



Claybury Hall

Following on from the Romans, the Saxons would have continued to farm the cleared land and the two village greens at Woodford Bridge may, possibly, be remnants of their community.

When parish boundaries were drawn, the Claybury area was included in the parish of Barking. In c.1145 King Stephen confirmed a grant of land to the newly established Ilford Hospital, which was attached to Barking Abbey. It was this grant that led to the wood becoming known as Hospital Hill Wood long before Claybury Hospital was built.

During the Medieval period the Claybury estate was leased out to a series of gentleman tenants who paid rent to help finance the Ilford Hospital. When Henry VIII destroyed the Abbey in 1539 the Crown confiscated most of the lands and the estate became the home of city gentleman or courtiers, including Thomas Knyvet, a gentleman of the Fry's Chamber, who entered Queen Elizabeth's there in 1597 in 1652.

James Hatch, a malt distiller from Bow, purchased the estate in 1786. He became a very wealthy man as a partner in the Four Mills distillery on the River Lea. He demolished the old gabled hall on the estate and replaced it with a new mansion/industrialist. It was designed by Jesse Gibson, a two-story building of gault brick, and is the hall we know today.

CLAYBURY HISTORY

The Early Years

Three very large oak trees stand in a line in the south east of the parkland. They are an impressive feature of Repton's original landscaping works and are known locally as the Repton oaks. It is noted that across the Thames into Kent.

Humphrey Repton, a famous landscape gardener, was called in to give advice about the grounds. The only major alteration for which Repton was directly responsible was to re-site the drive and the main entrance to the north side of the house. Otherwise his recommendations concentrated upon improving the view from the house by destroying all the hedges and adding some additional plantations (egg clump and ash plantation) near the perimeter to join up the estate however there is still a splendid view took place in the southern portion of the Wood was replanted with exotic trees for timber production.

The hospital closed in 1997 by which time the woods and parkland were being externally managed.



Woodrush Forsters

During the last years of James Hatch's life Humphrey Repton made the decision not to recommend major changes to the landscape, as he considered the existing naturalness of the woodland and fields for paper lunatics' reported favourably on Claybury as a 'very desirable site of 250 acres within a mile and a quarter of Woodford station'. They singled out for special mention the mansion (Claybury Hall) which 'is in excellent repair'.

When Nature has been so bountiful of charms as in the situation of Claybury, woodrush, it can still be seen growing in Claybury Woods today.

Repton Oak

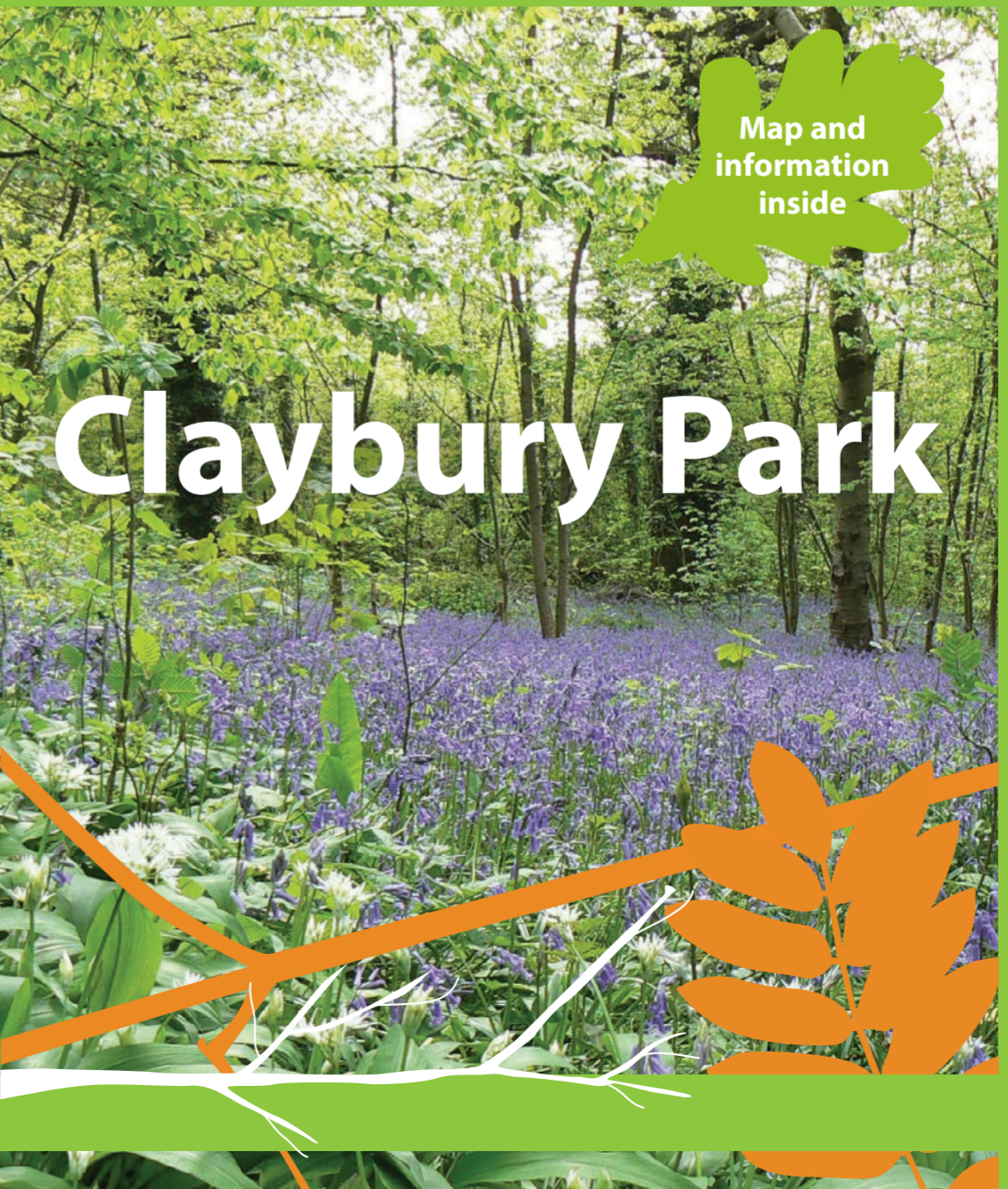


Aerial View of site

In 1839, the London County Council opened the asylum. Claybury Hall became the first public institution providing for private patients. In addition to the mansion, a massive building was constructed to the north of the estate. It covered sixteen acres on an attractively created plateau without destroying any of the remaining woods.

Any booklet about Claybury would be incomplete without reference to its grounds, sloping woodland mainly with hornbeams, oaks, sycamores, elms, beeches and a few maples - majestic and dignified - set among shrubs, bracken and bromble... In the spring masses of bluebells nod hopefully. Mosses and lichens, undisturbed through the years, carpet the woods and enchant the eye. Gladness is found there in the summer time. Autumn brings its tinted glories, and the weak sun glisters the snow in winter. At all seasons one may reap.

This was a form of what we might now term 'occupational therapy'; conducted walks in the surrounding countryside also formed part of the regime for patients even in early days. When the 1958 Claybury Report was published, its author was explicit:



Map and information inside

Claybury Park



Fly Agaric

Jim Henderson

Claybury Park is one of Redbridge's most important public open spaces. It's a haven for wildlife and people alike and has a fascinating history dating as far back as the 12th century. Management of the park is focused towards protecting the naturalness, wildness and open space heritage of the area and preserving its historical and ecological value for future generations to enjoy.

The park was once connected to Epping and Hainault Forest, as part of the Great Forest of Essex. Its landscape was championed in the 18th century by the famous landscape designer Humphrey Repton, who made only limited changes to the site in order to preserve its naturalness. In the Victorian era up to the late 1990s, the park formed the estate of one of Europe's largest mental asylums (Claybury Hospital). The grounds, particularly the ancient woodland (classified as such if continuously tree covered for over 400 years), were managed to preserve their wild and natural feel as they were considered key in the rehabilitation of patients.

Isolated from other green spaces in the borough, with development long since encroaching on the surrounding forests

and fields, Claybury's unique ecology and character, gives us a snapshot of the wildlife that once was common in this area many hundreds of years ago.

In springtime there are stunning displays of bluebell, ramson, celandine and stitchwort. Plants which are indicative of ancient woodland, such as wood anemone and yellow archangel can also be seen. In autumn, Claybury also has a huge variety of fungi.

Claybury Park has a diverse range of birds. Rare birds that have been recorded in the park include nightingale, firecrest and waxwing. In the woods, lesser and greater spotted woodpeckers can be heard drumming, nuthatches can be seen scampering up and down trees. The green

In the 1980s Claybury Woods came to the attention of the London Wildlife Trust. They formally started managing the ancient woodlands, orchard, farm pond and part of the grassland in 1987. Regular volunteer

Ancient Woodlands and Wildlife

A comprehensive study commissioned by the Waltham Forest Health Authority and issued in September 1991 spoke of the importance of the woodland and parkland areas and concluded that 'the intrinsic and local terms' identifying that the woods were one of the few remaining fragments of Hainault Forest in Greater London and of Hainault Forest in Greater London and

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workdays were held by the Redbridge Group of the Trust under the leadership of the honorary warden Clive Griffin and latterly, Chris Gannaway until 2000.



(From research by Georgina Green and Herbert Lockwood)

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FURTHER INFORMATION



Vision Redbridge Culture and Leisure's Nature Conservation Ranger Team run a number of events and practical volunteer workdays at Claybury Park. Volunteering is a great way to get some exercise, meet new people and help your local environment. Tasks vary and are suitable for many ages and abilities. For more information please contact us: 020 8559 2316 or nature.conservation@visionrcl.org.uk

Travel Information

Buses
169 bus, alight on Fullwell Avenue, adjacent to bus stops close to side roads Wedmore Avenue, Calne Avenue and Ravensbourne Gardens.

275 bus, alight on either Tomswood Hill or Roding Lane North for park entrances.

Underground

Fairlop Central Line tube station: Catch the 275 at Barkingside towards Walthamstow and get off on stop opposite Wannock Gardens, or catch the 169 from Barkingside towards Clayhall for road entrances along Fullwell Avenue.

Woodford Central Line tube station: Catch the 275 bus adjacent to the station towards Barkingside. Alight on Roding Lane North or Tomswood Hill for Claybury Park.

Car
Residential parking is available on most adjacent side streets where parking restrictions are not in force.

Bicycle

Bicycle friendly gates and racks are available on the Roding Lane North vehicle entrance gate, the Glade entrance, Acle Close gate and entrances along Ravensbourne Gardens.

Wheelchair Access

All access gates have a radar key lock that will open up the kissing gates for large buggy or wheelchair access. RADAR keys are available from certified locksmiths. Surfaced paths and the all-weather multi-user path into Claybury Woods are suitable for pushchair and wheelchair access, the rest of the paths in Claybury are soft and can be difficult to navigate in the wetter months.



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Claybury Park Nature Trail

1 On entering Hospital Hill Wood you'll be surrounded by coppiced hornbeams. Coppicing describes cutting down a tree at the base and letting it re-grow as a series of poles from the cut base (stool). Traditionally the poles would be harvested after a period of time depending on the use, which could include handles for tools, walking sticks or firewood. Coppicing encourages the growth of ground flora by letting more light to the woodland floor. In the first few years, the subsequent scrub growth is vital for woodland breeding birds. On your left you may notice one of the woodland art installations - a winding staircase, keep an eye out for other pieces on your way around.

2 This area of the wood is coppiced on a regular rotation to help regenerate the ground flora. As there is now little demand for coppiced wood this has been stacked to form a 'dead hedge', a wildlife habitat for small mammals and invertebrates, such as ladybirds. As the wood rots, it is colonised by species of fungi. Please do not disturb this barrier. In spring this area is covered in a profusion of bluebells. As you make your way towards Point 3 you will pass from Hospital Hill Wood into Claybury Wood, here are some of the best stands of wild garlic (ramsons), which thrive on the damp soils found here.

3 Up until the 1980s, this flat area was a tennis court for the hospital. It was left to nature and has now been recolonised by trees. Ivy is the dominant ground cover as it quickly spreads in disturbed or abandoned ground in woodland. A path and steps once connected this area to the hospital forecourt. The path can be made out to the left of the tennis court.

4 The old hornbeam in this area was re-coppiced in 2007. Many of the original hornbeam stools have re-sprouted, the young shoots protected from grazing deer by the bramble. The area is much more open now and with thick scrub, this is perfect habitat for breeding woodland birds, invertebrates and reptiles. Continue on the path and turn immediately right under a heavily leaning wild service tree (note the distinctive chequered bark). Soon after, on both sides of the path, clumps of the plant butcher's broom can be found. Legend has it, the plant was used for brushing down butchers' blocks, can you see why? Interestingly the sharp pointed leaves are in fact modified stems from which flowers and berries grow. This plant indicates that the area is ancient woodland, meaning it has been continually wooded for over 400 years.

5 This area is the one place within Claybury Wood that Forster's woodrush grows and one of only a few places in Essex where the species occurs. It is believed that this is the site where Edward Forster first found the species in 1795. Recently jogs were pinned into position to protect the plants from trampling. Hundreds of bluebells can also be found in this part of the woodland in springtime.

6 In March and April wood anemone can be found in large patches on the dry banks on the side of what was Sir Humphrey Repton's path/carrivageway within the woods. It is said that it takes a hundred years for one plant to grow one metre across.

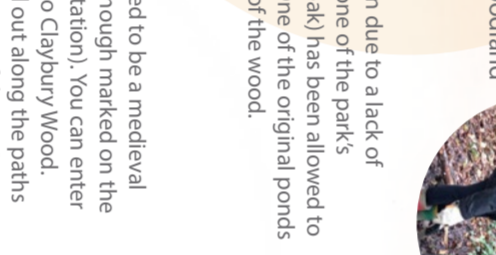
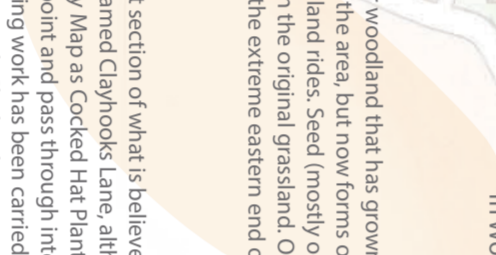
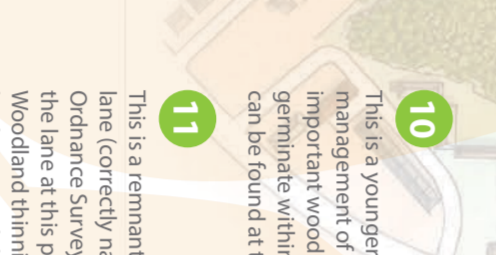
7 This area of the wood was recently coppiced. Bluebells, wood anemone and lesser celandine all flower here during April and May. Ramsons (wild garlic) also grow here and is noted individually for its particularly impressive display. The wood anemones grow on the drier ground with lesser celandine and ramsons preferring the wet flushes at the sides of the paths. There is a large specimen cherry tree in the centre of the coppice, a few standard oak trees and wild service trees.

Before commencing the walk please note the following points:

- ✓ The full circular walk should take about three hours but can be started at any point and can easily be broken down into circular stages - look for marker posts and waymarking.
- ✓ The full walk and certain sections are not suitable for young children or pushchairs (please use the hard surfaced paths in the park and the 'all weather multi-user path' in the wood as alternatives).
- ✓ Please wear suitable clothing and stout footwear or boots. The paths are mainly soft ground, hilly in places and can be slippery and muddy after rain.
- ✓ Please do not enter the wood under extreme weather conditions.
- ✓ Please do not pick flowers or remove any wood.

KEY

	Entrances		Surfaced Path
	Boundary		All Weather Multi User Path
	Permissive Bridleway		Public Right of Way Number 7
	Art Trail		



8 Claybury Hall dates from the 18th Century and was converted to apartments in the 1990s. Directly below is a landscape that dates back to 1791 when landscape gardener, Humphrey Repton was asked to advise on improving the house and grounds. The view of the parkland is little changed although mature trees in the south of the park now obscure some of the original un-interrupted views into London. However on a clear day one can still make out London's ever changing skyline and the hills of the North Kent Downs beyond.

9 This area is known as acid grassland, due to its acidic soil, and contains plants typical of this habitat type. There are many rounded colonies of meadow ants, a favourite food of the green woodpecker. A Roman road is known to have run through this part of the estate. As you navigate your way to point 10 note the large impressive oak trees. These are a notable example of Repton's landscaping of the area. The areas of scrub around the Repton Oaks are also home to some fascinating wildlife, migrants such as garden warbler and whitethroat. Muntjac deer are also commonly spotted at dusk feeding out in the open.

10 This is a younger woodland that has grown due to a lack of management of the area, but now forms one of the park's important woodland rides. Seed (mostly oak) has been allowed to germinate within the original grassland. One of the original ponds can be found at the extreme eastern end of the wood.

11 This is a remnant section of what is believed to be a medieval lane (correctly named Clayhocks Lane, although marked on the Ordnance Survey Map as Cocked Hat Plantation). You can enter the lane at this point and pass through into Claybury Wood. Woodland thinning work has been carried out along the paths leading to and through Clayhocks Lane as part of the sites forestry management programme, carried out with volunteers using hand tools. Conservation volunteering in Claybury is open to all, do contact the Nature Conservation Ranger Team if you want to take part.

12 This section of Claybury Park was arable farmland until the mid-1990s. The ponds at this end of the site provide drainage from the housing development. They also attract a wide variety of wildlife, especially dragonflies and amphibians such as smooth newts. Please note that fishing is prohibited on site.

15 This is one of the original ponds and though small it is used by smooth newt and common frog as a breeding site. Invertebrates such as water scorpion and dragonfly are found here. Care should be taken that fish are not introduced as they predate on other forms of pond life. This pond was originally part of the farm, the adjacent housing development being built on the old farm site.

13 You are now back in Hospital Hill Wood. Note the large pollarded oak, which marked a boundary feature when the wood was divided between two owners. To the right are the remains of an ancient hedgerow that provided the southern boundary to the wood. In this area and as you walk through the woods there have been some very discrete public art installations, can you find them? Inspired by the Victorian era, the pieces are there to inspire the imagination and to connect the heritage of the woods with the former hospital.

14 The main path joins the 'all weather multi-user path' at this point. The woodland adjacent to the paths is newer and contains trees that would have been used for timber production. Tree species such as sweet chestnut, American red oak and turkey oak were planted on the hills slope. This is one of the best areas of the wood to see and hear woodpeckers. Green, lesser and great spotted woodpeckers nest in this section of the wood.

16 This is an excellent example of an old traditional orchard and ongoing restoration is underway, including the planting of new trees to replace ones that have died. Orchards are highly beneficial to wildlife as they develop desirable features such as nesting holes in their trunks earlier than other tree species. The pollen in the blossoms is a good food source for bees and the blossoms themselves are a great food source for the park's population of bullfinch. There are a great variety of apples, pears and damsons. The fallen fruit is an important food source for birds, mammals and invertebrates to feed on in autumn.



Volunteers Working In Orchard