

Littleheath Wood and Edgecoombe

Playground history

Littleheath Woods is now a collective name for a number of woods which, over the past 100 years have grown together, with a field on the north eastern side. The wood consist of Littleheath Wood, Foxearth Wood, part of Queenhill Shaw (which derived from Queens Hale's Shaw) and part of Gee Wood.

Most of the 64 acres was acquired by the efforts of Malcolm Sharpe and the Commons and Footpath Preservation Society who were also instrumental in the gradual purchase of Selsdon Woods. The land was purchased in 1932 for £1,849, part was in Croydon, and part in Coulsdon and Purley Urban District.

Like Kings Wood and probably the northern part of Selsdon Wood, Littleheath Wood was used for shooting. A pheasantry was established north of Queenhill Shaw and many Laurel and Privet were planted as cover for the game amongst the trees. The woods are cut in half by a bridle path running north west to south east which was originally fenced to keep the game in the woods. The bridle path runs to Lloyd Park in the north and Selsdon Woods in the south.

Geologically Littleheath Woods is very interesting because of the variety of beds and this variety has meant the development of many types of fauna and flora on each soil. Littleheath Wood is on Blackheath Beds which overlie Woolwich Beds and Thanet Sand. There is evidence of a quarry on the Blackheath Beds, this would have supplied gravel and sand. The name Little Heath appears on a map of 1800 which suggests that there was less woodland in the area.

Gruttendens Field was open in 1800 and was still shown as a field 100 years later, the Birch woodland has therefore grown up on the Woolwich Beds and Thanet Sand since 1900. To the south east of the field was Gee Wood which had three ponds which are still discernable today. One of the ponds served livestock in Gruttendens Field and another served Gee Bank which is now occupied by houses in Foxearth Road. The pond resulted in the rear garden fences of several of the properties being diverted from an otherwise straight line.

The length of the wood straddles the parish boundary and later County Borough boundary. In 1928 markers were put up at various points and two of these can be found beside the path in Foxearth Wood. On the north western side of the wood was a pond which served Fallen Oak Field.