

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

Ancaster Valley



Location & Access

OS: 130 • **GR:** SK 984 434 • 9.70ha (23.90 acres) • Freehold 1982

Habitat type: Grassland

The reserve is situated on the south side of the A153 Sleaford-Grantham road close to the village of Ancaster. The entrance is reached via a short length of bridleway signposted from the road, about 100m to the east of the Ancaster crossroads. A public footpath runs through part of the valley. The vehicle gate is locked. It is advisable to park cars in the village. From time to time there will be sheep grazing in the reserve.

Description & Management

This narrow, steep-sided valley is covered with limestone grassland, scrub and woodland. It is one of the finest sites for limestone flowers in the county. Recorded species include the rare and beautiful pasqueflower, bee and fragrant orchids, dyer's greenweed, dropwort, spring cinquefoil, rock-rose, spring-sedge and many others. There is an attractive woodland, consisting chiefly of beech, on the eastern slope of the valley, which has yew, box, wayfaring tree, barberry and wild clematis on its edge, and woodland plants, such as violet and early-purple orchid. Large numbers of butterflies and bumble-bees may be seen on calm sunny days. The wide variety of birds include green and great spotted woodpeckers.

Large areas of the steep banks had become overgrown with scrub of gorse and hawthorn in the 1970s, and, since the reserve was acquired in 1982, one of the main management tasks has been clearance and control of scrub in order to retain the flower-rich

grassland. This is now managed with light sheep grazing.

The origin of Ancaster Valley is uncertain, but it is thought to be a glacial spillway formed at the close of the Ice Age when meltwater from the ice cap on higher ground poured into the Ancaster Gap - the former course of the River Trent before ice forced its course further north.

