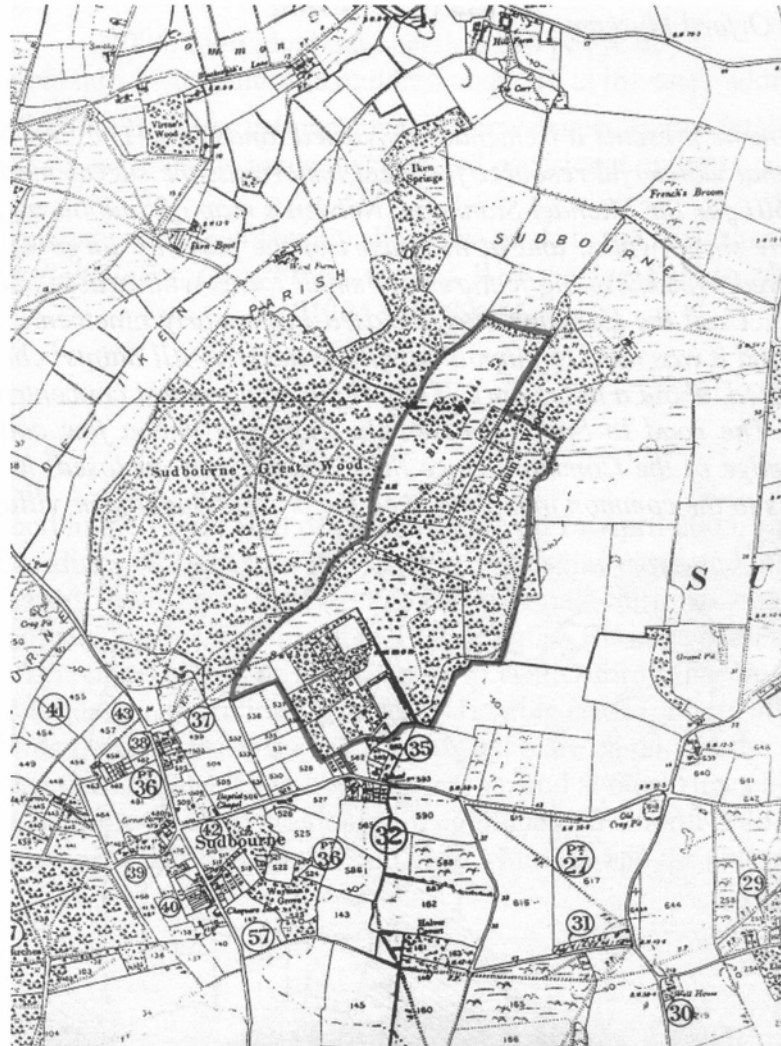


Historically, the present Captain's Wood comprised three distinct parts. The north-east portion was ancient woodland, the south-western part was laid out geometrically, and there was a piece between the two. The 1841 Tithe Apportionment map reveals that the centre portion was named Common Furzy Pasture, and belonged to Lord Hertford (the owner of the Sudbourne estate), as did the ancient wood. The 'geometrical wood' belonged to William Chaplin. Both this and the Furzy Pasture had been part of Sudbourne Common, enclosed in 1807. In addition, the Suffolk Wildlife Trust's Captain's Wood includes an area of the former Common called Black Walks.



Map prepared for the auction sale of the Sudbourne Estate in 1922 by Messrs Knight, Frank & Rutley (*Orford Museum collection*). The area of what is now the SWT Captain's Wood Reserve is outlined in red. Comparison with a modern Ordnance Survey map shows that there is now very little of Sudbourne Great Wood left. Within the reserve the 'geometrical wood' is today an open field bisected by a belt of ornamental trees - sweet chestnut, birches and rhododendrons. The eye-catching and curious 'compartments' and circular features, some planted with trees, have gone.

The Common consisted of 151 acres and 25 acres were awarded by the Commissioners appointed to make the distribution, to Francis Smith in one block. This is the 'geometrical wood' plus land between it and the road, at that time. The allocation was based on the ownership or occupancy of 'messuages, cottages, orchards, gardens, homesteads, ancient enclosed lands and grounds' totalling 1383 acres. The new owners were required to pay the Commissioners' costs and Lord Hertford, with nearly 100 acres was assessed at £733, and Francis Smith had to find £138. In addition the owners had to 'fence' their land by March 1808. Ditches had to be not less than 4½ feet wide at the top, 3 feet deep and one foot wide at the bottom. The bank must be laid with 'spring' and a good hedge or other 'sufficient fence' planted on top of each bank on the inward side. It was costs such as these that led many small commoners, who had access to the common only through occupancy of their cottage, to sell their plots and thus arose the saying that the 'greater criminal' is he who 'steals the common from the goose' rather than the one who steals the goose from the common. Deep ditches, their banks surmounted by coppiced trees can be seen today around and within the 'geometrical wood'.