

ROWHILL NATURE RESERVE

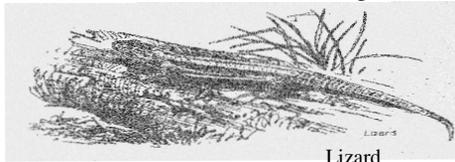
Welcome to Rowhill Nature Reserve

The Nature Trail is about 1.5 miles long and can be muddy in places. The Reserve is open to every one at all times but we ask your cooperation in maintaining a pleasant and peaceful atmosphere.

Follow the path round to the back of the field centre, up the steps, and continue to the T junction, turn right and bear right up more steps onto the heath, this is Hallimore Hill which is made up of sand and gravel.

Heathland

As you leave the trees the area on your left is dry grass heathland and contains more flowering plant species than the traditional heather heathland which covers most of the area on your right. Here you will see typical heathland flora, like bell heather, ling, bracken, gorse, broom, birch and pines. This area would revert to scrub and woodland if it was not managed.



Lizard

Carry on up the hill following the path around to the right, you are now at the highest point on the reserve at 500ft (160m), follow the path round to the left passing through an old Victorian boundary bank. There are many boundary banks on Rowhill.

Scots Pine

In front of you is a mature stand of Scots Pine trees, look for squirrels and notice the pine cones they have gnawed to extract and eat the seeds. Descend the steep hillside by the steps, which were constructed by our Conservation volunteers.

The Bog

At the bottom on your right there is another boundary bank, this was a hedge bank and the stumps of the trees are still visible. In front of you is a seepage bog, this is

where the sand and gravel of the heath stops and the clay that makes up the rest of the site starts. The water seeps out at this point as the sand and gravel is moderately free draining. This is the start of the River Blackwater, the area remains wet throughout the year and is very important for birds such as finches in the winter as they feed on the thistle seeds.

Stickleback Pond

Follow the path round to the right and come to the first of the ponds, this is Stickleback pond, the vegetation is restricted to one end due to the depth of the water, kingfishers and herons can be seen here.

Coppice

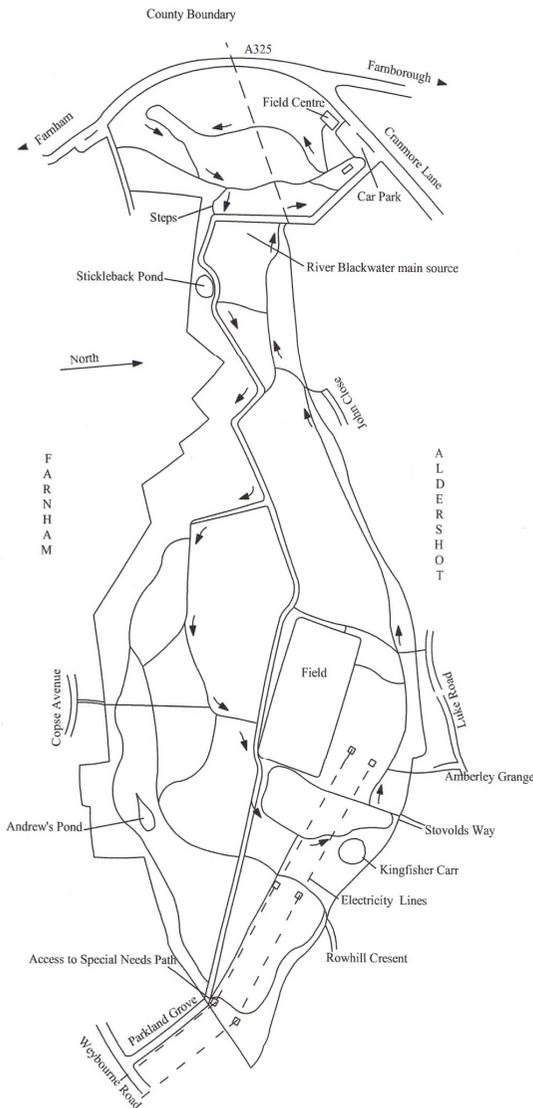
You are now entering the deciduous woodland. At the bend in the path you have reached the working part of the wood. Here you can see the old chestnut coppice stools that are now about 12ft across. These were planted to replace ash because chestnut gave more durable poles for the locally grown hops. The coppice in front of you is mixed chestnut and hazel and is on a 12 year cycle before re-cutting.

Rhododendron Avenue

Follow the path round to your right, you can see on the right scallops cut out of the rhododendron this is to encourage native flora back along the edges of the paths. Turn right down Rhododendron Avenue, this is a relic of the 19th century ornamental drive leading to the house of the then owner, Mr Wells. Notice the height of the rhododendron shrubs and how nothing grows under them, the drainage channels are thickly covered by mosses and liverworts.

Chestnut Glade

This path brings you into chestnut glade again you can see the size of the coppice stools. These have not been re-cut since about 1948. Follow the path around to the left, you pass through more areas that are still coppiced. Climb some steps and come up onto the field.



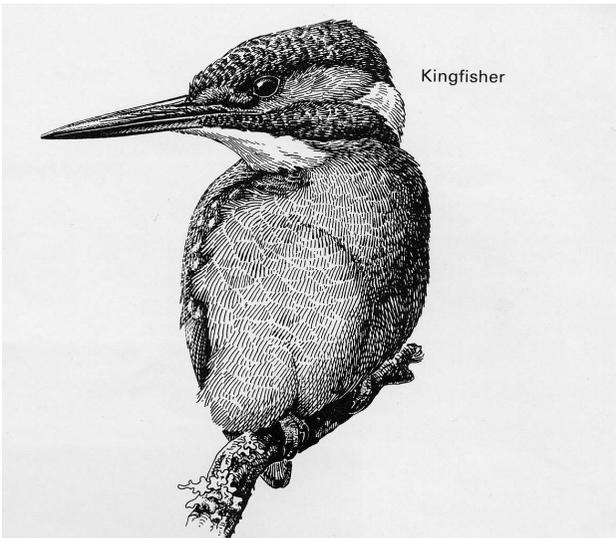
Nature Trail Guide

The Field

This area approximately 4 acres in size, was once the clay pits to the brickworks, it was filled and levelled, two thirds is managed as a meadow and the other third is cut regularly for recreational use. Around the field the trees are pollarded to give growth of variable height, making the area valuable habitat for small mammals, hedgerow birds and butterflies, an ideal spot for a picnic.

The Brickworks

Turn right down off the field and onto the tarmac path, bear left with the path and as you round the bend look to your left and see the remains of the 19th century brickworks, two upright metal beams, such works were common in the area around this time.



Kingfisher is often seen in the reserve

Kingfisher Carr

Follow the path round to Kingfisher Carr. This is a further reminder of the brickworks as these areas of wet woodland carr were once part of the extensive settlement beds. These areas now support moorhens and mallard ducks and herons and the brightly coloured kingfisher can also be seen here. This area is wet woodland and not a pond in the usual sense. You are now going to follow the river back up towards the source at the bog. Follow the path round to the left to come across a badger sett.

Coppicing

Keeping within the reserve turn right through more actively coppiced woodland. The material that is cut from the coppice is sold and this money put back into the reserve to maintain the footpaths etc. Notice that the height of the coppice is a uniform height. This makes it a useful material for stakes and binders for traditional hedgelaying. The ground flora makes use of the light that is allowed through to the woodland floor, cutting in this part of the reserve has given rise to a good show of bluebells and wood anemones in spring. Another feature of this area is the dead hedges around each compartment. These are important as wildlife corridors for anything displaced by coppicing, mice, voles etc, and very important for invertebrates and fungi.

Storm Damage

Go straight on keeping the stream on your right, you will pass over some lengths of board walk all the material has been cut from wind blown timber, some produced from the trunks lying after the storms in 1987 and 1992. The stumps were winched back upright rather than pulled out. These have survived as coppice stools since then. At the junction turn right, here stumps can be seen uprooted but still growing these are also remnants of the storms. You now cross a small stream. The path on you left returns you to Stickleback pond. The path in front now goes up towards the bog where a steep path will get you across the bog. Cross the bog, climb the steps and turn right and you will return to the car park.

Hedge Laying

Having returned to the car park you will notice that the hedges alongside the car park are laid; This encourages the hedge to remain thick, ideal for nesting birds and small mammals. The stakes and binders for these hedges were cut from our own coppice.

Text by Roy Champion

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to Rowhill Nature Reserve and will come again.

Some Facts

Rowhill Nature Reserve Society, is a registered charity managing a site of nearly 60 acres on behalf of the owners, Rushmoor Borough Council.

The society has been managing the site since 1968 and if you would like to become a member you will receive copies of the newsletters and be made aware of events at the Reserve.

Rowhill Nature Reserve is maintained and managed by volunteers, if you have any spare time and would like to help in the centre or with the conservation group we would be pleased to hear from you.



Rowhill Nature Reserve Society
Managing Rowhill on behalf of the owners
Rushmoor Borough Council

RUSHMOOR
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Where to find us

The Field Centre,
Cranmore Lane,
Aldershot,
Hampshire.
GU11 3BD

Phone 01252 3319749

