

Barnack Hills and Holes NNR

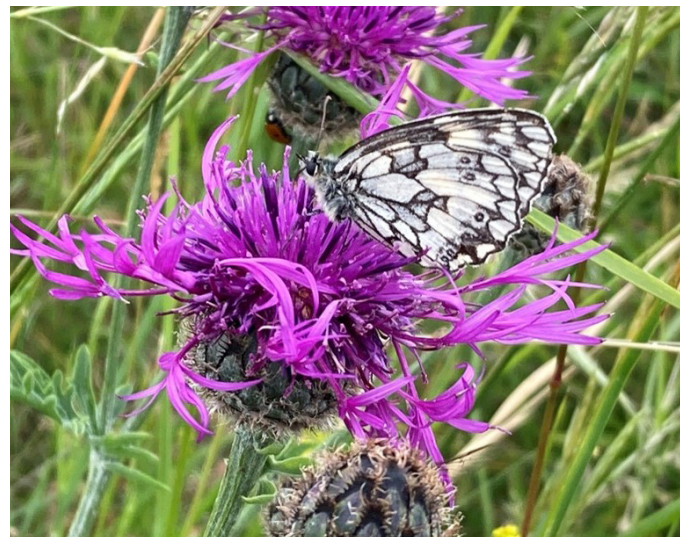


Welcome to the National Nature Reserve

Arising from the rubble of a mediaeval quarry, Barnack Hills and Holes is one of Britain's most important wildlife sites. Covering an area of just 22 hectares (50 acres), the grassy slopes are home to a profusion of rare wildflowers. This type of meadow is now all too rare: half of the surviving limestone grassland in Cambridgeshire is found at the Hills and Holes.

History

The unique hummocky landscape was created by quarrying for limestone, known as Barnack rag. It was first used by the Romans over 1500 years ago. Quarrying continued in mediaeval Times when Stone from Barnack was used to build Peterborough and Ely Cathedrals. By the year 1500, all the useful stone had been removed, and the bare heaps of limestone rubble gradually became covered by the rich carpet of wildflowers that can be seen today. The area became a National Nature Reserve in 1976.



Marbled white butterfly. © Ross Edgar

Wildflowers

Over 300 kinds of wild plants have been found on the Hills and Holes. One of the rarest plants found here is the pasqueflower, which blooms in April and May, alongside more familiar flowers such as violets and cowslip. The best time to see the flora is in June and July, when large areas are covered in pink, blue, white and yellow flowers. Eight species of orchids occur alongside other lime loving plants including rockrose, wild thyme, quaking grass, and ox-eye daisy. Later in the year further species such as clustered bellflower and autumn gentian may be seen.

You may also notice the tall brown spikes of knapweed broomrape, a parasitic plant which takes its food from the roots of greater knapweed.

Not surprisingly, Barnack's rich flora supports a wide variety of wildlife, especially insects. Several uncommon butterflies are found including marbled white, chalkhill blue, brown argus and green hairstreak. At night you might see the strange green lights of the glow-worm, which occurs in large numbers on warm summer nights.

Location and access

The reserve is situated in the village of Barnack, 11km north-west of Peterborough.

By car: Barnack village is on the B1443 and is signposted from the A1 just south of Stamford; following these signs brings you to Wittering Road, where our main car park is signposted. Additional parking is available in two lay-byes on Walcot Road.

By bus: Buses from Stamford and Peterborough serve local villages and stop regularly in Barnack, some 5 minutes walk from the reserve.

By bike: there are bike racks in the main car park. No bikes are allowed on the site, where the steep paths are dangerous for cycling.

Walking at Barnack Hills & Holes

The Limestone Trail is a waymarked walk that will take you around the main features of the site. In summer, some areas are protected with temporary fences – please avoid these areas when walking.

! Note that there are many steep slopes, and paths may be slippery or uneven. Suitable footwear should be worn.

Facilities

There are no facilities on site, there is a pub in the Village, within 5 minutes walk.

Contact

West Anglia National Nature Reserves – Collyweston Group

Email address: enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Website: www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-nature-reserves-in-england



Visitors

Help us to look after this special area by following a few simple rules:

- Access **on foot only** – please keep to the main paths.
- No hill-sliding, ball-games, frisbees, or kites – rare plants may be damaged.
- Dogs must be kept under close control, and **on a lead** when livestock are present. When livestock are present, keep dogs out of the signed livestock compartment.
- **Please clear up after your dog** – there are bins outside each main entrance.
- No camping, fires or barbecues.
- Please take all litter home with you.

Getting involved

You can become a Volunteer Warden, and help to patrol the site, monitor rare species or help with practical tasks. Each other Tuesday a group carries out practical tasks such as scrub clearance and fencing at Barnack or other local Reserves. Contact us for full details about these activities.