



How to get to Windmill Farm

The reserve is about one mile (1.6 km) north of Lizard village, with access from the Helston to Lizard road A3083. Turn right going towards Lizard village at the "Wild Camping" (not us!) sign, and follow the lane till you see the windmill.

Grid reference: SW 694 153



Cornish heath, a Lizard speciality

the HEATH project

The HEATH Project (Heathland, Environment, Agriculture, Tourism and Heritage) is funded by the European Interreg programme and the Heritage Lottery Fund and is administered in Cornwall by Natural England. In Cornwall the project covers 58 sites encompassing over 3,500 ha, on the Lizard, in West Penwith and St Agnes. It hopes to rejuvenate heathlands by reconnecting with sites, advocating good land management techniques, encouraging local community involvement and promoting heathlands as a valuable resource.

The Countryside Code

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Consider other people

Project partners:



Supported by:



For more information on this nature reserve please contact:

Cornwall Wildlife Trust, Five Acres, Allet, Truro TR4 9DJ. Tel: (01872) 273939. Website: www.cornwallwildlifetrust.org.uk



Cornwall Birdwatching and Preservation Society www.cbwps.org.uk

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Heathland self guided trails

Windmill Farm



Welcome to Windmill Farm Nature Reserve



Land management

Windmill Farm was purchased jointly by the Cornwall Birdwatching and Preservation Society and Cornwall Wildlife Trust in 2001. This 75ha (185 acre) farm is home to an array of habitats including wet and dry heaths, hay meadows, pasture, wetland, ponds and arable land. The mix of habitats means the site is home to a huge variety of plant, bird and invertebrate species. The 17th century windmill that gives the farm its name is a scheduled ancient monument.

This leaflet shows you what you might see as you follow the Windmill Farm self guided trail waymarkers around the reserve.

The trail shown inside should take between 1.5 and 2 hours to complete. If you would like a shorter route a short cut is highlighted on the map.

The paths are clearly defined across the reserve but the ground is uneven, muddy and slippery in places, so suitable footwear should be worn. Horseflies may be present in summer, so use of insect repellent is advised.

Dogs are not allowed on the reserve.

Please be aware that cattle are present on the site during the summer and autumn months. If you have to open a gate during your walk, please close it behind you.

Background

Windmill Farm was a dairy farm up until 2001, since then staff and volunteers have been working to maintain and enhance existing habitats. This work includes re-introducing grazing to the heathlands, ceasing to add fertilizers to the hay meadows, digging new ponds and scrapes and growing crops specifically as winter food for birds. As a result of this work bird, flower and invertebrate numbers have increased.

In common with heathland sites on the Lizard, Windmill Farm has an amazing array of archaeological remains. Archaeologists have identified a Mesolithic settlement (from 5000BC), two Bronze Age barrows (2000-700BC), medieval parish boundaries, thirteen World War II buildings and structures and of course the 17th Century windmill.



The windmill is a scheduled ancient monument (centre) pictured in 1938.



This wartime water tower is sometimes used as a roost for barn owls.

The heathlands and associated pools are the most important habitats on the reserve due to their international designation as part of the Lizard Special Area of Conservation.

Most lowland heathlands have been created by a combination of climate, geology and in particular human activity dating back to prehistoric times. Lowland heathlands have long played an essential part in the economy of rural communities in Cornwall providing extensive grazing and domestic fuel in the form of peat and furze (gorse), together with bracken for animal bedding and stone for building. These uses declined in the twentieth century with the result that many of these rough ground areas have become deserted and overgrown with bracken, dense heather, furze and other scrub.

Grazing, scrub management and small scale controlled burning is vital to the health and rejuvenation of heathland. This management restricts the level of scrub invasion and creates a mosaic of ecological niches for plants and animals, ensuring the heathlands remain rich in wildlife.



Heathland in flower



Fire break cutting



Scrub cutting



Burning



Cattle grazing

This trail is designed to allow you to walk it at your own pace. It should take between one and a half and two hours to complete.

Walk out of the information centre (1) and turn right then right again, through the gate way and into the arable fields (2).

2. Arable

The arable fields are planted up with sacrificial crops such as kale, quinoa and on occasion sunflowers. In the winter a standing crop is left to provide a 'living bird table' for over-wintering birds. Look out for large flocks of feeding finches. Flocks of a thousand have been seen in recent years.



Follow the track through the centre of the field and take the first right turn which takes you through another field gate. This brings you into an area of hay meadows.

3. Hay meadow

These hay meadows are cut for hay in late summer once the flowering plants have flowered and set seed and the skylarks have fledged. In the past they were heavily fertilized. Since 2001 no fertilizer has been added. The lack of fertilizer allows a greater diversity of finer grasses and wild flowers to get a foothold.



Turn left following the trail along the edge of the hay meadow. Keep going until you reach a large open field (3); turn right following the fence line to your right all the way to a gate which leads you into the heathland. Follow the path through the heathland for a short distance to a gate next to the wet woodland, go through this onto the boardwalk (4).



4. Boardwalk

The boardwalk takes you through a lush area of wet woodland which is home to speckled wood butterflies, dragonflies, wrens and willow warblers. Otters also use the stream, their spraint has been found on the boardwalk itself. The heathland on your left is Lower Predannack Downs managed by the National Trust.



Follow the boardwalk, almost to the end, where you reach a gate (5) then proceed into the heathland, walk straight ahead for 50m.

5. Heathland

This is a good place to take a closer look at the heathland, look out for Cornish heath which is found on the Lizard and nowhere else.



On your right is a section of boardwalk which leads you to the scrape hide (6) and provides a short cut back to the information centre.

6. Wader scrape

This shallow scrape has been carefully shaped to be attractive to wading birds.

Alternatively, turn left through a gate to continue on the trail towards the dragonfly ponds (7). The trail crosses the pasture diagonally with the ponds on your right.

7. Dragonfly ponds

These ponds were specially created to provide warm and sheltered conditions for dragonflies and damselflies, 17 species are regularly recorded here and newts and rare stoneworts have also benefited. The adjacent pasture is grazed only occasionally, the aim is to produce a rank area of grassland specifically for small mammals, such as field voles, which provide food for the local kestrels and barn owls.



Pass through the gate, turn right and follow the boardwalk and path until you come to a tarmac road. (8)

8. Old approach road

The approach road to the airfield was built by the RAF. This is a good place to spot adders which can sometimes be seen basking on the warm tarmac in the morning sunshine during the spring.



Turn right onto the road. To get to the Ruan Pool bird hides take the second turning on the left through a hay field (9)

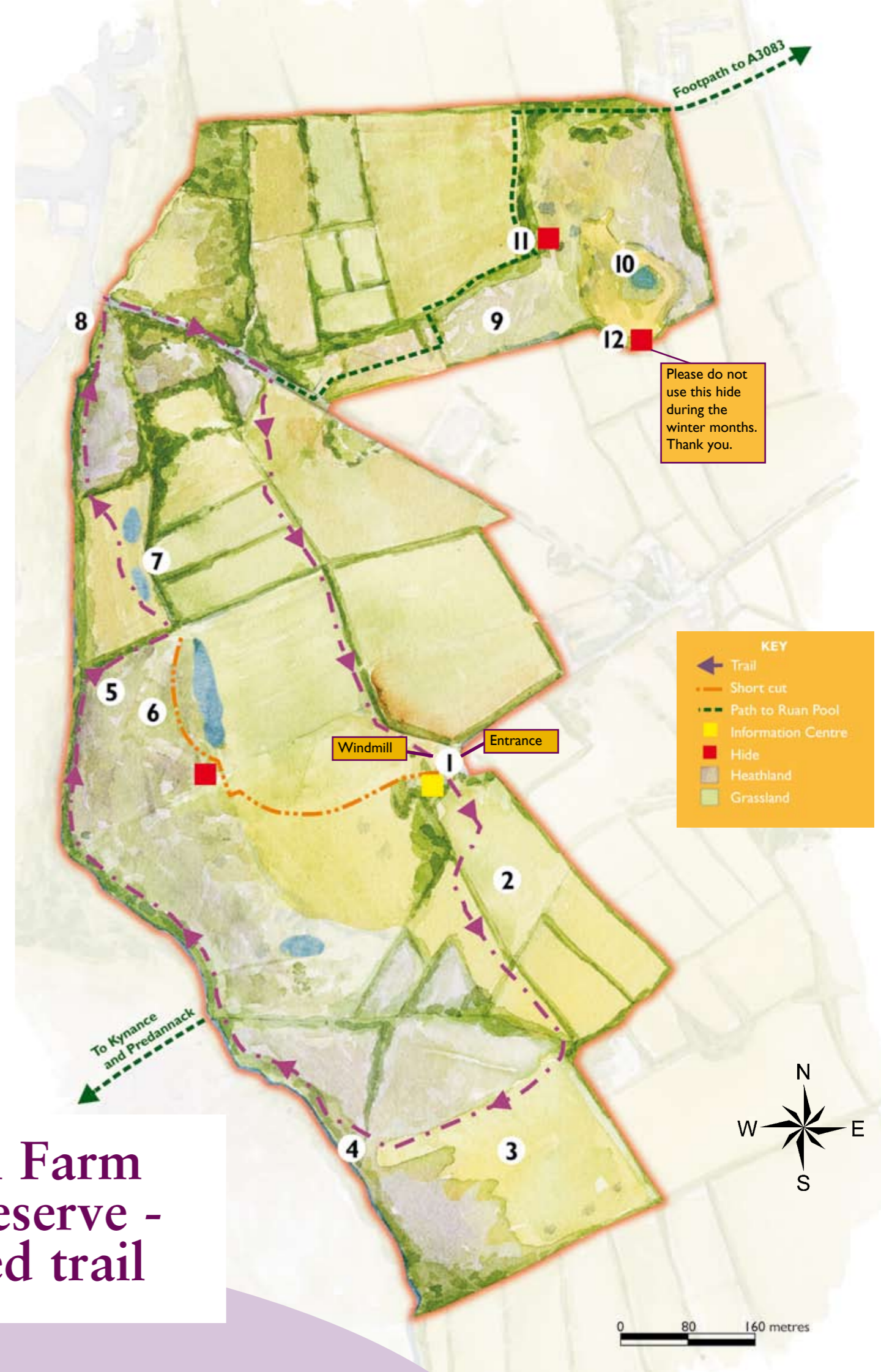
9. Heathland

A good time to visit this area is May to June when heath-spotted orchids cover the ground.

or, to get back to the centre, turn right through the second field gate heading towards a rectangular concrete building. Walk left around the building and follow the path back to the centre.

10, 11 & 12. Ruan Pool and bird hides

The wet heath that surrounds Ruan Pool is where many of the site's rarer plants can be found. These plants rely on the areas of bare muddy ground created by the cattle. The pool is also a fantastic place to see wintering wildfowl. If you are visiting in the winter please only use the north hide marked as 11 on the map. In the summer you can use hide 12 too.



Windmill Farm Nature Reserve - self guided trail