

Ice and Water

Shaped by climate and modified by man over the last 600 years, Forge Valley Woods is today one of the best examples of a valley-side mixed deciduous woodland in North Yorkshire.

During a relatively short period of geological time, Forge Valley was formed when melt waters, released from the retreating glaciers at the end of the last Ice Age, were unable to drain directly into the North Sea at Scarborough due to an ice dam. These waters rapidly cut down through the layers of bedrock to form the gorge and the new path of the River Derwent.

Now this beautiful and unspoilt stretch of the river flows through the valley floor and is home to a wealth of special wildlife. Many rare and attractive insects thrive here, along with brown trout, white-clawed crayfish and the elusive otter, as well as birds such as kingfisher, grey heron, grey wagtail and the occasional dipper.



© Natural England / Michael Hammett

Otter

Please follow the Countryside Code

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Further information:

Local groups: <http://raincliffewoods.com/> and www.scarboroughfieldnats.co.uk/page73

Scarborough Conservation Volunteers:
www.scarboroughconservationvolunteers.org.uk

North East Yorkshire Geology Trust:
www.avm-branding.com/neygt

North York Moors National Park:
www.northyorkmoors.org.uk

Natural Nature Reserves Office, Bank Island,
Church Lane, Wheldrake, North Yorkshire YO19 6FE

Find out more at www.naturalengland.org.uk
or by calling the Natural England switchboard on
0845 600 3078 (local rate)

Front cover image: The River Derwent flows through Forge Valley Woods © Natural England



Natural England is here to secure a healthy natural environment for people to enjoy, where wildlife is protected and England's traditional landscapes are safeguarded for future generations.

ISBN 978-1-84754-281-6
Catalogue Code: NE413
www.naturalengland.org.uk

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Forge Valley Woods National Nature Reserve



Forge Valley Woods NNR

Nestling just outside Scarborough, flanking the steep east and west facing slopes of the Derwent river valley, Forge Valley Woods are one of the best examples of mixed deciduous woodland in north-east England.



The Woodland

The strong geological influences upon the area have left a complex arrangement of different rock types from; shales, sandstones, ironstones, clay and limestones. In turn, the soils which have developed reflect the qualities of these rocks and they support a rich, varied and well defined woodland flora and fauna which still reflect this geology today. This underlying geology and the long history of human interaction have shaped the woodlands, with a natural sequence of woodland types occupying different levels of the valley sides.

The wetter valley bottom, which can flood during periods of heavy rain, is dominated by alder and willow

and other water loving plants such as marsh marigold, yellow flag, butterbur and pendulous sedge. Away from the river, the soils of the middle slopes are more alkaline and support a mixed canopy of ash and elm with an understorey of hazel, field maple, holly and rowan. Here, there is a rich field layer of ramsons, dog's mercury, herb paris, sancile, toothwort and a varied fern fauna. The acidic soils of the higher slopes support pedunculate oakwood with rowan and holly, and a field layer that comprises of species including blackberry, great woodrush, heather and wavy hair-grass.

There are also petrifying tufa springs and pockets of limestone grassland, as well as scrub and fen which add to the diversity of the site.





Marsh marigold

© Natural England/Peter Walev



Fungi growing on dead wood

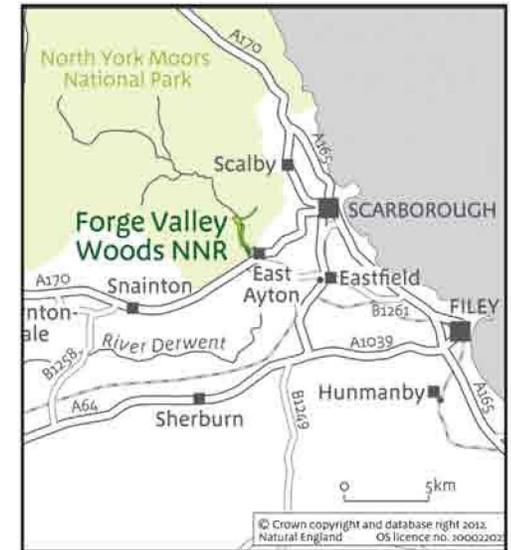
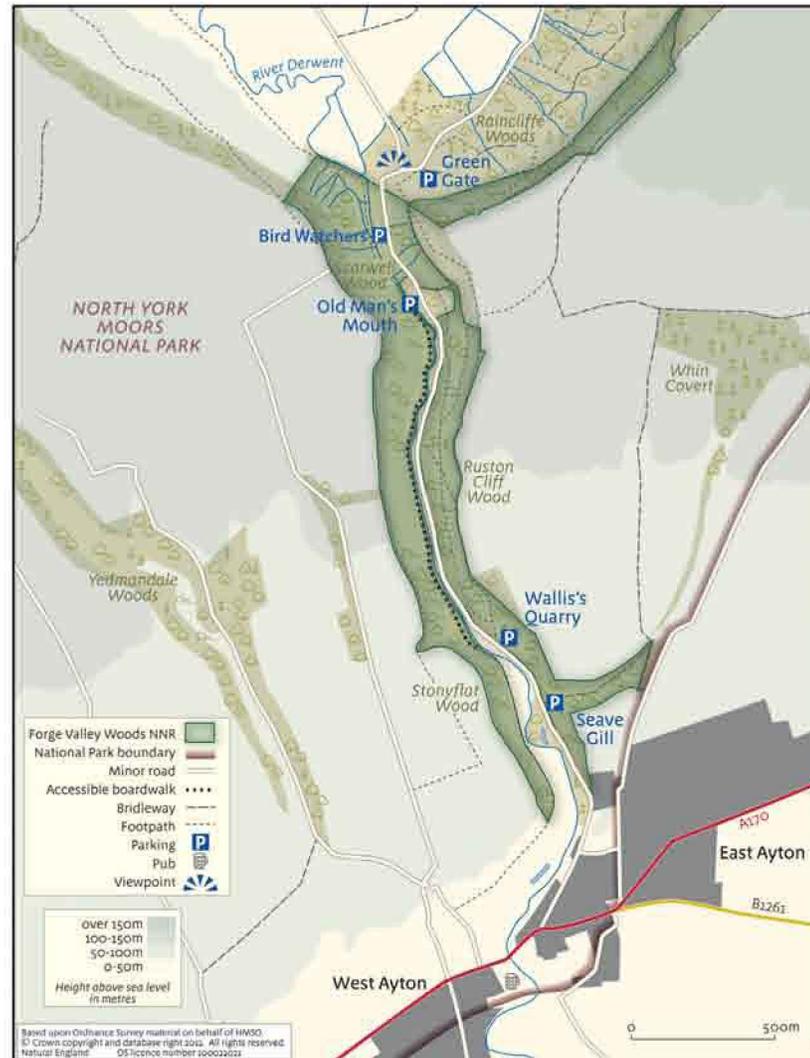
© Natural England/Craig Ralston

Access and Facilities

Set within the North York Moors National Park, Forge Valley is situated 5km to the south east of Scarborough off the A170. There are several car parks in the valley including Bird Watchers car park where bird feeders allow a close encounter with the valley's woodland birds such as nuthatch, jay and great spotted woodpecker. A network of paths are found throughout the woodland, whilst there is a 1.5km

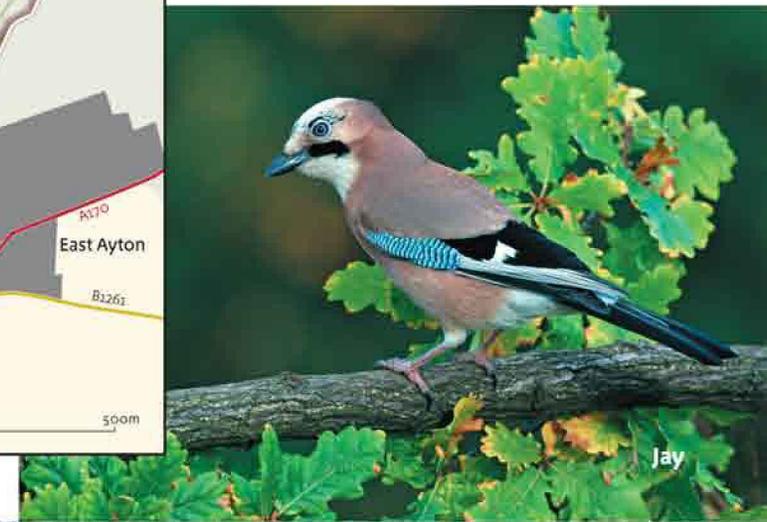
easy access boardwalk (suitable for wheelchairs) starting from Old Man's Mouth car park. A way marked geology trail also starts here and covers 3km of the eastern valley side and has an accompanying leaflet which can be downloaded from our website.

Bicycle racks are found in the car parks along with picnic facilities. A bus service runs to East Ayton with details available from the Scarborough and District Travel Centre on 01723 507300.

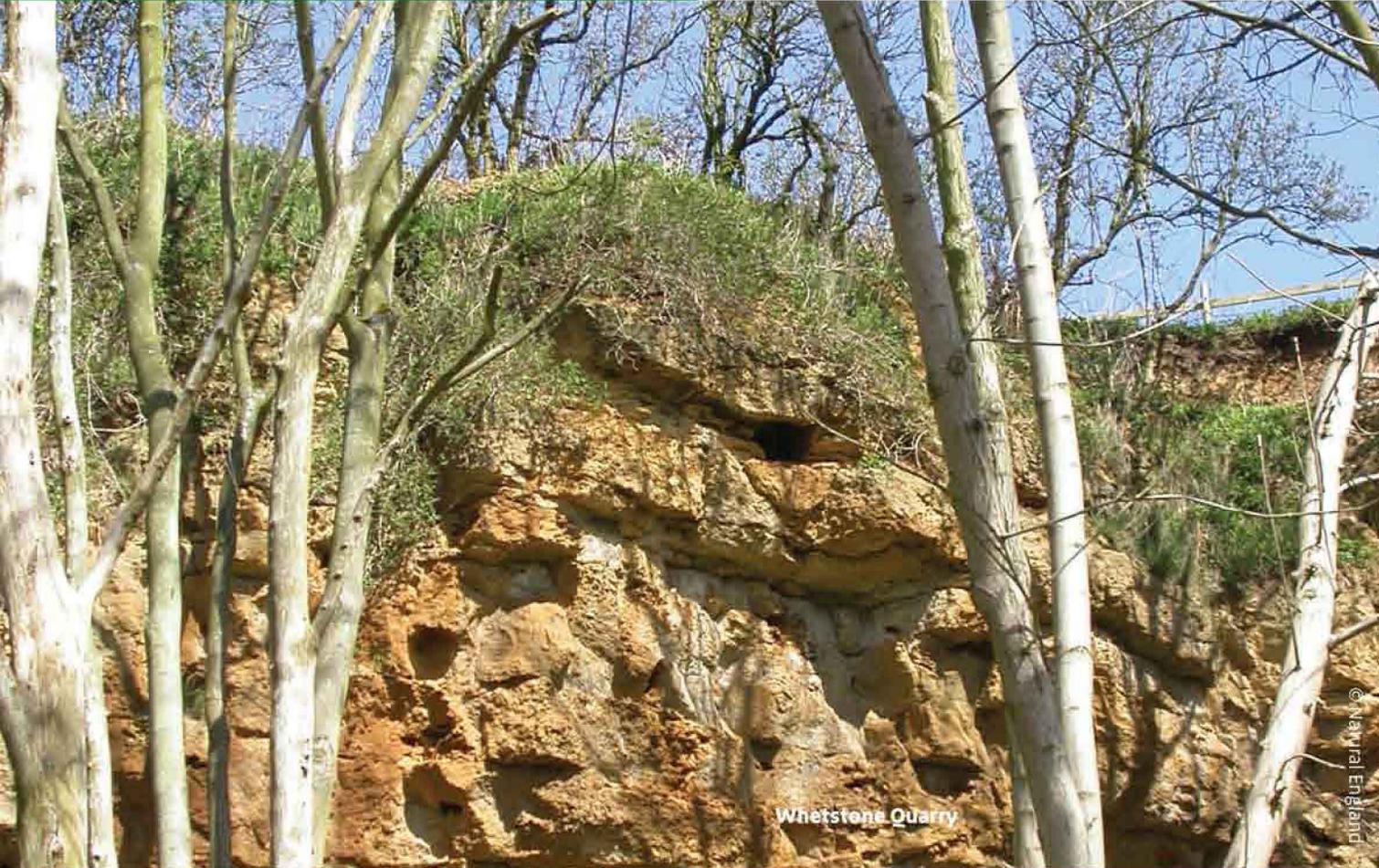


Management

Through a careful programme of selective tree felling, non-native and invasive trees such as sycamore and larch are gradually being removed to increase the light to the woodland for natural regeneration. This also adds to the diverse structure in the woodland and dead wood is retained, providing a valuable refuge for insects and fungi.



Jay



Whetstone Quarry

© Natural England



Butterbur

© Chris Milson

Human Influence

As the name of the valley implies, a forge once operated beside the river to process the locally extracted ironstone. As there was no immediate source of coal, the smelting was fuelled by charcoal produced by the slow burning of the abundant local timber. As a result, the woods were managed to produce a regular supply of wood and old coppice blocks can still be seen on the site. There are also small abandoned quarries on the site which made use of rocks that were laid down between 165 and 155 million years ago.

Visiting or getting involved

Visit in spring to see the flush of spring flowers, enjoy a shady walk alongside the river or the Geology Trail in summer, or experience the variety of autumn hues before the leaves fall.

Local voluntary groups organise volunteering and events within the woodlands and Scarborough conservation volunteers run regular tasks in the area, including within the NNR. Specific geoconservation is undertaken by North East Yorkshire Geology Trust, who also run guided walks along the Geology Trail. Natural England aims to support groups of students wishing to complete Duke of Edinburgh volunteering.

Other walks are run together with North York Moors Breath of Fresh Air scheme. You can find out more about the whole National Park on the Park's website or by going to one of their visitor centres at Danby or Sutton Bank.

Scarborough Borough Council's countryside team also offer educational visits to Raincliffe woods, or the Forge Valley Geology trail. Booking should be made through their Manor Road Office on 01723 374079.



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