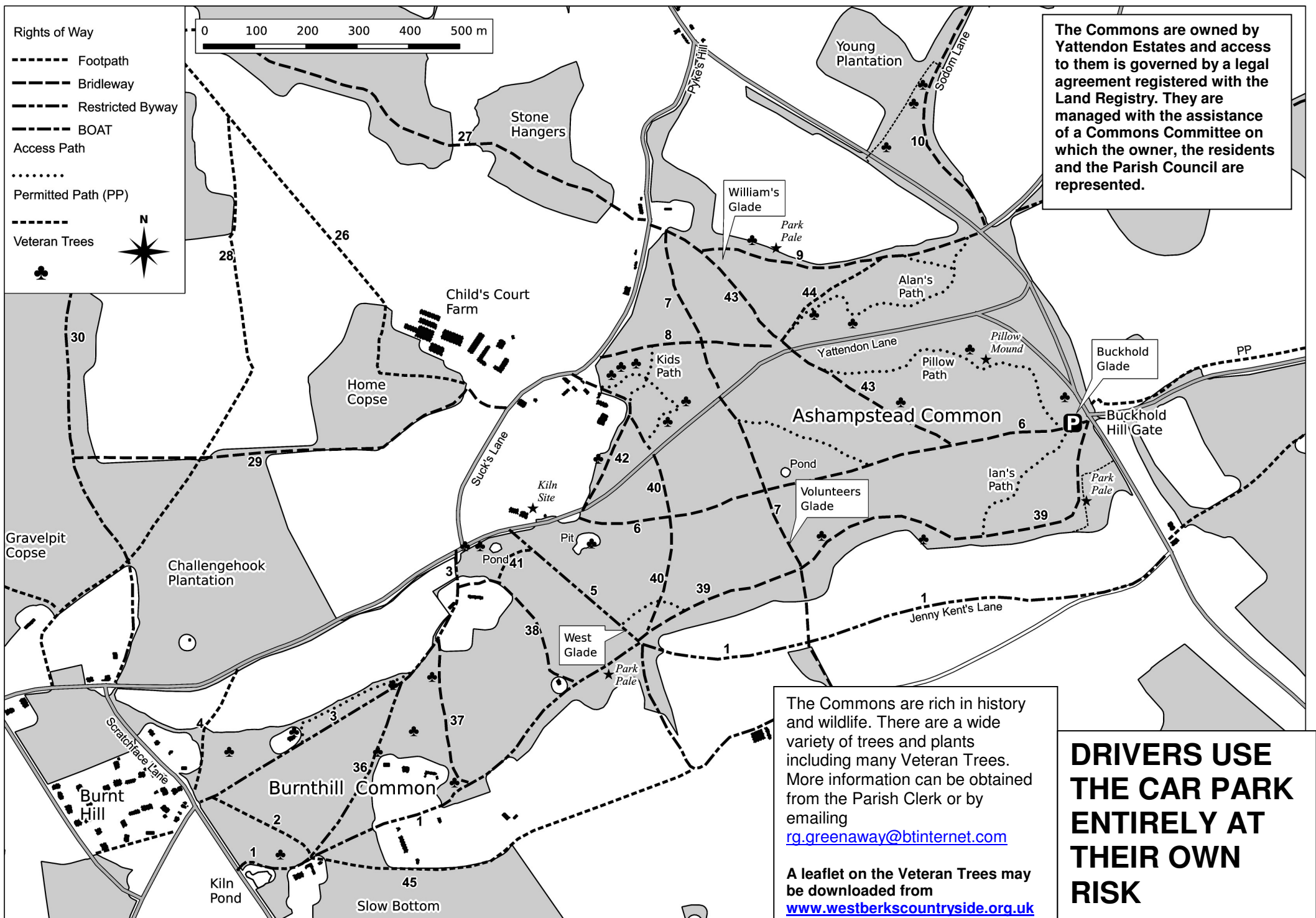




History:

Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age 5,000BC – 2,500BC) **flints** have been found in and around the Commons showing that people lived and hunted here at an earlier date than the building of the pyramids in Egypt. In about 1240 the Lord of the Manor built the large bank and ditch around the woods which turned the woods into a **deer park**. The park housed fallow deer and was really a deer farm. In about 1509 the park was extended to the east. The best preserved bank is along the southern edge. It would originally have had a fence along the top. The park was also used to breed rabbits. These were a 12th century Norman import from Sicily and had to be provided with artificial warrens. The **pillow mound** is probably one of these.

The commons were a valuable resource. The commoners used them to graze animals, to provide animal bedding and to provide fuel and small timber. Grazing on the Common during the day with a return to yards at night transferred nutrients in the animals' dung which fertilised the arable land. It also allowed the pastures to be used to grow hay to keep the animals alive in winter. The **Land of Milk and Honey** is a memory of commoners who grazed goats and kept bees on the commons.

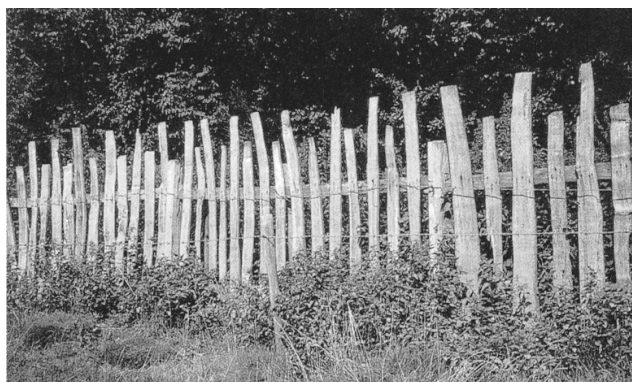
During **WWII the army** used the woods to conceal troops during the build up to **D Day**.

Wildlife:

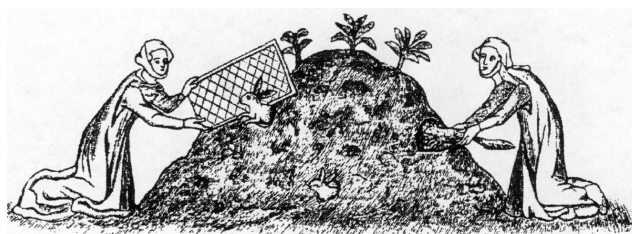
The Commons have a wide variety of soils and each soil type encourages a different mixture of trees, plants and flowers. This, combined with lack of ground disturbance over the centuries, has provided a **rich flora**. Ashampstead Common is particularly flower rich. Ongoing studies have produced a plant list of 232 tree and plant species. It is growing rapidly. The woods are home to roe and muntjak deer, badgers, rabbits and squirrels. There are a number of **Veteran and Notable Trees** which are being carefully maintained as part of a general Management Plan.



The 13th century park pale



A deer park fence of the medieval type



Catching rabbits from a pillow mound

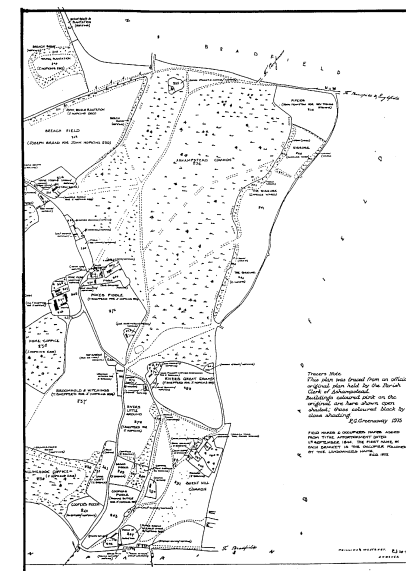
Access. The Commons are owned by Yattendon Estates. Ashampstead Parish residents have unrestricted access under a legal agreement of 1974. Non-parishioners are restricted to the many paths shown on the map.



West Berkshire
Countryside Society

We care for **your** countryside

Ashampstead & Burnt Hill Commons



The Commons in 1845

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