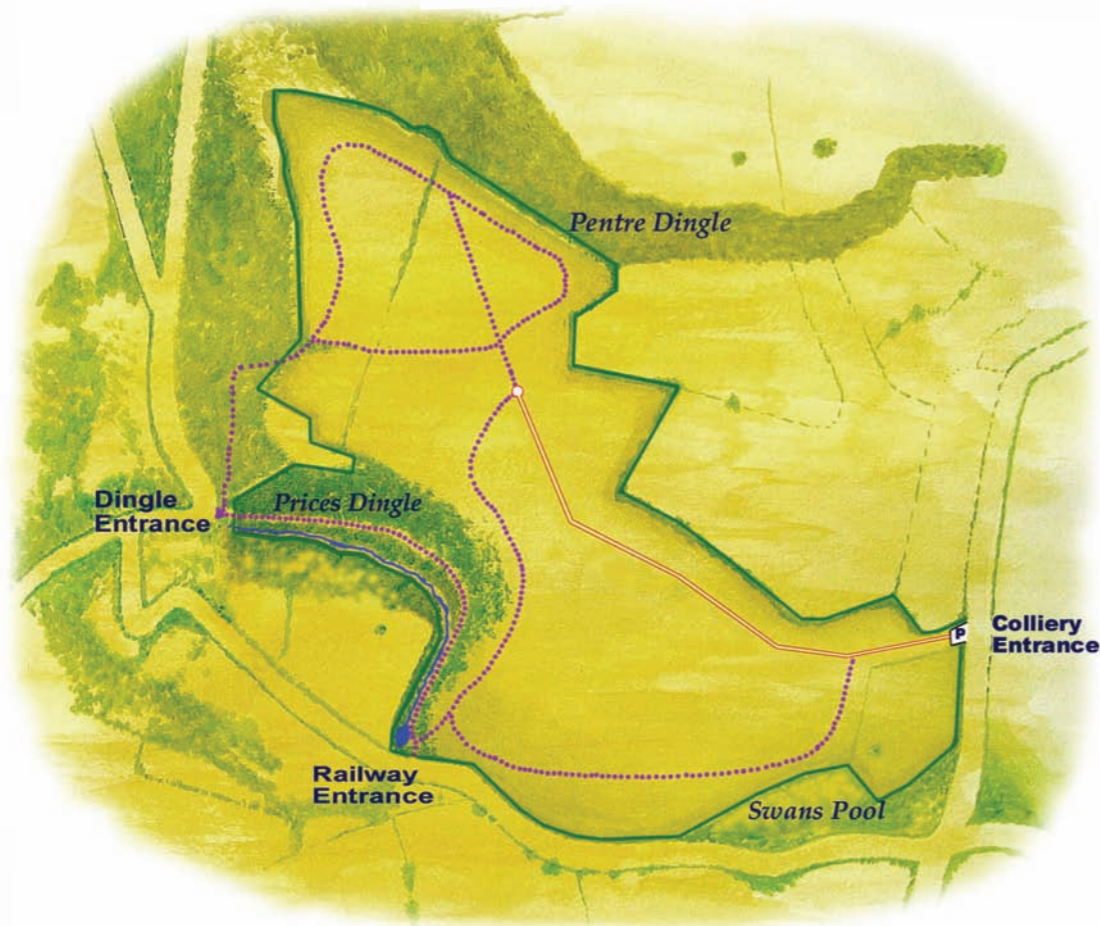


# Ifton Meadows Local Nature Reserve



- 1: Skylark
- 2: Cinnabar Moth
- 3: Dingy Skipper
- 4: Dog Violet
- 5: Kite Flying
- 6: Ifton Colliery C.1948
- 7: View West
- 8: Skylark Ascending
- 9: Price's Pond
- 10: Mini Beast Hunt
- 11: Price's Dingle
- 12: Price's Stream



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Ifton Meadows is a Local Nature Reserve on the edge of the village of St. Martins near Oswestry. The reserve extends to approximately 20 acres and includes differing habitats in a close-knit mosaic. Open grassland supports breeding Skylarks and Price's Dingle, a semi-natural ancient woodland has one of the best spring displays of wood anemone, snow drops, wild garlic and bluebells in the county. The stream at Prices Dingle cuts through the steeply dipping sandstones and siltstones and creates ideal conditions for mosses, liverworts and saxifrages.

Coed yr Allt Sandstone, a prized local building material used in the construction of Chirk church, can be seen outcropping on the bank. A pool at the top of the dingle acts as buffer for water to run-off from local fields and is home to dragonflies and moorhens. The grassland is mown annually and encroaching scrub is removed to provide the ideal habitat for summer nesting skylarks. The ascending song of this delightful bird, inspiration to both poets and composers is now a rare and welcome addition to a summer stroll.

Visitors are welcome to wander throughout the site enjoying panoramic views of the western Clwydian hills, fly kites, picnic, find swathes of common spotted orchid and enjoy the many species of butterfly benefiting from the scrubby edges of the grassland. The plant ragwort is maintained in a small area on site for the benefit of the threatened cinnabar moth caterpillar, now a U.K. biodiversity priority species.

**The History of Ifton Meadows**  
300 – 350 million years ago, during the Carboniferous era, Shropshire was near the equator and on the edge of a shallow tropical sea, rainforests and swamps dominated the landscape. Over many millennia, the pressure of deposited sediments, heat and bacteria converted this decaying material into coal, the fuel of the industrial revolution.

During the 16th Century mining commenced and Ifton Meadows and St. Martins began to evolve rapidly. The first mine shaft opened in 1771 and by 1838 coal was being mined at Pen-y-Banc above Price's Dingle. By 1868 Lord Trevor's Colliery & Brickworks operated at Pentre Dingle. The onset of the 20th Century brought a rapid expansion and by 1912 there were 5 shafts at Pentre with No. 3 shaft being renamed Gertrude Mine and was known as Ifton Colliery. Nine years later in 1921 Gertrude was extended to join the Brynkinalt mine in Chirk Green which closed as a mine in 1928 becoming a ventilation shaft for Ifton. By this time Ifton was employing 1357 men and producing 1000 tons of coal per day. The mine was gradually deepened to a depth of 1500 feet and was nationalised by the Clement Atlee government in 1947. Modernised mining at Ifton by 1960 was producing 1780 tons of coal per day with 1250 men employed. The mine was eventually closed in 1968, nearly 200 years after the first shaft was opened. Oswestry Borough Council took ownership of the site in 1975, regrading and covering the colliery spoil tips and opening it to the public three years later. Once nature had been allowed to reclothe the site with Her beauty the site was designated a Local Nature Reserve.

This reserve was born from the need to deal with the legacy of a once great coal industry. Now, reclaimed by man and reclothed by nature it is an asset to the local community and is enjoyed by visitors from near and far. In 2003 the Ifton Meadows Management Committee was established to look after the site. Made up of local residents with support from Oswestry Borough Council and Shropshire County Council's Countryside Service the committee have improved access around the site, organised regular events and produced a leaflet. On the first Sunday of the month there is a conservation task that allows locals to come and lend a helping hand keeping the place rich in wildlife and beautiful for visitors.