GENERAL INFORMATION

LOCATION MAP
Bus routes 82, 102, 260 and H2

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Barnet Council gratefully acknowledges the valuable contribution made by Susan Osborn in researching this leaflet and for illustrations by her and also John White ex Curator of Westonbirt Arboretum.

Thanks are also due to other local residents who contributed their knowledge and time and Paul Frainer formally Arboricultural Officer at Barnet without whose knowledge and expertise the new management plan for Big Wood would never have taken place.
Enter Big Wood at the Temple Fortune Hill Memorial Gate Entrance crossing the ancient boundary line which later became a boundary between Hendon and Finchley. In 1574 the Lord of the Manor of Hendon called on certain tenants to confirm the outbounds of the Parish. Part of the boundary ran across the suburban past Big Wood which is mentioned in the description: “First Mordins Brooke leadeth unto Bliswell, the Welden boundeth against Bliswell to Wildsworth (Big Wood) by a ditch to Harmsyke Park corner and so by Weildswoode(of which Tunners Wood is a remnant) against Hampstead Heath and over the heaths to Hadford Wood corner...”

**Wild Service Trees** are unusually abundant (over 80) in Big Wood. They are characteristic of ancient woods. They like dappled shade, growing here under oak and hazel. They are often found in areas of woodland which have been left undisturbed for a long time as in most of Big Wood. The Big Wood plan envisages leaving at least two of the seven compartments in the wood undisturbed. Wild Service trees spread mainly by sprouting from the root of parent trees, as seeds germinate poorly in Britain. Look for flowers in late spring and, in autumn, brilliant coloured coral brown-red and gold leaves. Clusters of russet-brown berries, called chequers, later darken and soften. Tangy and sweet, the berries used to be used to flavour alcoholic drinks and eaten as sweets.

**English Bluebells** The native variety are sweet scented, with narrower, darker “blue bells” and with a more drooping flowerhead than the garden variety. Nearby grows wood anemone with golden centres and white petals, another ancient woodland indicator species. Its seeds are rarely fertile and it spreads slowly by the roots. A new glade has been made here to encourage further wild flowers. So far Solomons Seal has sprouted up. More flowers will encourage the diversity of insects in the wood.

**Lichen** Notice creamy or rusty brown patches of lichen on the hazel by the path. There is a selection of species in the wood. Lichen are a combination of fungi and algae. They offer food and shelter to tiny invertebrates at the bottom of the food chain. Small birds like long tailed tits camouflage their nests with lichen. Leaving the old hazel uncut in parts of the wood provides continuity for lichen. **Old Hazel** also provides a variety of valuable habitats. Mature branches give a good crop of catkins and nuts as well as providing many holes and crannies. These can be used for storing food like nuts and berries, drinking holes, roosting places or even where soil has built up, a home for a worm. Being relatively short lived, the branches give a steady supply of dead wood-habitat for fungi, lichen and different wood-boring beetles.

**Oak** regenerates poorly in Big Wood. Woodlands need trees of diverse age. So six new glades were cleared by volunteers in 2011 and 2012. Hazel has been coppiced (almost to ground level) in these six cleared by volunteers in 2011 and 2012. Hazel has been coppiced (almost to ground level) in these six.

**Ivy** is growing using oak as a support. Ivy is valuable for wildlife: providing cover and winter roost sites for birds. The white flowers are a rich nectar source for pollinating bees. Only female trees produce berries, a good food source for birds. Thrushes will guard a berry covered tree all day. Flocks of Redwing, winter migrants, sometimes visit the woods to feed on berries. The Holly Blue butterfly lays the first crop of eggs in spring at the flower bud base. When these caterpillars hatch, they eat the flower.

**Cherry** trees in the wood. Many have grown as high as the oaks. The trees produce masses of white blossom in April and May and attract insects. Later a crop of cherries provides food for birds and small mammals.

Large hollowed out base stems offer shelter for mice and other small creatures. Lastly the old hazel provides dappled shade for wild service trees to sprout and encourages a damper micro climate which in turn promotes more moss and lichens. Most woodland flowers are adapted to the shade or come to life before the leaf canopy develops on the trees.

**True Wild Crab Apple** is uncommon but characteristic of ancient woods. Notice the thick spiny growth on the trunk. True crabs are spinier than more common ‘wildings’ (trees sprung up from discarded apple cores). In Big Wood there are many true crabs (one of which is over 100 years old!). In May the flowers attract insects. The small red/yellow fruits provide food for birds and mammals in autumn. Nearby there is a Guelder Rose, a shrub or small tree.

**Standing dead oak** is left in situ as it is an important habitat for invertebrates and fungi, and provides valuable feeding and nesting sites for woodpeckers. Watch out for **great spotted** and **green woodpeckers**. Notice two nest holes near the top of the trunk. Listen for woodpeckers drumming. As well as being territorial, drumming serves to attract a mate in spring. Woodpeckers drum on hollow branches to make the sound travel. Their skulls are adapted in one or two ways to protect their brains from the hammer blows. Often the first clue to a green woodpecker’s presence is a loud ringing laugh. Look out for its green wings, red crown and bright yellow at the top of the tail feathers.

**Holly Blue** butterfly is evergreen providing winter shelter for birds. The white flowers are a rich nectar source for pollinating bees. Only female trees produce berries, a good food source for birds. Thrushes will guard a berry covered tree all day. Flocks of Redwing, winter migrants, sometimes visit the woods to feed on berries. The Holly Blue butterfly lays the first crop of eggs in spring at the flower bud base. When these caterpillars hatch, they eat the flower.

**Tawny Owl**

Look out for **Yellow Archangel**, another woodland plant loved by bees and **Witches’ Broom** or **Cradle** in old hazel trees. The broom is thought to be a fungal distortion of branch growth.

**Great Spotted Woodpecker**

**Nuthatch**

**Green Woodpecker**

**Treecreeper**

**Holly**