

**EAST SUSSEX, DALLINGTON FOREST – 9 hectare compartment
ASNW, SSSI, TQ652211, VC14,
SHORT SITE DESCRIPTION, MAY 2010. Jamie Simpson.**

Dallington Forest is a mosaic of ancient woodland, secondary woodland, pasture woodland, heathland, grazing and hay cut fields and human habitation located in the high weald AONB in East Sussex.

The study area is a 9 hectare compartment of ancient semi natural ghyll woodland within 7 hectares of Dallington Forest. 2 hectares of this compartment have Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status.

Dallington is characterized by features of management that stretch back over 1000 years (charcoal and slag dating, Walser, D. pers comm. 2001). Veteran trees (pollards, maidens and coppice stools) and charcoal hearths are present throughout the site likely to help fuel the close by 17th century iron forge.

An old woodbank and layed hedge denote the land ownership to the west and east. There are a number of old linear ditches which cross the woodland, these may have been formed for product extraction of charcoal or sandstone.

During the 1960s some areas of the woodland were cleared for plantation forestry. Since 1970 management has ceased except shortly after the 1987 gale when windblown trees were cleared.

Today, considering its 9ha size, the woodland types are varied and reflect the long period of intervention by man. They comprise of the following: Alder coppice. Hazel and ash coppice. Hornbeam coppice with oak standards. Beech, birch and sweet chestnut high canopy. Larch, scots pine, spruce and beech plantations.

The understorey varies according to the tree species (esp. plantations) and soil type. *Rhododendron ponticum* spread across the site and doiminated many areas of the understorey.

The woodland edges that border the access routes and meadow are richest in ground flora. The hazel coppice has species such as *Orchis macula* and *Anemone nemorosa*, that support the ASNW status and in the ghyll area species such as cow wheat and hay scented buckler fern support the SSSI status.

In 2007 a programme of conservation works began with the aim of :

- Alleviating the impact of alien plants and inappropriate forestry.
- Increasing the longevity of veteran trees.
- Reinstating traditional pollarding and coppicing in some areas.
- Stopping further deterioration of archeological features.

This work is being undertaken in a sensitive way and funded by the land owner and Forestry Commission.

Dallington Forest is a special example of different woodland types. It has a rich ecology and cultural history evident in its composition of vascular plants, fungi, and woodland features (an invertebrate survey would be of interest). Care for its survival into 21st century and beyond (>19th century condition) is vital for all the organisms dependent upon it including man.

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