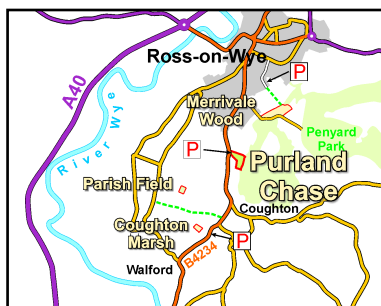


Purland Chase

Ross-on-Wye SO596221 (Explorer 189)

Semi-improved grassland and ancient woodland.



Visitor Guidelines

The reserve consists of a *meadow* together with a section of the adjoining woodland. The small *meadow* near the road, and the gardens around the house itself, are not part of the reserve. The wood lies on a slope and there are, as yet, no marked paths so movement within the wood is not easy. Please keep to the edge of the *meadow* during the summer *hay* growth period.

Description

The *meadow* consists of some 2-3 hectares of west-facing *semi-improved* grassland, lying on quite fertile, slightly acid soils derived from the underlying Old Red Sandstone rocks. Although herbicides have not been used on the site within living memory, it has suffered from earlier cattle grazing and fertiliser applications. As a result, nitrogen levels have built up in the soil and coarse grasses and vigorous weeds, such as Cocksfoot, Yorkshire Fog, nettles, docks and thistles, have taken over. The herbaceous flora is generally impoverished but future management aims to restore this situation. A number of ornamental trees were planted by the former owner, John Knight, between 1970 and 1994 along the northern border of the field. These include Oaks, Beech, Copper Beech, Lime, Elm, Wych Elm, Aspen and Silver Birch.

The woodland area of the reserve forms part of the much larger Chase Wood, currently managed by Forest Enterprise, which clothes the sides of the sandstone ridge east of Purland Chase. There has been little human intervention here in the last fifty years. The whole area has been *coppiced* in the past and there are some impressive Sweet Chestnut *stools*, supporting up to eight well-grown trunks. Sessile and Pedunculate Oak, Ash, Beech, and Silver Birch dominate, while there are a few Horse Chestnut, Wild Cherry and Goat Willow. Single Aspens, White Poplars and Wild Service are also present, probably planted by the previous owner. The understorey contains Hawthorn, Hazel, Elder, Holly, Honeysuckle, Bramble and Wild Currant. One or two small Yews and Crab apples are also found. Bluebells, Wood Anemones, Dog's Mercury and various ferns are present in the *field layer* and indicate that this wood has had *ancient* origins. There is a small overgrown quarry within the wood, which supplied stone for the original 19th century house and garden walls here. The Old Red Sandstone rock exposures within this quarry provide an interesting geological feature and an additional wildlife micro-habitat.

Present Management

The main priority is to reduce fertility levels in the soil of the *meadow* by repeated cutting and removal of vegetation, followed by grazing during the winter months. Aggressive weeds and grasses are being controlled and re-seeding with herbaceous species typical of local meadows has begun in order to re-establish a hay meadow regime. Management of the woodland area is expected to be largely non-interventional, but the management plan provides for the creation of two small *coppice coupes*, in order to bring more light onto the woodland floor, and promote more plant and insect diversity.

Acquisition Details

Bequeathed to the Trust in 1999 by the late owner, Mr. John Knight.

General Information:

Best time to visit: Spring and summer.

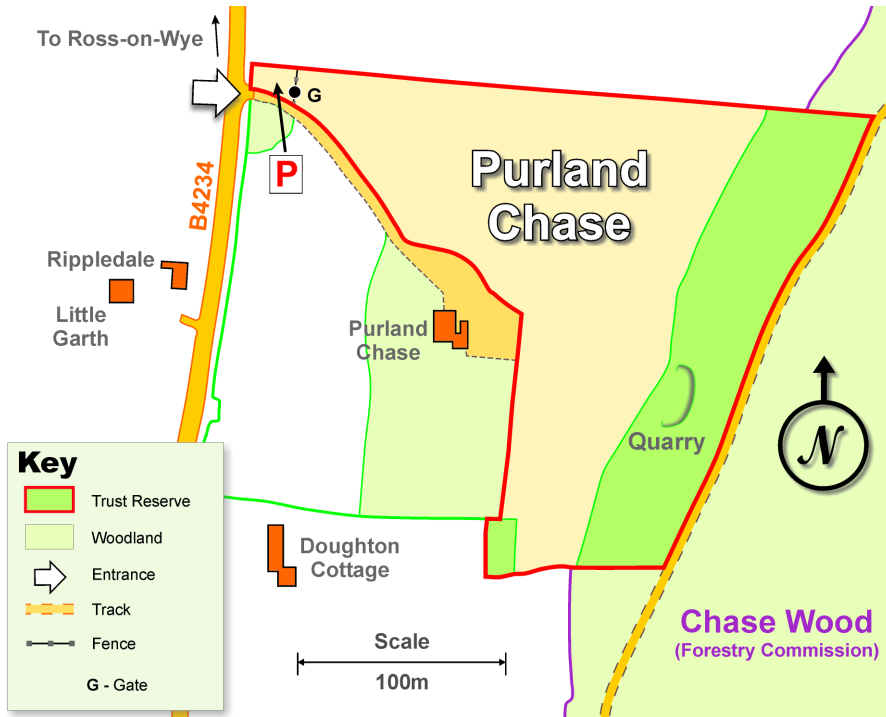
Habitat: *Semi-improved* grassland and *ancient* woodland.

Size: 3.5 hectares (8.6 acres).

Specialities: Blackcap (4-7), Long-tailed Tit, Goshawk. Little Thorn & Scarce Prominent moth. Bluebell (4-6), Wood Anemone (3-5), Yellow Archangel (5-6).

Parking: There is room for several cars in the parking area to the left of the track.

Nearby HNT reserves: Coughton Marsh, Merrivale Wood, Parish Field.



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