

Post 13

TWILIGHT ENVIRONMENT

The scrub here is denser and this has had an effect on the plant life. You may notice that plants growing in these shady conditions have leaves with a larger surface area to catch the maximum light. They also have inconspicuous flowers, either green or white, because they do not have to be seen from a distance by high-flying insects.

Shown below are two plants which can be found in shady woodland. Dog's Mercury is an indicator of 'ancient woodland', which has been continuously wooded since at least 1600. Can you spot either of these plants?

Dog's mercury

Growing in dense carpets in woods, this plant, which is **poisonous** to humans and animals, was thought of as being 'only fit for dogs'. Flowers February-April.

10 points



Ivy

Forms dense carpets on shady woodland floors as well as climbing trees. Glossy, dark-green leaves 3 to 5 lobed or oval in shape. Stems have hairy suckers. Flowers yellow-green from Sept-Nov.

5 points

Crab apples

In the autumn you may find fallen crab apples on the ground in this area. The crab apple has been revered since ancient times, as it was one of the few trees which bore mistletoe. In Norse mythology the fruit was thought to be the food of the gods, and was believed to give them immortality. In the Middle Ages, whole roasted pigs were often served with an apple in their mouth. Today we compromise and just have apple sauce!



Roman snail

In this shady area you may come across the Roman snail. This is the largest British snail,



and is thought to have been introduced into this country by the Romans for food. It is familiar to many people as the edible snail or 'escargot' sold in French restaurants, having been fattened for the purpose. The Roman snail, like the garden snail, hibernates during the cold winter months but is rarely seen in clusters like that species. Only in the mating season are even two snails seen together.

This snail is only found on chalky soils, as the chalk is used to form the shell and a membrane produced across its opening during hibernation. This membrane is only found on the Roman snail and is responsible for the scientific name *Helix pomatia*, from the Greek 'poma' meaning a door.

Roman Snails are now a threatened and protected species, and it is illegal to injure, collect or sell them in England.

Leaving the twilight zone turn left, cross the valley bottom and horse ride (be careful). Go through the kissing gate and up the hill to post 14 (see map below).

NATURE TRAIL MAP

