

Nature Reserve Facts

Wilwell Farm Cutting



Nottinghamshire



Orchids and Buttercups at Wilwell

Al Greer

History

Wilwell Cutting was dug out in 1895 and formed part of the last Victorian railway construction projects to link Manchester and London with a high speed line. Local people remember trains passing through in the 1950s as well as playing in the area as children. The Great Central line closed in 1967 as part of the "Beeching" cuts and Wilwell was abandoned.

In the late 1970s proposals to use it as a landfill site sparked a vocal campaign to protect the site due to its diverse wildflower populations. In 1981 the proposals were rejected and the site was declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The following year it was purchased by Rushcliffe Borough Council for £6,300. The World Wildlife Fund contributed £4,000 on condition that the site was leased to Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust for 99 years at a peppercorn rate.

of the site is scrub woodland (a valuable habitat in it's own right), dominated by hawthorn (dry) and willow (damp), however the old track bed is notable for its avenue of silver birch Ash saplings are becoming well established within the dry woodland areas and in time (ash die back permitting) ash woodland will develop.

Flora & Fauna

It is said that the flora of Wilwell is a glimpse of "Victorian" countryside, as many plants found on the site are will have been relatively common in the late 19th and early 20th Century, but are no longer common locally.

Notable species include green wing orchid and meadow saxifrage (both known only at one other Notts site), southern marsh orchid, yellow wort, common centaury, cypress spurge (almost certainly brought in by the railway), cowslip, great burnet and meadowsweet.

In addition there are a range of flowers that are still found in other local grasslands such as common knapweed, ladies bedstraw, ox eye daisy, yellow rattle, field forget me knots, various buttercups, wild carrot and yarrow. Wilwell also supports species such as enchanter's nightshade (a woodland specialist) that has arrived in the last twenty years. In all some 230 species of wildflower have been recorded on the site since 1980, plus 35 species of grasses.

Habitats

The Cutting has a mix of habitats, but is particularly noted for its rare species rich grassland (both dry neutral and damp habitats), along with areas of marsh. However much



Six spot burnet moth

Al Greer

Not surprisingly Wilwell is used by a range of local birds including great tits, blue tits, robins, blackbirds and sparrowhawks. Also you can pretty much guarantee to hear a green woodpecker - as both meadows are covered in yellow meadow anthills, a popular food source for them. The fringes of the upper meadow support a large magpie roost, with up to 100 birds having been counted on occasion.

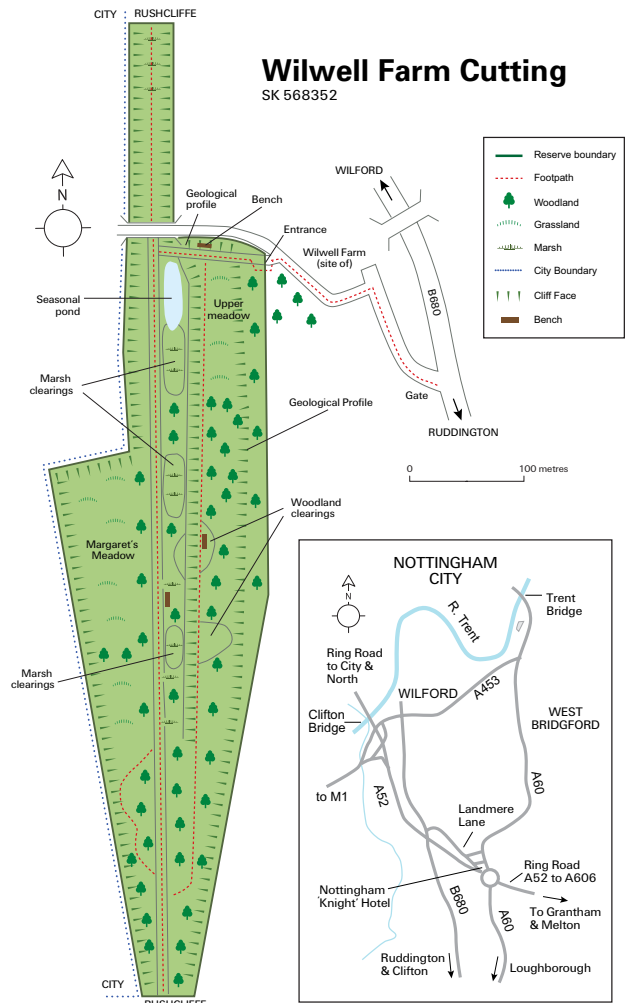
The site is known to support a wide range of moths. Just three moth surveys gave a total count of 142, so we would expect that many more species are yet to be discovered given the diverse range of habitats found. Even more startlingly a recent invertebrate survey found two beetle species that had not been recorded in Nottinghamshire since before World War 1.

Site Management

The primary objective of the site's management is to maintain and, where possible, extend the now rare areas of grassland and marsh to support the diverse range of flora found on the site. The principal threats are from coarse grasses and trees **coming dominate** the open areas, inevitably leading to shading and disappearance of more delicate and unusual grassland species. This is an ongoing effort involving a controlled grazing programme and manual scrub control.

Location

The reserve is on the B680 between Ruddington and Wilford to the south of Nottingham. If travelling towards Ruddington, turn onto the farm track on the right just after the Ring Road bridge. If using SatNav, enter NG2 7UT. There is limited parking space so please leave the gate clear, walk along the track, and the reserve entrance is on the left just past a wooded area. Check out a nearby reserve, Wilford Claypit, on our web site.



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Charity no. 224168R. Registered in England, no.748865

Production of this guide is funded by

