
48 The Spetchells

Theme: Heritage and mining

Location

You can take the train to Prudhoe Station, or park at Tyne Riverside Country Park beside the bridge to Ovingham and take the short walk east to The Spetchells. [NZ 097 641].

Description

Squeezed between the River Tyne and the Newcastle – Carlisle rail line at Prudhoe is a wooded mound, a ridge really, almost 1.5 kilometres long, 100 metres wide and 20 metres high. Where the vegetation and soil have been worn away, it is white.

The ridge, known as The Spetchells (the previous name of the local riverside), is man-made. It is made of millions of tons of waste material from a factory in Prudhoe which produced ammonium sulphate for explosives and fertilizer during World War 2. It was turfed to disguise the ridge and the factory from German bombers (the trees came later). The ridge is made of calcium carbonate, the same composition as limestone and chalk and so this is the only piece of “Chalk downland” in the county.

The Spetchells is a special habitat here in Northumberland. It hasn't exactly got a southern chalk grassland flora but rather a mix of lime-loving plants. They include musk-mallow, must thistle, kidney vetch, wild marjoram and traveller's-joy.

Photographs

(Photo 48-1) The Spetchells, a wooded mound made from waste material from a factory.

(Photo 48-2) On top of the Spetchells ridge.



(Photo 48-1) The Spetchells, a wooded mound made from waste material from a factory.



(Photo 48-2) On top of the Spetchells ridge.