

# **Coppicing Haringey's Ancient Woodlands**

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## **Abstract**

Recent coppice projects carried out in two North London Woods (Coldfall Wood and Queen's Wood in Haringey) are described. Changes to the coppice floras have been monitored and the results are discussed.

## **Introduction**

Coldfall Wood and Queen's Wood are two ancient oak/hornbeam woodlands lying near the western edge of the London Borough of Haringey (Figure 1). Both have a long recorded history of traditional coppice management dating back to the first half of the seventeenth century. Silvertown (1978) gives a useful account of the Woods' early histories; Game (2000) prepared detailed Management Briefs for both Woods; and Bevan (1986 and 1992), Gilbert and Bevan (1997) and Graham-Brown (2006) cover aspects of the Woods' ecologies.

## **The Woods**

**Coldfall Wood** (TQ 276 903) is a 14-hectare woodland lying on London clay with some overlying glacial gravel along the western boundary. A stream, Coppetts Brook (known locally as Coldfall Wood Brook), runs from south to north through the centre of the Wood. Previously culverted near the middle of the Wood, this part of the stream was brought to the surface in 1998 to rejoin its original natural course. A substantial wood-bank with a ditch on its outer side runs along the western and northern boundaries. In historical times this would have protected the coppice from animals grazing on what was once a part of Finchley Common. Ring counts of the recently cut hornbeam indicate that the Wood was last coppiced in the 1930s and the hornbeam have the multi-stemmed appearance characteristic of such woodland. Before the current coppicing programme was initiated in 1990, the interior of the Wood was very shady in the summer owing to the dense canopy of hornbeam. As a consequence the ground flora was sparse. A botanical survey carried out between

August 1985 and August 1986 (Bevan, 1986) found a total of just 128 species of flowering plants and ferns, but nearly half (54) of these only occurred around the edges of the Wood. The list included 18 ancient woodland indicator species (Rose, 1999). One of these, common cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*, has the dubious distinction of being the only plant from the 1985/86 survey that was not refound in Coldfall Wood during the current coppice project. It remains widespread in Queen's Wood. The canopy in Coldfall Wood is dominated by English oak *Quercus robur* and hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, together with frequent silver birch *Betula pendula* and occasional mountain ash *Sorbus aucuparia*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, holly *Ilex aquifolia*, downy birch *Betula pubescens* and wild cherry *Prunus avium*. Small quantities of midland hawthorn *Crataegus laevigata*, common hawthorn *C. monogyna* and the hybrid between them *C. x media* are found, but other trees, including wild service *Sorbus torminalis*, field maple *Acer campestre*, sessile oak *Quercus petraea*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and beech *Fagus sylvatica* are all rare. Further botanical records were kept of the plants appearing in three small coppices cut between 1990 and 1994 (Gilbert and Bevan, 1997). In the dampest of these, plentiful goat willow *Salix caprea* has established, but this tree was rare elsewhere in the Wood until the recent stream coppice has enabled it to establish in some quantity.

**Queen's Wood** (TQ 288 886) is a 21 hectare statutory Local Nature Reserve (declared by LB Haringey in 1990). It also lies on London clay, but this grades into the Claygate beds on the higher ground. The topography is more varied than in Coldfall Wood and includes a steep-sided central valley, which at one time contained a stream. This stream, shown on the Ordnance Survey 1:2500 edition of 1894-96, forms one of the headwaters of the river Moselle, but was culverted in the early part of the twentieth century. Its former course is marked by a drainage ditch in the western half of the valley that supports a range of damp-loving plants, including thin-spiked wood-sedge *Carex strigosa* in one of its very few remaining Middlesex sites. In the centre of the valley, a large "wildlife" pond was created in 2010 on the site of a

former paddling pool. Another drainage ditch runs from the north-western corner of the Wood and joins the culvert at the western end of the 2009 coppice at the site of a former dog pond (shown on the 1935 Ordnance Survey map). This part of the coppice remains permanently damp and supports a number of interesting wetland plants. Part of the western boundary of the Wood is demarcated by a similar ancient wood-bank and ditch to that found in Coldfall Wood. Unlike that Wood however, there is little visual evidence of previous coppice management, but Queen's Wood is known to have been regularly cut until the mid nineteenth century (Silvertown, 1978). The mature hornbeam have grown to a great size in many parts of the Wood, including the current coppice site, and some of the largest are around 150 years old. A small, experimental coppice (c.1/4 hectare) was cut in the western half of the Wood in February 1992 and is referred to in the discussion below.

The interior of Queen's Wood is more open than in Coldfall Wood and the flora is consequently more diverse. The canopy is also dominated by English oak and hornbeam, but the tree flora is more varied with plentiful beech and sessile oak on the higher ground. Silver birch, downy birch, holly (including much Highclere holly *I. x altaclerensis*), mountain ash, hazel, elder, wild cherry, the two native hawthorns and their hybrid, ash and field maple are all frequent. Wild service tree is widespread in the eastern half and there are occasional mature goat willows. Large-leaved lime *Tilia platyphyllos* is regenerating freely from planted trees along the southern border.

In 2006, the Friends of Queen's Wood commissioned the author to carry out a botanical survey of the Wood. This was undertaken during 2007, and provides a "snapshot" of the flowering plants and ferns found in that year. 225 species were recorded. In addition, following an extensive literature search, the Flora includes a wide range of earlier botanical records from the Wood extending back to the seventeenth century. These historical records added a further 140 species to the total (Bevan, 2010).

## **The coppices**

In December 2006, mature hornbeam were coppiced along a strip of approximately 10 metres width on either side of the central stream in **Coldfall Wood**, covering an area of c. 1 hectare. The area included some marshland to the north, known locally as the "everglades marsh", where several hornbeam had recently died because of the regular flooding of the stream. The coppiced hornbeam were cut into manageable lengths and stacked away from the stream. The work was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), as part of the wider Capital Woodlands Project overseen by Trees for Cities and locally in partnership with Haringey Council. HLF also paid for the construction of two wooden bridges over the stream and for the creation of two small reedbeds at the stream's southern end. These were planted with a range of aquatic species (marked with a P in Table 1) designed to intercept any pollutants entering the stream from the catchment area lying to the south. Changes to the flora were regularly monitored (with visits every month between April and September) from the year before the coppice was cut (2006) and throughout the following five years. The plants recorded in each year are listed in Table 1.

In **Queen's Wood**, a coppice of c. 1/2 hectare was created in February 2009 by felling the mature hornbeam growing at the eastern end of the central valley. The work was funded by the SITA Trust and Haringey Council's "Making the Difference" grant following applications by the Friends of Queen's Wood. In order to protect plants growing within this coppice, a dead-hedge was built around the perimeter using brushwood from the felled hornbeam. The cut hornbeam were stacked and secured with metal bands. As in Coldfall Wood, the flora was regularly monitored during the year before the coppice was cut (2008) and throughout the following three years. Figure 2 shows the coppice area in February 2009, looking east from the dog pond, just before the coppice was cut. Figure 3 shows the same view taken seven months later (24/9/2009) after the coppice was cut. The plants recorded are listed in Table 2.

## **The coppice floras**

In both Woods, the flora was very sparse in the year prior to coppicing, owing to the density of the hornbeam canopy and the resulting low light levels. More than 80% of the coppice area in **Coldfall Wood** consisted of bare ground, and most of the limited vegetation was confined to the steep-sided banks of the stream. Three common species of fern grew here: hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium*, male fern *Dryopteris felix-mas*, and broad buckler-fern *D. dilatata*. These had all been seen in the 1985/86 survey but a fourth species, soft shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*, was a recent arrival. It appears to be spreading locally, though it is still a scarce plant in Middlesex (Kent, 2000). A few fronds of lady fern *Athyrium felix-femina* were recorded in 2008 and may have been overlooked prior to coppicing. Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* was frequent along the eastern edge of the coppice. Stunted plants of tutsan *Hypericum androsaemum* (Figure 4), absent from the 1985/86 survey, were scattered along the length of the stream. Tutsan was widespread as a native plant in the county until the late eighteenth century, and known earlier to the London apothecary James Petiver (c. 1658 - 1718) "in the woods about Hampstead and Highgate" (Petiver, 1695). It is now thought to be extinct as a native in the Vice-county and these plants are likely to have escaped from local gardens (Kent, 1975). Also absent in 1986, was the single primrose *Primula vulgaris*, of unknown provenance, which grew rather precariously on the stream bank. Once widespread in woods in Middlesex, primroses are now rarely seen as most have been grubbed up and transferred to gardens. A small colony of fringe-cups *Tellima grandiflora* (Figure 5) also grew on the stream bank, the first of several exotic garden escapes to become established in the coppice.

In **Queen's Wood** the pre-coppice vegetation was even sparser, with around 90% of the coppice area being bare ground, and only a thin scattering of plants along the

boundary paths. There were no ferns. As in Coldfall Wood, a few vegetative tufts of tutsan grew in dense shade. A single spike of broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* was found near the centre of the area to be coppiced. By the end of the first year after coppicing, eleven flowering spikes had been seen, five were counted in the following year and just two appeared in the third year as little suitably open habitat remained. This orchid was first recorded from the Wood in 1956 by LNHS member Ted Bangerter (Kent, 1975) and is now seen in low numbers along the central valley in most years (a maximum of 22 flowering spikes were seen in 2011). Wood anemone *Anemone nemorosa* occurs in scattered clumps in both coppices. The largest clump in Queen's Wood had 27 flowers in April 2009, soon after the coppice was cut. By April 2010, this clump had produced almost 400 flowers.

In both Woods, the greatest numbers of new arrivals were seen during the first year after the coppice was cut. Around 100 new species were found in each coppice during this year. Many annuals thrived in the well-lit bare ground. These included common native plants like the two orache species *Atriplex prostrata* and *A. patula*, two goosefoots *Chenopodium album* and *C. polyspermum*, thale cress *Arabidopsis thaliana*, and petty spurge *Euphorbia peplus*. More surprisingly, a small colony of common whitlowgrass *Erophila verna*, rare and decreasing in Middlesex (Kent, 1975) turned up in Coldfall Wood. These, and other similar plants, declined rapidly in subsequent years as succession deprived them of suitably open habitat. In Coldfall Wood, a few plants of the Chinese gooseberry (Kiwi fruit) *Actinidia chinensis* var. *deliciosa* appeared briefly in the first year. This exotic fruit is seldom recorded in the wild in Britain and was a first record for Middlesex. It may have arrived as a result of sewage contamination of the stream - tomato seedlings *Solanum lycopersicum* were also recorded close by.

Longer-lasting biennial and perennial species also appeared early, including many that are known to survive for long periods as buried seed (listed in the Tables). They included foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, which appeared in small quantities in both coppices, and slender St John's-wort *Hypericum pulchrum* (Figure 6). The latter, an ancient woodland indicator (Rose, 1999), is now a rare plant in Middlesex (Kent, 2000), but can persist in the seed-bank for up to 200 years (Buckley, 1992). It was widely scattered in the Coldfall Wood coppice, but only two plants have been found in the coppice in Queen's Wood. It was also seen briefly (1993 - 1996) in the small experimental coppice cut in this Wood in 1992. The closely related square-stemmed St John's-wort *Hypericum tetrapterum*, which can also survive for long periods as buried seed, was found in small numbers in both coppices. A damp-loving plant, it occurs near the stream in Coldfall Wood and in the poorly drained western end of the Queen's Wood coppice, close to the dog pond. Another seed bank specialist that appeared in the Queen's Wood coppice is heath groundsel *Senecio sylvaticus*, a new record for the Wood of another plant that is declining in Middlesex (Kent, 2000). Although not seen in the current stream coppice in Coldfall Wood, it was recorded from that Wood in an earlier 1990 coppice (Bevan, 1992). Several sedges, also known to form persistent seed-banks (Grime et al, 2007), appeared in both coppices, although Coldfall Wood supported the greater number. Here, several populations of pale sedge *Carex pallescens* (Figure 6) were found in 2007 and were still present, though declining in numbers, in 2011. Three plants of common yellow sedge *C. demissa* (Figure 7) appeared on the stream bank in 2009 and are surviving, and a few plants of pill sedge *Carex pilulifera* were seen in 2008. Only the latter was recorded in the 1985/86 survey and all are now very scarce in Middlesex (Kent, 1975 & 2000). Bristle club-rush *Isolepis setacea*, another member of the sedge family that is rare in

the Vice-county, was found in some quantity beside the stream in the Coldfall Wood coppice in 2007. It declined rapidly thereafter and was last seen in 2009. Although this diminutive species did not appear in the current Queen's Wood coppice, it was recorded briefly in 1993 in the small experimental coppice referred to above. It had gone by 1994. Rackham (2003), reports its similarly brief appearance in a coppice in the Bradfield Woods: He wrote: "I had never seen it in a wood before, and seldom since. It lasted for a year and then disappeared". This plant was also known to Petiver "about Highgate and Hampstead" in the late seventeenth century (Petiver, 1695). Other locally declining native species, which are known to persist in the seed bank, included blink *Montia fontana*, three-nerved sandwort *Moehringia trinervia* and ragged robin *Silene flos-cuculi* (Figure 9), which were all seen in the Queen's Wood coppice, though there is some doubt about the provenance of the latter, which was planted in quantity in 2011 around the "wildlife" pond lying just to the west of the coppice, and may have been deliberately planted into the coppice from there. In Coldfall Wood only, a single plant of Vervain *Verbena officinalis*, which is known to survive in the seed bank, appeared in the coppice the year after it was cut but did not persist. This is another rare and decreasing plant in north London (Kent, 2000). Also confined to the coppice in Coldfall Wood were scattered populations of yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum* (Figure 10) which appeared in 2008 and have persisted. This is another seed-bank species of damp woods and an ancient woodland indicator (Rose, 1999). It has a long association with the Wood, being recorded here before 1910, but was recently thought to have become extinct (Kent, 1975).

Both Woods are surrounded by houses with extensive gardens, so it is not surprising that a wide range of garden escapes were found in the two coppices. Tutsan has already been mentioned as an attractive native escaping from gardens into both

coppices, but in Queen's Wood only, a single vigorous plant of water avens *Geum rivale* (Figure 11) also appeared in 2010 and has persisted. This too is sometimes grown in gardens and occasionally escapes. It has now almost disappeared from SE England as a wild native plant. Forms of the native wood forget-me-not *Myosotis sylvatica* are widely grown in gardens, and often escape. They were widespread in both coppices. Shining crane's-bill *Geranium lucidum*, scarce as a native in Middlesex, sometimes occurs in gardens and it also escaped into both coppices in small quantity. Nettle-leaved bellflower *Campanula trachelium*, another scarce native in the Vice-county and an ancient woodland indicator, is occasionally grown in gardens and was seen in the Coldfall Wood coppice in 2009 and 2011. Many non-native garden plants have also appeared. Himalayan honeysuckle *Leycesteria formosa* (Figure 12), an ornamental shrub bearing purple berries in the late summer, was present in large numbers as bird-sown seedlings in the Coldfall Wood coppice in its first year. Several of these have persisted and it is also present in smaller quantity in the Queen's Wood coppice. Yellow-flowered strawberry *Potentilla indica* (Figure 13), a popular garden plant sometimes recommended for "ground cover", covers the ground most effectively in parts of both coppices. The cultivated "Himalayan Giant" blackberry *Rubus armeniacus* became well established in the third year after both coppices were cut and now dominates large areas. A few plants of the less vigorous cut-leaved bramble *R. laciniatus* were also found. In addition, the following escaped garden ornamentals were found in both coppices: common Michaelmas-daisy *Aster x salignus*, Pampas-grass *Cortaderia selloana*, Argentine vervain *Verbena bonariensis*, purple toadflax *Linaria purpurea*, green alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, feverfew *Tanacetum parthenium*, hybrid Spanish bluebell *Hyacinthoides x massartiana*, early crocus *Crocus tommasinianus* and the ubiquitous butterfly-bush *Buddleja davidii*. A

single seedling fuchsia *Fuchsia magellanica*, seldom recorded from the wild in London, was found in the Queen's Wood coppice in 2009, but did not persist. In the same coppice that year, pale galingale *Cyperus longus* was found near the old dog pond. This plant can be invasive in other parts of London (Mark Spencer, pers. com.), but it did not survive here. Indian balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, another plant with a fearsome reputation for invasion, first appeared in the Coldfall Wood coppice in 2008 and, despite best efforts to control it, has persisted in low numbers. A single bird-sown firethorn *Pyracantha coccinea* has survived in the same coppice. In addition to these escaped garden plants, other exotics are likely to have arrived through the scattering of birdseed. These included ragweed *Ambrosia artemisiifolia*, and the grasses common millet *Panicum miliaceum*, yellow bristle-grass *Setaria pumila* and Canary-grass *Phalaris canariensis*, which were all found in the Queen's Wood coppice in the first year after cutting, and cockspur *Echinochloa crus-galli*, which appeared in both coppices. None of these have persisted. Another non-native grass, water bent *Polypogon viridis*, which has recently become well established in the London area (Spencer, 2009), appeared in both coppices and has spread. It is now particularly well established along the banks of the stream in Coldfall Wood.

## Discussion

The coppices have dramatically increased the botanical diversity of the two Woods. In Queen's Wood, three years after the coppice was cut, 150 new species had been added to the original sparse flora. 86 of these were new additions to the 225 seen in the entire Wood during the 2007 survey. In Coldfall Wood, five years after the coppice was cut, 182 new species had been added to the original flora. Of these, no less than 121 were additions to the meagre 1985/86 survey total of 128 species from the Wood

as a whole. Many new arrivals were ephemeral plants that have not persisted, but others have germinated from buried seed (see Tables) and form a permanent part of the flora. Several of the latter are London rarities making a welcome return to the Woods after many years apparent absence. The two coppices have much in common and support similar floras. 72% of the species found in the Queen's Wood coppice were also found in the coppice in Coldfall Wood. However, there are significant differences. The Coldfall Wood coppice, including the "everglade marsh", is about twice the size. The wider range of wetland plants found there reflects the presence of the stream and its associated damp habitats. A similar stream once flowed through the Queen's Wood coppice until it was culverted at the start of the twentieth century. C.S. Nicholson, then chairman of the LNHS Botany Committee (Northern district), saw marsh willowherb *Epilobium palustre* in Queen's Wood at this time (Kent & Lousley, 1953, p.124). He also recorded bog stitchwort *Stellaria alsine* (Kent & Lousley, 1951, p. 37), brooklime *Veronica beccabunga* (Kent, 1975) and pale sedge *Carex pallescens* (Kent & Lousley, 1956, p. 297). The last three records were all reported from "Highgate Woods", a broad-brush description which was used at that time to refer to Queen's Wood and Highgate Wood collectively. Brooklime and pale sedge have both been found in the Coldfall Wood coppice by the stream, and it seems likely that they would once have been present by the old stream in Queen's Wood. Thin-spiked wood-sedge *Carex strigosa* was found by Mark Spencer in 2002 about 150 metres to the west of the coppice, close to the course of the original stream (now marked by a drainage ditch). It might be difficult to de-culvert the stream in Queen's Wood (because of the possible flood risk to adjacent houses), but some more limited impeding of the drainage would bring great advantages to the flora of this coppice.

Historically, Coldfall Wood was coppiced much more recently (c. 1935) than Queen's Wood and this may explain the presence in the former of a number of species absent from the latter. Seed-bank plants cannot survive indefinitely as viable seed. At least 130 years have elapsed since the Queen's Wood coppice was last cut, so seed of plants like yellow pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, Vervain *Verbena officinalis*, and the rare sedges found only in Coldfall Wood, may not have survived. Foxglove and slender St John's-wort, found in both coppices, produce exceptionally long-lived seed banks as indicated by Buckley (1992).

In both coppices the number of new species found each year declined rapidly after the great diversity seen in the first year (see Tables). However, the overall diversity of species has been maintained for longer in Coldfall Wood, where there was little change over 5 years. In the Queen's Wood coppice this diversity has fallen off more rapidly. Paradoxically, the heavier visitor pressure in the Coldfall Wood coppice may explain this difference. The stream has become a very attractive feature and many associated "desire-line" paths have been created and kept open. This has held back the closing over of the canopy and kept the coppice more open than that in Queen's Wood which, with its surrounding impenetrable dead hedge, has been less heavily used and fewer paths have been made. The vegetation has grown up without disturbance and has more rapidly shaded out less vigorous species.

Regrowth from the cut hornbeam stools varied between the two coppices. In Coldfall Wood, more than 90% of the felled trees regenerated successfully and regrowth has been rapid. By contrast, in Queen's Wood hornbeam regeneration has been much slower. This may be due to the widely differing ages of the hornbeam in the two coppices, with the far older trees in Queen's Wood breaking less readily. In Coldfall Wood, regrowth after five years has reached a maximum of around 7 metres. In

Queen's Wood, after 3 years it has grown to less than 3 metres. Hornbeam seedlings were frequent in both coppices, growing to a maximum height of around 2 metres in Coldfall Wood and to about 1 metre in Queen's Wood. Other tree and shrub species have regenerated with varying degrees of success. Silver birch and mountain ash have both grown well. Disappointingly, very few oak seedlings have survived in either coppice. By 2011, there were just eight in Coldfall Wood and a similar number in Queen's Wood. Several of them were already infected with oak-mildew fungus *Microsphaera alphitoides*. Their progress will be monitored, but the long-term survival of most of them seems doubtful. Elsewhere in the Wood, there is little significant oak regeneration apart from in one small area in the southern quarter (known as "King's Wood" locally), where a dense stand of sapling sessile oaks have reached a height of about 4 metres beneath a mature parent tree. Two young guelder roses *Viburnum opulus* were recorded in the Coldfall Wood coppice in 2010. An ancient woodland indicator (Rose, 1999), it is another decreasing species in Middlesex, thinly scattered elsewhere in the Wood. John Benbow saw it there more than a hundred years ago (Kent, 1975). Two widely separate wild service-tree saplings appeared near the northern boundary of the Queen's Wood coppice and may have originated as long-distance suckers from mature trees growing close by. No wild service-tree seedlings were seen in the current coppices although, in an earlier Coldfall Wood fall cut in 1994, more than 100 were recorded in 1996. None of them survived for more than a year. Goat willow *Salix caprea*, absent before the two coppices were cut, has now become dominant in the wetter areas of both. Some trees have reached a height of almost 8 metres in the marshy hollow at the southern end of the Coldfall Wood coppice and they have grown to about 4 metres near the dog-pond in Queen's Wood. In these areas, goat willow is now replacing hornbeam and could be

coppiced back with advantage. A single hazel seedling was found in the Queen's Wood coppice in 2009 and has persisted. None have yet been seen in the Coldfall Wood coppice, although mature trees grow beside the stream in the north. Four aspen saplings *Populus tremula* were seen in the Queen's Wood coppice in 2011. This attractive native tree had not been recorded from the Wood before, although it is widespread in damp woods in Eastern England and elsewhere. Seedlings are very vulnerable to drought and, for successful establishment, require several weeks of unbroken wetness from May onwards (Rackham, 2003). Recent wet summers seem to have provided ideal conditions. Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* has been very sparse in Coldfall Wood, and has not yet been recorded from the Queen's Wood coppice. Its close relative the Norway maple *Acer platanoides* is plentiful along the southern boundary of Coldfall Wood, where it forms a component of the "urban ecotone" between the edge of the Wood and its urban surroundings (Gilbert & Bevan, 1997). This boundary is close to the southern end of the coppice, but Norway maple has not encroached very far into the Wood. A single sapling silver maple *Acer saccharinum* is well established on a bank of the stream. It is likely to have originated from wind-dispersed seed from a planted street tree. Such self-sown seedlings are becoming more frequent in the London area (Stace, 2010) and I have seen many around Bounds Green, though they are seldom allowed to grow to any size.

Approximately 20 per cent of the plants found in both coppices were of non-native origin. They reflect the urban nature of the Woods. As with the native flora, many early arrivals were ruderal species, like Canadian fleabane *Conyza canadensis*, and American willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum*, which occurred in both coppices. Oxford ragwort *Senecio squalidus* and narrow-leaved ragwort *S. inaequidens* (now spreading widely in London) appeared in the Queen's Wood coppice only. The seeds of these

plants are wind-dispersed, and took advantage of the recently disturbed ground and high light levels. They are unlikely to persist. Other exotics are shade-tolerant and more likely to survive. In the 1992 experimental coppice in Queen's Wood, for example, Himalayan honeysuckle, bird-sown from a local garden, was first recorded in 1993 and was still present there 14 years later in 2007. At that time, this coppice supported 31 species - almost double the 16 recorded back in 1992 before the coppice was cut. Himalayan honeysuckle is now widespread in both the current coppices and, together with Himalayan giant blackberry, cut-leaved blackberry, firethorn and cotoneaster species, is likely to persist. How should this proliferation of exotic introductions be regarded? It is one of the great themes of urban ecology (Gilbert and Bevan, 1997); these old woods are adapting to their new surroundings in a most natural way, by selecting from the incoming propagules those species most suited to the prevailing conditions. The Woods should not be managed as imitation countryside and sanitised by the removal of all exotics. Nevertheless, a few may need to be controlled in the future. They include Himalayan honeysuckle, Indian balsam and yellow-flowered strawberry. At present, however, the rapid spread of native goat willow in both coppices is of more concern. Further monitoring will provide information about the distribution of all these plants and allow informed decisions to be made about their management. I hope that this paper will encourage further coppicing in both Woods. The two projects have demonstrated that much of the historic coppice flora can be restored despite the long lapse of time. Rackham's experience in Hayley Wood in Cambridgeshire showed that even after an eighty-year gap it is possible to recover much of the coppice flora (Rackham, 2003). In Coldfall Wood, the length of time between coppices has been similar and in Queen's Wood it has been considerably longer. It is encouraging to report that in the winter of

2009/2010, the original 1990 coppice was cut again. This rotation of around twenty years should be adequate to maintain most of the ground vegetation. With the assistance of volunteers from both Friends groups, we will continue to monitor botanical change in these beautiful Woods for many years to come.

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