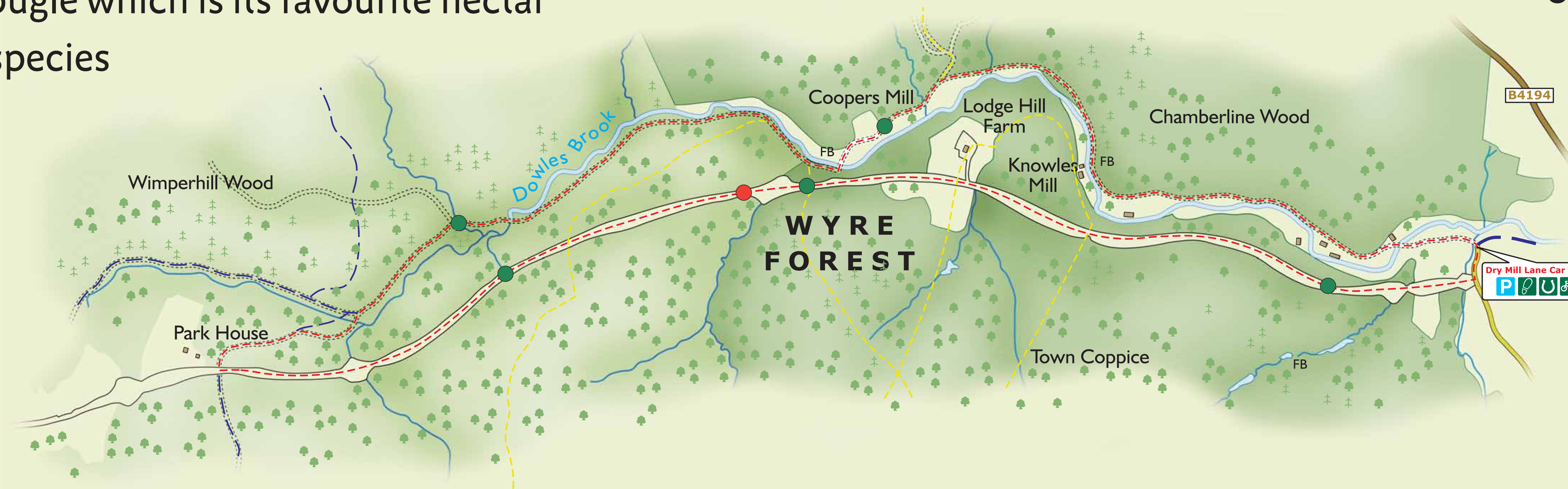


Wyre Forest Butterfly Trail



Welcome to the Wyre Forest Butterfly Trail. This 5.7 km trail takes 2-3 hours to complete and has been designed to introduce the amazing diversity of butterflies found in the Wyre.

The stretch of the old railway line ahead of you is one of the best areas in the Forest for the nationally rare Pearl-bordered Fritillary. This butterfly flies quite early in the year, usually from late April through to the middle of June. The railway line here runs in a shallow cutting and the butterfly enjoys the shelter this provides often visiting the flowers of bugle which is its favourite nectar source. Nectar is really important to most species of butterfly as it provides them with the essential sugars they require for flight, courtship and egg-laying.



As the demand for woodland products fell into decline, woods became much more shady places and often fast growing conifers were planted to replace native broadleaved trees. As a result of these changes, many butterflies and other sun loving insects and plants gradually disappeared. In Wyre, Butterfly Conservation, with the support of Natural England, the Forestry Commission and other woodland owners, has successfully helped to reverse this decline through the restoration of a much more diverse woodland structure that includes areas recently cleared of trees and shrubs and a network of sunny open rides, which has provided ideal conditions for a wide range of wildlife including many butterflies and moths.

The decline in many woodland butterflies, including the Pearl- Bordered Fritillary, is associated with the lack of open space in modern day woodland. Butterflies are very fussy as to where they lay their eggs and for many species they need their caterpillar food-plants to be growing in hot and sunny positions. Years ago this was provided through the normal practice of woodland management, where trees and shrubs were cut on a regular cycle (known as coppicing) to provide timber for various purposes, which meant that there were always open clearings and rides.

Other butterflies to look out for along this stretch of the trail include the Peacock, which is seen often very early in the year as it hibernates through the winter as an adult; the Silver-washed Fritillary, a member of the same family of butterflies as the Pearl-bordered Fritillary but much larger and not normally seen until late June; and the Ringlet with its distinctive eyespots on its underside which is often the commonest butterfly in the Forest during the summer.

