

2 BISHOP MIDDLEHAM QUARRY

A large magnesian limestone quarry, which is noted for its very rich flora, characteristic of a habitat that is internationally rare. The reserve is also an excellent site to see butterflies in very large numbers.



Limestone cliffs



Bee-eater (©RSPB)

Dark-red Helleborine



This reserve is considered to be one of the country's most important disused quarry habitats for wildlife and has been designated as a SSSI since 1968.

The magnesian limestone quarry was abandoned in the 1930's and since that time has been re-colonised by a variety of limestone flora, which are representative of magnesian limestone grassland. This is an internationally rare habitat type particularly rich in orchid species such as Pyramidal, Common Spotted, Fragrant and Bee Orchid and most importantly large numbers of Dark Red Helleborines. Amongst the many other plants that flourish on the thin limestone soils are Blue Moor Grass, Moonwort, Autumn Gentian and Fairy Flax.

Extensive areas of Common Rock-rose in the quarry support one of the county's largest colonies of Northern Brown Argus butterfly, which can be seen, on the wing in June and July. Other butterflies seen throughout the year include Dingy Skipper, Common Blue, Small Heath, Ringlet and Small and Large Skippers.

The scrub and woodland habitats present on site attract birds from the surrounding farmland and in 2002 the reserve became only the second recorded breeding site for Bee-eaters in the UK when a pair nested in one of the quarry faces and fledged three young.

Best seen – April to July for orchids, June/July for Northern Brown Argus and July/August for Dark-red Helleborine.

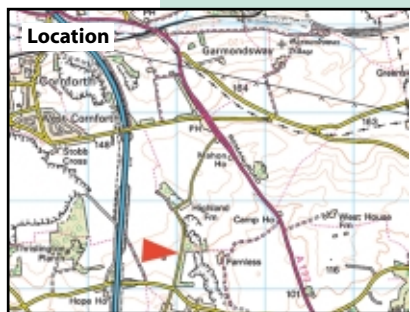
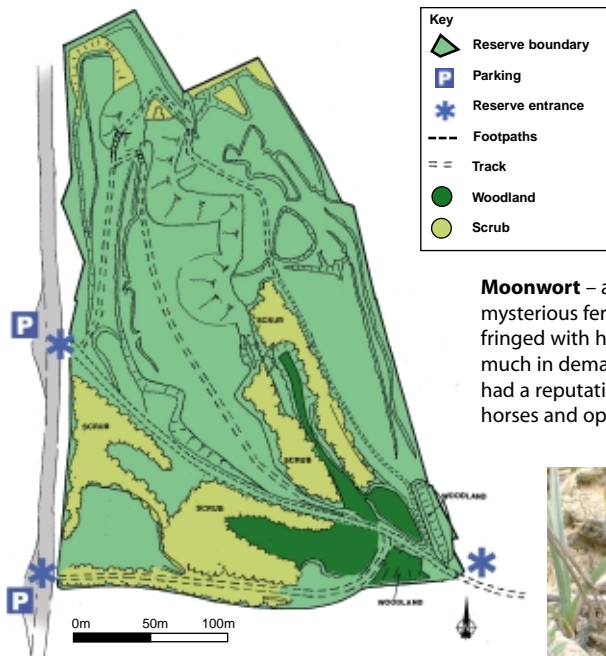


Northern Brown Argus

Common Rock-rose



BISHOP MIDDLEHAM QUARRY



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Key

- Reserve boundary
- Parking
- Reserve entrance
- Footpaths
- Track
- Woodland
- Scrub

Moonwort – a very small mysterious fern with leaves fringed with half-moons. Once much in demand by herbalists, it had a reputation for unshoeing horses and opening locks.

Moonwort



Blue Moor grass



Management

In order to maintain the important plant communities it is necessary to halt the process of natural succession from herb rich grassland to scrub and then woodland. The main management activities involve clearance of gorse and thorn scrub to prevent them shading out the herb rich flora. This also creates areas of bare ground, which provide germination sites for plants and invertebrates.

The Dark-red Helleborines and Northern Brown Argus butterflies are monitored each year.

The reserve is managed in partnership with English Nature under the "Reserves Enhancement Scheme".

Dingy skipper



Location

The reserve is situated ½ mile north of Bishop Middleham Village, to the west of the A177. Car parking is restricted to two lay-bys on the west side of the road adjacent to the reserve entrances.

The site is connected by a public footpath from Farnless Farm to the east. Access on site is by way of a way marked path and steps to the quarry floor. Please keep to the footpaths as there are several steep cliff faces away from the paths.

General Information

Ownership: Leased from Church Commissioners

Size: 10 hectares

Grid Reference: NZ331326

O.S. Explorer Map No: 305

Parking and access to site: Parking for up to 6 cars on roadside verge adjacent to western entrance to site.

Public transport: Regular bus service from Durham and Darlington to Coxhoe and Sedgfield.

Dogs: Dogs must be kept on a lead during the spring and summer.

Other: Please keep to the footpaths as there are several steep cliff faces.

Accessibility: ▲▲▲▲

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