



# The Hudnalls NNR

## Welcome to the National Nature Reserve

The Hudnalls is situated on a steep west facing slope in the Wye Valley. It is on the border between England and Wales, approximately 3 km south west of St Briavels. The Hudnalls forms part of the Wye Valley Woodland Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and is owned and looked after by Natural England. Most of the 30 ha reserve is registered Common Land. The Hudnalls is a good example of naturalistic, unmanaged woodland.

### Land use in the past

Around 250 years ago (c1750) settlements were set up by squatters on the common. The remains of the settlements are clearly evident in the patterns of the walls forming the dwellings and enclosures. There is also an abandoned quarry and stone chute used for the production of mill stones on the eastern edge. All of these features have now reverted to woodland.

Most of The Hudnalls is Common Land and the parishioners of the Parish of St Briavels still have certain rights over the land. It was once – and still could be – grazed by up to 10 horses, 25 cows and 100 sheep, and up to 30 pigs could be turned out into the wood to feed on beechmast. Although these rights still exist today, the parishioners now only exercise their right to collect dead wood from the ground.

The woodland has not been cut for nearly 100 years. Its structure currently is a transition from

a historic relict of ancient wood-pasture, which would have featured a much more open appearance and very little vegetation cover on the ground, to a natural high forest.

### Management today

Today, The Hudnalls is managed by minimum intervention. With a few exceptions, natural processes are allowed to take place. Trees are left to age until they die standing or collapse. Dead wood is left in-situ, allowing a whole array of creatures to move in for feeding and nesting, e.g. beetles, woodpeckers and fungi. Wherever gaps are formed in the canopy, seedlings have a chance to shoot up and race towards the light.

Tree work might only take place if public Health and Safety are at risk from dead wood close to paths. Other management includes the removal of non-native species like Himalayan balsam and sycamore, and culling of deer. The population of fallow deer needs to be kept under control to prevent excessive damage from browsing, especially to saplings and other new growth.

### Biodiversity

The woodland is dominated by beech, oak, ash and lime. The lime-beech-oak woodland on strongly acid soils is virtually unknown outside the Lower Wye Valley. On top of some of the old walls across the reserve are precariously

balanced pollarded trees looking as if they are growing out of the rock itself.

Towards the southern end of the reserve are several streams and waterfalls surrounded by tall trees creating dark, shady areas full of damp loving species, especially bryophytes including bright silk moss *Plagiothecium laetum*.

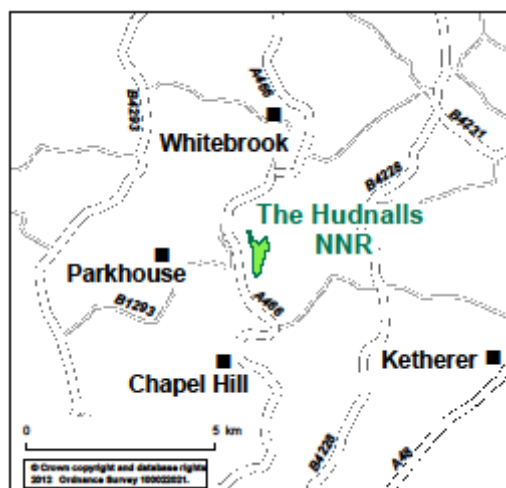
Spring is a particularly good time to visit for the display of wild garlic and other wildflowers. Amongst the rare plants found at The Hudnalls are thick berried bramble *Rubus dasycoccus* and wood fescue *Festuca altissima*. Birds recorded here include song thrush, hawfinch, wood warbler, starling and lesser spotted woodpecker. Furthermore, the woodland features some interesting members of the *diptera* – true flies – family, e.g. the rare crane fly *Tipula nubeculosa* and the scarce crane fly *Scleroprocta pentagonalis*.

## Facilities

There are no facilities at the reserve. The nearest toilet and refreshment facilities are in local towns and villages.

## Location and access

The Hudnalls is approximately 3 km south west of St Briavels.



All access to the Reserve is by foot only and some of the terrain is very steep and rocky underfoot. Public and permissive footpaths cross the reserve. The rest of the reserve is dedicated 'Open Access' land.

**By car:** The nearest parking is at Brockweir.

**By bus:** Regular bus services link the local area to St Briavels Common. For travel details see [www.transportdirect.info](http://www.transportdirect.info).

**By foot:** It is possible to gain access to the bottom (west) of the reserve on foot via public footpaths along the fields by the banks of the River Wye. Offas Dyke National Trail runs nearby.

## Contact

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