



Woodland walks which take in The Ercall, Limekiln Wood & Short Wood



Woods around The Ercall

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Woodlands, a vital part of our living natural world, are also a source of enjoyment and relaxation for all of us. They support and shelter a large range of wildlife – plants, birds, insects and mammals – providing us with the opportunity to appreciate and contemplate the rich diversity of wildlife right on our doorstep.

Everyone will have their own favourite season of the year, but in woodlands spring and early summer are a very special time. The plants on the woodland floor flower early before the tree canopy overhead comes into full leaf. At different points along these walks you will enjoy swathes of bluebells and the white-flowered wild garlic, also known as ramsoms, and instantly recognisable by its strong scent.

As well as masses of these flowers, look out for other plants such as the nettle-like yellow archangel, white flowers of wood anemone and wood sorrel, pink flowers of herb robert, the low-lying violets and yellow pimpernel and the more upright yellow-flowered wood avens and blue-flowered bugle.

Summer, with the trees looking magnificent in their full-leaved glory, brings different flowers; foxgloves with tall purple flower spikes, dog roses with pink petals, white-flowered enchanter's nightshade and perfumed honeysuckle. The speckled wood butterfly patrols the woodland rides, and summer migrant birds like the chiff-chaff and the cuckoo can be heard. Ferns and grasses fill the places of the earlier flowers.

Autumn sees the leaves turn colour, and the woods produce nuts and berries. Elderberries, rose hips, blackberries and hazel nuts provide food for small mammals and birds, and a harvest for us. An amazing assortment of fungi and many sorts of mosses are more apparent. Winter has its own unique atmosphere, with silhouettes of the leafless trees against the skies, frosty weather, and often a stillness not to be found at other times.

The four walks described in this leaflet all differ in character, and all will give you a woodland experience at any time of the year.



The Ercall



The Ercall quarries are renowned for their geological interest. The rocks are some 560 million years old, and around 450 million years ago they were 60° south of the equator.

Today geologists from far and wide come to appreciate their significance. The grassy areas are good for butterflies such as Dingy Skipper, Green Hairstreak and Wall, as well as the brilliant red-winged Cinnabar and Burnet moths.

On the upper slopes tall oak trees predominate; these are termed sessile oaks, as the acorns sit on the twigs without any stalks. Here acidic soils support such plants as bilberry, climbing corydalis and heath bedstraw.

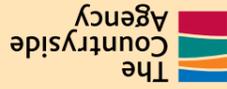
The Ercall woods often resound with birdsong, and you may hear among many songs the unmistakable loud laughing 'yaffle' of green woodpecker. The top of the hill provides wonderful views across Telford and, to the north, the Cheshire Plain.

Limekiln & Short Woods

Limekiln Wood was once part of the Royal Forest of Wrekin, and is one of the most botanically interesting woods in Telford, supporting a range of limestone flora. Over 150 plant species have been recorded here. You may see at the side of the path sanicle, which has tiny white flowers on an upright stalk. Look out for the flowering spikes of orchids. Ash trees form much of the tree canopy, along with oak and sycamore, with hazel and hawthorn providing the understory.

As with much of this area, these woods have a long history of mining and quarrying, which reached its heyday during the 18th and 19th centuries. Today the remnants of old workings are all that remain, including the ruins of old limekilns; the lime was used in the iron ore smelting works in Coalbrookdale, and for improving agricultural land. Coal was once mined in Short Wood. The adits of abandoned mineral workings are known to have been roosting sites for Daubentons, Brown Long-Eared and Pipistrelle Bats.

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Woods around The Erccall

1. Erccall Woods

Time: Allow 1½ hours

Terrain: Woodland paths, steep at first, along the top of The Erccall, and then back past Erccall quarries

Follow the **BLUE** Route 

Start at the entrance of The Erccall Nature Reserve and turn right along the road. Walk past the Bucktree Hall Hotel, and 25m later turn right along a footpath, gently uphill at first and then steeply. Follow this path up to the top of The Erccall.

The path swings left following the ridge of the hill, gradually descending. Keep to the ridge, avoiding paths going down to the right, and the path goes under some large, spreading oak trees. After this the path forks - take the righthand fork, descending from the ridge.

As the sound of the traffic on the M54 increases, but before you reach the fence in front of it, turn sharp right onto another path by some holly bushes, and follow this path gently uphill.

Where this path meets a wider path, turn left and walk downhill past The Erccall quarries. Here an interpretation board and a poem on a rock explain the geological story of the exposed rock faces. Continue along the path to where you started.

2. Erccall & Limekiln Woods

Time: Allow 2½ hours

Terrain: Mainly woodland paths, with a short section along the road to the golf course

Follow the **ORANGE** Route 

Start at the entrance to The Erccall Nature Reserve. Walk into the Nature Reserve through the kissing gate following the track. Go past quarries to the left and right, continue straight ahead and soon you will come to a poem on a rock and an interpretation board on your left. The path swings round to the left, past an old wall on the left, into woodland with tall oak trees.

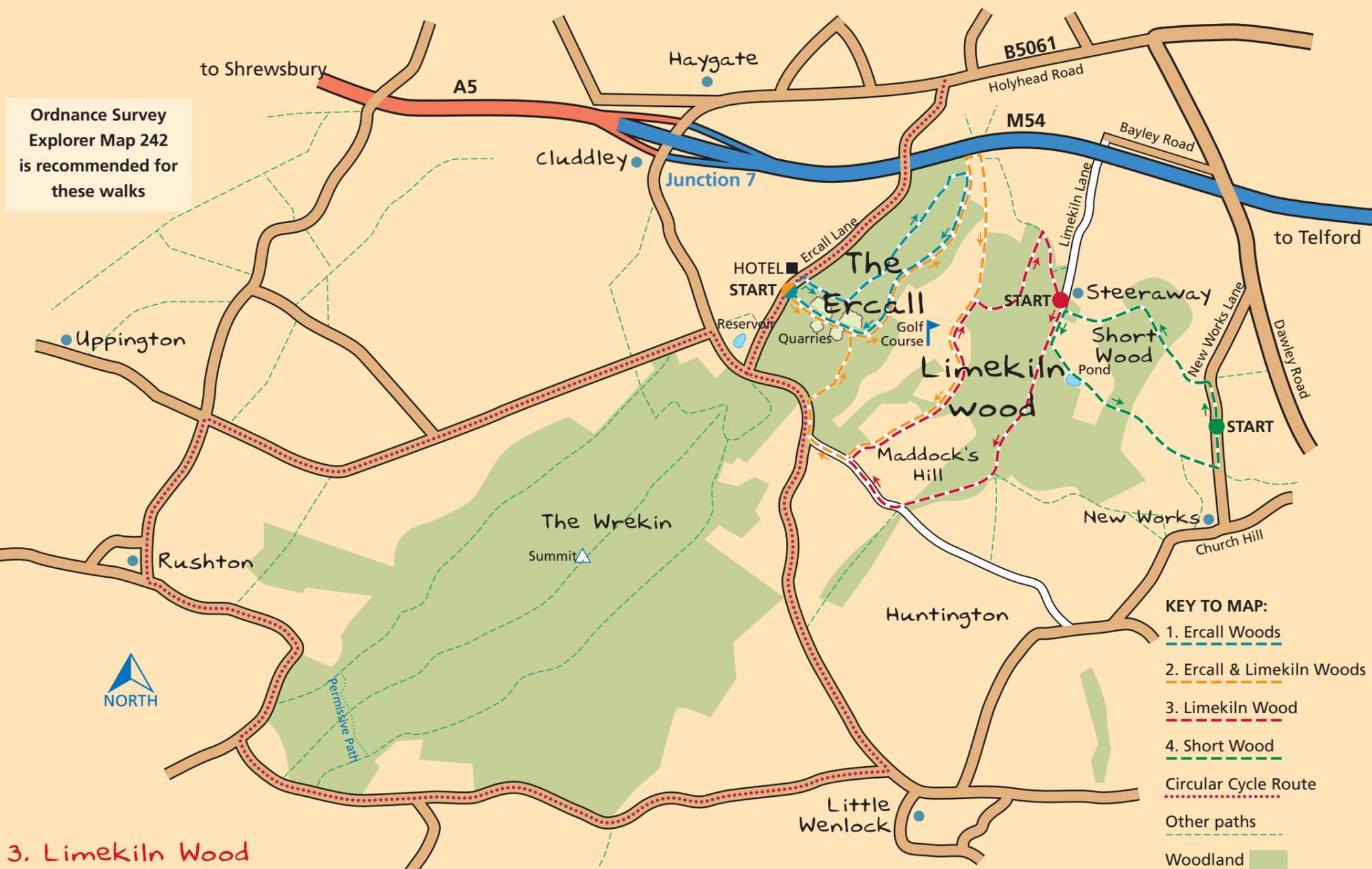
Where the path forks, take the righthand fork downhill, and not the lefthand fork up a broader path to the summit. Carry on along this path until you come to a fence in front of the M54, where you go right and cross a wooden footbridge over a stream. Turn right along the road leading to the golf club.

At the gates to the golf club walk along the public bridleway on the left hand side. The path eventually crosses the golf course (look out for golfers!), and then turns right into more woodland, with fine views of first The Wrekin and then The Erccall to the right.

Carry on along this path, passing Maddocks Hill quarry on the left, until you come to some large boulders, where you turn right downhill, and right again at the road.

After 50 metres turn right again along a path, which takes you through an avenue of Scots Pine trees and past an area called The Dairy-pit. Ignore paths branching left and right, and continue along the path back through The Erccall quarries to the start.

Follow the **Purple** Route  for a Circular Cycle Route starting from **Wellington**



3. Limekiln Wood

Time: Allow 2½ hours

Terrain: Mainly woodland paths

Follow the **RED** Route 

Start the walk at Steeraway, and cross a stile to take a path alongside the farm into the woods, with a field on your left, towards Limekiln Pool.

At a fork after 200 metres bear right and continue uphill. Shallow limestone workings are evident on both sides of the path, which now levels off. At a junction with a track turn right, and continue downhill. Pass Maddocks Hill quarry on your right, and soon afterwards turn right along another path.

Continue with the golf course on your left with views of The Erccall quarries. The path swings to the left to cross the golf course (look out for golfers!) with good views of The Wrekin.

Just past a large water tank on your left, and before you reach the clubhouse, turn right along another path. When this path reaches a junction turn left downhill.

Paths lead off to left and right, but ignore these and keep straight downhill until you come to a T junction in front of a field. Turn right here onto a broader path. Continue along this path, go through a gate and you are back at Steeraway.

4. Short Wood

Time: Allow 1½ hours

Terrain: Mainly woodland or field paths, and one section along a road

Follow the **GREEN** Route 

Start at the lay-by in New Works Lane, walk downhill along the road, and turn left to go along a track. Cross a stile and walk diagonally right across a field, passing near a pylon and following a line of old posts.

Enter Short Wood at a stile, and continue along the path. The path goes on to drop down a gully, carry on passing a

pond on your left, and then walk through the farm at Steeraway. On reaching a track immediately cross a stile on your left and walk along a path uphill with a field on your left towards Limekiln Pool.

Take a left fork after 200 metres, and after a further 100 metres cross a stile and walk across a field. Pass Limekiln Pool on your right, and cross another field. Enter Short Wood by crossing a stile, and follow a path that appears to be shared by a stream. On the left hand side the path separates from the stream and goes uphill and continues to pass some holly bushes.

Cross a stile into another field, and walk across into the wood again. The path is indistinct here, and you need to try to keep to a straight line, but be careful as you walk past old mine workings. Eventually you should pick up a wide track, pass beneath some power cables and approach a gate next to a bungalow. Ignore the gate, but cross a stile on the left and turn left along the road to return to the lay-by.