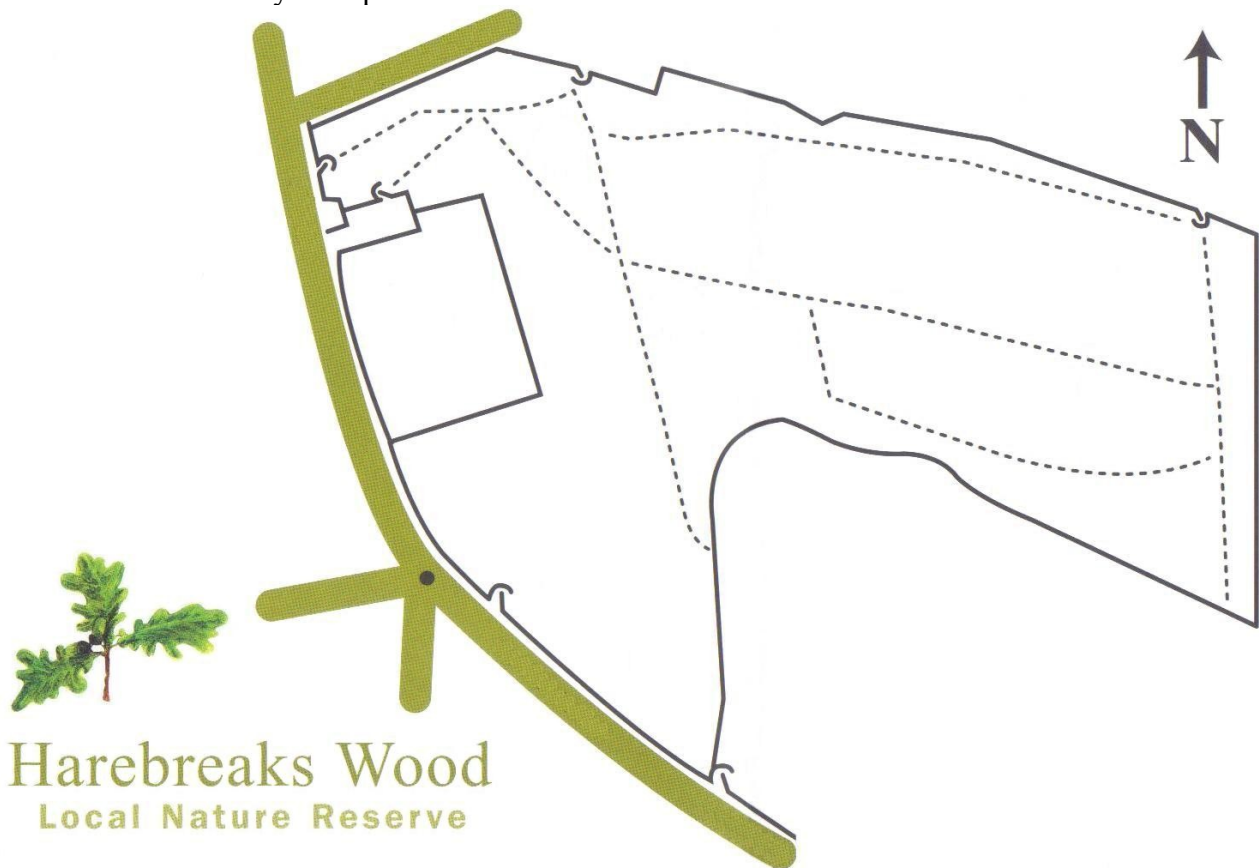


## History of Harebreaks Wood (for discussion)

[Harebreaks Wood](#) is a Nature Reserve in a designated [Ancient Woodland](#) to the north west of the North Watford History Group area.



Historically there are a couple of interesting points, the eastern section which is an old coppiced area, has many circular depressions which I believe are the remains of charcoal burning pits. Through the centre of the wood there is an avenue of Beech trees of between 200 and 250 years old. These have been purposely planted to flank a path, looking at the historic maps the alignment seems to match the field path from Russel Lodge (Longsping Lodge) to Russell Villas via Leggatts Farm. Here is a picture of Longsping Lodge believed to have been demolished in the late 50's:



As this land was all part of the Russell Estate was this an attempt at some grand drive in the 18<sup>th</sup> century? There is an interesting report about the area in the Times of March 6 1824 about the Earl of Essex suing the Beaufort Hunt for damage. Here is a small extract:

EVIDENCE.

Richard Carter, examined by Mr. BRODRICK.—I am keeper to Lord Essex, and have been in that situation 12 or 13 years. Lord Essex has the farm of Leggatt's in his possession; that place is about a mile from Cashiobury. There are many walks there. I was ordered to serve notices on several persons. A constable of the name of Simmons served notices on the two Oldacres. They are, I understand, the huntsman and whipper-in of Mr. Combe. I understand Mr. Combe is "the grand man" of the hunt. There are traps in the grounds at Leggatt's. The Salisbury Hunt go there. They always send the night before to desire the traps to be struck. Two years ago, I saw Mr. Combe, and rode with him a mile. I told him that there were traps set in the grounds all the way up to my house. That was since the hunt came to Rickmausworth. That parish adjoins Lord Essex's demesne. On the morning I spoke to Mr. Combe, the hounds were out. I was authorized by Lord Essex to tell any one going to hunt there, that traps were set in the woods. In consequence, I went out to Mr. Combe. Mr. Combe said, "If any of the hounds are injured, I'll bring my action, not against Lord Essex, but against you, for setting the traps." As I returned, a gentleman of the name of Leech gave me "a note." I put it in my pocket, and gave it to Lord Essex. It was returned next day to Mr. Leech. (Mr. Brodrick here inquired of the witness whether there were any tame foxes at Leggatt's—any foxes with marks in their ears? These questions the witness was very loath to answer—all he admitted was, that he had marked many foxes himself.) Witness went on to state, that there were many notices against hunting on the grounds, posted all over Lord Essex's estate. They were so numerous, that a man with one eye, instead of two, must see them. One of the notices was put in and read.

In the centre of the wood there is a small hump of earthworks age unknown but probably last



century.

Below are copies of the old map and an aerial picture with the path superimposed.



From Steve Harvey