

## Colgear Woods



To access our woods, descend station approach, then take a sharp left up the steep hill. Turn right **after** the railway bridge, walking in front of the two cottages. Follow the track through the field, keeping the railway on your right. The woods are directly ahead.

Colgear woods was clear felled in the 1960s and planted with a crop of Japanese larch. When we took on the woods in the mid 1990's much of the original woodland had coppiced or reseeded, so we had a good mix of hazel, ash, elm, beech, cherry, sweet chestnut and the occasional oak, alongside shrubby spindle, holly and elder. We also planted a few oaks and limes shortly after taking over the management of the woods.

In 2018, due to the threat of phytophthora ramorum disease, we clear felled the Japanese larch, which has allowed us to plant for greater wildlife diversity. In the last few years we have planted several hundred whips, including oaks, silver birch, wild service, rowan, walnut, purple beech, eucalyptus, large fruiting sweet chestnut, limes, dogwood, maple and many more.



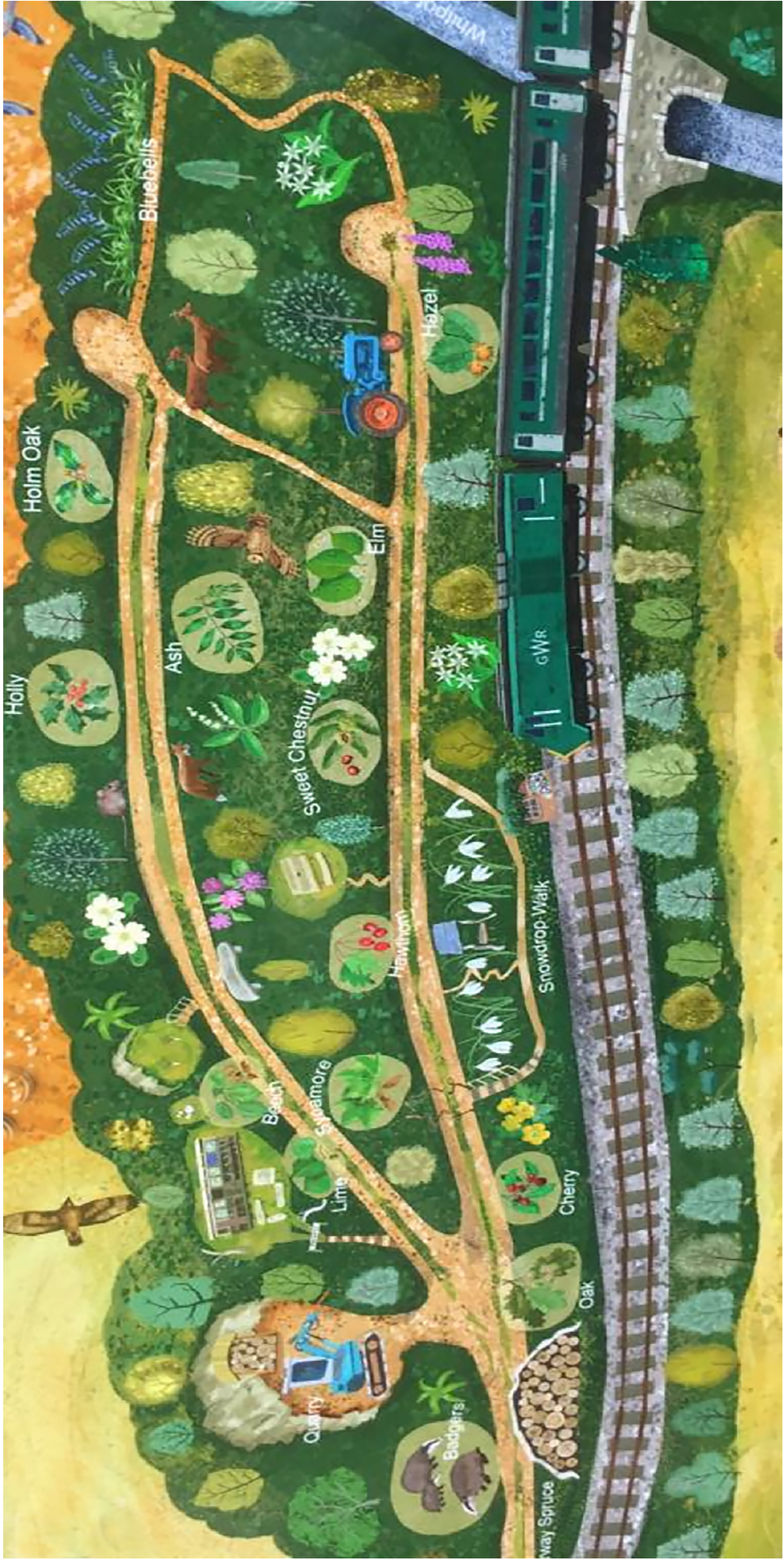
There are two main tracks through the woods, that join up about 3/4 of the way through the woods. Different areas of the wood shine at different times of the year. Here are our recommendations for making the most of your visit.

**In early spring** take the bottom track and descend to the snowdrop walk, where swathes of native snowdrops are complimented by cultivated varieties. The first snowdrops start...

What am I?

A  
cradle  
a bookshelf  
a table, a book  
i am tea & oranges  
your climate saviour  
a cool belly on a hot day  
a hand between land & sky  
i am a kingfisher's spring-board  
a mouse-chewed umbrella in rain  
i am the ivy-crowned nest of den-makers  
a breakfast for moths with movie-star names  
a beetle metropolis, rook atheneum, a bee's ritz  
i am a rain fracturer, lightning catcher, dream hatcher  
i am a rough-gruff chin of bark on a hippy-hugger's skin  
an ear piece for cankers, gnarled as a chicken's bottom  
i am the loving last ship of mothers  
the purveyor of monoliths  
master and slave of mycelium  
i am poetry, sometimes in motion  
i am the muse of the moon & orion  
the lousy tousled hair of drowsy giants  
i am a brooder, a thinker, a dew-drop drinker  
i am the scent of blossom on a southerly breeze  
a coat-hanger for squirrel-drays, a bird-song thief  
i am a handle for brooms & axes, a bellows, a mandolin  
i am the alchemy of music from horsehair against catgut  
a stinking armpit of honey fungus, a conjurer of elves' ears  
a secret-keeper, marcescent sleeper, the storm's grim reaper  
i am fuel for cremations, a wheel across land, freedom over sea  
i am a spear of panspermia, the curse & lifeblood of the indigenous  
i am an avenue of brush strokes hung in private rooms of oligarchs  
i am a thick cloak of undershirts, shelter for the displaced  
no wonder you  
all envy me  
make false  
idols of glass  
plastic, brass  
scumble paint  
to look like grain  
gracious even in death  
when storms come i weep my hair  
take a long bow a deep breath and return to soil

*Lizzy Lister - After Walt Whitman, Songs of Myself 6 - A Child Said What is the Grass?  
(Moths with movie-star names include Ruby Tiger, Rosy Underwing and Alder Kitten)*



(cont from page 1) to push through in December, coming into their own by the second week in January and flowering until early March. **In spring** wild garlic carpets the bulk of the woods, and by **summer** the clearing on the bottom track is a blaze of wild flowers, especially red champions, foxgloves and buttercups. For bluebells in late April and May follow the top track to the very end and you will enter the bluebell glade. The bluebell glade is also a place of fairies, with grottos to spy above the path on the left hand side.



Most of the year you can find bright scarlet cups, known as elf ear fungus. **Autumn** is the time for golden colours, sweet chestnuts and an array of fungi species. The bright hips of wild roses and spindle fruit brighten up the **winter**, as does holly berries, until the birds strip the trees.

Throughout the woods you will find information boards about the trees, along with wildlife poetry. We hope you'll be inspired to write some of your own! Also keep your eyes open for **painted stones**. If you wish you can take these home, or hide them elsewhere.

Colgear woods abounds with wildlife. You may not see any animals, but you will see plenty of evidence. As you walk into the woods look for animal tracks, and places where nocturnal **badgers** have been digging tunnels. They also dig holes searching for wild garlic cloves. This can make the tracks uneven, so do watch your step! **Foxes** leave a distinctive musky smell. The scent of fox is similar to the stinkhorn (pictured), a toadstool that is also prevalent in the woods. You might hear **deer** rustling, but they tend to be very shy. Look for their distinctive V shaped hoofmarks in the mud.



There are plenty of unseen small mammals - look for holes dug in the bank along the snowdrop walk. **Squirrels** are a pest as they ringbark trees, especially sycamore, and chew the edges of the information signs! The wood is frequented by all kinds of **bees**, harmless **wood wasps**, **moths** and **butterflies**. Look for meadow browns, coppers, cabbage whites, peacocks and red admirals. **Birds** are plentiful. Watch for owls, buzzards, pigeons, long tailed tits, robins and a plethora of smaller birds. At dusk you may also see **bats** in the quarry area, and at night hear the owls calling to each other.