

Ecclesall Woods are situated in the south west of Sheffield within close proximity of the Peak District National Park. They have been in existence since before the 1600s and are therefore defined as ancient woodlands. At over 130 hectares (320 acres) they are one of the largest ancient woodlands in South Yorkshire, and are of regional importance for recreation, wildlife and archaeology.

These woods have seen much industrial activity over the centuries, producing charcoal, white coal for lead smelting, and probably coke for iron smelting and early steel making. There is also evidence that ganister, a stone used in refractory production, has been quarried in several areas of the woodland. Further archaeological evidence suggests that the area has been inhabited from at least late prehistoric times.

There are many other historical and archaeological features throughout the woods including a hill top enclosure and prehistoric rock art. Further study is needed to provide more precise information about their origins and to increase our knowledge of the woods' history. We hope that this leaflet will help you to understand and enjoy some of the archaeology of this important site.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Ecclesall Woods are owned and managed by Sheffield City Council, in partnership with the Friends of Ecclesall Woods (FEW) and other interested groups and organisations.

This leaflet has been produced by a partnership of FEW, Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Hallam University and the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service, thanks to generous funding via the Heritage Lottery Fund 'Millennium Festival Awards for All'.



FEW



Sheffield Hallam University

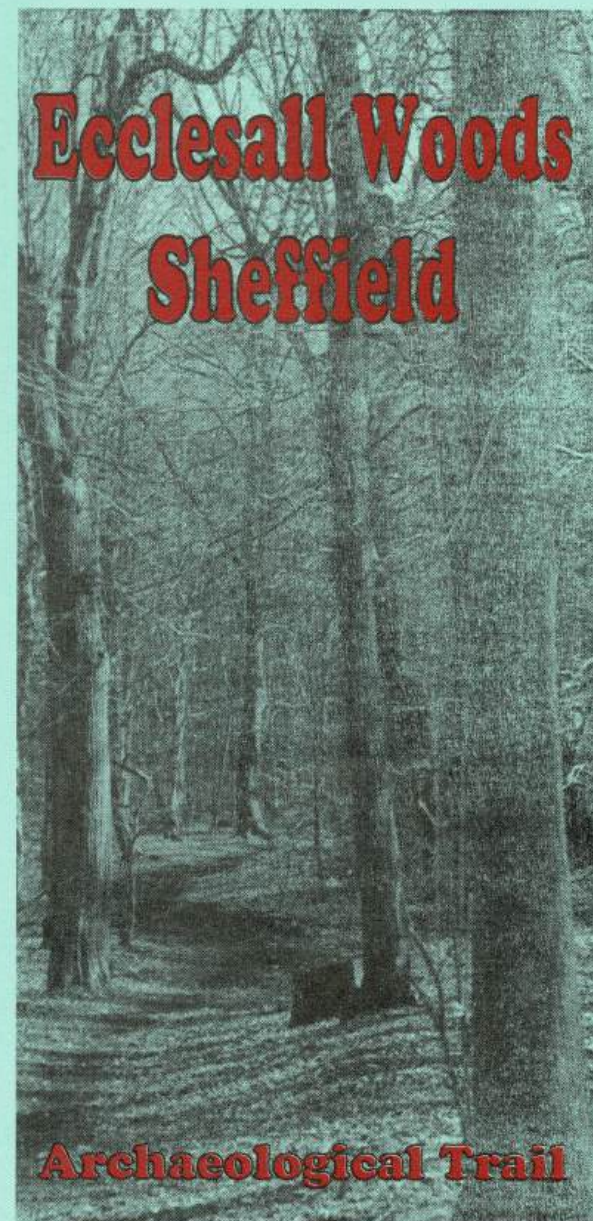


For information on Ecclesall Woods or other green spaces in Sheffield, please contact Parks, Woodlands & Countryside on 0114 2500500.

For information on Friends of Ecclesall Woods, please contact 0114 2366640, 2492936 or 2365126.

For information on the Ecclesall Woods Research Project, please contact the Centre for Environmental Conservation and Outdoor Leisure on 0114 2252874 or www.shu.ac.uk/sybionet

For information on all aspects of archaeology in South Yorkshire, please contact South Yorkshire Archaeology Service on 0114 2736428 or 2736354.



Bomb Crater

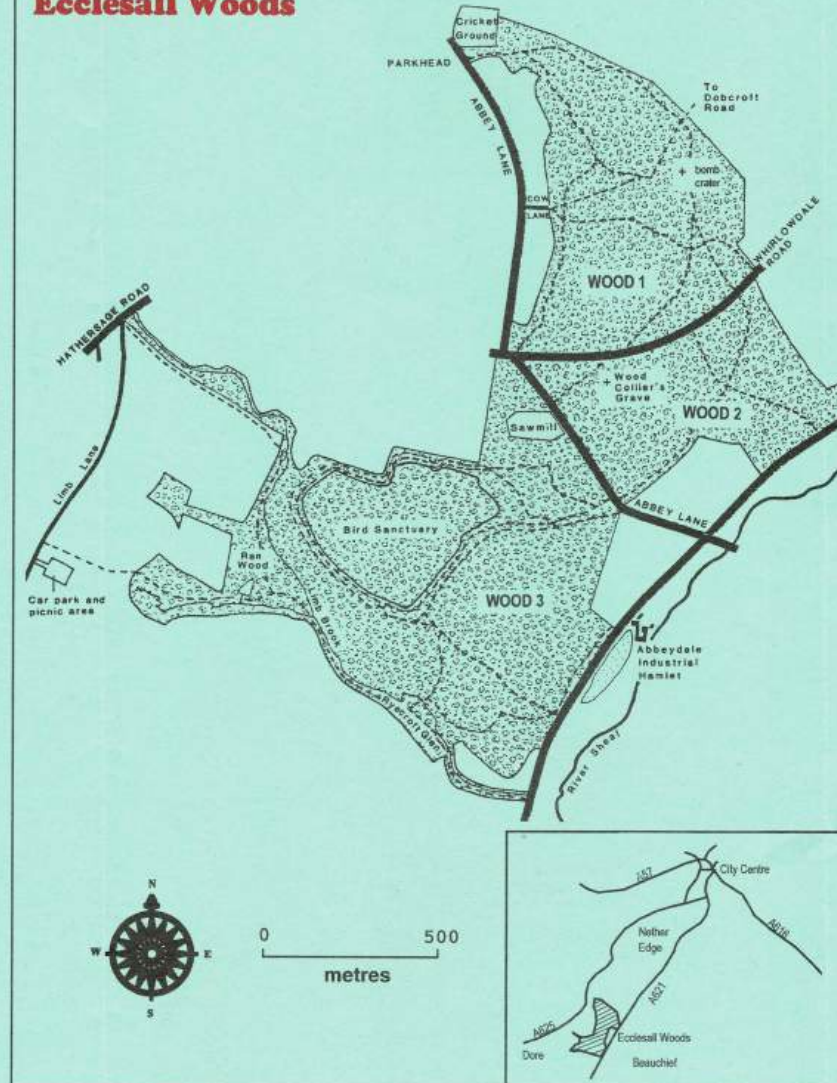
There are many holes, pits and crater-like features in the woods, but only one has been positively identified as a World War Two bomb crater. The bomb landed near the bridleway in Wood 1 during the night between 12th and 13th December 1940, and yellow clay was thrown on the roofs of houses in Dobcroft Road.

The crater is now nearly filled in after 60 years of weathering and build-up of leaf litter. It only shows as a shallow saucer-shaped feature (see main map).

Sawpits

Evidence of rectangular sawpits approximately 1.5 x 2 metres has also been found in the woods. The sides of these were lined with stone for stability. When in use two men operated a long saw which was probably pulled upwards by the top man and then downwards by the bottom man who stood in the pit. Felled trees would be sawn into planks in this way.

Location maps of Ecclesall Woods



The Archaeological Trail starts at the bridleway entering Wood 2 on Whirlowdale Road. Numbers on small posts in the wood indicate the features marked on the map. The trail follows surfaced tracks, and there is a short (optional) section which may not be suitable for wheelchairs. The distance is approximately 2 kilometres (1.4 miles).

Features to be observed are: 1. Q-pit; 2. & 3. Holloway; 4. Raised tramway track (from a ganister quarry); 5. Old oak tree (more than 200 years old); 6. Q-pit; 7a. Charcoal hearth; 7b. Woodcollier's grave; 8. & 9. Ditch and banks; 10. The ganister quarry can be seen by walking some 60 metres along Whirlowdale Road from the bridleway exit.

Acknowledgement

Friends of Ecclesall Woods wish to acknowledge with thanks permission to reproduce the illustrations on these centre pages from Prof. Melvyn Jones and Bob Warburton, author and illustrator of *Sheffield's Woodland Heritage* - Green Tree Publications, 1993.

Q-Pits

These are one of the more common archaeological features, and there are at least 96 scattered through the woods. They have a central depression about 4 metres across and the soil from this is heaped up round the rim. Down slope there is a spout as in the sketch. They were used to produce white coal (wood heated to remove moisture) for use in lead smelting from the late 16th to the mid-18th century. In the mid-18th century this fuel was replaced by coke, produced by the controlled burning of coal. It is quite possible that some Q-pits in the woods were used for this purpose.

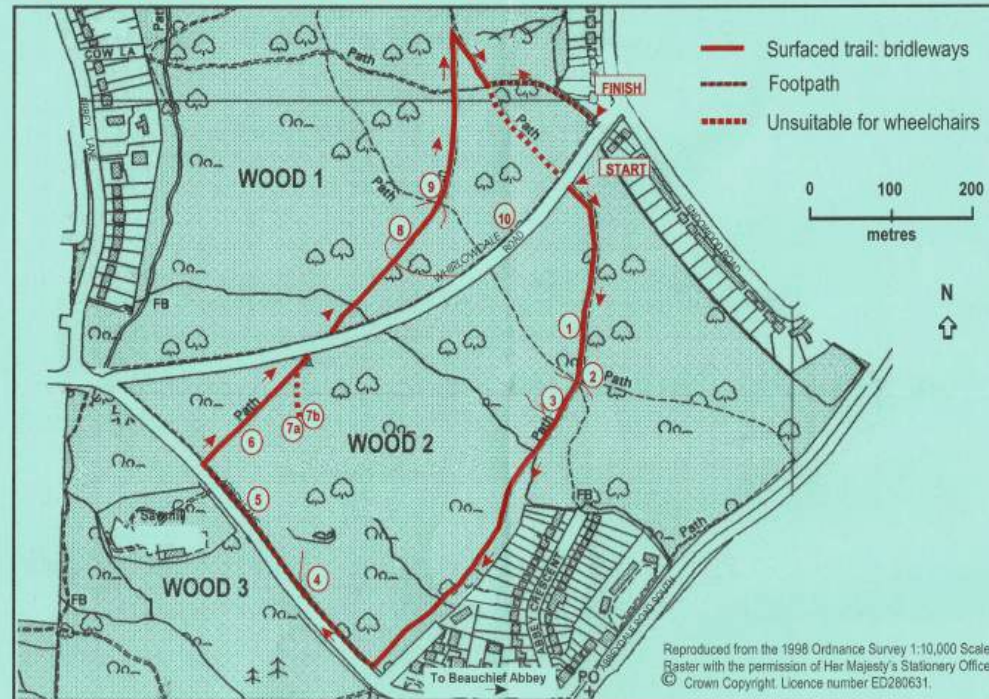


Holloways, Ditches, Banks and Linear Features

A few old holloways (sunken tracks) criss-cross the woods. Some could possibly be connected with nearby Beauchief Abbey. In the past, sections of the woods would have been much wetter, probably with abundant alder trees. The introduction of drainage ditches produced an environmental change in these areas resulting in the mixed oak, birch and alder woodland that is seen today. These ditches, of unknown age, were possibly re-dug during the Victorian period.

There is evidence of an extensive bank and ditch boundary adjacent to the Limb Brook which may define a Medieval deer park,

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRAIL



The **Archaeological Trail** starts at the bridleway entering Wood 2 on Whirlowdale Road. The distance is approximately 2 kilometres (1.4 miles). Features marked on this map are indicated in the wood by numbers on small posts.

Features: ① Q-pit ② Holloway ③ Holloway ④ Raised tram-way track (from ganister quarry) ⑤ Old oak tree (approximately 200 years old) ⑥ Q-pit ⑦a Charcoal hearth ⑦b Woodcollier's grave ⑧ & ⑨ Ditch and banks ⑩ The ganister quarry can be seen by walking about 60 metres along Whirlowdale Road from the bridleway exit.

known to have incorporated Ecclesall Woods.

There are also a variety of other linear boundaries and alignments of stone. Many are possibly late prehistoric field boundaries. The remains of a stone-lined causeway runs down the Limb Valley. Its origin is uncertain.

Woodcollier's Memorial

One feature indicating the use of the woods over 200 years ago is a memorial stone to George Yardley, a Woodcollier (maker of charcoal) who was burned to death in his cabin in 1786.

The inscription reads:

In memory of GEORGE YARDLEY
Woodcollier he was Burnt
to death in his Cabbin on
this place Oct. 11th 1786.
William Brooke Salesman
David Glosop Gamekeeper
Tho. Smith Beesomemaker
Samp. Brookshaw Innkeeper



Charcoal Hearths

From at least late Medieval times until the mid 19th century much charcoal was produced. Typically, oval-shaped platforms approximately 8 x 6 metres were created on which wood-stacks approximately 5 metres in diameter and 1.5 metres high were built. These were covered with grass or bracken, then turves and finally dust to exclude nearly all the air. A central pole was then removed and burning coals were dropped down to start the process.

Blackened earth, charcoal dust and fragments of charcoal are still present today on the hearths and in the banks surrounding them. Vegetation is often different from the surrounding area due to the presence of these materials. There are probably over 200 charcoal hearths in the woods.



Ganister Quarries

There are several quarries in the woods exploited to extract ganister - a very hard stone consisting mainly of silica. The stone was ground down in a ganister mill (see exhibit at Kelham Island) and mixed with clay and water to produce a paste which was used to line furnaces producing cast iron. As production methods developed, the material may have been shaped into blocks for furnace linings.