



agriculture. Heathland dwindled as land was enclosed and improved for ancient hunting forest of Mara and Mondrum. However the Budworth Common. In the Middle Ages it formed part of the larger area than the country park, and was known as Little At one time heathland covered a much unique wildlife to become established. maintain the heath and enable the All these activities have helped to bracken for bedding and turf for fuel. by man for grazing animals, cutting heathland has been valued and used woodland was cleared. Since then long ago as the Stone Age when the a man made landscape, created as Despite its wild character, heathland is and mire.



Bell heather

At the end of the last ice age, glacial sands were deposited in the area between Little Budworth, Delamere and Northwich. The nutrient poor soils that developed are ideal for hardy heathland vegetation and hollows formed by melting ice have filled with wet heath and mire.

**Origins of the heathland and boggy mires.**

**First impressions of Little Budworth Country Park are dominated by woodland. Take a closer look and amongst the trees you will find a mosaic of lowland heath, ponds and boggy mires.**

Today, the remnant heathland at Little Budworth is one of the largest areas of this habitat left in Cheshire and most of the country park is a Site of Special Scientific Interest for this reason. It is vital to conserve this special place for its distinctive wildlife and its historic value.

**Heathland - a unique wildlife community**

Ling, or common heather, is the dominant plant of the heathland. There are patches of bell heather in drier areas, whereas cross-leaved heath indicates wetter ground. Gorse forms dense thickets in places, while close inspection reveals the tiny white flowers of heath bedstraw and the yellow of Green tiger beetles scurry across bare ground where holes like tiny volcanoes may be evidence of minotaur beetles. Grass snakes and lizards take advantage of sandy patches for sunbathing.

Soggy sphagnum moss is common in wet heaths and mires. The fluffy white heads of cotton-grass bob in early summer breezes, and insectivorous sundews catch flies to supplement their diet. Boggy places are also home to cranberry and crowberry, rare spiders and craneflies.

Dragonflies can be seen around the pond or patrolling the open rides. Red and blue damselflies flirt around the pond while green hairstreak butterflies use patches of bilberry for laying their eggs.

The heathland is ideal for birds such as pipsits and warblers while over-wintering woodcock find shelter and protection there.

All three species of woodpecker are found in the birch and oak woodland. Listen for the laughing cry of green woodpeckers and keep an eye out for them on the heathland where they feed on ants.

**Heathland Restoration**

Without grazing by animals, cutting or burning, heathland and its wildlife can soon be lost as trees grow up and shade out the heather. After World War II birch woodland invaded Little Budworth's heathland until only isolated pockets remained. However as the soil has not been 'improved' with fertiliser, the ground is still suitable for heathland when trees are removed.

Since the 1980's the Council has worked to protect the remnants of heathland and to restore some of the areas which have been lost. Invading trees are removed, leaf litter is scraped off to reveal the mineral soil, and heather seed is spread to supplement the natural seed bank. Heather seedlings take a couple of years to become established, but the rich carpet of heath which results is well worth the wait.

In time it is hoped that further areas will be restored to heathland. Woodland will still cover much of the park, contributing to the intricate mix of habitats which provide benefits for wildlife and visitors alike.



Cross leaved heath

# Little Budworth Country Park - Heathland, History and Wildlife

## Welcome to Little Budworth Country Park

**Heathlands are an ancient part of our landscape, shaped by thousands of years of man's stewardship and home to some unique and very special wildlife.**

Little Budworth's heathland is one of the few surviving fragments in Cheshire. This habitat was once widespread and what remains provides a sense of wildness in the heart of Cheshire.

With paths through tranquil woodland, winding in and out of heathy glades, Little Budworth Country Park is ideal for gentle walking, horse riding and watching wildlife.

There is something to discover in every season. In spring the air is full of birdsong, as the trees burst with leafy green. Summer is the time to enjoy the spectacular aerobatics of dragonflies by the pond and perhaps catch a glimpse of a grass snake slithering out of sight.

The heathland is at its best as autumn unveils a scene of heathery purple. In winter, catch an unexpected glimpse of yellow gorse flowers or early morning frost glinting on a spider's web.



## How to find Little Budworth Country Park



For public transport information please contact Cheshire Traveline on 0871 200 22 33.

Little Budworth Country Park is managed by Cheshire West and Chester Council.

**Whitegate Station**  
 Clay Lane, Marton, Winsford  
 Cheshire CW7 2QE  
 01606 301484/85  
[www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

## Cheshire West & Chester Council Little Budworth Country Park



## Cheshire's Ancient Heathland



# Exploring Little Budworth Country Park



## On Foot

Follow the Heathland Trail and enjoy a relaxing walk. The 2.7 km/ 1 1/2 mile route is mostly on level ground and takes about an hour, depending on how long you spend watching the wildlife! Follow the woodpecker marker posts for this route.

There are also plenty of other paths to explore, taking you to quieter areas of the park. Only the main paths are shown on the map. Please leave The Gallops for the horse riders.

## On Horseback



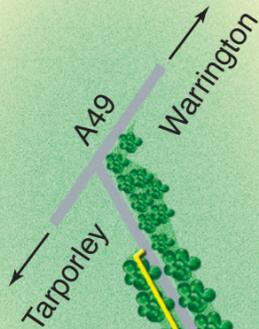
Horse riding is permitted on the paths shown in yellow on the map. Riders can enjoy the sandy Gallops which run for over a mile beside Coach Road. Please take great care as walkers share the same tracks.

## Beyond the Country Park

Explore the public rights of way leading from Little Budworth Country Park into the wider countryside. These are clearly shown on the Ordnance Survey Explorer map 267 'Northwich and Delamere Forest'. Public footpaths are for walkers only, while other rights of way can be used by horseriders and cyclists as well.

A short walk leads to the village of Little Budworth where refreshments are available at the village pubs.

Nearby is the Whitegate Way. This is a 10 km/6 mile route for walkers, cyclists and horseriders along the old railway line from Winsford to Cuddington. A leaflet is available from Whitegate Station, details overleaf.



**Key**

- Woodland
- Moss/Wet Heath
- Heathland
- Heathland Trail
- Heathland Trail Shortcut
- Horses & Walkers
- Walkers Only

0 200m

0 200yds



Old maps and aerial photos show that Little Budworth was very different in the past, with much more open heathland. This photo was taken in 1947. © Crown copyright 1947.

