



Gomm's & Bubbles

Management Plan 2016-2021

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THE WOODLAND TRUST

INTRODUCTION

The Trust's corporate aims and management approach guide the management of all the Trust's properties, and are described on Page 4. These determine basic management policies and methods, which apply to all sites unless specifically stated otherwise. Such policies include free public access; keeping local people informed of major proposed work; the retention of old trees and dead wood; and a desire for management to be as unobtrusive as possible. The Trust also has available Policy Statements covering a variety of woodland management issues.

The Trust's management plans are based on the identification of Key Features for the site and setting objectives for their management. A monitoring programme (not included in this plan) ensures that these objectives are met and any necessary management works are carried out.

Any legally confidential or sensitive species information about this site is not included in this version of the plan.

PLAN REVIEW AND UPDATING

The information presented in this Management plan is held in a database which is continuously being amended and updated on our website. Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations. Please either consult The Woodland Trust website www.woodlandtrust.org.uk or contact the Woodland Trust (wopsmail@woodlandtrust.org.uk) to confirm details of the current management programme.

There is a formal review of this plan every 5 years and a summary of monitoring results can be obtained on request.

WOODLAND MANAGEMENT APPROACH

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing peoples' understanding and enjoyment of woodland. Our strategic aims are to:

- Protect native woods, trees and their wildlife for the future
- Work with others to create more native woodlands and places rich in trees
- Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees

All our sites have a management plan which is freely accessible via our website

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk. Our woods are managed to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS) and are certified with the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) under licence FSC-C009406 and through independent audit.

In addition to the guidelines below we have specific guidance and policies on issues of woodland management which we review and update from time to time.

We recognise that all woods are different and that the management of our sites should also reflect their local landscape and where appropriate support local projects and initiatives. Guidelines like these provide a necessary overarching framework to guide the management of our sites but such management also requires decisions based on local circumstances and our Site Manager's intimate knowledge of each site.

The following guidelines help to direct our woodland management:

1. Our woods are managed to maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape. We intervene when there is evidence that it is necessary to maintain or improve biodiversity and to further the development of more resilient woods and landscapes.
2. We establish new native woodland using both natural regeneration and tree planting, but largely the latter, particularly when there are opportunities for involving people.
3. We provide free public access to woods for quiet, informal recreation and our woods are managed to make them accessible, welcoming and safe.
4. The long term vision for our non-native plantations on ancient woodland sites is to restore them to predominantly native species composition and semi-natural structure, a vision that equally applies to our secondary woods.
5. Existing semi-natural open-ground and freshwater habitats are restored and maintained wherever their management can be sustained and new open ground habitats created where appropriate.
6. The heritage and cultural value of sites is taken into account in our management and, in particular, our ancient trees are retained for as long as possible.
7. Woods can offer the potential to generate income both from the sustainable harvesting of wood products and the delivery of other services. We will therefore consider the potential to generate income from our estate to help support our aims.
8. We work with neighbours, local people, organisations and other stakeholders in developing the management of our woods. We recognise the benefits of local community woodland ownership and management. Where appropriate we allow our woods to be used to support local woodland, conservation, education and access initiatives.
9. We use and offer the estate where appropriate, for the purpose of demonstration, evidence gathering and research associated with the conservation, recreational and sustainable management of woodlands. In particular we will develop and maintain a network of long-term monitoring sites across the estate.
10. Any activities we undertake will conform to sustainable forest management principles, be appropriate for the site and will be balanced with our primary objectives of enhancing the biodiversity and recreational value of our woods and the wider landscapes.

SUMMARY

This public management plan briefly describes the site, specifically mentions information on public access, sets out the long term policy and lists the Key Features which drive management actions. The Key Features are specific to this site - their significance is outlined together with their long (50 year+) and short (5 year) term objectives. The short term objectives are complemented by a detailed Work Programme for the period of this management plan. Detailed compartment descriptions are listed in the appendices which include any major management constraints and designations. A short glossary of technical terms is at the end. The Key Features and general woodland condition of this site are subject to a formal monitoring programme which is maintained in a central database. A summary of monitoring results is available on request.

1.0 SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Gomm's & Bubbles
Location:	Cryers Hill
Grid reference:	SU869971, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 165
Area:	6.12 hectares (15.12 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Chiltern Heritage Woodland, Green Belt

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

This ancient, semi-natural woodland in the Chiltern Hill is only three miles from High Wycombe. Timber used to be sourced from here for the local furniture trade and there are also old quarry pits within the wood. There are some steep climbs within the wood but this is a lovely quiet place to walk and enjoy the surrounding countryside.

2.2 Extended Description

Gomm's and Bubbles is a 6 hectare / 15 acre ancient semi-natural woodland in the Chiltern Hills AONB approximately three miles north of the centre of High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, and was gifted to the Woodland Trust in 1991. It lies in a dry valley position between the hamlets of Great Kingshill and Hughenden Valley, close to Pipers Corner School. Bubbles Wood is to the west of the valley and Gomm's Wood to the east. Surrounding land use is a mixture of pasture, arable and woodland. There are very old wood banks around most of the woodland boundary indicating that the woodland has ancient origins which help to justify its ASNW status.

Composition of the flora most closely resembles NVC type W12 Beech - Dog's Mercury, which is characteristically developed on chalk slopes. Mature beech dominates the canopy in the eastern section of the wood which would have been planted for the High Wycombe furniture trade. Other main tree species include oak, cherry, hornbeam, wych elm and whitebeam, with holly forming a dense understory in places. The woodland suffered during the storms of 1987 and 1990, and in the narrow arm of the wood to the south some of the storm-damaged beech trees still remain, adding to the dead wood habitat. Where there have been gaps formed by previous storm damage mostly in the western area, ash and sycamore species are regenerating. The woodland has a good range of ancient woodland indicator species including bluebell, yellow archangel, dog's mercury and wood spurge as well as uncommon green hellebore and the nationally scarce coralroot, (*Cardamine bulbifera*), the Chilterns being one of two strongholds in Britain along with Sussex

The soils comprise of 'Andover 1' series, defined as shallow well drained calcareous silty soils over chalk on slopes and crests. There are deeper soils in the valley formed by the natural creep down hill.

As well as the wood banks, there is other woodland archaeology in the form of old chalk and flint quarry pits, some of which are a considerable size. Permissive paths extend across the site which are steep in places. The public right of way running beside the north west boundary is called Boss Lane and is an ancient sunken lane lined with high earth banks and mature trees. Gomm's and Bubbles has strong historical links with the High Wycombe chair industry, via the previous owner's family business operating until the 1950's, but has since been unmanaged. A small number of larch were planted in the 1970's but have not done well. Gomm's and Bubbles is thought to have been the inspiration to the late JM Barrie for the Enchanted Wood in 'Dear Brutus'.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

Getting there: Buses stop in Hughenden Valley (Coombe Lane) on route to Naphill and High Wycombe. From there, the wood is accessible from public rights of way and minor roads and is less than a mile away. Other rights of way pass very near to the wood particularly Boss Lane, a restricted byway leading from Pipers School to Hughenden Valley. Two public footpaths run from Cryers Hill to the wood. Parking is not possible close to the wood and vehicles may have to be left at Cryers Hill, Great Kingshill or in Hughenden Valley.

The main wood entrance is off Boss Lane and up a 1 metre high woodbank. The path through the wood are narrow in places (approx. 1.5m width) track that runs close to a depression and down a steep slope to a dry valley. Paths then climb out of the valley to a squeeze gap of approximately 50 cms leading onto the footpath to Cryers Hill.

Public conveniences: The nearest public toilets are in High Wycombe near the Information Centre (Wycombe District Council 01494 421415) and Prestwood High Street (Chiltern District Council 01494 732053).

All distances are approximate.

For further information about public transport, contact Traveline - www.traveline.org.uk or phone 0871 200 22 33 .

3.2 Access / Walks

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

This small but interesting area of ancient woodland in the Chilterns will contribute to the Woodland Trust's aims of no further loss of ancient woodland, while enhancing woodland biodiversity and providing informal public access to woodland.

Principally, the woodland will be managed by minimum intervention to allow natural processes to shape the future diversity and structure. Mature trees will be left to gradually decline and provide important niche habitats within the wood, except if they pose a significant tree safety risk. Any trees that are felled or collapse naturally will be retained on site to provide a succession of dead wood habitat which will add to the biodiversity interest, particularly for invertebrates and fungi. The gaps left by these trees will provide space and light for natural succession to take place.

Observations will be carried out to record any factors causing change that may be detrimental to the vitality and structure of the woodland. For example there should be no damaging invasive species present on the site, and the likely colonisation by ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*) and other pests and diseases monitored and managed where necessary.

The public's enjoyment of the woodland will be enhanced by maintaining an accessible and safe network of paths and rides. Entrances, boundary fences, and benches will be maintained as necessary and the access provision will be monitored and provided in line with a Category C access site: Low usage sites where we do maintain paths.

5.0 KEY FEATURES

The Key Features of the site are identified and described below. They encapsulate what is important about the site. The short and long-term objectives are stated and any management necessary to maintain and improve the Key Feature.

5.1 Ancient Semi Natural Woodland

Description

The historical sites of both Bubbles Wood and Gomm's Wood form a *Fagus sylvatica* - *Mercurialis perennis* woodland probably with a sub community 12b on the slopes and in the valley according to the National Vegetation Classification.

Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) is dominant as a canopy species in areas unaffected by storm damage. Most of Gomm's Wood has a sparse shrub layer containing holly and elder, with a ground flora either dominated by dog's mercury or bluebell where soils are perhaps more moisture retentive. Woodruff and wood spurge are frequent.

On high ground towards the plateau on the north east side of Gomm's Wood there is a higher proportion of pedunculate oak, hornbeam and cherry, with bracken suggesting less base rich conditions, though bluebell is still dominant in the field layer.

Bubbles Wood has a slightly more varied composition with field maple, beech and ash as canopy trees.

The woodland has a good range of ancient woodland indicator species including bluebell, yellow archangel, dog's mercury and wood spurge as well as uncommon green hellebore and the nationally scarce coralroot, (*Cardamine bulbifera*), the Chilterns being one of two strongholds in Britain along with Sussex.

Significance

Ancient semi natural woodland is irreplaceable, and the amount in Britain has been drastically reduced over the last century. ASNW is very important due to the continuity of woodland cover over hundreds of years which allows for a diverse range of wildlife and vegetation to develop over time that cannot be found in new woodland creation sites, and a key aim of the Woodland Trust is to prevent any further loss of ancient woodland.

This woodland is important as a fragment of ancient woodland in the Chilterns as well as being a home of the rare Coralroot plant, (*Cardamine bulbifera*) a national rarity.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

Poor access for timber extraction and haulage

Topography of site presents management challenges

Lack of market for beech

Illegal motorbike incursions into the wood have in the past caused some concern from visitors as well as potential damage and disturbance to the woodland flora and fauna

Opportunities:

Ceasing active management the wood will allow the processes of natural succession and provide the old growth characteristics that are desired to favour a more diverse range of flora and fauna

Factors Causing Change

Death of ash due to colonisation of Ash dieback (*Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*)

Historical use of the wood for off road activity, though there have been no new reports since 2008 after installation of a boundary fence

Threat to natural regeneration by predation from deer

Long term Objective (50 years+)

Change in this woodland will only be apparent in the very long term. Trees will be replaced by natural regeneration when gaps naturally occur due to collapse or wind blow. This will ensure the stability of the current communities of plants in the woods.

In the long term, it is likely that the woodland will have a more varied composition of species with less dominance of beech. Oak and wild cherry are likely to feature more frequently by regenerating in the gaps left by the declining beech. There will continue to be a range of tree ages with a good proportion and succession of deadwood.

A more natural broadleaved woodland will develop with old growth characteristics: large old trees, standing & fallen deadwood and existing standards will become veteran trees.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

There will be no silvicultural intervention within the main body of the woodland in this plan period. Natural processes will be allowed to shape the woodland.

Periodic inspections of the tree safety zones will be undertaken by the site manager.

Boundaries will remain secure to prevent future motorbike access by periodic boundary checks.

5.2 Informal Public Access

Description

Public access is accessible direct from Boss Lane (and up a 1 metre high wood bank) which abuts the western boundary of the site and is an unclassified, un-metalled road (and as such may have public vehicular rights).

It is recorded as a road used as a public footpath (RUPP). This sunken lane or hollow way links the communities of the Hughenden Valley and Great Kingsmill.

There are several permissive paths running close to a depression and down a steep slope to a dry valley through the site, which are also narrow in places (approx. 1.5m width). The paths through the wood and Paths then climb out of the valley to a squeeze gap of approximately 50cm leading onto the footpath to Cryers Hill.

Access is for pedestrian use only, and the site is WT access category C: less than 5 visitors a day.

Significance

It provides a quiet area for walking and recreation for many people living within walking distance of the woodland. One of the Woodland Trust's main objectives is the promotion of public access to, and enjoyment of, woodlands.

Opportunities & Constraints

Constraints:

The terrain is steep and some of the paths difficult to navigate, particularly in adverse weather conditions.

The site is remote from larger conurbations, and so visitor numbers are low.

Opportunities:

To provide formal and quiet access opportunities to an ancient woodland with associated (and some rare) flora.

Factors Causing Change

Low visitor numbers could lead to loss of navigable paths over time.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The paths will be kept safe for quiet, recreational pedestrian access to the woodland.

Short term management Objectives for the plan period (5 years)

During this plan period visitor numbers will be maintained by providing a network of suitable paths & rides, access points & signage. This will be achieved through: Annual path cut and entrance maintenance.

Monitoring to ensure that access category & maintenance is in line with usage.

The trees will be checked for safety once every two years, and appropriate works undertaken.

6.0 WORK PROGRAMME

Year	Type of Work	Description	Due By
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APPENDIX 1: COMPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Cpt No.	Area (ha)	Main Species	Year	Management Regime	Major Management Constraints	Key Features Present	Designations
1a	6.11	Beech	1901	Min-intervention	Gullies/Deep Valleys/Uneven/Rocky ground, Landscape factors, No/poor vehicular access to the site, No/poor vehicular access within the site, Sensitive habitats/species on or adjacent to site	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Informal Public Access	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt, Other

Composition of the flora most closely resembles NVC type W12 *Fagus sylvatica* - *Mercurialis perennis* or Beech - Dog's Mercury, which is characteristically developed on chalk slopes. Mature beech dominates the canopy in the eastern section of the wood which would have been planted for the High Wycombe furniture trade. Other main tree species include oak, cherry, hornbeam, wych elm and whitebeam, with holly forming a dense understory in places. The woodland suffered during the storms of 1987 and 1990, and in the narrow arm of the wood to the south some of the storm-damaged beech trees still remain, adding to the dead wood habitat. Where there have been gaps formed by previous storm damage mostly in the western area, ash and sycamore species are regenerating. The woodland has a good range of ancient woodland indicator species including bluebell, yellow archangel, dog's mercury and wood spurge as well as uncommon green hellebore and the nationally scarce coralroot, (*Cardamine bulbifera*), the Chilterns being one of two strongholds in Britain along with Sussex

The soils comprise of 'Andover 1' series, defined as shallow well drained calcareous silty soils over chalk on slopes and crests. There are deeper soils in the valley formed by the natural creep down hill.

GLOSSARY

Ancient Woodland

Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD. In Scotland ancient woods are defined strictly as sites shown as semi-natural woodland on the 'Roy' maps (a military survey carried out in 1750 AD, which is the best source of historical map evidence) and as woodland all subsequent maps. However, they have been combined with long-established woods of semi-natural origin (originating from between 1750 and 1860) into a single category of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland to take account of uncertainties in their identification. Ancient woods include Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland and plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites (see below). May support many species that are only found in ancient woodland.

Ancient Semi - Natural Woodland

Stands in ancient woods defined as those consisting predominantly of native trees and shrubs that have not obviously been planted, which have arisen from natural regeneration or coppice regrowth.

Ancient Woodland Site

Stands in ancient woods that have been converted to plantations, of coniferous, broadleaved or mixed species, usually for timber production, including plantations of native species planted so closely together that any semi-natural elements of the understorey have been suppressed.

Beating Up

Replacing any newly planted trees that have died in the first few years after planting.

Broadleaf

A tree having broad leaves (such as oak) rather than needles found on conifers (such as Scots pine).

Canopy

The uppermost layer of vegetation in a woodland, or the upper foliage and branches of an individual tree.

Clearfell

Felling of all trees within a defined area.

Compartment

Permanent management division of a woodland, usually defined on site by permanent features such as roads. See Sub-compartments.

Conifer

A tree having needles, rather than broadleaves, and typically bearing cones.

Continuous Cover forestry

A term used for managing woods to ensure that there are groups or individual trees of different ages scattered over the whole wood and that some mature tree cover is always maintained. Management is by repeated thinning and no large areas are ever completely felled all at once.

Coppice

Trees which are cut back to ground levels at regular intervals (3-25 years).

Exotic (non-native) Species

Species originating from other countries (or other parts of the UK) that have been introduced by humans, deliberately or accidentally.

Field Layer

Layer of small, non-woody herbaceous plants such as bluebells.

Group Fell

The felling of a small group of trees, often to promote natural regeneration or allow planting.

Long Term Retention

Discrete groups of trees (or in some cases single trees) that are retained significantly past their economic felling age. Operations may still be carried out within them and thinning is often necessary to maintain stability.

Minimum Intervention

Areas where no operations (such as thinning) will take place other than to protect public safety or possibly to control invasive exotic species.

Mixed Woodland

Woodland made up of broadleaved and coniferous trees.

National vegetation classification (NVC)

A classification scheme that allows an area of vegetation to be assigned to the standardised type that best matches the combination of plant species that it contains. All woodlands in the UK can be described as being one of 18 main woodland types (W1 - W18), which principally reflect soil and climatic conditions. For example, Upland Oakwoods are type W11, and normally occur on well drained infertile soils in the cooler and wetter north and west of Britain. Each main type can be subdivided into numerous subtypes. Most real woods contain more than one type or sub-type and inevitably some woods are intermediate in character and can't be properly described by any sub type.

Native Species

Species that arrived in Britain without human assistance.

Natural Regeneration

Naturally grown trees from seeds falling from mature trees. Also regeneration from coppicing and suckering.

Origin & Provenance

The provenance of a tree or seed is the place where seed was collected to grow the tree or plant. The origin is the geographical location within the natural range of a species from where seeds/tree originally derives. Thus an acorn collected from a Turkey oak in Edinburgh would have an Edinburgh provenance and a southern European origin.

Re-Stocking

Re-planting an area of woodland, after it has been felled.

Shrub Layer

Formed by woody plants 1-10m tall.

Silviculture

The growing and care of trees in woodlands.

Stand

Trees of one type or species, grouped together within a woodland.

Sub-Compartment

Temporary management division of a compartment, which may change between management plan periods.

Thinning

The felling of a proportion of individual trees within a given area. The remaining trees grow to fill in the space created.

Tubex or Grow or Tuley Tubes

Tubes placed over newly planted trees or natural regeneration that promote growth and provide protection from animals such as rabbits and deer.

Weeding

The control of vegetation immediately around newly planted trees or natural regeneration to promote tree growth until they become established. Either by hand cutting or with carefully selected weed killers such as glyphosate.

Windblow/Windthrow

Trees or groups of trees blown over (usually uprooted) by strong winds and gales.