

Brede High Woods today

While today the woods are a tranquil retreat from the bustle of modern life, they were quite different in the 16th to 18th centuries. This incredible woodland tells the stories of centuries of human activity. Walk among stands of ancient woodland and conifer plantations and discover its forgotten past.

Unearthing the past

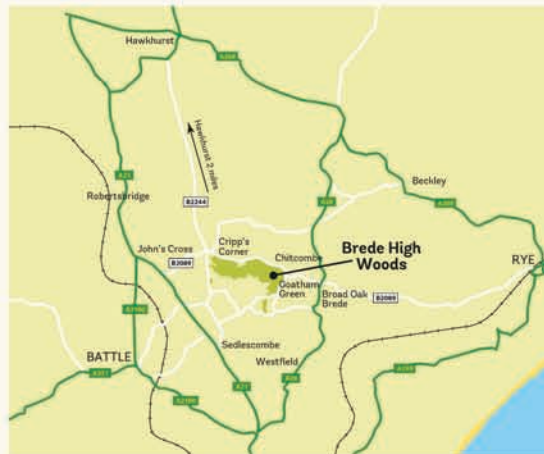
In May 2012, with the help of local archaeologists, more than 25 volunteers took part in The Big Dig. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the team found remains of a 17th century farmhouse, farm buildings and saw pits. In the woodland they unearthed the remains of a charcoal-burning platform, two iron-working furnaces and a hop workers' camp. More information about these features and those more visible on-site can be found online, search *Brede High Woods* at woodlandtrust.org.uk

Follow the trail

Choose either the shorter red route, which takes approximately 30 minutes to walk, or the longer black route, which leads you around the woods in a figure of eight and takes an hour. Both routes are waymarked and allow you to discover Brede's deserted farmstead, saw pits, ancient coppiced woodland (Coneyburrow Wood) and the distinctive wood banks.

Getting there

Brede High Woods is between Cripps Corner and Broad Oak Brede, south of the B2089 about 10 miles north of Hastings. There are two car parks on the south side of the B2089 Cripps Corner/Broad Oak Brede Road.



Ordnance Survey map ref: TQ 804 206

Artist's reconstruction of Brede High Farm in the 19th century, based on historic maps, photos and evidence from excavations in 2012-13



The Woodland Trust is the UK's leading woodland conservation charity. For further details about our work, including how to become a member, please contact us at the address shown left or visit woodlandtrust.org.uk where you can search *Brede High Woods* to find out more about this site.



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Brede High Woods



Our restoration work at Brede High Woods has been generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.





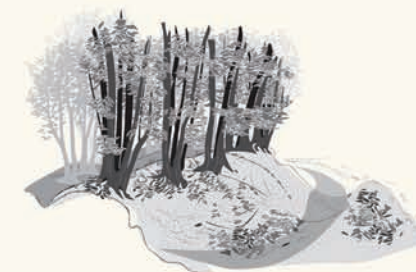
It was more efficient to saw large trunks within the woodland, rather than carry them out and process them elsewhere. Sawyers used **sawpits** which consisted of a shallow pit dug into the earth on which a frame was assembled above. This method of working is the theory behind the saying top dog and underdog. A man or a boy stood in the pit (the underdog) while another stood on the trunk (the top dog). The underdog got the raw end of the deal, as a lot of sawdust would fall on him.



To the north east of the woods lies the former site of **Brede High Farm**. This substantial farm was first recorded in a deed of 1639 and a farmhouse existed until it was demolished in the 1930s. More information can be found about this at the site of the old farm.



Coppicing is a traditional form of woodland management where the tree is felled at the stump and shoots arise from the stump known as a stool. The resulting stems were then cut again after 6-20 years depending on the species and on the products being made. **Coppiced woodland** can be sustainable for hundreds of years, with the stool increasing in diameter over time and the life of the tree extended. Most of the ancient woodland areas in Brede and across the High Weald were coppiced to produce firewood, charcoal (particularly using hornbeam and alder) and hop poles (from sweet chestnut). These trees can still be found in Coneyburrow Wood today.



Look out for **wood banks** as you cross the old boundary between ancient Coneyburrow Wood and the former fields that surrounded it. They are probably medieval in origin and can still be traced around the whole woodland today. They were constructed to enclose coppice woodland and protect young trees from grazing animals. The bank would usually have a row of coppiced trees or a laid hedge on top with a ditch on the outside. Many of the old boundary banks within Brede High Woods retain some of their original tree species, particularly the distinctive hornbeam.

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