

Swadlincote Woodlands **Nature Trail**



Follow the Waymarkers



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**South
Derbyshire
District Council**

Nature Trail






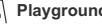


Enjoy the varied habitats of this developing site

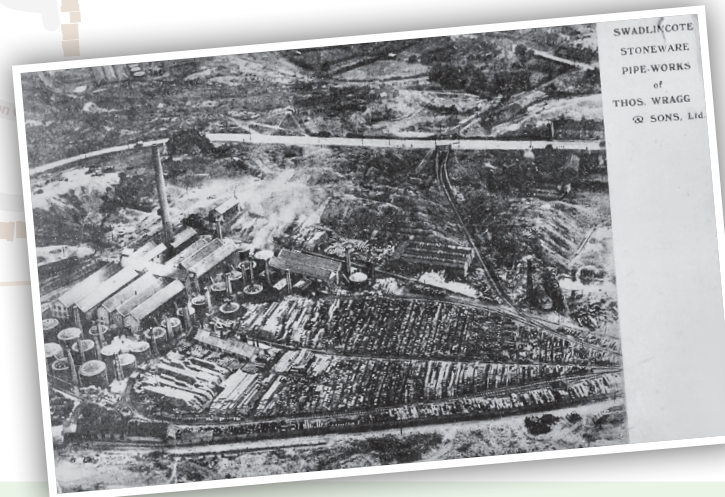
The walk starts at the car park off Derby Road (DE11 8LP) and should take less than an hour to complete. It is about 2¾ miles in length on surfaced paths. Numbered waymarkers guide you round the route. Please remember your binoculars.

Please follow our park code

- Protect our site, wildlife and all visitors.
- Enjoy the views and trails
- Leave the habitats undisturbed.
- Well behaved dogs on leads are welcome.
- Take dog's mess and other litter to the bins provided.

Map Key

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Woodland |  Footpaths |
|  Meadow |  Parking |
|  Ponds & Streams |  Playground |
|  Footbridges |  Toilets |



1

In the 1950s the site was dominated by the landscape above. Not only was it an eyesore, it suffered from air pollution. Wragg's pipe-yard had 26 round beehive kilns belching out smoke and soot. When the drainage pipes were being glazed, salt was thrown on to them creating hydrochloric acid that permeated the air. The large variety of clays present underground provided the raw material for the business and horse-drawn wagons using a tramway carried clay to the pipe-yard from an adjacent quarry known locally as a clay-hole. Nearby roads were dusty and dirty as lorries leaving the site had no wheel washing facility to use. Today there are 33 hectares of restored land with a network of trails and a variety of habitats to enjoy. It is an informal woodland park and the restoration of the site, which began in 1995, has been supported by The National Forest Company, Butterfly Conservation and Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Over 22,000 trees were planted. There are woodlands, wetland areas and a meadow. A variety of wildlife has resulted – dragonflies, butterflies, wild flowers, invertebrates, a wide range of trees and shrubs together with bats, birds and grass snakes.

Leave the car park by turning left past the toilet block and then through the metal sculpture and gates. Stop at the cross of paths.



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2

A Community Wood fuel group is now involved with managing the site by crown lifting trees (removing lower branches) close to the trails and thinning others. Some of the wood is taken away, some remains as brush for mini-beast habitats. Hazel is coppiced to encourage light to reach the woodland floor to allow other species to flourish. Quiet areas remain undisturbed for the wildlife to thrive.

Turn right and walk uphill ignoring paths left and right. Continue until housing can be seen ahead.

3

Planting trees for wildlife

As you walk along the route especially in autumn you will notice the wide range of berries on shrubs and trees. Whitebeam with oval leaves have a white felt like underside and produce bright scarlet berries. Dog rose is festooned with bright red hips and brambles on the woodland floor are covered with blackberries. These provide food not only for birds but mammals such as hedgehogs, foxes and badgers that make use of the site. Acorns provide food for grey squirrels and jays cache them for winter. Winter thrushes like redwing and fieldfare that visit eat vast quantities of hawthorn berries (haws). Crab apples lie on the ground in autumn and provide food for a range of mammals, small and large. A range of woodland birds make their homes on the site. Stop and listen for their songs in spring. However the robin trills in autumn too. Great tit and blue tit flit through the trees as do bullfinch. Dunnock search for tiny morsels on the ground. Magpie, crow and kestrel are predators. Listen for the mewing of buzzard as they rise on the thermal currents on sunny days.

Take the path half left where routes meet and signposted View Point continue uphill soon reaching a zig-zag path leading to the highest point on the site. Stop and take a break.

4

Planting trees for beauty





Walking through woodland refreshes and soothes the spirit. Trees have given pleasure to the eye for many years. The changing colours of deciduous species through the seasons allow us to appreciate the texture of bark in the winter, blossom in spring, the colours of fruits in summer and finally the range of autumn tints. As you wander along the trail look out for the white bark of silver birch; the deep red bark of wild cherry trees and grey smooth bark of ash. Guelder rose produces large blooms of white flowers. The outer circle of white bracts attract insects to pollinate the smaller white flowers at the centre. Shiny red clusters of berries soon develop.

Continue up the path soon bearing left and downhill to a major junction on the edge of the site. Stop.

5

Planting for use

The trees are young but over time some will provide timber that can be used. Try and identify some of the species as you walk. The silhouettes of leaves drawn below will help.

| Native tree | Silhouette of leaf | Feature | Uses |
|---------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Alder |  | Likes damp ground | Making clog soles & broom handles |
| Oak |  | Acorns once food for pigs | Building ships, homes & furniture |
| Goat willow |  | Pussy willow catkins in spring | Used to make clothes pegs |
| Silver birch |  | Silver bark | Twigs used to drive away evil spirits. Used to make brooms |

Turn sharp left along Granville Way. Then turn right at the junction with Skylark Walk. Stop at the bridge.

6

Trees that like water

Alder trees are common along the water courses in the park. They have long catkins in the spring tipped with a brownish red. These develop into green cones and then they become woody. Alder has grown in Britain for over eight thousand years. The tree's roots contain bacteria that can fix nitrogen in wet soil. They will help the soil on the site to improve over time. Look out for crack willow trees. They have thin leaves and their catkins develop into white woolly fruits. Broken twigs soon root in nearby mud so they do not rely completely on seed dispersal. They can grow in a polluted atmosphere. Another willow that was important locally is osier. These were grown in beds and used to make crates and baskets to pack finished pottery and other clay products.

Turn left and walk past blue metal arch down to cross of paths. Turn right to reach Frank Bodicote Way. Cross the road and take the narrow surfaced path leading towards Salt's Meadow. Amble across the meadow enjoying any butterflies and wildflowers.

7

Salt's Meadow

Over 115 different plant species have been recorded growing in the meadow. Low growing yellow bird's foot trefoil, ox-eye daisies, common knapweed and creeping cinquefoil provide nectar sources for bees, hoverflies and soldier beetles. It is home to a number of other insects – crickets, butterflies including ringlet, gatekeeper, common blue, and meadow brown that thrive in the grassland habitat. Two day time flying moths are common – the six spot burnet (with black wings and red spots) and the cinnabar moth identified by a vibrant red stripe on its upper wing. The meadow provides an ideal home for grass snakes too. In summer, swallows and house martins fly overhead catching flies and other insects. In late spring look out for them gathering mud to build their nests. By mowing the meadow in late summer, flower seeds scatter and the soil does not become enriched as the grass is raked away.

Retrace your steps. Take Wetlands Way downhill crossing a couple of metal bridges to the edge of a housing estate on the left.

8

Ponds

Resident waterfowl such as moorhen, coot and heron make use of the ponds. There is a plentiful supply of food and marginal plants to provide cover for nesting. Look out for reed buntings in the scrubby plants around the ponds. They are easy to recognise having a black head and white nape on the neck. Daubenton's Bats make good use of the open water on summer evenings as they fly and scoop up insects from the surface using their wings. Red Mace (bulrush) is a problem on the site as it colonises rapidly and chokes smaller aquatic plants. It also causes ponds and water courses to silt up reducing oxygen content. The plant is managed by clearing out using local conservation volunteers. It is important to keep open water to allow submerged plants to oxygenate the water. The ponds have varying depths allowing a greater biodiversity. Look out for giant horsetails and water mint that grow along the margins. Lady's smock (cuckoo flower) with its delicate mauve flowers in May grows in the damper grassland areas.



Bear half right keeping the pond on the right following the path around the pond and eventually return to this spot. Retrace your steps to Frank Bodicote Way and cross over. Take the straight path - Opening Hole Way. Stop at point 9 where a stream passes below the path.

9

Water courses

The water from the site feeds Darklands Brook. This was one of the dirtiest streams in Derbyshire being Class 4 on the Environment Agency scale of water pollution. It supported no life. Today the tiny brooks and ponds are much cleaner and freshwater habitats are important for increasing the biodiversity of the area. Look out for frogs, whirligig beetles and pond skaters on the surface as you stroll along.

Continue ahead to point 2 at the crossing of paths. Turn right and then take the next left to follow path round to point 10.

10

Shrubs

A variety of shrubs grow as under-storey in the woodland, many of them providing food for wildlife and colour in the winter. They also act as a shelter belt on the periphery of the site. Dogwood, flowering in June, has greenish white flowers that attract many insects because of their foetid smell and then black berries follow in August. Look out for its red bark in winter. Hazel is important in the woodland producing plenty of nuts in the autumn. In January long yellow male catkins produce pollen that lands on the delicate tiny pink flowers where the nuts develop. Gorse can be in flower in any month. 'When gorse is out of bloom, kissing is out of season' is an old country saying. On warm days the flowers smell of coconut and are a rich source of nectar for many insects. In the past washing was put out on gorse bushes as there was no fear of it blowing away trapped on the thorny branches. There is often evidence of damage by leaf beetles in the summer. They strip the guelder rose leaves down to a skeleton.

Continue along the path to the starting point passing the climbing boulder on the right.

If you require this information in large print or in another language please phone: **01283 595795** or email: **customer.services@southderbyshire.gov.uk**

Trail created by Dorothy Morson, April 2017. Thanks to the Magic Attic Archive for the heritage images.