

**Perry Wood has a long and varied history, and has existed in some form since Anglo-Saxon times. Early names include Pirian, Pirie and Pirywode, suggesting that it was the "wood by the pear tree". Generations of people have influenced the character of the wood, with the importance of agriculture and forestry declining in the 20th century in favour of wildlife conservation and recreation.**

This ancient woodland with King's Field to the north became Perry Wood Local Nature Reserve in 1987. It is now managed for recreation and wildlife by Worcester City Council.



*Bluebell*

In spring the ancient woodlands are awash with Bluebells, Ramsons and Wood Anemone, especially in coppiced areas. Coppicing means that we cut down the Hazel trees in a small area of the wood, and when the Hazel grows back, it has lots of small stems, instead of one large one. The mature Oak and Ash trees are left to grow on as "standards". Managing the wood in this traditional way means that there is always an area of the wood with lots of light, which some butterflies and flowers need to thrive. Purple and White-letter Hairstreak butterflies can be spotted at the edges of the coppice plots and the woodland glade ①.

Perry Wood was managed as "coppice with standards" between the 17th and late 19th centuries, and probably earlier. The Hazel was cut for firewood, hurdles and stakes for hedging then left to grow for around 10 years. Some of the Oaks and mature Ash would have been cut for building, when they were between 80 and 100 years old. We still use the Hazel for hedging stakes as well as repairing paths, but the main reason we cut it is because it's good for wildlife.



*Coppiced Hazel with Oak standards*

Sometimes we cut down mature Oaks, again to let in more light. If the timber is suitable, we use it for making furniture such as benches and information boards for the City's nature reserves. Some areas of the wood are left untouched, particularly the sloped western edge ② where Hornbeam and Cherry are more common, and some trees are selected to become veterans, providing habitat for a host of specialised insects as well as nesting and feeding sites for birds. Look out for Greater Spotted Woodpeckers, Treecreepers, Nuthatches, Jays, Sparrowhawks and Buzzards.

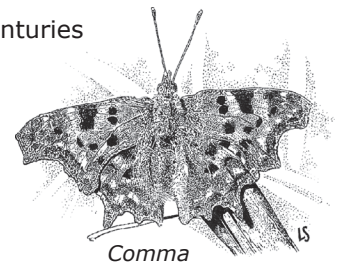


*Jay on Oak branch*

In the past the Deer and livestock may have grazed in the wood, so it was common to surround a wood with a bank and ditch, possibly topped by a hedge or fence. On the northern edge of the wood (the oldest boundary) the surviving traditional bank and ditch ③ are still clearly visible today.

The "ridge and furrow" pattern ④ on the field is at least 200 years old, and was formed by centuries of ploughing before the field was left to pasture, sometime before 1820.

While a large area of grass is cut short, at the edge of the field next to the woodland the grass is left long to allow the wildflowers and grasses to flower and set seed. This provides nectar sources for many insects, and in the summer this area is awash with Ringlet, Green-veined White, Meadow Brown and Orange Tip butterflies. Green Woodpeckers feed on ants in the open field, and the long grass gives shelter for Slow-worms and small mammals.



*Comma*



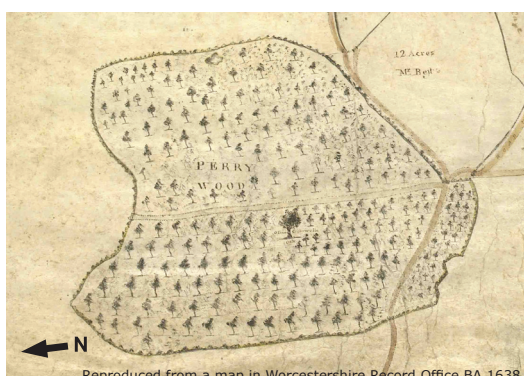
*Re-enactors in Civil War dress*

The trench ⑤ in King's Field may have been a holloway or a medieval quarry, and may have been used by parliamentary forces who had an encampment in the wood during the Battle of Worcester in 1651. A map of 1790 shows the position of 'Cromwell's Oak'.

The mixture of scrub and bramble in the trench and at the northern end of the reserve adds to the overall diversity of the site. Small tortoiseshell butterflies feed on bramble flowers, and the scrub provides nesting and breeding sites for a variety of woodland and garden birds.

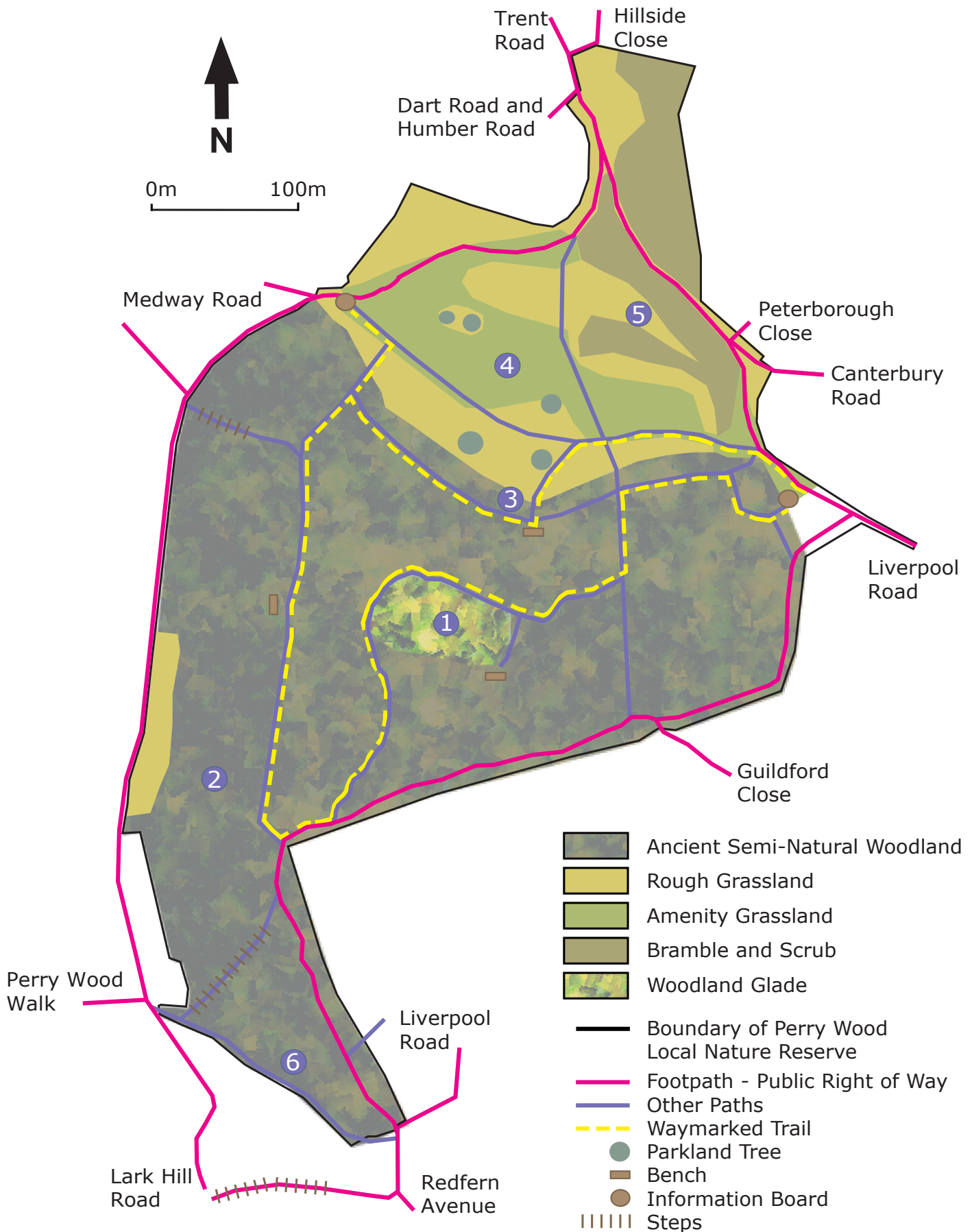


*Hawthorn blossom*



The boundaries of the wood have changed little since 1839, when 5 hectares of woodland to the southeast of the current wood (where the majority of Liverpool Road is now) was cleared for pasture. At the Marley Banks ⑥, a holloway created by centuries of passing feet and carts marks the southern boundary of the Reserve.

**Map of Perry Wood in 1790, showing 'Cromwell's Oak'**



# Perry Wood Local Nature Reserve

For further information please contact the Customer Service Centre on 01905 722233 or visit [www.worcester.gov.uk/parks](http://www.worcester.gov.uk/parks)

