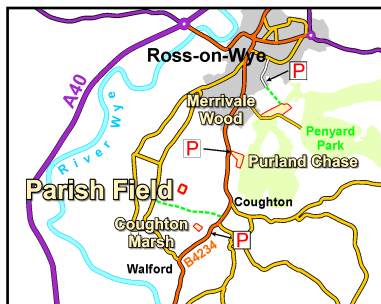


# Parish Field

Walford SO587216 (Outdoor Leisure 14)

Wet fen meadow and willow scrub.



## Visitor Guidelines

Access to this reserve is RESTRICTED and permission to visit should be obtained from the Trust office. The central part of the reserve remains wet all year and boots are advisable. Visitors are asked to take care not to trample the sensitive fen vegetation.

## Description

Like Coughton Marsh, Parish Field is a remnant of what was originally an extensive area of wet *common meadow* between Old Hill Court and Coughton. The *common meadow* is shown on the 1843 Tithe Map and was presumably used as grazing and *hay meadow* prior to this. Although bounded by drainage dykes on three sides, the field remains wet due to a permanent spring arising in the central section. The remaining western boundary is separated from a disused railway line by a narrow strip of recently planted mixed woodland. Neglected for many years, the field had become invaded by Grey Willow, Bramble, Meadowsweet, thistles and coarse grasses. The willow scrub now occupies only 20% of the site and is the principal competitor needing control. A number of old Crack and White Willows occur along the eastern boundary; some have fallen or have lost branches to storm damage. Along the northern boundary are a group of young Alders and also a row of older Grey Willows. Other trees in the boundary hedgerows include Ash and Oak.

The *meadow* supports many plants typical of peaty grassland and the site is attractive to a number of butterfly and dragonfly/damselfly species. The willow scrub provides cover and nesting sites for three species of warbler, as well as a good selection of common resident birds. Although small and previously neglected, the site has responded well to restoration and has recovered much of its original flora.

## Present Management

The original flora had been largely suppressed due to neglect over many years, allowing invasion of the site by vigorous perennials and woody scrub. Management aims to re-establish the original flora by control of the invading competitor species and allowing natural regeneration of the wet meadowland species from the seed-bank assumed to be still present in the soil. A programme of regular mowing has begun, which will eventually favour regrowth of the original flora.

Re-establishing a *pollarding* regime for the large willows on the eastern boundary has begun, bringing a return to traditional management, as well as extending the life of the trees and providing more nesting habitat for birds.

### Acquisition Details

Purchased by the Trust in 1998 from Walford Relief in Need Charity.

### General Information:

**Best time to visit:** Spring and Summer.

**Habitat:** Wet neutral grassland and willow scrub.

**Size:** 1 hectare (2.3 acres)

**Specialities:** Whitethroat and Garden Warbler (5-7). Orange Tip (4-6) and Small Copper (4-8) butterflies. Southern Marsh Orchid (6-7), Spotted Orchid (6-8), Fleabane (7-9), Yellow Iris (6-8), Ragged Robin (5-8), Fragrant Orchid (6-7).

**Parking:** Park in the lay-by outside Walford Primary School or as indicated.

**Nearby reserves:** Purland Chase, Coughton Marsh, Merrivale Wood, Goodrich Court & Pool Ellocks.

