



RUNNING FOX WALKS

9 THE OLD FOREST

The field in front of you is called Side Hill for boringly obvious reasons! Along the top third of this field the soil is very thin and chalky.

Heath Grassland

The thin, chalky, infertile soils towards the top of Side Hill were very difficult to farm viably (particularly with the large number of rabbits coming out to dinner from the rifle range) and so we planted it with a chalky downland mixture of fine grasses and wildflowers, with assistance from our Environmental Stewardship grant. The seed was mainly harvested from (near) Royston Heath by Emorsgate Seeds (www.wildseed.co.uk).



A hay cut is taken from this small meadow in late July and the regrowth (aftermath) is grazed by sheep in late summer and autumn.



It attracts masses of butterflies and is hunted over by our Barn Owls.

The meadow is popular with butterflies and Barn Owls

Wild Bird Seed Mix

Around the farm, a number of small, awkward field corners have been taken out of the normal arable rotation and sown with a range of small seeded plants (millet, kale, sweet clover etc) to provide winter feed for our small song birds. The scruffy plot behind you is one such of these.

Small birds have three crucial requirements:

- summer food to raise their broods (usually insects, which as an organic farm, we provide in abundance!),
- good nesting sites (usually a variety of different hedgerows like ours, although some are ground nesting)
- winter food (usually seeds - which is what these small plots are designed to provide!).

They also like an absence of predators, but that is a more difficult, moral issue.



*Yellowhammers:
Our hedge is their home!*



Laid Hedge

The hedge running away to your left, beside the bridleway, was laid during the 2007 East Anglian Hedge Laying Competition (approximately the first 200 yards only), having previously last been coppiced in 1974. It is home to many small birds (Corn Bunting, Yellowhammer, Hedge Sparrow etc).

Permissive Footpath

The footpath you have just walked along is one of several that we have established, linking existing rights of way, to create a circular path through the farm. Hopefully enabling you to enjoy the farm as we do.

Old Forest

The field on top of the hill is called the Old Forest. This probably alludes to a time when most of the heavy clay lands were too difficult to farm and therefore remained as ancient woodland. Sadly, now long gone.

Natural England is here to conserve and enhance the natural environment, for its intrinsic value, the wellbeing and enjoyment of people and the economic prosperity that it brings.

Wildflower seeds

