

HOLME PARK QUARRY LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

ANNUAL REPORT APRIL 2008 – MARCH 2009

Introduction

This is the annual report of the Holme Park Quarry voluntary reserve manager. The aim of the report is to detail the progress of the reserve volunteers towards meeting the objectives in the Management Plan, Reference A.

The Reserve

Holme Park Quarry Local Nature Reserve is a small (4.8 hectares) reserve located South West of and adjacent to the quarry on land owned by Aggregate Industries UK Ltd. The creation of the LNR stems from the 2000 planning agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This states that the land will be held under a local nature reserve agreement with Cumbria County Council for an initial term of 21 years.

The land within the LNR is mapped in detail in Reference A. The land forms part of the ring of low limestone fells that surround the head of Morecambe Bay. The geology of Holme Park Quarry influences the character of the area. The site lies upon beds of limestone of Carboniferous age. The woodland, grassland and the pavement communities reflect this underlying bedrock. The bracken dominated vegetation has probably developed on an overlying deposit of glacial drift which has given rise to the deeper soils and more acidic conditions.

The compartments for management are mapped in detail in Reference A. In general the three compartments are as follows:

Compartment 1: Woodland on limestone pavement in the east of the reserve

Compartment 2: Grassland with scrub and bracken in the centre and west of the reserve

Compartment 3: The planted bund acting as a screen to the quarry along the northern boundary of the reserve

Management of the Reserve

The reserve is managed by local volunteers under the chairmanship of the Cumbria County Council County Ecologist and with the participation of the Holme Park Quarry Manager. However, the aim of a local nature reserve is that it is managed by the local community to foster public awareness of and interest in the local ecology. The members of the local voluntary team take full responsibility for the management of the reserve but would like to take this opportunity of thanking the County Ecologist and the Quarry Manager for their positive support.

The members of the management team during the period of the report were:

Chairman	Judy Palmer (The County Ecologist)
Quarry Rep	Mark Broadley (Quarry Mngr to Nov 08) Steve Rigby (Quarry Mngr from Nov 08)
Roger Bingham	County Councillor
Maria Gettle	Holme Community School
TBD	Burton Morewood School
Kath Unsworth	Volunteer
Ann Dale	Volunteer (CWT Reserves)
Reg Hesketh	Volunteer (Butterflies)
Tony Wood	Volunteer (Plants)
Peter Smith	Volunteer (Reserve Manager)
Kathryn Smith	Volunteer (Secretary to Committee)

Activity in the reserve is guided by a detailed Management Plan. The current edition of the Plan covers the period 2007 to 2016. It contains a detailed description of the reserve, the flora and fauna, and the management objectives. The plan will be available on the Burton in Kendal village web-site.

A much more enjoyable read is the Education Pack, Reference B, for use by schools undertaking visits to the reserve. It is hoped that this will also be on the web-site. The management team would certainly recommend it to anyone with an interest in the natural science of this beautiful area of England. Unintentionally, it also provides reassurance to adults of the high standards expected of children working at Key Stage 2.

Our Aim

It is our aim that in fifty years time Holme Park Quarry LNR will have an area of wooded limestone pavement and a mosaic of open stands of gorse, bracken

and limestone grassland. Stands of gorse will have a ground flora of limestone grassland, whilst areas of bracken will have abundant violets but little grass. At least 20 species of butterfly will regularly be present on the reserve, including High Brown Fritillary, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary and Dingy Skipper. A good range of bird species will breed in scrub and woodland on the reserve, including Bullfinch, Song Thrush, Spotted Flycatcher, Green Woodpecker and Woodcock. The boundary of the reserve will have been extended to include the triangle of land to the South East corner of the current reserve boundary. The reserve will be regularly visited by school parties, whilst an active group of volunteers will carry out reserve management and record the wildlife present.

The Objectives

The Management Plan lists ten objectives to help ensure that we meet our aim. These are shown in the next paragraph along with the activity and progress towards meeting the objective.

Activity and Progress Toward Meeting Objectives

During the period of the report the following activity and progress towards meeting the ten objectives took place:

Objective 1. To maintain the quality of wooded limestone pavement and other woodland within the reserve

The spread of non-native species in the reserve was monitored and the general health of all tree species was noted. There was no immediate problem with the spread of non-native species at present. However, the growth of sycamores would be closely monitored in future. It was noted that many of the larger cherry trees appeared to be dying off. Some of the goat willows had died back and fallen but the fallen trees and branches continued to shoot provided they were still rooted.

Objective 2. To maximize the butterfly and other invertebrate interest of the reserve

Reg Hesketh has continued to conduct a butterfly transect through the reserve. During the period of the report he identified 18 species including High Brown Fritillary, Grayling and Small Pearl-bordered. It is planned that the full details of the transect will be available on the web-site. In

order to improve the environment for the High Brown Fritillary in particular the bracken is managed to encourage the growth of violets beneath relatively short and weak bracken stands. This year the bracken was bruised with hand tools in the scrub area in the western part of the reserve (Compartment 2), and cut in the cherry glade in the south of the wooded area (Compartment 1). The bruising was done later than usual and although this ensured there was no re-growth, the bracken had become very large and dense. It will be done earlier next year. It was noted that the tree growth on the bund (Compartment 3) was beginning to shade the bund and reduce the growth of the nectar producing plants which had made this such a butterfly rich area, so there are plans to remove some of this planting.

Objective 3. To maintain the area of limestone grassland within the reserve

The extent of the grassland was assessed from the ground this year. The only noticeable change was that the grassland is developing in the areas cleared of scrub but retreating in those areas where the bracken is particularly dense.

Objective 4. To maximize the bird interest of the reserve, where compatible with other conservation objectives

The initial and continuing requirement for a bird survey remains an outstanding aspiration. It is hoped that a knowledgeable volunteer will be found to undertake this challenging task. In the mean time all volunteers walking through the reserve have been asked to note the birds they identify.

Objective 5. To take into account the dormouse needs on the reserve as necessary

No activity this year.

Objective 6. To maintain the enclosed character of the reserve

Small amounts of scrub clearance were done. This was primarily to control regrowth of gorse, and to keep paths clear and safe. All this work was undertaken with a view to retaining the closed sightlines of the reserve whilst maintaining corridors for wildlife and visitors.

Objective 7. To manage the access to the site to facilitate quiet enjoyment of the reserve and to provide an educational resource for local schools

The Education Pack was completed and is available in hard copy and CD format. These have been circulated to local schools and schools which have traditionally visited the quarry and reserve. It is intended to publish the pack, or perhaps highlights of the pack, on the local village web-sites. Quiet enjoyment of the site has been encouraged by ensuring all activity in the site is carried out with hand tools and prohibiting all vehicle access, unless required by the quarry management.

Objective 8. To extend the boundary of the reserve to the south-east to existing fence line

During the period of the report it was requested that the boundary of the reserve be extended to include the “dead” triangle of woodland in the south-east corner of the reserve. This discussion was put on hold when it became apparent that this would involve a change to the original agreement. This extension remains an aspiration.

Objective 9. To provide a safe environment both for those working on and those visiting the reserve

During the period of this report it was agreed that we would seek registration with BTCV and that we would arrange to purchase their insurance for volunteers. In addition we would consider safety training for volunteers who undertook work in the reserve

Objective 10. To fulfill all legal and other obligations and to maintain all estate assets and boundaries

The need to maintain a health and safety file containing current risk assessments was recognized. The risk assessments were to be made available to all volunteers to inform their visits to and work within the reserve. School visits received risk assessment advice in the Education Pack and casual visitors could read the advice on the gate notice.

Professional Services

Timberwolf Associates assisted with activities within the reserve with three man-days of work at £100 per day to a total cost of £300. Aggregates Industries UK Ltd were invoiced for this work.

Community Volunteers

The reserve is run by volunteers with varying degrees of knowledge, skill, and spare time. They are united by an enthusiasm for the project and are supported by a committed County Ecologist who provides the very best professional advice, and a Quarry Manager with equal enthusiasm for this local project and access to funding to support the reserve. Volunteers are always required. Whatever your level of knowledge if you are enthusiastic about our local environment then please consider joining the team.

Peter Smith
Voluntary Reserve Manager

May 2009

References:

- A. Holme Park Quarry LNR Management Plan, dated 22 Oct 07.
- B. Holme Park Quarry LNR Education Pack, Cumbria County Council 100019596. 2005