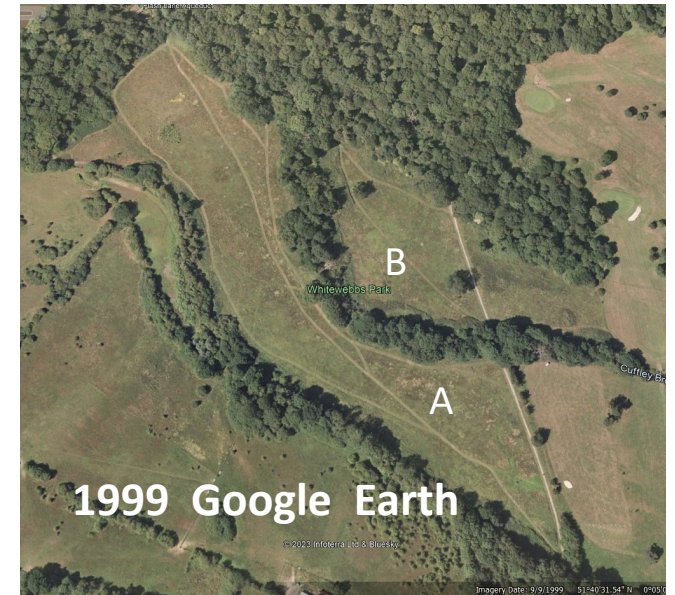




2024

# Whitewebbs Park

A walk through natural regeneration in action.



1999 Google Earth

The purpose of this walk is to explore the way that the landscape of these two areas has changed so rapidly over the last 25 years with minimal human intervention.



## Suggested walk (about 1.5 kms)

Starting at the café, through the carpark to the far footpath exit (by the notice-board)

Follow the path down the slope and turn left into the meadow area. (A) There is a path through the middle. Follow this to the bridge across Cuffley Brook by the Aqueduct.

Turn right over the bridge and walk the path on the North side of Cuffley Brook. On your right you can see the Old Course of the New River. The falling down concrete building was the cricket pavilion—there was a cricket pitch on the meadow area!

To your right is the heavily rewilded area (B).

Turn right onto the main path and back to the carpark and cafe



2016—scrubby grassland



The change in this landscape has been rapid and remarkable.

We need as many trees as we can get. It is amazing how efficient nature is in planting and caring for them when left to get on with it.



As you can see from the photos this area has undergone rapid natural regeneration (rewilding, renaturing) over the last 25 years.

The Council has allowed nature to work at its own pace and has done little to interfere with the process. Brambles, other scrubby plants and hawthorns established themselves first. Jays have planted thousands of trees, mostly oaks. These look very healthy and have not needed plastic guards to protect them from deer. There are plenty of other plants for deer to eat.

There is a deal of evidence that the parent trees in natural woodland communicate with and support their offspring through root systems and fungal networks. These young trees survived the long hot summer of '22 quite happily.

As you walk through the meadow you will see many varieties of wild flowers and a vast range of grasses. On a warm sunny day you should see butterflies—many varieties breed here according to season.

Explore as you walk. Don't just stick to the path but watch out for deep wide splits in the clay soil away from the trodden paths. The mounds you see are ant hills. Many are active and provide food for the green woodpeckers that swoop across the land. Look for holes drilled into the anthills—those are the work of hungry woodpeckers.

If the old golf course were left to itself for the next 25 years much of it would look like this with a mix of trees and open areas. Even three years after it closed there is a lot of evidence of natural tree planting and regeneration.

There is probably a need for some minimal human management—drainage and removal of invasive species but oak trees have had 300 million years experience of looking after themselves.

Cross the bridge over Cuffley Brook and walk along the north bank. This is the edge of the ancient woodland. You will pass a few remarkably old oak trees as well as younger ones and many hornbeams and maples.

The greatest risk to the brook is pollution from some of the Crews Hill activities. There is also a problem with Himalayan balsam in summer, choking the waterway.

Enjoy the walk and admire nature at work.