

Several species of butterfly feed on the grasses and flowers, including the ringlet, gatekeeper and the Essex and small skipper. Day flying moths can be found here too, including the six spot burnet. This striking red and black moth is extremely poisonous, containing cyanide derivatives to deter birds.

The quarry and wetland

In the north-western part of the reserve the old quarry remains, providing a mosaic of habitats and a unique chance to see Swaddywell's important geological features.

The quarry exposes an outcrop of the lower beds of Lincolnshire limestone. The limestone formed as a marine sediment in warm, sub-tropical waters some 160 million years ago when the area lay in latitudes about equal to present day North Africa. These sediments were lifted above sea level at various times, the latest being during the formation of the Alps some 60 million years ago.

Perhaps the most interesting feature is on the north side of the quarry. The limestone beds dip steeply and lie over a white, sandy exposure. The exposure of these rocks is due to a fault – the Tinwell-Marholm fault.

Over the years the disused quarry has gradually flooded, creating a patchwork of open water, reed and scrub. It also contains small areas of grassland with banks of wild marjoram and other flowers.

One of Swaddywell's most important natural features is its population of great crested newts. Although internationally scarce, this amphibian is common around Peterborough.

In spring and summer, the quarry is alive with 14 species of dragonfly. Perhaps the most obvious is the emperor dragonfly. The emperor is the largest British dragonfly and aggressively hunts over the ponds, clashing in aerial duels with rival males. It can fly up to 40 mph, hunting out flying insects, including smaller dragonflies.



Emperor dragonfly

The reserve is also home to two tiny, but pretty moth species – the beautiful chinamark and the ringed chinamark. In July both can be found in the reeds around the main pond. Unusually the larvae of these moths are aquatic.



Beautiful chinamark

In summer large numbers of swallows, house martins and swifts fly up from their nests in the nearby villages to feed over the ponds. In winter, snipe and green sandpipers, both wading birds, search for invertebrates in the mud. In Clare's time the snipe was also a common breeding species. He wrote:

*Lover of swamps
The quagmire overgrown
With hassock tufts of sedge – where fear encamps
Around thy home alone*

For more information about the Langdyke Countryside Trust and its regular programme of events please visit www.langdyke.org.uk or call 01733 252376

Swaddywell Pit was purchased and the reserve developed with help from

- Shanks.first
- The trustees and members of the Langdyke Countryside Trust
- Peterborough Environment City Trust
- The Peterborough RIGS group
- Peterborough City Council
- English Nature ALSF
- The communities of the neighbouring villages
- Ufford Parish Council

The Trust is grateful to all those who have supported its work in any way.

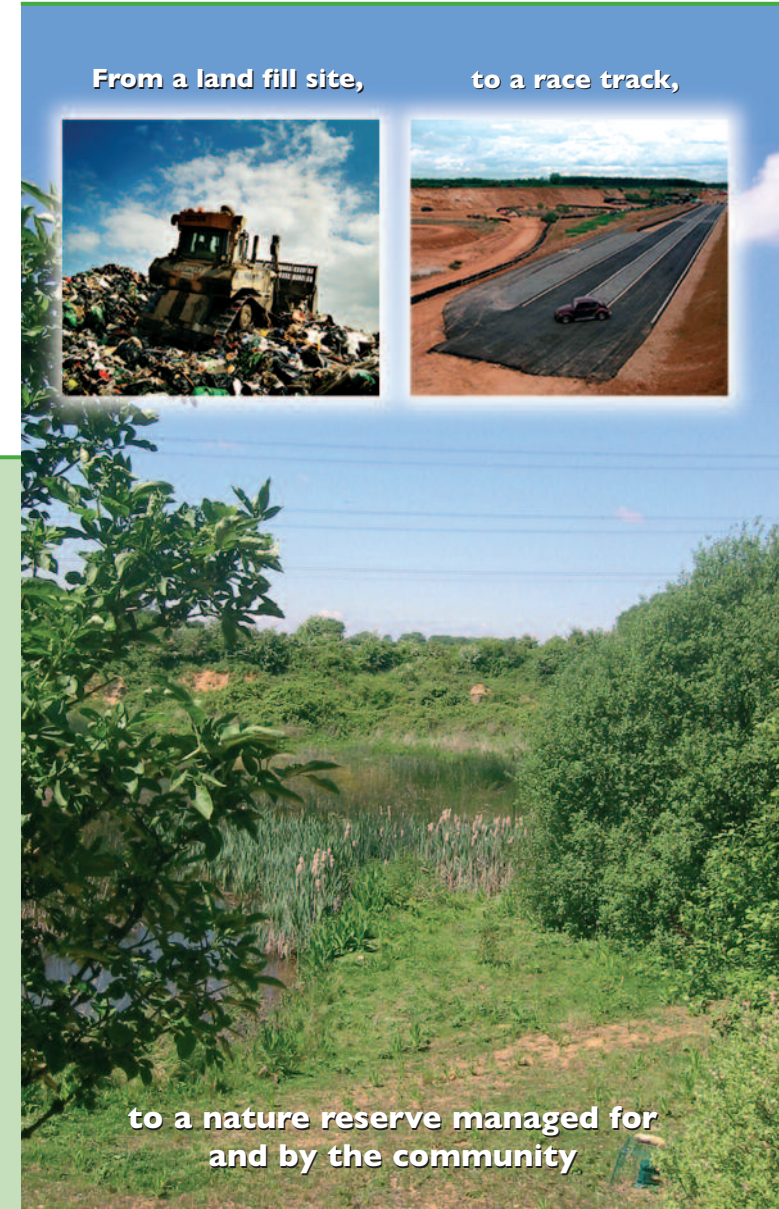


Swaddywell Pit

From a land fill site,



to a race track,



to a nature reserve managed for and by the community

The Langdyke Countryside Trust established Swaddywell Pit Nature Reserve in 2003. Located south of the village of Helpston near Peterborough, Swaddywell was the site of a quarry since Roman times and takes its name from a nearby spring where, reputedly, an ancient sword was once found. Over time Swordy Well became Swaddywell and the spring itself probably now lies beneath nearby King Street.

In medieval times, quarries such as Swaddywell would have provided stone for local churches and for the great cathedrals at Ely and Peterborough.



Six-spot burnet moth

John Clare, the famous Helpston-born poet, wrote about Swaddywell in the early 19th century, describing the changing landscape around the village brought about by the enclosure of common land and the consequent destruction of many familiar natural landmarks.

Lament of Swordy Well

*For passers-by I never pin
No troubles to my breast
Nor carry round some names to win
More money from the rest
I am Swordy Well a piece of land
That's fell upon the town
Who worked me till I couldn't stand
And crush me now I'm down*



Tree sparrow

Swaddywell was one of England's earliest nature reserves, leased by the National Trust between 1915 and 1924. Charles Rothschild, the man who initiated the modern nature conservation movement, included

Swaddywell on his 1915 list of the country's most important nature conservation sites.

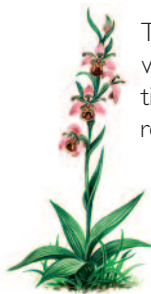
Swaddywell was sold in 1924 and quarrying resumed. During the second world war it was used as a bomb dump.

After the war the original site was filled and returned to agriculture, whilst quarrying moved further east and north, creating the current pit. During the 1980's, the quarry was a rubbish tip. More recently it was used as a racetrack, but it then lapsed into neglect and became a venue for occasional raves and fly tipping.

Now Swaddywell is being returned to some of the natural glory John Clare would have known. It boasts many wildflowers typical of limestone grassland and is home to great crested newts and many species of dragonflies, butterflies and other insects. Large numbers of farmland birds, including nationally declining species such as reed bunting, yellowhammer and tree sparrow, find food, shelter and nest sites here.

The limestone grassland

Limestone grassland used to be a common habitat around Swaddywell. Now rare, such relic areas of grassland provide a vitally important habitat for wildlife.



Bee orchid

The large meadow at the top of the reserve was once a quarry and more recently a rubbish tip. When the tip was capped, it was quickly re-colonised by many species of grassland wildflowers.

Look out for bee orchids at the southern end of the reserve during June. John Clare wrote about the bee orchid in another poem dedicated to Swordy Well.

*I've loved thee Swordy Well and love thee still
Long was I with thee tending sheep and cow
In boyhood ramping up each steepy hill
To play at 'roly poly' down – and now
A man I trifle o'er thee cares to kill
Haunting thy mossy steeps to botanise
And hunt the orchis tribes where nature's skill
Doth like my thoughts run into phantasys
Spider and bee all mimicking at will . . .*

In late summer the large, white and pink flowers of the wild carrot are common. In the 16th century a concoction of its red flowers was thought to be a great remedy for the 'falling disease', what we know today as epilepsy. The herbalist, Nicholas Culpeper considered them beneficial too to expectant mothers, advising that wild carrot could help conception when boiled in wine! You may also notice yellow-wort with its prominent yellow flowers and unique leaves that grow right around the stem.



Yellow-wort

