

Small Tortoiseshell

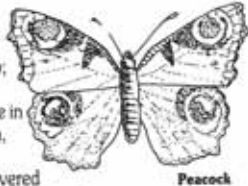


7 From the orchard follow the path into Lancaster Road, where here is a grassy track bordered by thorn scrub.

After just 10m turn off Lancaster Road, beside a spindle tree into another open plot.

The spindle can be identified by its long thin leaves and in the autumn by its distinctive pink fruits which remain on the bush long after the leaves have fallen.

8 The open plot was the site of the Bon Ami Sun Club; the remains of the swimming pool survive in the scrubs to the south, the foundations of the clubhouse are now covered by brambles in the centre of the plot.



Peacock

The grassland is now only cut once or twice a year to encourage plants such as fleabane, knapweed, centaury and vetches, and the butterflies which feed on them.



Common Blue

9 The path continues through this plot, passes two ponds, fringed with willow, sallow and dogwood. The origin of the ponds is unclear, possibly they are bomb craters.

10 Beyond the pond the wood opens out into another clearing around five large cherry trees before continuing through dense woodland onto Grove Road and back to the car park.

11 Away from the main area of woodland, between Katherine Close and Bramfield Road, is a small spinney.

Hidden by the dense scrub is a small patch of grassland rich in wild flowers; agrimony, yellow rattle, milkwort and spotted orchid all grow here and suggest this is a remnant of the original pasture of farmland. Today this area is managed by Rochford District Council to maintain the rich variety of plants.



Yellow Rattle

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This leaflet is one in a series published by Rochford District Council. The leaflets highlight a number of ecologically important sites and interesting circular walks in South East Essex.

Further information can be obtained from:

Woodlands and Environmental Specialist
Council Offices, South Street, Rochford, Essex.

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WOODLAND WALKS

IN SOUTH-EAST ESSEX

GROVE WOODS

A SHORT WOODLAND WALK BETWEEN RAYLEIGH AND EASTWOOD



ACCESS FROM GROVE ROAD, AND CONNAUGHT ROAD, RAYLEIGH

4

GROVE WOODS

WALK FOUR



GROVE WOODS are located between Rayleigh and Eastwood, forming a haven for both people and wildlife, between the suburban development of Rayleigh and the intensively farmed land of the Roach Valley. They can be reached from Grove Road or Connaught Road, Rayleigh. The trees and plants of these woods are a curious mixture of common hedgerow plants and exotic garden plants: oak, hawthorn, stitchwort and campion grow side by side with goldenrod, snowberries and fruit trees. The Woods reveal clues to both medieval farmland and a lost community which flourished and declined during the first half of this century.

When this settlement was abandoned the site was invaded by trees, demonstrating the impermanence of man's settlement and the ability of plants to transform an area.

In the Domesday Survey of 1086 this land was part of Rayleigh Park and owned by the Crown. The Park would have provided deer for the Crown and was mainly grassland, which was let to neighbouring farms for grazing. In 1544 the Park was sold and a number of small farms established.

In 1876 four of these farms - Lime House, Rayleigh Lodge, Whitehouse and Eastwood Lodge, were sold by auction to Joseph Henry Retallock Moloney. Twenty years later agriculture was still in decline and in 1896 Mr. Moloney decided to sell part of the Lime House Estate. The sale was carried out by the London Auctioneers Protheroe and Morris. Most of the land was offered for sale in small plots of land 20' wide and 180' deep as freehold building plots. A grid of roads, of which Grove, Lancaster, York and Connaught Roads are remnants, was established. The plots began to sell to both local people and others from London and the dream of owning a home and land was realised by many people.

Edward Benjamin Knight, a local builder, bought 18 plots for £70.14.3d; Mr. N. J. Kitson of Mile End Road, East London, bought 11 plots on the corner of Grove Road and Lancaster Road at £4.19.6 1/2d a plot. At this time (1896) a farm labourer's wage was 11s 9d a week, stout cost 3d a bottle and a loaf of bread 5d.

The eventual owners of the plots used them as small holdings, market gardens, and holiday homes and a flourishing pioneer community was established on land that had been considered infertile. The newly acquired plots were marked out with hawthorn hedges which still survive; the houses and bungalows were simple and often built of wood.

However, this plotland life had its drawbacks; the roads were impassable in winter and there were no mains water or drainage. The only fresh water was from wells, the remains of which can still be seen.

By the 1940's the area was showing signs of neglect. A large brick built house in Lancaster Road was destroyed by bomb blasts during the Second World War.

Many of the plots were abandoned and invaded by oaks and thorn to create the modern woodland. Amidst the overgrowth and relative seclusion of the new woods a naturist camp called "Bon Ami Sun Club" was started in the 1950's and continued successfully for 20 years.

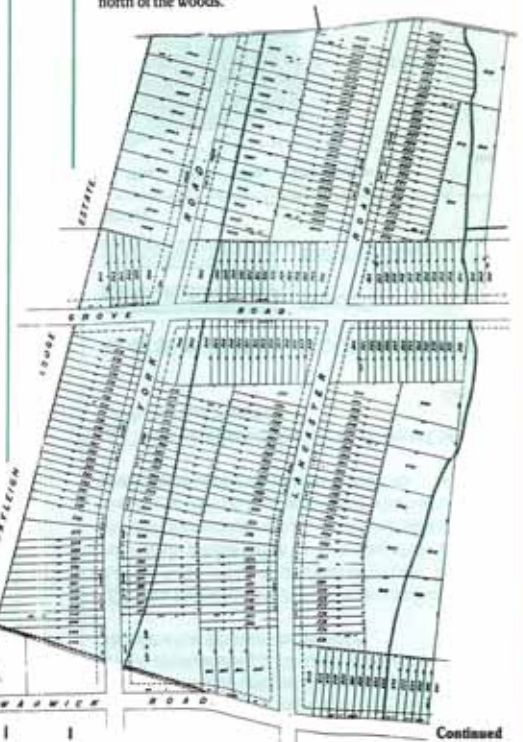
In the 1960's and 70's much of the plotland was developed for housing. Grove Woods survive today as part of a larger area of recent woodland which bears witness to the recent history of

this area of the medieval Rayleigh Park.

The woods at the eastern end of Grove Road are now managed by Rochford District Council to preserve this historic landscape, to encourage plants and wildlife and to provide enjoyment for the local population.

A car park and a network of paths have been established through the woods.

There are playing fields and a BMX track on the north of the woods.



Continued

GROVE WOODS

A short trail has been marked through these Woods. Follow the yellow arrows and the directions below.

1 Leave the car park and turn right up Grove Road before passing through a stile into the Woods on your left. Continue along this path. On your right is a small clearing fringed by ash trees.

2 The ditch and bank to the left are the remains of an old farm hedge which is clearly shown on the old tithe maps. The hedgerow elms survive as young suckers and the rotting trunks of the mature trees.


3 Cross the ditch and enter the dense woodland; this spinney is typical of the woodland, usually dominated by oak and thorn which has become established during this century. Continue through this woodland to a line of hawthorn, which were planted as a hedge between plots this century.

4 The woodland to the south has been thinned to leave a few oaks and to let more light reach the wood floor. If you look carefully you can see a series of ridges and furrows approximately 2.5m apart; these are relics of early drainage when this area was farmland.

5 From the hedge turn right through woodland, back across the elm hedge and into an orchard. The orchard was established at the beginning of the century when the surrounding hedge was planted, subsequently it was abandoned and invaded by scrub which has recently been cleared and new fruit trees established.

6 The ruins of the building and a well can still be seen in the north of this plot.

Continued

-  WOODLAND PATH
-  WOODS
-  BUILT UP AREA

