

# Special Wildlife

The Great Crested newt is our largest and rarest newt, now in decline throughout the UK and Europe. The claypits are of national importance for this species as they hold one of the largest breeding populations in the country! The newt, its breeding habitat (ponds), its terrestrial habitat (woodland, ponds and meadow) and all stages of its cycle are protected by law. It is illegal to pond dip in those water bodies where this newt is found. One special pond has been allocated for pond dipping activities.

## Dog Owners - It's YOUR Business

Whilst we welcome responsible dog walking on the Claypits, we ask that dog owners please remember that this site is a Nature Reserve and to observe the following rules.

### Use A Poop Scoop!

The Rangers receive many complaints about dog fouling. Over time a build up of faeces can lead to increased levels of nutrients which is detrimental to the rare plants of the Reserve. Children and volunteer groups tread in dog dirt and it gets onto clothing and tools. It is also splattered onto staff using machinery. Please use the bins provided.

### Keep Dogs On A Lead

Visitors have complained about loose dogs being a nuisance. On a Nature Reserve it is not acceptable that dogs be allowed to chase and disturb the wildlife we are trying to protect, nor to harass other site users. Over disturbance will lead to some species leaving the Reserve. Please keep your dogs on a lead at all times.

### Do Not Allow Your Dog Into The Ponds

This Reserve is both nationally and internationally important for Great Crested newts. Dogs splashing about in ponds create clouding of the water for hours. Newts cannot see food, nor the approach of predators, their eggs are dislodged from concealment then eaten by other enemies. During the winter amphibians hibernating in pond mud can be unearthed - leading to their deaths. All phases of the Great Crested newts life cycle and its habitats (ponds and terrestrial) are protected by Law. It is illegal to disturb them in any way and this carries a fine!

**PLEASE** follow the three simple rules above. Should dogs continue to be a problem it may become necessary, for the benefit of the Reserve, wildlife and other users to restrict dog access.

Please remember that you are on a Nature Reserve of Scientific Importance. *Thank you*

# Conservation Zones

Conservation Zones are areas where access is strictly controlled. This is because, as the site has become more popular, recreational pursuits are damaging the wildlife and plantlife which we are trying to protect. Access to these areas will be limited to Ranger led walks and for scientific and educational purposes. Please respect the wildlife and scientific work taking place in these zones.



# Management Work

In order to keep areas of the Reserve in favourable condition a substantial amount of maintenance work is undertaken by the Rangers, volunteers and contractors. This work sometimes involves plant machinery, tractors, mowers and chainsaws. For your safety, please observe any notices you may come across.

# Notes For Visitors

During the winter months we strongly recommend the use of wellingtons or walking boots. During the summer we advise the application of insect repellent, particularly through July and August.



**THE MERSEY FOREST** Telephone 01925 816217  
[www.merseyforest.org.uk](http://www.merseyforest.org.uk)

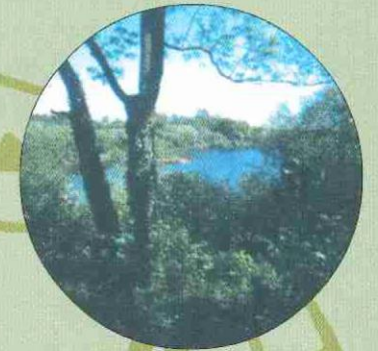


Warrington Borough Council

# Rixton Claypits Local Nature Reserve



in the heart of The Mersey Forest



Warrington Borough Council



# Welcome To Rixton Claypits Local Nature Reserve

Once a clay quarry, Rixton Claypits is now a Special Area for Conservation (S.A.C.) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (S.S.S.I). The site covers some 80 acres and is a wildlife haven where both the keen naturalist and casual visitor will find things of interest. Easy to follow and well maintained paths take you to ponds, pits, wildflower meadows, quiet corners and woodland.

## Quick History

For centuries, the area on which the Claypits now stands was farmland. In the 1920's clay extraction started and continued until 1965 when it ceased and the area was left to mature. Over the years much controversy and debate has surrounded the pits, as ownership changed hands several times and applications to landfill were made and rejected.

## Designations

Following a number of studies S.S.S.I. (Site of Special Scientific Interest) status was given to areas 3 in 1979, then areas 1 and 2 in 1990 due to the plant assemblage. More recently, areas outside the S.S.S.I. zones were given S.B.I. grade A status (Site of Biological Importance). This has now been changed to S.I.N.C. (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation).

In 1996 the entire Reserve became an L.N.R. (Local Nature Reserve). During August 2000 it was declared a S.A.C. site which is a European designation due to the areas high Great Crested newt population. This is a rare and legally protected species (see map).

## The Ranger Service

Warrington Borough Council Ranger Service became responsible for the management of the claypits in 1986 and manage the site for nature conservation. The Rangers patrol and monitor the site to deter misuse and vandalism and are responsible for the upkeep of the Reserve.



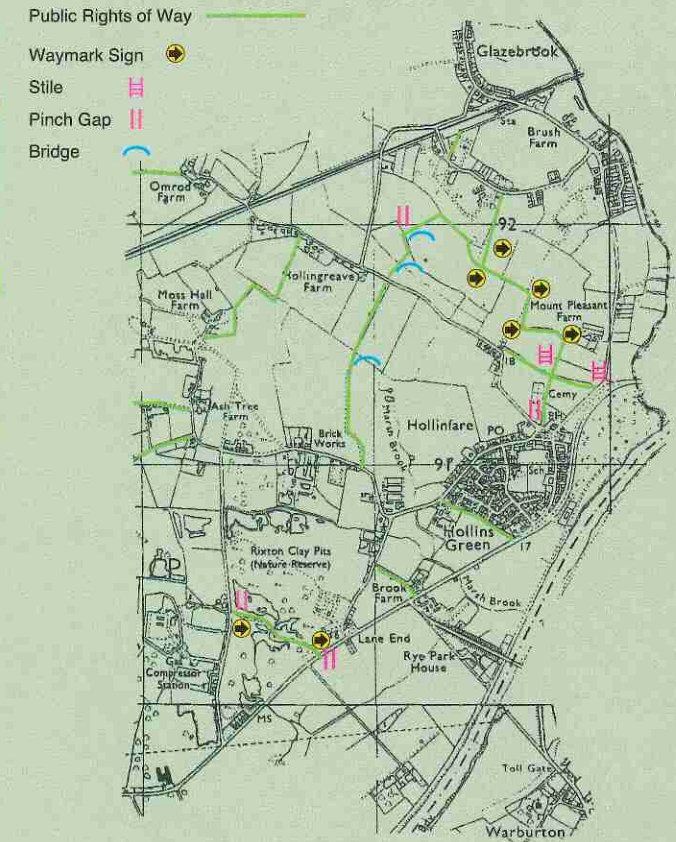
They also organise community events, work closely with schools, uniform and voluntary groups. For further information contact:  
Rixton Visitor Centre,  
Manchester Road,  
Rixton, Warrington.  
WA3 6EB.

Tel: 0161 777 9726  
[Rangers@warrington.gov.uk](mailto:Rangers@warrington.gov.uk)

For more information on events on the Reserve pick up a 'What's On in Warrington's Parks & Green Spaces' booklet or visit our web site at [www.warrington.gov.uk](http://www.warrington.gov.uk)

# Gateway To The Countryside

The wider countryside and the public rights of way network is easily accessible from the Claypits. There are several routes to choose from, which provide walks of varying lengths. It is even possible to reach Pennington Flash in Leigh from the Reserve. If you would like to find out more about the country footpaths around Warrington then why not join one of the Ranger-led guided walks that take place throughout the year



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