

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 - Karl Curtis. 02476 308 975

WWT Voluntary Warden - Mr Cyril Cleaver

Collator of Records - P J Parr **Document dated** 15-7-12

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.

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, Latticed Heath, and Burnet Companion 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. 23 survey visits were made to the cutting during 2011

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 2011	
	A	B	C	Warks. Wildlife Trust Reserve						
Section Numbers	A	B	C	D	E	F	G			
Small Skipper	1		1	7		26	1	36	10-Jul	
Essex Skipper	Thought to be present but difficult to tell from Small								0	
Large Skipper	3	2	2	2	3	2	1	15	28-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	2	1	2	4	5	4		18	23-Mar	
Large White	1		2	1		1		5	04-Jul	
Small White	4	2	2	12	5	12	2	39	10-Jul	
Green-veined White	3	5	4	9	7	9	2	39	08-May	
Orange-tip	1	3	1	6	7	7		25	18-Apr	
Green Hairstreak	Not seen since 1988, Species in decline.								0	
White-letter Hairstreak	Last record 20-6-96								0	
Small Copper				1		4		5	21-May	
Brown Argus				1		4		5	21-May	
Common Blue				4	1	14		19	21-May	
Holly Blue	1	1	3	1	2	1		9	02-May	
Red Admiral	1	1	2		2	1	1	8	10-Jul	
Painted Lady	Last record 22-6-10								0	
Small Tortoiseshell	2	1	3	2	3	1		12	10-Apr	
Peacock	2	1	4	11	8	4		30	06-Apr	
Comma	1	1		10	7	2	1	22	23-Mar	
Speckled Wood	1	5	1	14	8	2	4	35	24-Aug	
Wall	Not seen since 1995, believed extinct from county.								0	
Marbled White						21		21	20-Jun	
Gatekeeper		2	1	13		8		24	24-Aug	
Meadow Brown	1			1	1	11	3	17	10-Jul	
Ringlet		6	16	41	27	47	31	168	10-Jul	
Small Heath	Not seen since 2000, no longer on this site								0	
Latticed Heath						2		2	16-Jun	
Burnet Companion						9		9	21-May	
Forester	Last record (unconfirmed) 24-6-08								0	
Small Yellow-underwing	Previous record 2007								1	21-May
Shaded Broad-bar						28		28	10-Jul	
N.B.Five-spot Burnet						9		9	10-Jul	
Six-spot Burnet	Last record 8-7-10								0	
Cinnabar						1		1	11-Jun	
Chimney Sweeper	Last record 14-6-09								0	
Roesel's Bush Cricket	Last record 3-9-10								0	

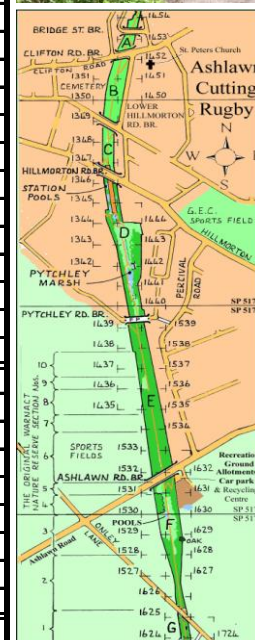
Birds noted include: - Buzzard, Coal Tit, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Chiffchaff, Cuckoo heard (10th May), Fieldfare, Garden Warbler, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Green & Great-spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Linnet, Long-tailed Tit, Mallard, Moorhen, Redwing, Skylark, Song Thrush, Tree Creeper, Willow Tit, Yellowhammer, Yellow Wagtail, Peregrine - irregular flyover. Red Kite low flyover 21-4-11. S Batt.

The WWT Rugby Group & WWT carried out 2044 hours of habitat management on Ashlawn during 2011 and Rugby School Group 751 hours



Images: - The volunteers were awarded Gold Award in Rugby in Bloom 2011 competition.

Volunteers at work on grassland mainly during the winter so wild flowers, butterflies and many other insects can thrive. Their caterpillars feed the birds. Shown here - work party 13-7-11, Tufted Vetch 19-6-11, Honeysuckle 4-7-11, Common Spotted Orchid 16-6-11, Frogs south of Pytchley Bridge 6-4-11.



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We are very grateful for the help from the Wildlife Trusts Nature Force groups. We also had a visit from The Warwickshire Flora Group who identified plants that we find more difficult. Amongst their finds was Common Broomrape (now not common) This has not been seen on the reserve since 1987. Another rarity seen some years but not this is Adder's-tongue Fern

A less welcome plant that has appears on the reserve is Himalayan Balsam as it is so very invasive. We have taken steps to eradicate it by removing seed heads. [Pictures](#)

[clockwise from top left:](#) - Volunteers take a lunch break Section F 10-3-11, Hard at work on Section E 6-1-11, Grassland management on F 14-7-11, Hedge Woundwort grows by the path in places 19-6-11, A particularly fine example of *Chondrostereum purpureum* fungi F 13-11-11, Orange-tips nectar on Dames Violet F 21-5-11, The parasitic plant *C. Broomrape* feeds on the roots of Hawkweeds F 21-5-11 pic Di Rapier, Meadow Cranesbill F 19-6-11, Two male Common Blue butterflies nectar on Tansy D 22-8-10, The view south from Ashlawn Bridge F 10-4-11, Warwickshire Flora Group visit to survey & study the wild flowers F 21-5-11, Ian with chainsaw widens corridor to let in more light E 8-2-11.

