

Barkway Chalk Pit

Barkway chalk pit an important geological site revealing interesting events which occurred during the Anglian glacier period stop it also provides valuable habitats for wildlife within a rural agricultural landscape, such a scrub and remanent chalk grassland.

Includes a plan of the site and how to access it.

Geology

This unique site provide evidence for the advance of Anglian age ice sheets approximately 450,000 years ago. These vast glaciers which came from the north and east "bulldozed" rafts of chalk onto each other and formed the chalk masses we see here today stacked at a 40° angle.

These blocks of ice damaged the "Middle Chalk" which originally formed low escarpments to the north of Royston. They were pushed southwards by the ice sheets and tilted, leaving a layer of glacial till/clay between the chalk blocks you can see in the chalk face today.

Includes three diagrams

1. The distribution of Chalk rafts within till between Therfield and Barkway.
2. Spread of Anglian Ice
3. The glacial till - face of the pit now overgrown with vegetation

History

Originally, the chalk pit was excavated to provide chalk for improving local farmland, but talk instruction finished in Victorian times and it was subsequently used as the village rubbish dump. This explains the many old Victorian glass bottles which can be found on the site.

Chalk grassland

Chalk grassland is a specialised and fragile habitat present in small remanent patches at barkway chalk pit. This threatened habitat is lime Ridge a nutrient poor which results in a profusion of flowering plants such as cowslip, wild Basil and salad Burnett. It also supports a wide range of other wildlife, including butterflies like the common blue.

In an effort to maintain species diversity, volunteers work annually to cut and remove the nettles. Stinging nettles and brambles thrive in nutrient rich areas, removing them decrease is soil fertility there by encouraging rarer species.

If you would like to find out about volunteering, running educational trips, please visit the CMS website at www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/cms.

If you would like to find out more about the geology or get involved with the Hertfordshire geological Society please visit www.hertsgeolsoc.org.uk.

Includes a sketch of a Common blue butterfly.

North Herts District Council acknowledge the assistance of the Currie fund Geologists' Association www.geologistsassociation.org.uk

