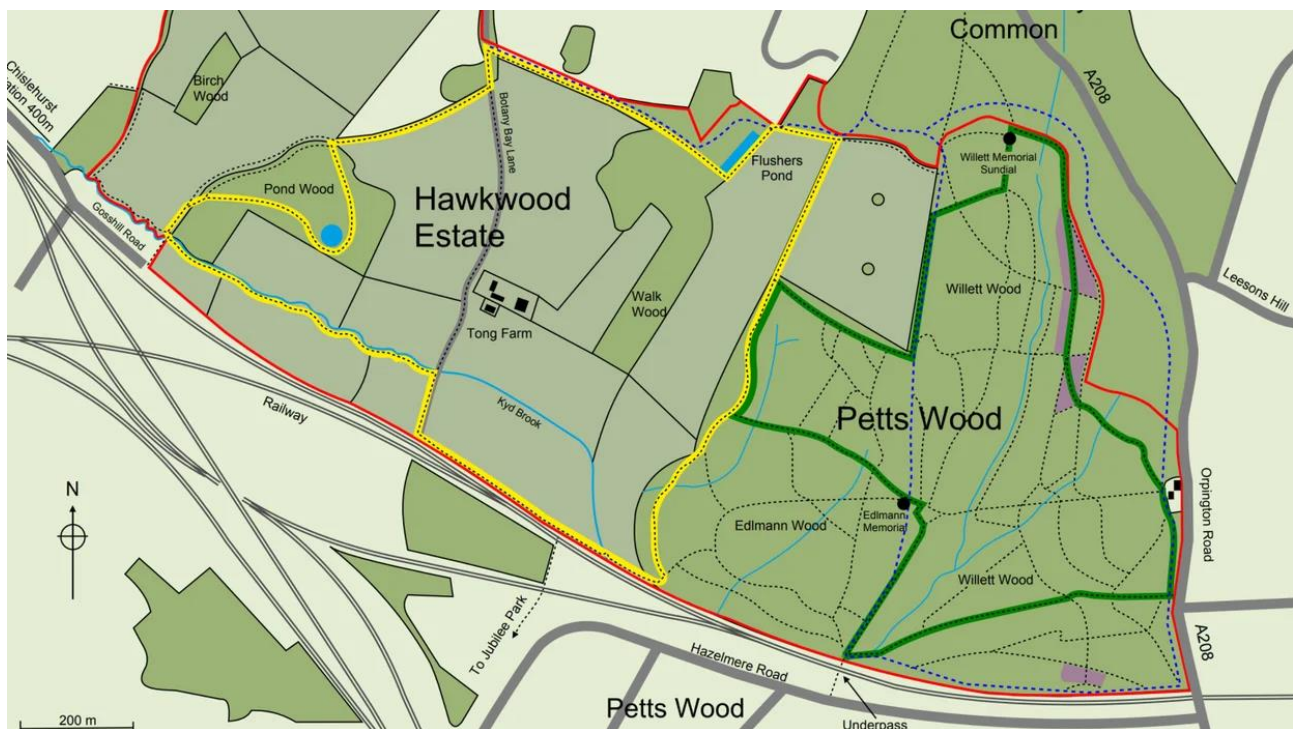


Chislehurst Society Creative Competition 2027

Willett Wood and the wider Petts Wood & Hawkwood Estate

Background:

Petts Wood & Hawkwood is a 338-acre estate featuring: semi-ancient woodland; heathland; meadows; ponds; a river & spring-fed streams; with 120 acres of grazed pasture at its heart. It is owned and cared for by the National Trust.



2027 marks 100 years since the start of the Trust's ownership.

The name Petts Wood refers to what was once a large, managed oak woodland. Managed by the Pett family, who built ships at yards in both Deptford and Woolwich, between the 15th and 18th centuries. One of their ships is remembered by the Sovereign of the Seas pub (Queensway, Petts Wood).

By the 19th century shipbuilding technology had moved on, meaning the demand for oak all-but ended. As the Petts quietly went out of business the woods were bought by a Dutch merchant, Berens of Kevington Hall (Orpington). For the next century it was used by the Berens family and friends for recreation and hunting.

By the turn of the 20th century the expansion of London created an ever-greater demand for new housing. Some of the old woodland (c150 acres) had already been developed (now part of St Mary Cray) before the First World War. Demand for more land grew after the war. Many of the roads and houses of today's Petts Wood were already in development.

In 1925 the 88 acres forming today's Willett Wood were put up for sale, with a view to development. An idea which created great concern amongst people in each of the local communities, from the longer-standing village of Chislehurst to the newly emerging St Mary Cray and Petts Wood. So began the idea of a public subscription to purchase and preserve the land as a haven of nature and peace in-between residential and commercial spaces.

The subscription was launched by friends of William Willett. Willett had been a prominent Chislehurst resident, and a well-connected national campaigner. Parliamentary supporters of his British Summer Time idea ensured necessary legislation was passed each year after 1916 to keep BST going, through till the passing of the Summer Time Act of 1925, which he did not live to witness.

The idea of linking saving the remaining Pett woodland from development and a celebration of Willett's legacy emerged at a celebratory lunch for that 1925 legislation. A Committee was formed of people from the area; Winston Churchill, of nearby Chartwell, became the Committee's President.

The call for money was launched with an article in *The Times*. The subscription was a success, albeit one that involved some arm-twisting of wealthy locals - a chap called Sturge, having already put in £500 was persuaded to put up another £1,000 in matched funding.

The Trust formally took possession of what at the time was renamed Willett Wood on 21 May 1927.

Competition Creations:

Individual pupils or class groups can take inspiration from any and all parts of today's Petts Wood & Hawkwood Estate. Focus on either of the ponds; or walk along the Kydbrook, passing the recently established new wetland; or stroll between fields grazed by sheep and cattle; or linger with the ling by the heather-beds. In exploring the estate pupils may find an artistic use for much of the material lying around: leaves & twigs, nuts & berries, stones & earth, etc. (but please, do not cut anything down in the name of creativity!) Any form of creativity is acceptable: collage, film, photography, poetry,

drawings, mathematical graphs or maps. We are, however, keen to see the children's own authentic work not cut and pasted from the internet!

Staff may find the following itinerary helpful. It mostly follows the northern loop of the way-marked Green Walk (WhatThreeWords references included):

Willett Inspirational Walk:



Willett Memorial (fakes.zones.lift)

Erected to mark the formal handover of the wood to the National Trust, the memorial includes a sundial which is set to Greenwich Mean Time +1, in other words, to British Summer Time. It includes a Latin inscription which is a deliberate twist on a more common sundial motto. That common version is: *Horas Non Numero Nisi Serenas* - which translates as I only count the sunny hours, a statement of fact for a sundial. However, the Willett Memorial inscription is *Horas Non Numero Nisi AEstivas* - which translates as I only count the Summer hours - a statement which obviously isn't factually true but gives a respectful nod to Willett's BST legacy (*Serenas* = sunny, *AEstivas* = Summer).

Pollard Oaks (plank.solo.grabs)



Pollarding is a longstanding method of periodically harvesting timber. Unlike coppicing, stems are cut from the trunk to prevent grazing of new shoots. This gives the trees a distinctive look, often with merging canopies forming a hedge-like effect. Lines of Pollard Oaks, plus a ditch and bank, are a traditional way of marking the boundary between different properties. There are a number here along the join between St Paul's Cray Common and Willett Wood.

Along that same line there are fabulous, almost sculpture-like old trees that may also inspire



great art (games.love.hooks).



Heather

(supper.palm.occupy)

Areas of heather are valuable habitats in their own right, and in adding variety accentuate a woodland's beauty.

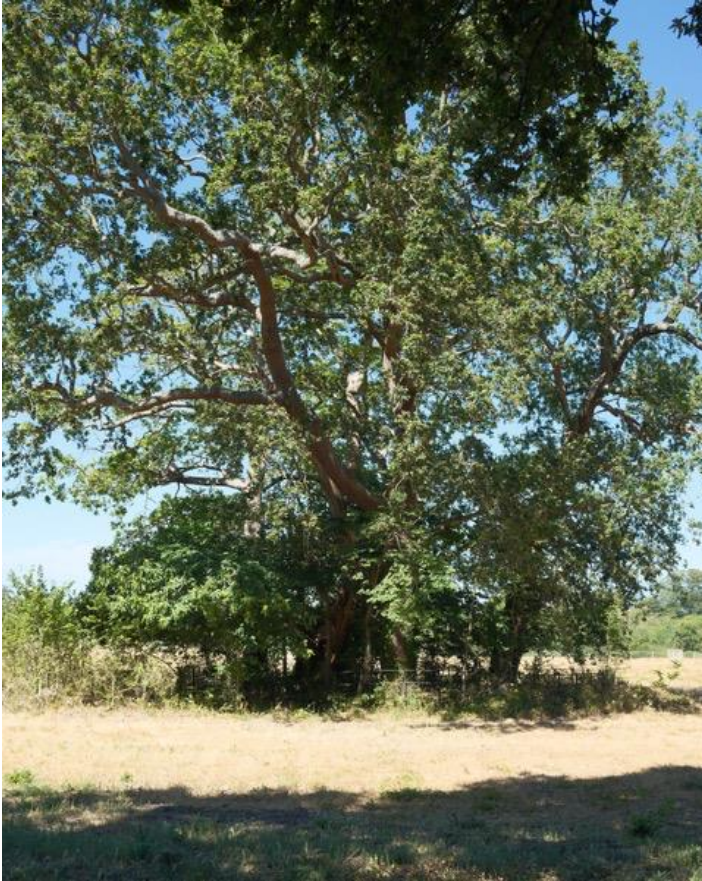
Most of the heather in Willett Wood is a recreation of more ancient beds, made possible by the violence of the 1987 storm which felled several hundred trees across the estate. Every cloud ...



Valleys (latter.watch.hiking)

The woodland includes a few fairly deep valleys, evidence of a time when far mightier rivers crossed the land than these days. Well, at the time of writing no water has been seen for months!

But come the Autumn / Winter this picturesque vale will trickle with a spring-fed rivulet.



Corsican Pine (turns.lend.grades)

This magnificent tree sits in what we know as Soldiers Field. That said, we neither know why the field bears that name, nor quite how this tree came to live here. In all probability it was brought back in the early 19th century by one of the then owners of the Hawkwood Estate - the traditional 'Grand Tour' for young gentleman of the classic sites of Italy having restarted following the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

The field itself is an enigma in its own right. It became part of the Hawkwood Estate / Tong's Farm in the early 19th century, being purchased from the old Cooper's Estate. But earlier it had been part of the Pett woodland. It is one of the few parts of the property to have

changed usage, from wood to farmland, in over 500 years.



Sweet Chestnut Coppice (hiding.supply.wedge)

The structure of the Pett woodland would have been mature oak and ash trees, with coppice hazel and alder managed underneath. However, as the need to maintain the woodland as an oak farm declined so Victorians were able to plant more of their favourite tree: sweet chestnut. Though originally brought over by the Romans, the 19th century saw new love for this fast-growing coppice wood which produces strong timber. It looks rather lovely also, never more so than in this beautiful grove just off the path between the Corsican Pine and the Willett Memorial.

We are very happy to come into school and chat about the woodland or guide groups on an outing.

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Or phone Joanna Friel 07850 898535 who can make arrangements with National Trust volunteers