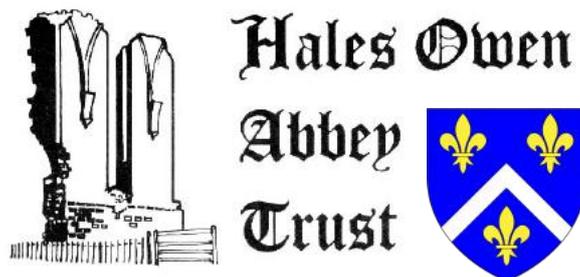




Walking Halesowen's Countryside
A Guide to Users & Landowners



Registered Charity No. 517973
Founded in 1986

Over a thirty year period, the Trust planted more than 10,000 trees and restored miles of Public Rights of Way, in the local countryside, for public benefit

Cover Photograph - Public rights of way at Manor Farm take the walker into the monastic landscape of Halesowen Abbey.

Note: The Farm and Abbey are in private ownership. Please keep to the Rights of Way.

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Walking Halesowen's Countryside

A Guide to Users & Landowners

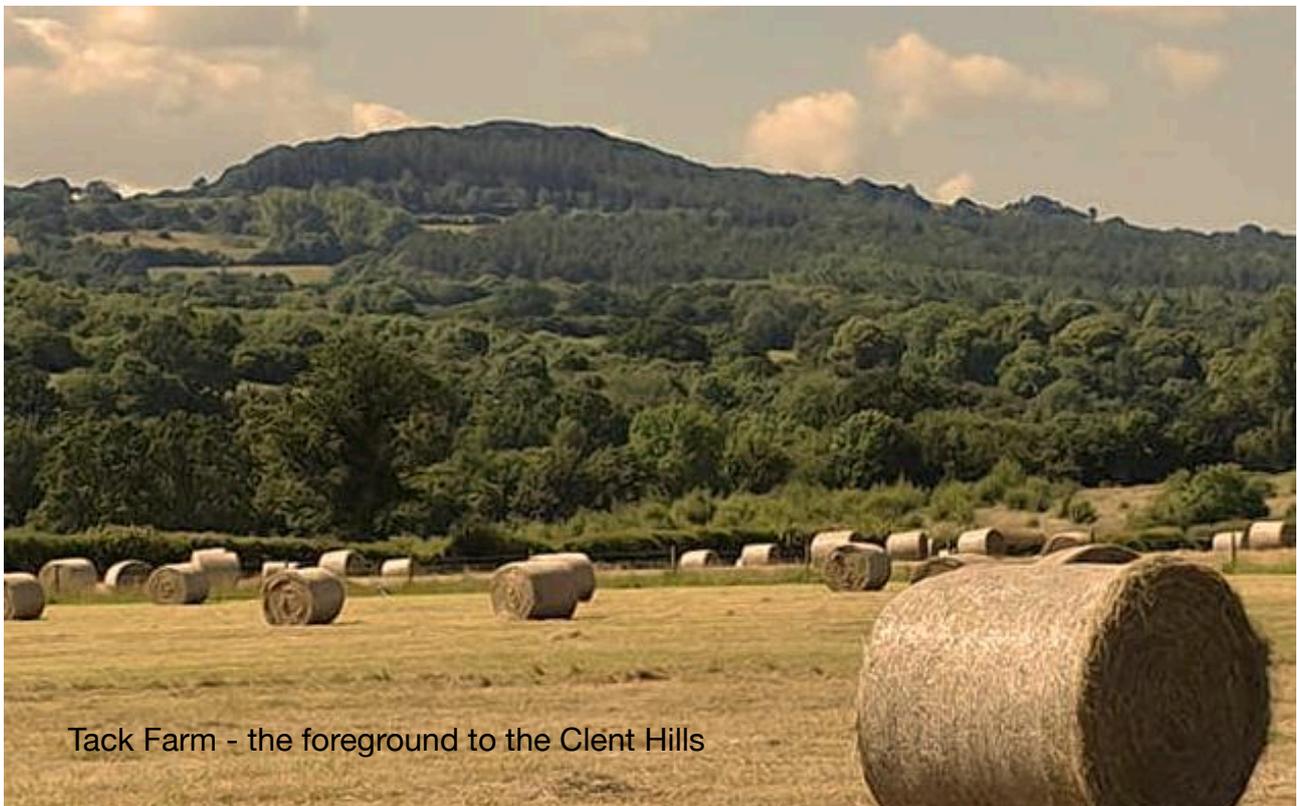
1. Introduction

The countryside, within and around Halesowen, has evolved over the millennia to form a landscape rich in ecological, archaeological, and historic, features. Let's not forget that its prime purpose was food production, as well as traditional 'coppice with standards' woodland management to produce wood for building, fencing, burning and even clothes line props. We still see medieval 'ridge and furrow' created by horse, or even ox drawn ploughing. The resultant landscape is a complex and beautiful composition of the work of nature and man.

The remains of Halesowen Abbey, founded in 1214, including the substantial earthworks associated with the former monastic fishponds, and corn mill, have been protected as a 'Scheduled Ancient Monument of National Importance', since 1915. Nearby, is 'The Grange', aptly named as a former home farm of the Abbey. It is now dominated by a Georgian House, built circa 1740 on older foundations. In 1741 it became the home of Lord Dudley, when the owner, *Ferdinando Dudley Lea*, inherited the title following the death of his uncle, William Ward, on the 20th May 1740. On Ferdinando's death, at The Grange, on the 21st October 1757, the title of Lord Dudley fell into abeyance. The abeyance was terminated in 1916 when *Ferdinando Dudley William Lea Smith*, a descendant of *Ferdinando Dudley Lea's* eldest sister, Anne, was created 12th Lord Dudley.

In 1834 The Grange, which then was the operational centre of a twelve hundred and fifty acre estate, underwent major extensions and improvements. Whilst some of those features remain, almost half of it was demolished, circa 1950, under the direction of the new owners, Walter Somers Ltd, to convert it for the use by 'Somers Sports and Social Club'. It is a Grade 2+ listed building.

Further to the west, adjacent to Uffmoor Wood, is Tack Farm, which, in the Anglo-Saxon period, was the site of Notwic Mill. The historic uses of the areas named above is a



Tack Farm - the foreground to the Clent Hills

snapshot of the many factors that have shaped and influenced the landscape. For the informed user, there is plenty to see and enjoy in this ‘Clentine’¹ countryside.

However, for many users, the beauty and variety of the landscape is their main inspiration and a well maintained and waymarked Public Rights of Way network opens a gateway to the countryside, which is a recreational asset in sharp contrast to the pressures of an urban existence. The Halesowen countryside pierces into the urban areas through the Lutley and Coombeswood ‘Green Wedges’. It’s a walker’s paradise.

Until 1974, it was controlled by Halesowen Councils, which underwent various evolutionary transformations. From 1894 to 1924, it was *Halesowen Rural District Council*. From 1924 to 1936, it was *Halesowen Urban District Council* and finally, it was *Halesowen Borough Council* from 1936 to 1974.

ILLEY BROOK FARM,
NEAR HALES OWEN.

TO be SOLD by Auction, by HENRY JACOB, at the New Inn, in Hales Owen, on Wednesday the 29th day of November inst. precisely at three o'clock in the afternoon;—

	A.	R.	P.
LOT I. A very desirable and compact DAIRY FARM, called ILLEY BROOK FARM, part freehold and part copyhold of inheritance, comprising a farm-house and necessary outbuildings, cottage, orchard, and several closes of land, chiefly meadow and pasture, containing together	43	1	14
LOT II. A Close of Arable Land, called the INHEDGE and the ACRE, adjoining together, and containing	5	0	8
LOT III. A Close of Arable Land, called FINCHALL, containing.....	5	1	32

The two last lots are near to lot 1, and the whole is in the occupation of Jesse Taylor, a yearly tenant.

The above estate is pleasantly situated at Illey, in the parish of Hales Owen, in the county of Salop, one mile from Hales Owen, near to the turnpike road to Bromsgrove, seven miles from Birmingham, five from Stourbridge, and one from the Dudley canal.

The country abounds with game, and the river Stour (running through the land) with trout.

Under the lands have lately been discovered several veins of coal and ironstone, and near to the surface a thick grey building stone.

The tenant will shew the premises, and further particulars may be known of Mr. Brettell, solicitor, Bromsgrove, or of Messrs. Jacob and Mathews, surveyors, at their offices in Stourbridge and Birmingham, where plans of the estate may be seen.

Illey Brook Farm,
advertised for sale on the
4th November, 1822, in
Aris's B'ham Gazette

It was then in Shropshire and was auctioned at the New Inn, in Halesowen, which was then a desirable public house, but was demolished in the 1960s.

It states that *'The country abounds with game and the River Stour (running through the land) with trout'*.

The turnpike road to Bromsgrove gets a mention, as does the Dudley Canal.

The presence of coal, limestone and building stone are considered desirable.

It was during the latter administration period that the Public Rights of Way were recorded on a ‘Definitive Map’² and associated ‘Statement’, in accordance with Government requirements, introduced in ‘The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act’ of 1949. Most of the survey work for Halesowen was carried out, circa 1951, by a young highways engineer, John Woodall, a native of the Town, whilst working in the Borough Engineer’s Department.

In 1974, Halesowen Borough Council was abolished and became part of Dudley Metropolitan Borough. At that time Halesowen, due to the local government reorganisation, was no longer part of Worcestershire and became part of the sprawling West Midlands conurbation.

¹ ‘Clentine’- an epithet first recorded in 1845 when William Harris wrote ‘Clentine Rambles’

² The Definitive Map is the legal record of public rights of way in England and Wales. In law it is the definitive record of where rights of way are located. Each right of way also has a written description known as the Definitive Statement.

2. The Importance of Public Rights of Way

Over 80% of the British public walk every week, with many walking in their local countryside for recreational purposes, such as enjoying the sights and sounds, walking the dog, or keeping fit. Users depend on the appropriate maintenance and protection of the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network.

A well maintained and waymarked PROW network is in everyone's interests. The vast majority of walkers want commodious, clearly defined and waymarked footpaths to walk on and this minimises problems for landowners.

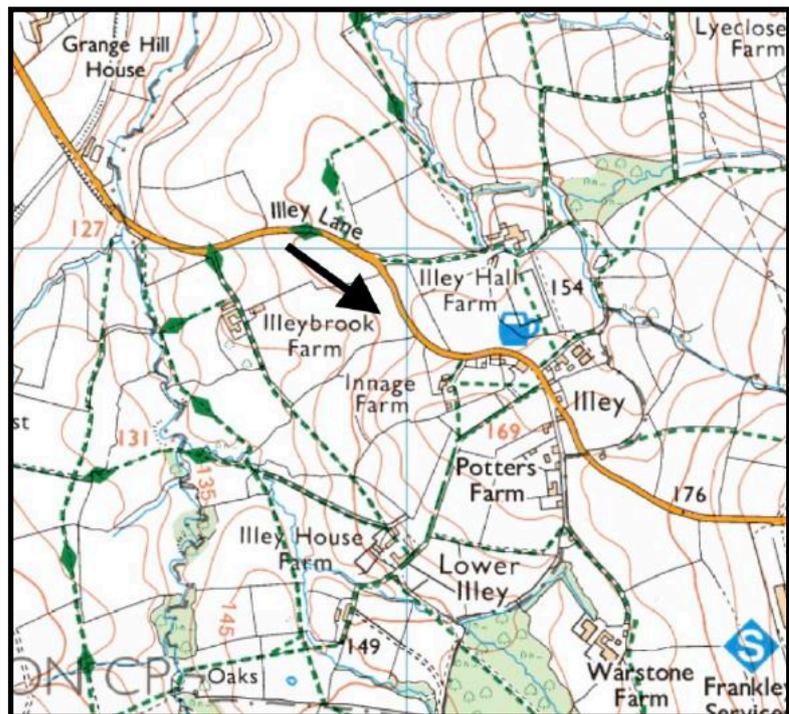
3. Ordnance Survey Maps

Arguably, we have the finest maps in the world, at our disposal, produced by the Ordnance Survey. The Landranger and Explorer series are of particular interest to the walker. With the advent of mobile phones, the footpath user has the opportunity to download the OS Maps application. When visiting areas where there is likely to be no phone signal, the user can download maps and routes to their phone beforehand. On the previous page we referred to the sale of Illeybrook Farm in 1822. Below is the image obtained from the OS Maps 'app', two hundred years later, showing that the landscape hasn't changed much and indicating the available opportunities to explore this area from the dense PROW network.

Illey Brook Farm today, showing the intensity of the footpath network on OS Landranger, and Explorer Maps

The footpath annotated with the diamond shapes is a small section of the Monarch's Way, created by the late Trevor Antill from Halesowen. It's 625 miles long and approximates to the escape route of Charles II after he lost the Battle of Worcester in 1651.

It's a prestigious path for Dudley and this section through Halesowen was chosen, last year, by Ordnance Survey map users, as one of the best city walks in Britain.



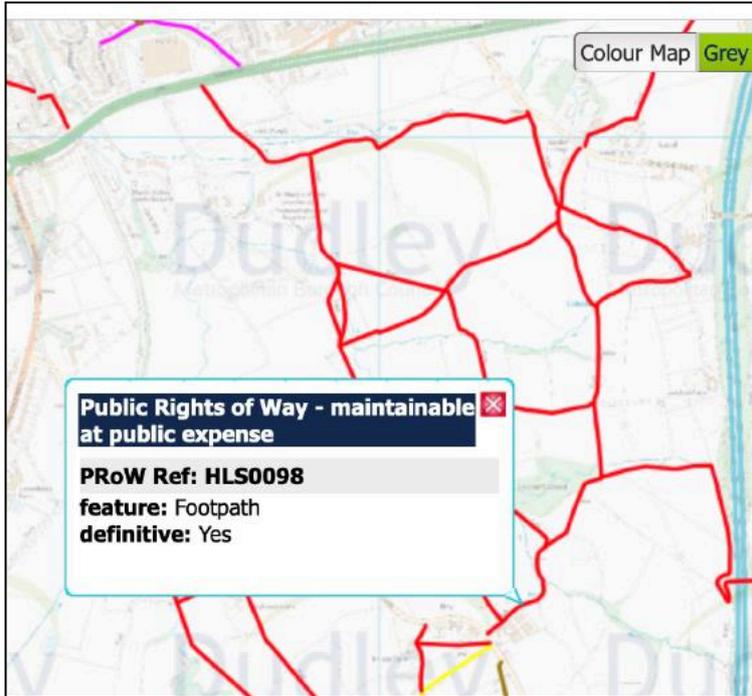
4. Interactive Maps provided by the local Highway Authorities

Dudley Council and Worcestershire County Council have such maps, which are convenient for footpath users in identifying PROW and obtaining the footpath numbers when reporting problems.

At the time of writing this guide, the following links to the interactive maps worked:

Dudley Council: <https://mapping.dudley.gov.uk/custom/urban-and-rural-paths.asp>

Worcestershire County Council: <https://tinyurl.com/yuym7r9r>

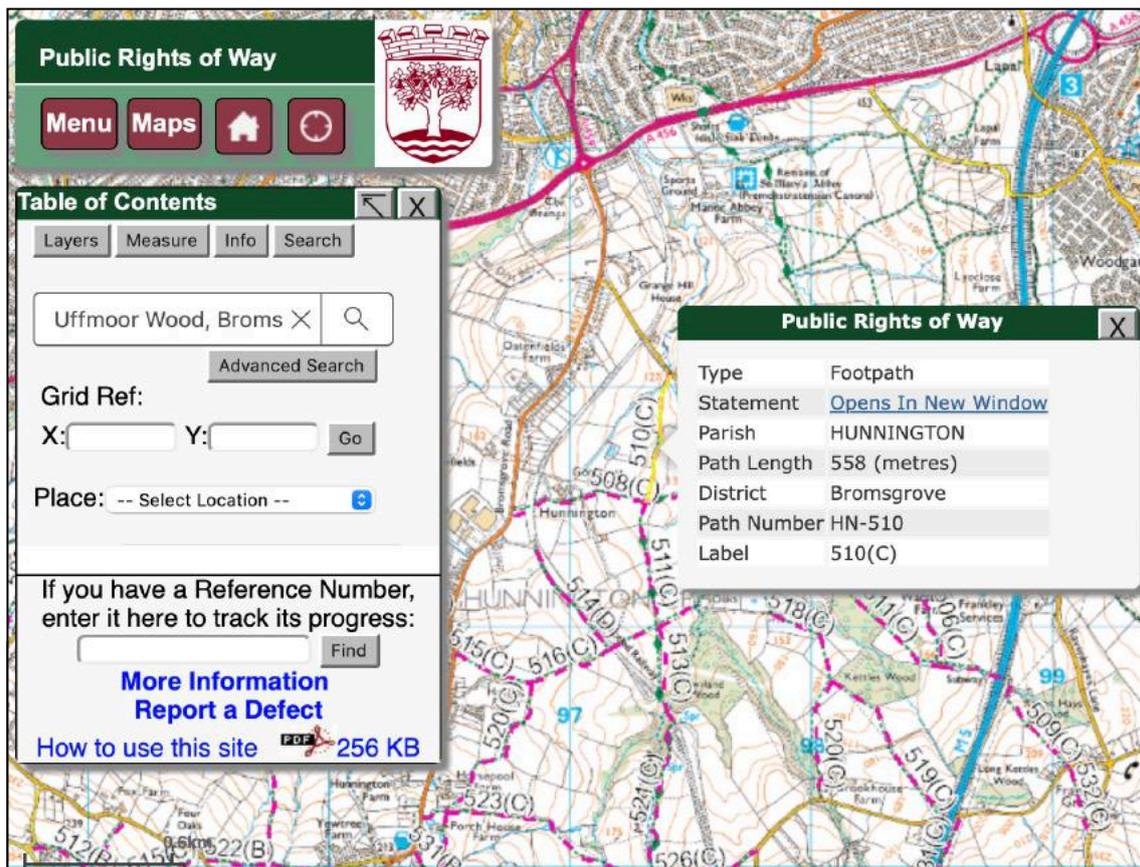


Dudley Council's Map

Lapal and Illey - The red lines indicate the Public Rights of Way. To obtain a description, simply click onto a line. In this case it is HLS0098 and it is a definitive path.

To report a problem, quote this number and add a description.

This mapping is sufficient for users needs and there is the option to select an aerial view to make the image more interactive.



Worcestershire County Council's Map

The County use the OS Landranger/Explorer series, making identification much easier and clearer. In this example the user has clicked on the the path labelled 510(C) and immediately gets footpath information and the opportunity to view the Definitive Map Statement. The panel on the left allows for searching; reporting a path defect/problem and also downloading a guide on 'How to use this site'. It's the Rolls Royce treatment.

5. Reporting PROW Problems to the Highway Authority

What happens when a problem is reported?

Dudley Council

You've returned from your walk, which was disrupted by a problem such as a dangerous stile. After looking at the Council's interactive map, you have the footpath number and you are already to report it. Click on the following link and follow the procedure.

<https://customer.dudley.gov.uk/service-request/council-contact/?ref=SO-00539>

You will, automatically be allocated a reference number. So what happens next? Usually nothing happens and you hear no more, because the system collapses at this point.

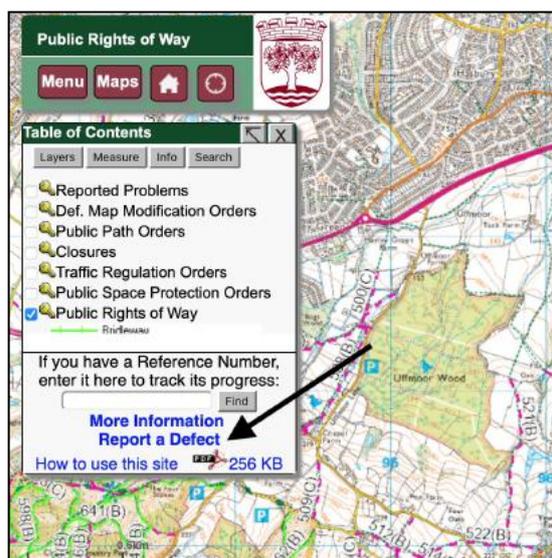
This procedural failure has been reported to Dudley Council.

Worcestershire County Council

The procedure for reporting problems is somewhat different to that of Dudley Council.

After obtaining the footpath number from the interactive map and identifying features to pinpoint the precise location of the problem, select the 'Report a defect' on the contents panel as indicated by the black arrow on the illustration. This will take you to a form to complete. After submitting the completed form, you will receive an email. An officer will visit the site and grade the problem between 1 and 6, where one is the highest priority.

The problem will be annotated on the interactive map for others to see. It will be addressed in due course. In practice this procedure works well and the problem can be elevated to a higher priority if circumstances indicate this to be necessary.



6. Categories of Public Rights of Way

There are four categories of Public Rights of Way:-

- **Public footpaths** – Public rights to use on foot
- **Public Bridleways** – Public rights to use on foot, horseback, leading a horse and on a bicycle
- **Restricted Byway** – Public rights to use on foot, on horseback, leading a horse, on a bicycle and by horse drawn vehicle
- **Byway Open to all Traffic (BOAT)** – Public rights on foot, horseback, leading a horse, on a bicycle, in a motorised or non-motorised vehicle and driving animals.

7. Protection

All of the above are public highways and as such are protected in law under the provisions of the Highways Act 1980.

Other legislation governing Public Rights of Way includes:

- *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949*
- *Countryside Act 1968*
- *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*
- *Rights of Way Act 1990*
- *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.*

8. Management Responsibility

Whilst overall responsibility rests with the Councils, as the Highway Authorities, to ensure that the Public Rights of Way are available for use and enjoyment by the public, responsibilities are divided between the Councils, landowners and occupiers.

The Councils are responsible for:

- *Signposting paths where they leave a metalled road*
- *Waymarking along the route of paths*
- *Clearance of undergrowth i.e. natural vegetation growing through the path surface*
- *Maintenance of most bridges and ditch crossings*
- *Ensuring landowners and occupiers comply with their responsibilities*

Landowners and occupiers are responsible for:

- *Maintenance of stiles and gates*
- *Clearance of overgrowth i.e. vegetation growing from the sides or above*
- *Re-instatement of paths after ploughing*
- *Keeping paths clear of crops*
- *Making sure they don't obstruct paths in other ways*



An Inviting Prospect

A user, after examining the information board prepares to cross the stile armed with the knowledge that the path is clearly waymarked. This is a section of the 625 mile 'Monarch's Way'

Hopefully, this inviting starting point indicates that the rest of this section of PROW is well maintained.

This approach is likely to have a positive effect on the attitude of all parties involved.

The CROW Act 2000 promotes public access and enjoyment of countryside and open spaces.

9. Common Problems and Solutions

Most problems are avoided when the PROW are appropriately maintained, but the unforeseen does happen, such as a fallen tree, or landslip, obstructing the path. If, as a user, you see such incidents then report them to the Highway Authority. Similarly, report issues relating to the following, when they develop into problems, but it is strongly recommended that you leave any action to the authority. Always bear in mind that you walk to enjoy the experience. Where the relevant act is quoted after a paragraph, this is potential further reading for the user of this guide.

Footpath Width

In some instances the footpath width may be set by long established features such as hedgerows and fences. An ancient 'green lane' can be very wide.

Where not specified on the Definitive Map/Statement, the width should allow people to comfortably pass when walking in opposite directions. This would normally be two metres for a footpath, or three metres for a bridleway, but this is not a legal definition.

Ploughing & Cropping

It is an offence to plough any field edge public right of way and cross field Restricted Byway or BOAT. It is possible to plough cross field footpaths and bridleways. However there is a statutory period within which the public right of way has to be reinstated. Reinstatement means marking the route clearly on the ground and making the surface reasonably convenient for public usage. The statutory period is 14 days for the first disturbance and 24 hours for any further disturbance such as harrowing or drilling. Upon application, the Highway Authority can grant an extension of that period not exceeding 28 days.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 134)

Where a crop (other than grass) has been sown across land with a public right of way the owner/occupier has a duty to ensure that the line of the right of way is indicated to not less than its minimum width and to ensure that a growing crop does not encroach onto this line during the growing season. Failure to comply with this duty is an offence.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 137A)

The Statutory minimum width for reinstatement is that which is defined in the Definitive Statement that accompanies the Definitive Map. In the absence of a Definitive Statement for a route, the following statutory minimum widths apply (in metres):

(Highways Act 1980 Schedule 12A)

	Field Edge	Cross Field
Footpath	1.5m	1m
Bridleway	3m	2m
Restricted Byway & Byway Open to all Traffic	3m	5m

Barbed Wire

A barbed wire fence or exposed barbed wire erected across a public right of way without an adequate means of crossing is an offence. It is an obstruction to the public right of way, and also a nuisance and a danger to members of the public. It should be removed. If an additional fence across a public right of way is required for agricultural purposes, the Highway Authority should be consulted beforehand, but predictably they will require a suitable crossing for the pedestrian users. It will need authorisation before being erected. Without authorisation an offence is being committed.

(Highways Act 1980 Sections 137 & 149)

Barbed wire adjacent to a Public Right of Way can be considered to be a '*public nuisance*' if likely to injure people, or animals, lawfully using the Right of Way. If this is the case, the landowner should remove the barbed wire. Failure to do so could result in action through a Magistrates Court.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 164)

Stiles, Gates and Similar Structures

Stiles are authorised obstructions to a Public Right of Way recorded on the Definitive Map/Statement. A landowner will need to obtain the consent of the highway authority if the landowner intends to erect additional gates or stiles along the route of a Public Right of Way. Consent will only normally be given, under the terms of the Highways Act 1980, if the stiles or gates are required to prevent the ingress and egress of animals.

Additional stiles, gates and similar structures will be expected to cause minimal disruption to legitimate footpath users. Competent highways authorities in exercising their powers shall have due regard to the needs of persons with mobility problems.

The landowner has a duty to ensure that any stile or similar structure across the Public Right of Way is kept in good repair and in a safe condition. The highway authority has a duty to ensure that the landowner complies with this obligation and will contribute a minimum of 25% towards the cost of such structures.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 146 & 147)

Signposting and Waymarking

The Highway Authority has a duty to signpost all public paths where they leave a metalled road. The status of a right of way must be given, but the provision of supplementary information such as destination and distance is discretionary. Signposts need not be erected in situations where the highway authority considers it unnecessary and the Parish Council agrees.

(Countryside Act 1968 Section 27 (2 & 3))

The highway authority also has the power to erect waymarkers along routes to assist persons unfamiliar with the locality. Consultation must first take place with the landowner/occupier and way marks should not be attached to any structures owned by the landowner/occupier without their permission. The merit of waymarking is that it assists path users unfamiliar with the locality to follow paths more easily thus avoiding inadvertent trespass or damage.

(Countryside Act 1968 Section 27 (1 & 4))

Pulling down or obliterating a direction sign is an offence. The offender can be prosecuted in a Magistrates' Court.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 131).

Obstructions

Any person who wilfully obstructs the free passage along a highway, without lawful authority, is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 137)

Furthermore,, a magistrates Court may, on the conviction of a person for wilful obstruction, order the person to remove the obstruction if it is in that person's power to do so. This may be in addition to, or instead of a fine.

(Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 Section 64)

A highway obstruction has been defined as "something which permanently or temporarily removes the whole or part of the highway from the public's use altogether".

An encroachment which reduces the width of a highway, e.g. the extension of a garden fence across a right of way or a building is an obstruction, even if the obstruction is only partial.

Any unauthorised structure on a right of way can be considered an obstruction and the highway authority can serve notice on the person responsible for the structure requiring them to remove it within a period of one month. If the notice is not complied with, the authority may remove the obstruction and seek to recover the costs incurred.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 143)

Overhanging vegetation and Fallen Trees

Maintenance of any vegetation overhanging the right of way is the responsibility of the landowner unless the vegetation is growing on land forming part of the highway, i.e. the verge.

Where a hedge, tree, shrub or any vegetation overhangs a highway so as to endanger users, the highway authority has the power to require the owner, or occupier, to cut it back within 14 days of service of a notice. However, the owner or occupier has 21 days from the service of notice in which to appeal to the Magistrates Court against the terms of the notice. If the work is not done within the stated time-scale, the authority may do it itself and recover the cost from the owner.

The highway authority is responsible for ensuring that fallen trees are removed from the highway either by requiring the landowner/occupier to clear the route or by removing as much of the tree as obstructs the route. Trees growing on the path are normally the Authority's responsibility.

(Highways Act, 1980 Section 154)

Misleading Notices

It is an offence for any person to place or maintain on land on or near a public right of way, a false or misleading notice which is likely to deter the public from using that way. A Magistrates' Court can require the offender to remove the notice and impose fines.

(National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 Section 57).

Deposition of Material on a Highway

It is an offence to deposit, without lawful authority or excuse, anything whatsoever on a highway, in consequence of which a user of the highway is injured or endangered. It is also an offence to allow any filth, lime or other offensive material to flow onto the highway, or to place any rope or wire across a highway so as to endanger people using the highway. If the substance deposited is endangering public safety the highway authority can remove it immediately and seek to recover costs, otherwise they can prosecute the offender in the Magistrates' Court.

If substances are deposited as a result of fly-tipping and whilst unsightly are not preventing the use of the right of way it is the duty of district councils to remove them under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 161 (2))

Firearms

It is an offence to shoot across a vehicular highway. However it is not an offence to shoot across a footpath or bridleway, although it may amount to a public nuisance or be considered as wilful obstruction of the highway. It is an offence to carry or use firearms on or near a right of way in order to intimidate or deter the public from using the right of way

Dangerous Animals

It is an offence to keep any animal, including bulls which would otherwise be legal, and horses, in a field crossed by a right of way if the animal is known to be dangerous. The owner may be liable for damages and prosecution.

**(Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Section 59,
Animals Act 1971 Section 2)**

Intimidation

In some instances, the right to use a public right of way may be challenged by the landowner in such a way that no physical obstruction takes place. The Highway Authority has a statutory duty to protect the rights of the public to the use of public rights of way and this duty is wide enough for appropriate action to be taken to prevent intimidatory tactics.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 130)

Surface

The vast majority of Public Rights of Way are maintainable at public expense, meaning that the Highway Authority are responsible for the surface and should deal with problems of natural growth on the path and other matters, such as flooding/drainage, which could cause problems/obstruction.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 163)

It is an offence to interfere with the surface to the detriment of users. Landowners/occupiers who wish to alter the surface in any way will require prior authorisation from the Highway Authority. In addition, owner/occupiers must ensure that any private vehicular usage does not damage the surface of the path. If damage is caused, the surface must be reinstated at the owner's cost to the required standard.

Any member of the public can require the local authority to repair the surface of a public footpath, bridleway, restricted byway or byway open to all traffic.

It's a simple procedure giving an highway authority six months to repair the path. If the authority fails to do the work in that time the applicant can apply to the magistrates' court for an order to force the Highway Authority to take action.

However, the procedure can only be used on paths maintained at public expense. Be Aware that costs can be awarded against the complainant.

(Highways Act 1980 Section 56)

'Out of repair' paths - This is when there are problems with the surface of a right of way, or a bridge, forming part of it. Examples include flooding due to inadequate drainage or a bridge that is not safe. This procedure does not apply to rights of way that are obstructed. A separate procedure exists for this.

As can be seen, the situation can appear complex, but more often than not the problems relate to the growth of the likes of nettles, brambles and ferns. The situation can be exacerbated where the landowner erects a fence to contain users of a field edge path close to an hedgerow boundary. With the growth of the hedgerow to fill the gap, coupled to the growth of surface vegetation, the path can be encroached upon and obstructed very quickly - **every year**.



The Impact of Forcing the Path Close to a Severely Cut Hedge

The photos were taken one year apart. The one on the left shows the path shortly after the hedge was cut and the barbed wire fence erected. Previously, there was no fence to this field edge path and no problem for users.

The photo on the right shows the impact of one year of growth. The user eventually has to force a way through and the hidden barbed wire is a threat, particularly to children and pets, with barbed wire at their head height. Many have abandoned use of this once popular path as consequence of the problems experienced and the associated dangers.

10. **'The Illey Way' - A Fine Example of What is Achievable**

Whilst 'The Illey Way' is the name given, in 1991, to a footpath linking Woodgate Valley Country Park, in Birmingham, to Wasely Hills Country Park, in Worcestershire, it could have quite easily have been a title of a study indicating what is achievable when those with vision work together. The 'Illey Way' involved ambition, enthusiasm, cooperation and a worthy objective.

Over thirty years after Sue Beardsmore, cut the tape to open the route, it is still popular.



Saturday, 14th September 1991- Sue Beardsmore, presenter of BBC's Midlands Today, cuts the tape to officially open 'The Illey Way'.

Roy Burgess and his daughter Sarah, hold the tape. On the extreme left is Nick Riding and fourth from the left, in blue jacket, is Fiona Hey, who were countryside officers for Hereford and Worcester County Council's 'Urban Fringe Project'. Second from the right is Kevin Clements, Dudley Council's first Countryside Manager. Kevin's enthusiasm materialised in an enormous amount of constructive work.

Improvements continued through to 1996 with tasteful artwork items, such as metal sculptures, and crafted stones, added at strategic points to enhance the user experience and reflect the forces that shaped the route, including the railway and nature.

Sadly, Dowery Dell Viaduct, which came into service on the 10th September 1883, was demolished, in April 1965. It was a rare lattice girder structure supported on trestles, of which only one is known to survive³ The Halesowen Abbey Trust did much of the initial footpath guide improvement work, such as stiles and marker posts.

³ Bennerley Viaduct (originally Ilkeston Viaduct) is a former railway bridge, now a foot and cycle bridge. It is listed.

The Illey Way Walkers' Guide

ANCIENT WOODLANDS

Cooper's, Twland, and Ell Woods, are all examples of 'ancient' semi-natural woodlands; 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:

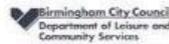
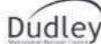
WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE
Tel: 01905 766407 or
DUDLEY COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT PROJECT
Tel: 01384 814189

USEFUL INFORMATION

Distance: Approximately 4.5 miles (7.2km)

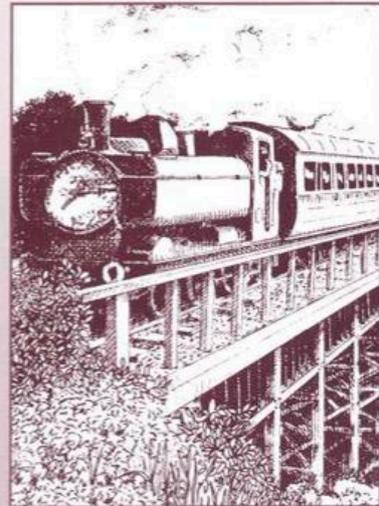
Be prepared for all kinds of weather, wear comfortable strong footwear and please keep dogs under control. There are hilly and difficult sections on the walk.

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.



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 hodgepodge 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 bates (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

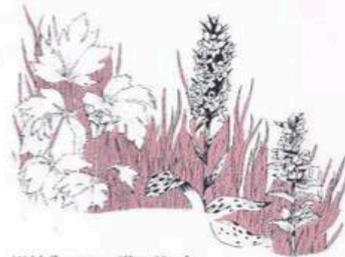
BOUNDARY STONES

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.

WOODGATE SECTION

From the main car park follow the path through the urban farm and, turning left at the gate onto Watery Lane, walk up the slope and cross with care over Woodgate Lane into Lye Close Lane (Old Crown Pub is on the right) then proceed over the M5 bridge and turn left following the sign to Illey.

GREEN LANES SECTION

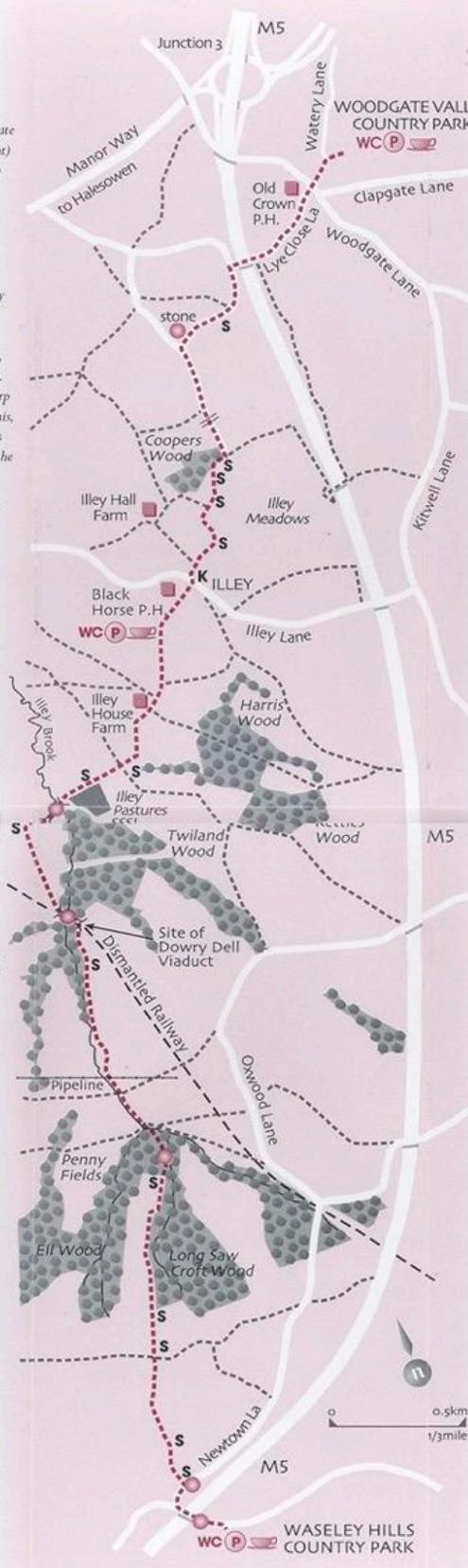
At the end of the lane turn right and go over the stile by the gate (signed Illey and Waseley) into the green lane. Turn left at the junction at the foot of the hill and continue along the green lane through the horse barrier, then walk down the slope and cross the culverted stream. Go over the stile at the edge of Cooper's Wood, turn sharp right and follow the field edge to the next stile. After this, veer left across the field to a stile in the hedge, and cross the 'ridge and furrow' field known as Illey Meadows to the corner. Continue onto the surfaced track and over the stream and stile into the green lane. Follow this uphill, passing Lowlands Farm, then through the kissing gate onto Illey Lane. The Black Horse Pub is on the right - last refreshments before Waseley!



The Black Horse Pub at Illey

ILLEY SECTION

Carefully cross Illey Lane and follow the track that runs along the left-hand edge of the pub car park (signed Romsley and Waseley). Continue along the track for about half a mile passing Illey House Farm and Lower Illey Farm. From there views of Clent, Walton and Romsley Hills and the Bluebird Toffee Factory chimney can be seen to the right, and Frankley Beeches looking over to the left in the distance. At the end of the green lane go over the stile and follow the track to the right down to the stream. Cross the bridge and walk up the bank and carry on through the Illey Pastures Site of Special Scientific Interest to a stile in the hedge. Continue straight on with the line of field trees to the left (these trees mark a previous hedgerow). Follow the path down to the Illey Brook (which marks the boundary of Dudley and Worcestershire). Go over the footbridge and stile into the open field. Head up towards the brow of the hill, following the fenceline. Cross the stile in the fence on the left. Cross an open field to an enclosed narrow strip of land. Go over the two stiles here and carry on towards the wooded valley at the end of the former railway embankment.



Sheep

WOODED SECTION

At the gap in the former railway embankment, leave the open field and follow the steps down to the small stream and brick bridge. This is the site of the former Dowry Dell Viaduct. To the right you can see the old blue brick bases of the viaduct (look out for the metal sculpture). Follow the winding steps up the embankment and bear right along the wooded path, then cross the stile into the open field. Bear right along the edge of the field with the wooded river valley to the right. Carry on along the field edge, cross over before passing the Elan Valley pipeline which carries drinking water from mid Wales to Birmingham. When you come to the farm track, cross over and continue along the line of the stream, then bear right uphill through Pennyfields. At the end of the track cross the stile to the right of the gate and follow the left hand field boundary along the edge of Long Saw Croft wood. Crossing a further two stiles, close together, walk across the corner of the field, with the field gate to the left, and follow the path uphill keeping close to the hedge. From here you can see the British Telecom Radio Mast with good views of Romsley Hill in the distance.

WASELEY SECTION

Continue along the field edge and cross two more stiles on the way before emerging at the road. Here turn right and follow the road to the junction, cross over carefully then left over the M5 road bridge and ahead is Waseley Hills Country Park.



Waseley Hills Country Park Visitor Centre

Key to Route Map

- Illey Way
- (P) Parking
- WC Toilets
- ☕ Refreshments
- Horse Barrier
- - - Other Paths
- K Kissing Gate
- S Stile
- Bridge
- Position of Environmental Art

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to the various voluntary groups, in particular the Halesowen Abbey Trust, who helped to prepare the text and who have undertaken much practical work on the public footpaths in the area.

Opening of the Railway September 10th 1883

HALESOWEN & NORTHFIELD RAILWAY.

This Railway will be opened for Traffic
On MONDAY, SEPT. 10th, 1883,

AND THE FOLLOWING
SERVICE OF PASSENGER TRAINS
 WILL BE RUN BETWEEN
Halesowen, Rubery, & Northfield,

UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE:-

From **HALESOWEN.**

STATIONS.	WEEKDAYS.						
	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
HALESOWEN .....dep.	9 5	10 36	1 10	3 41	4 53	7 14	8 5
HUNNINGTON	9 13	10 43	1 18	3 48	5 1	7 21	8 13
RUBERY	9 23	10 51	1 28	3 56	5 11	7 29	8 22
NORTHFIELD .....arr.	9 31	.....	1 36	.....	5 19	.....	8 31

To **HALESOWEN.**

STATIONS.	WEEKDAYS.						
	a.m.	a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
NORTHFIELD .....dep.	8 26	.....	12 38	3 48	.....	7 21	.....
RUBERY	8 34	11 49	12 46	3 56	4 24	7 29	7 44
HUNNINGTON	8 44	11 58	12 56	4 6	4 33	7 39	7 53
HALESOWEN .....arr.	8 51	12 4	1 3	4 13	4 39	7 46	7 59

SEPT., 1883.

BY ORDER.

MIDLAND RAILWAY.

OPENING OF THE NEW LINE
 BETWEEN

HALESOWEN & NORTHFIELD.

The Railway connecting **HALESOWEN**
 with the **MIDLAND SYSTEM** will be OPENED
 FOR PASSENGER AND GOODS TRAFFIC

On MONDAY, SEPT. 10th,

and a Service of PASSENGER TRAINS will until further notice
 be run between **HALESOWEN** and **KING'S NORTON** in connection
 with Trains to and from **BIRMINGHAM** as under:-

STATIONS.	WEEKDAYS.				STATIONS.	WEEKDAYS.			
	a.m.	noon.	p.m.	p.m.		a.m.	p.m.	p.m.	p.m.
BIRMINGHAM (New St.) dep.	7.50	12. 03	1.06	4.42	HALESOWEN dep.	9. 51	10.43	3.38	5
Camp Hill	7.58	12. 08	1.10	4.50	Hunnington	9.13	10.51	3.48	18.13
Brighton Road	8. 31	12. 22	1.24	5.04	Rubery	9.23	11.01	3.58	18.23
Moseley	8. 41	12. 32	1.34	5.14	Northfield	9.31	11.05	4.06	18.31
King's Heath	8.10	12.22	1.24	5. 7	King's Norton	9.35	11.05	4.10	18.35
King's Norton	8.16	12.27	1.30	5. 7	Northfield dep.	10.11	11.55	4.29	17
Birmingham(Granville St.) dep.	11.30	2.20	6.32	.....	Redditch	10.32	11.55	4.50	18
Redditch	7.48	11.22	3.04	4.49	Birmingham(Granville St.) arr.	10. 52	11.55	4.29	25
Northfield	8.14	11.49	3.47	4.11	KING'S NORTON dep.	9.47	11.05	4.31	8.41
KING'S NORTON dep.	8.21	11.35	4.37	4.16	King's Heath	9.51	11.05	4.37	8.47
Northfield	8.26	11.38	4.42	4.21	Moseley	9.52	11.05	4.41	8.51
Rubery	8.34	11.46	4.50	4.29	Brighton Road	9.52	11.05	4.44	8.54
Hunnington	8.44	11.56	4. 6	4.39	Camp Hill	10. 02	11.05	4.48	8.57
HALESOWEN arr.	8.51	1. 34	4.47	4.39	BIRMINGHAM (New St.)	10.14	11.05	4.50	9.10

N.—The time of arrival at Granville Street applies to Saturdays only.
 The 9.35 a.m. Train from Barst Green to Birmingham, and 3.10 p.m. Birmingham to Worcester, will stop at King's Norton, and form connections with the Halesowen Trains.
 The NEW TRAINS leaving Birmingham (New St.) for King's Norton at 7.20 a.m., and King's Norton for Birmingham (New St.) at 8.41 p.m., will be THROUGH TRAINS to and from the Halesowen Branch.

Derby, Sept. 1883.

JOHN NOBLE, General-Manager.

Printed & Sold, London and Derby.



Improving the Public Rights Way at Dowery Dell 1993

The Illey Way was opened in 1991, but the Dowery Dell section was problematic, with heavy clay underfoot spoiling enjoyment of an otherwise wonderful route. The Halesowen Abbey Trust therefore undertook an essential improvement funded by the Urban Fringe Project.



Late Summer/Early Autumn 1993 - Excavation of path at Dowery Dell



1993 - Footpath stoned, rolled and steps installed



1993 - The Illey Way in Twyland Wood, near the site of Dowery Dell Viaduct

This was major work, involving planning; setting out; levelling; excavating at least four inches of clay; pegging wood edgings; applying a geo membrane and filling with 400 tons of MOT stone, which had to be consolidated. Drains were created to minimise future flooding and sufficient greenery had to be removed to create the path. An excavator; dumper truck; bobcat loader; roller and wacker plate were hired. A wooden superstructure was added to the bridge over the stream and fences were adapted where necessary. The result justified the effort



Waymarker for the route

The Illey Way project is a role model for what is achievable when volunteers work constructively with dedicated officers. We must not forget the landowners who were cooperative and helpful.

Inevitably, the Illey Way requires some ongoing maintenance, but it has so far withstood thirty years of use and remains in good condition.

The Countryside Code



Your guide to enjoying parks and waterways, coast and countryside

Respect everyone

- be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside
- leave gates and property as you find them
- do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking
- be nice, say hello, share the space
- follow local signs and keep to marked paths unless wider access is available

Protect the environment

- take your litter home - leave no trace of your visit
- do not light fires and only have BBQs where signs say you can
- always keep dogs under control and in sight
- dog poo - bag it and bin it in any public waste bin or take it home
- care for nature - do not cause damage or disturbance

Enjoy the outdoors

- check your route and local conditions
- plan your adventure - know what to expect and what you can do
- enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory



www.countryside-code.org.uk

The Countryside Code



Follow advice and local signs

The arrows show the legal and recorded rights of way for different user groups

Footpath



Bridleway



Restricted Byway



Byway open to all traffic



Permissive Path

Follow advice on local signs as landowners voluntarily provide access to these paths and choose who can use them. Some open access areas are also made available in the same way.



National Trail

National Trails are created for walking, with horse-riding and cycling possible on some trails or trail sections.
www.nationaltrail.co.uk



Open Access

You can walk and explore away from paths.

www.openaccess.naturalengland.org.uk

For further information visit www.countryside-code.org.uk

The Trust's Public Rights of Way Philosophy

The first project that the Halesowen Abbey Trust undertook was to help a local farmer who was having problems with people not keeping to the footpaths and allowing their dogs to run loose and 'worry' his sheep. These were genuine concerns.

Our plan to resolve this issue involved improving access along the definitive map routes; providing good stiles and clear waymarking. We also improved his fences and planted hedgerow whips to provide better protection. We also displayed a notice to inform users of the Countryside Code. The strategy worked.

Our belief was, and still is, that the vast majority of users wish to keep to the official line of the path. Accommodating that and providing commodious stiles and gates makes life easier for all parties. Similarly, dealing with drainage problems and avoiding quagmires where animals congregate in poorly drained areas, sets the right conditions for harmony between Public Right of Way users and the landowner/occupier.

The Highway Authority can make a huge difference and it does not cost a fortune. The right team, led by a Rights of Way Officer with a leisure and recreation mandate, can steer the Public Rights of Way asset to be of much greater value than its functional highway purpose. The footpaths in the countryside are not simply a means of getting from A to B. Indeed they are rarely used in that way. They are a '*conduit*' for enjoyment of open space; nature and the user being part of the environment. Resolving footpath problems diffuses potential conflicts and adds to pride of place and use for physical and mental health.



A Trust member erects a stile and marker post on a Public Right of Way obstructed by a new fence.



A delightful 'Green Lane' at Lapal

Care has been taken to be as factual and accurate as possible. If any mistakes have been made, they are the responsibility of the author, who apologises for any inadvertent errors.

Mick Freer

October 2023