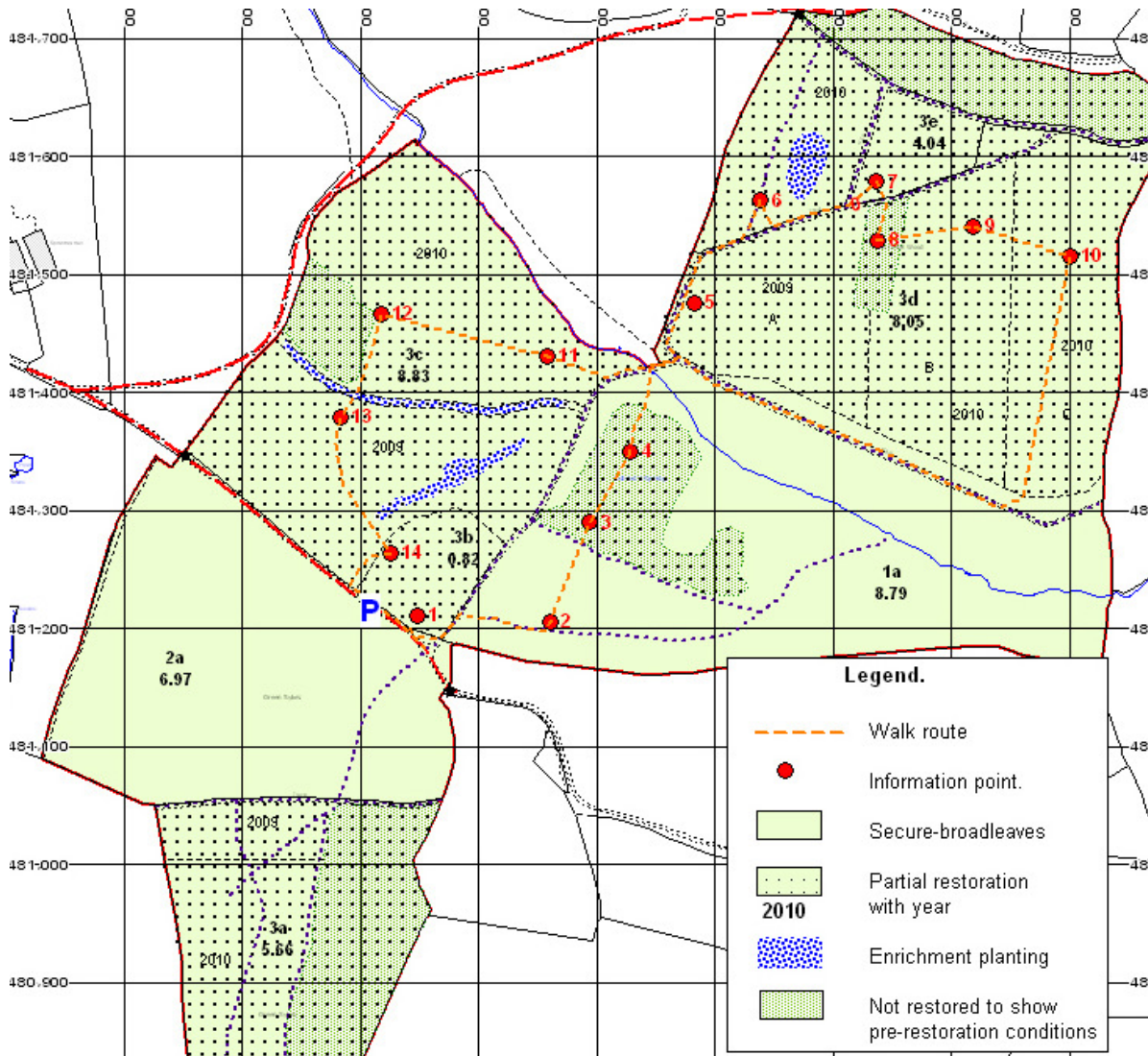


Restoration of Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites Robson's Spring Wood, Sproxton near Helmsley



Robson's Spring Wood is an ancient woodland site covering an area of 43ha (106 acres). In the 1960's and 70's a large part of the site (64%) was felled and planted with conifers, including Norway and Sitka spruce, western hemlock, grand fir, European larch and lodgepole pine. Western hemlock trees cover an area of around 16ha. The main broadleaved species are ash and oak with other species including field maple, birch, sycamore and hazel.

The Trust purchased the wood in 2008 and thinning operations commenced in 2009, 2010 and 2011 to start the process of restoration. Different methods were used to demonstrate the techniques used in the restoration of planted ancient woodland sites (PAWS).

A way-marked path has been developed around the site to illustrate the different aspects of the restoration process. A description of the site and its past management is given for each of the information points as listed below:

1. **Veteran Oak** - This is the only veteran tree in the wood and is over 300 years of age, note the wide spread crown indicating this tree was once in a more open setting. It is possible that the tree dates from when part of the site was within Helmsley East Park, one of three old hunting parks which existed around Helmsley.
2. **Mature Broadleaves** - This stand of ash and oak was planted in the 1920's. The ground flora and shrub species are diverse in this broadleaved area and include hazel, wood sage, wood sorrel, bluebell, wild garlic, honeysuckle, burdock, lesser stitchwort, wood sedge, soft rush and meadowsweet.
3. **Transition Zone** - This information point is situated on the transition between the broadleaves and the conifers: note how ground flora gradually fades out with the lower light levels in the conifers.
4. **Dense Conifers** - Containing Sitka and Norway spruce, this area was planted in the late 1970's and has been left un-thinned to illustrate how much of the wood had little or no ground flora before restoration.
5. **Line thinning** - This stand of western hemlock was planted in the 1960's and thinned in 2009 by removing complete lines of trees: note the start of the regeneration. On the boundary of the wood is an old bank and ditch with a hedgerow of numerous species, which perhaps gives an indication of the age of the hedgerow and boundary.
6. **European Larch / enrichment planting** – The deciduous nature and lighter foliage of the larch has enabled a dense carpet of bluebells to survive beneath the canopy. Bracken dominates the area. In 2011 an area has been cleared of larch and replanted with broadleaves.
7. **European Larch / hardwood** – In this area more hardwood trees were present, so the larch was thinned in 2010 to favour the ash trees.
8. **Un-thinned** – Part of this compartment of western hemlock has been left un-thinned to illustrate the condition prior to the thinning work.
9. **Selective thinning** – This area was selectively thinned in 2010 to increase light levels and provides a contrast to the un-thinned area at information point 8.
10. **Light selective thinning** – This area received a much lighter thinning than at information point 9 and comparisons will be made over the development of the ground flora between the two areas.
11. **Grand fir** – A selective thinning was undertaken in 2010. The canopy beneath these trees was already much lighter than the western hemlock at points 9 and 10 but the ground flora is still very limited.
12. **Halo thinning** – Isolated mature oak trees within the conifer compartment have been retained and conifers around them have been removed to provide more space for their growth and development.
13. **Enrichment planting** – This old ride has developed a dense ground flora and rather than use it for further timber extraction which would damage the plants, the area has been planted with oak, ash and hazel.
14. **Lodgepole pine and Larch** – This area was once farmed and the ridge and furrow is clearly evident. It has been recently thinned to allow the natural regeneration to develop.

Ancient woodland – continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD, the UK's richest habitat for wildlife.

Ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW) - native tree and shrub cover that has not been planted.

Plantations on Ancient woodland Sites (PAWS) - ancient woods planted with non-native species.