

■ **GROVE WOODS** have grown during the last 50 years on abandoned farmland; today they are managed by Rochford District Council for recreation and wildlife.

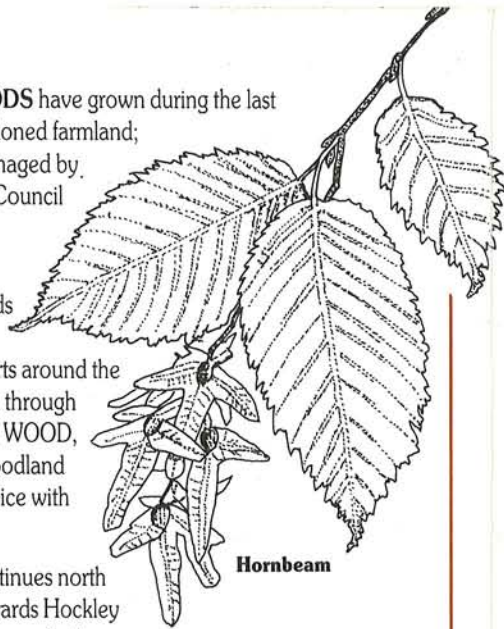
From Grove Woods the path crosses the stream and skirts around the sewage works and through **RAWRETH HALL WOOD**, a small ancient woodland of hornbeam coppice with oak standards.

The path then continues north along a hedge towards Hockley Woods. The hedge marks the **PARISH BOUNDARY** between Rayleigh and Rochford, and contains many different trees and shrubs including oak, ash, field maple, willow, hornbeam and hazel.

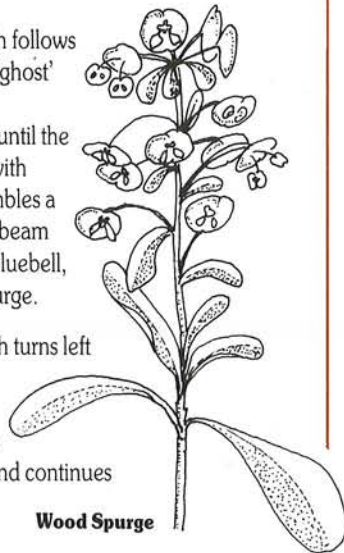
At **HOCKLEY WOODS** the path runs just inside the southern edge of the woods, in **PARSON'S SNIPE**, the smallest of the woods which combine to form Hockley Woods. The public footpath from Bull Lane Rayleigh links into the walk here. This wood once belonged to the parish of Hawkwell, and is still owned by the Church Commissioners; the wood has a fine stand of wild cherry trees.

At the east of The Snipe the path follows a hedge south – this hedge is a 'ghost' wood bank, all that remains of **COOMBE HILL WOOD** which until the 1950's linked Hockley Woods with Eastwood. The hedge still resembles a wood bank with coppiced hornbeam and woodland flowers such as bluebell, yellow archangel and wood spurge.

At the end of the hedge, the path turns left around 8 oaks and a pylon towards **GUSTED HALL WOOD**, skirts the western edge of the wood, past Gusted Hall and continues down through **THE SCRUBS**.



Hornbeam



Wood Spurge

Both these woods are ancient and have survived, although many of the surrounding hedgerows have been destroyed, because they are still coppiced for sweet chestnut.

The Byway through the Scrubs joins Fleming's Farm Road; leave the lane and enter **EDWARDS HALL PARK**. This is the site of an eighteenth century farm, now managed by Southend Borough Council. The remains of early drainage systems can be seen in the ridges and furrows which survive in the unploughed grassland.

From Edwards Hall the path passes through **PLOTLAND** of Eastwood back to Grove Woods. Plotland is the peculiar landscape which has developed on farmland abandoned during the nineteenth century agricultural depression and divided into plots and sold by speculators. Subsequently plots developed as small holdings, holiday homes, orchards, or were incorporated into housing or abandoned.

To reach Grove Woods leave Edwards Hall Park via Wren Avenue, Gravel Road, Eastwood Rise, Hillside Road and Disraeli Road into The Drive and Grove Road.



Sallow Catkins



ROCHFORD  
DISTRICT  
COUNCIL

**Countryside**  
COMMISSION

*This leaflet is one of a series published by the South-east Essex Woodland Project. This project was established by Rochford and Castle Point District Councils and the Countryside Commission with the aims of helping land owners manage their woods, developing the educational use of woodland and increasing opportunities for woodland recreation. For further information contact the Woodland Project Officer, Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, Essex.*

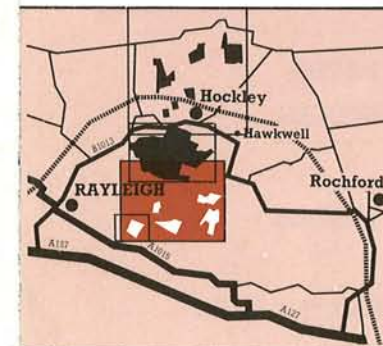
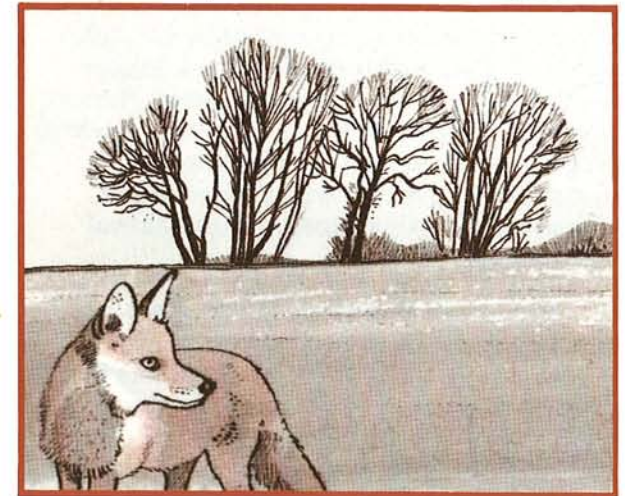
© 1987 Rochford District Council  
Designed and produced by Bizzley Graphics 22 Yeldham Lock Chelmer Village Chelmsford CM2 6RP

# WOODLAND WALKS

IN SOUTH-EAST ESSEX

## UPPER ROACH VALLEY

■ **A CIRCULAR WALK THROUGH THE COUNTRYSIDE BETWEEN ROCHFORD, RAYLEIGH, HOCKLEY AND EASTWOOD**



**DISTANCE** 6km

**ACCESS**  
FROM GROVE ROAD,  
RAYLEIGH,  
EDWARDS HALL  
PARK, EASTWOOD,  
AND HOCKLEY  
WOODS

3



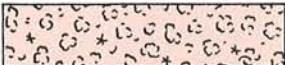
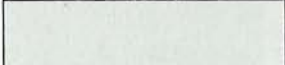
# UPPER ROACH VALLEY

## WALK THREE

**T**HE COUNTRYSIDE of this valley, between the suburbs of Rayleigh, Eastwood, Hockley and Rochford, reveals clues to the history of south-east Essex over the last thousand years. The walks described in this leaflet pass through a landscape which bears the traces of Saxon clearance, Norman parks, late Medieval field systems, nineteenth century property speculators and post war agriculture. Central to this landscape are the ancient woods, which survive largely unchanged since Medieval times or earlier.

A circular walk of approximately 6 km. along public footpaths links many of these features. For convenience the walk is described from Grove Woods but can be started elsewhere. There are car parks at Grove Woods, Hockley Woods and Edward's Hall Park; public footpaths from Bull Lane, Rayleigh and Gusted Hall Lane, Rochford link into the walk.

continued

-  PATHS
-  HEDGES
-  WOODS
-  BUILT UP AREA

