

DOLLYPERS HILL

NATURE RESERVE



PROTECTING *the future of* SURREY WILDLIFE



J. P. Early

Ringlet *Aphantopus hyperantus*

Dollypers Hill

People often wonder where the name 'Dollypers Hill' comes from. All the old maps give slightly different versions, such as 'Dollopers Hill', 'Dolly Pod Hill', 'Dollyper Hill' and so on. On a map by Issac Messeder dated 1762 it is shown as 'Dorrowpit Field', which is thought to be a corruption of 'Borrowpit Field'. A borrowpit is a civil engineering term, still used today, for a pit from which building materials are obtained. As there is an old pit next to Old Lodge Lane, which is very overgrown, one theory is that this is where the name came from.

Surrey Wildlife Trust has managed Dollypers Hill for the London Borough of Croydon by agreement since 1988. It forms part of a strip of countryside that separates the built-up areas of Kenley and Old Coulsdon. The reserve stands in 11.5 hectares comprising woodland, scrub and grassland. Areas of ancient woodland, chalk grassland and old field boundaries are found here.

History

Although Dollypers Hill is now a nature reserve, much of the site was originally arable land. In the past the lower valley was ploughed and parts were divided into strips to be cultivated by the 'common people'. These were similar to allotments, with one man generally owning several strips in the same field. These strips were divided by grass bands, which was normal practice at the time and followed the contours of the land. The continual ploughing turned these grass bands into ridges known as 'lynchets'.

The reserve lies between Old Lodge Lane and the end of Caterham Drive and is located near to Kenley aerodrome, which saw action in World War II. A radar controlled searchlight and an anti-aircraft gun were located on the site, along with an ammunition store. Despite these protective measures a 1000lb bomb, presumably meant for the airfield, hit the site. The resulting crater was filled in over five years with old bicycles, car engines and other assorted junk.



Yellow Archangel
Lamium galeobdolon



Eyebright
Euphrasia sp.



11.5 ha 28 acres



North

Old Lodge Lane



- KEY:
- Mixed Woodland
 - Scrub
 - Grassland
 - Pond
 - Footpaths

Caterham Drive

Dollypers Hill grid ref: TQ 315 584



Management

The main aim of management on this site is to maintain a balance between the different habitats. Most of the work involves scrub clearance to benefit the chalk grassland. This has had some spectacular effects on the flora, with over 200 pyramidal orchids emerging, when before there were none. Ground flora is important for the butterflies found at the site, including a locally scarce population of small blue.

Every autumn grass cutting is carried out. Most areas are divided into two, with alternate areas being cut each year, as this allows over-wintering insects to survive. The raked-up hay is piled around the edges where it is used to create habitat piles. Grass cutting is a valuable form of habitat management beneficial to the greater yellow rattle, a Red Data Book species which is quite common in Croydon. Dogwood is a problem species, which spreads very easily, so it is important that it is kept under control by cutting back.

Ecology

The northern section of the woodland consists of old ash and hazel coppice, with a notable lack of oak trees, which may be due to the woods past use. Coppicing has allowed many of the flowering plants to flourish, with bluebells dominating the clay with flint areas and dog's mercury dominating the chalk areas. Of particular note are the abundant sheets of wood anemone, along with the large numbers of the parasitic plant toothwort, which grow on the roots of hazel. Other woodland plants in this area include yellow archangel, goldilocks, moschatel and twayblade.

The main part of the site consists of grassland and the reduction in rabbit numbers has led to areas becoming scrubbed over. The slopes to the west have small areas of good chalk flora and contain plants such as grass vetchling, eyebright, kidney vetch, bird's-foot trefoil and quaking grass.

Birds recorded on the reserve over the years range from sparrowhawks and kestrels to goldcrests and long tailed tits. Less common visitors include the hawfinch and brambling.

The reserve has a good range of habitats, but there is a need for active management through continuation of scrub clearance and coppicing if they are not to be lost.

What to look out for:

Plants

Bee orchid
Bird's-foot trefoil
Bluebell
Common eyebright
Common spotted orchid
Dog's mercury
Forget-me-not
Kidney vetch
Lords and ladies
Moschatel
Pyramidal orchid
Red campion
Toothwort
Twayblade
Wood anemone
Yellow archangel

Birds

Fieldfare
Goldcrest
Green woodpecker
Kestrel
Long tailed tit
Redwing
Sparrowhawk

Butterflies

Brimstone
Common blue
Large skipper
Orange tip
Peacock
Ringlet
Small blue
Speckled wood

Trees

Dogwood
Guelder rose
Hawthorn
Pendunculate oak
Spindle
Whitebeam
Yew

Fungi

Blushing bracket
Earthstar
Honey fungus
Many-zoned polypore
Velvet shank



Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus*

Illustration: Carol Yesson



General Information

The reserve is situated near Kenley. Access to the site is from either Old Lodge Lane, to the north, or from Caterham Drive, to the south.

You can travel to the site by bus numbers 404, 409 and 466 all stopping half a mile away. For more information on public transport call Surrey Traveline on 0870 6082608.

Work parties on all our reserves are held throughout the year on weekdays and Sundays through the winter. Help on these is always welcome. Please call the Trust on 01483 795440 if you would like details of these or any other aspect of our work.

Management of this reserve is helped through a grant from the Norlands Foundation

Please keep dogs on leads and respect the countryside code. Enjoy your visit.

Surrey Wildlife Trust is a member of The Wildlife Trust Partnership.



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Green Wood Pecker *Picus viridis*

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