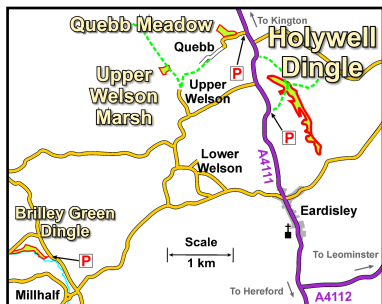


Holywell Dingle

Eardisley SO313510 (Explorer 201)

Ancient woodland and freshwater stream



Visitor Guidelines

Access around the reserve is straightforward as there is a good network of marked paths and two footbridges crossing the stream. Some parts near the stream can be wet and muddy, so waterproof footwear is advised. The northern part of the reserve is very steep-sided in places, and there are precipitous drops into the stream-bed.

Description

The reserve occupies a narrow, steep-sided, wooded valley, cut deeply into the underlying Old Red Sandstone (ORS) rocks. The soils are shallow and quite acidic on the valley sides, but deeper, more base-rich, and less well drained in the valley floor. The fast-flowing Holywell Brook follows a narrow and winding course through the dingle. At the northern tip of the reserve, two streams join to form the brook, and in the 19th century, as part of a landscaping scheme, they were dammed to form a large pool which has long since dried out. The wood probably gets its name from the small spring that arises near the cottage.

The woodland is dominated by Oak and Ash, but many other tree species occur, including Silver Birch, Yew, Wild Cherry and Limes. Near the old dam, English Elms once dominated the *canopy*, but these have been killed by disease and have been replaced by young elm suckers and some planted Oak and Ash. *Coppiced* Alders line the stream banks. There is some evidence that the entire wood was clear felled in the 18th century, after which it was managed as Oak *coppice*. Some exotic conifers, a group of mature Scots Pines and Rhododendron at the northern end of the reserve are relics of the 19th century landscaping. The woodland *understorey* is mainly composed of Hazel and Holly, with some Wych Elm, Elder and Field Maple.

The ground flora in the Dingle is very rich and contains a variety of species indicative of *ancient woodland* e.g. Herb Paris, Yellow Archangel, Broad-leaved Helleborine and Early Purple Orchid. In springtime, the woodland floor makes a fine tapestry of colour as Lesser Celandines, Wood Anemones and then Bluebells come into bloom. There are at least 8 species of fern present and a wide variety of mosses and liverworts.

The Dingle attracts a good variety of bird species, including breeding Nuthatch, Pied Flycatcher, Marsh Tit, Treecreeper, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Chiffchaff, Rook and Blackcap. The well-oxygenated, pollution-free waters of the brook support a variety of aquatic life. Stones in the stream-bed hide many caddis and mayfly larvae, as well as the occasional Bullhead or Crayfish.

Present Management

The difficult access to the Dingle means that traditional woodland management involving *coppicing* or *thinning* is not easy. Very small areas have been *coppiced* and a few trees planted. In recent years considerable work has been done to improve access around the reserve.

Acquisition Details

The freehold of the upper part of the Dingle was bequeathed to HNT in 1977 by Mrs. Longueville of Lemore, Eardisley. The southern part of the Dingle (10 acres) has been leased to the Trust by Hereford County Council since 1976.

General Information:

Best time to visit: All times of year.

Habitat: *Ancient* woodland plus freshwater stream.

Size: 7.9 hectares (19 acres).

Specialities: Badger. Pied Flycatcher (4-7), Blackcap (4-7). Herb Paris (5-6), Early Purple Orchid (4-6), Toothwort (4-5), Sanicle (5-7), Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage (3-7), Hart's Tongue Fern (5-7), Soft and Hard Shield-ferns (5-8). Crayfish

Parking: There is room for several cars in the lay-by off the A4111.

Nearby reserves: Quebb Corner Meadow, Upper Welson Marsh, Brilley Green Dingle, The Sturts and Waterloo.

