INTRODUCTION
Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve is a geological site of exceptional importance and is one of the most notable geological locations in the British Isles. It is internationally famous for its large numbers of beautifully preserved Silurian limestone fossils, collections of which can be found in museums throughout the world. A number of ancient species are located at Wren's Nest, and Dudley was the first place in the world where a third of these were found. In recognition of its geological significance, Wren's Nest was declared a National Nature Reserve in 1956 and also a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1990. In 2006 Wren's Nest celebrated its 50th anniversary.

SILURIAN TIMERS
Wren’s Nest and Meole Hill are composed of Wenlock limestone deposited 420 million years ago when the area now for its large numbers of beautifully preserved Silurian limestone fossils, collections of which can be found in museums throughout the world. A number of ancient species are located at Wren’s Nest, and Dudley was the first place in the world where a third of these were found. In recognition of its geological significance, Wren’s Nest was declared a National Nature Reserve in 1956 and also a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1990. In 2006 Wren’s Nest celebrated its 50th anniversary.

The first Aboriginal Daley, the father of the industrial revolution, was born at Wren’s Nest in 1769 and reputedly learnt the art of making new soft coal from his great uncle, Dud Dudley. The Daley later moved to Coalbrookdale in Shropshire to develop his techniques and went on to construct the famous Ironbridge in 1781. Wren’s Nest has numerous archeological points of interest including several early lime pits for burning limestone which date from medieval times and some lake bed brick kilns which are listed features. In recognition of Wren’s Nest’s contribution to the lime industry and development of the Black Country, together with Climbin Hill, the area was declared a Scheduled Monument in 2004.

NATURE CONSERVATION
Today, Wren’s Nest is also important for its wildlife interest and it is an area of national importance for its nature. The occurrence of species rich limestone grassland and salt marsh woodland at Wren’s Nest is unique in the British Isles. Several county rarities are present, including autumn gentian, small scabious, common gromwell and bee orchid. Some of the underground limestone has been removed. The layers of limestone making up the ancient Silurian sea bed are clearly visible and indistinct at about 150 million years old. The Dudley Bug is also present in the reserve, as well as a number of rare and endangered species. The Dud Dudley Bug trilobite, which became an important local eel and was once feared on the town’s coat of arms. The Dudley Bug is also present in the reserve, as well as a number of rare and endangered species. The Dud Dudley Bug trilobite, which became an important local eel and was once feared on the town’s coat of arms. As you walk through the trench you pass through three different rock faces. Point 6 is the most southerly tip of the reserve where you can see the two sides of the hill meet. The climb up the ‘99 steps’ to point 6 is worthwhile for the views of Dudley Castle, Birmingham and the Clent Hills. The iconography panel at this point explains why it is known as ‘Murchison’s View’. Find out who Sir Roderick Murchison was and the part he played in the history of Wren’s Nest.

The nature conservation of the reserve has been awarded a Heritage Lottery funded project. Engineering works have been necessary to stabilise the mine and public access may be restricted, whilst the location of the site may not be indicated on current maps. Please call for the latest information prior to your visit.

The geological richness of the area is due to its long association with the sea since the earliest geological period. The distinctive ripple marks can clearly be seen on the surface of the rock face and look especially attractive on a sunny day. Another good spot for collecting is the base of the limestone cliff on the west side of the hill. Please observe the fossil collecting code on the reserve.

The surface texture of this rockface is not caused by wave action but by the action of the Silurian sea creatures moving over it. The distinctive ripple marks can clearly be seen on the surface of the rock face and look especially attractive on a sunny day. Another good spot for collecting is the base of the limestone cliff on the west side of the hill. Please observe the fossil collecting code on the reserve.

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SAFETY INFORMATION

Visitors are requested to remain on designated footpaths and not to enter safety fenced areas. The geological trail route provides good access to all the main features of interest. Due to the engineering works it has been necessary to extend the fencing in certain areas and re-route paths. Please refrain from climbing rock faces. The use of hammers is strictly prohibited.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

The Wildside of Wren's Nest leaflet
Wren's Nest Geological trail guide for children by Bromford Primary School
The Limestone Way walk leaflet

For a more detailed explanation of the trail route the Wren's Nest Geological 'A' level field guide is available from the warden service or Dudley Museum & Art Gallery.

WREN'S NEST WARDEN SERVICE

The nature reserve has a team of full-time wardens who maintain and care for the site's geological, wildlife and archaeological features. To book a guided walk or group visit, or to enquire about volunteering with the Friends of Wren's Nest call the senior warden on 01384 812785.

Why not combine your visit with a trip to Dudley Museum & Art Gallery? The museum has an extensive geological collection and fine displays of fossils from Wren's Nest. The museum shop sells books, fossil replicas and minerals. Admission is free.

Dudley Museum & Art Gallery
St. James's Road, Dudley, West Midlands DY1 1HY
Telephone: 01384 815575
Open Monday to Saturday 10am - 4pm

Geological Society - The Black Country Geological Society is based in Dudley and meetings usually take place once a month, lectures being held at Dudley Museum & Art Gallery. Telephone: 01384 815575. For more information please visit www.bcgs.info

CONTACT DETAILS

More information can be found at www.dudley.gov.uk/wrensnestnnr

To speak to a warden call 01384 812785 or e-mail wrensnest.country@dudley.gov.uk