

Welcome to Manor Vale Wood

ANCIENT WOODLAND

Where a castle once stood and deer were hunted across the countryside, you can enjoy the natural beauty and fascinating wildlife of this ancient woodland – where trees have grown for hundreds, even thousands of years.

The ancient deer park

Around a thousand years ago, Manor Vale Wood was part of a Norman deer park.

The park was a large space, but fully enclosed to control the deer - as a result of which it also protected areas of natural woodland, forming a continuous link between the earlier and current landscape.

This wood stood at the perimeter of the park – known as the pale – and what we see here today may be a remnant of that ancient world.

Where a medieval castle stood

Manor Vale Wood was once part of a much larger estate, at the centre of which stood Neville Castle. Pottery remains show that the site was occupied as long ago as the 12th century, and a timber-framed hall once stood there.

The castle was built in the late 15th or early 16th century as a hunting lodge for the Neville family, holders of the Manor of Kirbymoorside. Its ruins can be seen in the south-east corner of the wood next to Castlegate Lane.

The stones around you

Manor Vale, as the name suggests, is a valley, and was probably formed by the erosion of frozen ground after the last glacial era.

The slopes of the wood are semi-natural ash woodland on limestone, which supports plants including field maple, wych elm, dog's mercury, wood speedwell, wood anemone and primrose.

You can also find woodland here growing over sandstone, and species of oak, rowan, silver birch, bilberry and greater woodrush thrive. At Low Knoll, small areas of limestone grassland can be found. Some of the exposed rock is the result of quarrying over the centuries.

Rare treasures

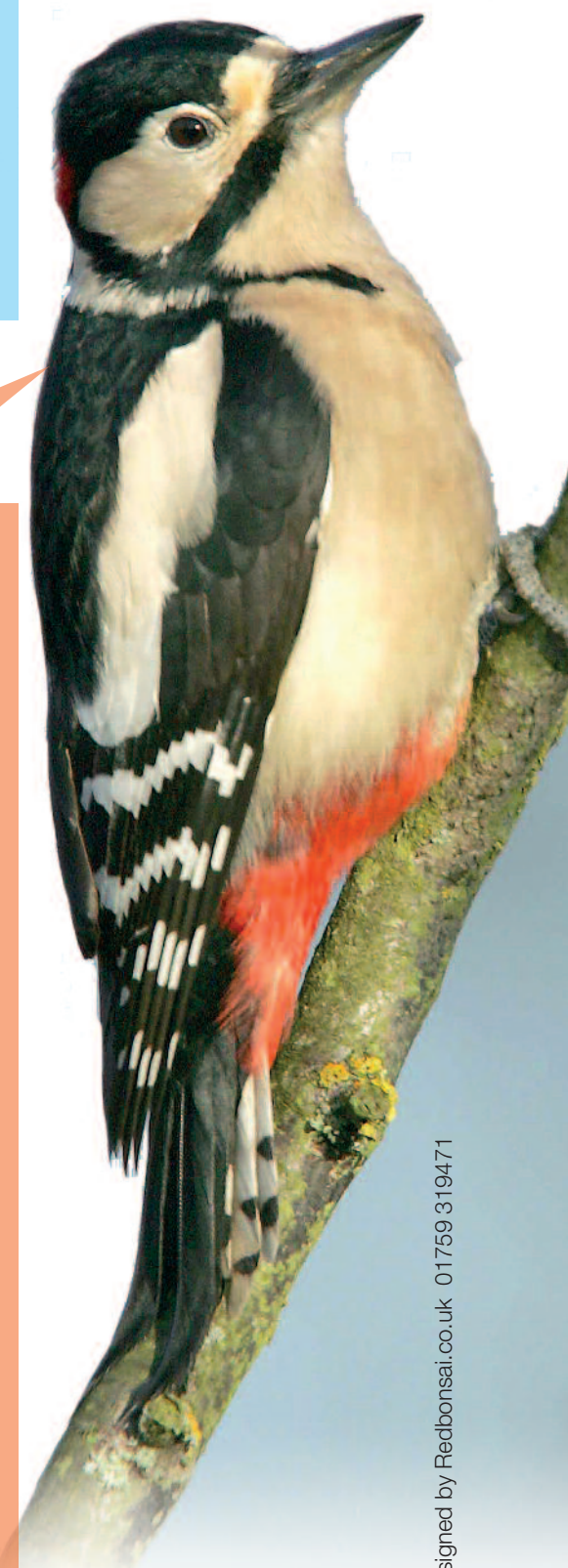
Insects to be found here include the very rare flower beetle, *Oedemera virescens*, a species up to 7mm long associated with the dead wood of veteran trees and parkland on the fringes of the North York Moors.

Look out for a few uncommon plant species including early purple orchid, lily-of-the-valley, woodruff, green hellebore and toothwort – a strange, ghostly-white plant with no chlorophyll that is parasitic on tree roots.



Did you know?

Many of the trees are remarkable specimens, with very old and large oak and ash. The huge Manor Vale ash (left) is probably the largest and oldest tree here, thought to have begun life in the early 1600s.



Did you know?

An adult male great spotted woodpecker (right) has a conspicuous red patch on the back of the neck. The female has not.

Great spotted have no song; instead, they produce a drumming noise by sharp taps of the bill on a resonant dead bough, making a sound far louder than when they are feeding. Keep an ear open for this distinctive sound in spring.

Magic carpets

Amongst the 176 species of flowering plants and ferns recorded here, you won't fail to see the delightful carpets of ramsons in spring, as well as bluebells.

Others you could spot, depending on the time of year, include pignut, enchanter's nightshade, sweet violet, yellow pimpernel, male fern, goldilocks, herb Robert, hairy St. John's wort, wood sorrel, sanicle, wood false brome, wild arum and broad buckler fern.

below The parasitic toothwort
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Did you know?

The very rare flower beetle, *Oedemera virescens*, is thought to develop as a larva in dead wood, the adults visiting nearby flowers for nectar.



Did you know?

Many of the 38 species of birds recorded here are typical of woodland, such as great spotted woodpecker, tawny owl, tits and finches. More localised species include marsh tit and nuthatch, which is the only British bird known to be capable of climbing head-first down a tree.

The chase is on

Nobles return to Neville Castle after a successful day's hunting.

The Normans were known to be keen deer hunters with hounds, but with other dogs and hawks in the hunting party, the choice of prey was wide.



Nuthatch

RYEDALE
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



The wood is cared for by the Manor Vale Wood Management Committee.
www.kirkbymoorsidetowncouncil.gov.uk
Please keep dogs on leads or under close control and pick up after your dog.

