

Areas of trees & scrub

The nutrient-rich soil favours the native trees and shrubs that have been introduced. These include willow, birch, hawthorn, holly, field maple, hazel, blackthorn, oak, alder, beech, pine, dog- and burnet-rose as well as native fruit trees. As these mature they are shading out the more rampant undergrowth, allowing other plants to establish themselves. Native wild flowers, such as knapweed, red campion, bird's foot trefoil, teasel and yarrow have been introduced to self-seed in areas where the soil is less rich. These areas provide nesting sites for resident blackbirds, songthrushes, robins and wrens and for summer visitors such as blackcaps, white throats and willow warblers. Sparrowhawks are regular hunters. Winter flocks of fieldfares and redwings visit to strip the berries from the trees and hedges.

Designed by

The Friends of Gallows Hill and Otley Town Council

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Wharfedale Naturalists' Society
www.wharfedale-nats.org.uk

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GALLOWS HILL NATURE RESERVE OTLEY

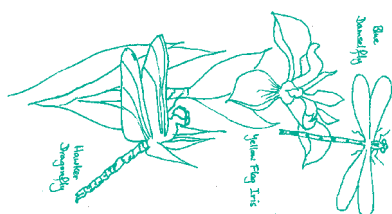
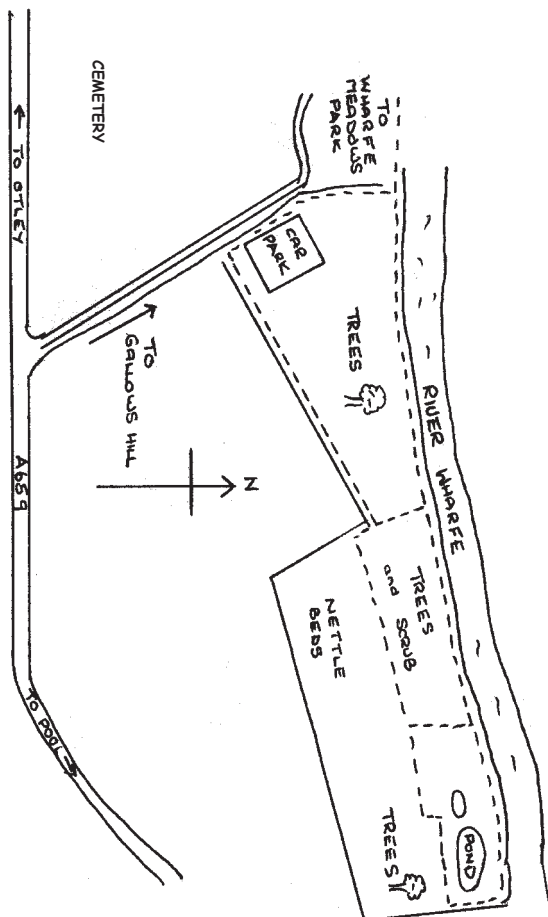


THE FRIENDS OF GALLOWS HILL

Meet on the first Saturday of each month
at 2pm at the Gallows Hill car park.

New volunteers are always welcome !

GALLOWS HILL NATURE RESERVE OTLEY



Introduction

Gallows Hill Nature Reserve occupies a strip of land on the south side of the River Wharfe east of Otley. It is signed to the left off Pool Road, just after the cemetery on the way out of Otley.

It consists of areas of trees, scrub and nettle beds with a pond, providing a variety of habitats important to birds, amphibians, butterflies and dragonflies.

History of the site

It gets its name from its use as a site of execution as far back as Anglo-Saxon times. During the reign of Henry I (1100-1135) the Archbishop of York had the power to execute thieves caught in the Manor of Otley. The last execution took place in 1614.

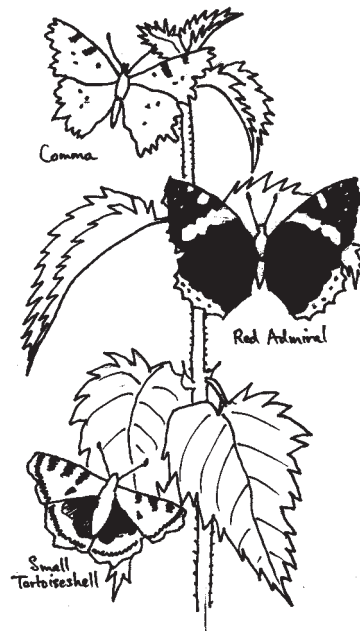
Much of the area is situated on the old Sewage works sludge beds. Otley Town Council purchased the land from Yorkshire Water Authority in 1987/8. There was considerable investment to remove toxic materials followed by a programme of development including construction of a pond, and tree and hedging planting.



Although close to Wharfemeadows Park, the area is a Nature Reserve, a managed wilderness with grass cutting mainly restricted to paths.

Funding comes mainly from Otley Town Council with regular contributions from other bodies, notably Wharfedale Naturalists.

The continuing work of tree, hedge, and flower planting and maintenance of the Reserve is carried out by a group of volunteers, the Friends of Gallows Hill. They meet on the first Saturday of each month at 2 pm at the Gallows Hill car park. New volunteers are always welcome.



The Nettle Beds

Because of its previous history as a sewage works, the soil at Gallows Hill is rich in nutrients, encouraging the growth of nettles and goosegrass. The nettles are important for some of our native butterflies, notably Peacocks, Commas and Tortoiseshells. These emerge from hibernation to lay their eggs on the nettles, which act as food plants for their caterpillars. Red Admirals do the same when they arrive later in the summer.

The Pond

Surrounded by willows, edged by yellow flag irises with areas of bulrushes, the pond provides nesting cover for moorhens. It is an important breeding site for common toads, with numbers peaking at 800 in late March or early April. There are smaller populations of frogs and newts. It is a breeding site and hunting ground for at least six species of damselfly and several species of dragonfly.

