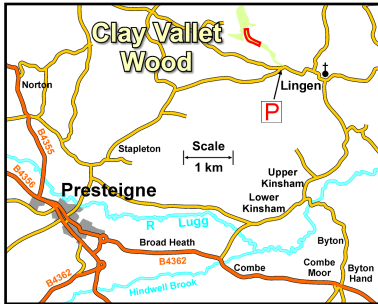


# Clay Vallet Wood

Lingen SO351679 (Explorer 201)

Ancient sessile oak woodland



## Visitor Guidelines

The reserve clings to the side of a steep valley and has upper and lower access paths following the valley contour above the stream. Park where you can on the roadside and walk along the footpath for about 500 metres, and then cross the stream and join the path on the opposite bank. The gate to the reserve is 300 metres up the path.

## Description

The position of the wood on a steep slope, the presence of a number of *indicator* plants, as well as historical records, all provide evidence of the wood's *ancient* origin. It was certainly managed as *coppice* in the 1840's, and probably much earlier, as the name "Vallet" is a local dialect word for portions of a coppice wood felled in rotation. The present-day woodland shows clearly how it has developed from management practices in the past. The trees are nearly all Sessile Oak of similar age and growth, and this uniformity probably stems from selection for Oak in the past in order to produce Oak bark for the tanning industry. Later, but still over 100 years ago, the *coppice* was converted into *standards* by singling the growth from the old *coppice stools*; the knobby bases of the Oaks today clearly show their *coppice* origins. The *shrub layer* is poorly developed, partly due to light sheep grazing, partly due to deliberate removal of hazels by a previous owner.

Growth of the Oaks on the middle slopes has been very slow due to the underlying soil being thin and infertile. Cow-wheat, Wood Sage and Sweet Vernal Grass are typical in this region. Halfway along the wood where the bedrock lies close below the surface, Heather and Bilberry grow. Along the upper boundary the soil is deeper, clayey and more fertile; Oak growth has been stronger and patches of Bluebell and Yellow Archangel occur. Towards the head of the valley, Birches increasingly appear among the Oaks.

## Present Management

Future management aims to retain the character of the wood as a Sessile Oakwood 'hanger', allowing the young standard Oaks to grow on with only selective thinning to facilitate proper crown development. Any natural regeneration leading to a wood of more mixed age will be encouraged. Eventually, a small *coppice coupe* is planned for the south-east end of the reserve to provide more open feeding areas for warblers

and flycatchers. Minimal management will help to keep the canopy closed, suppressing Bramble and Bracken growth, whilst encouraging retention of the distinctive Cow-wheat/Wood Sage/Vernal Grass ground flora in its present form.

**Acquisition Details**

Freehold purchased by the Trust in 1983.

**General Information:**

**Best time to visit:** Early May for spring flowers and bird song, mid-summer for Silver-washed Fritillary.

**Habitat:** *Ancient* Sessile Oak woodland.

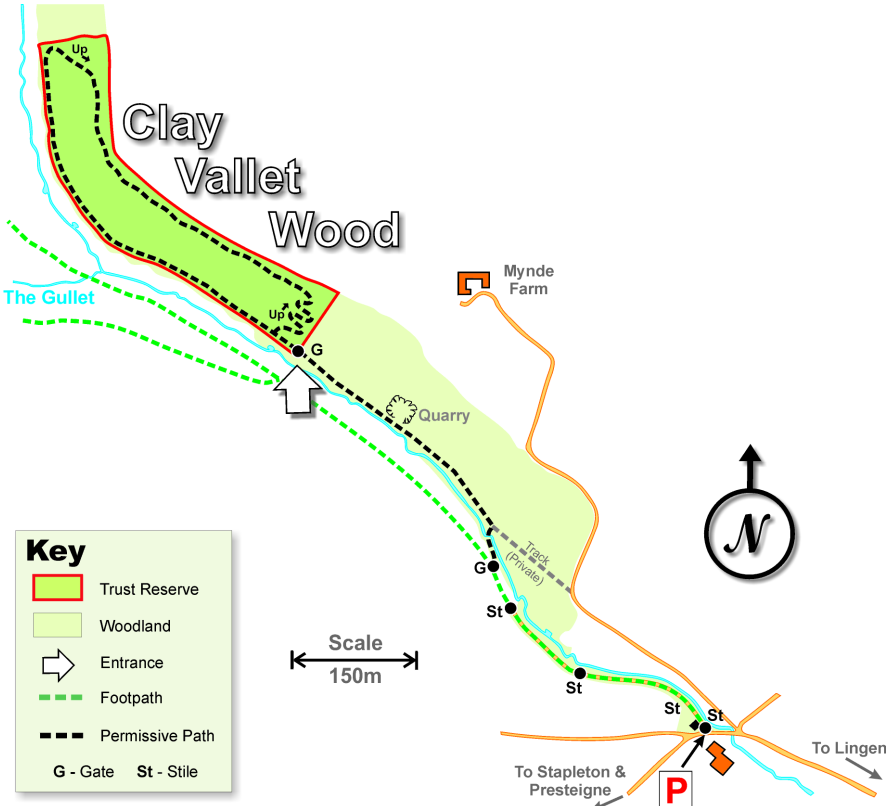
**Size:** 3.4 hectares (8.5 acres).

**Specialities:** Bluebell (4-5), Yellow Archangel (4-7), Cow-wheat (5-9), Bilberry (4-6), Wood Warbler(4-7), Tree Pipit (4-7), Pied Flycatcher (4-7). Silver-washed Fritillary (6-8) and Wood White (5-8) butterflies.

**Parking:** There is limited parking on the roadside.

**Nearby reserves:** Titley Pool & Mowley Wood.

Clay Vallet Wood



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