



“The first machines on the Twywell site were twenty-ton steam shovels in the 1920s. They used to start with a flat field and would have one machine pulling out a gullet. The transporter then moved the soil to form a ‘hill’ on a bit that wasn’t going to be dug out. When the next cut was started they then put the muck in the gullet where they had already taken the ironstone out”
Extract from “Pig Iron & Old Men”

The site was originally farmland and mainly used as pasture. Remnants of Twywell Lodge farmhouse and its dairy and orchard can still be seen. Quarrying at the site began in 1920. At first manual labour was used to extract the stone. Later, large heavy machinery was used. A railway line was laid to carry the stone up to Isip Furnaces for smelting. This became part of the largest narrow gauge railway system in the country. The quarry was finally closed in January 1948.

In 1994 the land was purchased by East Northamptonshire Council from British Steel for wildlife conservation and to offer quiet recreational opportunities to local people and other visitors. It is managed by a partnership of the Wildlife Trust, Rockingham Forest Trust and the Woodland Trust.

Twywell Hills and Dales lies on the southern edge of the Rockingham Forest. Named by Norman Kings some 900 years ago, the area was subject to Forest Law, which meant that nothing could be taken from the land without the King’s permission.

History

How to find the reserve

OS Grid Reference SP 938 772
From the A14 take junction 11 for A510 ‘Wellingborough’ and ‘Cranford St John’.
At roundabout take road to Cranford St John and Cranford St Andrew. After 150m take first right into car park. Entrance to reserve is from car park.

Further information

Your local Wildlife Trust protects wildlife and countryside for people to enjoy in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough.
We are a charity dependant on voluntary contributions

If you would like more information about this reserve or about how you can support us please contact
The Reserves Manager, The Wildlife Trust, Lings House, Billing Lings, Northampton, NN3 8BE or telephone (01604) 405285.
E-mail: northamptonshire@wildlifebcnp.org

To join the Wildlife Trust please contact the Membership Manager, The Wildlife Trust, The Manor House, Broad Street, Great Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6DH or telephone (01954) 713500
E-mail: cambridgeshire@wildlifebcnp.org

Twywell Hills and Dales Nature Reserve is managed in partnership by :



Twywell Hills and Dales Nature Reserve

The site takes its name from the abandoned quarry workings which have left a mosaic of undulating limestone quarries, grassland, scrub and woodland which is now a haven for wildlife. The Nature Reserve covers an area of 54.6 ha (135 acres).

Part of the nature reserve, The Gullet, has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to the limestone geology and the rich diversity of plants and associated invertebrates they support.

Common spotted orchid - one of the site's rare plants



We hope you enjoy your visit



Bedfordshire
Cambridgeshire
Northamptonshire
Peterborough

Access

The main access points are via: the car park, public footpaths leading from Twywell, Slipton and Cranford.

Bring stout footwear as the ground across the reserve is uneven and can be wet and slippery. As a result of quarrying there are steep drops and slopes around the reserve, we therefore ask visitors to keep to marked paths and keep dogs on leads. Please follow the countryside code at all times.

- Choice of waymarked trails:
- Whitestones for easy walking (1 mile / 40 minutes)
 - Gullet and Woodland – moderately difficult (2.5 miles / 1 hour 40 minutes)
 - Countryside walks to local villages along connecting footpaths
 - Riders’ route for horse riders

Dogs are welcome but owners are asked to clear up after them and they should be kept on a lead to avoid disturbing the wildlife.



This leaflet has been made possible thanks to the support of Alpro Soya

Welcome to Twywell Hills & Dales



The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough. Registered charity no: 1000412

Protecting **Wildlife** close to home

Twywell Hills and Dales Nature Reserve

Whitestones

Given its name when it was still farmland, because of the white limestone found here, the area is again grazed by rare breed sheep and cows to maintain the wildflower-rich limestone grassland. This habitat supports a rich assemblage of wild flowers and has diversity in structure from scrub, through grassland to bare ground, which in turn supports many different invertebrates, such as green tiger beetles and rare ants.

Many of the wildflowers are no longer common in the county and include bird's-foot trefoil, greater knapweed, field scabious and wild strawberry. As you walk you will see a range of butterflies, such as common blue, marbled white, green hairstreak, dingy skipper and brown argus. On warm spring days look out for the elusive grizzled skipper with its rapid, energetic flight pausing frequently to perch on a prominent twig or feed on bird's-foot trefoil.



Grizzled skipper

The areas of scrub in and around the grassland support a wide range of birds, including whitethroat and blackcaps. Listen out for the distinctive laugh of the green woodpecker in the summer months.

Red kites are an increasingly common visitor, seen circling overhead.



Green woodpecker

Follow the easy trail over its gentle ups and downs and explore the old railway cuttings and rich limestone grassland. For a longer walk continue to Twywell village and back via the wood and gullet. If on horseback take the Riders' Route which loops around the edge of Whitestones.

The Gullet

This deep gorge-like quarry and adjacent hill and dale ridges were formed by digging deep for ironstone which exposed limestone banks. The area has been designated a SSSI because of its wildlife-rich limestone grassland. The large pond provides a home for great-crested newts.



Marbled white

Kingfishers can often be seen here. Plants growing on the site include bee orchids, common-spotted orchids, wild strawberries and hart's-tongue ferns.

Take care if taking the rugged and difficult trail that starts at the far end of the pond and follows the gullet along the adjacent ridge towards the wood.

The Wood

This mainly evergreen wood was created after ironstone extraction ceased, beginning with the planting of European larch in 1932. More trees were planted during the 1950s.

Complete the waymarked trail along wide grassy paths and turn back beyond the large half-hidden pond.

-  Meadow
-  Woodland
-  Ridge
-  Scrub
-  Pond
-  Whitestones Trail (easy walking)
-  Gullet & Woodland Trail (moderately difficult walking)
-  Alternative Trail (difficult walking)
-  Riders' Route
-  Connecting Rights of way
-  Steps
-  Boardwalk
-  Bridlegate
-  Kissing Gate
-  Viewpoint

