

Hexton Chalk Pit

Once an active chalk quarry, this small reserve is now full of chalk grassland herbs and grasses. It is a peaceful spot with fine views across the border into Bedfordshire.

Flower-rich [chalk grassland](#) is now rare in Hertfordshire and this reserve is almost unique in having good quality herb-rich grassland of an old chalk pit. The bare chalk has been colonised naturally by fine-leaved fescue grasses and chalk-loving plants such as horseshoe vetch, yellow-wort, milkwort and rockrose. Five species of orchid and the uncommon slender tare are also present. There is a large colony of chalkhill blue butterflies on the reserve, on the wing from mid July.

Around the margins of the chalk grassland is an interesting assemblage of trees and shrubs including sweet briar, hazel, blackthorn, dogwood, wild privet, field maple, oak and hornbeam. Of particular note is the wayfaring tree with its black autumnal berries and also the guelder rose with its red and purple berries.

Management work

At the beginning of October a large volunteer task was held on the reserve, cutting and raking the lower meadow and removing saplings and scrub that had grown up through the summer months. This has been done every year for the past three years in order to try and restore it to more favourable chalk grassland.

Some large trees and blocks of encroaching scrub have been removed in order to improve the chalk grassland habitat found at the reserve. By preventing shading and excessive nutrient build up from leaf litter less dominant flowers typical of chalk grassland should flourish. The lower meadow is slowly improving in condition and now supports large numbers of butterflies, including dingy skipper, green hairstreak and chalkhill blue.

Butterflies in summer

During July and into August impressive numbers of chalkhill blue butterflies can be seen throughout the reserve. Their caterpillars feed on horseshoe vetch, which can be seen growing on the banks around the reserve. Other butterflies that can be seen at this time of year include common blue, comma, gatekeeper and brimstone.



- [Get driving directions](#)
- [Find nearby public transport](#)

How to Get Here

Location

Hexton

Directions

Take the Pirton Road from Hitchin (B655) towards Luton. Entering Hexton the road drops down a steep hill into a 30mph section. At the crossroads turn left - the reserve is 50 yards along this road on the left (park next to the gate).

Public Transport Links

Bus: Mill Lane, Hexton (77). Barton-le-Clay 10 minute bus journey.

Walking Links

Icknield Way

Map Reference

TL 107299

Visitor Guide

Size

2 hectares

Access to site

Reserve is reached via a track which leads from the parking area. Small entrance gate.

Access around site

Some steep slopes; generally dry ground due to free draining nature of chalk grassland

Walking time

1/2 - 1 hour

Advice on what to wear/bring

Map of site (if available)