



South Yorkshire Demonstration Woodlands

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MAINLY BROADLEAVED COMMUNITY WOODLAND ON AGRICULTURAL LAND

BIRDWELL WOOD

Description:

Birdwell Wood is a 25.8 hectare, recently planted, even-aged broadleaved woodland. It is a good example of large-scale tree planting on agricultural land with involvement of the local community. The main species planted were sessile and pedunculate oak, ash, cherry, alder, birch and rowan with a variety of other trees and shrubs. All of the land comprising the woodland is designated as Greenbelt. Part of the site bordering Worsbrough Country Park is designated as a Site of Scientific Interest and a Nature Conservation Area.

Location and Access

The woodland lies between the A61 and Rockley Lane at Birdwell, Barnsley. OS grid reference SE343020. Access is easiest from the small car park on Rockley Lane. Pedestrian access is also available from the A61 and via two paths to the northern end of the site. The woodland, which is open to the public, is crossed by a number of public footpaths,



History

Immediately after World War II, much of the site was subject to opencast mining. It was restored to agriculture and before planting, the site formed part of Beech House Farm, with the land being used for grazing. It was purchased by The Woodland Trust in May 1995. A design plan was drawn up in conjunction with the South Yorkshire Forest Partnership and in consultation with local groups and organisations, and the local community. Planting took place during the winters of 1996/97 (8.18 hectares) and 1997/98 (17.6 hectares) and was carried out with help from the Forestry Commission's Woodland Grant Scheme, and included Planting Grant, Better Land Supplement, Locational Supplement and Community Woodland Supplement.



Recreation

There is free access onto the site for informal recreation and public enjoyment. There are plans to develop the access off Rockley lane for wheelchair users and people with limited mobility.

Existing footpaths are well used by walkers and the Rockley Lane side of the site is also used by horse riders. Footpaths 28, 38, 46 and 48 cross the site but there are no official bridleways. The design for the new woodland incorporated a range of new permissive rides and paths that link up with the existing rights of way to provide through routes and circular walks. The Woodland Trust maintains these footpaths, associated stiles and other low-key facilities. Future management operations will be aimed at enhancing the current path network and access to the site. BMBC will examine ways to improve footpath links into the wood from Birdwell, Worsbrough and the Trans-Pennine Trail. The demand for bridleways will be kept under review.

The main paths are two metres wide with open areas alongside to retain a feeling of safety. Other rides may be five to twenty-five metres wide. All are mown regularly. Permanent information / map boards are to be erected at the main entrances off the A61 and Rockley Lane along with Welcome Woodland signs. The Woodland Trust publicises Birdwell Wood through its visitor's guide and literature.

Community

Before any work took place, a public relations campaign was launched. Public meetings were held, guided walks undertaken, letters sent to local residents, notices posted and items sent to the local press. Involving local people in the design, creation

and management of the woodland has made it more able to meet the needs of the local community. Active management will remain sympathetic to its users, the local residents. Work has been phased over a period of years to maximise the potential of community involvement. Local voluntary wardens will be encouraged along with the use of the site by local schools.

Nature Conservation & Landscape

Prior to planting, ecological and archaeological surveys of the site were carried out, and an identified area of ancient ridge and furrow was left unplanted. Management operations are improving the value of the site for wildlife by providing a variety of different habitats.

The planting joins the existing woodlands of Parkinson Spring, Miller Hill and Wigfield Wood. Areas that are left unplanted are being managed to encourage indigenous plants, insects and other wildlife. This management includes mowing of the rides twice a year and the meadow areas once at the end of summer.

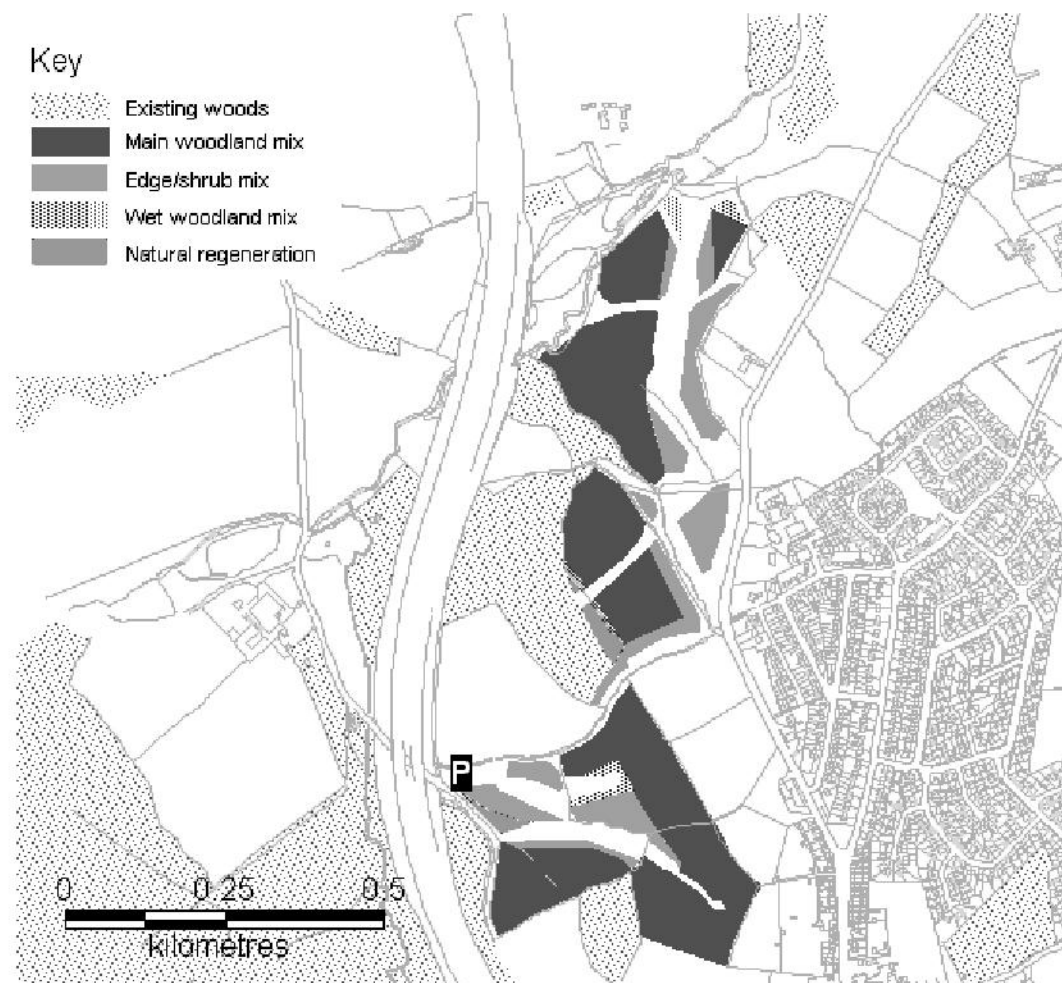
Prior to planting the surrounding landscape was a mosaic of woodlands, open areas, watercourses and areas of open water. The new wood was planned to be a strong landscape feature linking existing woods along the ridgeline. Walks through the woodland offer a variety of open and enclosed views and a variety of habitats. Wide rides and open glades will retain views towards Rockley Old Hall and across the motorway towards Stainborough and Pilley.

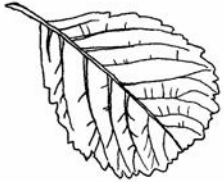


Silviculture

The tree species planted were chosen because they occur naturally in the area. They have a high wildlife value and will develop into woodland with a varied canopy and seasonal colour. Planting was carried out at 2250 trees per hectare, with plant sizes of 30-45 cm. As the site conditions were variable, including several wet areas, a variety of planting mixes was used to suit the ground conditions in particular areas. Several small areas adjacent to existing woodland were left unplanted in order to encourage natural regeneration.

BIRDWELL WOOD PLANTING PLAN



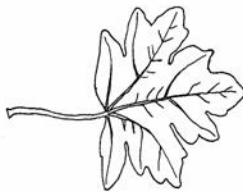


- Main Mix – sessile oak, silver birch, rowan plus a small amount of holly..

On lower and wetter ground, pedunculate oak, ash, alder, wild cherry with a small amount of holly. A small area in the far south was planted with oak and scots pine to demonstrate how pine can act as a nurse tree when planted with oak. The pine will be cleared at age 40 leaving the oak to grow on.



- Edge & shrub mix– pedunculate oak, wild cherry, hawthorn, blackthorn, crab apple, hazel and dog rose with some ash, field maple and holly
- Wet Mix – willow, silver birch, ash, aspen and alder.
- The area under the power lines to the north of the site was planted with hazel



**WOODLAND
TRUST**

Current Management:

Birdwell Wood is now owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. Their main management objective is “to maintain and enhance the wood’s value for amenity, landscape and wildlife; producing timber where this is compatible with all other objectives.” In the long term the site will become an uneven-aged native broadleaved woodland with associated wet areas, glades and meadows.

Protection of the young trees against rabbits was carried out with spiral tree guards. No fencing was done except for a stock proof fence along one boundary. Beating up has been carried out in the years after planting to replace any failed plants. The trees have also been chemically spot weeded to give a one metre clear area around each plant. Beating up and weeding will continue until establishment is secured.



The South Yorkshire Forest

The South Yorkshire Forest is one of 12 special areas within England called Community Forests in which many organisations are joining forces to improve the environment. The aim of the organisations backing the Community Forests include protecting wildlife, dramatically increasing the amount of trees in the area and bringing new jobs by assisting economic regeneration. The SYF covers an extensive area which includes Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield. The people working together to improve the environment within the Forests include the Government, local authorities, business, voluntary bodies and many local residents who wish to have a say in improving the place in which they live.

FORESTRY RESOURCES GRANTS

The South Yorkshire Forest partnership has nearly £2 million available to help landowners, businesses and other organisations plant new woodlands, manage existing woodlands and to support wood based businesses. The money comes from the European Objective 1 programme in South Yorkshire and from Defra.

New woodland planting

We particularly want to encourage new woodlands on underused open space and derelict land, near to local communities and along transport corridors.

Managing existing woodlands

Grants will provide the opportunity for local people to enjoy, understand and benefit from the woodlands in their area. They will also assist owners and managers or under-managed woodlands improve their economic and ecological value.

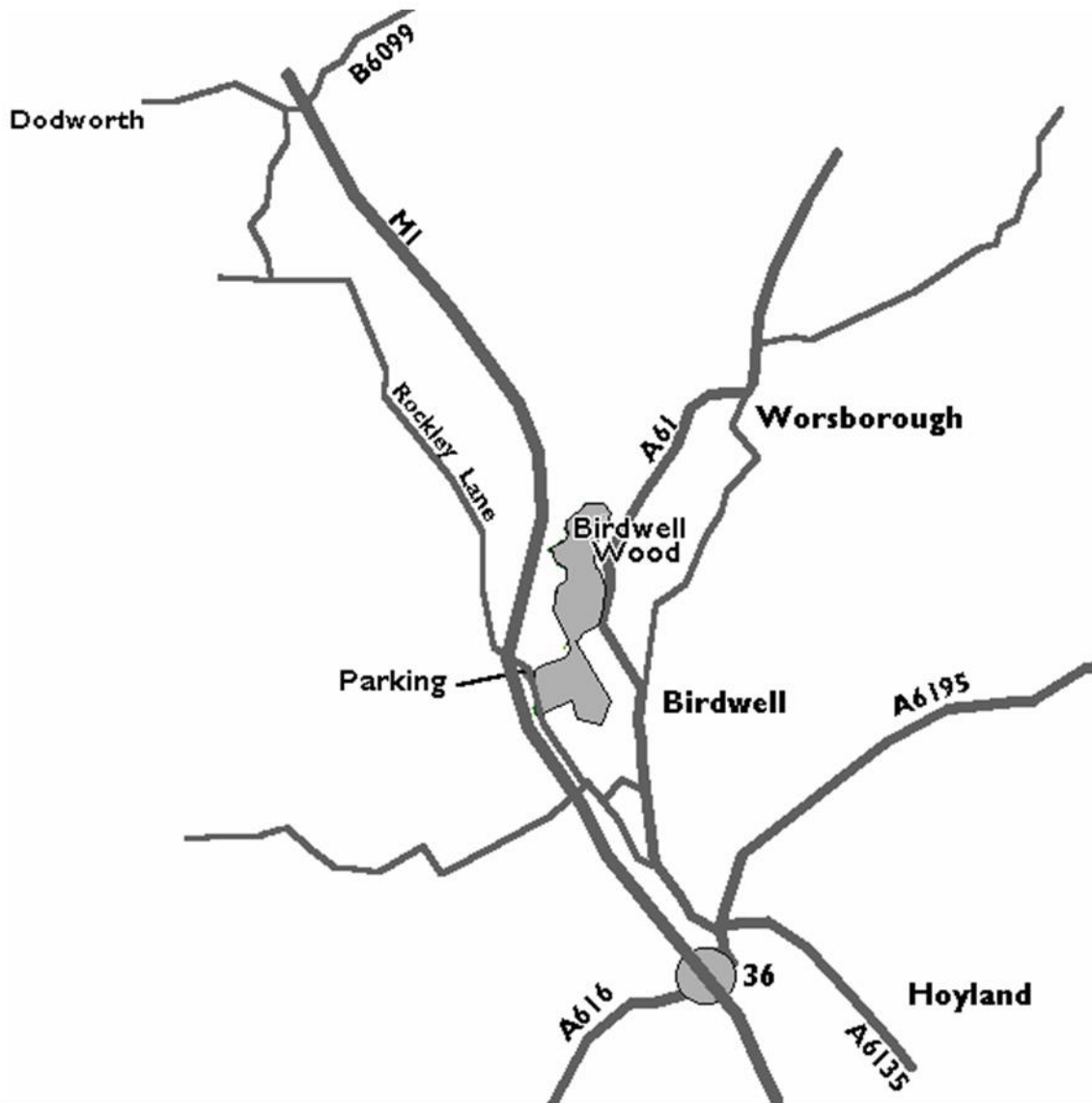
Harvesting, marketing and processing of wood and timber products

Grants will be paid to businesses in South Yorkshire to encourage the growth and improvement of timber industries.





Location of Birdwell Wood



Credits

Woodland Trust
South Yorkshire Forest Partnership

For **Further information** about Birdwell Wood contact:

The Woodland Trust
Autumn Park
Dysart Road
Grantham
Lincolnshire
NG31 6LL