

Although these whitethroats nest here, they spend their winters in Africa, just south of the Sahara desert. Here they can find the insects they need to survive. They fly back in the spring, with the males coming about a fortnight earlier to set up their territories. We are lucky to have these birds here: 50 years ago, whitethroats were common in Britain but, in 1969, nearly all of them mysteriously disappeared, with numbers falling by 77% in just one year. There had been a catastrophic drought in their African over-wintering area which had virtually wiped them out. Even now, the population has still not fully recovered. Species can be massively affected by all kinds of unexpected events which is why conserving sites like this is so important. If you would like to give the Trust regular feedback on the birds and butterflies seen at this site, we would love to hear from you.

E Retrace your steps back to the main path and turn left. When you reach the T junction again, go straight on through a gate onto a narrow footpath and then a driveway. Eventually, you will reach the corner of Bovingdon Green where your walk began.

Safety

Please take great care when following this route and carrying out the activities suggested. It is possible to walk all over the site; this walk is merely an introduction to its different areas.

However, please remember that this is a former quarry and the ground can be extremely uneven and, in some places, there are deep holes which may hold water.

Great care should therefore be taken when visiting with children and animals. The Box Moor Trust cannot accept responsibility for the children under your care.

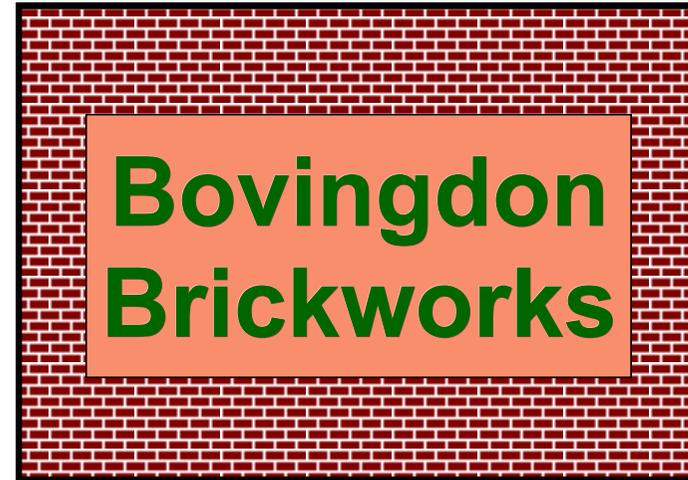
Care of the Box Moor Trust Estate

Where livestock are grazing, please keep dogs on a short lead or at heel. If your dog fouls, please bag and bin it or take it away with you.

More information can be found in our leaflet 'Dogs and the Box Moor Trust'. Please also:

- Close all gates.
- Do not leave litter or light fires.
- Do not pick plants, flowers or fungi.

Email: education@boxmoortrust.org.uk



Take a short stroll from the centre of Bovingdon to explore and learn more about this wonderful wild area

Since 2000, the former quarry of Bovingdon Brickworks has been carefully managed as a wildlife conservation site by The Box Moor Trust for the benefit of people living in the surrounding area. This 36 acre site is open all year round.

To find out more about the work of the Trust, visit our website or the Box Moor Trust Centre on London Road, Hemel Hempstead.

If you have enjoyed this walk, why not explore further on our Orange, Blue, Green or Red walk routes?

**Please visit our website:
www.boxmoortrust.org.uk**



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Bricks have been made at Bovingdon Brickworks for nearly a century, with more than a million produced each year before WWII. This quarry produced the clay; the raw material for the bricks. The clay here is dark red but clay comes in many different shades, which is why brick-built houses vary so much in colour.

Finding your way around Bovingdon Brickworks is easy.....

A This walk begins at the Cricket Club on Bovingdon Green. From the parking area, bear right and take Public Footpath 8 to the right of the houses, signposted 'Pudds Cross'. Walk under the canopy of the tall silver birches until you reach a kissing gate. Go through, turn left and then immediately right through a second kissing gate into a very large field. Turn left and head down the broad path. Continue on this path until you reach another kissing gate.

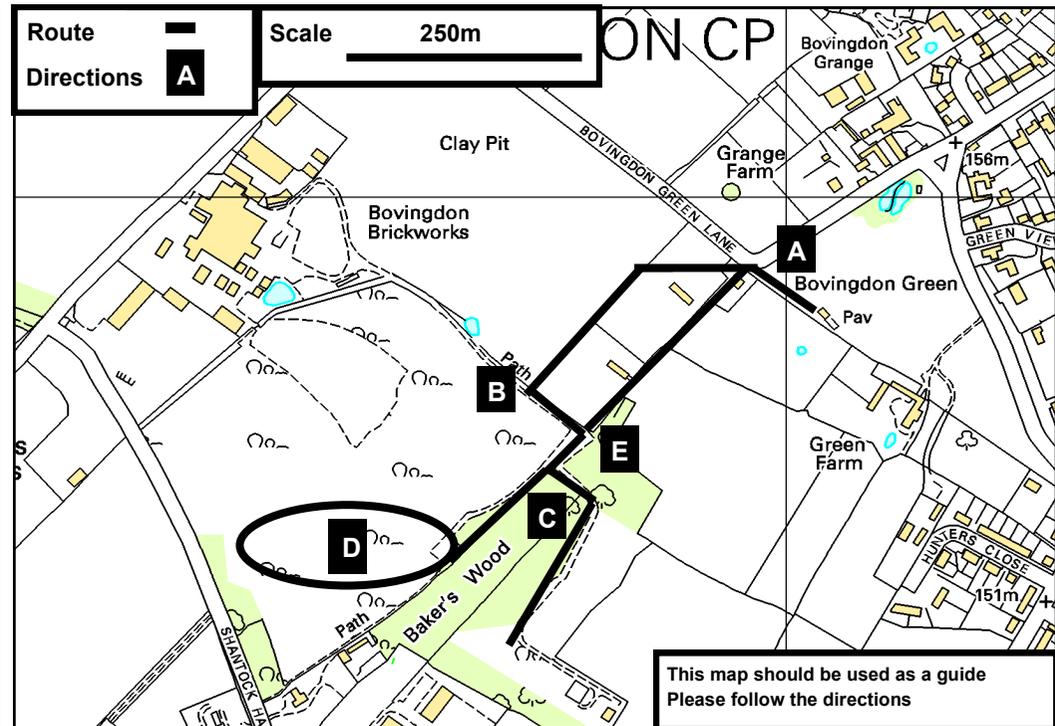
This field has an amazing abundance of wild flower and tree species. The deep brick red clay soil here is still bare in places but wild plants are making good progress in re-colonising it. In spring, look out for cowslips and, later on, the bright yellow-red of Bird's Foot Trefoil, Ox-Eye Daisies, Ragged Robin with its torn streamer-like petals and Common Spotted Orchids with their pyramids of pink flowers and distinctive spotty leaves. Can you spot a flower for every colour of the rainbow? Please don't pick them! Leave the flowers for others to enjoy, including the insects that rely on them for food. This site is also very rich in insect life: look particularly for wasps, bees and butterflies. In addition to the 20 species of butterfly regularly seen here, the scare Dingy Skipper and White Admiral have recently been recorded.

B Turn left onto a track passing between mature trees, hedges and woodland plants to reach a T junction. Turn right and, after a short time, go left through a kissing gate. Carry straight on.

Beneath your feet are the remains of buildings. Many of the bricks you can see were made at Bovingdon Brickworks - can you spot any stamped with their initials 'BB'? The buildings were used by the RAF and the United States Air Force who used Bovingdon Airfield during WWII. They had many different uses, including the Officers' Mess, the Commanding Officer's quarters and the Military Police building. There was also a chapel and a squash court. The American soldiers used the cricket pitch on Bovingdon Green as a baseball diamond but, perhaps unusually for Americans, they also had their own cricket team!

C Continue on to bear right into a wide meadow. This path reaches a dead-end so, once you have explored this area, please retrace your steps back to the kissing gate and onto the main path.

On both sides of the path, there are many different species of grass. Grasses are most easily identified by the shape of their flower heads; some are tightly furled, whilst others are more delicately spread. How many different types can you find? A plant survey carried out at the Brickworks found 16 different grass species here. Grasses and many trees rely on the wind to distribute the pollen from their flowers, unlike plants with coloured and scented flowers that attract insects to do this work for them. Wind pollinated plants have to produce a lot of pollen to make sure it reaches the right flowers which is why grass and trees cause hay fever.



D Once you have returned via the kissing gate to the main path, turn left to go a short distance until a narrow path forks off to the right between coppiced trees. This takes you to another area of the quarry, this time with paths winding between excavated pits which in winter and spring turn into ponds. From this point, it is possible to continue through to reach Shantock Hall Lane, however, on this walk, once you have explored this area, retrace your steps back to the main path.

Look carefully into the pits. Can you see how the plant species change as the habitat becomes damper? You will see mosses and rushes there that do not occur elsewhere. The water collects at the base of the pits because the soil is made of tiny particles of clay which act as a natural 'pond liner'.

Bovingdon Brickworks is also home to many different birds, including what may well be the largest population of nesting whitethroats in Hertfordshire. These fascinating small, lively birds are easily identified by the white feathers on their throats and their reddish brown wings. They have forceps-like beaks to help them pick up insects and berries. If you can't see them, you may hear their distinctive 'chack' call. You might even see a whitethroat singing to defend its territory or trying to attract a mate: they fly vertically up whilst singing and then drop straight back down. It looks rather like they are bouncing on elastic!

Whilst some birds learn part of their song through listening to other birds, whitethroats inherit a complete vocabulary of call notes and songs from their parents. They don't need to learn anything else. We know this because whitethroat babies raised in sound-proof rooms are able to sing exactly the same as other whitethroats raised normally in contact with other birds.