

BLUE LAGOON
Bletchley, Buckinghamshire

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Water Eaton pit, now called the Blue Lagoon

Blue Lagoon Local Nature Reserve covers about 30 ha (75 acres) and has two lakes with a mix of trees, scrub, long grass and chalky downland. The lakes have been formed by flooding two large clay pits.	This is the only Local Nature Reserve in the borough of Milton Keynes. Once the site of brick manufacture, it became a landfill site, before being redeveloped as a nature reserve and place of recreation in the 1990s.	TARGET SPECIES 30 different species have been recorded including Dingy and Grizzled Skippers, and the Small Blue.
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For many years, Bletchley was a centre for brick manufacture. Vast areas were excavated to extract clay, which was fired in huge kilns to make bricks. The process was labour intensive, hot and dusty and the high brick chimneys of the kilns dominated their surroundings. It was a process developed over the centuries, but, as steel and concrete became rival materials which were more suited for high buildings, the demand for bricks gradually diminished and eventually brick-making finished for ever at Bletchley in the late 1970s.

The Blue Lagoon reserve now covers part of the old brickworks site, while the larger area to its west has become an enormous landfill site serving not only Bletchley and its surroundings but other parts of south-east England, including London. It was a lovely surprise to find that such a good butterfly site can be found in such an apparently unpromising location. Not only that, but the location is fast improving as progress

continues in returning the entire landfill site to a mixture of woodland, agricultural and recreational land uses, a transformation that must be completed by 2022.

The Blue Lagoon reserve covers two large disused clay pits. The northern pit, known as the Water Eaton pit, is now the Blue Lagoon. Its name derives from the colour of the clay there. It was flooded in the 1940s when the nearby Water Eaton brook burst its banks and it has not been used since except for recreation. The southerly Flettons pit was used for bricks until production ceased and was initially used for landfill before being incorporated into the nature reserve. By now Bletchley had been absorbed into the new town of Milton Keynes and the Blue Lagoon came into the care of the borough of Milton Keynes. It is the only Nature Reserve in Milton Keynes.

The two lakes in the reserve are used for diving by the Milton Keynes Sub-Aqua Club and for fishing and they provide shallow and deep water where pike, perch, roach and crayfish are caught regularly and tench and carp occasionally. The former spoil heaps have been landscaped and the reserve has a belt of trees sheltering a mix of scrub and chalky grasslands. The planned landscaping has combined hedges, flowering shrubs and scrub with undulating grasslands in a pleasing combination. A good network of wide winding tracks includes many hard-surfaced paths with easy access from the car-parking areas. Although the mainline Euston to Glasgow railway runs along an embankment at the east of the reserve, the railway line is well shielded with trees and trains do not seem intrusive to the peace and calm of a summer Saturday afternoon's stroll. There are frequent seats for those who want to sit, watch and think. I have been told that a good place to look for Skippers and Blues is between the two lakes. Try where the grass is short and the ground dry, although they may appear anywhere.

If you have time before you leave the Blue Lagoon, it is only about 3 miles to Bletchley Park. This is the WW2 secret communications centre, which is now a museum. It is a stone's throw from Bletchley railway station. The manor of Eaton, which became the Bletchley Park estate, was included in the Domesday Book in 1086, but the present mansion dates only from the early 1900s. Curiously, the head of the Government Code and Cipher School bought the estate with his own money in 1938 and it remained in private ownership throughout the war. Everything about Bletchley Park was kept strictly secret until the 1970s, but Churchill referred to the codebreakers who worked there as "My geese that laid the golden eggs and never cackled."



Flooded Flettons pit, used for brick manufacture until 1970



Enjoying the peace and quiet

Bletchley's Surprise

Tucked out of sight
a hidden park
surprised us with its charm.
This undramatic quiet space
exudes its soothing balm.



Entrance sign with graffiti



Reserve sign with Bletchley brick



View towards Milton Keynes across the Blue Lagoon



Meadow on the east side of the reserve



Good wheelchair access



Grassy trail between the lakes



Brimstone (f) roosting in May



Common Blue (m) between the lakes



Common Blue (m) between the Lakes in May



Common Blue (f) with damaged wing

LOCATION

Parking (Entrance) SP 871325 OS Map

Immediately south of Bletchley railway station. The easiest access is from the A5. Leave the A5 at its junction with the A4146, just north of Little Brickhill. Go east until the second roundabout, where you fork right. At the next roundabout, turn right onto Drayton Road and follow this for about a mile before turning sharp left onto a narrow road into the reserve. This passes under a large brick archway in the railway viaduct. There is a good car park and picnic area, and the site is suitable for wheelchairs, but there are no other facilities. These are available at Bletchley Park, the WW2 National Codes and Cipher Centre. This museum, which is open daily, is only about a mile away, next to Bletchley railway station. Its entrance is in Sherwood Drive.