

Wider application

The Outwood is particularly fortunate in that the manorial court rolls exist as a powerful record of the heritage of the area. However, all areas have a history and much of this can be discovered by skilful and patient research and by working with local enthusiasts. Just as an ecological survey is a useful starting point for working on the nature conservation of an area, historical and cultural surveys can provide a potent means of stimulating community interest, in understanding, interpreting and further enhancing the cultural landscape.

Further information

National Urban Forestry Unit

This leaflet is one of a series produced by the National Urban Forestry Unit. NUFU is a charitable trust and it provides a national focus for the exchange of information and good practice in urban forestry. If you would like further information on other case studies, or if you have examples of good practice to share, please contact:

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The Outwood Project

The Outwood project is part of the Future Landscapes vision of the World Wide Fund for Nature. It was initiated by a partnership including local people, scientists from the Unit of Vegetation Science at Lancaster University, Wakefield MDC, English Nature, the Forestry Commission and the Collaborators Theatre Company. The Outwood Wakefield Community Group is now taking the project forward. For further information, please contact:

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Further reading

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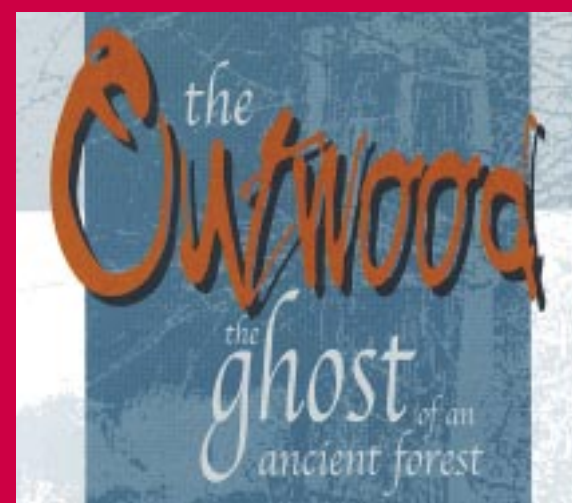
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Urban Forestry in Practice

Using the past to shape the future urban forest



Using the past to shape the future urban forest

Introduction

In earlier times, much of the landscape of the UK was dominated by wild woodland. This provided vital economic resources and it also made an important contribution to the local sense of place.

Understandably, the social and cultural history of an area's wooded past can provide a potent means of engaging communities. This can help them to appreciate today's environment and to shape a vision for the future.

Specific example

Project name and location

The **OUTWOOD, Wakefield**, Yorkshire, UK
Grid reference SE 333235

Project partners

- City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
- English Nature
- Forestry Commission
- Groundwork Wakefield
- Unit of Vegetation Science, Lancaster University
- World Wide Fund for Nature (UK)

Project objectives

- To create an understanding of the cultural relevance of the local forest heritage
- To discover the remaining fragments of wildlife in the forest area
- To celebrate the distinctiveness of the present, shaped by the past
- To develop a vision for the future of the Outwood
- To carry out practical initiatives such as planting native trees and shrubs and planting street trees to highlight the significance of the boundaries, gates and trackways of the old forest

Background to the project

The Outwood sits hidden in the Yorkshire landscape where the M1 and the M62 motorways meet. This ancient manorial forest played a vital role in the lives of the past inhabitants. Today, only a few small fragments of woodland survive. However, memories remain in the names of places and of local families and in the written records of the past.

The Outwood project shows how local people can be reconnected to the landscape through an understanding of the past cultural, environmental and economic uses of the forest. By discovering surviving evidence of the past, they can develop a greater sense of stewardship and a determination to hand on their heritage to future generations.



The very name 'Outwood' encourages an exploration of the local landscape's history

Planting trees for the future is a practical way for local people to acknowledge the past



Design process and implementation



Even in this much-changed landscape, there is still plenty of evidence of the wooded past – if you know where to look

The Outwood project is a partnership of local people, scientists, the local authority, the Forestry Commission, English Nature and others. Together, they have carried out research and mapped the boundaries of the Outwood. The research has drawn on many sources, but particularly important have been the court rolls of the Manor of Wakefield which date back to the 14th century and which are a rich source of personal detail from the past. Who worked in the Outwood? Who used the trees, allowed their animals to trespass, quarrelled with neighbours, or who fell victim to highway robbery?

In drawing up an understanding of the existing landscape, the group has also:

- Translated the geology and geography of the area
- Mapped land ownerships
- Surveyed the existing treescape of woods and hedgerows
- Mapped the topography
- Mapped historical roads and gates in the forest
- Mapped existing land use
- Identified the possibilities for signage and waymarking
- Identified existing green spaces and mapped the potential for further woodland cover
- Used *Forestry Commission Bulletin 112* to specify suitable tree and shrub mixes

One project referred to the manorial court rolls in order to identify the family names of people found guilty of removing trees from the forest without permission in the distant past. Local residents with the same family name were then encouraged to plant new trees as a light-hearted way of 'making amends' and engaging with local history.

Results

Local people have generated a veritable 'forest of ideas' for practical actions:

- Survey existing trees, land ownerships and current management regimes
- Replant woodland using trees of local provenance and use local schools and special needs groups to collect seed and grow the saplings
- Restore the planted boundaries of the old manorial forest
- Plant tree species that have a particular personal significance, e.g. local people with the surname of "Turner" planting sycamore and maple trees, and celebrating the event by learning how to make bowls from these traditional and easily-turned woods
- Organise a system of trails and give a sense of cohesion to this through the use of a single Outwood logo
- Commission an artist to work with the community to produce dramatic pieces of street art to celebrate the ancient entrances to the Outwood
- Develop a reminiscences project for older Outwood residents
- Develop a photo-archive of the area
- Develop theatre projects with local infant and primary schools to re-enact the historical events of the Outwood
- Develop a 'virtual' forest as an interactive website with the local secondary school