

YEW TRAIL
Ulverscroft Manor, Priory Lane,
Ulverscroft, Leicestershire LE67 9PH
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VISIT NOTES

BRITAIN'S WOODLAND - A LOOK BACK IN TIME

Research has concluded that thousands of years ago virtually the whole of Britain was covered by woodland. Only one tenth remains; the remainder has succumbed to increasing population and both the agricultural and technological revolutions. A massive four hundred and fifty thousand acres was felled to support the two world war efforts of the last century.

In our modern world, most think of woodland as a tranquil environment, somewhere to go and relax. But in times past this was not always the case; communities depended on the woodland for construction materials, food, firewood, bedding and fodder for livestock, and materials for simple industrial processes that were carried out close by.

Bark was used for tanning leather; there was a barking season when the trees were felled and the bark stripped off. Timber was used to fire the furnaces for iron smelting, and charcoal would have been produced for that process in many woodlands. Sawpits would not have been an uncommon sight. They were used for the purpose of cutting timber into planks. The tree was placed over the pit, with one man in the pit at one end of a long bladed saw; he sawed upwards. The other man was on the top at the other end of the saw and sawed downwards, which was easier. He was known as 'top dog', and his less fortunate workmate 'underdog'.

THE VALUE OF OUR WOODLAND

It is widely recognised that the saving of the tropical rain forest is of vital importance to the planet because it acts to absorb carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, and also generates oxygen. This is true of woodland generally. Air is fresher in woodland as a result of increased oxygen.

Forests and woodland provide varied habitat for a vast range of animals, birds, insects, plants and fungi, each dependant on, or affected by, the other.

Timber is still a much used natural resource, different species having different applications. Some of these are described in the notes relating to the trees to be found within the Yew Trail and adjoining woodland.

Medicine has benefited from extracts from trees, and who can say what has yet to be discovered? The bark of willow trees was the first source of aspirin; research has indicated that the leaves of the yew tree, which are poisonous, may have cancer curing properties. Manuka honey, sold worldwide, is made by bees which collect the pollen from the manuka bush which grows wild in New Zealand. This honey also appears to have remarkable healing properties, internally and externally. Dressings and creams containing the honey have been licensed for use in the NHS.

ULVERSCROFT WOOD

Ulverscroft Wood consists of all the woodland owned by the Shuttlewood Clarke Foundation at Ulverscroft Manor and incorporates the **Yew Trail Outdoor Classroom** area.

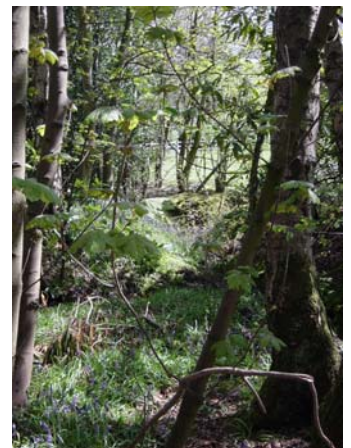
The site is a good example of ancient woodland, a habitat which is characteristic of Charnwood Forest, but rare in Leicestershire as a whole. Even though large parts of the wood have been replanted, the ground flora contains a range of species which only occur in ancient woodland. The wood has high ecological value and qualifies as a Wildlife Site. Wildlife Sites (also known as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation) are the most important places for wildlife that are not protected by law. Many of these are irreplaceable and their conservation is crucial to the future of our wildlife.

Ulverscroft Wood is mixed plantation woodland on an ancient woodland site. The site also includes areas of naturally regenerated birch woodland, and alder woodland with a rich semi-natural ground flora. The woodland has a very varied canopy, with both planted and naturally regenerated areas. Birch is generally abundant and becomes dominant in places, with locally abundant larch, oak, sycamore and small amounts of beech, copper beech, fir and ash. Stands of alder are also present, mainly in the wet areas bordering the stream which forms that north-eastern boundary of the wood.

Other species occur only occasionally and include hazel, holly, rowan, elder, and non-native shrubs such as yew, cherry laurel, box and snowberry. Occasional guelder rose is also present in the wetter areas beneath the alders.

The most abundant ground flora species are bramble and bracken, with frequent nettle. Several ancient woodland indicator species are also present, including large patches of bluebell, wood sorrel and dog's mercury. Occasional non-native species are also present, including greater celandine, ornamental primulas, and a variegated variety of yellow archangel.

The richest ground flora occurs on the stream banks along the north-eastern edge of the wood, an adjacent area of wet alder woodland and the track edges. These areas contain a range of species typical of damp ancient woodland, including yellow pimpernel, opposite leaved golden-saxifrage, enchanter's nightshade, remote sedge, wood sedge, wood anemone, wild angelica and sanicle. The largest area of alder woodland also contains abundant great horsetail, which is uncommon in this part of Leicestershire.



THE FLIGHT POND AREA

The central part of the site has been fenced from the rest of the wood to create a nature area and woodland walk.

At the centre of this area is a man-made pond, which is just beginning to be colonised by migration vegetation, including soft rush, angelica, greater bird's-foot trefoil and marsh bed straw.

The surrounding banks have been planted with tree species such as birch, alder, goat willow, Scots pine and larch. This merges with the more established birch, oak and larch woodland of the surrounding area.



Pond Dipping Area



SPECIES OF PLANTS THAT CAN BE FOUND IN ULVERSCROFT WOOD & THE YEW TRAIL AREA (Charnwood Wildlife Survey 2001)

Herbs

Bittersweet *
Bluebell
Bracken
Broad Buckler-fern
Broad-leaved Willowherb *
Brooklime *
Bugle *
Comfrey
Common Dog-violet
Common Figwort *
Common Hemp-nettle
Common Water-starwort *
Creeping Buttercup *
Dogs Mercury
Enchanters Nightshade *
Foxglove
Goosegrass
Great Horsetail *
Greater Stitchwort *
Hedge Garlic*
Hedge Woundwort

Herb-Robert *
Honeysuckle
Lady Fern
Lesser Burdock
Male-fern
Marsh Bedstraw *
Primrose
Red Campion *
Sanicle *
Spear Thistle
Stinging Nettle
Three-veined Sandwort
Valerian *
Wavy Bitter-cress *
Wild Angelica *
Wood Anemone *
Wood Dock
Wood Forget-me-not
Wood Sorrel
Wood Speedwell *
Yellow Archangel *
Yellow Pimpernel *

Greater Celandine
Procumbent Pearlwort *
Opp. Ivd Golden Saxifrage *

Grasses

Tufted Hair-grass *
Wood Meadow-grass
Yorkshire Fog

Sedges

Remote Sedge *
Wood Sedge *

*** = Species restricted to edges of tracks, streams, banks and other wet areas.**

TREES & SHRUBS

In the woodland through which the Yew Trail winds are to be found sixteen tree and shrub species, brief details of which are to be found in the notes that follow. A tree is commonly defined as a species capable of growing to a height of at least five metres; a shrub is conversely a species normally growing to less than five metres.

The Tree Trail:

Along the route of the **Yew Trail** are ten numbered boards which are placed next to a particular tree species. The numbers and their location are shown on the attached map. Details of these trees are shown in a folder of laminated Flip Cards (which will be available for the group leaders on site, on the day of your visit) and the Tree Trail can be used for basic tree identification, orienteering and route planning etc.

It is worth mentioning two species which are not numbered on the trail:

RHODODENDRON

There is a good deal of this along the line of the Trail; indeed the paths have been cut through it in a number of places. It is often regarded as a nuisance because of its dominating characteristic which prevents anything surviving beneath it. However the Rhododendron's purple flowers are spectacular and it is a good example of a foreign species which has been very successful. Refer also to the species notes.

CHERRY LAUREL

This is to be found in the area bounded by numbers 5, 6 and 9 on the map. It presents quite a spectacle, being unusually tall with substantial branches. It is reckoned to be around one hundred and fifty years old. It is often to be found in gardens usually with a bush like appearance and on nothing like the scale here. Refer also to the species notes.

TREES THAT YOU CAN SEE ON THE YEW TRAIL

*** = Trees included in the Tree Trail**

English Oak (Quercus Robur) *

Height 115ft (35m)

Lives to over 400yrs

Timber is used for Oak panelling and furniture and years ago was used for ship building.

The acorns are a valuable food source for many birds and mammals.

Sycamore (Acer Pseudolatanus) *

Height 115ft (35m)

Lives up to 200yrs

Introduced from France around 1550, it is fast growing on good soils.

Timber is used for making furniture and musical instruments.

Silver Birch (Betula Pendula) *

Height 50 ft (15m)

Lives up to 150yrs

Fast growing and one of the world's hardiest trees, growing high up on mountains. Timber is made into the backs of brushes and tool handles. Birch twigs are used to make besom brooms. The seeds are eaten by small birds.

Beech (*Fagus Sylvatica*)
Height 120ft (36m)
Lives up to 500yrs
Has smooth grey bark and quite shiny leaves.
Timber is used to make chairs.
Beech nuts are mostly eaten by wood mice and Jays.

Sweet Chestnut (*Castanea Sativa*) *

Height 100ft (30m)
Lives up to 600yrs
The Sweet Chestnut was introduced to Britain by the Romans as a source of nuts for food but Britain's summers are too cool for the Chestnut to ripen to full size.
The timber is similar to Oak and is used for panelling and beams and for the palings of rough fences.



The Veteran Beech

Holly (*Ilex Aquifolium*) *

Height 65ft (20m)
Lives up to 400yrs
The Holly tree can be either male or female, only female trees bear berries, in years gone by it was thought unlucky to cut one down. The wood is white, hard and heavy, it is used for carving and inlay work.

Scots Pine (*Pinus Sylvestris*)

Height 120ft (36m)
Lives 250-400yrs
Popular forestry tree, the timber is used for furniture, chipboard, boxes fencing, telegraph poles and charcoal.

Common Yew (*Taxus Baccata*) *

Height 50ft (15m)
Lives up to 1,000yrs
The timber was used in the Middle Ages for making long-bows, the wood is orange/brown in colour and takes a high polish. The bark, foliage and seeds are poisonous but the scarlet berries are harmless. The Common Yew was planted in churchyards to ward off evil spirits.

Norway Spruce (*Picea Abies*) *

Height 130ft (40m)
Lives 200yrs
Known to everyone as the 'Christmas Tree'. The timber is used for building work, pit props, packing cases, boxes and for the front of violins (the back and sides are maple wood)

Larch (*Larix Decidua*) *

Height 125ft (38m)
Lives 150-200yrs
The Larch is a conifer that is deciduous and loses its foliage in the winter. Introduced to Britain in 1620, the timber is used to make staircases, light furniture and wall panelling.

Elder (*Sambucus Nigra*)

Normally classed as a shrub but can grow into a small tree up to 30ft (9m)

The flowers and fruit are made into wines and jams and are rich in vitamin C. The wood used to be used to make toys, combs and wooden spoons.

Cherry Laurel (*Prunus Laurocerasus Rotundifolia*)

Height 20ft (6m) (Can grow more when reaching for the light)

Introduced to Britain in 1576, it was planted in woods as cover for game and is tolerant of shade. Its large leaves keep the ground warm in winter for game birds, the cherry-like fruit is eaten by birds such as Blackbirds and Starlings

Rhododendron (*Rhododendron Ponticum*)

Height 20ft (6m)

Introduced to Britain from Asia Minor over 200 years ago and planted for game cover in woods. It adapts to all kinds of soils and can survive under the heavy shade of trees. The purple flowers appear in May and June in clusters of 10-15, they are 2in (5cm) across.

Hazel (*Corylus Avellana*) *

Height 30ft (9m)

Usually classed as a shrub they used to be coppiced, that is cut back to ground level, every seven years. The Hazel rods are used in hedge laying and are woven between the thorn which is cut back and 'laid' giving added strength to the hedge. The Catkins appear in February and the hazel nuts in the autumn, these are eaten by squirrels, mice, woodpigeons, jays and pheasants.

Common Ash (*Fraxinus Excelsior*)

Height 130ft (40m)

Lives up to 300 years old.

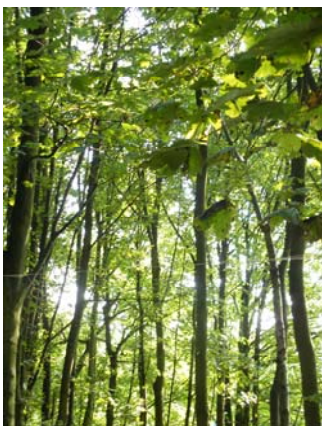
The timber is almost pure white and very tough. It is used for a wide variety of products including axe and hammer handles, hockey sticks, tennis rackets and oars for boats. The seeds are known as 'Keys' and grow in bunches.

Rowan (*Sorbus Aucuparia*) *

Height 65ft (20m)

Lives up to 200yrs

Connected with witchcraft from ancient times, the tree was often planted outside houses and in church yards to ward off witches. The timber is used for making tool handles and was sometimes used instead of Yew for making long-bows. Have bright red/orange berries in the autumn.



The Parachute



BIRDS YOU MAY SEE IN THE YEW TRAIL & POND AREA

Listed below are birds that have been seen within the woods and pond area at Ulverscroft Manor.

Grey Heron	Mallard	Buzzard
Sparrow Hawk	Kestrel	Pheasant
Moorhen	Woodcock	Wood Pigeon
Stock Dove	Collard Dove	Cuckoo
Tawny Owl	Green Woodpecker	Swallow
Great Spotted Woodpecker	Kingfisher	House Martin
Common Crow	Jackdaw	Jay
Magpie	Blue Tit	Great Tit
Coal Tit	Marsh Tit	Long Tailed Tit
Nuthatch	Tree Creeper	Wren
Mistle Thrush	Song Thrush	Fieldfare
Redwing	Blackbird	Robin
Blackcap	Whitethroat	Chiffchaff
Goldcrest	Spotted Flycatcher	Dunnock
Pied Wagtail	Grey Wagtail	Starling
Greenfinch	Chaffinch	House Sparrow



The Bird Hide (Yew Lodge)

BADGERS

In the Yew Trail area there are active Badger Setts. These can be seen to the right of the red path going towards the parachute.

Badgers have been described as the oldest land-owners in Britain.

Long before Britain was an island they were here.

They belong to the same family of mammals that have musk-bearing glands under their tails - including the otters, polecat, stoat, weasel and pine marten.

Badgers live in groups of up to 15 in an earthen sett. The sett is lined with moss and grass which the badger renews frequently. There will also be a special nesting chamber off the regular sett. They live in woods and copses, especially if attached to pastureland and can occasionally be seen in suburbs.

Badgers have a widespread distribution in the UK, with more in the wild/wet areas of the south and south-west, and fewer in flat and farmed areas, and above 900m.

The Badger grows up to 30 inches (750 mm) from head to tail - with a six-inch (150 mm) tail, and weighs up to about 10 to 12 kg.

The female badger is slightly smaller than the male.

The hair is black and white - leading to a grey appearance from a distance. The badger has a black chest and forepaws; with a prominent black and white striped head with white ears.

Badger cubs have a high-pitched whickering. Adults growl or bark as a warning or purr with pleasure. They are also known to emit a long-drawn scream (reason unknown).

Although the badger is classed as a carnivore (it has large canine teeth), it is essentially omnivorous. As well as earthworms, beetles, voles, mice, frogs, snails and wasps, it also eats acorns, beech mast, bulbs, fruits and roots.

Badgers normally produce a single litter of between 2 and 3 cubs born from January to March. The cubs are born blind, with dirty white fur on their upper body only.

Many cubs die within their first year, although those that do survive often live for up to five years or more.



Badger information and pictures courtesy of WWW.BADGERLAND.CO.UK

SHELTER BUILDING AREA

Situated to the left and right hand side of the shelter building area are two racks containing the raw materials for creating structures such as the one illustrated below. In the green 'compost type' bin is bio-degradable twine and straw for the floor.

No tools should be required.



SAFETY

The Yew Trail, flight pond and all other areas of the site are natural environments and while every effort has been made to minimise risk we ask all group leaders to ensure that the children in their care are aware of the natural hazards within a woodland / pond area, behave accordingly and abide by the Yew Trail Code shown overleaf..

In addition please take extreme care when crossing roads, driveways and the car park areas within the site.

For further information refer to the risk assessment within the booking pack.

Please advise your group leaders that should any member of your group become lost while on the Yew Trail area of the site they should make their way along the coloured paths to the Parachute Meeting Point and wait.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Shuttlewood Clarke Foundation

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SHUTTLEWOOD CLARKE FOUNDATION

Support, Care & Friendship

THE YEW TRAIL CODE

*WE HOPE THAT YOU HAVE A WONDERFUL DAY
EXPLORING THE YEW TRAIL*

*To help protect the trail for future visitors please read and
follow the advice shown below:*

- 1) **BE SAFE:**
TAKE CARE ON UNEVEN GROUND.
THESE PATHS ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR
WHEELCHAIRS & MOBILITY AIDS.
WATCH OUT FOR OBSTACLES.
DO NOT WANDER OFF ON YOUR OWN.
SOME PLANTS, FUNGI & BERRIES ARE POISONOUS:
TAKE PROPER CARE.
ALWAYS WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE EATING
FOOD.

- 2) **LOOK AFTER THE ENVIRONMENT:**
KEEP TO THE MARKED PATHS.
TAKE YOUR LITTER HOME.
DO NOT HARM OR DAMAGE PLANTS, TREES, FUNGI,
ANIMALS AND THEIR HABITATS.
DO NOT START FIRES.

- 3) **RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE & THEIR PROPERTY.**

THE YEW TRAIL OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

The development of the **Yew Trail Outdoor Classroom** site at Ulverscroft near Markfield (less than 10 miles from the centre of Leicester) is now into its second year.

Working with the RSPB, National Forest, BTCV, Groundwork and Leicestershire County Council the Foundation has created a wonderful educational environment in the heart an English Woodland.

Features include the **parachute learning area**, **woodland trails** through a site rich with wildlife (active **Badger sets**, **Muntjac Deer**, a wide variety of **birds, bugs & beetles**) a **bird hide**, **tree trail**, **opportunities for shelter building** and a **pond dipping area**.

By the **first week of May** this year there will be installed, deep within the wood, a **Yurt** (Central Asia Nomadic Tent) Classroom for up to 30 children offering endless opportunities to experience and learn in an unparalleled magical setting.

The whole site provides the stimulus to learn about the environment, enjoy the outdoors and link the day's activities to a wide variety of curriculum subjects.

Make your next school visit a visit to the Yew Trail.
'A real wilderness experience on your doorstep'

To arrange a **pre-visit trip** and/or request a **Yew Trail pack** please contact the Foundation on 01530 244914 or via yewtrail@shuttlewood-clarke.org

To find out more about the Foundation & the Yew Trail visit www.shuttlewood-clarke.org

We look forward to hearing from you.

Alan Norman
Chief Executive

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