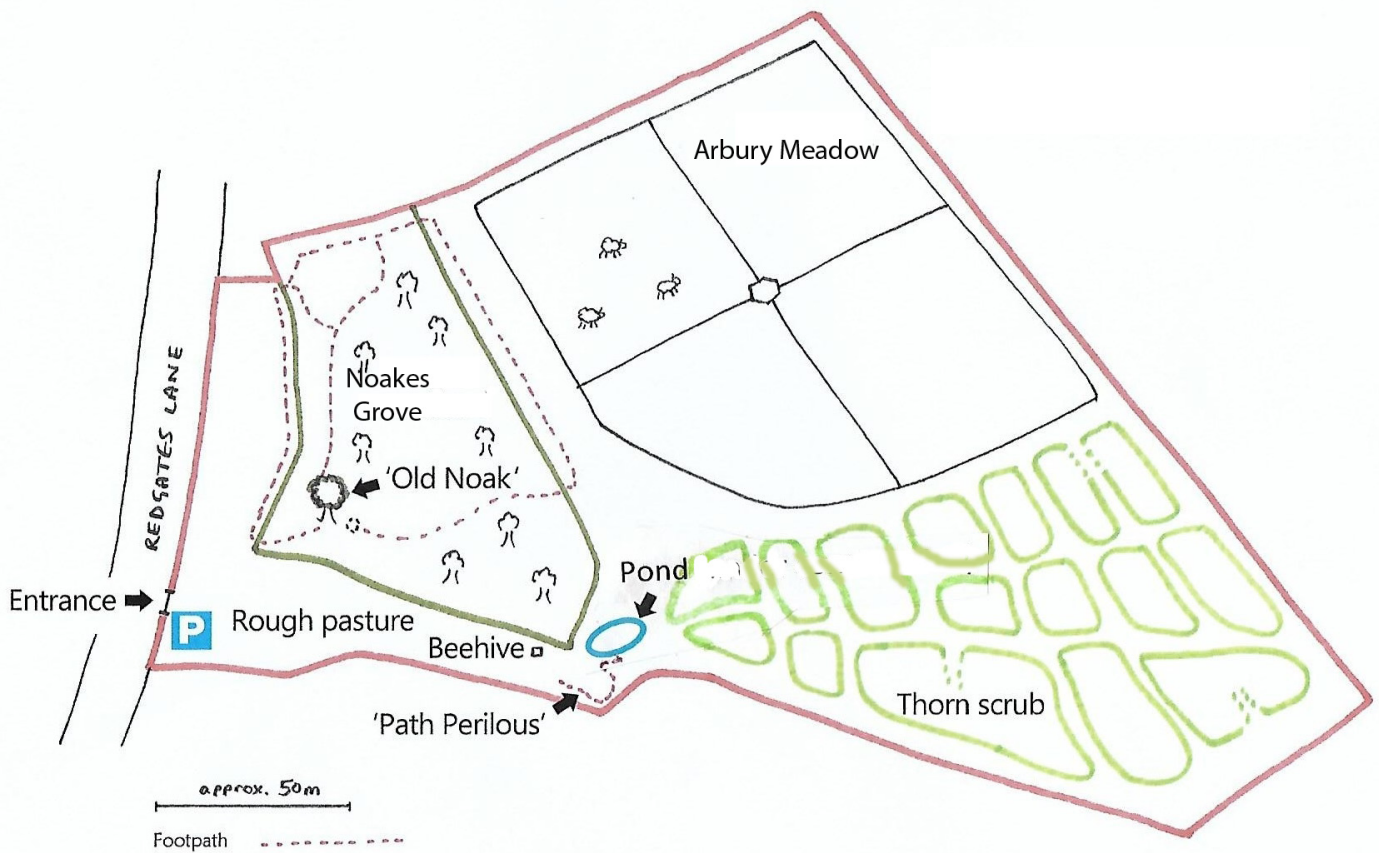




NOAKES GROVE - self-guided tour



Please enjoy your visit to this nature reserve but leave the wild flowers and wildlife for others to enjoy. Dogs are welcome but keep them on a lead or under strict control when near the sheep. This is a wild habitat with inherent dangers, especially for children. Make sure your kids don't climb dangerous trees, disturb the beehive, get a shock from the sheep fences or drown in the pond. If you might be pregnant, NHS advise avoiding contact with sheep.

Noakes: the L-shaped entrance field with car park. In the 1400s this was the site of a cottage housing the Nokes family, who gave their name to the small farm they cleared from the forest. Today the land level has been raised because building-site waste was dumped in the field in the 1970s and 1980s. This increased the fertility of the field, which

is why there are so many stinging nettles and very few meadow-land flowers. In high summer, the knapweed flowers attract many butterflies. Later, the seeds are eaten by goldfinches. ***There is a beehive at the west end of the field: please do not approach too close!***

Roadside verge: An ancient hedge separates Noakes field from Redgates Lane. Between the road and the hedge is a designated wild flower verge that



once had populations of crested cow-wheat. We have cleared part of the verge and ditch in the hope that the flowers will return. The hedge itself was given a traditional coppicing in winter 2017/18 and this should further improve the wild flower verge.

Noakes Grove – this is an ancient wood: we have a 1758 map showing it had exactly the same boundary then as now.



Please do not wander off the paths as this will damage the bluebells and other woodland plants.

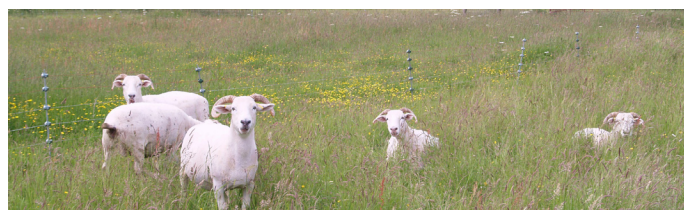
Most of the trees are oaks: some very large and old. There are also ash, maple, crab-apple and elder with an understorey of hazel coppice. Unlike almost all the neighbouring woods, Noakes Grove has never been damaged by replanting with conifers. The western side of the wood has a carpet of bluebells and most of the wood has a lot of dog's mercury and scattered cuckoo pint. There are only a few oxlips surviving, we don't know whether this is because the soil is too dry for them or because the deer eat almost all the flowers. Maybe both.

Reeve Brothers: In the north-west corner of the wood is a cross marking the place where the ashes of the three Reeve brothers are buried. Their parents moved to Swards End Farm in the 1920s: and their sons (none of whom married) farmed the land until 2003.



Arbury: This is the large field west of Noakes Grove. Until the 1970s it was

arable land, then permanent grassland and sometimes used for the village fete. During the 1980s scrub was grown all over the field and wide grassy paths were cut through it. The scrub was removed about 2005 except in the northern third of Arbury. The wide sunny rides attract butterflies. There is a good population of wild liquorice, a rare local plant. Wild orchids common spotted, pyramidal → (bee, and a few twayblade) grow in both the scrub area and the meadow where the sheep graze.



The sheep are Wiltshire Horns, a once rare breed now getting much more popular because they are hardy and do not have to be shorn; they simply moult their wool naturally.

The main part of Arbury field is fenced into four areas so the sheep can be moved to new grass every few weeks. This gives the wild plants a chance to flower when the sheep are elsewhere.

The electric fences in Arbury Field will normally be on when the sheep are in residence. Please be sure your children and dogs avoid contact with the fences or enter the sheep fields.

The pond, was dug where the scrub meets Noakes Grove. It is fed by an ancient wood-boundary ditch down the west



of Noakes Grove. It is already used by newts, frogs and many water insects.