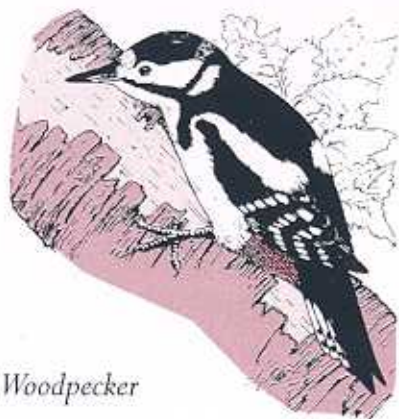


## ANCIENT WOODLANDS

Cooper's, Twiland, and Ell Woods, are all examples of 'ancient' semi-natural woodland; remnants of the vegetation which covered Britain after the last Ice Age, c. 8,000 years ago. They may not have been cleared, because the many streams here make the land unsuitable for agriculture, but they would have been coppiced for wood and used for hunting. Their long history and management makes these woods important for wildlife today with plants like Bluebell, Wood Anemone, Wood Sorrel, Yellow Archangel and Ramsons flowering in spring, and birds such as Sparrowhawk, Great Spotted Woodpecker and Treecreeper.

Unfortunately, many of these woods have received little appropriate management in recent years, and non native conifers have been introduced into some, thereby reducing their ecological value. Correct woodland management includes regular coppicing and thinning which encourages wildlife.



Great Spotted Woodpecker

## WASELEY HILLS COUNTRY PARK

150 acres of woodland and pasture managed by Worcestershire County Council. From the toposcope on Windmill Hill you can see the Malverns and Cotswolds. There is an information centre and cafe housed in an ancient timber framed barn. There is a childrens play area.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ART

During 1996 the Illey Way was the subject of a 'gateway art' initiative which aimed to celebrate the varied countryside encountered on the route by creating sympathetic pieces of environmental art. Using locally cut limestone blocks, artist Mick Farrell produced 10 sculpture 'stepping stones' and a stone squeeze stile. Over 200 people were involved in designing, sketching and carving the stones. A metal sculpture evocative of the former railway also stands at the site of the railway viaduct at Dowry Dell.

## CARING FOR THE COUNTRYSIDE

Worcestershire County Council's Countryside Service and the Dudley Countryside Management Project are working to help improve the countryside of this area. If you would like to find out more about their work or other walks in the area, please contact either:

WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

Tel: 01905 766407 or

DUDLEY COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Tel: 01384 814189

## USEFUL INFORMATION

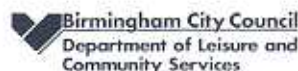
Distance: Approximately 4.5 miles (7.2km)

Be prepared for all kinds of weather, wear comfortable strong footwear and please keep dogs under control. There are hilly and difficult sections on the walk.

Public Transport: The Illey Way is accessible via public transport. To find out the best connections for you call the Worcestershire County Council County Bus Line on 0870 6082608 or the Centro Bus and Rail Line on 0121 200 2700.

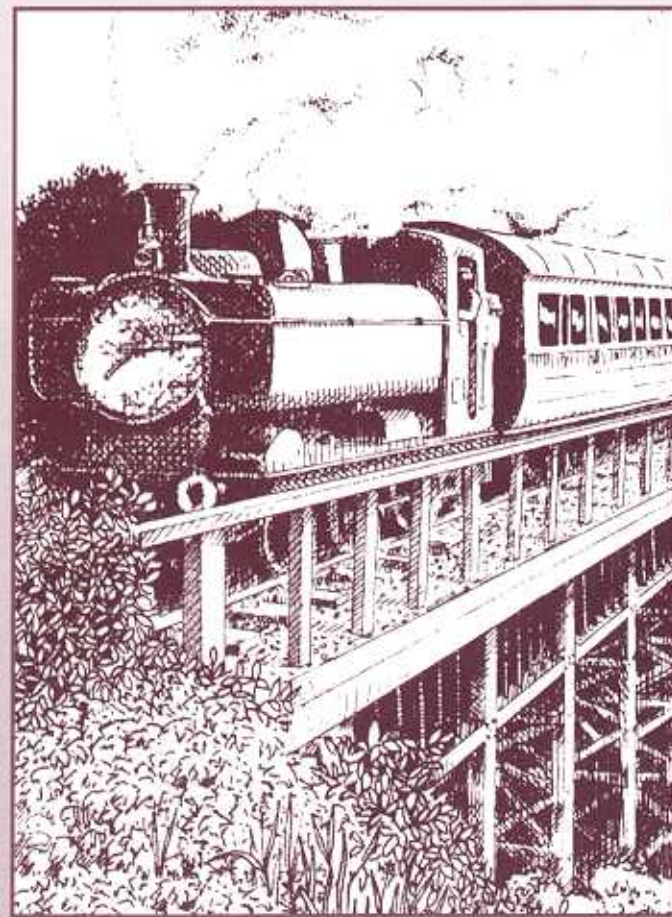


worcestershire  
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# ILLEY WAY

# Walkers Guide



Discovering Worcestershire

## PLACES OF INTEREST



A Green Lane

### GREEN LANES

These double-hedged sunken lanes or 'hollow-ways', may have been formed by water erosion after use by heavy carts and other traffic over many years. They could be medieval in origin, forming part of a network that served the Manor of Hales. The diversity of hedgerow plants suggests an ancient origin.

### WOODGATE VALLEY

Owned and managed by Birmingham City Council, the 450 acres (175 ha) of countryside were designated a Country Park in 1984. There is an urban farm by the Park and pony trekking is available. Refreshments are on sale in the visitor centre.

### HALESOWEN ABBEY (St. Mary's Abbey)

Although the Abbey ruins are not visible from the Illey Way the route does cross some of the 10,000 acres (4000ha) formerly controlled by the Abbot. The Abbey was founded in 1215 by the White Canons of the Premonstratensian Order (from France), but was ruined after its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1538.

### DOWRY DELL VIADUCT

Also known as Frankley or Hunnington Viaduct, it was built in 1881 to carry the Old Hill - Halesowen - Longbridge railway, which opened 2 years later. The viaduct was 600ft (180m) long and 100ft (30m) high and consisted of two stone abutments and eight cast iron piers resting on blue brick bases (these are the only visible remains today). Originally called the Halesowen Railway, the Halesowen to Longbridge section became a joint line between the Great Western Railway and Midland Railway in 1906. After transport nationalisation in 1948, the line became part of the Western Region of the newly created British Railways.

Passenger services on the line ceased in 1919 but workmen's services for the Austin Motor Company's factory at Longbridge continued until 1958. Goods traffic ended in 1964 when the railway south of Halesowen closed due to the building of the M5. The Dowry Dell Viaduct was dismantled a year later.



Environmental Art at Waseley Hills Country Park

### BOUNDARY STONES

At the base of many of the stiles in the area is a large boulder that may have been a boundary marker for Halesowen Abbey land or, more recently, Manor Abbey Farm.

### 'RIDGE AND FURROW'

#### Illey Meadows

It was medieval practice to allocate farmers strips of land rather than extensive holdings. To show ownership and improve drainage, each was ploughed by oxen which produced a raised ridge with furrows at either side for drainage. Surviving 'ridge and furrow' indicates that the land has not been deep ploughed by modern techniques. Illey Meadows is also a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation - plants include Common Spotted Orchid, Carnation Sedge and Quaking Grass.



Wild flowers at Illey Meadow

### ILLEY PASTURES

These two ancient meadows contain a variety of rare plants including Common Spotted Orchid, Sneezewort, Yellow Rattle, Pepper Saxifrage, Dyer's Greenweed and Quaking Grass, and are now designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. In order that the meadows remain botanically rich, they are grazed in a traditional manner and receive no fertilisers or herbicides.

