

Dymock Woods

Michael Harper Reserves Management Plan

Summer 2023

For external consultation
June 14th - July 21st 2023



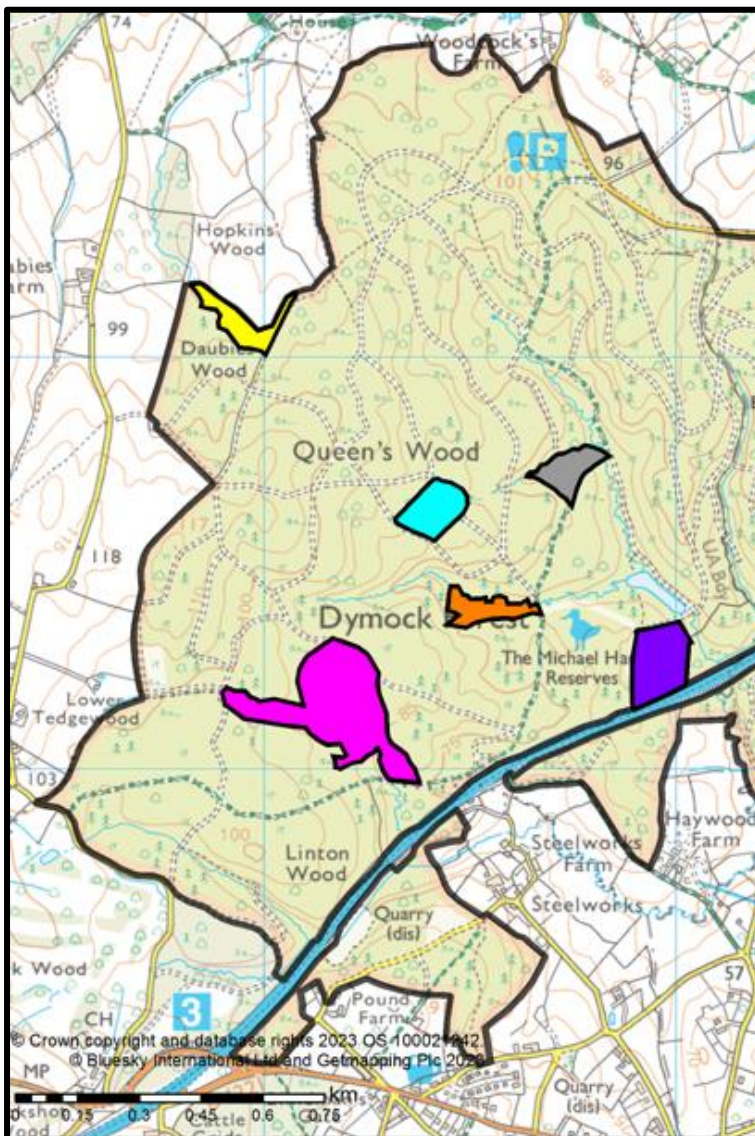
About this plan







This document is an appendix to the Dymock Woods Forest Plan (2023-33) and outlines the management intentions for the Michael Harper Reserves for the next 10 years or more.

Objectives

- The Michael Harper Reserves will continue to be managed by volunteers from the Ledbury Naturalists, under the guidance of the Forestry England Assistant Ecologist.
- The reserves will continue to provide biodiverse areas of valuable wildlife habitat within a working forest.
- Actions will be taken (by the Forestry England beat team) to improve connectivity between the reserves with corridors or patches of similar habitat, creating an extensive area for biodiversity in the centre of Queen's Wood.

Map of the Michael Harper Reserves



	Ragged Robin Reserve
	Alder Buckthorn Reserve
	Tulip Tree Reserve
	Orchid Reserve
	Fiveways Reserve
	Motorway Reserve

Background

The reserves were identified by local entomologist, Dr Michael Harper, in the 1960s as habitats of importance for Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) and, at that time, were just small remnants of coppice, fen and heathland within a productive broadleaved, and recently partly coniferised, woodland. In agreement with the Forestry Commission, Dr Harper began to keep records of the Lepidoptera present and, along with members of the Ledbury Naturalists Field Club, undertook small scale coppicing and clearing.

Today these reserves are still managed, predominantly by volunteers under Forestry England guidance, with biodiversity in mind, and are complemented by neighbouring areas of partially open / wooded heathland habitat. Monitoring continues, not just of Lepidoptera, but also of plants, birds and small mammals including dormice which thrive in the reserves and across the rest of Dymock Woods.

The reserves are generally managed by coppicing on different timescales, or rotations, which vary from 4 to 20 years between cuts, dependent on the species present. Many of the numerous butterflies and moths found in the Dymock Woods are listed as local conservation priority species, and some depend on a single plant species for their survival ([see box to the right](#)), so maintaining floral diversity is essential.

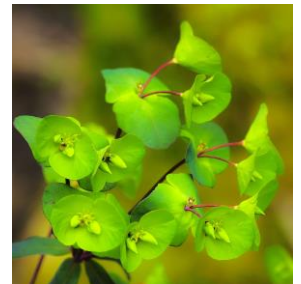
Actions applicable to all of the reserves

1. Eco-heaps ([see photo below](#)) - these were initially designed by Dr Harper as a way to stack coppiced wood, while providing a variety of micro-habitats with different temperatures and moisture levels. In the longer-term, eco-heaps are important for species which depend on dead and decaying wood.
2. Dormice are present in all of the reserves and the wider woodland and must be considered when planning any operational work.



Images - top to bottom

- Brimstone caterpillar feeding on alder buckthorn
- Wood spurge - food for the drab looper moth caterpillar
- Lead coloured pug moth, which depends on cow-wheat



3. Coppicing is the main management intervention, but must not take place unless followed by suitable protection from deer, ideally semi-permanent wire deer fencing. Cheaper (but less effective) alternatives, which can be put up by volunteers, are brash fencing or plastic deer fencing.

Ragged Robin Reserve

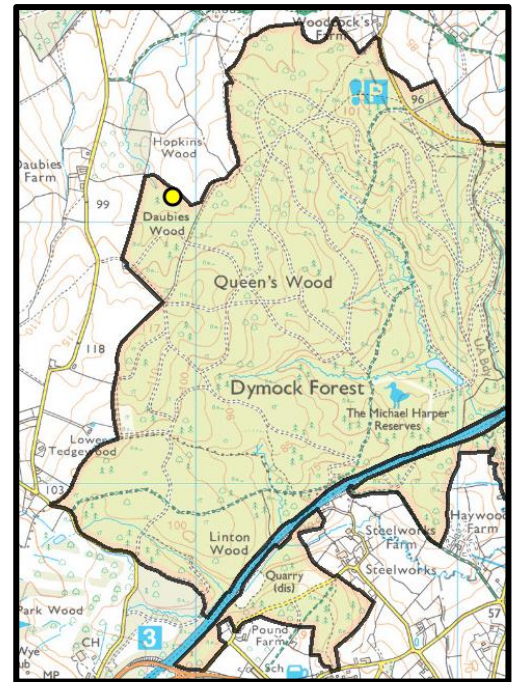
- 1.25 hectares
- Broadleaved woodland with a small stream - birch, willow and ash coppice with oak standards and wild service
- Provides nice woodland edge to neighbouring farmland
- Flora includes ragged robin and wild daffodils
- Fauna includes honeysuckle bell moth, dormouse and badger

Work to be carried out by volunteers:

- Coppice on a rotation of approximately 20 years (4 coupes - one to be cut every 5 years)
- Keep area clear where ragged robin grows
- Remove any conifers that are casting shade

Work to be carried out by Forestry England beat team:

- Identify opportunities to connect the Ragged Robin Reserve to the central reserves through rideside management

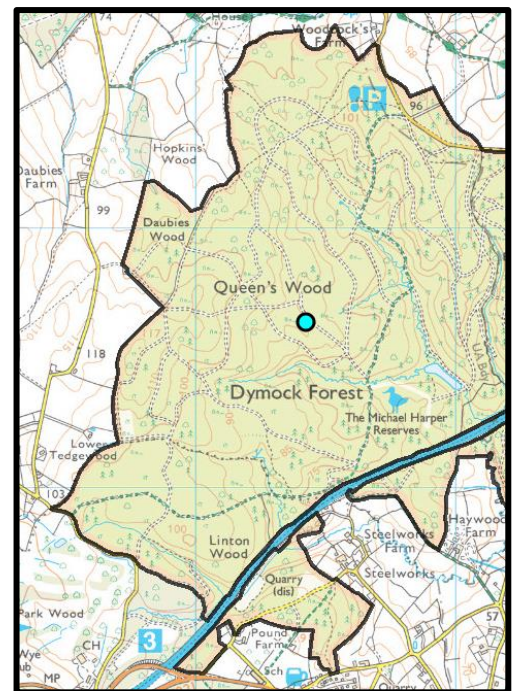


Alder Buckthorn Reserve

- 1.55 hectares
- Coppiced woodland with many broadleaf species, including birch, alder buckthorn, wild service, small leaved lime and oak
- Flora includes herb paris, wood anemone, hemp agrimony, wild daffodils and bilberry
- Fauna includes beautiful snout moth, drab looper moth, brimstone butterfly, glow-worm and dormouse
- There are dormouse and bat boxes in the reserve and the surrounding woodland

Work to be carried out by volunteers:

- Manage as short rotation coppice (7-10 years)
- Propose to coppice eastern section first and then install 250m of deer fencing if budget allows
- Maintain the path as open habitat

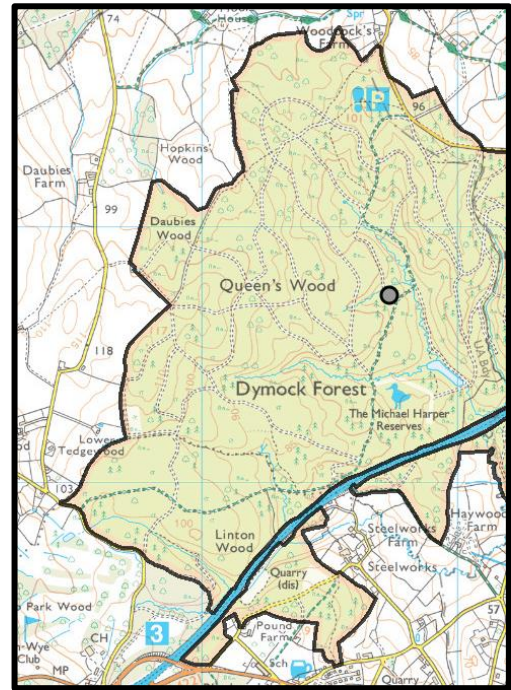


Tulip Tree Reserve

- 1.20 hectares
- Part fen, part coppice, including sweet chestnut, hazel, birch and blackthorn; two tulip trees remain from a previously larger group from a historical planting trial
- Flora includes wild daffodils and the rare narrow buckler fern
- Fauna includes drab looper moth and white-line snout moth, dormouse and glow-worm

Work to be carried out by volunteers:

- Manage as coppice with standards on a short rotation of 7 to 10 years
- Retain the tulip trees until their natural end

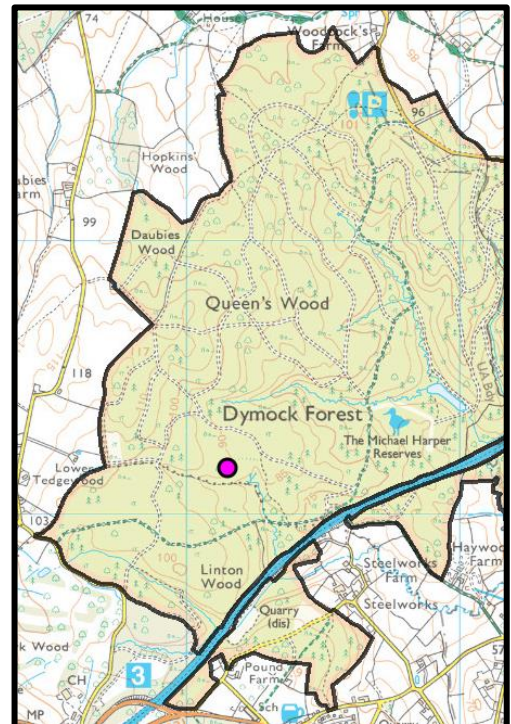


Orchid Reserve

- 6.44 hectares
- Two small streams and a pond; marsh with limestone feeders; fen with tufa; coppice and open glades; and heathland vegetation
- Trees include young alder, birch and alder buckthorn
- Flora includes bog pimpernel, marsh helleborine, fragrant and common spotted orchids, goldenrod, wild privet, heather, bilberry and the rare fen cotton grass
- Fauna includes dormouse and several uncommon moths, such as the white-barred clearwing

Work to be carried out by volunteers:

- Maintain tufa, fen, devil's-bit scabious ride and area around ponds as open space
- Coppice either side of fen on a very short rotation (4 years) being aware of clearwing larvae
- Clear some regenerated trees from heathland periodically, maintaining a lightly wooded heath
- Maintain and create dams along watercourse to retain damp conditions in tufa and fen



Work to be carried out by Forestry England beat team:

- Gradually clear conifers shading reserve on southern edge

Five Ways Reserve

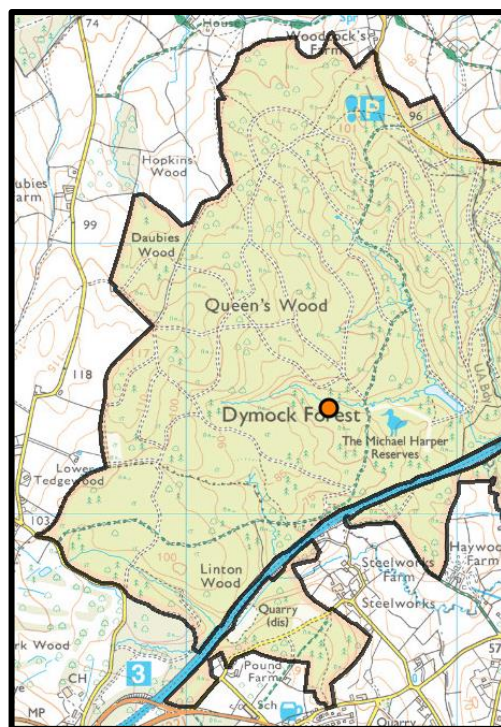
- 1.12 hectares
- Two areas of alder and birch with alder buckthorn coppice, with a block of Norway spruce between these broadleaf areas
- Adjacent to a small stream
- Flora includes wild daffodils and primroses
- Fauna includes brindled white-spot moth, common clubtail dragonfly, dormouse, glow worms and occasionally wood white butterfly along the forest ride

Work to be carried out by volunteers:

- Manage as coppice with standards on a rotation of approximately 20 years (divide into 4 coupes; cut one every 5 years)
- Keep the first part of the ride from Fiveways towards the Alder Buckthorn Reserve open to benefit the lily of the valley

Work to be carried out by Forestry England beat team:

- Remove Norway spruce and encourage broadleaf regeneration

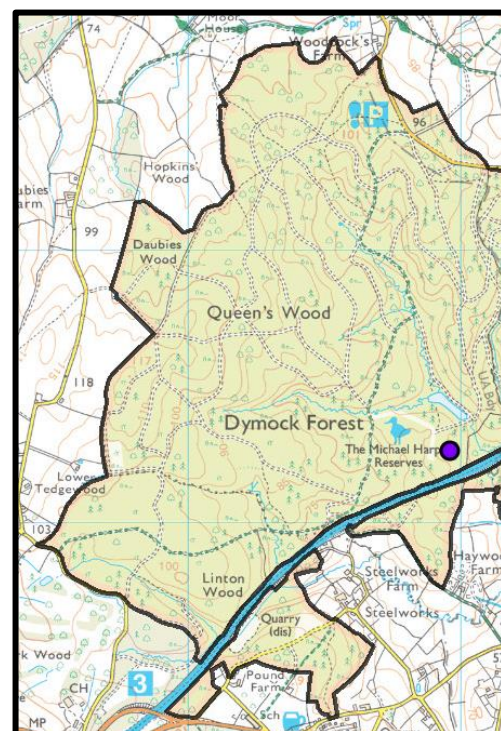


Motorway Reserve

- 2.27 hectares
- Broadleaf coppice with standards - trees include birch, oak, hazel, alder, willow, aspen, wild service, guelder rose, alder buckthorn and small-leaved lime
- Flora includes wild daffodils, devil's-bit scabious, common spotted orchid and heather in the drier areas
- Fauna includes orange moth, dormouse and glow worms

Work to be carried out by volunteers:

- Manage as short-medium rotation (7-20 years) coppice with standards - coppicing a small coupe every 2-3 years
- Encourage heather where present
- Propose to coppice substantial area in next few years and install 380m of deer fencing if budget allows
- Maintain the ride with devil's-bit scabious as open space and remove shading crop trees



Connecting the reserves

The map below shows some of the work that will be carried out by the Forestry England beat team over the coming decades to develop the habitat between the reserves.

More detail is provided in the Dymock Woods Forest Plan (2023-33).

