

**AREA 7: PARISH OF BUBBENHALL: BUBBENHALL WOOD and SHRUBS WOOD**  
**PARISH OF WAPPENBURY: WAPPENBURY WOOD**  
**PARISH OF STRETTON-ON- DUNSMORE: BULL & BUTCHER WOOD, FOREST WOOD,**  
**BURNTHURST WOOD, BURNTHURST COPPICE**  
**PARISH OF PRINCETHORPE: GREAT WOOD, OLD NUN, NEW NUN AND DUKE'S WOODS**

**ECOLOGY (1)**

**Bubbenhall Wood** is a Warwickshire Wildlife Trust reserve, and part a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for the uniquely preserved interglacial deposit found there. It is mature mixed deciduous woodland with pedunculate oak, silver birch, ash, gean, maple, honeysuckle; the hazel coppice is poor as it was neglected and overgrown until managed by SmithConcrete after the previous owner had taken out all of the mature timber in the 1960s. Dormice from the Channel Tunnel works were introduced in 1998 but no evidence of them has been found since 2003 (17). Ground flora is poor, with bluebell and primrose. There are records of nightingale and woodcock, also green hairstreak butterfly and silver washed fritillary (now extinct), and the sawfly *Arge panana* (also now extinct).

**Wappenbury** is also a Warwickshire Wildlife Trust reserve with a long history of entomological interest, a result of its continuous history for at least a thousand years and its proximity to other woodland sites. The ancient woodland was purchased by the Forestry Commission in the 1940s, clear-felled twice and then left to regenerate naturally. It has a canopy of oak, ash, and hazel with an understorey of maple, hawthorn and holly. Although classified by Natural England as a plantation on an ancient woodland site (PAWS), only a very small part has been planted with conifers and the vast majority of the reserve has all the characteristics of natural ancient woodland. Ground flora includes broad-leaved orchids and helleborine, bluebells and primroses. 88 species of birds, including woodcock and nightingale, 22 species of butterflies (white admiral and silver-washed fritillary being the most obvious true woodland species), damsel flies and 7 species of dragonflies are recorded, also lizards. Numerous nationally scarce beetle species have been recorded, including two nationally rare Red Data Book species, only found at this site in the county.

**Burnthurst Wood** and **Burnthurst Coppice** are mixed deciduous semi-natural woodland with oak, ash, birch and hazel, mostly coppice with standards and an understorey of honeysuckle, holly, dog rose and privet. The ground flora is poor, with mostly primrose and bluebell, except for a boggy area with abundant orchids and common helleborine.

**Bull & Butcher Wood** and **Forest Wood** are both ancient woodland.

**Princethorpe Great Wood** is ancient woodland with a canopy of ash and pedunculate oak, and old coppiced sweet chestnut and wych elm. The understorey is weak, with coppiced hazel. Ground flora has wood sanicle and primrose. Nightingales are recorded breeding here. The wood has narrow shallow drainage ditches and a gas pipe line route through the south-west corner.

**Old Nun Wood** and **Dukes Wood** are Warwickshire Wildlife Trust reserves, with oak and hazel coppice with standards; also sallow and maple. Ground flora has bluebell, wood anemone, wood sorrel, and primrose. White admiral, purple hairstreak and comma butterflies are recorded, also nightingales, woodcock and garden warbler.

**HISTORY**

**PARISH OF BUBBENHALL**

Domesday Book 1086 recorded '*silva*' (probably wood pasture, 18:p121) in Bubbenhall which was a chapelry of Ryton around 1183, implying that Bubbenhall and Ryton had once been part of the same land unit; whether the '*silva*' belonged to both manors in 1086 is not known. In 1391 an '*inquisition post mortem*' described a park situated in the northern part of Bubbenhall and that the park contained open grassland, the '*laund*' or lawn, separated from the wood by a ditch. It also described part of the manor of Bubbenhall including 'a certain part of the '*foreign*' wood' (*a wood outside the bounds of a manor*) in the south near to Wappenbury',

the area in which Bubbenhall's woodland was concentrated in 1726. There is no reference to an enclosed wood or coppice (4a).

By 1580 there seems to have been a separate coppice wood of about 98 acres, in two pieces: **Bubbenhill cotypes** and **Bubbenhill shrubbes**, both parcels of the 'demesne' (*land attached to a manor*) reserved to the lord of the manor whose consent was required before tenants could use, but not profit from or meddle with any part of, these two woods (4a). Rent accounts for the manor in 1580 show that John Collyns rented the 'wooddelande' and also probably the manor, owned by Thomas Wotton of Kent (3).

The Enclosure Award of 1726 identifies **Neather Wood, Upper Wood, Shrubbs Wood** and **Spring Wood** (now Bubbenhall Wood). The common woodland of **Neather, Upper** and **Shrubbs Woods** would have been open to shared use by the local inhabitants, whereas **Spring Wood** would have been closed to protect the 'spring', or new growth of coppiced trees. It is not known whether this wood was once part of the common woodland and, if so, when it lost its commonable status. This area of common woodland is shown abutting **Wappenbury Wood** to the south-east and **Ryton Wood** to the north-east (4a).

The Award map of 1726 shows the size and position of these woods. **Spring Wood** (61 acres), belonging to Mr. Bromley the vicar, was the same shape as **Bubbenhall Wood** is now. **Neather Wood** (36 acres) and **Upper Wood** (20 acres and no trees marked), now with **Pools** (13 acres) and the rest gravel pits, lie between Bubbenhall, Wappenbury and Ryton Woods; as neither wood appears on the 1888 Ordnance Survey map they must have gone by this date (3). **Shrubbs Wood** (15 acres) adjoined **Ryton Wood** and was separated from the rest of the common woodland by Murrian Slade, a strip of marshy grassland (4a); the large wood banks mark the parish boundary between Ryton and Bubbenhall (6).

#### PARISH OF WAPPENBURY

The medieval ridge and furrow plough markings found to the north of **Wappenbury Wood**, the ancient wood bank boundaries and the age-old pathway known as Nunwood Lane, all provide evidence of the age of this wood (1).

In the north-west of the wood there is a small area outside the original boundary which is obviously a later addition, divided into two parts by a natural ditch. The northern section is a very recent addition which is marked as a field even on modern maps. The southern part is more established woodland lying on shallow ridge and furrow running more or less parallel with the original boundary. An external wood bank and ditch, known to date back to at least medieval times, almost certainly marks the original medieval boundary of part of the wood, although some of the surrounding boundaries seem to be more recent. To the south-west there is an excavated pit, with elongate mounds nearby, possibly representing a site where clay was extracted. The historic record that 'much of the wood has a wood bank of medieval type' would seem to be an overstatement since only part of the present boundary would appear to be of this type.

A wood bank of 'medieval type' is considered to be one that:

- has a definite bank on the inner (woodland) side so that the ground is higher than the general level
- has a distinct ditch on the outer side
- does not follow a straight line over any distance
- often has distinctive trees, here mainly old ash stools, on the bank
- does not have an extant or effaced laid hawthorn hedge on the bank (10)

A simple system of three major internal wood banks and ditches also exists, with another short minor one in the south-east which is definitely artificial and appears to have no connection with other features (10).

It is possible that **Wappenbury Wood** is far older than its recorded history. There was a pottery industry in Wappenbury during the Romano-British period, indicating that ample supplies of wood were available in the vicinity for firing kilns. **Wappenbury Wood** may even occupy land which is primary woodland, i.e. has been woodland without interruption though subject to human intervention, since the last Ice Age (4c).

In Domesday Book 1086, under the manor of Wappenbury, is a record of 'silva' (probably wood pasture, 18:p121), that would have covered about 120 acres had the 'silva' been rectangular in shape; if the measurements recorded in Domesday relate to the longest and broadest points of an irregularly shaped area of woodland then the area would have been somewhat less (4c).

In 1208 a record of a wood of Wappenbury confirmed that Richard of Wappenbury, who had undertaken not to alienate his lands or woods from his heir, should have reasonable 'estovers' (*rights to collect fuel and wood for hedging and housing*) for himself, and gift in moderation to his friends, from his wood of Wappenbury. There is no information on the extent of this wood but reference to a coppice hedge of an estimated 2 miles in circumference suggests that it was pretty large. It is not known how long it had been managed as a coppice wood although the agreement of 1208 suggests, but does not prove, that wood rather than pasture was the main product (4c).

By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century the wood, now owned by Nicholas Catesby, was providing a source of fuel, building materials and hunting opportunities for the local community. In a suit in the Star Chamber against Nicholas Broune, Gerard Danet and Richard Cotes, Catesby claimed that they had entered his lands and tenements in Wappenbury and 'distroued the sprynge forever', referring to the new growth of underwood which springs up from the stump of a tree after coppicing; this tells us that the wood was a coppice wood by this date, if not before (4c).

By 1549 the wood had recovered since accounts describe 'a great parcel of the high wood' in Wappenbury and another adjoining piece; in 1550 it was divided into at least 25 hags (*areas for cutting or sale*) which made about £100 per annum. Purchasers came from 25 places, in Warwickshire mostly to the south and east of Wappenbury and from a few places in Northamptonshire. In 1668 a survey of Sir Thomas Preston's lands recorded under 'Wappenbury woods and the common', a list of various areas of woodland, suggesting that the wood remained sub-divided into coppices (4c).

A sketch map of presumed 18<sup>th</sup> Century date shows the wood having its present shape and measuring 172 acres, 3 roods and 36 perches. A map of 1726 shows it adjoining Bubbenhall parish (4c).

#### PARISH OF STRETTON ON DUNSMORE

Burnthurst was an outlying settlement of Stretton, linked by an old lane, its name suggesting that the area was probably cleared from forest by fire. In 1313 the Manor was split, and a second manor house built, later owned by the Earl of Halifax (14).

In 1704 the parish was enclosed but, as one of the earliest Warwickshire enclosures, no map accompanied the Award. A plan of the manor in 1763 shows **Miss Smith's Wood** and another wood, maybe **Mr Wilcoxes'**, together shown as **Bull & Butcher Wood** by 1850, also a large wood in the west corner in 2 parts: **Lord Clifford's Wood** in the north adjacent to **Ryton Wood** and **Mrs Shuckburgh's Wood** extending south towards the parish of Princethorpe, both called **Burnthurst** (3). In 1771 the manor was reunited by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Duke of Buccleugh who inherited the new manor from the Earl of Halifax and owned it up to modern times. An estate map of 1793 shows **Coppice**, situated north of **Bull & Butcher** wood (14).

On a map of the manor at a later date two remnants of the northern part are shown: **Burnthurst Wood** (18 acres) and **Burnthurst Heath** (7 acres) so much of Lord Clifford's Wood had gone. **Mrs Shuckburgh's Wood** in the south is now called **Goddards 'copy'**, a coppice of 30 acres (3). By 1830, the area of woodland extending south from the edge of **Ryton Wood** had been largely grubbed leaving only **Forest Wood**. Two 'assarts' (*cleared areas of woodland to create fields*) of an unknown date are surrounded by small relatively straight banks so are probably post-medieval (6).

In 1838 the estate was sold after the death of the owner John Shuckburgh of Bourton (3); a sale document lists four woods which appear to be remnants of the **Burnthurst Wood** of 1763 whose 58 acres once filled the west corner of the parish between the Ryton and Princethorpe parish boundaries. These are **Little Burnthurst Wood**

(the 12 acre remnant of Lord Clifford's Wood), **Rough Wood** (7 acres and the same area as Burnthurst Heath), **Coppice Wood** (the remaining 27 acres of Goddard's Copy) and **Forest Wood** (the 12 acre south-east corner of Ryton Wood) with large wood banks on its side of the parish boundary (3).

A tithable lands document of 1850 shows 5 woods, 58 acres in all, apportioned to George Whieldon: **Little Burnthurst Wood** (today's **Burnthurst Wood**), **Coppice Wood** (the current **Burnthurst Coppice**), and **Forest Wood**; also the **Rough** and **Spinney**, their location unknown and now gone. Also shown is **Bull & Butcher Wood**, comprising **Mr. Wilcox's Wood** (now gone), and **Miss Smith's Wood** (the rest of the wood, the northern part now gone), **Coppice** (now gone), and **Dench Wood**, 24 acres (also now gone and not marked on the map as outside the study area) at the east end of the parish next to Wolston Parish (3).

### PARISH OF PRINCETHORPE

The parish was enclosed in 1763. The Enclosure Award map shows **Nun Wood**, apportioned to Richard Jenners (the area of **New** and **Old Nun Woods** today), **Ancient Wood**, also apportioned to Richard Jenners (the current **Great Wood** but not the part next to the road) and **Dukes Wood**, apportioned to Countess of Cardigan and marked as 2 enclosures, not woodland. Also shown is the **Ancient Wood of Stanes Chamberlayne**, to the east of the Great Wood (3); the Chamberlaynes are mentioned in the Stretton book as big landowners in the area (14).

However, by 1850 **Stanes Chamberlayne Wood** had gone as the Tithe apportionment shows it as titheable and arable; its shape can be seen from the curved hedgerow shown on the 1880 Victorian map where the College Sports Ground is now (3).

The 1888 Ordnance Survey map shows **Stockleys Spinney**, a small wood in the far east of the parish adjacent to Frankton Wood (see **Area 8**) and now gone (16).

#### Sources of information:

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- 4a. Wager, S.J. *A short history of Bubbenhall Wood (unpublished)*
- 4c. Wager, S.J. *A short history of Wappenbury Wood (unpublished)*
6. Morfitt, D.R. (1988b) *A short summary of evidence for the 'ancient' status of Ryton Wood - documentary, archaeological and ecological.*
10. Wright, R. (2009) *Wappenbury Nature Reserve management plan and archaeological survey.*
14. Stretton on Dunsmore: *The Making of a Warwickshire Village (2000) Stretton Millennium History Group.*
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18. Rackham, O. (1986) *The History of the Countryside*