

Severn Gorge  
COUNTRYSIDE  
Trust

# Lloyds Coppice

IRONBRIDGE GORGE

# Discover Lloyds Coppice

Like the people of the Severn Gorge, The Lloyds has seen prosperity and poverty, industrial frenzy and recessional decline.

It holds the secrets of its long and turbulent history in the shadows of its trees. It grips the steep sides of the Gorge with a tenacity characteristic of the local community. It may be a tough, resilient place where life has never been easy, even for the rich, but it is also a generous place, willing to give up its stories to an inquiring visitor and reveal a rare beauty to those who venture in the wood with an open heart.

## WILD FORCES

The wild force which shapes the nature of Lloyds Coppice is generated by two conflicting powers.



The first is the **River Severn** which is constrained by the Gorge it has carved here since the Ice Age. The river, often in turmoil and flood in recent years, is still gnawing through the rock of its bed and undercutting the banks.

The second is the geology of this part of the Gorge. Formed of sandstones containing coal and overlain with clays deposited during the Ice Age, the almost vertical sides of the Gorge are very unstable. Occasionally, on the steepest northern slopes, the clay gets waterlogged and

sections shear away from the rock, slumping down, drawn by gravity and the river's ceaseless erosion of its banks. These landslides, some only a few metres wide, others the size of football pitches, leave a cliff behind them with tumbled clay and stones forming irregular platforms in front. This changes the way water moves down the slopes and forms springs, wet flushes and pools below.

Many of these pools are beautifully garden-like. Overhung by alder trees, the shadowy water wraps around boulders with ferns, moss and golden saxifage growing on them. The process which produces these wonderful little water gardens from the chaos of landslides is one of ecological succession. From dormant seeds in soil to those which drift in on the wind, areas of bare earth are soon colonised, establishing conditions for other plants to gain a purchase. Then surrounding trees move in.

This is not a simple linear process from bare earth to mature woodland because natural disturbance, in the form of landslides, disease, fire and climatic changes, happen frequently in the long life of the wood. By being geologically unstable and vulnerable to the river's power, the nature of Lloyds Coppice is very dynamic and this gives it a fascinating ecology.



## HUMAN FORCES

The other major force acting on these woods and adding to its dynamic ecology is human action. The sandstone contains coal, the remains of forests laid down millions of years ago in the Carboniferous period, and iron, the very stuff of the Industrial Revolution which began in this valley.

Although small-scale mining had been carried out for centuries, the intensive, industrialised working of clay, coal and ironstone in Lloyds Coppice began in 1750. Although only the ruins of an **Engine House** remain as a silent witness to this industry, the effect of centuries of mining has accelerated the natural land movement.

This is a post-industrial landscape and a humbling lesson in the ability of Nature to transcend the arrogance of human ambition.



At the eastern end of Lloyds Coppice are what look like the blunted ends of old tunnels. These are the remains of the cold stores which once lay beneath **Madeley Wood Hall**, a 19th century manor house belonging



Inside the unquiet shadows of the trees, imagine the ghost of one of the Hall's gardeners returning to see the results of his labours, only to find half a century of dereliction. As he lights his pipe, made perhaps from clay hewn from the slopes of this very woodland and manufactured across the Gorge in Broseley, he can think about his work and what it meant. For all his skill, gardening has only a slender purchase on the workings of this wood which has ebbed and flowed across these steep slopes since the river carved it out. Even the embellishments of the rich and powerful count for nothing. The splendid formal gardens, so immaculately tended, are little more than a flicker of colour in the long green history of Lloyds Coppice. The woods have reclaimed even the idea of a building; only scraps of walls remain. And yet, something of the gardener spans the centuries.



to the Anstice family, powerful local industrialists.

Some garden plants have worked their way into natural processes of recolonisation and survived. Laurel bushes, once clipped into hedges now form gangly, evergreen thickets. Periwinkle, neat and lawnlike, has naturalised on surrounding banks. Clumps of Japanese knotweed, loved by Victorians, loathed by modern conserva-



tionists, poke defiant spearheads through the undergrowth. Lloyds Coppice has absorbed these resilient fugitives from the garden as it has the remnants of heathland, grassland and ancient woodland into its dynamic ecology, to produce a woodland republic of equal constituents.

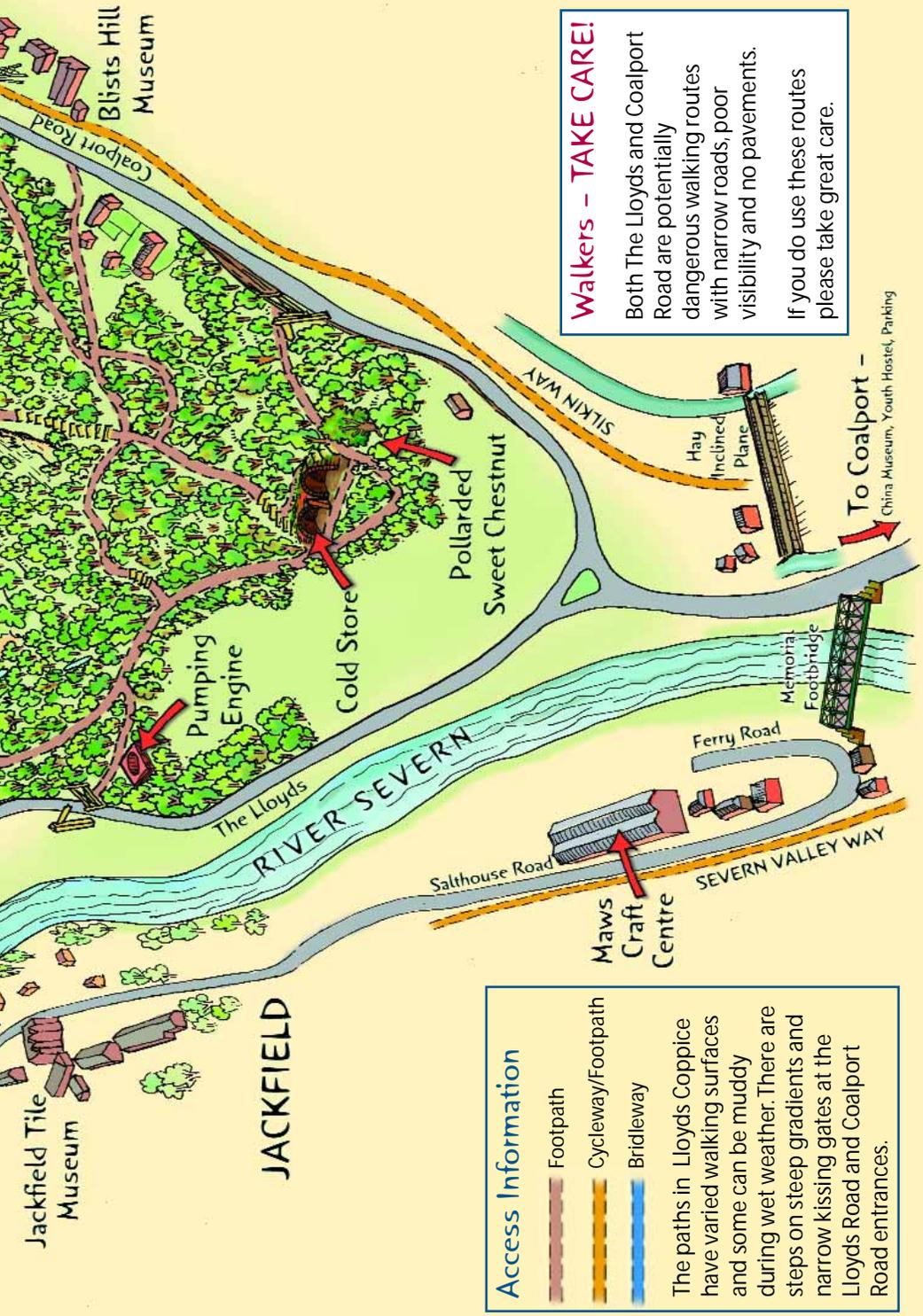
A few yards away is a huge old tree. Its great trunk bears the stumps of older branches like severed tusks and now tall stems rise high into the sky. This is a **sweet chestnut** which may well be much older than the great house it stood in front of and although it has been pollarded, fashioned to provide a bold, imposing emblem of grandeur, over the years it has broken free and grown its own way. This tree is much more than the symbol of a bygone age. It may bear the signature of privilege



but it is now a powerful presence in its own right and part of a living archive written into the ecology of Lloyds Coppice about the cultural influence of people on this place. This is a complicated story which goes back a long way.

# Lloyds Coppice





Jackfield Tile Museum

Blists Hill Museum

# JACKFIELD

The Lloyds  
RIVER SEVERN

Pumping Engine

Cold Store

Pollarded Sweet Chestnut

Maws Craft Centre

Salthouse Road

Ferry Road

Memorial Footbridge

Hay Inclined Plane

SILKIN WAY

To Coalport -  
China Museum, Youth Hostel, Parking

## Access Information

-  Footpath
-  Cycleway/Footpath
-  Bridleway

The paths in Lloyds Coppice have varied walking surfaces and some can be muddy during wet weather. There are steps on steep gradients and narrow kissing gates at the Lloyds Road and Coalport Road entrances.

**Walkers - TAKE CARE!**

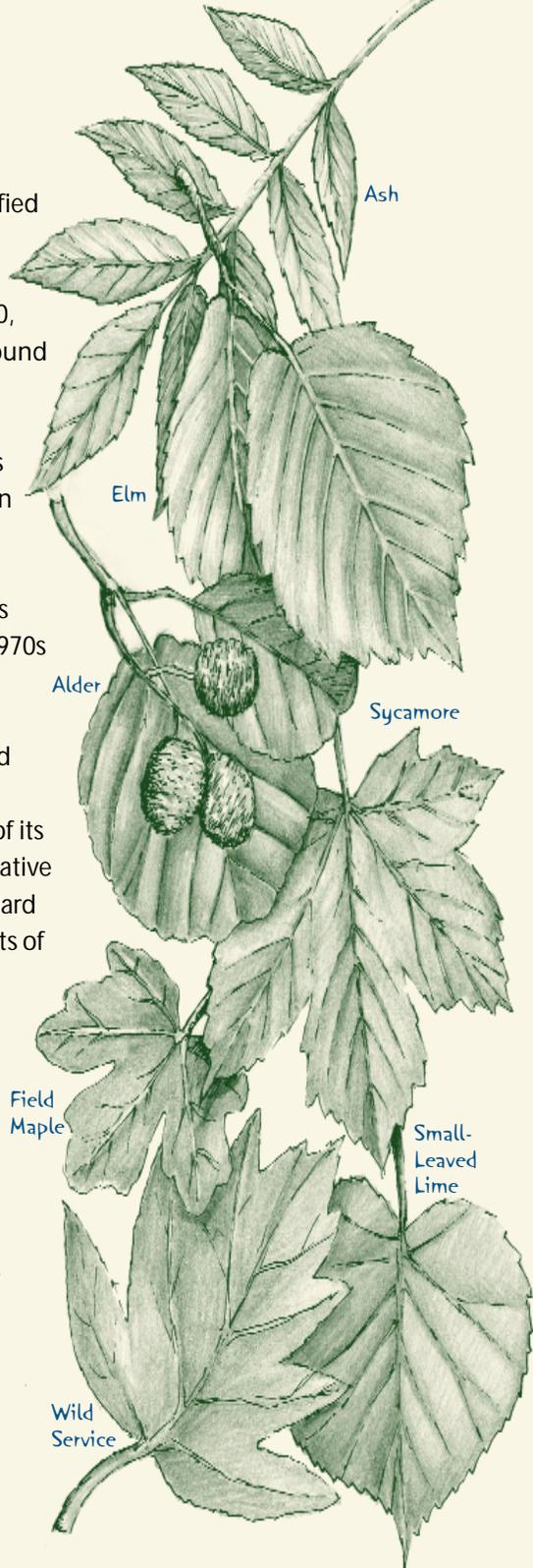
Both The Lloyds and Coalport Road are potentially dangerous walking routes with narrow roads, poor visibility and no pavements. If you do use these routes please take great care.

## TREES, WOODLAND AND CHANGE

All 40 hectares of these woods are classified as ancient semi-natural woodland; ancient because there has been woodland cover here since at least 1600, and semi-natural because of the profound influence of human activity.

These categories of time and naturalness are reflected in the composition of trees in the wood. The most noticeable trees are:

- ◆ ash, a great native coloniser
- ◆ elm – young trees only, the old elms were killed by disease during the 1970s
- ◆ alder, in the wet lower areas
- ◆ sycamore, introduced from Europe during the 15th or 16th century and now ubiquitous
- ◆ hornbeam, probably too far north of its range in southeast England to be native here but planted because its iron-hard timber was used in the moving parts of wooden machinery
- ◆ cherry, with magnificent spring blossom and horizontally banded bark
- ◆ sweet chestnut, introduced from southern Europe in Roman times.
- ◆ Oak, with some fine old coppiced individuals
- ◆ birch predominate where there are acid deposits from mine spoil
- ◆ Much less frequent are field maple, small-leaved lime and wild service, indigenous trees more commonly





found across the river on Wenlock Edge.

- ◆ Scattered throughout are yews, the dark trees which thrive on ravine sides and link back through ancient history to the deepest reaches of our imagination.

After several millennia of habitation, changes in land use, plantings of trees with commercial value, landslides and ecological succession expanded to include species introduced over the centuries, this ancient wood may bear little resemblance to its original composition. However ancient the wood may be in origin, it is obvious that there are now very few old trees. This has nothing to do with landslides. It is because Lloyds Coppice has been felled at least twice in recent history; once before the First World War and again during the Second World War. These periodic and often violent upheavals are part of the process which has been going on for as long as people have dwelt in the Severn Gorge.

## CHANGING FORTUNES

The origin of the name, The Lloyds, used to describe this area of the riverbank and subsequently the area of woodland above it, has been lost in history. What is now Lloyds Coppice once lay at the southerly end of the great Wrekin forest which was subject to forest law in early medieval times.



In 1301, **Madeley Wood**, the woodland which sloped down from Madeley to the river, was taken over by Much Wenlock priory. Under ecclesiastic control, the woodland was used for fattening 400 pigs and was one of the most productive in the county.

After the Dissolution the area passed into private ownership. Coppicing, for timber and charcoal, probably began in the 14th century. By the 15th century the western extension of Madeley Wood was called Lloyds Coppice. At this time there was already coal, ironstone and clay mining here and the methods of extraction remained similar until the 18th century.

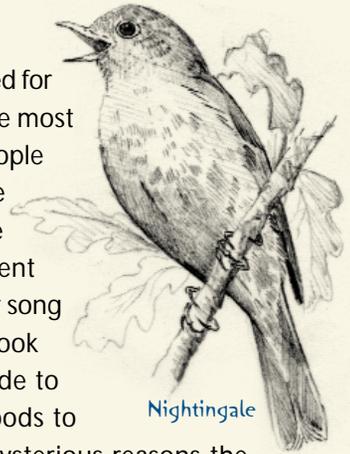
In the late 19th century, the Madeley Wood company took over all the mineral extraction in the vicinity and Lloyds Coppice

had its own colliery with tramways and railways. Owned by the Anstice family, the Madeley Wood company was prosperous, paternalistic and abolished child labour. However, the prosperity did not last. The company moved to richer, more accessible mining sites and despite building their grand house in Lloyds Coppice, the Anstices sold up and moved to New Zealand.

Throughout this history the woodland itself has always healed the scars left by people and Nature. It still has a defiantly resilient wild spirit and, haunted by those who struggled to exploit it through the centuries, Lloyds Coppice continues to cast its immutably green shadow along the river.

## THE SONG OF THE COPPICE

Throughout its history Lloyds Coppice became renowned for the recurring presence of a distinctive song, one of the most alluring in Nature: the song of the nightingale. Local people would travel miles on a summer night to listen to the magical notes of the nightingale which had one of the most northerly nesting sites in Britain here. In recent decades the nightingales failed to return and now their song is silent. When the Telford Development Corporation took over Lloyds Coppice in the 1980s attempts were made to replicate traditional coppice management of the woods to provide the ideal habitat for nightingales. But for mysterious reasons the nightingales have still not returned. This depletion in the natural range of these birds is not just a local issue but a national and international one. Other reasons for reinstating coppice management were to create greater diversity in the species which depend on light penetrating the dense tree canopy and also the economic use of local green timber.



Nightingale

The **Severn Gorge Countryside Trust** took over the management of Lloyds Coppice in 1991. It inherited ancient semi-natural woodland, patches of acidic grassland, archaeological remains, plantations, footpaths, increasing urban pressures, previous regimes of woodland management, conservation priorities and the ghosts of those who laboured here for centuries.

The Trust aims to balance the conservation of landscape, wildlife and public access and also to reinforce the cultural importance of this very special place.

Some areas of Lloyds Coppice will be managed and some allowed to manage themselves. People and Nature have always played a part in shaping this place and will continue to do so.



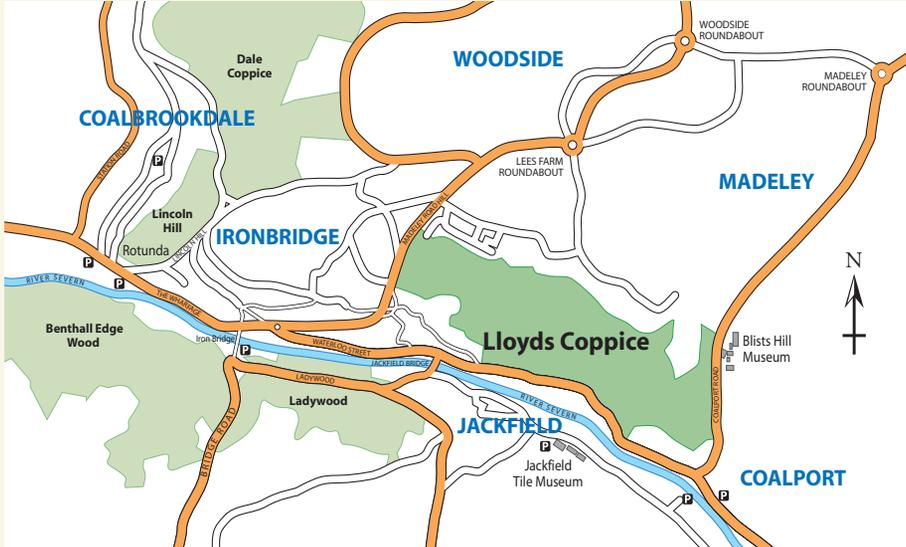
## Managing local countryside for the long term benefit of residents and visitors to the area.

The Severn Gorge Countryside Trust manages much of the woodland and other countryside that gives the Ironbridge Gorge and Coalbrookdale its distinctive landscape.

This beautiful and dramatic landscape contributes greatly to the quality of life of many local people. It also adds to the experience of the large number of visitors to the World Heritage Site.

The Trust was established in 1991 by Telford Development Corporation to manage and conserve over 270 hectares of woodland, grassland, small areas of heathland, pools and other public open spaces throughout Ironbridge, Coalbrookdale, South Madeley, Coalport, Jackfield, Sutton Maddock, Benthall and Broseley Wood for 999 years.

We work to balance the conservation of landscape, wildlife and public access and to conserve the cultural value and character of these special areas.



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**Price:  
£1.50**