

Opening times

The wood is **open to pedestrians**
24 hours a day 365 days a year.

There are entrances in **Outwood Common Road, Break Egg Hill, Norsey Close, Deerbank and Norsey Road.**

Car park opening times:

April 1st to October 31st 06:00 – 20:30

November 1st to 31st March 06:00 – 18:30

Car park entrance is on Outwood Common Road.

Office address: Norsey Wood Information Centre
Outwood Common Road, Billericay
CM11 1HA **01277 624553**
e-mail norsey.wood@basildon.gov.uk

Basildon Council Countryside Services
Main contact number 01268 550088
Out of hours emergency contact number 01268 286622

Norsey Wood Society: www.norseywood.org.uk
e-mail norsey1@hotmail.co.uk

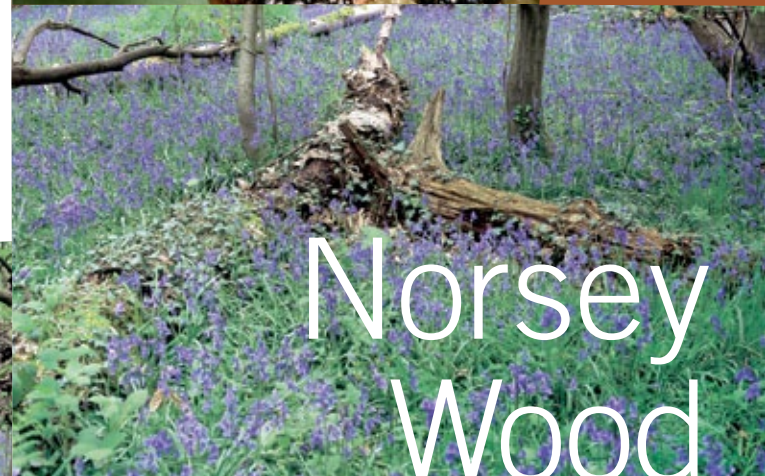
Getting here

By ROAD If travelling on the A127 (London-Southend), turn onto the A176 (Billericay turnoff). Proceed to Billericay High Street and take the right fork at the far end (Norsey Road). As you leave the built-up area, look out for Outwood Common Road on the right. The entrance to the Wood is about 350 metres up this road on the right.

If you are approaching from the Chelmsford direction along the B1007, take the left exit at the roundabout (Potash Road) soon after entering the built-up area of Billericay. At the end of this road, turn left and then almost immediately right into Outwood Common Road. The entrance to the Wood is about 350 metres on the right.

By PUBLIC TRANSPORT Take the bus or train to Billericay. From Billericay High Street follow Norsey Road, turn right into Deerbank, and enter the wood by turning first left. The Information Centre can be reached by walking straight through the wood on the main ride for about one kilometre.

Open to pedestrians
24 hours a day
365 days a year.



Map and leaflet partly funded by the Forestry Commission





Welcome to Norsey Wood

Norsey Wood is visited by about 60,000 people a year. Some people visit just to walk or to exercise their dogs. Other people come to study the wildlife or the history of the site. Schools and colleges make education visits too.

Norsey Wood has a wide variety of plants and animal life. The wood is helping to conserve biodiversity by providing suitable homes for some threatened and rare species like the dormouse and pipistrelle bat.

Norsey Wood is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Local Nature Reserve, as an ancient coppice woodland with a wide variety of plants and animals, largely as a result of the varied geology, history and management of the site.

The wood is divided by rides or pathways many of which are thought to date back to Iron Age times.

The earliest written evidence for the rides is a map of 1593. They have been described as the oldest known woodland rides which still exist.

1 Ponds

Although the trail only passes this pond there are two others if you turn right off the trail before you cross the bridges. The origin of these is unknown. They could be natural hollows, dug by previous owners, or the result of wartime bombs. Woodland ponds can be shady places so we aim to coppice round them on rotation to let in more light. Wild flowers that benefit include Water Violet and Skullcap. There are also healthy populations of Palmate Newt.

2 Trenches

These were dug by the London Defence Volunteers during World War One as practice defensive trenches using the route of a large medieval bank. Although now partly obscured the route and design of the trenches can still be seen.

3 Heather glade

The soils on the flat top area of the wood are quite acidic leading to a 'heathy' community of plants including Heather *Calluna vulgaris*, bracken, birch, Hard Fern and sedges. Hazel has also been planted here in the past. Over the last few years we have been aiming to cut the bracken, bramble and birch annually to encourage the spread of heather. This area is well used by dragonflies, reptiles like Grass Snake and Slow Worm, as well as deer.

4 Sweet Chestnut coppice

Norsey Wood is coppiced annually on a rotation and you will notice various stages of regrowth as you walk round the wood. Most of the trees are cut down leaving a few as 'standards', as they re-grow, the different stages provide habitats of different plants and animals. The trees in this area are an example of one stage of this cycle.

5 Main Ride

The main ride that you are crossing runs roughly east to west through the wood and is thought to be of Iron Age origin. The sides of parts of this ride are cut annually to increase light and warmth and encourage wild flowers, insects and other invertebrates. Wild flowers seen here in spring include Bluebells, Violets, Yellow Archangel and Foxgloves.



A young Muntjac deer

6 Valleys

You are now standing in the bottom of one of several valleys that run through the wood. The streams form when the water drains through the porous sandy soils and meet the impermeable clay layer below. They drain the wood and eventually run into the river Crouch. The wetter and less acidic soils in this area lead to a change in the plant species, with Pendulous Sedge, ferns (predominantly Broad-buckler Fern) and trees like Alder, Ash and willows. There are no plans to extensively coppice in the valleys, but selective felling provides increased light levels for some damp loving plants not present in the drier parts of the wood.

7 Wood bank

Norsey Wood was once surrounded by a bank that helped to protect the coppice regrowth from browsing by deer. Much of this bank has been removed by the housing development to the north and west, but remains visible, if a little eroded here. On your walk you may catch a glimpse of small Muntjac deer, which are present in the wood. More recently there have been signs of large deer, possibly Roe or Fallow.

8 Larch trees

Larch is not native to Britain, but was planted in the wood between 1825 and the 1930s, and this the largest remaining area. Unusually for a conifer, larch is deciduous and although we favour native species in the wood larches add variety to the potential habitats. A number of them have died, but this provides homes for fungi and other species that feed on dead wood.

9 Tumulus

You are standing in front of what is reputed to be the only authenticated Bronze Age burial mound in Essex. It was excavated in 1865 and three clay urns containing cremation remains were found. A second tumulus once existed on the north side of the wood, but this was destroyed to make way for housing.

10 Butterfly ride

This is the only grassy ride in the wood, and we aim to cut it once a year in the late summer to increase the diversity of wild flowers and provide good foraging spots for butterflies and bees. Flowers you may see here include Yellow Pimpernel, Selfheal, Common Centaury and Common-spotted Orchids. Keep an eye out for Peacock, Comma and Meadow Brown butterflies.



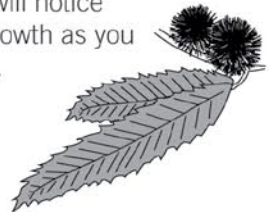
The Norsey Wood trail guide

The **Norsey Wood Trail** is about 1½ miles/2km long and is marked by red topped posts that direct you and point out features of interest. It includes a number of steep slopes and can be muddy, especially in the winter.

If you prefer a shorter stroll, there is the **Easy Access Trail**, a surfaced path of about ¾ mile/1km. This is suitable for the less mobile, including wheelchair users.

4 Sweet Chestnut coppice

Norsey Wood is coppiced annually on a rotation to increase the variety of habitats, and you will notice various stages of regrowth as you walk round the wood.



5 Main Ride

The main ride is thought to date back to the Iron Age. The sides of parts of this ride are cut annually to encourage wild flowers and insects. Flowers seen here in spring include Bluebells, Violets, Yellow Archangel and **Foxgloves**.



6 Valleys

Several valleys run through the wood and eventually run into the river Crouch. The wetter soils in this area lead to a change in the plant species, with trees like **Alder**, Ash and willows along with ferns and sedges.



3 Heather glade

Over the last few years we have been aiming to encourage the spread of heather in this area. The glade is well used by dragonflies, **Grass Snakes** and Slow Worms.



2 Trenches

These were dug by London Defence Volunteers during World War One as practice trenches. Although now partly obscured the route and design of the trenches can still be seen.

Hornbeam coppice

Pure Hornbeam areas like the recently coppiced ones off to the right here are an Essex speciality. Some Hornbeam coppice stools at Norsey Wood are probably more than 500 years old.

Features of interest

Large coppice stool

Bridge

Mature chestnut



1 Ponds

There are three ponds in this area. Woodland ponds can be shady places so we aim to coppice round them to let in more light. Wild flowers include Water Violet and Skullcap. There are also healthy populations of **Palmer Newt**.



10 Butterfly ride

The only grassy ride in the wood. Flowers you may see here include Yellow Pimpernel, Selfheal, **Common Centaury** and Common-spotted Orchids. Keep an eye out for Peacock, Comma and Meadow Brown butterflies too.



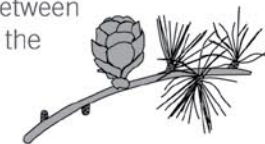
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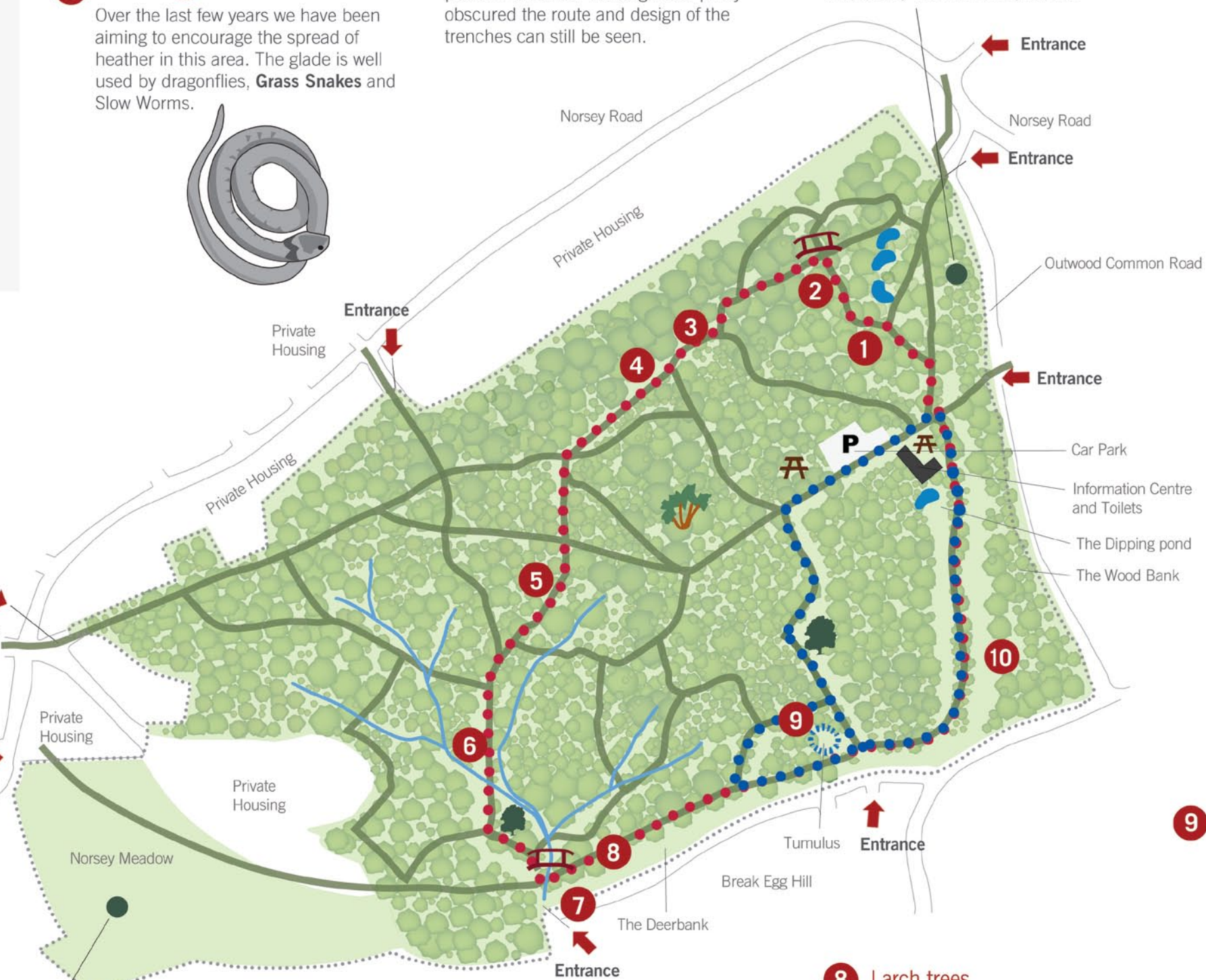


7 Wood bank

Norsey Wood was once surrounded by a bank that helped to protect the coppice regrowth from browsing by deer, and this is still visible here.

Ancient Meadow

Norsey Meadow is part of an area of ancient grassland that has become invaded with trees and scrub. We are in the process of restoring this to a mixture of open grassland and wood pasture by a combination of tree felling and grazing. This should create good habitat for wild flowers, meadow ants, and adders



Key

- Entrances
- Norsey Wood Trail
- Streams
- Wood boundary
- Picnic sites (both picnic sites are dog free areas)
- Ponds
- Easy Access Trail
- Tumulus
- Car Park
- Other paths