

Gillham Wood

A small but characterful oak woodland within an area of modern housing

Gillham Wood is a little oasis of woodland set among the residential area to the west of Bexhill-on-Sea, between Little Common and Cooden Beach and regarded as a valuable treasure by local residents. The Friends of Gillham Wood group oversees the maintenance here — an excellent example of community involvement with natural heritage. The wood is dominated by oak trees, most of which are the same size, indicating that the wood was felled some 60 years ago and has been allowed to re-grow. This has not harmed its character, however, for it still retains many elements of a semi-natural ancient woodland such as hazel, holly and even the delightful guelder rose, with its curious flowers and beautiful red berries. In autumn you may be lucky enough to see the extraordinary parasitic bolete fungus, a small, rather rare toadstool that only grows on a much commoner species, the earthball, a spherical tan-coloured fungus about the size of an orange.

Glades and rides are an important part of any woodland and they are maintained here by occasional mowing to encourage flowers and grasses, which in turn encourage butterflies. The wood acts as a base from which many birds can visit gardens, and in spring the air is full of birdsong. Listen in particular for the rapid drumming of the great spotted woodpecker, as he calls for his mate by hammering loudly with his beak on a dead branch, apparently without personal injury!



Mark Monk-Terry

puffball

Getting around

The easiest entrance to this three hectare reserve is from Withyham Road. There is a small lay-by here for parking.

Grid Reference TQ717069

Nearest Postcode TN39 3BA

Lat Long N50.836597, E0.437790