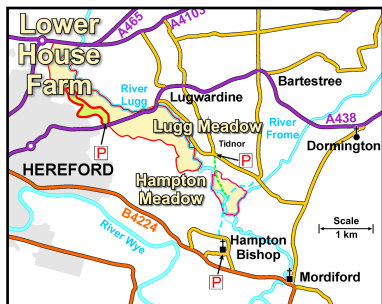


Lower House Farm

Tupsley SO535404 (Explorer 189)

Old orchard, grassland and ancient woodland

SSSI



Visitor Guidelines

Access around the reserve is unrestricted, although it would be appreciated if visitors would stay on the clearly marked footpaths through the *pasture* and *hay meadow* areas to avoid unnecessary trampling of vegetation and disturbance to nesting birds. Dogs should be kept under control at all times.

Description

Lower House Farm is a Jacobean timber-framed farm house dating from 1614. The building is thought to be the second oldest house in Hereford city. When acquired by HNT in 1995 it was in a run-down state, but it has now been fully restored to its original condition. The farm house is the headquarters of the Nature Trust.

The gardens have been landscaped with wildlife in mind and attract a wide range of interesting species. The aromatic herbs and scented flowers of the border in front of the building draw in large numbers of nectar-seeking butterflies, including Comma, Small Tortoiseshell, Painted Lady and Gatekeeper. The pond, although small, has been used as a breeding site for Southern Hawker dragonflies, while Club-tailed and Emperor dragonflies have visited. During autumn and winter the bird feeders host small numbers of Goldfinches as well as an array of more usual birds. The grassed areas contain a variety of spring bulbs and are cut in mid-summer.

The orchard area behind the farmhouse contains a mixture of old and newly planted fruit trees. The original orchard was extended in 1998, by planting an additional 20 old Herefordshire varieties of apple, pear and plum. One of the most distinctive old trees is a fine Huff Cap pear whose white blossoms make an attractive feature in spring. Parties of Fieldfares and Redwings may be seen here in autumn, while Yellowhammers breed along the boundary hedges.

Rickyard Pasture consists of seasonally flooded wet grassland bounded to the north and east by the Lugg Rhea. Reed Buntings call from the willows along the Rhea and wildfowl, Snipe and gulls visit in winter. Lapwing and Curlew have occasionally been recorded in other seasons.

Bank and Wood Meadows form a strip of semi-improved grassland separated from Upper Lugg Meadow by the Lugg Rhea. **Bank Meadow** slopes quite steeply up from the Rhea towards the Tupsley housing, and much of it remains relatively dry in winter. In contrast, **Wood Meadow** is regularly flooded when the Lugg and Rhea overflow after winter rains. Yellowhammers breed in the boundary hedges and Meadow Pipits forage in the grassland in winter. The *meadows* contain a good variety of typical meadow flowers, such as Ladies Smock and three species of buttercup, but lack the plant diversity of adjacent Upper Lugg Meadow.

Baynton Wood lies on a steep embankment north-west of Lower House Farm. The western edge abuts onto the Tupsley housing estate and the wood is frequently visited by children and dog-walkers from the estate. To the north it adjoins the Broadlands Local Nature Reserve, while to the east the wood slopes steeply down to overlook **Upper Lugg** and **Wood Meadows**. Historical information and physical features of the site indicate that the wood is a plantation on an *ancient woodland* site, therefore making the wood at least 500 years old.

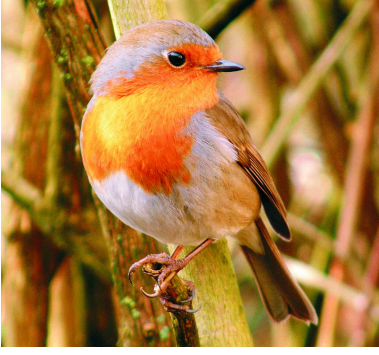
The present-day wood comprises scrub habitat dominated by Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Gorse and Bramble together with some of the original broad-leaved trees. Sycamore, Hazel, Small-leaved Lime and Field Maple also occur, while the invasive alien Japanese Knotweed has a foothold in many parts of the scrubby areas.

Some 73 plant species have been listed for **Baynton Wood**, including Bluebell, Wood Avens, Bitter Vetch, Musk Mallow, Meadow Vetchling and both Red and White Campion - quite a variety in view of the wood's close proximity to large human populations. Breeding birds include Mistle Thrush, Collared Dove, Blackcap, Sedge Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat and Spotted Flycatcher. Great Spotted Woodpeckers and Bullfinches are regular visitors and Bramblings have been seen in winter, feeding on Beech mast.

Present Management

Maintenance of the gardens is in the hands of a volunteer group who do general tidying and planting. The orchard area grass is grazed by cattle, but apart from pruning operations, other maintenance is kept to a minimum now that fruit tree planting is complete. **Rickyard Pasture** is currently grazed by cattle during the summer months, while the two meadows are mown for hay once a year in June/July. The reserve grassland areas and orchards are managed under the Countryside Stewardship Scheme until 2006. Apart from keeping paths clear of fallen trees/branches, **Baynton Wood** is treated as a non-intervention area.

Robin (Chris Harris)



Club-tailed dragonfly (Chris Harris)



Huff Cap pear tree (Chris Harris)

Lower House Farm (Chris Harris)



Lower House Farm

Acquisition Details

Freehold purchased by HNT in 1995 with the aid of monies provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund and generous donations from Trust members.

General Information:

Best time to visit: All times of year.

Habitat: Wildlife gardens, old mixed orchard, improved pastureland, semi-improved meadow, and plantation on an *ancient woodland* site.

Size: 16.25 hectares (39 acres).

Specialities: Lesser Whitethroat (5-7), Sedge Warbler (4-7), Blackcap (4-7), Reed Bunting, Yellowhammer, Snipe, winter wildfowl. Southern Hawker dragonfly, summer butterflies. Bitter Vetch(4-7), Musk Mallow (7-8), Bluebell (5-6). Old varieties of orchard trees.

Parking: Parking for several cars on road in front of Lower House Farm.

Nearby HNT reserves: Lugg Meadow, Hampton Meadow, Lea & Pagets Wood, Wessington Pasture, Common Hill and Nupend Wood.

