

Ashlawn Cutting - Rugby

Location - From the heart of the town south to open countryside. **Grid Ref SP 515 726 to SP 516 757**

Status - **Local Nature Reserve**, a 'Grade A' wildlife site in the Rugby Borough Plan, & a greater part is a Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve

Tenure - Land belonging to Rugby Borough Council, and over half of the banks leased to W.W.Trust to be managed for wildlife. The track bed forms part of The Great Central Walk and is also a Sustrans Cycle Track. **RBC contact** - Chris Worman, Parks, RBC. 01788 533 706

WWT Conservation Manager - Michael Drummond. 02476 308 998

Collator of Records - P J Parr Document dated 8-5-11

WWT Voluntary Warden - Mr Cyril Cleaver

Site History and Description. The site was formed by the construction of the Great Central Railway at the end of the 19th century.

Ashlawn cutting is approximately 3.4km long. The WWT Reserve is 2.2km long running south from the Hillmorton Road bridge. The railway closed in 1966.

The site lies on lias clay and this exposure encourages plants that thrive on calcareous soils.

Typical plants include Quaking Grass, Fairy Flax, Ox-eye Daisy, Birds-foot Trefoil, Creeping Cinquefoil, Agrimony, Grass Vetchling, & Adder's-tongue Fern.

Habitat & Management. While the railway was operating, the embankment and cutting sides were mostly **species rich grasslands**, but over the last 44 years the grassland has been gradually invaded by scrub and the scrub now dominates.

Species rich grassland is one of the counties rarest habitat types.

It is important as it holds plants & insects that are no longer common in the wider countryside. These include the butterflies, Small Copper, Brown Argus, Common Blue, Marbled White, and Chimney Sweeper & Forester moths

Butterfly Conservation has been monitoring the site since 1984

A small group of volunteers have worked for many years to retain some areas of grassland in the WWT Reserve part the cutting. The assistance of **pupils from Rugby School** and **WWT's Nature Force group** is also much appreciated

For the purposes of management & recording the site has been split into sections. See the site plan.

Most visits to record butterflies are made to the WWT Reserve (Sections D,E,F,& G) at the southern end of the cutting. 27 survey visits were made to the cutting during 2010



Images:
Volunteers at work on habitat management during the winter, & taking a break so that butterflies like the Holly & Common Blue butterflies (seen on Tansy) can thrive, also below Small Skipper. The volunteers were awarded a Gold Award in the Rugby in Bloom 2009 competition. Views of different parts of the cutting, Uncommon Stork's-bill flower, Violets, White Spindles fungi, and Crab Apples.



The table shows greatest number of each species seen in each section	Tetrad SP 50 74			Tetrad SP 50 72				Site Total	Date highest No. seen 2010	
	A	B	C	Works, Wildlife Trust Reserve						
Section Numbers	A	B	C	D	E	F	G			
Small Skipper		1	1	2	1	8		13	08-Jul	
Essex Skipper	Thought to be present but difficult to tell from Small								0	
Large Skipper						30		30	22-Jun	
Grizzled Skipper	Not seen for many years though occurs at CEMEX site								0	
Clouded Yellow	Migrant & a few seen in this country this year								0	
Brimstone	3	2	1	2	5	5	1	19	17-Apr	
Large White	3	1	1	2	3	6	2	18	22-Jun	
Small White	5	5	7	21	60	16	3	117	17-Jul	
Green-veined White			3	12	3	6	3	27	27-Jul	
Orange-tip	1	2	2	5	5	6		21	28-Apr	
Green Hairstreak	Not seen since 1988, Species in decline.								0	
White-letter Hairstreak	Last record 20-6-96								0	
Small Copper				2		8		10	22-Aug	
Brown Argus				2		4		6	22-Aug	
Common Blue				17		81		98	22-Aug	
Holly Blue		1	1	5	3			10	20-Jul	
Red Admiral					1	2		3	17-Jul	
Painted Lady						1		1	22-Jun	
Small Tortoiseshell	3	1	1	4	4	4		17	17-Apr	
Peacock	1	1	6	7	8	7		30	17-Apr	
Comma	2	4	1	6	10	7	1	31	17-Apr	
Speckled Wood	4	7	1	16	22	6	5	61	06-Sep	
Wall	Not seen since 1995, believed extinct from county.								0	
Marbled White						32		32	05-Jul	
Gatekeeper		4	6	12	6	40	1	69	17-Jul	
Meadow Brown		3			2	34	1	40	05-Jul	
Ringlet	18	40	8	80	50	66	2	264	20-Jul	
Small Heath	Not seen since 2000, no longer on this site								0	
Latticed Heath						3		3	22-Jun	
Burnet Companion						6		6	12-Jun	
Forester	Last sighting (unconfirmed) 24-6-08								0	
Small Yellow-underwing	Not seen since 2007								0	
Shaded Broad-bar				2				2	26-Jul	
N.B.Five-spot Burnet						27		27	05-Jul	
Six-spot Burnet				1		1		2	08-Jul	
Cinnabar						5		5	12-Jun	
Chimney Sweeper								0		
Roesel's Bush Cricket						6		6	03-Sep	

Birds noted include: - Kingfisher 7-11-10 - C Cleaver, Snipe 26-12-10 - Mr Bruce, Barn Owl 8-11-10 - Mr Hancock, Willow Warbler-4, Chiffchaff-2, Song Thrush-1, Jay-2, + Wren, Robin, Dunnock, Long Tailed Tit, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Chaffinch, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Whitethroat, Redwing, Starling, Fieldfare, Blackbird, Magpie, Woodpigeon, Crow, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Mallard, Moorhen. S Batt.

The WWT Rugby Group & WWT carried out 499 hours of habitat management on Ashlawn during 2010 and Rugby School Group 800 hours

