

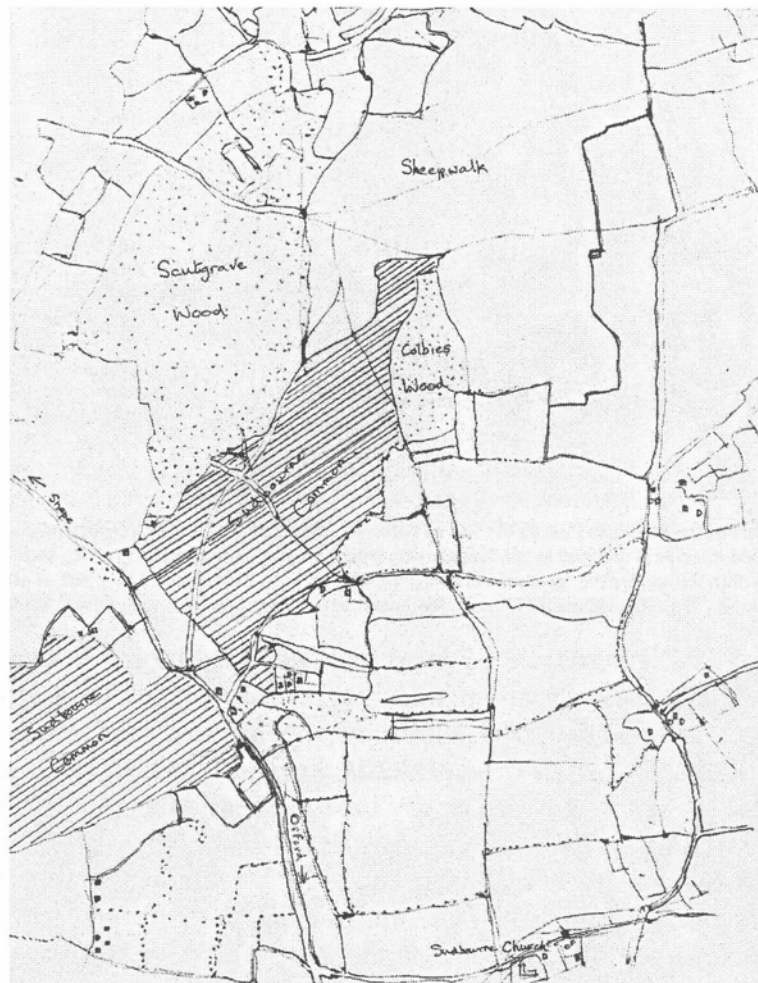
CAPTAIN'S WOOD, SUDBOURNE

In 2005 the Suffolk Wildlife Trust acquired a new reserve in Sudbourne, Captain's Wood. It was opened to the public in May this year. The land is as rich in history as it is in wildlife, as Vic Harrup has discovered.

Vic's research concentrates on the 19th century and the evidence he has uncovered which may explain a very puzzling feature of the wood. His article is 'topped and tailed' with an Introduction and Footnote (printed in italic type) giving an outline of the earlier and later history of the wood from information held by Orford Museum

Introduction

The parish of Sudbourne presents a tremendously varied landscape. The first picture that we have of it is to be found in that wonderful resource for local historians, the survey made by the cartographer John Norden in c1601 for Sir Michael Stanhope. Norden's map of Sudbourne shows grazing marsh near the river, sandy sheep walks, and at the heart of the parish a large Common flanked by two ancient woods. Carved from these big features are small farms with arable fields and the gardens of houses and cottages. Until the Common was enclosed in the early nineteenth century the settlement was very scattered and it was hard to pinpoint a village nucleus. All Saints' church and the Hall each stood, virtually isolated, about a mile apart. If anywhere, the greatest concentration of settlement was along Ferry Road. The road to Snape crossed the Common and a few cottages and fields were 'nibbled' from the edge of the Common. Once the Common was enclosed, ie parcelled up amongst those who had rights to the common into plots, then the present Sudbourne village developed.



Map compiled from Plates 14 and 17 of the Norden survey, showing the Common and woods in 1601. The western wood, known now as Sudbourne Great Wood, was called Scutgrave Wood and the smaller eastern wood, Captain's Wood, on Plate 17 it is marked 'Late Colbies in the hands of the Lord' (meaning that its former occupant had been Mr Colbie but it was back in the possession of the lord of the manor) and on Plate 14 it is marked 'Late Colbyes woode'. Usually Norden's accuracy can be relied on, but here he shows Captain's Wood as a bottle-shaped area lying directly north-south. In fact, using the evidence of the Ordnance Survey maps, it should almost certainly have been orientated on a slant, north-east to south-west.