

Post 19

OAK WOODLAND

You have now entered Sparklie Wood, and this corner consists mainly of oak trees.

The oak is the king of the English woodland, surviving for many centuries.

There are two native species of oak in Britain. The pedunculate or common oak, seen here, grows on heavy wet soils. Its acorn is attached to a long stalk. The sessile oak is found on poorer, sandy or acid soils and its acorn is almost stalkless. (The word 'sessile' means stalkless).



Over the centuries the timber of oak has had many uses because of its strength and its resistance to rot.

The oak gate post which you passed at the entrance to the wood has been here for at least 50 years. Oak dominated the timber industry until the 19th century. It was the most important wood used for shipbuilding until it was replaced by iron, and for building houses before the widespread use of steel and cement. It became less popular for furniture with the introduction of walnut and mahogany in the C17th, and



An acorn of the common or pedunculate oak

then teak in the C20th. Similarly, the use of oak for wall panelling died out with the invention of wallpaper. The oak forests also provided the fuel for the thriving Wealden iron industry of Kent and Sussex in the Middle Ages.

GALLS

You may sometimes notice unusual growths on the twigs and leaves of oak trees. Marble galls are caused by a tiny wasp which inserts its eggs into the base of a bud. The plant reacts by producing distinctive swollen growths and, once mature, the adult insect bores its way out.



Oak Marble
Galls

Silk button spangle galls are created when a tiny wasp lays its eggs on the leaf of the oak tree.



They have a covering of golden hairs which give the impression of silk thread.



You may also notice the bright red 'Robin's pin cushion', a gall which is found on wild roses in the meadows and woodland edges in Happy Valley.

NATURE TRAIL MAP

