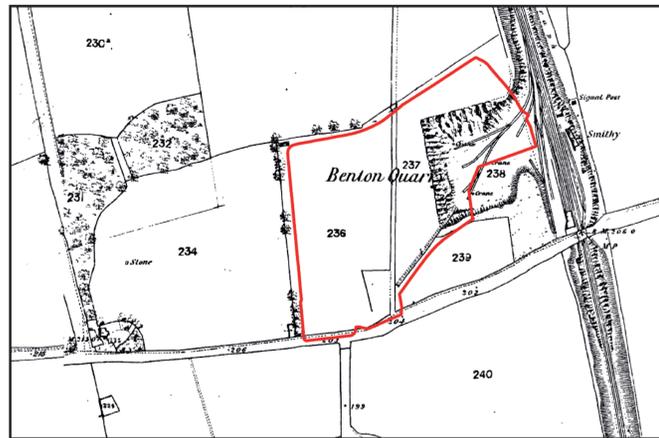


Welcome to Benton Quarry Park



North Tyneside Council



A quarry of some sort has been here since Roman times and it is said that when the quarry came into full production in the 1800s – the age of the industrial revolution – the sandstone was used to help build some of Newcastle’s famous buildings.

The map above, produced in 1858-1895, shows railway wagon access routes into the quarry. The unfenced quarry became worked out and filled up with water in the 1930s, with the exception of an island known by locals as ‘Froggy Island’ – suggesting it was a haven for frogs.

During the Second World War, the views around the quarry were very different – barrage balloons covering the skyline protected the shipyards, factories and railway lines. In this time of war the fire brigade used water from the quarry to fill up their fire tenders to fight the many fires started by Luftwaffe bombing raids.

In the 1960s, the council of the time used the quarry for disposal of building rubble and the quarry basin was filled in. Lime, sycamore and horse chestnut trees surrounded the quarry and it was fenced off. The land inside was basically grassy scrubland and a local farmer used it to feed his goats.



Image: Google Maps

Then in the late 1970s and 1980s trees were planted with the help of local volunteers and Scout groups. The park was left to develop naturally and little more was done until 2003 when North Tyneside Council reintroduced Park Wardens.

The old pathways were then reclaimed and the park started to look as it is now. Tree and sight lines were established, overgrown areas cut back and meadows were developed. Bench seats, fencing and bins were installed and the children’s play site was updated. Access to the main park was via one entrance and exit; and a parking metering system was installed in the car park.

The Friends of Benton Quarry Park group was established in 2013 and has been fundamental in the park’s further development and obtaining funding from a number of sources, including the Banks Group, which has been used to improve drainage, resurface paths and extend the path system around the large field.

What you can see in the park

1 Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*

Hedgehogs are the gardener’s friends as they eat slugs, snails and other insects. They have over 2,000 spines as a protection from predators and hibernate between November and March. Since 2000 we’ve seen a decline and lost a third of the population. To help hedgehogs, cut a hole at the bottom of your garden fence so they can move from garden to garden and find enough food.



2 Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus*

Originally kept captive in pens called warrens, they were a source of meat and fur. They originate from Spain and were brought over by the Romans. Some escaped and quickly populated the countryside. The male is called a buck and the female a doe. Its main predator is the fox.



3 Fox *Vulpes vulpes*

These are widespread across Europe. Red-brown in colour with pointed ears and a bushy tail, they hunt mainly at night and are more commonly found in urban areas now. In parks and gardens, two-thirds of its diet is made up of our rubbish and waste. The call of the fox can be heard in mid-winter, which is their breeding season. They have a gestation period of about 52 days, with four or five cubs being born black.



4 Stoat *Mustela erminea*

The stoat has a wide range of habitats, found wherever there is a suitable food supply. It hunts both by day and night, preying on mice, voles, rabbits and birds. It has a bounding gait and is a good swimmer.



5 The Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*

A tiny brown bird, with a short upright tail and a dark stripe across its eye. It loves woodland, dense undergrowth scrub and heathland. Wrens breed from April to July and the nest is domed. They have two broods per year.



6 Red Wing *Turdus iliacus*

This bird is a winter visitor. It is the size of a thrush with a black-tipped bill and a white stripe above the eye. The red patch under its wing is more noticeable when in flight. It breeds in Scandinavia and migrates south west to Britain in February.



7 Nettles *Urtica dioica*

Stinging nettles are perennial broad leaf weeds found along river banks, hedgeways and grassy areas. They are an early food source for ladybirds and moths; and butterflies such as the Small Tortoiseshell and Peacock love them too. Their larvae feed in large groups in silken tents at the top of the nettle stems. Nettles are also loved by other insect-eaters such as hedgehogs, shrews, frogs and toads. Fibres from the stems have been used over the years to make rope and lining. People have eaten nettles for centuries and they are a good source of calcium, magnesium and iron, among other trace elements and vitamins. They can also be used in many soups and stews.

