

# Gravel Hole Nature Reserve

**Reserve Area:** 3 Acres

OS Map: Explorer Sheet 306 Middlesbrough and Hartlepool (1:25,000)

**Grid Reference:** NZ 446231

## Description:

Gravel Hole is a small area of mixed grassland in the heart of Teesside, where the sheer range of wildflowers in early summer makes it worth a visit.

## Access:

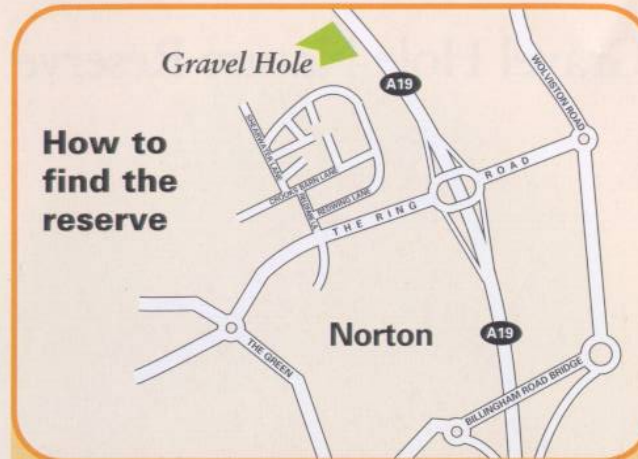
Park at the end of Shearwater Lane continue through the gate and cross the railway line. Then follow the waymaker posts to the entrance of the reserve.

## Education Opportunities:

Gravel Hole provides a good opportunity to learn about grassland habitats and their wildlife. If any groups or schools wish to find out more please contact the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust.



Common Centaury



Directions: From the A19 take the A1027 towards Norton. At the first set of traffic lights turn into Fieldfare Lane, at the T Junction turn left into Crooks Barn Lane. Turn immediately right on Shearwater Lane. Follow Shearwater Lane until it starts to bend left into Fulmar Road. Park here at the end of the cul-de-sac please take care not to block any drives.



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**Heritage Lottery Fund**



Supported by English Nature,  
through the Aggregates Levy  
Sustainability Fund

Photography Acknowledgements: John Williamson & Neville Harwood

# Tees Valley

Wildlife Trust



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# Hidden Oasis

Protecting **Wildlife** for the Future

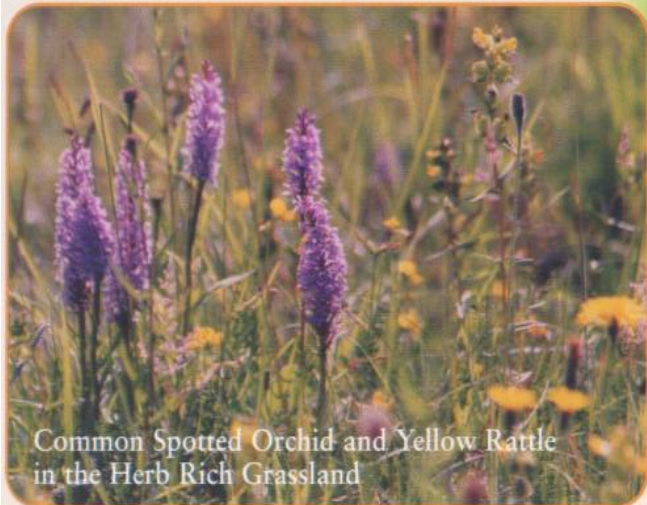
Visitors are welcome to this former sand and gravel quarry situated between the busy A19 and Norton. Now owned and managed by Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, it supports a diverse range of plants and animals, including several species of orchid and 10 species of butterfly.

## Quarrying past shapes today's reserve.

The reserve is situated on the edge of the Billingham Beck Valley. Over several thousands years, the river washed down small amounts of sand and gravel which were deposited on the valley floor. As the river receded these sand and gravel lenses were left on the valley floor, to be exploited by man thousands of years later.

## Wildflower Grasslands

The two different grasslands found on the reserve are a result of that quarrying activity. Where the sand and gravel lenses have been exposed a herb rich grasslands is found. The soil found here is free draining and low in nutrients and provides ideal conditions for plants such as Common Spotted Orchid, Yellow Rattle and Ox Eye Daisy



Common Spotted Orchid and Yellow Rattle in the Herb Rich Grassland

The rough grassland found in the southern half of the site shows the original land surface where lenses have not been exposed. Here the soil is much richer in nutrients and is dominated by such as False Oat Grass

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## Key

I Interpretation      Scrub

## Everything a bird wants

The other major habitat found on the reserve is scrub which dominates the northern and western boundaries of the site. It largely comprises of Hawthorn and provides important nesting sites and feeding opportunities for birds.

In the Summer, listen out for the scratchy song of the Whitethroat or watch for a Yellowhammer that may be perched on top of a bush. In the Winter, the berries may attract flocks of Fieldfare and Blackbirds newly arrived from the continent.



Whitethroat

## How does the Trust manage the reserve?

To maintain the variety of plant species found in the grassland areas it is necessary to take an annual cut and to rake off the cuttings. The purpose behind this is two fold; one is to reduce the build up of nutrients in the soil which would allow the coarser vegetation to dominate. The other is to control species like Ground Elder and Rosebay Willowherb which are invasive. The work is carried out in early August, once most of the wildflowers have set seed.

Other management that is periodically required is to cutting back the scrub so that it does not encroach onto the grassland which the main habitat interest on the site.