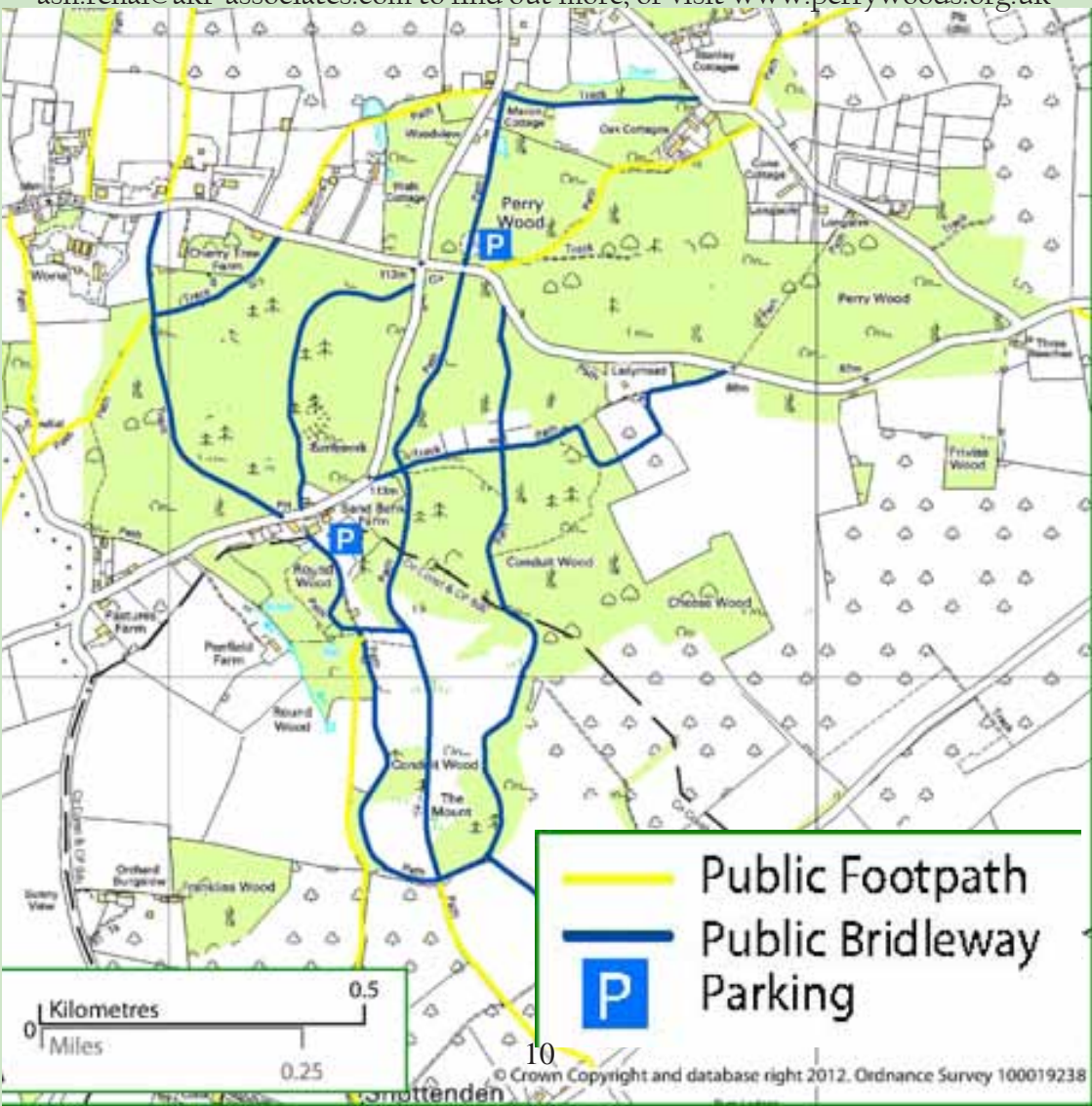
There's plenty more to discover! See the full archaeological report at www.perrywoods.org.uk and contribute your Perry Wood memories . .

How you can get involved . .

Volunteering - There are plenty of jobs in the woods that could be done by volunteers, from helping with heritage research to bracken and rhodie-bashing, tree-wardening or simply recording the things you see. Contact:

The Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership, West Barn, Penstock Hall Farm, Brabourne, Ashford, Kent. TN25 5LL 01303 815170 midkentdowns@kentdowns.org.uk, www.midkentdowns.org.uk www.perrywoods.org.uk

The Friends of Perry Wood are a local group passionate about conservation and enhancement of this special place, open to new members. Contact Secretary: ash.rehal@akr-associates.com to find out more, or visit www.perrywoods.org.uk





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