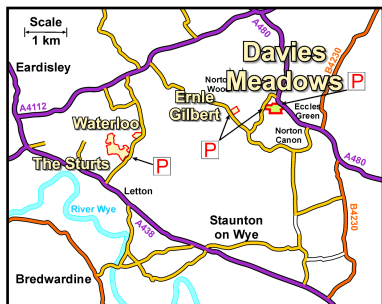
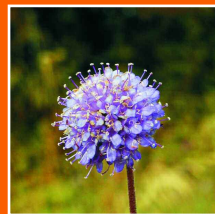


Davies Meadows

Norton Canon SO374485 (Explorer 201)

Ancient hay meadows, ponds and an old orchard



Visitor Guidelines

While the *hay* crop is growing or stock grazing please keep to the edge of the meadows and keep dogs under control. Field gates should be kept shut at all times.

Description

The reserve comprises a block of three traditional Herefordshire *hay-meadows*, a small old orchard area, two ponds and a complex of old hedgerows. The ground surface is gently undulating and is underlain by deep morainic soils varying from sand through to clays.

The land was formerly owned by the Davies family, well-known local agricultural contractors, who farmed the *meadows* traditionally, without using herbicides or fertiliser. The main *meadow*, Cockley Green Field, has not been ploughed for at least a hundred years, while the other two, known as Bower Field and Green Field, were ploughed until the early 1950's. As a result, all the *meadows* are herb-rich, with a wide range of grasses. In all three *meadows*, Crested Dogstail and Sweet Vernal grasses dominate, with an abundance of herbs like Hay Rattle, Pignut and Black Knapweed. Betony, Sneezewort, Cowslips and Devil's Bit Scabious occur in patches, while Common Spotted and Green-winged Orchids are also found. The present-day plant communities are typical of grazed *hay meadows* farmed in the traditional manner, an increasingly rare and threatened habitat.

The two temporary pond areas are also rich in interesting plants. Some species to look out for include Bur Marigold, Marsh Bedstraw, Lesser Spearwort and Meadow Rue. The central pond is surrounded by ancient willows and stays wet and marshy long after the pond in Cockley Green Field has dried out. In 2000, an invertebrate pond survey revealed two nationally scarce water beetles, both typical of temporary ponds. The internal hedges are moderately species-rich and contain larger hedgerow trees, including mature Oaks, a large *coppiced* Wych Elm, a few Perry Pears and some Hollies. The small pear orchard had fallen into neglect, but has now been restored and replanted with 15 traditional pear varieties between 1997 and 1999.

The *meadows* and hedgerows are alive with butterflies and day flying moths during late spring and summer. The star species to look for is the small, black Chimney-sweeper moth, on the wing in June/July and recorded at only one other site in the county - the HNT Christopher Cadbury reserve at Michaelchurch. The moth overwinters as an egg laid on Pignut, which is widespread throughout the *meadows*.

Present Management

The Trust continues to manage the *meadows* in the traditional manner used by the Davies family in earlier times. The *meadows* are "shut up for hay" during spring and summer and are generally cut in the second half of July. The cut time for each *meadow* is different in order to ensure maximum seed production. Sheep are used to graze the *aftermath* until the end of November.

Acquisition Details

Leased to HNT in May 1994 from Plantlife for 50 years at a peppercorn rental.

General Information:

Best time to visit: Spring to late summer.

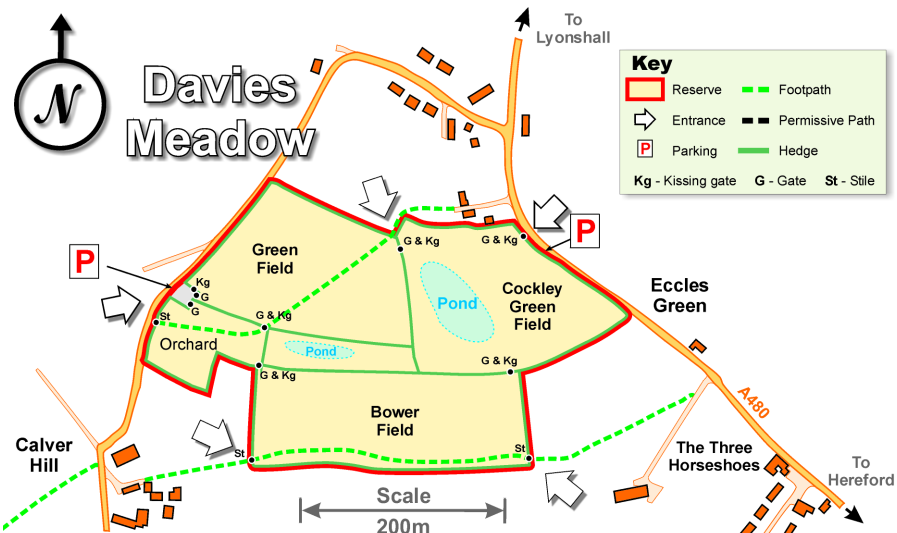
Habitat: Herb-rich *hay meadows*, two ponds and an old orchard.

Size: 9.58 hectares (23 acres).

Specialities: Chimney Sweeper (6-7), 6-Spot Burnet (5-8), Burnet Companion (5-7), Grass Rivulet (6-7) and Mother Shipton (5-7) moths. Common Spotted Orchid (6-8), Pignut (5-7), Devil's-bit Scabious (6-9), Trifid Bur Marigold (7-9), Sneezewort (7-9), Musk Mallow (7-8).

Parking: There is a small car park on the western side of the reserve.

Nearby HNT reserves: Ernle Gilbert, The Sturts, Waterloo.



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Davies Meadows