

10 HESLEDEN DENE

The most southerly of the three important ravine woodland Denes on the Durham Coast this reserve has excellent natural exposures of magnesian limestone and supports a wide range of woodland plants typical of the limestone.



Hesleden Dene



Cowslips

Fox



The reserve gets its name from its abundant hazel stands above which the canopy consists mainly of Ash, Sycamore and Wych Elm. Several species uncommon to county Durham can be found in the dene including Yew, Spindle and large numbers of Hart's-tongue fern. The damp, humid conditions provide niches for impressive displays of mosses, lichens and fungi. At the western end of the reserve there is a small magnesian limestone grassland which is home to many plant species associated with this grassland type. These include Common Rock-rose, Devils-bit Scabious, Salad Burnet and Sea Plantain in addition to several Orchid species including Twayblade and Common Spotted Orchid. The woodland provides an excellent habitat for small birds such as Robin, Chaffinch and Goldcrest and also supports larger birds such as Greater-Spotted Woodpeckers and Tawny Owls. Numerous mammals including Roe Deer, Badgers and Foxes live in the dene. Impressive outcrops of limestone have been eroded to produce many caves with unusual local names such as Hairy Man's Hole and Jack Rock.



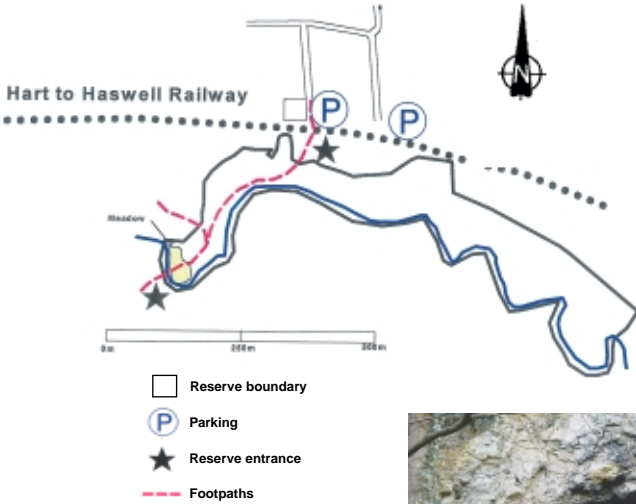
Many Zoned Polypor





Young fern



Best seen – Spring time for woodland flora, and July/August for grassland flora.

HESLEDEN DENE



-  Reserve boundary
-  Parking
-  Reserve entrance
-  Footpaths

Management

The magnesian limestone grassland is a small but important feature of the reserve. In order to halt succession and maintain the species diversity within the grassland an annual cut is taken, the cuttings are removed thus maintaining the low nutrient status and high species diversity. The woodland management is concentrated on the removal of non-native species such as Sycamore and re-planting with natives such as Ash and Yew. Coppice management of the Hazel in the Dene has also been re-introduced to improve the structure of the woodland.

Great Spotted Woodpecker (©RSPB)



Hairy mans hole

Hesleden Dene contains some fantastic magnesian limestone exposures. They are riddled with fissures and caves, the largest of which is called 'Hairy Man's

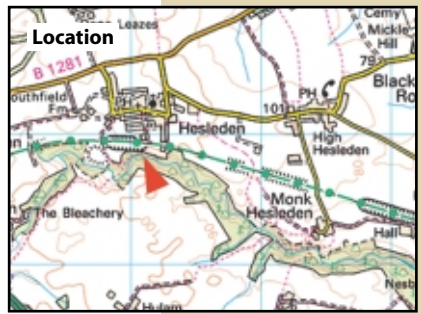


Selfheal

Hole'. According to local historian Bill Rhodes the name originated from the time when the cave was used as a hiding place for Jesuit priests from the nearby Hardwick Hall.

Location

From the A19 take the B1281 towards Blackhall Rocks. Turn right at the sign for Hesleden Village and follow the road into the village. Turn right opposite the community centre and follow the road down to station house where you can park. Entry to the Dene is across an old railway track, which has been converted into a cycle track. The footpath leads down to the western end of the reserve, however the path is steep and contains several steps therefore the site is not suitable for wheelchair access.



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General Information

Ownership:
Durham Wildlife Trust

Area: 8.5 hectares

Grid Reference: NZ 441 379

Explorer Map No: 306

Parking and access to site:
Small amount of parking at station house.

Public transport:
Regular bus service from Durham to Blackhall.

Dogs: Dogs to be kept under control at all times

Accessibility: ▲▲▲▲

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