

# Shropshire Wildlife Trust



## The Violet Trail

A two-mile walk exploring Llyncllys Common nature reserve, a wildlife-rich limestone hill with traces of vanished industries and panoramic views.

Start from the layby on the A495, about 400m west of Llyncllys Crossroads.

Walk along the grass verge and then left up Turner's Lane. Take the first path off to the right by the map panel. When you come to the end of the path, opposite a house, turn left up the hill until you meet a bridleway where you turn left again to meet another bridleway, then right up the hill. Stay on this path until you come to a distinct fork. Here, the Shropshire Way (yellow & black discs), goes to the right – you need to take the left path. You will soon reach a stone-surfaced track with another map panel; take the path to the right, shortly passing through a kissing gate to join the Shropshire Way.

Quite soon you emerge from the woods into open grassland on the common. Carry on until you reach a waymarker post on your left. Turn left, leaving the Shropshire Way and walk across the open common, looking out for another waymarker post ahead, then through some silver birch, hawthorn, a crab apple and an ash until the path takes you to a kissing gate. Go through the gate and on through the wicket gate opposite a house. Turn right along the first track through the woods. Stay on this track for quite a while ignoring paths to the left and right. After a while you emerge at a crossing of tracks, turn right just after another map panel. Pass the house called The Firs and take a grassy footpath towards another map panel.

### Viewpoint

This place is known locally as Jacob's Ladder. From here you can see Llyncllys Quarry and the Oswestry Hills beyond. The highest point is summit of The Moelydd, below which is Jones' Rough Nature Reserve. Further west you have fabulous views up the Tanat Valley into Wales and on the horizon, the ridge of the Berwyn Mountains and (on a very clear day) Cadair Idris.

Turn right downhill. At the staggered crossroads of paths go straight on (not following the Shropshire Way) and then left at the next path junction and straight on, to go through a gate, keeping the fence on your left as you walk downhill.

Much of this woodland was coppiced in the past. Clearings would be cut for firewood, fencing materials, tool handles and other products. This would then be allowed to grow back and be re-cut some years later when the re-growth was the right size for what was needed. The by-product of this was a woodland rich in wildlife as the variety of habitat types provided for a greater range of insects, birds and flora. The Trust, working with a local commoner, has been re-coppicing parts of this woodland.

## Oliver's Pool

When you reach the next path the trail turns left but you can turn right to visit Oliver's Pool hidden away on your left, by a large hawthorn tree. In the summer it may look more like a swamp than a pond, but usually enough water remains in the centre for late tadpoles to keep growing. In late summer the common turns purple and blue with knapweed and devil's bit scabious, excellent flowers for bees and butterflies.



On sunny days look out for the silver-washed fritillary, a large orange-brown butterfly that sometimes stops on knapweed or bramble flowers.

Meadow browns, common blue and gatekeeper are also commonly seen.

From the pond, retrace your steps a short way back toward the woodland. Look out for a wooden field gate (not the kissing gate to the left), go through and go straight on, following the path downhill. Soon you will reach the embankment of Offa's Dyke. The Trust has begun to clear trees from the dyke to protect it from damage and make it easier to see.

### Through the woods

Follow this path until you meet another to your right, marked by a rock. This takes you uphill, through trees. Where another path crosses yours, turn left downhill and then right through the woodland. Follow this winding path for some way until another path joins from the right. Bear left here. This leads you down to an open area, once a quarry, known as Upper Butchers. Explore if you have time: several species of orchid can be seen in the spring and summer; silver-washed fritillaries in July and August. Go straight ahead up the little path through the trees.

When you meet a wider track turn left downhill. Then cross a track, through a kissing gate, to Anthill Meadow, following the path through the anthills then up into woodland again. Go over a stile, along the edge of the wood, keeping the fence on your left. At the path junction follow the bridleway to the left, downhill. You will then find yourself Turner's Lane once again. Follow it back down to the main road and the layby.

### If you get lost....

There are many paths on Llyncllys Common and it can be very confusing. Trust your instincts, you will get out eventually and remember that what you discover on your own is always more exciting than what someone else discovers for you....

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*Illustrations by Bob Guy.*

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Shropshire Wildlife Trust, 193 Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury SY2 6AH

Charity: 212744

