

Great things to see and do in the

# Proposed Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark



**Black Country**  
UNESCO Global Geopark Project



## Welcome to the world-class heritage which is the Black Country

The Black Country is an amazing place with a captivating history spanning hundreds of millions of years. This is a geological and cultural undiscovered treasure of the UK, located at the heart of the country. It is just 30 minutes from Birmingham International Airport and 10 minutes by train from the city of Birmingham.

The Black Country is where many essential aspects of the Industrial Revolution began. It was the world's first large scale industrial landscape where anything could be made, earning it the nick-name the 'workshop of the world' during the Industrial Revolution. This short guidebook introduces some of the sites and features that are great things to see and places to explore across many parts of The Black Country. Much more information can be found at

<https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcgp/>

## Why did it happen here?

The rocks here held vast quantities of easily worked minerals that powered industry. This caused industrialisation which spread across this once green landscape, turning the place into an area 'black by day and red by night'. The lush landscape was destroyed as mining churned up the land, factories piled slag heaps everywhere, black smoke and soot filled the air and blackened the streets, houses and even the people, and the glows of red fiery furnaces lit up the night sky.

Over time the mines gave us more than wealth. Digging into the ground here led to discoveries of fossils and advancements in geological understanding. These unique elements created special places and features, which are globally and internationally important today.

## Our story recorded in stone

The rock layers beneath your feet contain many clues to the past. The oldest rock layers of the Black Country are limestones and shales full of shelly fossils and coral reefs which lived and died here. They are 428 million years old and belong to a period of time that geologists call 'The Silurian Period'. They tell us of a time when this area was under a shallow tropical sea.

The layers lying above these are grey muddy rocks that contain seams of ironstone, fireclay and coal with lots of fossils of plants and insects. These rocks tell us of a time some 310 million years ago (called the Carboniferous Period, named after the carbon in the coal) when the Black Country was covered in huge steamy rainforests.

Sitting on top of those we find reddish sandy rocks containing ancient sand dunes and pebbly river beds. This tells us that the landscape dried out to become a scorching desolate desert (this happened about 250 million years ago and lasted through the Permian and Triassic time periods).

The final chapter in the making of our landscape is often called the 'Ice Age'. It spans the last 2.6 million years of our history when vast ice sheets scraped across the surface of the area, leaving a landscaped sculpted by ice and carved into the hills and valleys we see today.

This vision of the Black Country is now gone, but fantastic heritage sites remain, scattered across this landscape to be explored. Many of these sites have been selected to form the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark project, celebrating world class heritage on a landscape scale.

## What is a Global Geopark?

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) defines Global Geoparks as 'single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed'.

The main emphasis is on protection, education and sustainable development while involving local communities. As of 2019, there are 140 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 38 countries and there are seven in the UK. The Black Country is in the process of applying to become a UNESCO Global Geopark. Within a Geopark the important selected sites are called Geosites. This guidebook lists and describes a selection of the Geosites of our proposed UNESCO Global Geopark.

## Explore the Black Country heritage

Come and discover how the Black Country shaped the Industrial Revolution. Visit the wonderful variety of Geosites we have to offer, the breath taking views and enjoy long walks at our nature reserves and open spaces.

## DUDLEY MUSEUM @ THE ARCHIVES (Geosite 1)

Tipton Road, Dudley DY1 4SQ (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 950 912)

Dudley Museum at the Archives is the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark Project headquarters. This is the best place to begin to find information and plan your visits to the Geosites of the Black Country.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

See some of the finest fossils ever found in the Black Country and explore the story of how our world class working landscape shaped our culture and modern way of life.

Visit the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark Project discovery room and learn about the other Geosites, which make up

this incredible place. Check out our programme of geological exhibitions and events, education sessions and other services.

This is a modern building with full disabled access. There is a free car park and toilet facilities. Open Monday to Saturday 10am to 4pm. Free entry.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information call

**+ 44 (0) 1384 815574 or (0) 1384 812770.**

You can also find us online at **[www.dudley.gov.uk/see-and-do/museums](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/see-and-do/museums)**





# WREN'S NEST NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE (Geosite 2)

Wren's Hill Road, Dudley, DY1 3SB (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 935 922)

Wren's Nest National Nature Reserve is a classic geological site of exceptional international importance for the quality and diversity of its fossils and spectacular mining heritage.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This is a great place to explore a landscape of wooded abandoned quarries and old limestone mine workings, to find beautiful 428 million year old fossils and to see and learn about geology and wildlife. Among many woodland pathways are four specific way-marked walks leading to features of geology, wildlife or mining heritage and many geo-art sculptures. They feature viewing platforms and places to search in the scree for fossils. You will also find interpretation panels and signage to aid your experience.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

The Geosite was England's first National Nature Reserve established for its exceptional limestone geology in 1956. Rocks and fossils here belong to the Silurian

Period of the Earth's history and are between 427.7 and 429 million years old. Over 700 different types of fossil are found here; 186 types first discovered and described here and 86 types found nowhere else on Earth. Fossil collecting is permitted from the loose scree continually building up at the foot of the rock faces, but is not permitted from rock faces.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

It is a large public access urban nature reserve, free to access 24 hours a day. The free car park is open 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday. There is no dedicated visitor centre, site café or public toilets on site, so plan your visit with this in mind.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, including copies of leaflets, details about events and guided walks call **+ 44 (0) 1384 812785** (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm) or visit **[www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves)**



# BARR BEACON & PINFOLD LANE QUARRY (Geosite 3)

Beacon Way, Walsall WS9 0QS (Landranger OS Sheet, grid reference 139, SP 061 970)

Barr Beacon is a geological site of exceptional importance due to the nature of its pebbly rocks that provided raw materials for the building of the Black Country and Birmingham. It has a special position next to one of the major geological faults that produces unique structures.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Barr Beacon is the highest point in the northern part of the Black Country offering magnificent views across the area. It has open parkland, a beautiful Portland Stone war memorial, many footpaths and open grassland. The site stands on the Beacon Way long distance footpath and connects it to the Pinfold Lane Quarry site, which is a little below the summit. Here you can see and learn about geology and its impacts on the landscape.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

The rocks forming the Hill are a mixture of red sandstones, pebble beds and breccias. They formed in semi-arid desert conditions within a vast river complex that flowed across the landscape during the early Triassic Period, between 241 and 248 million years ago.

Cutting into the eastern hillside and running towards Birmingham city centre is a 'v' shaped valley. This is now dry and long abandoned by the river that created this valley at the end of the last Ice Age 20,000 years ago.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

It is a large public access urban nature reserve, free to access 24 hours a day. The free car park is open 9am to 4pm Monday to Friday. There is no dedicated visitor centre, site café or public toilets on site, so plan your visit with this in mind.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information including obtaining copies of leaflets, details about events and guided walks at the Beacon call **+ 44 (0) 1922 653344** or visit **[https://go.walsall.gov.uk/barr\\_beacon\\_local\\_nature\\_reserve](https://go.walsall.gov.uk/barr_beacon_local_nature_reserve)**



# SALTWELLS NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE (Geosite 4)

Saltwells Lane, Dudley DY5 1AX (Landranger OS Sheet 139, SO 934 869)

Saltwells National Nature Reserve is an exceptional geological site because it contains the best exposures of Coal Measures rocks in the Black Country and has wonderful mining heritage and canal features.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The site is a large woodland with canal heritage, coal mining, clay mining and brine water industrial heritage, scattered around more than 100 hectares of hills and valleys. The site has many footpaths and points of interest for geology, wildlife and archaeology. Several are themed including a Geopark walk with artworks depicting geological themes. Fossil collecting is permitted from the loose scree continually building up at the foot of the rock faces, but is not permitted from rock faces.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

Coal seams, fireclays and ironstones, interwoven with siltstones and sandstones seen in the exposed rock faces of Doulton's Claypit in the woods formed in a steaming hot swamp when the Black Country lay on the equator about 310 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period. These seams rest on an eroded surface of much older rocks of a former landscape that emerged from the seas at the end of the Silurian Period about 420 million years ago. Rock faces and mining features are designated as nationally important and protected under UK laws. The protection covers both the geology and mining heritage.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

It is a large urban access nature reserve, open 24 hours a day. There is a large free car park and public house (The Saltwells Inn) off Coppice Lane near the centre of the site offering a good range of hospitality. There is no visitor centre, dedicated café or toilets at the site, so plan your visit with this in mind.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the site, events and walks contact the wardens on **+44 (0) 1384 812795** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm).

Visit **[www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves)**



# BARROW HILL & TANSEY GREEN CLAYPIT (Geosite 5)

Vicarage Lane, Brierley Hill DY5 4JH (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 915 894)

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Barrow Hill and Tansey Green Local Nature Reserve is important nationally and internationally as the only known occurrence of volcanic ashes in the whole of the Black Country. Some of the rocks here contain rare preserved fossil conifers, indicating that a surface volcano erupted here 307 million years ago. This Geosite has become lovingly known as the 'Dudley Volcano'. This Geosite contains features that are exceptionally rare and relate to volcano activity that happened as plate tectonics tore the Black Country landscape apart during the late Carboniferous Period about 307 million years ago.

The site is a prominent hill with a viewpoint marked by a large cross. Its slopes have deep scars caused by the quarrying of basalt and dolerite road stone and clay quarrying for brick making. The site has many footpaths and points of interest for geology, wildlife and archaeology.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

The red clays in Tansey Green Claypit were created on flat plains in a hot semi-desert world where rivers and streams occasionally flooded and covered the area with silt and mud. In these muddy layers are dark green ash layers with cinders thrown out of the volcano. In these beds are scorched stems of ancient conifers 'cooked' by the hot falling

ashes. These are some of the best-preserved and oldest anatomically preserved conifer trees found anywhere on Earth! The basalt/dolerite rocks of the hill never made it to the surface, but cooled slowly deep within the magma chamber below the Dudley volcano. Exposed rocks in the quarry walls show beautiful basalt columns and the contact where the edge of the magma chamber sat against the marls and baked them into natural pottery at about 1200 degree centigrade.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

This is a large public access urban nature reserve covering some 30 acres of wooded hillside and meadows. There is no visitor centre, cafe or toilets at the site, although some hospitality may be available at nearby St Marks Church by arrangement, or in the entrance café of the adjacent Russell's Hall Hospital.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the warden for more information about events and guided walks from Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm.

Call + 44 (0) 1384 812780 or visit [www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/buckpool-fens-pools-and-barrow-hill-nature-reserves/barrow-hill-local-nature-reserve/](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/buckpool-fens-pools-and-barrow-hill-nature-reserves/barrow-hill-local-nature-reserve/)





# MOORCROFT WOOD LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (Geosite 6)

Hawkswood Drive, Wednesbury WS10 8GA (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 968 951)

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This Geosite is the best place in the Black Country to observe the interaction between groundwater and old mining excavations. Its unique and mysterious landscape is made from huge masses of furnace slag and clinker, discarded into a flooded subsidence hollow from past coal mining. Moorcroft Wood has become a very important wildlife site especially for insects, amphibians and bats and is now a protected Local Nature Reserve for its geology and wildlife.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

Coal and ironstones were mined here and used at the nearby Moorcroft Iron Works to make cast iron. These minerals were combined with limestone from Walsall and Dudley to produce pig iron in huge blast furnaces. You can see evidence of the ironworks today as the maze of towering clinker blocks around the edges of Moorcroft Pool. By the beginning of the 20th century all industrial activity on the site had ceased, leaving huge boulders of industrial slag and clinker towering from its banks like frozen giants of a bygone industrial age. The woodland was planted in the early 20th century to help to reclaim industrial dereliction. The aim was to restore the old spoil heaps and quarry workings to provide

an amenity area for the patients of the isolation hospital that formally stood on the site.

The site was quarried at the surface for glacial clay/sands and a brick works was established, with the remnants of the quarry sites now forming parts of the present pool. A network of canals served these industries and the open Walsall Canal still runs past the site today. Collecting from the slag and clinker deposits, or any of the other archaeological features, is strictly forbidden.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

This is a large public access urban nature reserve of wooded pools sitting at the junction between two canals. There is a Wildlife Trust education centre at the site, open at certain times for groups and events.

Parking is available on the roadside at Hawkswood Drive near to the Wildlife Trust Education Centre.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the Environmental Improvement Team call **+ 44 (0) 1922 65 3344**  
email: [cleanandgreen@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:cleanandgreen@walsall.gov.uk)  
or visit [www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/reserves/moorcroft-wood](http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/reserves/moorcroft-wood)





# COTWALL END LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (Geosite 7)

Cotwall End Road, Dudley DY3 3YH (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 915 894)

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Cotwall End Local Nature Reserve Geosite sits on two branches of a major geological fault (The Western Boundary Fault), which marks the edge of the South Staffordshire/Black Country coalfield. It is a place of great geological diversity and in the past, coal, limestone, clays and sandstones were all quarried and mined here.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

Four coal seams occur in the valley floor that were mined with varying degrees of success, including the famous South Staffordshire Thick coal seam which was 9m in thickness at 75m (80 yards) below the surface. The quarries on the eastern side of the geosite yielded the famous 'Gornal Fish' (otherwise known as *Hemicyclaspis Murchisoni*) which was found in the 'Gornal Grit' (Downton Castle Sandstones) quarried for building stone and abrasives (grindstones, sandpaper, etc.).

Several trackside exposures allow the rocks of Turner's Hill geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to be viewable. These are important exposures of Sedgley Limestone and the Ludlow Bone Bed and contain fossils of sea creatures that lived and died here during the late Silurian Period about 318 million years ago.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

This is a large public access urban nature reserve with many woodland tracks to explore. There are a number of waymarked walks at the site and many places to stop to view the landscape, watch wildlife, or simply enjoy a picnic. There is a nature centre

(Brockswood Animal Sanctuary) with a large car park and a café at its northern end of the Geosite.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the site, events and walks contact the wardens on  
**+ 44 (0) 1902 884390.**

**[www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/cotwall-end-local-nature-reserve](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/cotwall-end-local-nature-reserve)** or for more information visit  
**[www.brockswood.org](http://www.brockswood.org)**



# SEDGLEY BEACON AND QUARRIES (Geosite 8)

Beacon Lane, Dudley DY3 1NA (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 923 942)

Sedgley's Beacon Hill was one of the beacons used to warn of invasion at the time of Queen Elizabeth I. It has commanding views across the Black Country and the hills of Shropshire and Wales. It is an important Geosite for its fossiliferous limestones belonging to the Aymestry Limestone Formation of approximately 420 million years in age.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

The Geosite contains a notable Grade II listed building 'The Sedgley Beacon', a Victorian tower constructed under the orders of Lord Wrottersley and said to be his tower for observing the night sky.

The limestones here contrast in type and fossil content to those of nearby Wren's Nest and the rock faces and mining features are designated as nationally important and protected under UK laws. The protection covers both geology as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) and mining heritage as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM).

Fossil collecting is permitted from the loose scree in the quarry continually building up at the foot of the rock faces but is not permitted from rock faces.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

This is a large public access open space offering open views of the wider landscape and a wide expanse of grassland for children to play. There is no formal car park or visitor centre; however, parking is available on Beacon Lane at the southern end of the site. The Beacon Hotel on the same road offers a good range of hospitality in a very traditional Black Country setting.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the site, events and walks contact the parks development team + 44 (0) 1384 816991 or [www.dudley.gov.uk/see-and-do/parks-open-spaces/the-parks-in-the-borough/beacon-hill-and-tower](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/see-and-do/parks-open-spaces/the-parks-in-the-borough/beacon-hill-and-tower)



## BANTOCK HOUSE MUSEUM (Geosite 9)

Finchfield Road, Wolverhampton WV3 9LQ (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 895 979)

Bantock House is a fantastic example of an important Edwardian farm and mansion house set in beautiful parkland. Now restored to its original glory, it is a great example of the Arts & Crafts Movement in its interior design. The scientific instruments used by James Glaisher in pioneering flight of 'The Mammoth' hot air balloon were fundamental in understanding the upper atmosphere and establishing modern meteorology.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This Geosite is a great place to explore an Edwardian mansion, find some peace and quiet in formal gardens, have fun in the park, or just enjoy a lovely picnic or lunch in the on-site café. Set in 48 acres of parkland and surrounded by formal gardens there is a great deal to see and explore, in and around this beautiful house. The house has a number of permanent displays and temporary exhibition areas hosting a number of exhibitions each year. A programme of talks and other events is regularly updated.

### ABOUT THE GEOSITE

The main theme of Bantock House Museum is the Edwardian life of a wealthy industrial Black Country family, showing the aspirations of those who generated their wealth from the mines and factories of the area. The house features carved oak panelled rooms and period furnishings inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement. There are displays of locally made enamels, jewellery, toys and dolls.

The gardens transformed from the original farmyard into the beautiful designs enjoyed

today by Baldwin Bantock, a keen gardener. The parkland sits on a thick layer of glacial deposits and once hosted a large single glacial erratic as a feature in the corner of the park. The ring of fencing where this stood is still present in the park.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

The house and gardens have specific opening hours that vary through the year.

The parkland is accessible all year round and there is a car park with abundant free parking adjacent to the house. Café and toilet facilities are available at the house.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**[www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk/visit/bantock](http://www.wolverhamptonart.org.uk/visit/bantock)** or **[www.bantockhouse.co.uk](http://www.bantockhouse.co.uk)**



# DUDLEY CANAL & TUNNEL TRUST (Geosite 10)

Birmingham New Road, Dudley DY1 4SB (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO948917)

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This Geosite is a fantastic place for visitors to experience a spectacular insight into the geological and limestone mining history of the Black Country. You can take a 45-minute canal narrow-boat excursion guiding you into a 1790's canal tunnel and a network of underground canal tunnels and limestone mines. The geological and industrial heritage of the area comes to life in an underground audio-visual presentation.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

Spectacular underground exposures are here, including Silurian geology from the Coalbrookdale Formation through to the Elton Formation. It also includes major structural geology features of the Castle Hill anticline as well as cave deposits including stalactites, stalagmites and flowstones. The Singing Cavern was last mined in the early 19th century and extends nearly to the middle of Dudley, complete with tramway along its length. Unfortunately, much of the cavern has now collapsed and only approximately 100 yards of it remains today. It has seven limestone pillars that support the roof, each weighing 300 tons and has two loading shafts.

The other mines and caverns include: Castle Mill Basin - the underground limestone mine, Cathedral Arch - a beautiful vaulted underground canal junction, Hurst Cavern - the last of the mines to be closed, Little Tess - once part of the larger Dark Cavern, this is the remaining smaller cavern following a major roof fall which sealed the site, Shirts Mill Basin - an unloading area for mined limestone, The Well - a lovely site viewed from the surface, looking down into the canal system. A thin bed of limestone was worked here, which may have caused a collapse within the tunnels.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust operate the heritage visitor centre called 'The Portal', hosting Geopark interpretation. They offer a range of canal boat trips and events all-year round. They also provide educational sessions including geology and local history. There is a restaurant and toilet facilities.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the site, boat trips, events and walks contact Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust + 44 (0) 121 557 6265 or visit [www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk](http://www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk)





# BROWNHILLS & WALSALL WOOD MINING HERITAGE MONUMENTS (Geosite 11)

7 Lichfield Rd, Brownhills, Walsall WS8 6HR (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SK 044 056)

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Here you will find The Brownhills Colossus, one of many pieces of Black Country mining themed public art. It is a particularly impressive monument, created to celebrate and commemorate the rich deep underground coal mining of the Brownhills community. The area around Brownhills was the subject of deep coal mining for generations.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

The Colossus figure stands 12m high, is stainless steel and is one of the largest figurative sculptures in the United Kingdom. Truly iconic, this sculpture was designed by artist and sculptor John McKenna, who drew upon extensive consultation with the local community of Brownhills when developing the art and held workshops to establish a general theme for the artwork. It was installed in May 2006.

A number of metal sculptures were commissioned by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council, which went on to form the sculpture trail. These were designed and built by Black Country artist Luke Perry and his team at Industrial Heritage Stronghold Ltd.

The main monument, standing 20m high was designed to reflect the landmark of the pithead to Walsall Wood Colliery. It shows the typical pithead construction at the colliery used to lower and raise the mine cages in the main pit shaft. It is the largest monument of this type in the world. Linked with the adjacent mining sculpture at Brownhills, this forms part of a substantial mining geo-art trail across the Black Country that celebrates this

most important aspect of the geo-heritage of the Geopark.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are plenty of local facilities in and around the town to provide hospitality and refreshments for your visit.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For general Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark Project information visit

<https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg>



# BUMBLE HOLE & WARRENS HALL LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (Geosite 12)

Windmill End, Dudley DY2 9HS (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 953 880)

Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall Local Nature Reserve is a classic coal mining landscape of the Black Country and a very important industrial canal junction that remains a vital inland waterways link to areas beyond the Black Country for tourism and commerce.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This Geosite is a lovely large canal-side parkland occupying a large reclaimed area of former industries, including old mines and clay pits, old factories and boatyards, the junction of canals and railways and even the longest canal tunnel in the Black Country.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

This was one of the hubs of industrial activity from the 1800's onward and the site is 50 hectares, including two Local Nature Reserves. Atop its pit-mounds, it offers superb views across the south of the Geopark and beyond, to the Clent, Abberley and Worcestershire's Malvern Hills. It is on the southern face of the Rowley Hills and straddles the border between the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell.

The chimney of Windmill End No 3 Colliery (Cobb's Engine House/Windmill End Pumping Station) is testament to the site's industrial past, along with the Netherton Canal Tunnel. The chimney is a Scheduled

Ancient Monument and a Grade II listed building built around 1831, which originally housed a James Watt beam engine and drained a series of mine workings extending 525 feet (approximately 200m) below the current surface. It ceased work in 1928 and the Newcomen type engine moved to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan in 1930. The adjacent Netherton Canal Tunnel was the last canal tunnel to be built in Britain during the great canal building age from 1750 - 1860. The ceremonial 'first sod' of the earthwork was turned by Lord Ward the Earl of Dudley on 31 December 1855 and the canal opened on 20 August 1858.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

It is a large public access urban nature reserve, free to access all day, every day with some car parking. The visitor centre opens infrequently. The Geosite is home to the Black Country Boating Festival each September. Parking is available at the Bumble Hole Visitor Centre.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information call **+044 (0)1384 814100** (Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm) or visit **[www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/bumble-hole-and-warrens-hall-local-nature-res](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/bumble-hole-and-warrens-hall-local-nature-res)**



## GALTON VALLEY (Geosite 13)

Brasshouse Lane, Smethwick B66 2AD (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SP 019 889)

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The Geosite is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and as such, is regionally important. It is a large, man-made valley cut into thick Quaternary, Anglian age glaciofluvial sands and glacial channel fills. This was a major canal and railway transportation corridor during the industrialisation of the region. This long thin Geosite traces a very historic part of the Black Country canals story.

### ABOUT THE GEOSITE

The valley hosts some of the most important industrial heritage sites of Britain, including Galton Bridge built by Thomas Telford in 1829. The bridge, which carries Roebuck Lane, spans the Birmingham Canal Navigations New Main Line. When it was constructed, its single span of 151 feet (46 metres) was the highest in the world. Chance's Glass Works is a cluster of listed buildings and adjacent canal bridges which sit within the made valley. They were innovative manufacturers producing the majority of the UK's scientific glass, the majority of glass for the world's lighthouses, as well as the glass in London's iconic Crystal Palace.

Further eastwards along the canal, Thomas Telford built The Engine Arm Aqueduct in

1825 to carry a water feeder from Edgbaston Reservoir over the Birmingham Canal Navigation New Main Line Canal to the adjacent and parallel Old Main Line. This is a beautiful Scheduled Ancient Monument with a 52 foot (16m) span structure, consisting of a cast-iron trough supported by a single arch with five ribs in a cathedral-like form. Galton Valley has a visitor centre in the old Victorian canal pumping engine house (a Scheduled Monument) and some on-site interpretation. It has extensive footpaths along the two canals and two rail stations providing ease of access.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Galton Valley has a visitor centre in the old Victorian canal pumping engine house (a Scheduled Monument) which is open periodically (for details see the website) and some on-site interpretation. There is no dedicated cafe or toilets at the site, so plan your visit with this in mind.

Parking is on Brasshouse Lane or on the public carpark just off Brasshouse Lane.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk) and search Galton Valley Pumping Station.



# SANDWELL VALLEY COUNTRY PARK (Geosite 14)

7 St John's Close, West Bromwich B70 6TH (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SP 018913)

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Sandwell Valley Country Park occupies about six square kilometres of the broad valley of the River Tame immediately to the east of West Bromwich town centre (a 10 minute walk approximately). This is a large site containing an RSPB Reserve, two working historic farms (one a restored Victorian farm, the other dealing with rare breeds), museum displays, the remains of an old monastery and well, a number of important mining features, playing areas and open grassland with many footpaths, cycle trails, bridleways and a lake.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

The majority of the park is gentle rolling green landscape created by the erosion of soft sedimentary rocks over millions of years of geological time. The landscape is now covered by thin deposits of sand, gravels and patches of boulder clay from glaciers as they moved across and then melted back from this area during the last 2.6 million years. Beneath this covering of softer superficial deposits, the bedrock is Upper Carboniferous Period in age (approximately 300 million year old). This is mainly red sandstones and marls of the Alverley and Enville Members of the Salop Formation. The site is particularly important because of the landscape these rocks form, capturing the River Tame, creating low lying wetlands reserve and formerly hosting one of the most important coal mining sites of the entire region.

It was at this site in 1867 that Henry Johnson, a young geologist, challenged beliefs about the extent of the Black Country Coalfield to the east. Using practical predictive geology he argued the surface coal, ironstone and fireclays exposed to the west, which disappeared against the eastern boundary fault of the coalfield, must have been downthrown by 400m by this great fault and that a deep sinking would find them deeper below the surface and extending far to the east. His work established the Sandwell Park, Hampstead and Jubilee Collieries and extended the working life of the Black Country coalfield by 90 years. This is one of the greatest feats of predictive geology of the industrial age. The Hampstead mine was the site of a great disaster and a mining monument commemorates this in the estate to the northeast.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

It is a large public access urban green space with visitor centres in two locations that offer a range of hospitality. These offer a range of activities and events each year.

Parking is available at car parks at Lodge Hill Road, Swan Pool, Forge Mill Farm & Lake. See website for parking charges.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information e-mail [sandwellvalley@rspb.org.uk](mailto:sandwellvalley@rspb.org.uk)  
call +044 (0) 121 357 7595 or go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk/sandwellvalley](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/sandwellvalley)





## WEST PARK, WOLVERHAMPTON (Geosite 15)

Park Road West, Wolverhampton WV1 4PH (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 906 991)

This Geosite is a formal park covering 17 hectares (roughly 43 acres) in area, including its lake and provides a beautifully landscaped green space within a ten-minute walk of Wolverhampton City Centre. The park is considered one of the best, unspoilt examples of a Victorian park left in England and is Wolverhampton's premier open space.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This is a fabulous parkland, bursting with colour in spring, summer and autumn. It has large areas to explore and is a great place to play sports or just relax and enjoy the sunshine on a summer day. It has sporting facilities and toilets.

### ABOUT THE GEOSITE

Prior to becoming a park, it was known as Broad Meadows and from 1825 was the town's racecourse. In 1879, the council leased the land for 63 years and designs were invited for laying out the interior for a proposed public park, with a design by R.H. Veragans selected. On 6 June 1881, there was an official opening ceremony. Work continued in the following years as items were changed or added. In 1940, the council purchased the park and is now sole owner.

This Geosite is particularly important for its range of well-displayed and easy access glacial erratics (ice age boulders) thoughtfully placed around its many footpaths and recreational areas. A number of these erratics have interpretation associated with them explaining they travelled here on ice sheets from Wales and Scotland thousands of years ago. The flat landscape that the park is part of reflects the underlying soft boulder-clays below

forming a smooth plane. These overlie softer red sandstones some 250 million years old and belong to the Permian and Triassic Period's. These red sandstone rocks are all around the Black Country Coalfield whose edge is about 1km to the west just on the other side of the city centre.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

This Geosite has toilet facilities and enjoys a full range of the city centre's amenities just a few minutes' walk away. The park has many places to shelter should the weather turn inclement. As an outdoor site, plan your visit according to weather and daylight hours.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about West Park visit [www.wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk) and search for West Park.



# WALSALL ARBORETUM (Geosite 16)

Arboretum Road, Walsall WS1 2QH (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SP 019 990)

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

It is a great place to take a leisurely walk and enjoy the Arboretum planting and the lakes. There is also a network of footpaths, including a nature trail and long distance path linking this site with Geosite 28 (Hay Head) and the Dingle Local Nature Reserve. The site also contains a feature glacial boulder with interpretation adjacent to the main lake. Facilities have undergone a major redevelopment project and now include a visitor centre, café and toilet facilities. There is an annual programme of events at the Arboretum.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

This Geosite was formerly the site of limestone mines active between 1770 and about 1835, ending when groundwater inflows made the mining uneconomic and the lakes formed as the groundwater levels equalised. This is a beautiful landscaped parkland on the site of former limestone mines and quarries on the edge of the town.



The mines on the site extracted pure limestone for iron making and the production of white limewash, known locally as Stucco. This is Much Wenlock Limestone Formation strata, belonging to the 'Silurian' and date to about 428 million years ago.

By 1874, after the limestone mining had finished, the area was deliberately reclaimed and turned into an Arboretum. The Arboretum was officially opened on 4 May 1874 by Lady Hatherton and consisted of two lakes, two lodges, a boathouse, bandstand, several summerhouses, a tree lined promenade, space for dancing, a flagpole, croquet lawns and a cricket ground. Many alterations and additions have been made since.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

This is a large public park with sporting and leisure facilities. The visitor centre on site offers a range of hospitality, food and drinks, toilet facilities and meeting rooms. The site also has a number of outdoor facilities that host events during the year. The Arboretum is just a short walk from Walsall Town Centre where a full range of facilities exists. There is a nearby carpark.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further information about opening times, special events and site facilities visit <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/arboretum> or contact the Arboretum Park Manager, Louise Worton, at [louise.worton@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:louise.worton@walsall.gov.uk)

# CASTLE HILL AND ZOO (Geosite 17)

30 Castle Hill, Dudley DY1 4SQ (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 948 906)

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Centuries of limestone mining created a hill cratered at the surface and threaded beneath the surface with a network of mine galleries and tunnels. The hill has hosted two castles, many industries and has been the site of great scientific exploration that created the world's first geological map in 1665.

Nowadays, this landscape is home to Dudley Zoological Gardens, a Living History Museum and beautiful urban woodlands. There is also a large wooded section of the hill crossed by many quiet woodland paths that can be freely explored. The hill is adjacent to the town of Dudley and the adjacent Castlegate (a business and leisure park), where a large range of hospitality and visitor facilities is present. Fossil collecting is permitted from the loose scree continually building up at the foot of the rock faces, but is not permitted from rock faces themselves, or within the Zoological Gardens.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

In terms of its geology, the hill is a huge upwarp or arch in the strata of the area with a great crack (geological fault running along its central plane). Geologists refer to this as 'faulted anticline'. The rocks are of two ages on the hill. The oldest belong to the Silurian Period and date to about 428 to 425 million years ago. These are limestone strata and muddy limey siltstones, grouped into specific types, given names after places where they were first described. These are the Elton Formation, Much Wenlock Limestone Formation (MWLF) and Coalbrookdale Formation. They formed in a shallow tropical sea that covered the area at the time. The limestones of Castle Hill are very special to science. The hill is the 'type location' for many Silurian Fossil species and is significant in ongoing international research projects for microfossils.

Great Earth movements lifted up the hill and it became land. Rivers then flowed across the area and laid down layers of sand and

mud allowing great steamy swamp forests to spread across the Black Country. When these forests died and were buried by more layers, they turned into coal seams. The coal gives this geological time-period the name 'The Carboniferous Period' and these rock strata on Castle Hill date to about 310 million years ago. The strata with coal seams sit on top of the limestones. They rest at a different angle on what was an eroded landscape of the older limestones, called an 'Unconformity'.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There is a large pay and display car park accessible from Tipton Road. There are plenty of food and drink options as well as toilet facilities. The nature of the historic site means that in parts the paths are steep and in some areas there are steps.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit [www.dudleyzoo.org.uk](http://www.dudleyzoo.org.uk) or for more information about Castle Hill Woodlands contact Dudley Countryside Services. Telephone **01384 816991**.



## RED HOUSE GLASS CONE (Geosite 19)

High Street, Wordsley, Stourbridge DY8 4AZ (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 894 864)

Reaching 100ft into the sky, this glass heritage visitor attraction is an impressive site on the Stourbridge landscape and an integral part of the historic Stourbridge Glass Quarter. Internationally renowned for its glassmaking heritage going back over 400 years, the 'Crystal Mile' celebrates the Black Country's industrial heritage.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Family friendly events, including trails and activities, take place throughout the year. There are free glassmaking demonstrations at weekends and scheduled demonstrations during school holidays. The gift shop and artisan craft studios offer a range of locally produced glassware and handcrafted items that would make a special gift.



### ABOUT THE GEOSITE

Built at the end of the 18th century by Richard Bradley, the Red House Glass Cone, Grade II\* listed, reaching over 100ft high was used for the manufacture of glass until 1936 and is now one of only four complete cones left in the United Kingdom.

The underlying geology, where particular fine fire clays occur in abundance at the southern tip of the coalfield, dictated the location of this industry within the Stourbridge area. The transportation of fragile products such as window glass, on rough tracks by packhorses was not ideal and in 1779 saw the completion of the building of the Stourbridge Canal to ensure safe passage. Over the next 150 years saw the development of 50 glassworks, including a chain of 16 glasshouses along the main Stourbridge to Kingswinford road - this today is referred to as the Crystal Mile.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Open Monday to Friday 10am to 3pm and Saturday & Sunday 11am to 4pm. Admission is free.

There is a small free car park and on-street parking nearby.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.dudley.gov.uk/things-to-do/museums/red-house-glass-cone/](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/things-to-do/museums/red-house-glass-cone/)  
[www.glassquarter.org.uk](http://www.glassquarter.org.uk)



## Planning your visit

The Black Country is a fascinating urban area to the west of the city of Birmingham at the heart of the UK. It has a large population and a temperate climate, where temperature and daylight hours vary considerably over the year. The Black Country is very well served with hotels and hospitality to suit every taste and pocket and is just a few kilometres from the UK's second city of Birmingham where significant additional accommodation and hospitality can be found. There is a huge offer of places to see, events, music, sports and heritage on offer that is continually being updated, so be sure to check out the listings on the websites listed in this guidebook. The sections below contain some information and links that we hope will help you to plan your stay with us.

## Tips for travelling

The Black Country is just 45 minutes from Birmingham International Airport and an hour from Manchester and East Midlands airports. It has many rail stations connected to national rail networks and local light rail/tram services. For road users there is an extensive road network and a comprehensive set of bus routes. Two national cycle routes cross the area and there are many walking routes and bridleways weaving around the landscape. A unique aspect of the transport networks are the historic canals. More than 130km of canals thread throughout the Black Country connecting communities and heritage features via a web of blue waterways. So there are many transport options for the traveller.

As this is an historic manufacturing area it has a large population. Like every other large town or city, there are busy periods on the roads and public transport related to school and business hours, the so-called 'rush hour'. In this area, the transport systems are busy between 7.30am to 9.30am and again from 3.30pm until about 6.30pm, so if you are travelling at these parts of the day allow extra time for your journeys.

## Travelling to the West Midlands

For bus, train and metro times ring Traveline on **0871 200 22 33** or visit <https://nxbus.co.uk/> or [www.networkwestmidlands.com](http://www.networkwestmidlands.com)

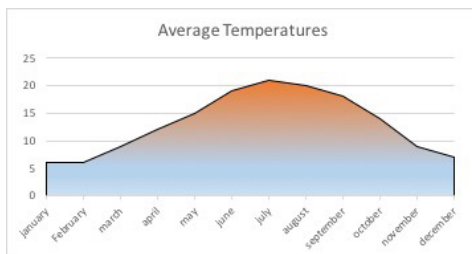
For information on selected train services and fares call National Rail on **03457 48 49 50** or visit [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)

## UK holidays

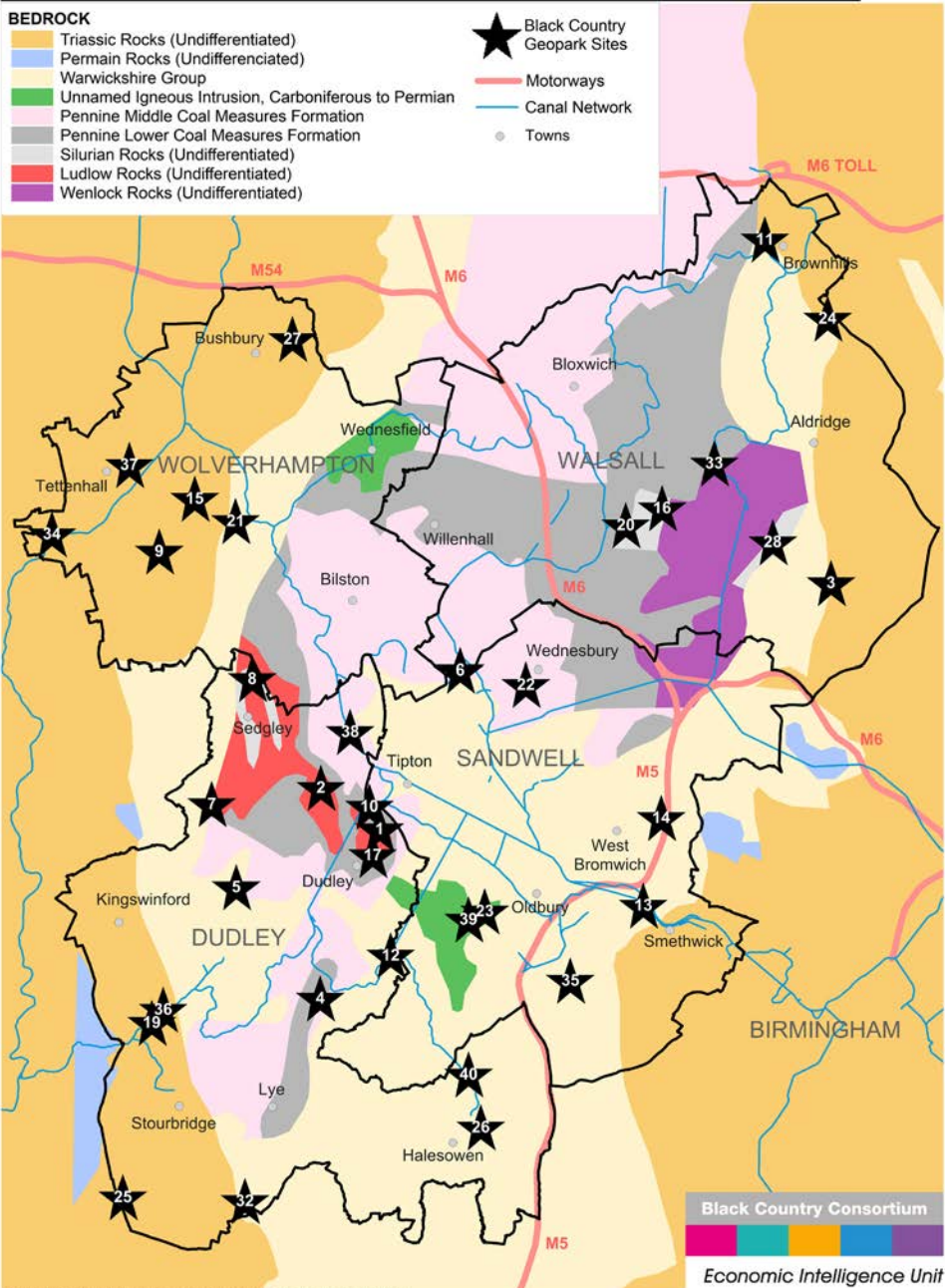
In the UK, a lot of heritage activity happens when the schools and colleges are on their breaks and holidays. In the Black Country this corresponds to two weeks around Easter in March/April, a summer break between late July and the start of September and two weeks around Christmas time. There are shorter, single week breaks at February half-term and October half-term too. At these times heritage attractions and outdoor areas are at their busiest, but the travelling around is easier, particularly during the traditional rush hour.

## The weather - temperatures during the year

As a result of the global position of the Black Country (52.4 to 52.6°N of the equator) the area changes significantly with the seasons. The weather can therefore be quite varied. The warmest weather occurs between April to early October when temperatures typically range between 10 - 30°C. In recent years there have been short periods of unusually hot weather in May and July where temperatures have reached 36 to 37°C. In contrast, winter temperatures typically range between -5 and 5°C.



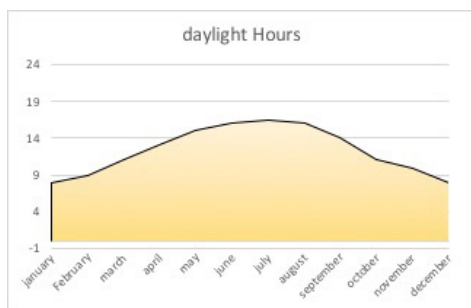
BLACK COUNTRY GEOPARK SITES WITH BEDROCK GEOLOGY



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## The weather - number of hours of daylight during the year

The hours of daylight vary considerably throughout the seasons here. This can make a big difference to the activities on offer at different times of the year and also tends to follow the temperature trends(outdoor festivals are usually held between May and September) to capitalise on these conditions. So if you like to spend your time outdoors then a visit during the summer months.

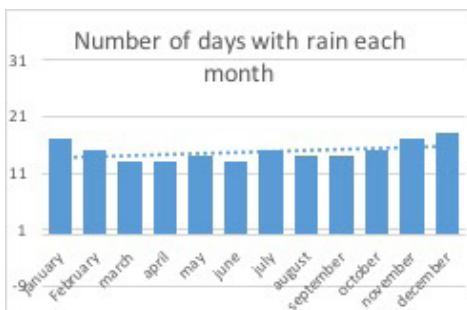
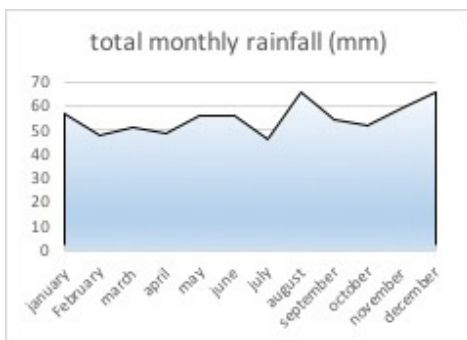


The temperature, daylight hours and temperate climate means that the Spring, Summer and Autumn months are also the best times to see the wide range of wildlife and the urban landscape is clothed with wildflowers. So if you are a nature lover, then these might be the best times for you to visit.

## The weather - snow and rain

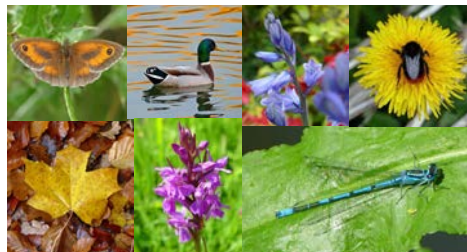
The Black Country has very little snowfall, but just like much of the UK, has regular rainfall. In fact statistics reveal that the UK is remarkably consistent in the number of days in the month in which it may rain or snow across all of the seasons. One of the great advantages of the Black Country is that its attractions are supported all year round by local people and educational groups so they do not suffer seasons-dependant closure as is the case in some areas. There are so many all-year round indoor attractions and activities in the area and a

wide range of bars, cafes and restaurants where you can find plenty of things to do and plenty of hospitality irrespective of the weather conditions, so the normal weather should seldom affect your plans.



## Biodiversity in the Black Country

The highly variable geology creates a wonderful variety of habitats for urban wildlife many of which are superb nature reserves for geology and wildlife.



## GEOSITES

- Geosite 1** ■ Dudley Museum at the Archives (Geopark headquarters)
- Geosite 2** ■ Wren's Nest NNR
- Geosite 3** ■ Barr Beacon LNR
- Geosite 4** ■ Saltwells LNR
- Geosite 5** ■ Barrow Hill LNR
- Geosite 6** ■ Moorcroft Wood LNR
- Geosite 7** ■ Cotwall End LNR
- Geosite 8** ■ Sedgley Beacon
- Geosite 9** ■ Bantock House Museum
- Geosite 10** ■ Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust
- Geosite 11** ■ Brownhills Miner Monument
- Geosite 12** ■ Bumble Hole & Warrens Hall LNR
- Geosite 13** ■ Galton Valley & Bridge
- Geosite 14** ■ Sandwell Valley Country Park
- Geosite 15** ■ Wolverhampton West Park
- Geosite 16** ■ Walsall Arboretum
- Geosite 17** ■ Dudley Zoo & Castle
- Geosite 19** ■ Red House Glass Cone
- Geosite 20** ■ Walsall Art Gallery
- Geosite 21** ■ Wolverhampton Art Gallery
- Geosite 22** ■ Wednesbury Museum
- Geosite 23** ■ Blue Rock Quarry
- Geosite 24** ■ Shire Oak Quarry
- Geosite 25** ■ Norton Covert
- Geosite 26** ■ Leasowes Park
- Geosite 27** ■ Northcote Farm
- Geosite 28** ■ Hay Head Quarry
- Geosite 32** ■ Wychbury Hill
- Geosite 33** ■ Park Lime Pits Local Nature Reserve
- Geosite 34** ■ Wightwick Wedge and Smestow Valley
- Geosite 35** ■ Barnford Hill Park
- Geosite 36** ■ Buckpool and The Leys Local Nature Reserve
- Geosite 37** ■ Compton to Tettenhall Ridge
- Geosite 38** ■ Coseley Canal Cutting and Tunnel
- Geosite 39** ■ The Rowley Hills
- Geosite 40** ■ Coombswood Valley



# WALSALL GEOTRAIL, MUSEUMS & ART GALLERY (Geosite 20)

Gallery Square, Walsall WS2 8LN (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SP 010 986)

This Geosite is a classic town centre rich in building stones and imported decorative rock-types that provide a varied geotrail.

The Industrial Revolution was when Walsall saw major changes as it adapted to the introduction of manufactured goods, including leatherwork, saddles, buckles, plated wear and chains. This industrialisation created a huge influx of population.

Walsall's town centre sits immediately adjacent to Geosite 16 (Walsall Arboretum) and the town includes a Local History Centre, Walsall Leather Museum and Walsall New Art Gallery.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

These attractions enrich the stories of Walsall and provide very well presented cultural heritage attractions within the town. The town centre is an interesting place to explore that is full of amenities and easily accessed by bus, car and train. From as far back as the 13th century, Walsall has been a market town, with a weekly market introduced in 1220.

The Industrial Revolution in Walsall saw major changes as it adapted to the introduction of manufactured goods, including leatherwork, saddles, buckles, plated wear and chains. This industrialisation created a huge influx of population.

## ABOUT THE GEOSITE

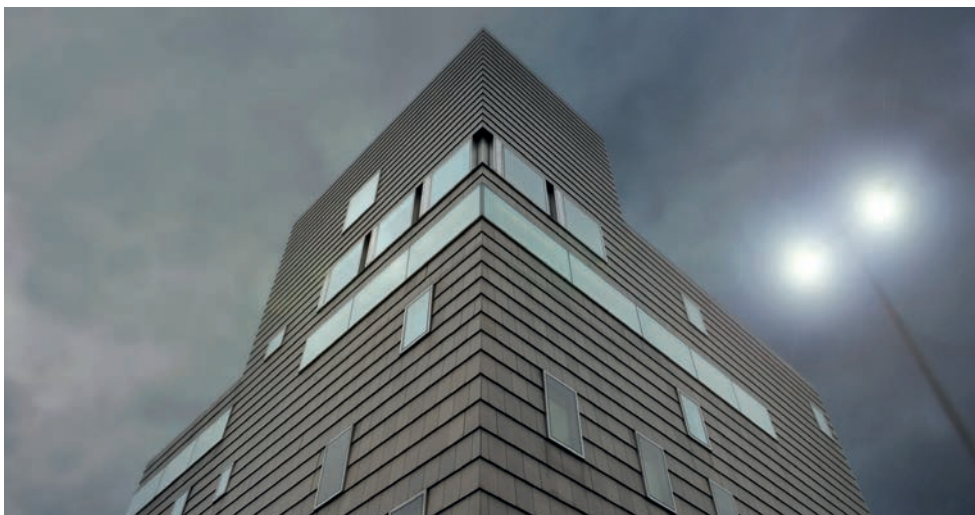
The geological make-up of the area introduced the quarrying of limestone. The soil is largely clay based. Coalmining was also important until the late 19th century, when the mines became exhausted.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Walsall Art Gallery is open Tuesday to Sunday with a café and toilets on site. Walsall Arboretum is open daily with a café and toilets on site. Walsall Leather Museum is open Tuesday to Saturday with toilet facilities on site.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk>



# WOLVERHAMPTON GEOTRAIL, MUSEUMS & ART GALLERY (Geosite 21)

St Peters Walk, Wolverhampton WV1 1DG (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference, SO 914 987)

This Geosite is a larger city centre rich urban landscape with important buildings, many architectural stones and imported decorative rock-types, which provide a rich building stones geotrail.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Varied buildings, public art and attractions like the Art Gallery provide a rich landscape story of Wolverhampton. The town centre is an interesting place to explore, full of amenities and easily accessed by bus, car and train. Geosite 21 links to Geosite 15 (West Park) by a short walk from the city centre.

## ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

Originally a market town, the city specialised in the wool trade, and as late as the 17th century, in the production of steel buckles and sword hilts. During the Industrial Revolution Wolverhampton became a major centre for coal mining, steel production, lock making and enamel work (japanned wear). The first canal to Wolverhampton opened in 1772, which helped with the development of the area during the Revolution. In 1859, the Great Western Railway opened a factory for making and repairing locomotives following the boom in the railway industry.

The city's geology is complex. The edge of the South Staffordshire coalfield runs just to the east of the city centre marked by a large geological fault called 'The Western Boundary Fault'. This brings together Triassic and Carboniferous geology - specifically Bunter and Keuper sandstone and Upper and Middle Coal Measures. Molten rocks were injected into the north west of the city area 307 million years ago. These are now represented as an area of dolerite intrusions. The Art Gallery hosts the second-largest geological collection within the Black Country (viewable by appointment).

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Wolverhampton also has a wide range of entertainment with many restaurants and bars with live music, amenities and theatre venues. Access to the city is easy via car, bus and rail services.

## OTHER NEARBY HERITAGE

Wolverhampton's city centre sits immediately adjacent to Geosite 15 (West Park).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk)



# WEDNESBURY GEOTRAIL, MUSEUMS & ART GALLERY (Geosite 22)

Holyhead Road, Wednesbury WS10 7DF (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 986 947))

This Geosite is a small town centre with important historic buildings and industrial associations. Architectural stones and imported decorative rock types provide a building stones geotrail.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The varied buildings, public art and attractions like the Art Gallery provide a rich landscape story of Wednesbury. The town centre is an interesting place to explore with a number of amenities and easily accessed by bus, car and tram. The Museum & Art Gallery is a wonderful small museum that holds the Black Country's third largest geological collection of about 7,000 objects that is viewable by appointment.

## ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

It was a market town dating back to pre-medieval times, with a plaque now displayed commemorating the fortifications at the gardens between Ethelfleda Terrace and St Bartholomew's Church. If you look closely at these gardens, you will see stones

from these fortifications incorporated into the design.

By the 18th century, coal mining became important to the area, together with nail making. These grew with the introduction of canals, followed by the railway. In 1769, the first Birmingham Canal was cut to link Wednesbury's coalfields to Birmingham's industries.

They also hold the world's largest collection of Ruskin pottery.

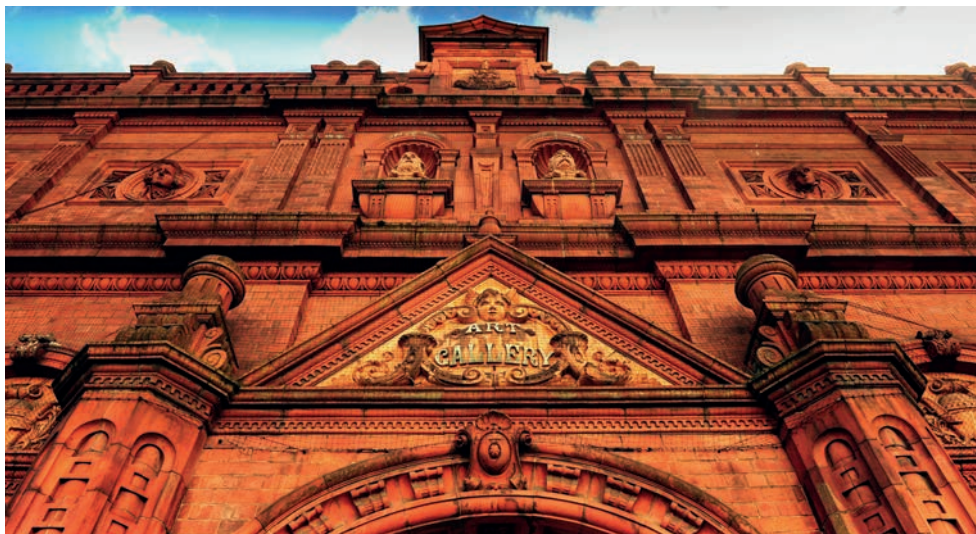
Wednesbury has an active local history society that organises a programme of talks and local heritage exhibitions.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are toilet facilities at Wednesbury Museum but no café facilities.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information go to [www.sandwell.gov.uk](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk) and search Wednesbury Museum & Art Gallery.





## BLUE ROCK QUARRY (Geosite 23)

Off St Brades Close, Oldbury B69 1HQ (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 977 891)

This Geosite is situated on the edge of long-abandoned dolerite (Rowley Rag) quarries adjacent to a large sloping grassland area, that bursts with wildflowers in the spring and summer months.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

Sitting on the northern slopes of the Rowley Hills, the site offers a viewpoint across the developed plain of the coalfield to the north and is a great place to take in the scale of the landscape, stop for a picnic, or marvel at the mighty operations of the Earth that through these hills up from hot magma from below.

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

This site comprises a 20m long derelict quarry face in the restored - Samson/Blue Rock quarries. The exposed rocks are entirely weathered igneous rocks locally known as 'Rowley Ragstone' (dolerite/microgabbro). They are about 307 million years old from the Carboniferous Period. The rock faces exhibit excellent examples of columnar jointing, nodular exfoliation and weak mineralisation.

The area is iconic and distinctive - viewable for many miles due to its height. It is important in scientific, industrial and social terms as it has a very varied geology. Around 30 quarries operated on these hills, with the last active one closing in 2008. The site has been the recent focus of community geo-conservation activities with a sculptural seating area put in place and an interpretive cairn.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

It is a large public access urban nature reserve, free to access all day, every day. Good, safe access makes this a very useful geo-educational and geo-tourism site linking to the wider landscape of the Rowley Hills. There are no toilets, visitor centre or dedicated cafe at the site, so plan your visit with this in mind.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country owns this nature reserve.

For more information call

**+44 (0) 121 523 0094** or visit

**[www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/rowley-hills](http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/rowley-hills)**





## SHIRE OAK QUARRY LNR (Geosite 24)

Off Andrews Road, Walsall Wood, Walsall WS9 9RL (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SK 056 039)

This is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, originally part of the Royal Forest of Cannock. It was enclosed into agricultural fields in the 18th century and in the 1930s, a sand and gravel quarry opened.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The Geosite is a wonderful green oasis that bursts with bird song and wildflowers from Spring to Autumn. Its quarries, woodland glades and open meadow are a great place to explore, take a picnic or watch the sights and sounds of nature through the seasons. The rock-faces are full of examples of layers of pebbles and sands that were dug out of this landscape to provide building materials for Birmingham and The Black Country.

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

The quarry closed in 1978, but the extensive exposures of Triassic Chester Formation

overlain by Quaternary glaciofluvial sands and gravels remain. It now has lowland heather, grassland, woodland and ponds as nature has taken control of this redundant land. There is limited on-site geological interpretation.

This is an important geoscience and geo-educational site for the Geopark.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

The site has a car park and formal footpaths, as well as seating and play areas. There are no toilet facilities or on-site cafe. Food and drink and other local amenities can be found at short distance from the site at nearby Brownhills and Walsall Wood.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk> and search Shire Oak Quarry



# NORTON COVERT (Geosite 25)

Norton Road, Stourbridge DY8 2RT (Landranger Ordnance Survey Sheet 139, grid reference SO 887 822)

This Geosite is an abandoned sand and gravel pit worked for building sand and aggregate during the 19th century. It has naturally re-vegetated and is important to the story of the Black Country, as it is the only site providing exposures of Quaternary, Devensian stratified outwash sands and gravels in the South Western area of the proposed Geopark.

The Geosite is a wonderful green oasis that bursts with bird song and wildflowers from Spring to Autumn. Its quarries and woodland glades are a great place to explore and watch the sights and sounds of nature through the seasons. The rock-faces are full of examples of layers of pebbles and sands that were dug out of this landscape to provide building materials for the southern part of the Black Country.

## ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

The geology was originally scorching deserts and icy wastes and there are two distinct rock formations present. The underlying bed

rock (country rock) is red-orange, fine to medium grained sandstone with occasional thin mudstone bands belonging to the Wildmoor Sandstone Formation (formerly known as Upper Mottled Sandstone), deposited in the scorching deserts of the Triassic age (circa 220 million years ago). The sand grains are mainly white quartz coloured red by a thin veneer of iron oxide.

Lying on top of the Wildmoor Formation there is a superficial capping of soft sands and gravels deposited in the ice age, about 20,000 - 25,000 years ago. Small, but important exposures of the ice age sands and gravel remain and are viewable in the southern tip of the rim of the Covert.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are no toilet facilities available at this site. Roadside car parking is available nearby. Refreshment facilities are available in nearby Stourbridge Town Centre.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/sites-to-see/norton-covert/>



## LEASOWES PARK, HALESOWEN (Geosite 26)

Leasowes Lane, Halesowen B62 8DH (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 975 840)

Nestled to the east of Halesowen, the enchanting landscape of The Leasowes holds great historical significance and is home to many wonderful species living in its woodland, grassland, streams and lakes. Designed and created by poet William Shenstone between 1743 and 1763, the historic park ranked highly with the likes of prestigious landscapes including Blenheim and Stow. It is Grade 1 listed on the English Heritage register of parks and gardens of special historic interest in England, and a newly declared SSSI and NNR (Special Site of Scientific Importance and National Nature Reserve).

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The Geosite is a wonderful green oasis that bursts with bird song and wildflowers from Spring to Autumn. Its quarries and woodland glades are a great place to explore and watch the sights and sounds of nature through the seasons. The Citrine Waxcap, a list of species at threat of extinction has been recorded at The Leasowes. Pink, golden and Parrot Waxcaps are amongst the other species spotted at the Geosite.

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

During its lifespan, the fortunes of the site have waxed and waned, but its most treasured hidden gem, Virgil's Grove and other aspects of the site returned to their former glory when £1.3 million of Heritage Lottery Funding brought the site back to life. The distinct features added by Shenstone

developed into a themed walk, which visitors to the site can still enjoy today. Although famous during Shenstone's life, The Leasowes reputation increased after his death, due largely to the publication of 'A Description of The Leasowes' by Robert Dodsley in 1765. This described the circuit path, which led visitors through the varied landscape, allowing visitors to tour The Leasowes. Visitors to the site have included Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and John Wesley.

In the years since, fortunes have increased and declined. The house was rebuilt in 1778 and several other buildings including the Ruined Priory, survived until the 1960s. Sections of the circuit walk remain, but many of Shenstone's original trees have gone. The most dramatic change to the landscape, however, was the construction of the Dudley No.2 canal. When opened in 1779, it had reduced the extent of Priory Pool and blocked views across Halesowen.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are no toilet facilities available on site, or refreshment facilities. The Wardens Office is open Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm by contacting **01384 814642**.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**[www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/leasowes-park](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/leasowes-park)**





# NORTHYCOTE FARM WOLVERHAMPTON (Geosite 27)

Underhill Lane, Wolverhampton WV10 7JG (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SJ 929 032)

Northycote Farm is on the site of a former 400-year-old Tudor farmhouse deeply covered in history. It offers lovely woodland walks where you can view a wide variety of wildlife in natural habitats, 10 minutes from the centre of Wolverhampton.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

You can visit the working farm where you can interact with farmyard animals including pigs, sheep and fowl. The surrounding 90 acres of mature woodland, fields, Berry Brook and untouched meadowland can be explored throughout the changing seasons. There are special events held throughout the year.

## ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

This Geosite is located a little to the north west of the western edge of the Black Country coalfield. Beneath its surface red sandy and pebbly rocks belonging to the Permian Period, in particular the Chester Formation of about 250 million years ago when rivers flowed across a scorching hot desert landscape. Today the rolling farmland is the result of millions of years of weathering and erosion, the last phase of which ended

about 15,000 years ago when the last of the great ice sheets melted away from the area. The large rounded blocks of stone around the farmhouse are glacial boulders carried here from the mountains of Wales and Scotland by ice sheets that flowed out from there during the last phases of the ice age. These were deposited here when those ice sheets melted as the climate warmed.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

The site is free entry and open daily, with the exception of Christmas Day. Most visitors park on the car park on Underhill Lane, which is open daily from 8am to 5pm. Be aware that the farmhouse is not always open for viewing. The estate is quite large. There is currently a cafe in the main farmhouse offering a range of food and drink. Picnicking around the countryside areas of the site is popular in the summer months. Toilets are in the farmhouse courtyard.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information go to **[www.wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk)** and search Northycote Farm.





## HAY HEAD QUARRY (Geosite 28)

Off Sutton Road, Walsall WS9 0QG (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SP 051 990)

This secret woodland walk follows the site of historic limestone excavations through a green dingle and gently rolling farmland. This part of Walsall was intensively mined for limestone in the late 18th century.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This is a great site to explore Walsall's green heritage. A walk into the wooded area from Sutton Road will be greeted with birdsong and colourful wildflowers throughout the seasons, fossils can be found here in the old limestone excavations. This is a lovely place for a peaceful walk with stopping places where you can have a picnic or simply listen to the sights and sounds of nature.

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

In the dingle part of this site, the rocks are rich in lime and create an alkaline soil. Further along the walk they change to become silica rich rocks which create a more acidic soil. A walk through the Dingle Nature Reserve will therefore take you through two completely different habitats, created by two different types of soil.

The limestone mined at Hay Head Works was used both for making iron where it was a flux to lower the melting point and help to

remove impurities, but it was also used to make 'Stucco' a white mortar that could be used to dress walls of houses.

Hay Head lime works ceased to operate in the 1940's. A mineral canal arm once existed here but all that now remains are the ponds and wildlife. The rock faces are designated as nationally important and protected under UK laws. The protection covers the sites special geology as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Fossil collecting is permitted from the loose scree continually building up at the foot of the rock faces, but is not permitted from rock faces.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are no toilet facilities or visitor centre available at this site. Walking trails, education material and an interpretive leaflet are available. Roadside car parking is available nearby. A wide range of amenities and hospitality is available in nearby Walsall town centre.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information call **01922 654269** or visit **[www.wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk)** and search Hay Head Quarry.



## WYCHBURY HILL (Geosite 32)

Off A456 Birmingham Road, Hagley DY9 9JB (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 921 816)

This site illustrates the connection of geology and landform to early human settlement in the Black Country, as the summit of the hill hosts earthworks of an iron-age fortified structure (Wychbury Camp/Ring) of national significance as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The site is a viewpoint. The 84ft Wychbury Obelisk (a Grade II listed building commenced in 1747 and completed in 1758). An ancient yew grove has a footpath connecting landscapes adjacent to the Black Country.

The hill offers excellent views across the Severn Valley, including the Malvern Hills and Clee Hills. It is a rural and walking route. It is a great place for a brisk walk, a picnic and to take in the sights and sounds of nature throughout the seasons.

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

This Geosite has exposures of Permian Clent Formation in the banks of the farm track leading to the summit of this steep, rounded hill. Such exposures are very rare in the Black

Country and important to understanding how this unit varies laterally and vertically from its type locality of the Clent Hills to the south of the Black Country.

This is also a site that illustrates the connection of geology and landform to early human settlement in the Black Country. The summit of the hill hosts earthworks of an iron-age fortified structure (Wychbury Camp/Ring) of national significance as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It covers 2.93 hectares and has two sets of ramparts and ditches.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

As a rural and walking route Geosite there are no visitor facilities for this site. Roadside car parking is available around the hill. The site has no café or toilets but a wide range of amenities are available in nearby Halesowen and Stourbridge town centres.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For further information about the hill, there are a number of short walks guides available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/blackcountry/content/articles/2005/12/06/mike\\_jemmett\\_walks\\_feature.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blackcountry/content/articles/2005/12/06/mike_jemmett_walks_feature.shtml)



# PARK LIME PITS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (Geosite 33)

Off Park Lane, Walsall WS4 1LG (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SK 032 001)

This Geosite was a former limestone quarry working the Wenlock Limestone Formation strata that outcrop here. Now abandoned and flooded this is a wonderful wetland for nature.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This is a great place for a nature ramble. Where the woodlands ring with birdsong during the Spring and the Summer and a host of wildfowl can be seen on the lake all year round. Long abandoned quarries, known locally as 'the pits', now contain beautiful clear pools surrounded by mature beech woodland and species rich calcareous grassland and meadows. This is one of the places where rare and extremely diverse limestone plants can be seen.

## ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

There is speculation that the limestone from these quarries was used by the Romans during their occupation of Britain in the first to fourth centuries for paving 'Watling Street' - the main Roman road in the area, which is located a little to the north of the site. Large-scale extraction occurred much later and is associated with the Industrial Revolution. During that main period of

activity, limestone travelled from the pits by pony-pulled rail trucks and local canals to the iron foundries of the Black Country.

When quarrying ceased 150 years ago, the Victorians landscaped the old workings and the quarries became flooded to form the pools occupying the site today. The area is now an urban oasis, with peaceful walks, tranquil pools and the sounds of nature. Lime Pits Farm surrounds the site on three sides, creating a green buffer between the reserve and the urban areas beyond, giving the feeling visitors are in the countryside, surrounded by wildlife. The limestone composition of the soil had nurtured a diversity of wildflowers, with over 300 species recorded.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are no toilet or visitor facilities at this site. There are two small free car parks from which a number of woodland tracks radiate. Local amenities are available at nearby Aldridge and Walsall town centres.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk> and search Park Lime Pits.





## WIGHTWICK WEDGE & SMESTOW VALLEY (Geosite 34)

Off Wightwick Lane, Wolverhampton WV6 8EE (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 869 983)

This lovely long green space is host to a historic manor house, railways and canals from the Industrial Revolution, nature reserves, woodlands walks, cafes and visitor centres.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This is a fantastic area to explore. You can see all kinds of wildlife, witness the changing seasons learn about historic structures of the Industrial Revolution, visit a historic manor house and gardens, take long walks and bike rides or simply have a cup of tea and a cake at Cupcake Lane (a beautifully restored former railway station café).

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

All of the activities and attractions of this Geosite are held within a narrow valley. The valley was created by flowing glacial meltwater when the last ice sheet melted away 15,000 years ago. In old quarries the exposed geology in the valley includes a

series of narrow, twisting, ribbon-like sand and gravel areas cut into the upper part of the exposed bedrock, (Triassic Wildmoor Sandstone Member). These are enigmatic channel features infilled with sediments relating this melting ice sheet. Such features are unique in the Black Country and make this an important geoscience site.

Wightwick Manor has a particularly good display of glacial boulders in the gardens of this National Trust property.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are no toilet or visitor facilities at this site. Along this Geosite, there are a number of small car parks and access points where you can join the footpaths and old canal/ railway tracks. Refreshments and toilets are available at Cupcake Lane café, the nature centre and nearby Compton town centre.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.wolverhamptonparks.co.uk](http://www.wolverhamptonparks.co.uk)





## BARNFORD HILL PARK (Geosite 35)

Off Moat Road, Oldbury B68 8RA (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 997 874)

This is the famous ‘Pudding Rock’ of Langley which is a large rounded mound of conglomerate (hard, pebble beds). This towering mound in the centre of what is now a formal park is all that remains after the quarrying activities had ceased and workings were restored to form this public parkland.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This is a small curiosity of the natural and quarrying heritage of the Black Country. It is a short walk and a few minutes of intriguing exploration. Just a small hidden gem, lurking within the urban landscape but well worth a visit for a few minutes.

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

The exposure stands in the centre of what is now a well-managed recreational park with a range of sporting facilities and children’s play areas. This history of the park notes it was given “for the use of the public forever” in 1915 by Mr W A Albright of Messrs Albright

and Wilson, a major Black Country Chemicals manufacturer and innovator.

The exposure shows the characteristic very coarse, grained nature and distinctive included clasts, characteristic of this geological unit. Its elevated position provides good views across the Black Country landscape to both the north and west. The site is a very well managed geo-tourism and geo-educational asset. It has a pavilion and good accessible footpaths and there is an interpretive sign for the geology of Pudding Rock.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There is a community friends group associated with this site, but no on-site or printed geological interpretation is available. There are no toilet or visitor facilities at this site.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.sandwell.gov.uk](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk) and search Barnford Park.



# BUCKPOOL & THE LEYS LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (Geosite 36)

Off Brierley Hill Road, Brierley Hill DY5 3TN (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 901 870)

This is an easily overlooked nature reserve that hides a host of heritage features and is a good place to witness the changing seasons. It is a good place for a short walk and links to the canal network where other heritage features can be explored. Willows, marshland and fragments of ancient woodland support diverse wildlife in Buckpool Dingle, which is a good place to see Kingfishers.

## ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

The area was once part of the medieval hunting ground of Pensnett Chase, but gradually turned into industrial use, which included coal mining, clay extraction and brickworks. The collieries and clay pits closed in the early 20th century but the brickworks and railway only closed in the 1960s. Collieries were operating at the Dell, on the Leys and the Wallows and around Grove and Middle Pools. The Pensnett Railway ran between Middle and Fens Pools, bringing coal from the Earl of Dudley's Baggeridge pits to the Round Oak Iron and Steel Works, whose blast furnaces lit up the night sky for miles around. The Stourbridge Canal Company constructed the pools, consisting of Grove Pool, Middle Pool and Fens Pool, as reservoirs. The Stourbridge Canal links Buckpool Dingle and the Fens Pools. The Stourbridge Canal opened in 1779 and the reservoirs fed into a navigable branch, joining the canal's main line at Leys Junction, close to the top of the 'Stourbridge

Flight' - a series of 16 locks through which the level of the canal falls by 145 feet.

This Geosite is a classic geological location of the Black Country and has been featured in books and education for more than a century. The small rock exposures show how rocks have been uplifted and tilted by large earth movements associated with a major geological fault. (Western Boundary Fault of the Black Country coalfield). The area is very significant in terms of historical geology being associated with the work of J. Beete Jukes, an early director of the British Geological Survey. It has good exposures of a number of strata and strong associations with the canals and the internationally important glass making industry of the Stourbridge Glass Quarter known as the 'Crystal Mile'.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There is a wardens base at The Dell Stadium, half way between Fens Pools in the north and Buckpool in the south. It has limited car parking and no on-site toilet facilities or refreshments. The Dell Stadium has toilet facilities and local pubs and cafes offer a range of refreshments.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/buckpool-fens-pools-and-barrow-hill-nature-reserves](http://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/environment/countryside/nature-reserves/buckpool-fens-pools-and-barrow-hill-nature-reserves)



## COMPTON TO TETTENHALL RIDGE (Geosite 37)

The Holloway, Compton, WV6 8LH (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 880 989)

A walk along this Geosite traces the geology of a long escarpment on the south-western edge of Wolverhampton. It is a place to witness how the geology imparts local distinctiveness to the landscapes and building materials of the Compton and Tettenhall area.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This is one for the geologist and geomorphologists. It is a landscape to be explored on foot where the effects of sandstone geology, ice-age meltwater sculpting of the landscape and man's extraction of sandstone create a unique storyline. All over this valley and ridge are scattered exotic rock-types dropped here by ice sheets. This is a great place to find glacial erratics in the most surprising places of churchyards, playgrounds and people's back gardens.

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

This Geosite is an elongate valley and ridge where roadside quarries (on private land), an

historic church site and small cave-like excavations in the sandstones at the rear of the church have been used by local residents for storage and give good exposures of the rock types and textures of the bedrock here. The churchyard and church contain interesting and diverse gravestones as well as scattered boulders.

There is a geological leaflet available explaining the geology of this area.

The site is close to other Geosites in the immediate area and their features (Geosites 15 and 34 in particular).

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Compton Village at the south end of this Geosite has a very good range of hospitality but no specific visitor centre or public toilets are currently present within the Geosite.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.tettenhall.co.uk](http://www.tettenhall.co.uk)





## COSELEY CANAL CUTTING (Geosite 38)

Off School Street, Roseville, WV14 9DS (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 942 937)

The Birmingham to Wolverhampton Canal was cut between 1769 and 1772 by the engineer James Brindley, designed to follow the land's natural contours. When they came upon the ridge at Coseley, they only had three options: go over, go round or go through. This short canal tunnel is a wonderful example of the pioneering spirit of the Black Country industrialists in the hey-day of the Industrial Revolution.

### WHAT TO SEE AND DO

This is a great site to witness some of the incredible canal engineering of the Black Country and forms one of the highlights of a long distance walk along the canals here. This is a quick stop, look and learn Geosite of the Geopark.

### ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

It is located within a high-sided rock cutting where the adjacent canal is cut into the landscape such that at its base, the canal

enters a short canal tunnel. The rock sequence exposed is of pale coloured sandstones, mudstones, and ironstones. Its position on the well-used inland waterway of the canal makes it easily visited and viewed.

This Geosite site exposes a rare section of the softer sedimentary succession of the Carboniferous Pennine Middle Coal Measures Strata.

### PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are no toilet or visitor facilities at this site. However, immediately next to the Geosite is the small town centre of Roseville where limited car parking and hospitality is available.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information visit [www.wolverhampton.gov.uk](http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk) and search for Coseley Canal Cutting.





# THE ROWLEY HILLS (Geosite 39)

Darby's Hill Road, Tividale, B69 1SF (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SP 010 986)

The Rowley Hills stand proud above the gentle plain of the Black Country coalfield. These hills are formed of very hard rock (dolerite) which has been quarried from the ground for centuries creating a patchwork of open and reclaimed quarry workings. Together, these green spaces make one of the larger Geosites of the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark Project.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The highest point of the Black Country is adjacent to the radio mast on Darby's Hill. From here you get the best view of the landscape of the Black Country that there is. Looking to the north you can see the developed flat plain of the coalfield and the large escarpment of the limestone hills of Castle Hill, Wren's Nest Hill and Sedgley Beacon. Looking to the south in contrast, you can see the deep valleys of the southern Black Country. These hills offer a range of activities from walking and cycling to horse riding or simply sitting for a picnic and watching nature throughout the seasons.

## ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

This large hilly Geosite has many footpaths crossing its various features. The long history of dolerite quarrying is expressed in many quarries that have now become useful for such things as golf courses and landscape

green space. From the geologists point of view these hills contain the finest evidence of the more violent Earth history that created the Black Country. The largest quarry on the hill is the Hailstone Quarry - a very large and deep aggregate quarry that finally ceased its quarrying activity in 2010. Rock exposures show clearly how the dolerite (called Rowley Ragstone by local people), was injected into the coalfields some 307 million years ago and how its hot molten magma scorched the local rocks as it slowly cooled over millions of years. There are spectacular features to be seen including large columnar basalts and eroded 'giants eyes' just like those found at the Giants Causeway in Ireland.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are no toilet or visitor facilities available at this site. There are many places to join a footpath some of which have small car parks (such as Warrens Hall Local Nature Reserve) and there is widely available roadside parking closer to specific features for a more limited visit. Refreshments are available at a number of nearby local town centres.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/rowley-hills](http://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/rowley-hills)

[www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200248/parks\\_and\\_green\\_spaces/754/warrens\\_hall](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200248/parks_and_green_spaces/754/warrens_hall)



# COOMBSWOOD VALLEY (Geosite 40)

Coombswood Way, Halesowen B62 8BF (Landranger OS Sheet 139, grid reference SO 972 852)

This steep sided valley was where the first coal mining of the Black Country is recorded in documentary evidence. The valley since then has been host to one of the largest iron and steel works of the southern Black Country and contains the final stretch of the Dudley No. 2 Canal perched on the valley side.

## WHAT TO SEE AND DO

The Coombswood Valley is a rich landscape of nature and human heritage. The valley side since the abandonment of the steelworks has become a wooded nature reserve with a number of paths to explore. The canal running along the valley is a great place to see the remnants of the old steelworks which bear witness to the huge scale of the human endeavour that happened here during the Industrial Revolution. At the end of the canal section is a canal marina which has open days and is full of colourful boats. This is a great place to explore.

## ABOUT THIS GEOSITE

The Geosite is easily accessible from either side of the canal where a short walk along the canal towpath rewards the visitor with totally different aspects of this landscape. From the geologist's point of view, this valley is very significant in terms of understanding the development of the Black Country

coalfields. The area is referred to in Latin manuscripts of the Halesowen Abbey where underground coal mining was occurring as early as 1281, providing a known date for the start of underground coal mining activity in the Black Country.

Also, to the geologist it provides the best long section of Carboniferous, Etruria Formation rocks to be seen and studied in the whole of the Black Country and contains plant fossils.

There is a leaflet, which introduces the history of the valley and a footpath network in the valley associated with its canals, but no on-site interpretation is present.

## PLANNING YOUR VISIT

There are no toilet or visitor facilities at this site. There are several places to join a footpath some of which have roadside parking. Refreshments are available at a number of nearby local town centres including Halesowen and Blackheath.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Further information about Coombswood is available in two walking leaflets produced by The Coombswood Canal Trust.



Dudley Museum at the Archives is the headquarters of the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark Project and is located on the first floor of the Archives building.

It has a fantastic selection of fossils and geology displays, collections include dinosaurs, Dudley Castle finds, Dudley local heroes gallery (including a small collection of Duncan Edwards memorabilia) and local glass. Artwork from our collection includes Dudley landscapes and an 'in focus' display of Sir Frank Short.

It is a great starting point to pick up information and begin to explore the aspiring Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark.



## Disclaimer

*Every effort has been made to check the accuracy of details included in this guide.*

*Dudley Council and the Geosites featured cannot guarantee the accuracy of the details included and accept no responsibility for this. Visitors should check details with Geosites before travelling.*

*Further details available at <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/>*

To find out more about the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark Project:

Visit: <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/bcg/>

Email: [blackcountrygeopark@dudley.gov.uk](mailto:blackcountrygeopark@dudley.gov.uk)

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