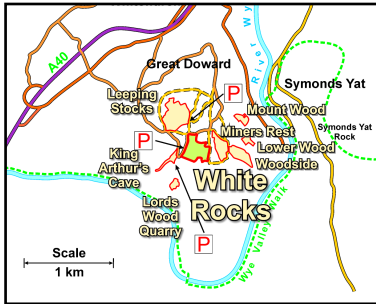


White Rocks

Great Doward SO550158 (Outdoor Leisure 14)

Ancient broad-leaved woodland & limestone grassland.



Visitor Guidelines

Access to most parts of the reserve presents no problems and paths are obvious and well-marked. The main area of woodland in the south-eastern part of the reserve may be damp and muddy in places - boots are advised. There are man-holes dotted over the tip site to monitor methane production from the waste below; these areas are best avoided.

Description

The reserve is named after a nearby house just to the south. The name is apt as the whole area is underlain with pale Carboniferous Limestone. The soils vary in thickness over the reserve but are notably calcareous. The past history of the area has produced a rich mosaic of habitats, with an accompanying diversity of wildlife. A map from 1847 shows the reserve area divided up between 14 different owners into over 20 small enclosures, half being arable and half woodland. There were three inhabited cottages on the site and the remains of two can still be seen. The old land boundary walls of limestone pieces topped by the remains of Beech hedges still survive in various places.

In 1947, a large quarry was opened up, eventually extending to nearly 25% of the reserve site. When quarrying operations finished the site was used for tipping domestic rubbish. Tipping ended in 1980 and the area was then capped with sub-soil. Attempts to rehabilitate the area by tree-planting have proved largely unsuccessful, due to the inhospitable growing conditions. However, an interesting calcareous scrub vegetation has slowly developed, as local species gradually find a foothold in the loose gravelly soil.

North and east of the tip area, there are strips of limestone grassland containing such typically calcicole plants as Quaking Grass, Marjoram and Salad Burnet, as well as plants found also on neutral soils, e.g. Musk Mallow and Black Knapweed. These warm, south-facing grassy areas, together with the filled-in tip and the bramble thickets around its perimeter, form a very attractive habitat for butterflies, particularly Marbled White, Ringlet and Gatekeeper which are on the wing in large numbers in July. Graylings have been recorded in the past on the drier gravel slopes above the tip but not, unfortunately, in recent years. Fallow Deer frequently use this area for feeding or resting.

Much of the woodland is *ancient* with tall Beech, Ash and Oak grown up from old *coppice stools* and a ground flora dominated by Bluebells and Bramble. A well-marked track runs NE-SW along a valley bottom in this old woodland, and being clear of trees on either side, gives a good view of the developing *high forest* on the slopes above. The stone-walled enclosure at the end of the track was formerly used as a sheep pen.

Present Management

There are two small *coppice* plots while the rest of the woodland area is managed as *high forest*. The grassland areas are cut annually to control scrub invasion.

Acquisition Details

Freehold bought in 1979 with the aid of a very generous gift from Mr. J.C. Cadbury and a grant from Worldwide Fund for Nature.

General Information:

Best time to visit: All times of year.

Habitat: Ancient broad-leaved woodland and limestone grassland.

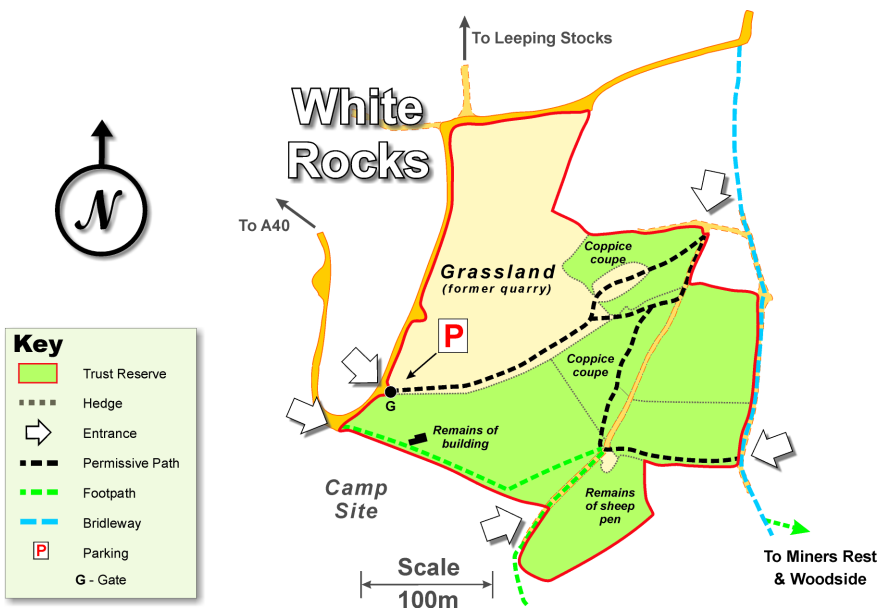
Size: 5.3 hectares (13 acres).

Specialities: Green & Great Spotted Woodpeckers. Fallow deer. Bee Orchid (6-7), Pyramidal Orchid (6-8), Yellow-wort (6-10), Quaking Grass, Rock Rose (5-9). Silver-washed Fritillary (6-8), Marbled White (6-8), Rose Chafer (5-9).

Parking: There is room for two cars in the entrance to the reserve.

Nearby reserves: King Arthur's Cave, Leeping Stocks, Lords Wood Quarry, Lower Wood, Miners Rest, Mount Wood and Woodside.

White Rocks



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