

A walk around Holly Hayes Wood and Coalville Meadows

We anticipate that this walk will take you roughly 45 to 60 minutes to complete, although we have given options below for shorter routes if you prefer.

Holly Hayes Wood is on the southeast side of the village of Whitwick and is part of the ancient woodland, which was on the border of Charnwood forest. It has been in a state of decline for many years, and in 2008 was taken over by The Friends of Holly Hayes Wood who believed that the wood was worth saving.

The Friends of Holly Hayes Wood welcome people to our wood all year round, although it is at its best at the end of April, when the bluebells are out for 3 to 4 weeks. You will also be able to see the remedial work we have started on the site. Whilst visiting our site, please observe the Countryside Code.



Bluebells in Holly Hayes Wood

There are many access points to the wood from Leicester Road, Hall Lane, Hilary Crescent, Meadow Lane & St Bernards Road, but for this particular walk access by Holly Hayes Road is recommended.

There are two car parks in the centre of Whitwick, by the City of Dan, one behind the miner's wheel and a larger one across the road in front of the fish & chip shop.

Behind the Miners wheel there is a small footpath, which crosses the brook and leads to Holly Hayes Road. Just walk the full length of this road, about 300 meters following the brook, until you reach some large rocks, you are now entering Holly Hayes Wood. The main footpath on this side of the wood follows the brook.



Entrance off Holly Hayes Road

After a few meters inside the wood, the brook veers off to the right. Just keep going straight until you see the brook again a few meters further on, where there is a path which crosses the brook to a children's playing field and onto Hilary Crescent.

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Incorporating Coalville Meadows, Holly Hayes & Forest Rock Woodlands



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Looking down to the brook crossing from Hilary Crescent

By now you will have seen not only the neglect and vandalism the wood has suffered over many years, but also the beauty of this ancient woodland.

Don't cross the brook, just go straight on following it. The path twists and turns, and there are many large boulders which you will have to look out for, as you can easily miss your footing.

You will sense you are now down in a valley, with a steep bank over to the right on the other side of the brook, making it a good place to stop and listen to the birds. You may even hear the tapping of the woodpecker in the summer months, which I have heard many times, but have never seen.

There is lots of other wildlife living in the wood, and I would be surprised if you don't see a squirrel on your walk. You will also see a few trees which have come down over the years, which makes the wood look a little unsightly. In time, we hope to move some of these, but not all, as they to are great homes for wildlife.

Some of these trees are over the old path, so you have to wind your way around them. You should start to hear the sound of water coming over the dam by the duck pond, you may even hear the quacking of the ducks. Follow the sound and you should come to the restored dam on your right hand side, which has been our biggest project to date. Part of the bank had got washed away in 2002 when we had the great Whitwick flood, leaving just a big muddy hole where the pond is today. It still needs dredging out at some time, but like everything else in life, this will cost us money to get this properly dredged. We are currently working on some grant applications to help fund this.



Restored dam by Holly Hayes Pond

Most of the Dam work included filling the metal baskets with 40 tons of rock, to stop further erosion, which was all done by hand like the great pyramid!

The path at this point crosses the brook in front of the dam over some stepping stones. There was a small cottage, which was demolished a long time ago, but very little remains. As you walk around the pond, a path goes off to the right taking you back to the children's playing field (if you only wanted a short walk you could go this way back).

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Stepping stones across the brook

If not, keep going left around the pond and follow the brook through an avenue of tall poplar trees. These are sadly coming to the end of their life and need replacing with new trees ... another expensive project.



Poplar Trees

On your left is Coalville Meadow, which is protected by a SSSI, as it is a site with some rare wild flowers and grassland for this part of the country. (We would, at this moment in time, prefer you go around the meadow than across it, until an authorised path is established.)

When you come to the end of line of poplars and the brook disappears into a culvert, go up the bank and turn left, you are now on the old mineral railway line. This is the last remaining bit of the track bed from the old mineral railway line, which went to and from Whitwick Quarry.

Turn left, and as you walk along the track bed, you may even spot the odd sleeper as you walk along this path. At the end of the track, you come to one of the main paths through the wood. This is a public footpath (part bridleway) and comes from Meadow Lane on your right hand side to St Bernards Road on your left.



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Public footpath towards Meadow Lane



Public footpath towards St Bernards Road

If you turn left, follow this track all the way back into the wood. It eventually comes out on St Bernard Road.



Exit by St Bernards Road

As you walk down this path there is a large fence on your right, and a fenced off lake on your left. The lake is not owned by Friends of Holly Hayes Wood and is private. Please keep to the main path.



The lake

As you make your way back towards the wood, the end of the fence is on your right, you are now at a crossroads.

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At this spot you have reached Holly Hayes, not just as a wood, but as a place. On your left are the remains of Holly Hayes Farm, which you can very clearly see, and just up on your right, not quite so clearly outlined, is where Holly Hayes cottages stood, both were demolished in the 1960's.

You could take any way back at this point.

If you turn left, this will take you back to the duck pond where you can go back on the path you came on from Holly Hayes Road. If you go straight on, down the main public footpath, you will come out on St. Bernard's Road. Follow St Bernards road down (left out of the exit) and around until you get to Leicester Road. Turn left down the hill, and you should be back at the City of Dan and the miner's wheel.

If you decide to turn right, this path will take you up to the top of Leicester Road, just out side the village. At Leicester Road, turn left, and then walk back down the hill to the City of Dan.



Leicester Road Exit (looking down towards the wood)

We hope you have enjoyed your walk around our wood, and hope for your continued support in the coming months and years.

By Peter Firth

Executive Committee – Friends of Holly Hayes Wood

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