

Biggin Woods history

Biggin Wood is an area of mainly deciduous woodland which is believed to be part of the Great North Wood which covered most of the higher ground and slopes of the district at one time. Other surviving areas of the Great Wood are at Grange Wood and Hazel Wood.

Biggin Wood appears to have been part of a 120 acre estate known as Biggin's Farm. The name Byggyng appears on a map of 1512, the word is of Scandinavian origin and is unusual being used so far south. A Parish map of 1864 shows Biggenswood and Biggens Farm at the end of Biggins Farm Road. A building is shown in the north of the wood and to the south west there were two meadows known as Furzey Field.

In 1928 it was reported in the local paper that the Streatham Antiquarian and Natural History Society were campaigning for a sixteen acre wild woodland and bramble-covered heath known as Bigginwood to be dedicated to Public use. The area had lain derelict for many years and the old house, which had been built in the 19th century by Mr. James Epps who had made his money from the cocoa trade, was a tumbled ruin.

Upper Norwood was still predominantly agricultural in 1864 according to W. Roberts plan of Croydon but the arrival of the railway at the end of the century soon made the area a very desirable location for business men who worked in London but wanted a better environment for their families to live in. The derelict state of Biggin Wood was ideal for the developers building the large mansions in the area but at this point the Antiquarian Society stepped in.

The Society hoped that part of the area could be made into a bird sanctuary. When Mr. Epps lived on the estate it was said that he had to leave it during the month of May because he could not sleep at night due to the song of the nightingale. During 1979-81 a study of the birds in the vicinity of the woodland noted 40 different species feeding or breeding in the woodlands.

The site was acquired by the Corporation in 1939 with the tennis courts and changing rooms added in 1949.