



View through the woodland

The Friends of Norton Covert Group has regular conservation work parties at weekends and holds meetings locally. Notices of forthcoming activities are displayed at the entrances to Norton Covert. Further information 01384 372945.

How to get involved

The Friends have focussed on works such as installing sleeper revetments which physically protect the steep slopes and sheer cliffs, protecting against erosion and habitat management. This has produced better site access, raised public awareness to encourage positive use of the site for geology and wildlife.



Revetments



Norton Covert from Norton Road

Over the last few years, the active involvement of local residents, who have formed a Friends of Norton Covert Group continues to improve the site.

Community involvement

So all visitors are urged to enjoy their visit but to have regard for the fragile environment of the Covert.

Today the site is owned and managed by Dudley Council and is a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) for geology and also a Wildlife Consultation Area within Green Belt.

Being worked in phases has allowed the Covert to regenerate in phases and develop a varied structure with trees of varying age.

We were actually so positioned as safety screening. Covert was and it is possible that some of the spoil mounds Between the two world wars a rifle range, used by Stourbridge Rifle Club, was located in the centre of the progressively worked southwards in phases.

Norton Covert is a former sand and gravel pit worked for the burial ground around two hundred years ago and evident that extraction began at the northern end adjacent to building sand and aggregate during the 19th century. It is

Norton Covert history

Neither Dudley Council nor any of its employees, nor the Black Country Geological Society, nor the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham & the Black Country, nor the Friends of Norton Covert accept any responsibility for any loss or injury, howsoever caused, to anyone visiting Norton Covert.

There are three access points to Norton Covert, from Sandy Lane Bridleway, Covert Lane and Norton Road (see map overleaf).

Access



Norton Covert is located near Iwerley, alongside the Norton Road, Stourbridge. (A451 Stourbridge - Kidderminster road). The nearest bus stop is by The Greyhound Public House, Norton Road, served by bus service 288 from Stourbridge town terminus. An alternative route through Norton Estate with service 294 is suitable for access via the Sandy Lane (Roman Road) bridge, using the bus stop at the junction of The Broadway and Shenstone Avenue.

How to find Norton Covert

The Geological Code

The rocks and landscapes around us contain clues to the ancient past of the planet, long before man walked the Earth. Rock faces, whether in quarries, at the roadside or canalside or in other places are where we can access this ancient past. Just like sites for wildlife these can be damaged and destroyed by careless actions. So when visiting a special geological site:

- Obey the countryside code.
- Stay on footpaths and never closely approach a rockface.
- Be considerate to other people, don't hammer indiscriminately or leave broken material lying around.
- Keep collecting to a minimum. Collect only from fallen material.
- Never collect from walls or buildings.
- Leaders of visiting parties must familiarise themselves with the current state of the exposures, carry out any risk assessment that is required by their organisation and plan their visit accordingly.
- Appropriate waterproof and other protective wear should be worn as the site conditions dictate.
- Field work even with specific research permissions and concessions must not disfigure rockfaces with markings or sampling damage.
- Ensure that in the longer term your field notes and samples are offered to a local museum.
- For more information contact Dudley Museum on 01384 815575 or The Geologist's Association, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London W1V 9AG

Please follow this geological code to ensure that our fragile geological sites are protected and used wisely.

The Countryside Code

From a gentle stroll or relaxing picnic to a long-distant walk or heart-pumping adventure, the countryside provides every opportunity for enjoyment and relaxation.

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

If you follow the Countryside Code wherever you go, you'll get the best enjoyment possible and you'll help to protect the countryside now and for future generations.

www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

Acknowledgements Cover illustration, Stourbridge during the Ice-age copyright: Nick Arber, Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service; Ice sheet copyright British Geological Survey; Scorching Desert copyright Graham Worton, Dudley Museum.



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Norton Covert

A story of scorching deserts, icy wastes and woodland glades



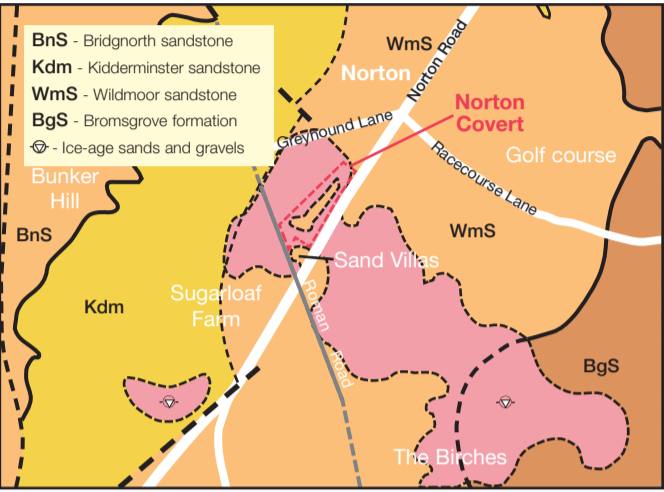
Black Country See it in colour

Norton Covert

The ancient past

The geology of Norton Covert is a story of scorching deserts and icy wastes. There are two distinct rock formations present. The underlying bed rock (country rock) is a red-orange, fine to medium grained sandstone with occasional thin mudstone bands belonging to the Wildmoor Sandstone Formation (formerly known as the Upper Mottled Sandstone) which was deposited in the scorching deserts of Triassic age (circa 220 million years ago). The sand grains are mainly white quartz coloured red by a thin veneer of iron oxide (rust).

Lying on top of the Wildmoor Formation is a superficial capping of soft sands and gravels which were deposited in the Ice-age (glacial period) about 20,000 -25,000 years ago.



Unfortunately the Wildmoor Formation is no longer exposed at Norton Covert but when it was a working sand pit, a section showing a thickness of about 8.5m of sands and gravel resting on about 3m of sand rock was visible in the South Western corner but this is now buried beneath overburden which has accumulated around the perimeter. The Wildmoor Formation can still be seen in Stourbridge along the river Stour west of the Bonded Warehouse.

Small but very important exposures of the Ice-age sands and gravel remain in the southern rim of the Covert. Here, thin layers (laminae) of coarse red-brown and buff sands with thicker pebbly sands can be seen. The ground surface at the southern end of the covert is still undisturbed and shows abundant pebbles.

Although both of these formations were once exposed in many quarries, a combination of industrial decline and redevelopment as well as natural weathering of the loosely consolidated sediments has meant considerable loss to the nature conservation resource, hence the importance and ranking of Norton Covert as a geological SINc.

Scorching deserts

The Wildmoor Formation outcrops in a northeasterly trending tract between 1-2 km wide and underlies much of Stourbridge as far as Amblecote (see inset map). The sandstone was deposited in a desert basin by an occasional, perhaps seasonally, active river system with a general flow from the South to North extending as far as present day Cheshire. The sand and silt is believed to have been derived from sand dunes in the Triassic desert and reworking of the immediately underlying but older Kidderminster (Triassic age, about 245 million years ago) and/or Bridgnorth Formations (Permian age, about 260 million years old) which outcrop in the region. The general lack of pebbles within the Wildmoor Formation supports the view that material was locally derived rather than transported from distant sources. The occasional mudstone bands probably represent wind blown dust and fine sand accumulated under temporary lakes. The climate was arid or semi-arid punctuated by seasonal torrential storms.



When the Wildmoor sandstone was being formed, the world's landmass formed one giant supercontinent known as Pangaea and the part of the Earth's crust upon which Stourbridge now stands lay about 15 degrees north of the equator, approximating to where Sudan, Chad and other north African countries lie today.

Fossils are unknown from this formation over much of the Midlands. Trace fossils and vertebrate footprints are known from the Droitwich area but the general lack of material underlines the harsh environmental conditions

Icy wastes

The Ice-age sand and gravel deposits locally form a prominent NW trending ridge extending from Bury's Hill (near Ounty John Lane) to Greyhound Lane (see inset map) and also extend southwards towards Hagley as evidenced by the pronounced hummocky and undulating ground which can be seen on the opposite side of Norton road.

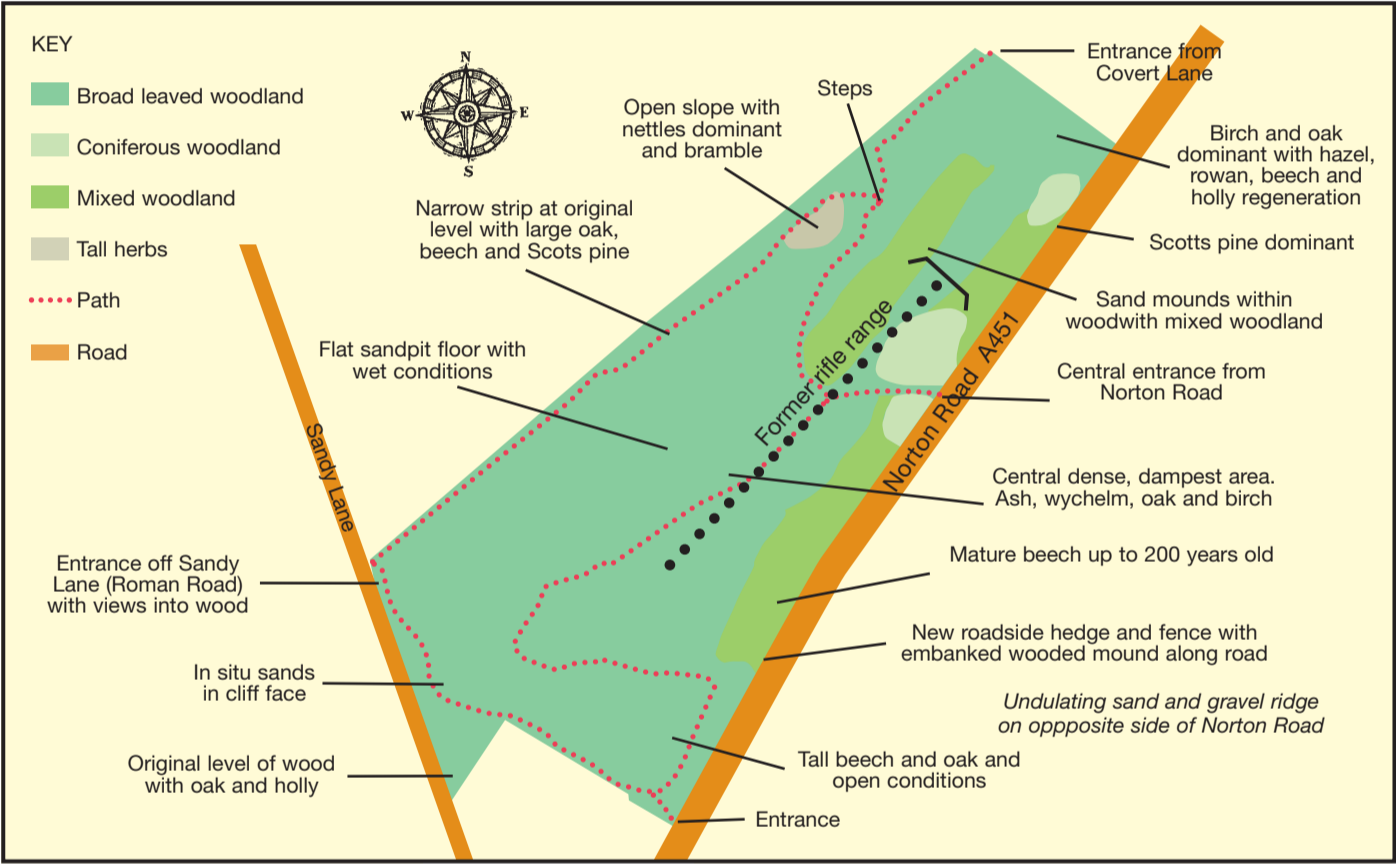


Norton Covert today

Woodland glades

Mature woodland now covers the site but the history of sand and gravel extraction has given rise to varying ground levels and this has produced a variety of habitats. Oak is the dominant tree species but Birch, Sycamore, Ash, Wych-Elm, Holly, Beech and Scots Pine are also significant.

From the main access point from Sandy Lane bridleway, a path follows the western boundary alongside the back fences and walls to gardens of Sandy Road and makes a pleasant route and good vantage points. The views are all the more interesting because they include the ability to look across the wood at canopy level as well as seeing the different habitats, some more open and others quite dense.



Wildlife

The Covert has a variety of mammals. Foxes use the Covert for hunting; Pippistrelle bats have been recorded and Wood mice and Bank voles are present and mole hills have been noted towards the Norton Road side. Grey squirrels are present and do cause damage particularly to Beech and Sycamore trees, causing die back and ring- barking. They also take eggs and young birds and probably cause high mortality amongst some species of birds.

The White letter hairstreak butterfly has been recorded from neighbouring gardens and the remnant elm population is important as a larval food plant.

Moth trapping by the Friends Group has recorded 114 species. These include a wide range of general and woodland moth species and help show the value of the woodland for this range of invertebrates.

Local recording by members of The Friends Group has produced a bird list of 47 species. These include typical garden and woodland species such as robin, wren, blackbird, willow and marsh tit, willow and wood warbler, jay and finches including hawfinch.

Winter visitors include brambling, fieldfare and redwing. Green, greater spotted woodpecker and lesser spotted woodpeckers are present as are nuthatch and tree creeper which indicates the value of deadwood present. Buzzard, sparrowhawk, kestrel and tawny owl also occur showing the value of the covert to predators. The wood is also a roosting site for jackdaws and rooks.

Enjoy your visit.