

# Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements

A programme of woodland, grassland, wetland and water quality improvements

This project has enabled the planting of hundreds of trees and thousands of other plants across the borough

## Elmdon Ward Tree Planting

A series of wildlife habitat enhancements were carried out across the borough's parks and open spaces through Solihull Habitat and Nature Improvements Project 2017-2020, with thousands of new plants included.

As part of this programme hundreds of trees and shrubs were planted in parks and open spaces within the Elmdon Ward – at Elmdon Park, Elmdon Nature Park, Damson Lane Park, Rowood Drive and the play park next to Elmdon Coppice.

Native trees and shrubs were planted, with some ornamental and fruit trees, to create and strengthen a range of habitats. As well as their value for wildlife, the trees enhance the landscape by adding structure, variety of form and seasonal change. Many are also characteristic of the local area.

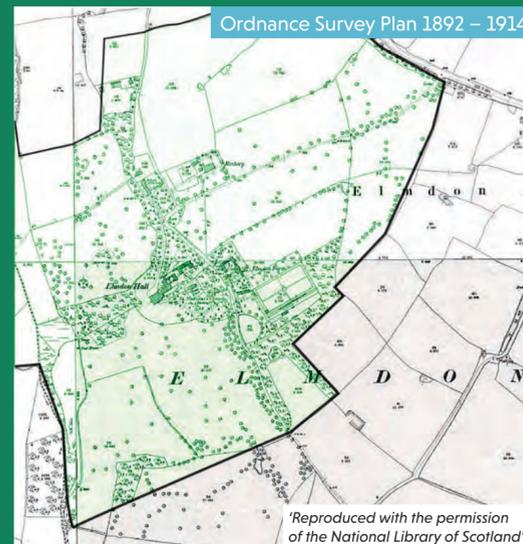
The Elmdon Ward tree planting created new habitat for wildlife by adding 450 trees, 690 metres of hedgerow and 2,000 square metres of thicket.

## Parkland and Wood Pasture

Old parkland and wood-pasture are the products of historic land management systems and they both have significant ecological and landscape benefits, contributing to a 'sense of place'.

Parklands are important historic and visual elements in the landscape. Some started as medieval hunting forests or wooded commons and others are the designed landscapes from large estates, such as Elmdon Hall. Many of the trees planted when these landscapes were set out are now large ancient and veteran trees.

Small-leaved lime and sweet chestnut trees have been planted within the park to enhance the established parkland character, while retaining a sense of openness and long views across the park.



This plan shows the Elmdon Hall Estate parkland before Elmdon Park was created (as indicated by the black line)

Wood pasture is a priority habitat in the UK and is the subject of a Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Biodiversity Action Plan.



Mature wood pasture (as the above image illustrates) is good in landscapes where large woodlands are less appropriate – such as sensitive historic and ecological areas.

English oak (*Quercus robur*) and sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) have been planted in the park on the edge of woodland to establish a new habitat.

## Some species of animals and plants found in the park

The **green woodpecker** (*Picus viridis*) is the largest of the UK's woodpeckers. It nests in holes that it excavates in trees in broadleaved woodlands, large parks and gardens. It uses its barbed tongue to remove insects from crevices in the bark and use its strong beak to dig into ant colonies. An old country name for the bird is the 'Yaffle' because of the laughing sounds it makes. Professor Yaffle, a character in the classic children's programme Bagpuss, was loosely based on the green woodpecker.



@Margaret Holland



**Sweet chestnut** (*Castanea sativa*) is a non-native tree brought to the UK by the Romans. It can live for 700 years or more. It's a species often used in designed landscapes, deer parks and parklands. It can be identified by its serrated leaves, fissured bark which spirals upwards and by a wide girth as the tree grows with age. The flowers provide an important source of nectar and pollen for bees and other insects. The spiky chestnut fruits only develop on trees once they reach about 25 years old and are eaten by red squirrels.

**Wild service tree** (*Sorbus torminalis*) was once widespread in England's forests and although rare, it is often found in oak and ash woods and pockets of ancient woodland. The tree is most prominent in spring when it displays pretty white blossom and autumn when its maple-like leaves turn bright crimson. The flowers provide pollen and nectar for insects, berries are eaten by birds and leaves are eaten by moth caterpillars.



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