



# Bassingthorpe Spring Wood



**Bassingthorpe Spring Wood is a small woodland situated 2 kilometres north-east of the centre of Rotherham, on the eastern edge of the Kimberworth Park estate. The woodland is divided into two parts by Fenton Road, with the larger part of the site lying on the east side of this, gently sloping down towards the road, opposite to Wingfield Secondary School, where it forms a prominent and attractive feature of the landscape.**



The northern section of the wood is steeply sloping open oak woodland.

The wood has a light, open aspect, dominated by roughly even aged sessile oak and birch. Most of the oaks are thirty to fifty years old, although there are some more mature trees scattered throughout the

wood. Small areas of ash, wych elm and wild cherry are also present where the soils are richer in nutrients. There is today no evidence of former coppicing.

## HISTORY

The oldest written record referring to Bassingthorpe Spring Wood dates from around 1600, which makes it an ancient woodland, that is, one that has been in existence for at least 400 years. In this record the wood is listed as a coppice woodland belonging to the 7th Earl of Shrewsbury.

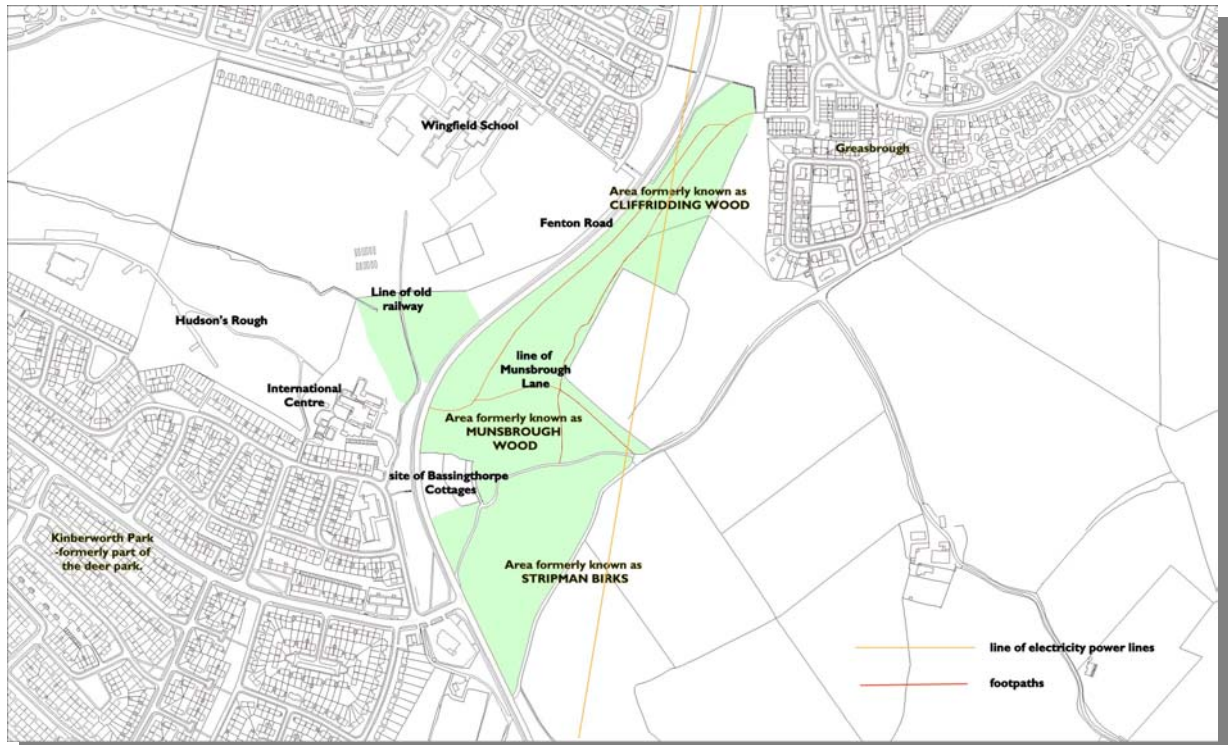
It would appear that the wood had come into the ownership of the Shrewsburys in 1552 when they acquired the manor of Kimberworth. It passed, with all the local Shrewsbury holdings, to the Dukes of Norfolk who sold it in 1678 to the Gill family for £1,130. The family sold the wood to the Wortleys who, in 1726, sold it to Thomas Watson-Wentworth, the 1st Marquis of Rockingham, complete with two farms, four woods, one third of the manor and tithes of Greasbrough and the coal rights for £11,000.

The wood was purchased by Rotherham Borough Council from Earl Fitzwilliam in 1950.

Like most ancient woods Bassingthorpe Spring is located on a township boundary, in this case between Greasborough township and Kimberworth.

The name 'Spring' indicates that the wood was managed as a coppice or 'spring' wood. The earliest known document referring to the wood is an entry in the list of spring woods belonging to the Earl of

*Kimberworth  
L.O.P.P.  
2 Basingthorpe Spring 3 about 14 years old - 30 ac.  
Kimberworth plus all roads to be roled - 300 ac } 340 ac  
Walsworth about - 12 years old - 10 ac*



Map showing location and extent of Bassingthorpe Spring Wood, Rotherham.



Aerial view showing same area as the map above.



Shrewsbury in about 1600-  
The first entry of these three refers to Bassingthorpe Spring. It says-

‘Kimberworth Lordship.  
Bassingthorpe Springes 3 about  
14 years ould – 30 acres.’

The 3 indicates that the wood was divided into 3 parts and the word ‘spring’ indicates that this was coppiced woodland.

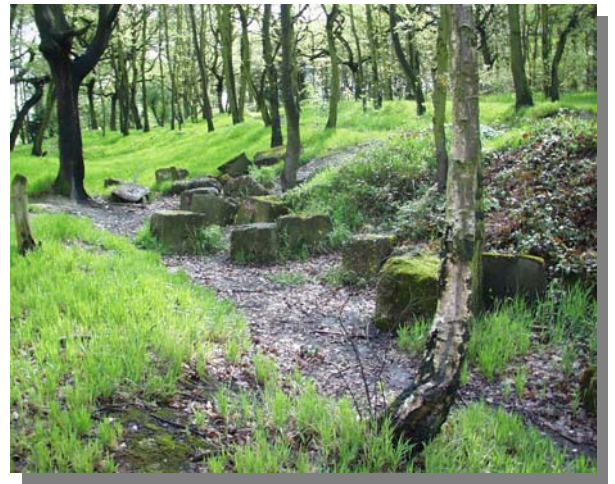
The wood retained this role throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century, during which time it was divided into the three parts. The northern section was known as **Cliffridding Wood**, in reference to its location on the steep bank, the central section as **Munsbrough Wood**, which took its name from the farm to the east, and the southern section as **Stripman Birks**, in reference to the birch trees growing there. These woods are listed in two different coppice management schemes in 1727 and 1749.

Since this time the area of woodland has been considerably reduced. Much of the southern section, ‘Stripman Birks’ had been cleared for farming by 1850 and over half of the total woodland was destroyed with the building of Fenton Road and its wide grass verges. During the second half of the nineteenth century a mineral railway line was cut through the wood, virtually along the course of Fenton Road before turning west through Hudson’s Rough.

There is extensive evidence of nineteenth and early twentieth century coal mining in the area, especially in the small remnant of ancient woodland on the opposite side

of the road, through which the impressive raised bank of the mineral railway line passes. The nearby woodland of Hudson’s Rough has regenerated on old mine workings and spoil heaps.

The most prominent historical feature within the present day wood is the the holloway of Munsbrough Lane, which followed the former northern boundary of Munsbrough Wood. Only a few ruins now remain of the former Bassingthorpe Cottages which once stood deeply hidden in the wood.



The old line of Munsbrough Lane.  
It has been suggested that the concrete blocks dumped here were originally anchors which held down second world war barrage balloons.

## TREES AND WILDLIFE

Bassingthorpe Spring is basically an oak/ birch wood with an understorey of holly. Throughout the wood oaks are dominant, often being multi-stemmed and twisted. This is particularly the case in the northern part of the wood. The woodland edges contain a far broader variety of native trees including ash, hazel, field maple, cherry, elder and elm. There are surprisingly few sycamores, one horse chestnut and a solitary hornbeam.

Although the ground flora is relatively poor, fifteen plant species characteristic of ancient woodlands have been found. Bluebells are widely distributed but only flower prolifically on the banks in the northern section. Other indicator species include yellow archangel, yellow pimpernel, dog's mercury and stitchwort.

Electricity power lines cross through the wood from north to south. Along this line the trees are cut well back to avoid any interference. This adds greatly to the floral diversity of the woodland in that it lets light into the wood and creates a whole series of new woodland edges. The plant growth under the power lines is especially lush and creates a very interesting contrast with the adjacent areas of the wood, especially in spring.

The wood is of local importance for wildlife. and there is also a diverse population of birds, including great-spotted woodpecker. It has the distinction of being the only Yorkshire location where a serotine bat, a southern species which nests in tree holes, has been recorded, although unfortunately the specimen was dead when found.

## ACCESS

Access into the woodland is straightforward and a number of footpaths run both along the edges and through the centre of the wood. Parking is available on nearby streets and the area is also served by public transport.

## MANAGEMENT

Before the start of the *Fuelling a Revolution* programme, Bassingthorpe Spring was unmanaged for several decades. During this time, it suffered from vandalism in the form of fires, motorbike scrambling and fly tipping. A programme of woodland restoration and access improvement

work is now taking place to restore the woodland to its former glory and to maximise its potential as a recreational and educational resource.

The age range of trees in the woodland will be broadened by the selective thinning of young trees, and native species such as oak, ash, birch and hazel will be encouraged.

The boundaries of the woodland will be restored and access points installed that prevent access by motorbikes and other off-road vehicles whilst at the same time allowing access by other woodland users. Signs of neglect, such as litter and tipping, will be removed and controlled.

Finally, in order to raise awareness of the history and natural history, recreational potential and management of the wood, a programme of interpretative events is being run at the site. Because the wood lies close to several schools, there is considerable potential for use of the woodland as an 'outdoor classroom'.

