



Victory Wood

Management Plan 2015-2020

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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 Consequently this printed version may quickly become out of date, particularly in relation to the planned work programme and on-going monitoring observations.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:	Victory Wood
Location:	Yorkletts
Grid reference:	TR093619, OS 1:50,000 Sheet No. 179
Area:	140.40 hectares (346.94 acres)
Designations:	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Candidate Special Area of Conservation, Tree Preservation Order

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary Description

Enjoy a taste of history at Victory Wood which was planted in 2005 to mark the 200th anniversary of Britain's victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. Various features relating to the battle have been created, such as sculptures and groves representing each ship in the British fleet. There are open habitats too, along with two areas of ancient woodland, all surrounded by an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which includes some of the most scenic and diverse examples of natural woodland in south-east England.

2.2 Extended Description

Victory Wood (140.26 hectares) is centred between the villages of Dargate and Yorkletts some 3 miles north of Canterbury, Kent. This site is in the North Kent Plain Natural Area between the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Graveney Marshes and Sea Salter Level beside the Thames Estuary. It is also situated at the northwest end of 'The Blean', the largest continuous wooded area in Kent covering over 3,000 hectares arcing around the north of Canterbury, much of which is classified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The terrain at Victory Wood is undulating with the ground rising up to a long ridge at the southern end of the site. This gives spectacular views north towards the Isle of Sheppey and the Thames Estuary, and south over the Blean National Nature Reserve (NNR).

Victory Wood was purchased by the Woodland Trust in 2004 to be the flagship site for Trafalgar Woods Project to commemorate the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

At the time of purchase Victory Wood consisted of 133.04ha of arable land and situated in the southwest of the site 7.07ha of ancient woodland and 0.39 of secondary woodland close to the public highway. During 2005-2008, 86ha of secondary woodland was established through extensive community efforts on the main ridge at the southern end of the site. This new wood now links together Blean Wood and Ellenden Wood which were separated between the late 1940's and early 1970's when the connecting area of ancient woodland (North Blean Wood) was cut down in a piecemeal way and converted to agriculture. Between 2011- 2014, a further 17.76ha of secondary woodland was created northwest of the main ridge.

The remaining land at Victory Wood is semi-natural open ground habitat (30.72ha) grazed by livestock and has a scattering of trees (Trees Outside Woodlands) established within fenced stockades during 2014.

Having had no public access prior to the purchase by the Woodland Trust, infrastructure was put in place in 2005 for 4 pedestrian access points and a car park. As part of the Trafalgar Woods Project during 2005 a number of interpretative structures were also placed on site (statue of Nelson, Victory Footprint, Chain Link and Trafalgar battle plan in trees) and these are themed around the Battle of Trafalgar but are linked to the importance of trees/woodlands and how different tree species were traditionally used.

At the base of the ridge a deep ditch, called the Hawkins Hill Ditch, runs southwest-northeast draining the land towards Ellenden Wood. At the edge of Ellenden Wood is a small pond situated on the ditch line. The soil at Victory Wood is clay soil from the Windsor Series which overlay a thick deposit of London Clay.

3.0 PUBLIC ACCESS INFORMATION

3.1 Getting there

By bus:

The nearest bus stop is Barn Close at Yorkletts. There are connections from here to Whitstable town centre (Saddleton Road) and to Dargate village beside the Dove Inn.

By train:

The nearest train station is in Whitstable on the London-Faversham - Margate line. Whitstable Station is 4.8km (three miles) from the car park along local public roads.

For further information on public transport, visit traveline.org.uk or telephone 0871 200 2233.

By car:

Victory Wood is located south of the A299 in Kent, close to Canterbury and Whitstable.

From the A299, take the exit signposted 'Yorkletts, Dargate, Waterham' beside the service stations (on either side of the road), into Highstreet. Follow Highstreet Road for approximately 300 metres until there is a sharp bend. At the bend, turn right, following the sign for Victory Wood (and Lamberhurst Farm). Continue for approximately 100 metres and our car park entrance is on the left-hand side under a height restriction barrier.

Grid reference:TR095615

Nearest postcode: ME13 9EP

On foot:

There is currently no public footpath leading into Victory Wood. However, there are links from public footpaths via existing roads to Victory Wood. The nearest one comes north out of the Blean National Nature Reserve (at Church Wood) onto Denstroude Lane. Follow the road north-east towards Blean village for around 0.8km (half a mile) until you reach a sharp right-angled bend in the road. At this point, turn left onto a stone track (also a bridleway entrance into Ellenden Wood), and the entrance into Victory Wood will be ahead of you.

3.2 Access / Walks

There are four entrances to Victory Wood:

The main entrance is via an all access kissing gate (suitable for pushchairs) from the Woodland Trust car park off Dargate Road. There is a height restriction barrier over the car park's entrance.

In addition, all-access kissing gates lead either onto the all-user path or, alternatively, into open ground and the Victory Footprint. A surfaced path has been constructed for wheelchair/pushchairs to allow access to the Victory Footprint from the car park.

The second entrance lies on the northern boundary, off Dargate Road, through an all access kissing gate. This leads into the grazing area and straight to the Footprint after about 100 metres.

The third entrance can be found towards the south-west of Victory Wood, just off Dargate Road, via a pedestrian squeeze gap. This is opposite Blean Wood which is on the other side of the road. This entrance has no car parking and the road is too narrow to leave cars parked on the edge. From the entranceway the path leads into mature woodland up a steep slope.

The fourth entrance is located in the south-east corner of Victory Wood off Denstroude Lane, adjacent to Ellenden Wood. Access into Victory Wood is via an all-access kissing gate. Emergency access is required through this gateway at all times, therefore car parking is not permitted on the track leading up to the gateway. This entranceway leads directly into the woodland creation areas at Victory Wood.

All the paths have unmodified grass and earth surfaces which can get slippery and muddy when wet, particularly in the winter. In addition, there are some steep slopes at the southern end of Victory Wood so caution is advised when attempting to negotiate this area of the wood. Please be mindful that the area is an open ground habitat so there will often be livestock grazing here.

Additionally, a multi-user path allows horse riders, pedestrians and off-road push bikes to cross Victory Wood on a designated route from the car park entrance to the entrance off Denstroude Lane in the south-east. This route is open all year round but restricts horses to the spring and summer months only.

Part of the Big Blean Walk passes through Victory Wood along the ridge, and walkers are welcome to use the path network provided to gain access to the rest of the Blean complex beyond - 11 square miles of predominantly ancient woodland arching over the north of Canterbury.

4.0 LONG TERM POLICY

In fifty years' time, Victory Wood will be a resilient landscape retaining its ancient woodland and more recent secondary woodland areas alongside the open ground habitat. The woodland areas will contain a diverse structure providing a good range of different habitats typical of this native broadleaved woodland type.

The secondary woodland will be managed through minimal intervention and will be developing into high forest type. Natural regeneration will have occurred during the preceding decades to fill the majority of the unplanted areas with a scattering of open glades remaining through this woodland area. Through the secondary woodland the major paths will have their woodland edges coppiced on short rotations to provide beneficial wildlife habitats through structural diversity and to maintain views at strategic points particularly along the main ridge.

The ancient woodland area will also be managed through minimal intervention to allow natural processes to occur that in time will lead to the development of diverse habitat structures. There will be an increase in the age of the trees and the accumulation of dead wood which will in turn help to support a large range of invertebrates and fungi. The edge beside the public highway will require periodic intervention to remove dangerous trees, but also to promote individual trees so that they produce well balanced crowns to aid the stability of the trees.

The semi-natural open ground habitat will be converting towards a Lowland Wood-pasture and parkland habitat containing a scattering of maturing open grown trees. Natural regeneration of scrub species like hawthorn and blackthorn will be well established having extending out from hedgerows into the semi-natural open ground habitat. Seasonal grazing will ensure that the open ground habitat will develop a mosaic of grassland and a covering of natural regeneration from scrub and tree species extending over no more than 10% of the habitat area.

Monitoring for the presence of invasive trees and shrubs will be on-going. Deer will undoubtedly be present at Victory Wood in 50 years' time and their numbers will be monitored and controlled if numbers become too high preventing the woodland from regenerating.

Although the site will retain its tranquil character, it will be visited by a moderate number of visitors each year who appreciate and respect walking in a wooded landscape with diverse habitats, along a well-maintained network of paths. The origins of Victory Wood and the link to the bicentenary of the Battle of Trafalgar will still continue to be promoted on site.

The management of our woods is based on our charitable purposes, and is therefore focused on improving woodland biodiversity and increasing people's understanding and enjoyment of woodland to help create a UK rich in native woods and trees, for people and wildlife.

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

Cpt. 1a, 7.07ha is ancient semi natural woodland (ASNW) and is the remnant of the much larger North Blean Wood which stretched across Clay Hill - the current Victory Wood site to Ellenden and Coombe Wood. It has a tree, shrub and ground flora vegetation community of NVC (National Vegetation Community) W10A, oak woodland with bramble and bracken. It contains a mixture of mainly sessile oak with some beech and hornbeam and a localised understory of wild service. Ground flora is absent over much of the woodland area, however where present it contains some ancient woodland flora species such as butcher's broom, a small area of bluebell, wood Sage, hairy wood-rush, the more local great wood-rush and broad buckler-fern.

Historically managed by coppicing (last cut in the 1950's), the wood is unusual in having examples of beech coppice. There are no old standard trees. This area of woodland also preserves several hollow ways and a wood access track of historical interest.

The small area of woodland (cpt. 1b) 0.39ha formerly known as Bushy Close, used to stand at the northern fringe of North Blean Wood and is probably secondary woodland following map evidence of a field located in 1876 in the same area. The woodland is the most mature secondary woodland habitat on site being approximately 100 years old. It contains oak and ash high forest resembling an NVC 8a, primrose and ground ivy. The wood has been extensively disturbed in the past through the use of pheasant rearing cages, and is not species-rich. However, a number of woodland species still thrive, including bluebell, wood anemone, midland hawthorn, primrose and wood avens.

Significance

Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) is a dwindling and irreplaceable habitat and as such all remnants of ancient woodland need to be protected from further loss. Protection of ASNW is a key objective of the Woodland Trust.

The small area of ANSW at Victory Wood is all that remains of the former North Blean Wood east of Dargate Road and is part of 'The Blean' woodland complex. It probably survived intact due to the steep terrain which would have made agricultural cultivation impossible had woodland clearance occurred.

By managing through minimal intervention and retaining its maturing coppice habitat, this will enable the general public to compare the areas of secondary woodland created from 2005-2014 and help visualise what the secondary woodland could become in many decades time.

The woodland is set within a connected landscape which is being managed sympathetically for the benefit of biodiversity.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

To demonstrate the contrast between the secondary woodland created between 2005 and 2014 and this remnant ASNW and show how the secondary woodland might look in the future.

Constraints:

This woodland is small in area and is situated on a slope making management of it difficult. Dargate Road presents a physical barrier to the movement of species by separating the remnant ASNW from the main part of Blean Wood situated west of Dargate road.

Factors Causing Change

Introduction of invasive plants through fly tipping off Dargate Road.
Natural succession to oak and beech high forest.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The long term objective is to achieve a resilient woodscape and structural diversity with this area of ASNW being left to develop by natural processes. In time it will exhibit the development of a more naturalised woodland characteristic with a broader age range of trees through increasing amounts of regeneration, a developing woody shrub layer and the proportion of standing and fallen deadwood will be increasing.

To maintain this habitat to ensure survival of a healthy and secure ground flora where present with appropriate deer numbers. The presence of threatening invasive species to be absent or minor with containment and eradication work as necessary.

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

The short term objective is to contribute towards the creation/ maintenance of structurally diverse woodland within a resilient woodscape. This will be achieved through:

- Thinning

In 2017, the coppice is to be thinned and singled in a 20 metre wide section along the edge of Dargate Road so as to promote future wind firm and notable trees at approximately 8-10 metre spacing along this boundary position. To allow the cut stumps to re coppice. To also encourage diversity within the trees retained by keeping a mixture of species and where possible different diameters/heights and age and retaining some trees which exhibit character.

5.2 Secondary Woodland

Description

Following extensive consultation and a landscape assessment by Simon Bell in 2005, the design to create Victory Wood from an arable farmed landscape included the use of large scale woodland creation. This was targeted initially along the main ridge at the southern end of the site. Secondary woodland was created in 2 phases. From 2005-2008, 86ha was created (cpt.2a) providing the wooded link between Blean Wood and Ellenden Wood. And from 2013-2014 when a further 17.76ha was created northwest of the main ridge to form cpts. 2b, 3b, 3c, 3d and small groups around the car park area.

The 2005-2008 woodland creation followed the Forestry Commission's "new native woodland" design of random spacing and random tree positions and allowed for approximately 13ha to be colonised through natural regeneration adjacent to the ANSW woodlands of Blean and Ellenden. The majority of 2005-2008 secondary woodland established contained species which resembled W10 woodland with some smaller areas of W8 woodland species. Woody shrubs were concentrated on the ride edges. This establishment phase also involved a significant area which was planted through community planting days and the Woodland Trust's Tree For All Project involving local school children. All the trees were protected from rabbit damage by fencing off whole areas around their perimeter. Weed suppression around each tree was achieved through straw mulch for the first 2 years after planting, followed by spot herbicide treatments until the trees were established.

Wide conservation rides are a feature of the main secondary woodland area in cpt.2a totalling 10.0ha. These were sown in the autumn of 2006 with a neutral grass mixture suitable for wet clay soils comprising of 2 types of rye variants plus timothy, cocksfoot, crested dog's tail, red fescue, trefoil and wild red clover. These rides help to maintain the views out towards the North Sea but are also there for future management objectives.

In 2005 within the woodland creation in cpt.2a, an oak provenance trial plot was planted with trees supplied by the Earth Trust as part of a wider UK project. There are 10 provenances from three countries (four French, four UK and 2 Dutch) planted in blocks of 100 each and replicated three times (3000 trees) and positioned in a distinct block within cpt.2a. These are periodically checked by the Earth Trust.

The 2013-2014 secondary woodland creation areas (17.76ha) were established in a more traditional manner with trees planted in sinuous rows. Due to ash dieback fungus (*Chalara fraxinea*) arriving on site in 2013 the species choice was changed to exclude the small percentage of ash in the mixture and to use other native species such as common alder as a replacement. A small area, cpt.3b 0.14ha was fenced to allow the development of scrub natural regeneration and prevent it from being grazed.

The rate of establishment of the woodland creation areas at Victory Wood is slow compared to other sites in the SE mainly due to the heavy clay soils and the minimal summer rainfall in East Kent. This has had the effect of extending the maintenance period of newly planted trees from 3 to at least 4-5 years.

Significance

New native planting of this kind increases the area of native woodland in an area of the country with intense developmental pressures (road construction, housing).

It gives native species of animal, insect and plants new environments and habitats in which to exist. Through establishing secondary woodlands next to ASNW habitats, this is designed to make the ASNW more robust in the face of climate change by buffering the core ancient woodland areas as well as helping to join up isolated blocks of woodland to form bigger woods and to provide a more connected landscape. Blean Wood and Ellenden Wood for example are no longer isolated having been joined up again.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

An opportunity for the Woodland Trust to contribute towards the result of the oak provenance trial To provide a wooded link between 2 large but isolated ancient woodland areas.

To provide a woodland habitat on what was arable land.

To provide a buffer to the ancient woodland either side of the main area of secondary woodland.

To demonstrate the trial use of mulch as a weed suppressant around newly planted trees.

Constraints:

The extent and the design of the tree planting have been subject to Environment Impact Assessments (EIA) considerations.

Most of the secondary woodland will be similar aged as all the planting was carried out within 3-9 years of each other.

Secondary woodlands are species poor for 100's of years compared to ASNW areas.

Factors Causing Change

Rabbit browsing, tree disease

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The main secondary woodland area on the ridge at Victory Wood was created to provide the wooded link between Blean Wood and Ellenden Wood to form a contiguous woodland block. The long term intention is therefore to allow this habitat to evolve and mature so as to allow species migration through it. Other areas of secondary woodland at Victory Wood have been created to help blend the main secondary woodland into the landscape.

To achieve structural diversity within the planted woodland areas and thereby increase the biodiversity interest. This will be achieved by the following:

- Retaining significant areas under minimal intervention
- Ride side management.

In 50 years' + the secondary woodland managed by minimum intervention will be showing the development of semi natural woodland characteristics with increasing signs of regeneration and a developing woody shrub layer. The proportion of standing and fallen deadwood within the secondary woodland will be increasing. Periodic interventions maybe necessary to encourage the development of an understory.

To maintain this woodland habitat with low deer numbers to ensure the development of a ground flora. The presence of threatening invasive species to be absent or minor with containment and eradication work as necessary.

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

The short term objective is to contribute towards the creation/maintenance of structurally diverse woodland as part of a resilient woodscape through maintaining recently planted areas.

This will be achieved by:

- Maintenance of woodland creation areas

For all the areas of woodland creation established in 2013, 2b (13.41ha) and 2014, 3c (2.05ha) and 3d (2.16ha) all trees will be maintained for up to 4 years through the use of straw mulch to suppress the weeds in the first 2 years and then by chemically weeding a metre diameter area around each tree once a year for the following 2 years, plus mowing lank vegetation and noxious weeds once during the summer months for the first 4 years and replacing any trees which die over the first 3 winters since planting.

Ensure that stocking density is no less than 1600 stems per ha for tree species and 2250 stems per ha for woody shrubs planted along the ride edges.

- Survey

To continue to permit Earth Trust access to the oak trial plot in cpt.2a as and when is required and replace plot marker posts in 2015.

- Maintenance of conservation rides

To mow 50% by area of the conservation rides each year to help provide a more structured ride edge habitat.

5.3 Semi Natural Open Ground Habitat

Description

The semi-natural open ground habitat (cpt.3a, 30.72ha) forming approximately 22% of the site area, has been created as a way of developing lowland wood-pasture. It was sown with a neutral grass mixture in the autumn of 2006 comprising of 4 types of rye variants plus timothy, cocksfoot and wild red clover. Areas of wild flowers were also sown over this habitat in 8no inoculation patches, each being approximately 0.75ha in size. However the wild flowers failed to establish with only a few species such as bird's foot trefoil, buttercup, bitter vetch, oxeye daisy, cowslip and white clover surviving. Bristly oxtongue currently dominates the sward, but new introductions are occurring with species like red bartsia now established. This habitat has been grazed by sheep since 2007 with sheep on site for 10 months of the year which has helped keep ragwort under control. Since 2010, the number and severity of attacks by out of control dogs on the flock of sheep has increased to a worrying degree.

Scrub is beginning to spread out from the mature hedge along the boundary with Dargate Road. 75no oak trees have been established across this habitat during 2006 and in 2013 all within fenced corrals for protection from livestock. Hawthorn and blackthorn have also been planted within the same corrals to help establish these scrub species further into the site.

Skylark is well established within this habitat, with linnet as well.

New species rich hedges planted in 2005, 2010 and 2014 have been established along the boundaries of this habitat totalling 2.7kms to help improve the connectivity between the different habitats at Victory Wood.

A veteran oak tree (the only "old" tree on site) is situated in the small paddock opposite the car park. This contains significant deadwood as well as having a hollow trunk.

Situated within the northern half of the semi-natural open ground habitat are important elements of interpretation for the Trafalgar Woods Project such as the Victory Footprint, Canon Ball trail leading to the Battle line marked out by holm oak trees.

The northern half of the habitat is to be grazed more intensely, with southeast of the Battle line less intensely.

Public access is permitted through this habitat along mown pathways, however dog walkers are encouraged to use the multi user path to avoid their dogs having contact with livestock.

Significance

The South East of England has the highest amount of wood-pasture in Western Europe, and often there is a high conservation interest in the veteran tree element of the wood-pasture habitat. Kent's Habitat Action Plan (HAP) no 16 "Lowland Wood-Pasture and Parkland" (2005) indicates that this habitat is declining in area and in the quality of management and certainly very little new habitat is being created. Whilst the veteran tree element of Victory Wood will take centuries to achieve any conservation interest, the creation of new lowland wood-pasture is a significant development.

Increasing biodiversity is one of the Woodland Trust's key Corporate Objectives as part of creating places rich in trees and protecting their wildlife for the future.

Open space provides landscape views at this site enhancing the visitor experience.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

To establish a new Lowland Wood-pasture habitat. As this habitat develops and changes this will provide a mosaic of open semi-natural grassland habitat with patches of scrub which will benefit ground nesting birds, invertebrates over a significant area.

Constraints:

Scrub habitat may not form as expected.

A range of animal species may be needed to graze the land which may be difficult to find.

Attacks by out of control dogs on livestock could forcibly change the type of livestock on site.

Ragwort may become a serious problem due to low intensity grazing particularly if sheep are removed.

Factors Causing Change

Natural regeneration of scrub habitat, ragwort, over grazing/ timing, out of control dogs

Long term Objective (50 years+)

The semi-natural open ground habitat will appear as pasture with scattered trees for decades. The long term objective will be that this habitat matures into a Lowland Wood-pasture and parkland habitat, but split into 2 parts the northern and south-eastern parts. Features of this habitat will be:

- a significant scrub element over no more than 10% of the area
- no less than 70-75 broadleaved trees developing as specimen trees in open grown conditions
- a grassy sward which is diverse and not dominated by coarse weed species. Seasonally grazed by a low number of suitable livestock such as a mixture of cattle and sheep to keep 90% of the area as open habitat.
- The northern half of the habitat to be grazed more intensely so that the Trafalgar interpretation structures are kept visible.

In the long term this semi-natural open ground habitat will resemble Lowland Wood-pasture and parkland, and will be labelled as such, and will be part of the resilient woodscape at Victory Wood. Successional scrub growth should be allowed to develop especially in the south-eastern part of the habitat around the edges of the habitat adjacent to woodland areas and boundary hedges. Total percentage cover for the habitat is to be no more than 10% but a higher proportion of up to 20% to exist in the south-eastern part and up to 3-5% in the northern half. The scrub component will not be permanently fixed in one place but will gradually shift position through rotational grazing.

The majority of internal hedges to be allowed to mature uncut and to form small shaws so linking habitats across the habitat. Where internal views are important hedges will be maintained by mechanical flailing and when considered necessary by laying them to improve their structure.

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

The short-term objective is to enhance the diversity of the sward of the semi-natural open ground habitat (cpt.3a). This will be achieved through a combination of rotational grazing and mechanical cutting when required which will help reduce the dominance of bristly oxtongue and other dominant weed species. To also encourage the establishment of scrub species along the boundaries of this habitat such as beside hedges and woodland areas. To achieve this:

- Grazing: Grazing is the primary management tool for maintaining the open ground habitat. The current 30.72ha semi-natural open ground habitat is to be split in 2016 into 2 separate grazing compartments by approximately 135m of additional stock fencing. This will create a northern area of approximately 16ha and a south-eastern area of approximately 14ha with the dividing line being near to the Trafalgar Battle line of holm oak trees. A new kissing gate is to be installed within this new fence line on the permissive path route.

During 2016, to provide an additional water trough in the north-eastern grazing area and connect it to the site water supply by extending the underground water pipe by approximately 600 metres from the existing water trough in the south-eastern grazing area.

Livestock, ideally a mixture of approximately 20 cattle and 10 sheep are to be on site between June and end of September each year. Rotational grazing by the livestock to occur during this period so that the northern compartment is grazed more intensely than the south-eastern one. During this plan's period mechanical cutting by tractor and swipe in August is to be carried out to reduce the dominance of bristly oxtongue and ragwort.

In 2016 to provide a buffer between the main woodland creation area and the south-eastern grazing area by erecting approximately 350m of fencing along the western side of Hawkins Hill Ditch and installing new public access points (2 kissing gates and a vehicle gate) on the path network. The new fence to be positioned approximately 10 metres away from the top of the ditch on the western side to enable additional scrub species to develop.

To ensure 5 existing kissing gates and 3 existing vehicle gates (and all new structures installed during this plan period) are dog proof as far as possible by attaching stock netting to block the gaps under these structures and filling in ruts on tracks under vehicle gates during 2015.

- Trees Outside Woodlands: During 2015-2017 to maintain and replace any trees which die of the 40 trees established in 2013 to ensure they become established.

- New hedges: to replace dead woody shrubs during 2015-2016, maintain geotextile mulch strip in position.

5.4 Special Public Access Facilities

Description

Victory Wood is classified by The Woodland Trust as a category A site, where we are expecting a high level of public access (15-20 visitors using one entrance every day) and a site which is important for demonstrating our corporate objectives. Victory Wood is a popular place for dog walkers.

The public have access to the wood from 4 main formal access points - from the Woodland Trust car park off Dargate Road, a stile access off Dargate Road, a kissing gate access off Denstroude Lane and a squeeze gap point into the ancient woodland area off Dargate Road.

Victory Wood has a good network of maintained permissive paths along 8.7 km (5.4 miles) including a multi user path (3.1 km (1.9 miles) for horses, pedestrians and mountain bikes. Part of the Big Blean Walk, a long distance way marked route passes through Victory Wood. A short surfaced route is available for wheel chairs (330metres) from the car park to the Victory Footprint. A bin for dog waste is situated near the car park.

A site leaflet is available from a dispenser by the car park. This describes the main features to see on site which include interpretation structures linked to the Battle of Trafalgar - Nelson's Statue, Victory Copse, Victory Footprint, Canon Ball Trail to the battle line of trees and the Link Structure. These structures also provide the link between the use of trees and the importance of woodland as a timber resource and for wildlife.

Information is also given on site by information boards: A Welcome information board is situated beside the car park along with an information board next to the Victory Copse about the construction of HMS Victory; 2 information boards within the crow's nest next to the Victory Footprint explain how the site will eventually look and a detailed look at the Battle of Trafalgar and how it is depicted on site using trees to represent ships.

Good views are to be had from the southern end of the site looking north towards the Thames Estuary and south towards the Blean Woods National Nature Reserve.

Two "living sculptures" (Heart of Oak project) were created in 2009 on the ridge in sub-compartment 2a with the help of local schoolchildren from Blean Primary School and the Endowed School. Their connection with the community will continue over the decades as they grow and evolve.

A curriculum focused Educational Resource for Key Stage 2 pupils and written specifically for Victory Wood is available from the Woodland Trust website.

27no sponsored groves, "Victory Groves" each named after the ships in the English Fleet in the Battle of Trafalgar are situated at the extreme southern part of cpt.2a with a small information board at their eastern end showing the layout.

Situated on the main ridge at the south end of the site is a redundant Royal Observer Corps Underground Monitoring Bunker, a relic from the Cold War era. This was built in 1966 and operational for 10 years and then de commissioned in 1976.

Significance

Public access to this woodland helps fulfil one of the Woodland Trust's corporate objectives, to "Inspire everyone to enjoy and value woods and trees".

The site provides extensive access to an area which had no public access across it prior to Woodland Trust ownership. There are extensive views within the site and out of the site north across the Thames Estuary. It also enables wider access within the Blean, and provides the opportunity through interpretation to promote the message of ancient woodland protection along with linking/buffering by woodland creation.

Opportunities & Constraints

Opportunities:

This is a large Woodland site with potential to expand the types of user groups who currently visit this site, greatly helped by the good views which are available and which could help attract more visitors to the site.

Use as a 'gateway' for people to explore the wider Blean.

To be able to use the land as a resource for education and public engagement.

As a demonstration site for our woodland management approach.

As an opportunity to engage with the public on the benefits of woodland creation on a large scale.

Constraints:

The clay soil makes winter walking muddy and slippery on the well-used paths.

Parts of the site are hilly which may preclude access in these areas for the less able.

The wooded part of the site is at the opposite end to the car park, so making for a long walk before one reaches any woodland.

There is a short section of surfaced path from the car park otherwise the remainder of the permissive paths don't have any surfacing which makes wheel chair access to the remainder of the site difficult.

Out of control dogs chasing sheep in the grazed area is a growing threat to livestock management on site. This could risk graziers not being willing to provide livestock at this site.

Factors Causing Change

Fly Tipping, anti-social behaviour, out of control dogs.

Long term Objective (50 years+)

A well established and safe network of paths for informal public access throughout Victory Wood where responsible visitors can appreciate and respect this wood with its different habitats and wildlife interest. The visitor numbers to be in line with its category A status with parking available. The provision in the future of way marked routes, interpretation structures linked to the Trafalgar Woods Project, a site leaflet and information boards to be available on site if required. This site to be available for people engagement activities as and when is required.

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

During this plan period, the short term objective is to continue to provide public access at Victory Wood which is safe and enjoyable. How this will be achieved:

- Path mowing and maintenance

10.4 km (6.4 miles) of paths will be maintained to allow continued access across the whole site for pedestrians by mowing as appropriate during the summer months including through the Victory Groves area. Horse access along the multi user route 3.1 km (1.9 miles) will also be maintained by mowing and cutting back tree growth interfering with the route as necessary during the plan period. The 330m long surfaced wheelchair route to be kept weed free through herbicide applications during the summer months. To re grade surface to fill in water run-off channels and install cross drains along the wheelchair route to prevent excessive erosion damage. To provide a further 40 metres of surfaced path connecting the wheelchair route to the multi user path passed the Victory Copse.

- Maintenance of gates and stiles

Type 1 stone to be maintained in the base of all 9 kissing gate structures during the plan period. Rabbit netting is to be maintained on the steps to the 4 stiles on site to enhance grip. The 3 dog

gates/flaps are to be repaired or renewed during the plan period when necessary.

- Monitoring of antisocial behaviour

To monitor the car park and the surrounding woodland for signs of antisocial use and liaise with Kent Police when this occurs to try and prevent it from reoccurring. The vegetation around the car park to be kept short during the summer months linked to the path cuts.

- Annual inspections

Annual inspection of all gates, way marker posts, interpretation structures and constant monitoring of path and car park surfaces.

- Site based information and enjoyment

Provision of a site leaflet from a dispenser at the Woodland Trust car park off Dargate Road. This site leaflet is to be revised and reprinted in 2015.

Revision and reprinting in 2016 of all information boards on site (incorporating the Blean branding) following a review of public site information in 2015.

On the Woodland Trust website to maintain and review when necessary educational material for Key Stage 2 students.

To carry out an audit review of the sculptures and other interpretation structures on site including the Victory Copse during 2015 looking at their state, relevance and purpose and also consider the need for additional signage within the site. Any major alterations to be made in 2016.

- Tree safety

Annual Zone A tree safety inspection. Fungal survey to be carried out once in every 24 month period in the autumn with a summer survey in between to check trees' crowns.

Zone B tree safety inspections are to be carried out every 4 years. Arboriculture work to be carried out when necessary.

- Site boundary management

The 330m approximately of hedges along Dargate Road is to be flailed in November/December each year to ensure there is no interference with users of the highway year; where applicable that there is a minimum height clearance above the full width of the highway to 5.1m.

- The Cold War Bunker

To complete the renovation of the above ground structures for the bunker in 2015; design and print an information panel about the bunker and install it nearby. In 2016, to have a celebration event to mark the 50th anniversary of it's opening for active service.

- The dog waste bin

This is to be emptied weekly throughout the year.

- Communication and liaison with dog walkers

To improve communication with dog walkers about the need for controlling their dogs near livestock by holding at least 2 pet "events" based at the Woodland Trust car park during 2016. A flyer is to be produced to help this. Volunteers to be recruited to aid these events.

5.5 Connecting People with woods & trees

Description

Significance

Opportunities & Constraints

Factors Causing Change

Long term Objective (50 years+)

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

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	7.07	Oak (sessile)	1700	Min-intervention	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Special Public Access Facilities	Ancient Semi Natural Woodland, Tree Preservation Order
Area of ancient semi-natural woodland containing Sessile oak and beech coppice with localised understory of wild service tree.							
1b	0.39	Oak (sessile)	1898	Min-intervention	Very steep slope/cliff/quarry/mine shafts/sink holes etc	Special Public Access Facilities	Tree Preservation Order
A small triangular shaped woodland historically known as Bushy Close. It is actually secondary woodland with trees dating from 1898 growing there. Its name of "Bushy Close" comes from the 1876 map of Lamberhurst Farm and suggests that it was always a rough unproductive field. It sits on the northern side of a ditch which formed the parish boundary between 2 civil parishes. Along the ditch edge of the wood are some interesting old hornbeam specimens which once formed part of the boundary hedge and it contains ground flora which is similar to that of ancient woodland.							
2a	86.19	Mixed native broadleaves	2005	Min-intervention	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Special Public Access Facilities	
<p>Secondary woodland planted between 2005 and 2008 to a "new native woodland" design. Species were planted to represent as close to an NVC type as possible, mainly W10 woodland (oak, hornbeam) with a small area of W8 woodland (ash, field maple) along the north east edge. Average density of the planted areas is 2500 trees per hectare in the middle of the sub compartment with spacing widening to reduce the density to approximately 1600 trees per hectare near the edges of Ellenden and Blean Wood to allow additional space for natural regeneration to develop. Unplanted areas were left immediately adjacent to the ancient woodland edges of varying distance in width to be stocked by natural regeneration. Natural regeneration of oak, hornbeam, hawthorn, goat willow, dog rose and ash is becoming established.</p> <p>A Royal Observer Corps Underground Monitoring Bunker from the cold war era is situated on top of the main ridge through this sub-compartment.</p> <p>The 2 Heart of Oak living sculptures are situated on the ridge top within this sub-compartment.</p> <p>27no sponsored groves named after the ships in the English Fleet in the Battle of Trafalgar are situated at the extreme southern part of cpt.2a.</p>							

2b	13.41	Mixed native broadleaves	2013	Wood establishment	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Special Public Access Facilities	
Area of woodland creation planted in 2013. Wide conservation rides circulate through this area. The design of the planting was to produce large irregular shaped and sized clumps of woodland with semi-natural open space between them.							
3a	30.72	Open ground	2006	Wood pasture	Management factors (eg grazing etc), Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Special Public Access Facilities	
Main grazing area sown with rye/cocksfoot/timothy/wild red clover grass mixture in autumn 2006. 8no. wild flower inoculation patches were also sown across this area but these were not successful. 67no. individual and small clumps of trees are spread across this area and significant parts of the interpretation structures are situated within this sub-compartment. Near to the southern boundary of this sub-compartment runs a deep drainage ditch called Hawkins Hill Ditch which is up to 1.5-2.0 metres deep and flows (from north to south) after significant rainfall in the winter and spring months, but for most of the summer it is dry. The ditch is covered by bramble, trees and shrubs and provides a wooded connection across the site between Blean Wood and Ellenden Wood. The ditch exits from our land into Ellenden Wood, and near this point is a small pond formed by a basic dam across the ditch. Within this pond is a specimen of Almond Willow (<i>Salix triandra</i>), which is very scarce in Kent.							
3b	0.14	Hawthorn species	2014	Wood establishment	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Special Public Access Facilities	
Small area fenced off for natural regeneration to colonise, mostly hawthorn and blackthorn.							
3c	2.05	Mixed native broadleaves	2014	Wood establishment	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Special Public Access Facilities	
Mixed broadleaves planted in November 2013 in sinuous rows.							
3d	2.16	Mixed native broadleaves	2014	Wood establishment	Mostly wet ground/exposed site	Special Public Access Facilities	
Mixed broadleaves planted in November 2013 in sinuous rows.							

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.