



Rew Down local nature reserve

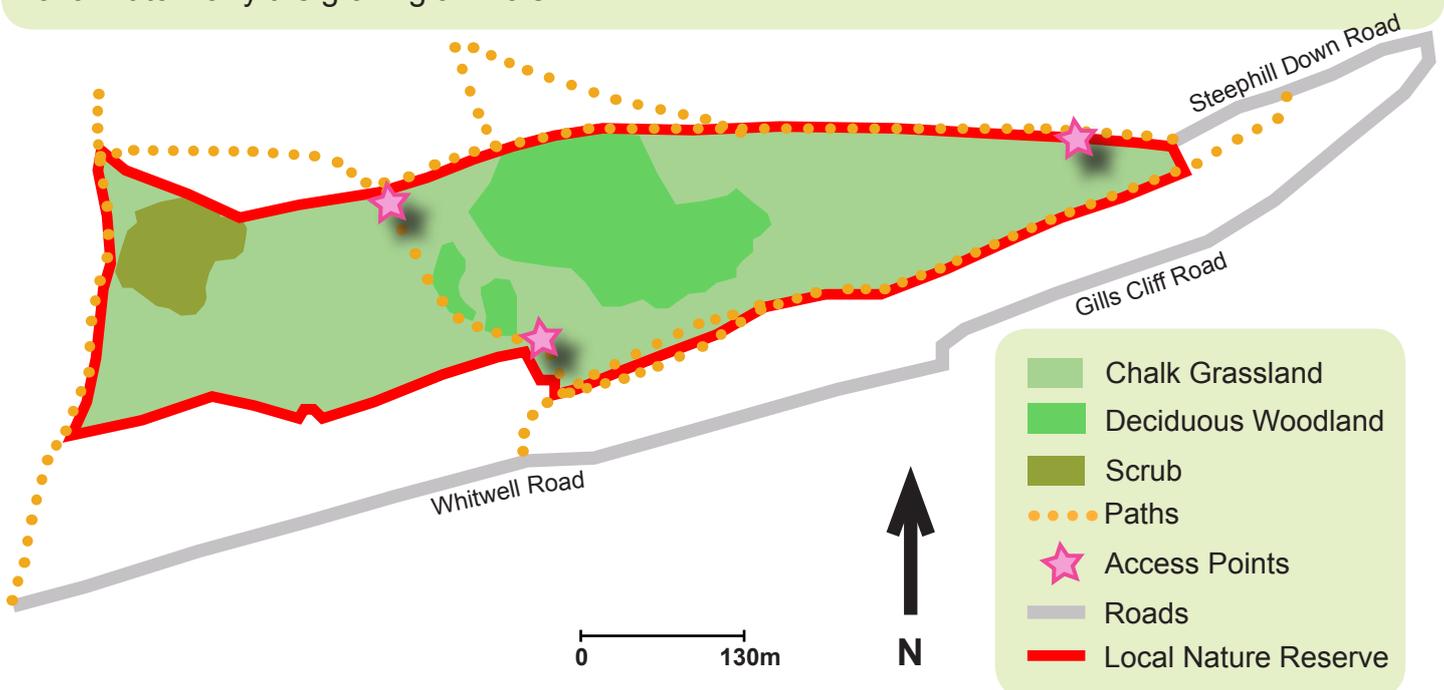


Where is Rew Down ?

It is on the western side of Ventnor, on a south-facing slope above the Whitwell Rd (GR SZ 552 773). It can be reached from Steephill Down Road, Whitwell Rd or the Stenbury Trail and is well served by public footpaths V64, V64A, V54, V53 and public bridleways V56, V54A. There are also many permissive paths which criss-cross the site. It also lies within the Isle of Wight Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

When can I visit?

Rew Down is open to the public at all times. There are always wonderful views from the site, down to the coast, as far as the downs above Niton to the west and over to St Boniface Down in the east. If you are walking over the site with your dog, please keep it under control and do not allow it to worry the grazing animals.



Why is the site so special?

In spring, bluebells form a carpet under the ash trees, and cowslips cover the lower part of the slopes. Birdsong is heard from the scrub, where yellowhammers and whitethroats nest.

The early gentian is found here and usually flowers during May and June, it is a nationally rare species and Rew Down was the site of the first British record (1883).

Pyramidal orchids make a fine show in late June and early July. Stemless thistles, with their deep purple flower heads and sharp shiny leaf rosettes flat against the ground are a feature of the later part of the summer.



Cowslips



Early gentian



Bird's foot trefoil



More recently, populations of the adonis blue butterfly have been seen at Rew Down. The adonis is the most striking of the blue butterflies. It was once on the endangered species list but it is now making a good recovery thanks to favourable management of the species rich chalk downland habitat it needs to survive.



Adonis blue



The site has a history of grazing and Highland cattle have been on the site since January 2003, helping to keep down the faster growing grasses that would overwhelm the more delicate chalk plants.