

Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust

# Far Ings



## Location & Access

**OS:** 112 • **GR:** TA 011 229 • 58.6ha (144.80 acres) • Leasehold and Freehold 1973

**Habitat type:** Grassland

The reserve is a 10-15 minute walk along the Humber Bank from Barton-upon-Humber. By car, leave the A15 at the A1077 turn-off (last exit before the Humber Bridge). Take the first exit from the roundabout, then the first right (look for the brown tourist signs). At the bottom of the hill, turn right. The entrance to the reserve is on the left.

## Description & Management

For centuries the thick layer of clay which borders the Humber estuary has been used to make tiles, bricks and cement. The tile yards were abandoned in the 1950s, leaving the pits to fill naturally with water. "Ings" is an old English word for the wet pastures to the west of Barton which, before embankment, were part of the Humber flood plain. Since Roman times the underlying clay has been used to make bricks and tiles. In the late 19th century there were 15 brick and tile yards; hundreds of men were employed to dig the clay by hand. There was also a cement works which made use of the clay. Supplies of clay began to run out during the early 20th century when many yards were abandoned. The clay workings soon filled with water and were colonised by reed and willow, forming a haven for many wildflowers, insects and birds. In 1983 the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust acquired the 100 acres of old pits which now form the Far Ings Nature Reserve. In the 1980s the reeds in the old clay pits were thick and dense. The booming call of the bittern was just a dream. Over the years the Trust has developed the

techniques of reedbed management to dramatic effect.

## Reedbeds

Far Ings is noted particularly for their extensive reedbeds. *Phragmites australis*, sometimes known as Norfolk Reed, grows in varying depths of water and forms dense stands which are of great importance to wildlife. Many invertebrates live on the reeds, proving a rich food source for a variety of reed-dwelling specialists such as reed warbler, water rail and the uncommon bearded tit.

Management work undertaken has improved the reedbed habitat and created more open feeding areas with the aim of attracting bitterns back as a nesting species. There are bitterns on the reserve all year and they are seen in various locations across the reserve. It is possible to hear them 'booming' in the spring from about March. A good location to try is the double decker hide at Ness End Farm, bitterns have been seen from here on a regular but infrequent basis – they are very shy birds and good at hiding.

## Open water

Freshwater lakes are important for wildlife, and the clay pits provide some substitute for the great wetlands of Lincolnshire lost through drainage. The water at Far Ings is rich in microscopic life which provides food for many invertebrates, which in turn support fish such as eel, roach, rudd and perch. Heron, grebes and kingfisher

prey on the fish. Many duck – including mallard, pochard and tufted duck – nest on the islands and margins. In winter many more wildfowl live here, including wigeon, teal, goldeneye and gadwall, goosander and occasionally smew. Great crested grebe, little grebe and water rail also nest.

## River Humber

The Humber, one of Britain's largest estuaries, supports abundant life. Wildfowl occur in great numbers, whilst the mud of the foreshore and offshore banks exposed at low tide support teeming wading birds. In winter dunlin, ringed and grey plover, redshank, knot and bar-tailed godwit all feed on the mudflats at low tide. In May and August passage waders such as curlew sandpiper and whimbrel occur, whilst black-tailed godwit and oystercatcher have been frequent visitors in recent winters. The upper shore is clothed in saltmarsh with cord-grass, sea plantain, scurvy grass and sea aster. There are also areas of common reed. Kingfishers are frequent here in winter and mixed flocks of finches may be seen feeding on the seeds of the saltmarsh plants.

## Meadow and Scrub

Old meadows and scrub adjoining the flooded pits provide sheltered sunny corners for butterflies such as common blue, meadow brown, ringlet, gatekeeper, and large and small skippers. In May the grassland is dotted with the yellow, blue and

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white of a variety of wildflowers, including birdsfoot trefoil, kidney vetch, selfheal and fairy flax. The surrounding hawthorn scrub provides excellent nesting habitat for small birds. Nine species of warbler breed at Far Ings in a good year. Blackcap, lesser whitethroat, sedge warbler and willow warbler are common. Whitethroat, garden warbler, grasshopper warbler and chiffchaff are regular nesters. Four species of tit (including willow and long-tailed), finches (including redpoll), and other scrub birds make this a rewarding habitat for birdwatchers.

## The Scrapes

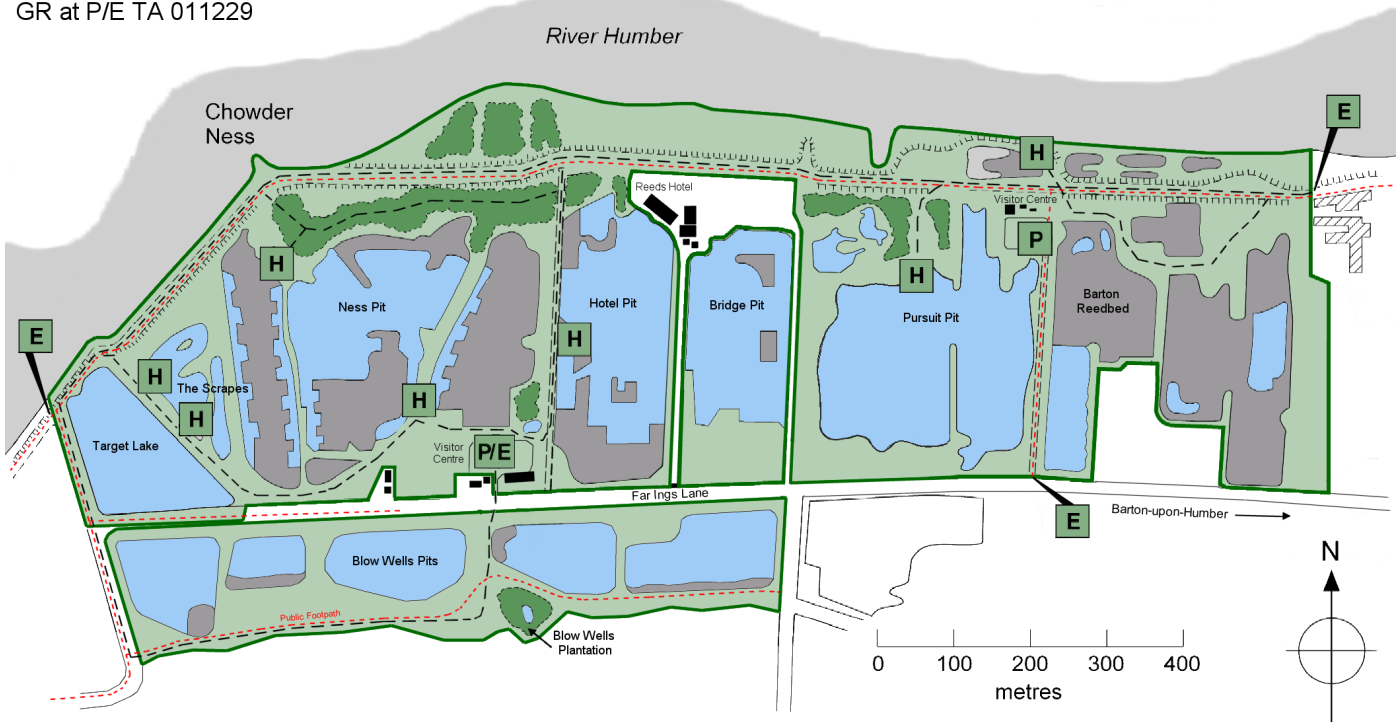
This area was created in 1986 by scraping a layer of top soil off a part of the nature reserve which had formerly been cultivated. The shallow water and islands are attractive to wading birds on migration, such as greenshank, spotted redshank and green sandpiper. Redshank and lapwing sometimes nest here. The area was re-worked in 2012-13. The Scrapes were deepened and linked to adjacent water bodies creating permanent water and reed fringe.

## Chowder Ness

Chowder Ness was developed as a managed realigned project by Associated British Ports in 2007. The bank wall was move inland and the old wall breached to create new saltmarsh and mudflat habitats. Waders including curlew, redshank and lapwing, as well as shelduck, regularly feed here. The passage of migrants in spring and autumn brings the possibility of avocet, greenshank and whimbrel.

## Far Ings

GR at P/E TA 011229



**P** Parking space   **E** Entrance   **H** Bird Hide