

Ledbury Naturalists' Field Club

## **Field Survey 2006**

### **Hollybush**



**February 2007**

## **Acknowledgements**

**Project Coordinator:** Peter Garnett

**Document, Data Collation**

**And Photography:** Janet Parry

**Graphics:** Alan Parry

**Members who carried out the survey, whose expertise and help was vital to the success of the project**

Ann Bowker	Felicity Burge	Gillian Davis	Lorna Garnett
Peter Garnett	Jenny Grant	Cherry Greenway	John Meiklejohn
Janet Parry	David Taft	Stephanie Thomson	Lorraine Weaver

**Validation of observations and checking of data:**

John Meiklejohn, Stephanie Thompson, Gillian Davies and Peter Garnett.

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## Introduction

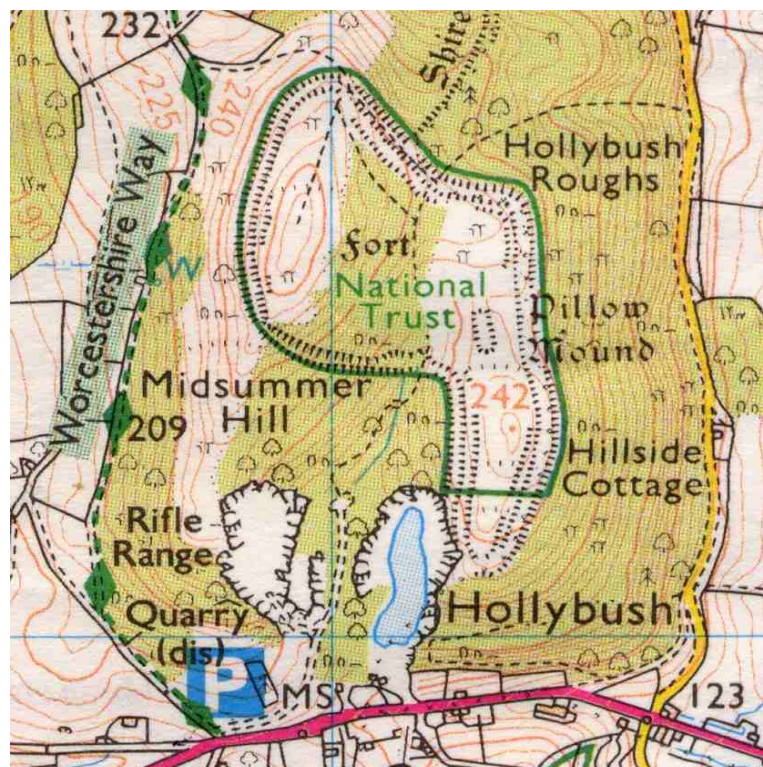
In 2006, Ledbury Naturalists' Field Club decided to survey another local site and add to the work done over the last 8 years. The Hollybush area on the Malvern Hills was chosen to contrast with the calcareous woodlands which have been recorded over the last few years. There is also easy public access and parking space and it is a well known beauty spot very familiar to walkers.

## Background

The Malvern Hills are a familiar landmark on the eastern borders of Herefordshire, about 5km east of Ledbury. The hills vary in height but stand, on average between 200 and 400 metres above sea level. The ridge is mainly made of igneous, Precambrian and Cambrian rocks between 1,000 and 500 million years old. They have been subsequently folded, faulted and eroded to give the now familiar outline. The granite rock gives rise to thin acidic soils on the ridges, which are prone to drought in summer and are not very rich in plant nutrients. On the lower slopes particularly on the west where the Silurian limestone abuts the older rock, there is more depth of soil and trees can survive and the soil is more calcareous. The hills have been used by our ancestors in the past and they are rich in archaeology with several obvious hill forts along the ridge. They have also been subjected to much quarrying over preceding centuries and this activity has left its mark. The hills are managed by the Malvern Hills Conservators to keep them open and freely available as a recreational area for all.

## The Survey Area

The recording area chosen was to the North of the Hollybush car park, situated off the A438 Ledbury to Tewkesbury road at SO 759369. It included the Midsummer Hill Iron Age Hill Fort owned by the National Trust also the area alongside the public footpath to the west, which was the old Worcestershire Way and adjoins the Eastnor estate. The informal path through the woodland to the east between the quarries was used as an alternative route to the top, passing through very different vegetation and yielding other species. There was evidence of old quarry workings and spoil heaps in places. The furthest point north recorded was SO 760378 and the whole area covered was about 50 hectares.



The Survey Area



## Conducting the Survey



**Peter, John and Stephanie at work**

Volunteers from Ledbury Naturalists' Field Club met monthly in 2006 to carry out the survey. The dates of the meetings were April 10<sup>th</sup>, May 17<sup>th</sup>, June 12<sup>th</sup>, July 10<sup>th</sup>, August 14<sup>th</sup>, September 11<sup>th</sup> and October 10<sup>th</sup>. On each occasion, members spent about three hours in the morning, walking round the area, either up through the woodland to the east and back via Midsummer Hill, or ascending from the footpath to the west and returning through the woodland. All flowering plants, grasses, trees, fungi, mosses, ferns, lichens, birds, insects, and other invertebrates found along the way were recorded.

As in previous years, the group was fortunate to have the assistance of several well-known experts in their field, and great

trouble was taken to verify each record to ensure the reliability of the survey as far as possible. However the records are doubtless an underestimate of the species present due to the limited time spent.

## Results and Comment

All species found were recorded. Complete details of the general survey can be found in the Appendix.

In summary the following numbers of species were noted.

Flowers	Grasses Sedges Rushes	Trees	Fungi Lichens Mosses Ferns	Birds	Butterflies and Moths	Other Insects and Invertebrates
164	50	27	99	38	10	131



**Large Beech**

The woodland to the east was dominated by Ash trees and saplings with a few Oaks and a rather thin understorey, mainly of Elder and a few Hazel bushes with Brambles and Wood Sage in the lighter parts giving way to Bracken higher up. Many of the Ash trees showed signs of earlier pollarding and were of a substantial size. There were also some large Beech trees on the steeper slopes to the west. There were 27 species of tree recorded in total, mainly native broadleaved, though there were also some Scots Pine and Japanese Larch. Nearer the top of the woodland were some Crab Apple and Wild Cherry. There was

Spindle and Blackthorn in the hedgerows and in the car park, the hedge was mainly English Elm which now only survives as suckers. There was an abundance of *Buddleja* in the small quarry now used as a shooting range.

Over 50 species of fungi were noted, mainly in the woodland which was also rich in mosses and liverworts, especially along the small stream. Large patches of Dog Lichen were found on the ground near one of the old quarry sites and 6 species of fern in the woodland.



**Honey Fungus**

The flowers were more prolific in the sunlit sections of the hillside and in the grassland on top. Of the 164 species recorded, Musk Thistle, Dwarf Thistle, Broad-leaved Helleborine, Common Stork's-bill and Spring Forget-me-not are only found in a few localities in the county. Spring Cinquefoil



**Weld**

found on the steep, grassy slope by the car park, and Small-flowered Buttercup found alongside the path near the old quarry workings are definitely rare in Herefordshire. There was a very large specimen of Weld which stood by the gate from the car park to the hillside all the season. In April, the woodland was carpeted with a stunning show of Bluebells which were quite extensively spread, though there were only a few Wild Garlic plants or Daffodils and no Wood Anemones.



There was a good range of 50 grasses, sedges and woodrushes, ranging from the acid loving Wavy Hair-grass on the summit to Quaking Grass on the lower, more calcareous grassy slopes. Six species of rush and 6 sedges were found mainly in the woodland.

The bird list included Goshawk, Green and Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Pied Flycatcher and Tawny Owl. A Cuckoo was heard in May. More solitary observations, at a different time of day may have yielded more species than the 38 noted.



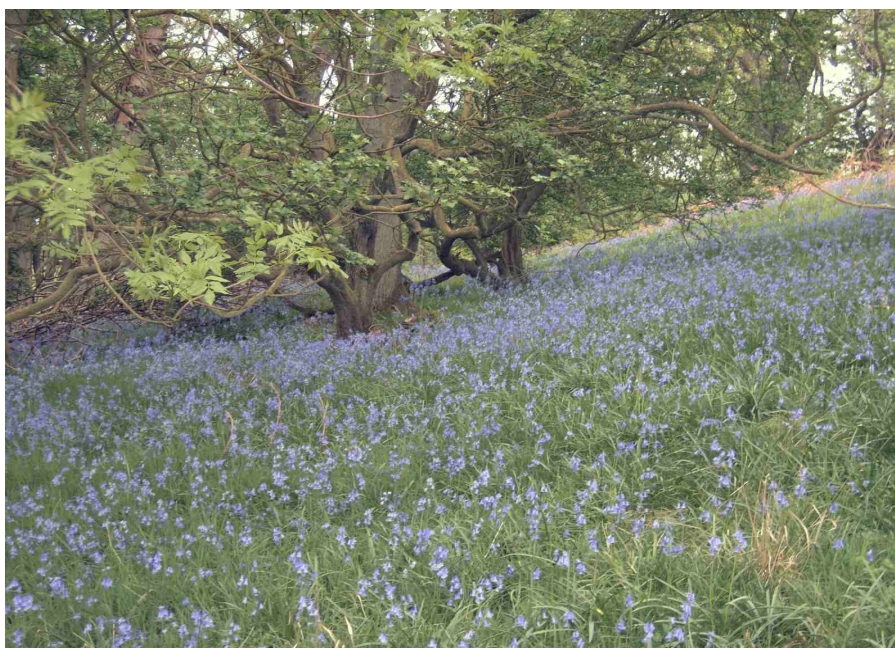
**Wavy Hair-grass with Heath Bedstraw on Midsummer Hill**

No moth traps were used this year so only 10 Lepidoptera were noted though there were 131 other invertebrates including 39 species of beetle and 22 types of bug. The Hymenoptera were represented by several species of gall wasps though very few bees or ants were seen. A range of other invertebrates such as woodlice, millipedes, spiders, slugs and snails were found.

Mammals were not formally recorded, but there was evidence of badgers and rabbits.

### **Conclusions:**

This well known site yielded no great surprises but had a good range of flora and fauna distributed between the woodland and the barer hilltop. The sheets of Bluebells in the spring were particularly spectacular. The area is well walked by the public and it is hoped that the wildlife will continue to thrive adding to their enjoyment of the glorious views to be seen from this far eastern corner of Herefordshire.



**Bluebells on Midsummer Hill**

## **And Finally**



**Peter Garnett 1929 -2006**

The field surveys the club has carried out over the last 8 years were the inspiration of Peter Garnett, the club's secretary. He planned them and organised the team and kept the records meticulously. Sadly, Peter died in November 2006 and will be greatly missed from this enterprise. The club plans to continue with the good work he began by surveying local areas and adding to the knowledge of our local wildlife.

## **Distribution**

1. Ledbury Naturalists' Field Club, survey team and committee members
2. Herefordshire Nature Trust.
3. Natural England.
4. Herefordshire Ornithological Club.
5. Herefordshire Biological Records Centre
6. Colwall Parish Council
7. Ledbury Town Council
8. Colwall Library
9. Ledbury Library
10. Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club
11. Malvern Hills Conservators





**Going home along the west path**



## **Appendix**