

## 1 HISTORY OF WICK WOODLAND

Wick Field (now Wick Woodland) is a triangle-shaped area at the southern end of Hackney Marshes. On its northern edge is Homerton Road, Lea Navigation is on the west, and A12 runs from Lea Interchange along its southern side.

After the Marshes came into public ownership in 1894, trees were planted: a row of 40 plane trees along Lea Navigation, native black poplars on Homerton Road (six to the north and six to the south) and another six and an ash tree by Lea Interchange.

Rubbish was dumped in the late C19: pottery and china are sometimes found when digging holes to plant trees. There was no dumping of bomb rubble after World War II. As a result, Wick Woodland is at a lower level than Main Marsh. Unlike the trees on Main Marsh, which have to push their roots through the rubble, the trees in Wick Woodland establish themselves more quickly in the softer ground.

In the 1960s a row of ash trees was planted along two sides of Wick Field. On one side they were chopped down when the M11 Link Road (now the A12) was built in the late 1990s. The trees along Homerton Road still remain.

Until 1990 Wick Field was laid out for football. The white lines which marked out the pitches are still occasionally visible. After a period of uncertainty and threats of building development, Wick Field was planted as a Community Woodland. Planting started in 1996 and continued until 2000. In 1997 a water main burst (left) and flooded



*Black poplars at Lea Interchange, ash, and newly planted woodland with plane trees near Lea Navigation in background. April 2001.*



*Black poplars at Lea Interchange (right) and ash trees (left) cut down for M11 Link Road (now the A12). October 1991.*



**Above:** Plane trees near Lea Navigation and black poplars on Homerton Road with young trees in Wick Woodland. April 2000.

**Below:** The first trees being planted for Wick Woodland. February 1996.



### PUBLIC TRANSPORT

#### Buses

236, 276, 308 & W15 to Homerton Rd.  
242 Millfields Rd. and Cowbridge.  
55, 56, 48 to Lea Bridge Rd; walk along Lee Navigation.

#### Trains

BR stations: Hackney Wick; Homerton.

This leaflet was prepared by Anne Woollett and Mike Trier with assistance from Ian Graham, Russell Miller, Annie Chipchase, Malcolm Robinson & Les Wilson. For copies of the leaflet and more information about Hackney Marshes and activities contact 020 8985 1256, or see

[www.hackneyenvironment.org.uk](http://www.hackneyenvironment.org.uk)

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Based on Collins mapping - [www.collinsmaps.com](http://www.collinsmaps.com)

2 much of the Woodland. In 1999, travellers occupied the Woodland and fly-tipped huge amounts of rubbish. This was cleared in 2000 and many new trees planted to replace those destroyed.

Lea Valley Walk, Capital Ring and Sustrans National Cycle and Pedestrian Path run along Lea Navigation towpath. The Woodland is maintained by Hackney Council's Parks Department assisted by local volunteers from Hackney Marsh User Group.

### TREES OF WICK WOODLAND

There are about 60 trees in Wick Woodland which are more than 100 years old.

**Planes.** 40 plane trees in a row near Lea Navigation: over 30 metres (100 feet) tall and 100 years old. London planes were planted extensively in London's parks and streets.



**Above:** Plane trees in autumn 2003.

**Left:** Gateway black poplars at Lea Interchange, looking from the banks of the Old River Lea towards Wick Woodland (background). May 2004.

**Native black poplars.** Six native black poplars on each side of Homerton Road and another six at Lea Interchange create a magnificent gateway to Hackney. Although old and rare, they are under threat from road-widening schemes.

**Ash.** 23 ash trees along Homerton Road and a large ash with gateway native black poplars were planted in 1960s. Some variants of the ash family include Wayland Glory and single-leaf ash, some of whose trunks are swollen by the rare moths which live in them.

Ash trees and hedge along Homerton Road, with woodland growing fast. Plane trees are in the background. April 2001.



Volunteers are cutting off some of the side branches of young black poplars to 'lift' them and encourage the trees to grow straight. On the left is the main path through the Woodland. March 2005.



### 3 TREES OF WICK WOODLAND (CONTD)

**Recently planted trees** include many native species, in order to encourage wildlife. Over 40 **native black poplars** line the main path. Produced especially for the Woodland, they have grown fast and some are now over 10 metres (30 feet) tall. Some side branches are cut off (left) to encourage them to grow straight. Cuttings are taken to grow yet more black poplars.



Black poplars along main path, with yellow ash and silver birch in the foreground and plane trees behind. October 2004.

**Other young trees** include: field maple, prunus (or cherry), ash, aspen, silver birch, rowan, hawthorn, willow, apple, alder, hazel, yew and oak. They were planted as small trees because small trees establish themselves better than larger trees. As they grow they provide nesting places for birds. Willow and hazel are being cut back to let in light and encourage new growth as well as providing materials for weaving and art projects.



New growth on willow that was coppiced the previous autumn.

In the spring, look for blossom (prunus, rowan, hawthorn) and catkins (hazel, willow, aspen, alder); and in the summer and autumn, fruits and berries (apple, hazel, rowan, field maple) which are eaten by birds and animals. Look in the trees for squirrels and jay and listen for the songs of robin and thrush (often high up in trees) and, in the summer, for blackcap, chiffchaff and whitethroats.

**Shrubs, bushes and a hedge** were planted to create an understorey and provide shelter and food for insects, such as ants (look for ant-hills) and butterflies, birds which live close to the ground, such as wren and dunnock, animals such as fox,



First flowers of prunus or cherry trees. March 2000.

#### Please help to protect wildlife of Wick Woodland:

- Always put your litter in a bin or take it home.
- If you have a dog, please keep it under control.
- Respect wildlife, plants and trees.

**4** and plants and flowers which like to grow in shade.

The bushes planted include alder buckthorn, buckthorn, field maple, hawthorn, rose, spindle, viburnum (guelder rose), gorse, broom and dwarf elder (a rare shrub spread along the Lea Valley on barges).

In spring they are covered in flowers and their seeds and berries are food for the animals and birds over the winter. Blackberry, buddleia and elder have colonised the woodland. They keep their leaves in winter and provide welcome shelter for birds and foxes. Look for house sparrow, dunnock and wren near the ground, chaffinch in bushes and blue tit, great tit and long-tailed tit feeding high in trees and bushes. Sparrows also live near Arena Field.

Many insects, such as ladybirds and lacewings, live in the bushes. There are also beetles, including lesser stag beetle, in the Woodland.



Skipper butterfly on hedge mustard. July 2002.

**Open areas.** The paths and area in the middle of the woodland are kept clear of trees to give the woodland an open feel. Birds, butterflies, and squirrels and foxes (and their tracks) can be seen along the paths. Keeping areas open encourages plants which prefer light, as well as woodland plants. Look for the flowers of black horehound, white dead-nettle and hedge mustard which flower most of the year, and the tall stems and seed-heads of burdock and teasel (goldfinch eat their seeds).

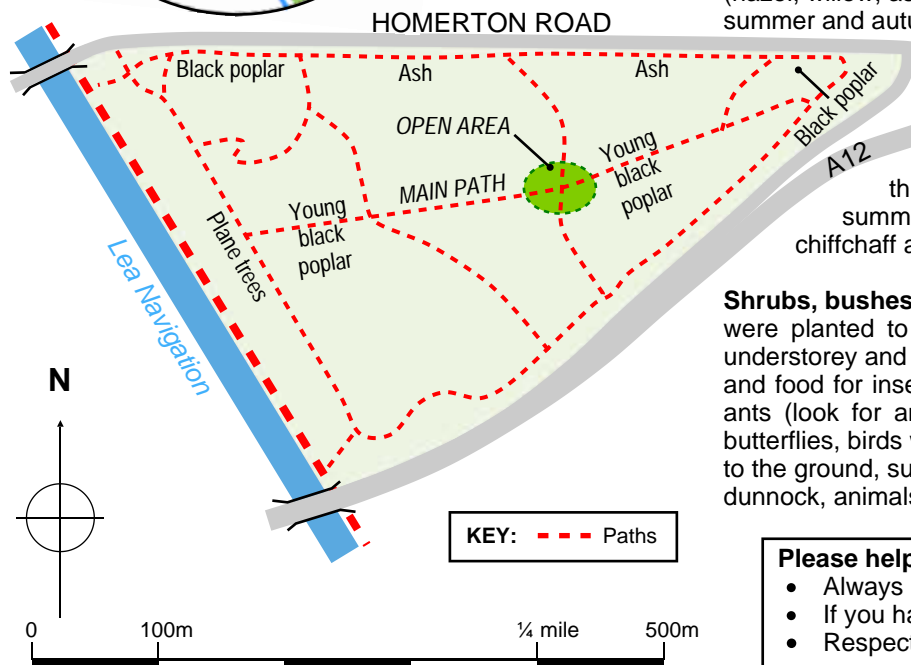
In the spring there are buttercup, clover, blue speedwell and cow parsley; and in the summer, yellow cinquefoil, goat's beard, herb Robert, comfrey and mallow; and later, rosebay willowherb, yarrow, sow thistle, and woody nightshade with red berries.

Magpies and green woodpeckers feed on the ground (especially on ants in their ant-hills). Blackbirds are often seen along the paths or looking for food in the layer of leaves on the ground. Butterflies move along the paths and the edges of the woodland: especially speckled wood, meadow brown and skipper. Look out for kestrel, cormorant and heron flying overhead. On the towpath look for water birds, including swan, Canada and greylag goose, moorhen and coots, mallard ducks.



Alder catkins and cones. February 2005.

**Wick Woodland, is separated from Hackney Main Marsh by Homerton Road (left). There are paths round the edge of the Woodland and a main path through the centre (below).**



KEY: - - - Paths

