

FRIENDS OF CASTLE HILL COUNTRY PARK & CASTLE HILL ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

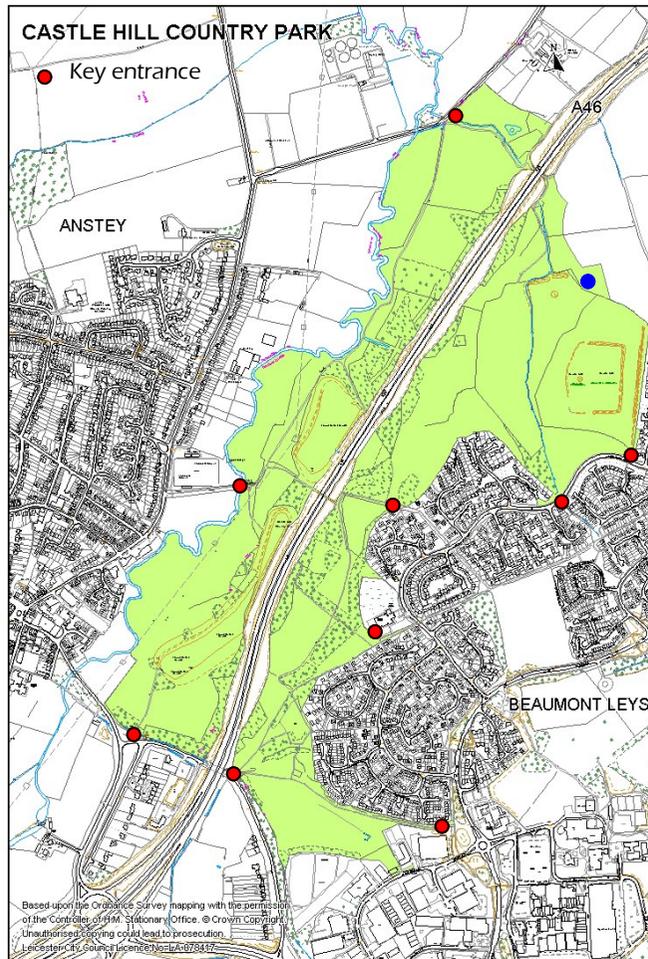
A **Friends of Group** for Castle Hill Country Park (FoCHCP) was established in early 2008. If you are interested in becoming involved in the on-going conservation, development and management of the Park generally, please contact either Parks Services or FoCHCP.

There is also a **Park's User Group** for Castle Hill Country Park. Established by the Parks Services, this group meets on a regular basis, at a local venue.

More recently, in 2014, the **Castle Hill Archaeology Project (CHAP)** was established. An independent group, CHAP seeks to involve the local community in re-searching, conserving and promoting the park's archaeological and historical heritage.



Large Skipper



● Hill Ground Nature Area

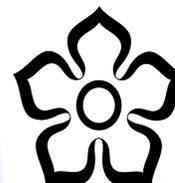
CASTLE HILL COUNTRY PARK

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Leicester
City Council

CASTLE HILL COUNTRY PARK

THE HILL GROUND NATURE AREA



Tel: 0116 454 1003

HISTORIC GRASSLANDS

Beaumont Leys has a long association with woodland and woodland pasture. The word 'leys' (lease, leaze) refers to pasture lands. Archaeological evidence suggests that tree clearance at 'Castle Hill' occurred by Roman times, if not considerably earlier. The Knights Hospitaller, and, later still, a succession of grazers reared sheep and other livestock here. The people of Leicester also held common rights of pasture at Beaumont Leys. In more recent times, between 1895-1964, Castle Hill became part of the extensive Beaumont Leys sewage irrigation farm. Extending over 1200 acres, and incorporating 7 farms (the 'City Farms') the area supported over 300 head of cattle and sheep.

As a consequence of heavy fertilization, today the Castle Hill Park landscape comprises predominantly species poor semi-improved grassland. This vegetation cover dominated by a limited number of coarse grasses and herbs, with few wildflowers.



Small Tortoiseshell

SPECIES RICH GRASSLANDS

While there is no evidence for unimproved grassland at Castle Hill, smallish areas of species rich grasslands occur at Gorse Hill meadow (seeded 1986 by City Wildlife Project), alongside the Rothley Brook, and in a field margins south of the Castle Hill earthworks field. The former was established 1986 by the City Wildlife Project, and, together with neighboring Gorse Hill Wood bank, is officially designated as a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SINC). The latter site, providing a natural barrier between Castle Hill, and farmlands, has been named recently as the 'Hill Ground Reserve', in recognition of its value to wildlife — The site takes its name from an old field name shown on the Beaumont Leys Estate Plan of 1686; this area being enclosed for agricultural purposes in the mid 17th Century.



Speckled Wood

THE HILL GROUND 'NATURE RESERVE'

The 'Hill Ground' reserve supports a variety of wild flowers including; Centaury, glaucous sedge, vetches including smooth tare, various clovers including hop trefoil, common cat's-ear and red fescue. In the wetter



Hawthorn Scrub and Grassland

areas, and hedgerow willow herb and Hedge woundwort occur. Common butterflies in the open areas and glades include Speckled Wood, Large Skipper and Gate Keeper .

In recent years the grassland has been invaded by hawthorn; together with some self-set oak, ash and field maple.



Red/White Clovers



Lesser Centaury



Willowherb

While these trees add to the site's natural values, the spread of hawthorn has resulted in some decline in the diversity of wild flowers, and therefore requires management .

CASTLE HILL COUNTRY PARK