

# Hail Mary Hill, Falconer & Treeton Woods

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## FUELLING A REVOLUTION

the woods that founded the steel country

### The woods today

Both Hail Mary Hill Wood and Falconer Wood consist of 30-40 year old regenerated oak and birch woodland that grew up after extensive clear felling. Scattered throughout the two woods are mature oaks and planted beech and sweet chestnut. Other plants include abundant bluebells, yellow archangel, wood anemone, ramsons and dog's mercury. An important area of marsh with alder and willow carr woodland occurs in Treeton Marsh on the north-western edge of Hail Mary Hill Wood.



Pebble hook-tip moth



Ramsons and bluebells

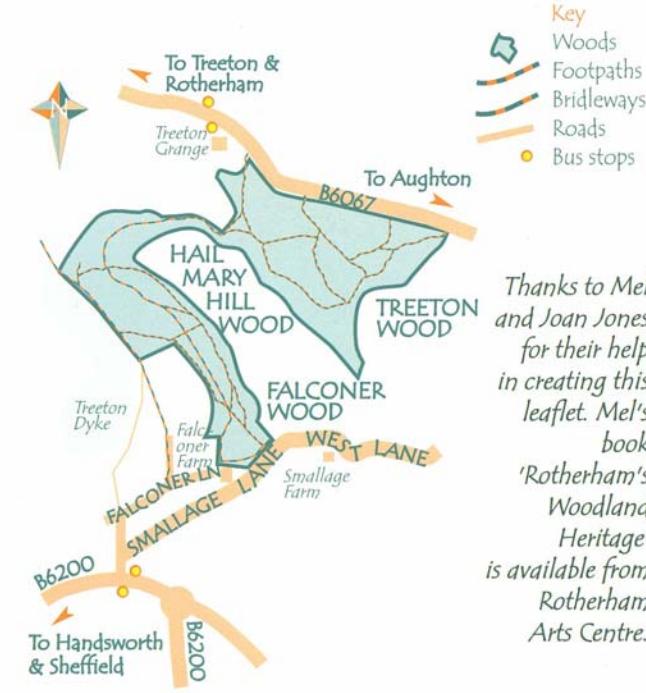
The northern third of Treeton Wood is an oak-birch wood with mature and multi-stemmed trees including hazel, field maple and guelder rose with a holly understorey. On the steeply sloping area to the south of this is a regenerating oak-birch wood. In the narrow valley on the southern boundary of Treeton Wood there is a stream beside which grow alders, oaks, rowans, crack willows and some very large hazels. In late spring and early summer this narrow valley is a beautiful sight, carpeted by bluebells, dog's mercury, ramsons and lesser celandine.

### Management of the woods

As part of the Fuelling a Revolution project, renewed management is taking place in order to enhance the woods' value for wildlife and for local people. The emphasis is on selective thinning and coppicing of trees to encourage regeneration and a mixed woodland structure of native trees and shrubs and improving access.

### General information

To find out more about the woodlands' management and maintenance contact: the Woodlands Officer on 01709 822177; or look on [www.rotherham.gov.uk](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk) or [www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk](http://www.heritagewoodsonline.co.uk).



## The names of the woods

We know little of Hail Mary Hill Wood and Falconer Wood's histories but their names are medieval in origin. Land here was given to the monks (Augustinian canons) of Nostell Priory in West Yorkshire who established a small settlement called Canonthorpe. It was first recorded in the late twelfth century as Canuntorp super Roder (Canonthorpe on the Rother). Canonthorpe is a lost name thought to have been replaced by Falconer House (now Falconer Farm) which is named after the family of Robert Faulkener who was first recorded in 1311. Falconer Wood was probably originally called Canonthorpe Wood. The name Hail Mary Hill Wood obviously also has a religious connection, reflecting its one-time ownership by the canons of Nostell Priory.

From early records until some time in the nineteenth century, Treeton Wood was called Oaken Cliff. The name tells us about its composition (mainly sessile oak) and its site (cliff = steep slope).



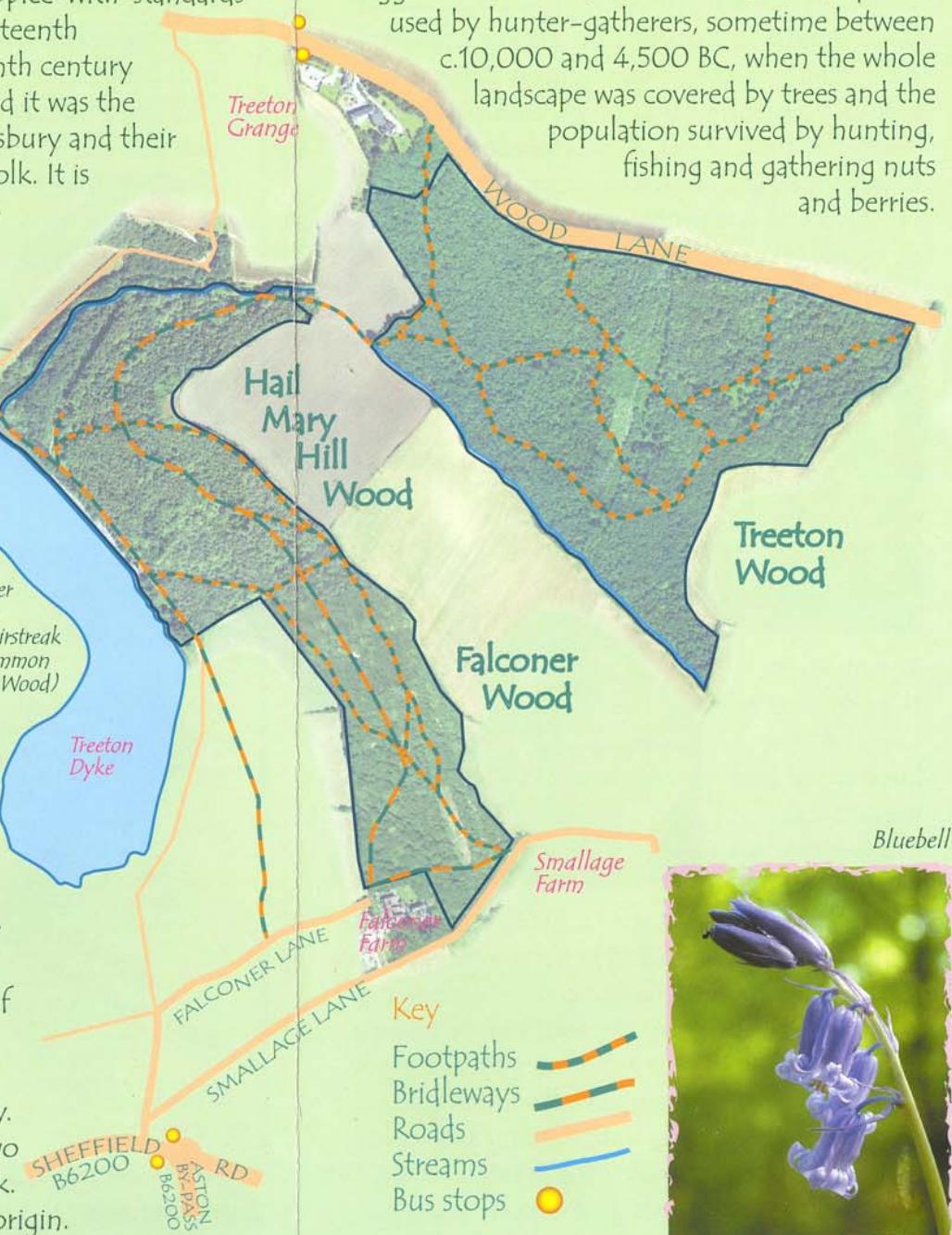
## Ancient woods

Much documentary evidence showing that Treeton Wood was a well managed coppice-with-standards wood from at least the late sixteenth century until the late nineteenth century still survives. During this period it was the property of the Earls of Shrewsbury and their successors, the Dukes of Norfolk. It is typical of an ancient wood (in existence from at least 1600) it being on a steeply sloping site and tucked into a corner of the parish of Treeton



White-letter hairstreak  
(Purple hairstreak is more common in Treeton Wood)

Hail Mary Hill and Falconer Woods also have a number of ancient woodland characteristics. Both are on fairly steeply sloping sites overlooking the Rother valley and both are in the north-western corner of the parish of Aston, with the northern boundary of Hail Mary Hill Wood on the parish boundary. The boundary between the two woods is in the form of a bank. This also suggests an ancient origin.



Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) flint tools were found at the summit of Hail Mary Hill Wood. This suggests that this was the site of an encampment used by hunter-gatherers, sometime between c.10,000 and 4,500 BC, when the whole landscape was covered by trees and the population survived by hunting, fishing and gathering nuts and berries.