

A Summary of Wildlife sites in Mountsorrel – 2016

Introduction

Despite the continuing urban spread of recent years the village is fortunate to have several varied wildlife areas ranging from flood meadow and marsh through unimproved grassland to woodland. Some of these sites benefit from a degree of legal protection.



Sheep grazing on Broad Hill – December 2011

Notes on Terminology

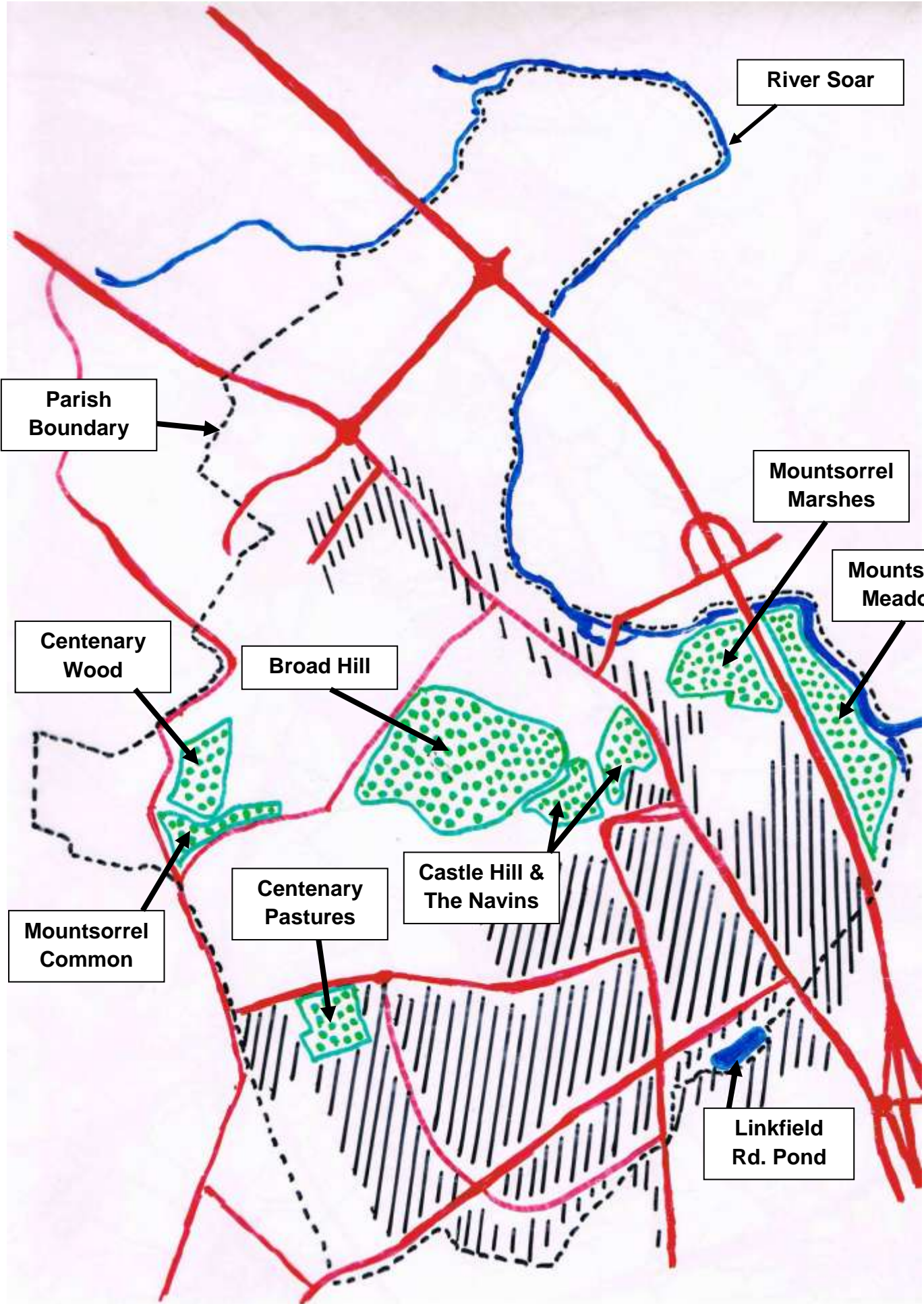
'Sites of Special Scientific Interest' (SSSI) are statutorily protected ecological sites. Natural England lists the management operations which are not permitted without their prior consent. Details of sites are at: <https://www.gov.uk/protected-areas-sites-of-special-scientific-interest>

'Local Wildlife Sites' (LWS) were formerly called 'Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation' (SINC) and many publically available records will still show them as SINC. These sites, which are not protected by law, are notified through the LWS Review Panel and registered as such by Charnwood Borough Council. This designation does not impose any legal or statutory restrictions on the landowner, for instance in relation to management operations, but it is taken into account when planning applications are determined.

'Local Nature Reserve' (LNR) is a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks & Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006. In Mountsorrel, Centenary Pasture on Halstead Road is both a LWS and a LNR.

The Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust (LWRT) owns, leases or manages across the county, sites which they refer to as 'Nature Reserves'. Many of these sites have often been notified as LWS. In Mountsorrel both Mountsorrel Marshes and Mountsorrel Meadows are managed by LWRT as part of their developing Mountsorrel & Rothley Marshes Reserve. Details of this and other LWRT sites are at <http://www.lrwt.org.uk/>

Mountsorrel Sketch Map - Wildlife Areas 2016



Local Nature Reserve

Centenary Pastures – Halstead Rd

Named to mark the centenary of the Parish Council in 1994 and declared a Local Nature Reserve in 2002 by Charnwood Borough Council (CBC) who own the site.

The site is an unimproved flower rich pasture with rigg and furrow and is managed, primarily for wildlife, to a plan prepared by the Charnwood Wildlife Project. This consists of light summer grazing by cattle to keep the vigorous grasses in check and to stop scrub and trees establishing themselves. More delicate plants thrive and as the cattle graze some areas more than others a variety of the plants flower, set seed and create tussocks in the grass which are important for insects to burrow and hibernate in.

The Hawthorn and Buckthorn hedges that border the site have been traditionally layed to ensure fresh growth and prolong the life of the hedge. They are significant habitat, providing cover and food for Yellowhammers and Linnets amongst others. Elsewhere in the field the Hawthorn has grown into mature trees that in autumn produce a profusion of red berries that attract the Redwings and Fieldfares.

Linkfield Road Pond

Linkfield Road Pond is part of the remains of the Victorian brickyard and the Alvis/Rolls Royce and later cardboard box manufacturing sites now used for housing. The pond was surveyed in 2008 prior to the last housing development. The site is registered by CBC as a SINC (CBC Reference CBCW 5814/3). The site is securely fenced for safety reasons. The site is noted for amphibians, in particular common toads.

Mountsorrel and Rothley Marshes

This consists 80 acres in three separate parcels of land now managed by the Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust (LR&WT) as part of their co-ordinated plan for the “Re-greening of the Soar Valley. Two parcels of land are within the parish

- Mountsorrel Marshes
- Mountsorrel Meadows

The third parcel is within Rothley Parish and abuts Mountsorrel Meadows adjacent to Sileby Lock.

Mountsorrel Meadows is a 12.6 hectare nature reserve, with wet woodland, shallow pools, wet grassland and marsh. It was purchased by L&RWT in 2006 with the main habitat creation work completed by the autumn of 2007. The newly planted woodland aread had previously been farmed with the last crop being maize in 2004 with the remainder being permanent grassland being grazed by cattle in common with most of the surrounding fields. The wet grassland and shallow wet scrapes have been designed to encourage overwintering birds but have also seen small numbers of Lapwing nesting in the spring.

The site is closely linked to the L&RWT Cossington Meadows Reserve which is now of national importance for bird life.

Mountsorrel Marshes are a remnant of the wetland habitats once common in the flood plain of the River Soar and are a notified Local Wildlife Site (CBC Reference CBCW 5815/1). It consists of three fields forming two distinct areas, marsh and wet pasture separated by a main drainage ditch. The whole site though meets the classification for Swamps and Fens. The site is occasionally grazed. Both the marsh and wet pasture have a host of bog plants, reed and grasses and attracts a wide variety of insect life and marshland birds.

Castle Hill and the Navins

The site of the former medieval castle and the village war memorial, Castle Hill is registered as a SINC (CBC Reference CBCW5814/2[25498] March 2002). It is an important local landmark and its value for wildlife is significant as an example of an acid grassland and rock outcrop mix which was once well-represented in Leicestershire at Mountsorrel, Croft and Enderby but has now been lost to extensive quarrying.

The area has suffered from a lack of management over the years since grazing ceased. This has resulted large areas of invasive scrub and bramble along with escapee garden trees self seeding but there has very recently been a fairly extensive clearance of the scrub on the main hillside. This clearance work augers well for the notable grassland species and, on the rocky outcrops, interesting mosses, that have survived.

Adjacent to Christ Church at the foot of the Navins is a small wildflower meadow that has been developed by the Mountsorrel Heritage Group. This mini-meadow is subject to a regular regime of scything and, after seed drop, hay clearance.

Broad Hill

As marked on the ordnance survey maps Broad Hill covers, Mountsorrel Common, the fields between Halstead Road and Bond Lane, the former Mountsorrel Granite Company No.1 Quarry site (now a reconstituted hill) and the quarry stock area.

The whole area is a major birdlife habitat as well as supporting a mammal population including fox, badger and muntjac.

The new Broad Hill is really the reconstituted hill on the old quarried area. This is still in the early stage of ecological regeneration with a raw covering of grass and self-sown trees and shrubs starting to take hold (notably buddleia). There is a good (permissive) access path from Cufflin's Pit Lane to the old Quarry Yard (then to Bond Lane or Crown Lane, with expansive views from the top of the hill by the statue of Albert the Quarryman.

If current plans go ahead we will lose the Halstead Road – Bond Lane fields to housing development this year. This represents a major loss of local bird habitat with the ground nesting skylarks needing to relocate and the unavoidable disruption due to building work will probably also cause the loss the Yellowhammer and Reed Bunting flocks that nest in the Enclosure Act hedgerows. Balanced against those losses through is the inclusion in the current development plans, following forcible representations by the Parish Council of, an improved wildlife corridor to connect the development's green spaces, dry and wet ponds with the wider area. There is also a wooded berm around the new proposed cricket pitch which in the long term will provide some extra habitat.

On the western edge of the area is Mountsorrel Station, the terminus of the recreated industrial steam line that connected the Mountsorrel granite quarries with the Midland Railway mainline at Swithland. The railway project have gone to great efforts to include wildlife habitats throughout their project and this includes wildflower seeding and planting at the station and along the line. Although just outside the Parish boundary, but immediately adjacent to the wider Broad Hill area, they have developed, alongside the Mountsorrel & Rothely Heritage Centre, a wildlife trail at Nunkley Hill (See <http://heritage-centre.co.uk/visit-us/nunckley-trail/>)

Mountsorrel Common

The site was surveyed as a candidate SINC in 2004 under the name “Bond Lane Wood” (CBC Reference CBCW 5614/12 [51243]). That report noted that “The undulating terrain within the wood is used for motorbike and mountain bike scrambling and human disturbance is likely to be appreciable”. Despite efforts by the Police and Parish Council there are still occasions of damage and disturbance. The site does however have both flora and fauna of interest.

Leading away from the western half (the site is bisected by Wood Lane) is the newly opened permissive path on Quarry estate referred to as Buddon Wood Farm Path. This leads through a young silver birch plantation up to the boundary of an area still under regeneration work by TARMAC connected with their future development of the quarries.

From the eastern side is a path from the former carpark leading down to Centenary Wood.

Centenary Wood

Planted to celebrate the centenary of the Parish Council and marked by a memorial stone this corner of woodland had been forgotten and abandoned for several years until LaFarge (the then quarry operator) opened up a new permissive path running through it to join the Wood Lane/Bond Lane path that runs through the Quarry Stock area.

The site closest to the Common is developing well with spring woodland flowers but lower down the path to the Wood Lane path junction it is a bit “raw” although the Birch trees are developing well.

North End of the Village

The river Soar flood plain fields cut by the A6 and Granite Way and bounded to the north by the river have three distinct parts, of which only the Barrow Horseshoe is of real interest:

- Barrow Horseshoe – the fields between the A6 Bypass and the river noted by CBC as the Barrow Washlands
- Betty Hensers Lane Fields
- The Bones – fields between Granite Way and the river side forming the parish boundary with Quorn.

Barrow Horseshoe

Privately owned but with a good public footpath that leads around the whole river edge with some interesting backwaters, trees and remains of rigg and furrow in the fields. CBC have a field, referred to as Betty Henser’s Lane and adjacent to the weir close to Barrow Lock Field listed as a

candidate SINC under reference CBCW 5716/ 8 [48793]. Many of the old willows along the footpath are also listed.