



Cornwall

Cornwall Wildlife Trust

- Protects wildlife where you live
- Campaigns for wildlife and the environment
- Encourages people to enjoy wildlife
- Involves volunteers in all aspects of its work
- Gives expert wildlife advice

The Cornwall Wildlife Trust cares for over 55 nature reserves around the county. Most are open to the public at all times. You can find out more about the Trust, how to become a member and events, either on the Trust's web site, or by phoning the Trust on the number below.

Cornwall Wildlife Trust

Five Acres, Allet, Truro, TR4 9DJ.
Tel: 01872 273939 Fax: 01872 225476

East Cornwall Reserves Officer: 07866 430086
Website: www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk
Email: info@cornwt.demon.co.uk

Friends of Churchtown Farm

c/o Bob Austin
165 St Stephens Road
Saltash
Cornwall PL12 4NJ
Tel: 01752 844666
e-mail: bojack@hotmail.co.uk

How to get to Churchtown Farm Community Nature Reserve



Directions:

From Carkeel roundabout on the A38, follow Callington Road towards Saltash straight over the roundabout and then straight on at the traffic lights. Then turn right at the mini roundabout by the fire station into Church Road, following signs to St Stephen's. Follow Church Road past Saltash College and straight over the mini-roundabout.

For the entrance to reserve behind St Stephen's Church turn right at the T- junction to St Stephen's Road and park in front of Church. Follow the road around to the Cecil Arms Pub and walk left up Farm Lane past the cemetery. The entrance to the reserve is at the end of this lane.

For the Wearde Road entrance turn left at the T- junction to St Stephen's Road. Take the second turning right into Wearde Road. Continue down the road and park on the left hand side before left hand turn to Saltash Community School. Entrance to reserve on right hand side of the road.



Supported by the
Heritage Lottery Fund

Supported by the Countryside Agency through the DEFRA Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund



Churchtown Farm Community Nature Reserve Saltash



Protecting **Cornwall's** wildlife for the Future

Hay Meadows...

The vision for the meadows are wildlife oases, swarming with butterflies and exploding with colourful plants. There has been a huge decline in hay meadow habitats nationally - over 95% of traditional hay meadows which existed in Britain before the war have been lost mainly due to intensive farming practices- and this is reflected in Cornwall. To achieve this vision, we are allowing the grass to grow long, then in late July cutting it and leaving it to dry. This hay is then turned to encourage the seeds to drop and then it's taken away for animal fodder. This process will gradually deprive the soil of nutrients, leading to increased competition between plants and eventually more diversity. The change will take time - see if you can notice a difference as the years go by... Look out for the marbled white butterfly.

Wetlands...

A couple of springs on the site have created a wetland habitat in the valley bottom. You can clearly see the different plants growing there, and in summer you can see the swallows feasting on the insects that thrive there. To keep this wetland healthy we are grazing it with cattle. This will control the plant growth and the cattle's hooves will disturb seeds hidden in the ground - you never know what may start growing there!



Rocky Shoreline...

The sheltered headland running around the southern boundary of the reserve shows vegetation typical of those affected by the tides and salty environment. Colourful plants can be found scattered above the high tide mark on the low rocky cliffs, such as red fescue and thrift. At low tide on the southern shore of the headland an area of seaweed dominated by bladder wrack can be found covering the rocks. The rock pools here are home to common shore crabs.



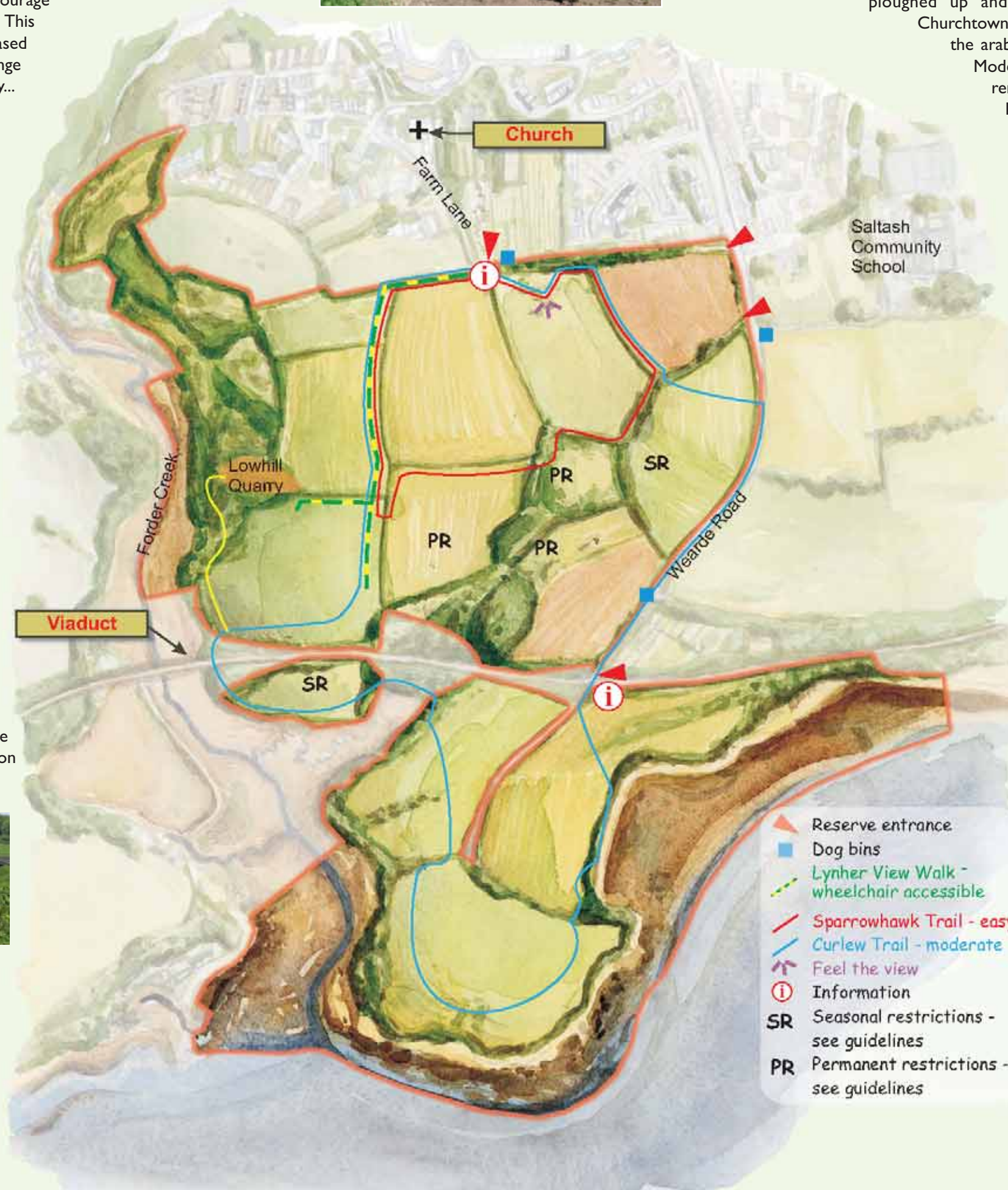
Cornish Hedges...

The hedgerows on the site are very old and very important for wildlife - providing shelter for mammals, food for birds and an abundance of flowers and trees. Traditional Cornish hedges have a bank with a stone face. You can see these all over the Reserve, though some of them are in a poor state of repair. Some of these hedges are being restored and the trees cut back to encourage new, bushy growth. Look out for the cornish elm, and sparrowhawks hunting along the hedges.



Arable Fields...

There are three fields on the Reserve which have been sown with arable crops. This has twin benefits for wildlife. Under intensive management, arable fields would have been repeatedly sprayed with herbicides and pesticides to kill off unwanted competitors to the growing crops. This has meant that nationally, once-common arable weeds have declined dramatically. However, the seeds of these plants can survive in the soil for a long time. Once ploughed up and disturbed the seeds germinate again, and at Churchtown Farm a number of rare plants have been found on the arable fields. These fields are also important for birds. Modern methods of harvesting crops are very efficient, removing almost all of the corn, oats or barley seeds. In the past, inefficient methods would have left plenty of seeds for birds to eat over winter. This reduction in winter food has been matched by a reduction in once-common farmland birds. Our crop will be left for the birds at Churchtown Farm - look out for flocks of goldfinches.



Mudflats...

Estuarine mudflats are highly productive ecosystems - providing a great deal of food for birds. A winter visit to the mudflats at Churchtown Farm will regularly reward you with sightings of little egrets, green shanks, red shanks and curlew, to mention just a few.

Geology...

There are two County Geological Sites within the boundary of the reserve. Lowhill Quarry located on the western side of the reserve was worked up until 1915 for dolerite (greenstone), used in road building. The quarry has a special ambience being cool, dark, damp and sheltered, factors which allow the development of an impressive collection of ferns including hart's tongue, soft shield fern and common male fern. Now the Quarry has an important educational value, clearly showing where the sandstone has been folded and cleaved by the dolerite, which forced its way in as larva millions of years ago. The slates along the foreshore from the point fields are also designated because they contain fossils called ostracods, this rare presence of fossils allowing accurate dating of the rock.

Churchtown Farm Community Nature Reserve is an important place both for people and wildlife. Recognising the importance of the site to local people, a group exists to enable community members to contribute to all aspects of the site's management. The Reserve has a wide variety of different wildlife habitats, mostly hay meadows with arable fields, woodland, wetland, scrub, rocky shoreline, mudflats and an extensive network of hedgerows. There is a rich history of quarrying, farming and maritime activities and the site's two quarries and the headland running around the west and south shores of the reserve are County Geological Sites. From the reserve there are extensive views over the River Lyhner, Antony Passage, Forder Creek, the River Tamar and beyond to Devonport and Plymouth. Its location on the edge of Saltash now makes it an ideal place for people to escape for a bit of peace and quiet.

The site falls within the Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the estuary fore shore lies within the Tamar Estuary candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), a designation of international significance. As a nature reserve with this kind of protection, the site will be safeguarded for its resident wildlife and its visiting public.

Putting the Community in Nature Reserve...

One of the most important things about this site is that local people are involved in deciding what happens here, and in getting things done. Through the Friends of Churchtown Farm Community Nature Reserve, local people are guiding the development of the site and contributing to practical tasks, guided walks, wildlife monitoring, wardening and all manner of other areas of the Reserve's life. Would you like to get involved too? Contact details overleaf.

Visitor guidelines...

Restrictions apply in the areas marked on the map with PR (Permanent Restrictions) and SR (Seasonal Restrictions):

PR: Please keep your dog on a lead at all times in these fields to minimise disturbance. They have a high conservation value and are periodically grazed by livestock.

SR: Please keep your dog on a lead and stick to the paths in these fields from 1st March to 30th September. This is to minimise disturbance to ground-nesting birds during the nesting season.

Please note that horses, bicycles, vehicles and camping are not permitted on the reserve.

Farming for Wildlife...

This land is farmed in a way which reflects traditional Cornish farming, benefiting wildlife in many ways. Historically Churchtown Farm was farmed for dairy and arable production. Over the last 40 years most of the fields were intensively managed, being re-seeded with highly productive rye grass mixtures maintained by regular applications of chemical fertilisers and heavy grazing. This intensive management has artificially increased the soil nutrients and encouraged pastures with a very limited range of plant species and little structural variation. In such a field there is very little insect, animal or bird life.

In an attempt to encourage wildlife back to the farm we are using a number of less intensive management techniques aimed at reducing the soil nutrient levels and increasing the number of plant species - this means more wildlife throughout the food chain!

