

Cultural heritage in sustainable forest management

The Dutch perspective



History and heritage



Cultural heritage in forest management



Research and surveys



Management strategies



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Introduction

Earth banks are striking elements of cultural heritage and are present in many European forests. These banks often have an interesting history which sometimes represents earlier land use.



Introduction

Nearly all forests in Europe are the outcome of the work of many generations. Each generation has left its traces (from even before sites became forested), which can still be seen in the forest today. Examples may include: boundary banks and dykes, celtic fields, burial mounds, charcoal-burning platforms, saw pits, bloomery and blast furnace sites, tar production sites, kilns, features associated with game management and forestry, ancient wood pastures, historic planted forests, stands of old industrial or pre-industrial coppice, coppice with standards, pollards, shredded or other 'working trees' for the production of acorns, fodder, tar, resins and other products.

However, across Europe valuable forest sites and historical artefacts are being damaged in routine forest management activities. This usually happens unintentionally due to a general lack of attention for cultural heritage in forestry and a lack of experience in integrating cultural heritage in forest management. Also, many forest managers and forest owners are simply not aware of all historical artefacts that can be found in their forests.

Cultural heritage has received considerable attention in the Netherlands from forest managers during recent years. Research is being conducted into the history of many different forest areas and the cultural heritage is subsequently mapped out. Historical forest landscapes or individual historical elements are also being restored in many different places. Stichting Probos has been devo-

ting a great deal of energy into highlighting this cultural heritage and transferring knowledge to forest managers and other people who are directly or indirectly involved with forest management in the Netherlands. This guide is an attempt to transfer the enthusiasm and passion for the subject and the acquired knowledge over to forest managers in other countries.

This guide is focussed on forest managers and other people who are directly or indi-



rectly involved with forest management, including researchers, policy makers, students, volunteers and such like. A basic knowledge regarding the subject has been assumed.

The information in this guide is largely based on the knowledge and experience concerning cultural heritage in forest management acquired in the Netherlands. In order to make the guide as recognisable as possible for forest managers in various countries, we have included some examples from other European countries with help and input provided by a number of international contacts. However, it will be necessary to translate the knowledge from this guide in line with the specific situation in your country and its forests as this can of course be quite different from the Dutch situation. Yet we are convinced this guide can prove useful for all European foresters when gathering and distributing knowledge about cultural heritage in forest management, especially when the guide is supported by, for example, training courses, excursions and assistance with activities (research, planning and execution) by specialists.

This guide is mainly about forests, as this is Stichting Probos' primary focus point. It goes without saying however, that the information can certainly also prove relevant for research into the history of other natural areas and even the current agricultural landscape.



In 2005 the book 'Elements of cultural heritage in and of forests' was published by Probos. Since then Probos has tried to raise awareness of cultural heritage in forests.

Stichting Probos

Probos is an independent non-profit institute for forestry, forest products and services, established in 1965. Probos strives for a sound balance between the different forest services and values and a sustainable financial basis for forest management. Probos' main fields of expertise are: sustainable forest management (SFM), afforestation, cultural heritage in forests, biomass production and procurement, timber market intelligence, certification of SFM and Chain of Custody (CoC), Green Public Procurement and specialised ICT services (forest data). Through applied research, pilot projects, information activities (seminars, field excursions, websites, publishing books and articles) Probos enhances the know-how and awareness on these issues in the forestry and timber sector in the Netherlands and abroad. By collecting, analyzing and summarizing vital (market) information Probos aims to ensure that the social debate on SFM is based on reliable facts and figures. Furthermore, it is the aim of Probos to promote innovations in forest management, afforestation, forest plantations, wood processing industry and biomass (upstream). Probos works on its mission by conducting projects initiated by themselves or in assignment of third parties. Probos is located in Wageningen, the Netherlands and has a permanent staff of ten employees.

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Forests can contain many different kinds of traces of human influence, like these traces of prehistoric mining in the Eisenerzer Alps. These shallow trenches (also called 'Röschen') indicate a collapsed tunnel.





Examples from the Netherlands

Landscape approach: Strubben Kniphorstbosch

The Strubben Kniphorstbosch (forest) is located in the Northern Province of Drenthe. This area is so rich in traces from the past that some people also refer to it as the 'prehistoric capital'. It is therefore no surprise the site has been labelled as the Netherlands' only archaeological reserve. Important elements include burial mounds, megaliths, celtic fields, cart tracks, a gallows mountain and coppice, but also recent elements like an assault course and production forests.

The site was used as a military training ground until recently. After the site was transferred to Staatsbosbeheer (state forest service) a very important question was raised: how should the area be designed and managed? The fact that it

Strubben are Oak circles which are the result of grazing and cutting of Oak trees in heathlands. Only after the heathlands were not in use as grazing lands for sheep, the Oaks gained height. This explains their extraordinary shape.



was seen as a design task rather than a management task was one of the main reasons why a landscape approach was opted for. Doing justice to the extraordinary historical qualities was a central focus point in this regard. The emphasis was put on enhancing the differences, displaying the spatial relationships and dramatising the spatial experiences. The area's history and historical heritage was mapped out with the landscape biography as a research model, whereby a broad approach of the heritage was used. The design plan was divided into three landscape units based on this, with the aim to strengthen each of these separate areas characteristics. For example, the Northern area is characterised by so-called 'strubben', Oak circles which are the result of the grazing and cutting of Oaks in heathlands. These strubben have been freed by removing the natural build up of Pines and Birches. Further forest areas have also been felled to make room for heathland and a fence has also been positioned around the site to control grazing by sheep. The Southern section is characterised by drift sands and heathlands. Forest stands have been considerably thinned out or removed in order to strengthen these open areas. The same has also been done in places where ruts (relicts of ancient roads) have been found in the site, ensuring these are made visible as elongated open 'channels' in the forest.

Element approach: De Wolfsberg and Hooge Hoenderberg

These country estates were the location of a project by Probos to bring the acquired knowledge on cultural heritage into practice. The area's history and historic heritage were mapped out using a systematic field inventory and desk study. All sorts of different information provision activities were organised for local residents and forest managers, but another important part of the plan was to restore a number of historical elements. The decision was made to restore some appealing and distinct elements which strengthen the estate's character and elements from various periods were eventually chosen. The connection between these elements was illustrated through a way marked trail and described in a walking guide. There used to be a walking park near the manor house within the De Wolfsberg country estate, which boasted a star shaped forest and a berceau. The characteristic path pattern was only visible to those who knew about it, but within the project this old path pattern was restored. (Stone) seats were once again positioned at the original locations, which were known thanks to a map dating back to 1912. This also re-established the con-

nection with the berceau. The berceau had been allowed to continue growing for too long and could now no longer be pruned. This is why the decision was made to free the trees and therefore extend their life span. Part of the forest served as an ammunition depot during the Second World War, which a railway line was also constructed for. This railway line is no longer there, but a seat has been positioned in the spot where the platform used to be, made from metal rails and natural stone, including an engraved text about the 'bomb forest'. The Hooge Hoenderberg country estate was developed around 1920 by a natural stone dealer from Rotterdam. One very characteristic feature of this country estate is the impressive quantity of large stones with engraved inscriptions. These stones were moved when the country estate was sold, but they have been returned to their (suspected) original location within this project. This also applied to a heavy stone weighing some six thousand kilos, which the estate owner had engraved with a poem. This represented the front of a type of cave. This cave has now been fully restored with the return of this poem stone. A high Beech tree at the highest spot of this same country estate was used as an observation post for forest fires during the Second World War. This tree was later referred to as the 'Fire Tree', but unfortunately needed to be cut down recently for safety reasons. A new Beech tree has been planted in its place with a small sign displaying the text 'Fire Tree'.

Around 1920 the estate De Hooge Hoenderberg was owned by a rich stone trader from Rotterdam. To embellish his estate he created an artificial cave at the entrance of his property. In 2010 the cave was restored by putting the original stone with an inscribed poem back in place.





At the end of the nineteenth century a berceau was established on the estate De Wolfsberg. This berceau was created by planting two rows of beech and connecting the top shoots of the beeches in order to form a 'green' tunnel. See page 62 for a picture of the berceau in 1909. In this way the women of the estate could go outside without having their skin tanned. Years ago the pruning and leading of the shoots stopped. The trees started growing up straight and the berceau gradually disappeared. Nowadays, only the crooked stem form refers to the original berceau. In 2010 surrounding trees were cut in order to create space for the remaining trees of the berceau. Also the path in the berceau was restored.

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Across Europe these kind of valuable forest sites and historical artefacts are being damaged in routine forest management activities. This usually happens unintentionally due to a lack of attention for cultural heritage in forestry and a lack of experience in integrating cultural heritage in forest management. Forest managers and forest owners are in general not aware of all historical artefacts that can be found in their forests.

In the Netherlands, cultural heritage has received considerable attention from forest managers during recent years. With this guide Stichting Probos aims to transfer the enthusiasm and passion for the subject and the knowledge that has been developed over the last decade, to forest managers in other countries.



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