

For Wildlife and for People

Each site along this trail has its own character and each is managed differently by Newport Pagnell Town Council to accommodate both the needs of human visitors and the wildlife that lives there.

Farming the Common

Bury Field was first recorded as common land in 1276 and some 100 properties in the town still have a 'right of common' whereby their freeholders have the right to graze cattle and take hay from the land. Until recently cattle did graze the common, but today it is managed as a traditional hay meadow with mown grass.

The annual hay cut is taken after 15th July allowing the wildflowers to set seed and the ground nesting skylarks and meadow pipits to rear their chicks.

Hay meadow wildlife to look out for:



Yellow rattle



Great burnet



Meadow brown butterfly



Lady's bedstraw

..to be discovered.



Castle Meadow and Riverside Meadow are managed as riverside public parks, but parts of Castle Meadow are allowed to grow a little wilder. On a sunny summer day this meadow is alive with butterflies including gatekeeper, meadow brown, red admiral, common blue and small tortoiseshell. In autumn, flocks of linnets and goldfinches feast on thistle and knapweed seeds.

Overhanging willows and dense vegetation along the River Ouzel provide a corridor for secretive species, such as otters and grass snakes, to move along the watercourse. This is also a favourite haunt of the cuckoo in spring time.



Roach



Gatekeeper butterfly



Pike



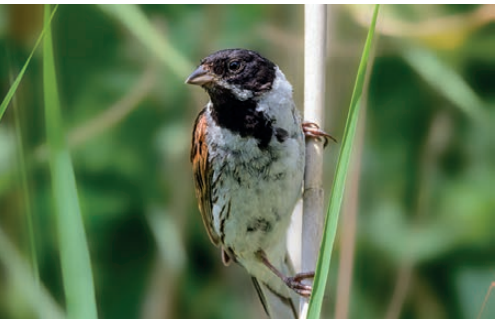
Grass snake

Keeping the wetland wet

Seasonal ponds and marshy areas are an important feature of Bury Field Common. Low lying areas created by stone quarrying, together with cuttings made for the construction of a railway line that was never completed, have been engineered to create wetland areas that fill with water through the winter. To maintain moisture levels, self-seeded goat willow is removed as these bushes quickly suck up water. The ponds are also periodically re-dug to different depths to stop them becoming choked by vegetation. With wetlands becoming one of the most rapidly diminishing natural resources in the world, due to poor management and land development, maintaining a healthy wetland habitat on the common is a top priority. Wetland wildlife to look out for:



Reed mace



Reed bunting



Common darter dragonfly



Pied wagtail



Common damselfly



Grass snake



Himalayan balsam



Start / Finish
Queen's Avenue free car park (MK16 8EU).
The nearest bus stop is Market Hill on the High Street.

For public transport timetables contact Traveline:
www.traveline.info Tel: 0871 200 22 33

Facilities nearby:
Public toilets at 86 High Street, near the town clock.
Picnic tables in Ousebank Gardens, Castle Meadow and Riverside Meadow.

For further information:
These green spaces are managed by Newport Pagnell Town Council.
80 High Street, Newport Pagnell, Bucks, MK16 8AQ (open Mon-Fri, 9am to 4pm).
www.newport-pagnell.org.uk Tel: 01908 618756
Email: TownClerk@newport-pagnell.org.uk

Be a responsible visitor:
Leave only footprints - take only photographs.
Please keep dogs under close control, especially in spring and summer on Bury Field Common to avoid disturbance to ground nesting birds.

All trail leaflets are available for download from this QR Code.



Guided walk app

Use this guide alongside the TrailTale guided walk app. Download free to your smartphone from the links below.
Search **Newport Pagnell Wildlink Trail**.

Download on the App Store
GET IT ON Google Play

More to explore

Also on the TrailTale app is a self-guided tour of the town's historic buildings. Search **Newport Pagnell Heritage Trail**. There is also an accompanying leaflet.

Family Activity Trails

Pick up the Family Activity Trail leaflets from the Town Council offices. There are 4 family fun adventure trails packed with easy activities to encourage all members of the family to discover the amazing wildlife that lives here.

KINGFISHER TRAIL
SKYLARK TRAIL
DRAGONFLY TRAIL
OTTER TRAIL

Design and illustration by: www.maltingspartnership.com

NEWPORT PAGNELL

Wildlink Trail

Exploring Newport Pagnell's treasured green spaces

1810

A 3½ mile walking trail around Bury Field Common, Ousebank Gardens, Castle Meadow and Riverside Meadow

A Wealth of Wildlife Opportunities..



Bury Field Common has an ancient history, having been one of the town's medieval open fields. It has been farmed since at least the 9th century and remarkably still has traces of 'ridge and furrow', created by medieval strip ploughing.

The common comprises Bury Field and Bury Meadow. Both are literally buzzing with wildlife due to their mosaic of habitats, ranging from flower-rich hay meadows, seasonal ponds and ancient hedgerows to pockets of dense scrub and a small woodland shelterbelt. The common is home to skylarks, a bird in serious decline in the UK. They can be heard singing here from as early as February.



Skylark



Ousebank Gardens was once a private garden and together with the neighbouring cemetery has a spectacular collection of over 30 different species of trees. Towering Wellingtonia and coast redwoods grow alongside graceful weeping beech and exotic-looking monkey puzzle and cypress trees.

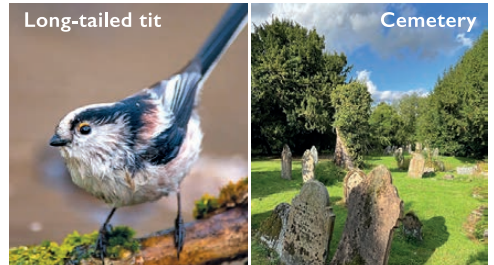
This is a peaceful place to wander at any time of year. In spring and summer the graves are adorned with wildflowers and caterpillars in the tree tops attract chattering flocks of long-tailed tits. An abundance of ivy flowers provide an autumn nectar feast for red admiral butterflies and the winter ivy berries are a favourite of wood pigeons and blackbirds. Colourful Mandarin ducks also feed in the rivers that flow alongside the garden and cemetery.



Red admiral butterfly



Seasonal ponds



Cemetery



NEWPORT PAGNELL

Wildlink Trail

Keep an eye out for these...



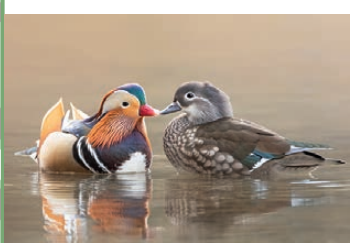
Scrambling Bramble

Bramble is superb for wildlife. Its thorny stems offer a safe haven for nesting birds. Butterflies, bees and beetles feed on its flowers and fruits and the dried fruits provide valuable winter food for finches.



Musk Thistle

The bright purple musk thistles that grow on Bury Field Common are the favourite food plant of painted lady butterfly caterpillars. Some of the adult butterflies that appear in summer will have flown all the way from Africa.



Mandarin Duck

These beautiful little ducks were introduced to Britain from China. Unlike other ducks, they nest in holes in trees, so the chicks have to jump down from the nest. Only males have the stunning plumage; females have grey heads, brown backs and a white eye stripe.



Banded Demoiselle Damselfly

Look for this insect flitting along the riverbank between May and August. Males are metallic blue with distinctive black wing bands whereas females are metallic green with pale green wings.



Burdock

The hooked seed heads, or burrs, are known as 'nature's Velcro'. These are designed to disperse the seeds by catching hold of passing animal fur. Burdock grows freely along this trail, so keep your jumper and socks clear! Legend has it that Velcro was invented by a Swiss engineer after removing burdock burrs from his dog.

- Road crossings
- Panels with additional information
- Toilets
- N
- 0 100m 200m
- 1/8 mile

Looking After the Town's Natural Assets

These sites, along with other parks, gardens and allotments, are managed by Newport Pagnell Town Council which recognises the vital role that greenspace plays in providing habitats for wildlife and essential 'ecosystem services', such as natural carbon storage, crop pollination, flood defence and improved air and water quality.

The effects of climate change and neighbouring urban development has prompted the Town Council to take action to protect and improve the town's natural assets through:

Wildlife surveys

To understand how to manage habitats to increase biodiversity.

Revised grass cutting regimes

To encourage wildflowers, pollinators and seed-eaters.

Installing bat and bird boxes

To increase nesting and roosting sites.

Planting trees and hedgerows

To provide safe corridors for wildlife, capture carbon, clean the air, absorb heat and reduce noise pollution.

Maintaining and creating wetland

To provide homes for wildlife, absorb heat, store and purify water and prevent flooding.

Maintaining the town's rivers

To prevent blockages from fallen trees and debris.

Providing trails and information

To encourage more people to explore, understand and value the natural world.

Start

From Queen's Avenue car park head through the gate onto Bury Field Common. Near the entrance are information panels with a map and details of the common's history and wildlife. Take the left hand path to begin your walk.

Seasonal Ponds

Depressions, created by road stone quarrying in the early 1800s, have been re-engineered to create seasonal ponds that fill with water in winter. Marsh plants, such as yellow flag iris and purple loosestrife, thrive here.

Christmas Plantation

A shelterbelt of maple, cherry, oak, lime and poplar trees were planted over one Christmas in the 1970s as shelter for cattle that grazed the common. Nest boxes have been installed in the trees for barn owls and kestrels, which hunt for small mammals, such as bank voles, in the long grass.

Air Observation Defence Post

Between 1939 and 1945 members of the Royal Observer Corps used this high point to spot enemy aircraft. The site is still a superb look-out for large aerial visitors in the form of buzzards, ravens and red kites.

The Railway that Never Was

In 1860 work began on constructing a railway to link Newport Pagnell with Olney, but the plan was abandoned. The disturbed ground has become valuable scrub and wetland, attracting small birds such as linnets, reed buntings and summer visiting whitethroat.

Medieval Ridge and Furrow

While most of the common was ploughed during the Second World War to grow crops, this area was left alone and still has ridge and furrow strips created by medieval farmers. Today the only soil excavation carried out is by green woodpeckers and flocks of starlings probing the soil with their beaks in search of ants and grubs.

Civil War Defences

Hidden in the undergrowth are ditches and earth ramparts, built in 1643 as part of the town's Civil War defences. Today the nettles that grow here shouldn't be regarded as weeds, but important food plants for caterpillars of small tortoiseshell and comma butterflies.

Ousebank Gardens

The gardens and cemetery are home to well over 30 different species of trees, some the remnants of a once private garden and others planted as memorial trees. An information panel and map is provided near the children's play area.

Cemetery Corner

This is where the River Ouzel flows into the River Great Ouse. Sit quietly and you're sure to spot something interesting, be it a heron wading in the shallows or a goosander diving for fish.

Seasonal Wildflower Meadow

Silt deposited by flooding has made the soil here too rich for many wildflowers to thrive. However by delaying grass cutting until after May, the water-tolerant plants that do grow here are allowed to flower to provide food for pollinators such as bees, butterflies and moths.

Specialist Survivors

The mown grass in Riverside Meadow may appear uninteresting, but look closer to discover a community of specialist plants. Dandelion, daisy, silverweed and broad-leaved plantain have wide, flat leaves able to survive continuous trampling by passing feet.

Hide

The riverside vegetation provides a safe corridor for wildlife to move along. From the hide you may spot mallard ducks, moorhens, mute swans or kingfishers.

Weir

Look for grey wagtails searching for insects on the weir. These small birds, with yellow bellies, are named for their incessant tail wagging. You may also see black and white pied wagtails here.

Poplar Trees

If the tall poplar trees are in leaf, stand beneath them and listen. The slightest breeze makes the heart-shaped leaves tremble on their slender stems creating a sound just like a waterfall.

A Little bit of History

While not recommended today, this small section of river is where many local children learned to swim before the town opened its first swimming pool in 1957.

Finish

To return to Queen's Avenue car park without retracing your steps - cross the bridge, turn right onto Willen Road and follow the dotted route on the map.