

## Activities all year round

**ORIENTEERING** – Ham Hill Country Park has a permanent orienteering course – this involves using a special map with a key to find lots of markers and recording the numbers written on them.

## The Friends of Ham Hill

Ham Hill Country Park has a well established and extremely valuable 'Friends' group that support the work of the Rangers by working to conserve, improve, and celebrate Ham Hill Country Park. Every year the Friends assist the Ranger team in organising and running events. They also help to raise funds for the Country Park, which fund various things such as part funding a casual seasonal ranger post and buying equipment for educational activities such as bug hunting nets and trays, and tools for the rangers.



## Geology Trail

This self guided trail takes you to 7 locations that demonstrate particular points of interest about Hamstone or its uses.

Ham Hill gives its name to the golden brown stone called HAMSTONE that you can see all around you.

It is a type of limestone made under water during the JURASSIC PERIOD some 170 million years ago, when dinosaurs lived. Hamstone is made up of broken shells which sank to the sea floor and became mixed with sand and clay. Eventually this mud dried out and hardened and with added pressure over millions of years layers of stone were created. Rocks made in this way are called SEDIMENTARY rocks. There was also some iron in the mixture which gives Hamstone some of its brown colour.

Visit the website to download all of the above activities:  
[www.southsomersetcountryside.com](http://www.southsomersetcountryside.com)



# A quick guide to Ham Hill Country Park

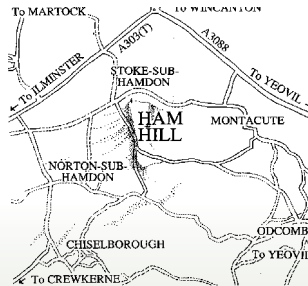


## How to get to Ham Hill Country Park:

Ham Hill Country Park is situated approximately 6 miles west of Yeovil, and a monument is clearly visible from the A303. The villages of Montacute, Stoke sub Hamdon and Norton sub Hamdon lie at the foot of the hill. There are brown tourism signs from the village of Stoke sub Hamdon

For more information or if you have any queries about Ham Hill Country Park please contact the Ham Hill Office on 01935 823617, email [countryside@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@southsomerset.gov.uk) or visit

[www.southsomersetcountryside.com](http://www.southsomersetcountryside.com)



If you need this information in large print, Braille, audio or another language, please contact 01935 462462

Este documento encontra-se disponível em português, a pedido. Dokument tem jest na użyczenie u dostawcy w języku polskim.



HAM HILL. STOKE-SUB-HAMDON TA14 6RW

Discover Ham Hill's exciting history, wildlife and geology





### Ham Hill Geology

Ham Hill Country Park is one of the most important geological locations in Somerset. The warm golden Hamstone, a Jurassic shelly limestone, has many special features and is one of the reasons for Ham Hill's exciting past and its current habitats. Hamstone is a limestone composed of crushed up fragments of shells and other sea creatures. The fossils found in the rock include ammonites, which date the stone to 170 million years ago - the Jurassic period. Hamstone is golden in colour, because of iron compounds present in the rock. Look out for beautiful crystals formed naturally in the cracks. Visit the stone circle to see if you can find any fossils and crystals, but please leave them where they are for other people to see.



There is access to several old quarry faces, which includes an LGS and a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These important designations ensure that the Hamstone is preserved for many years to come, and allows geologists and palaeontologists to study it. All the villages surrounding the hill are made from Hamstone, and it has been quarried for nearly 2000 years. The busiest time for quarrying on Ham Hill was 100 - 150 years ago in Victorian times - it would have been very noisy and dusty up here! The Hamstone is still quarried for use in local buildings and sculptures.

### The Countryside Code

On your visit to Ham Hill, please follow 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
- Keep dogs under close control and on a lead in fields of livestock. Please clean up after your dog and use the dog waste bins provided.
- Consider other people using the Country Park
- Please note: Ham Hill is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and on no account should any excavations be undertaken or metal detectors used—it is an offence to do so



### Ham Hill wildlife

Ham Hill is home to a range of wildlife, from large creatures such as deer, badgers and foxes, birds of many different shapes and sizes, right down to butterflies, bees, spiders and ants! The nutrient poor, alkaline soils found across the majority of the

Country Park support a rare type of grassland (called calcareous grassland). The colours change throughout the summer as the yellows, purples and whites of the wildflowers bloom and fade. Butterflies and other insects are frequently seen on warmer, calmer days in this habitat, also attracted to the buddleia shrubs that grow on this more disturbed ground.

In the summer the traditionally managed hay meadows are alive with wildlife. Buttercups, vetches, orchids, cranesbill and many attractive grasses create a wonderful scene, whilst hundreds of insects buzz around them. The tall grasses and flowers of this habitat provide ideal areas for ground nesting birds, and there is a good population of skylarks in these meadows.

There are some wonderful woodlands to explore within the Country Park. In early spring, the woodland floors are a sea of yellow when the lesser celandines are the first flowers to emerge, closely followed by primroses, violets and then in April a carpet of bluebells.

Horses Wood is frequented by Greater Spotted woodpeckers due to the amount of dead trees left standing. This wood is situated in the wide, open area known as Witcombe Valley, which is grazed during the summer months to maintain a tussocky grassland habitat where buzzards can be seen by day, and owls by night. This grassland is also home to green woodpeckers that feed off the ants nests, and many fungi species thrive in the humid grass tussocks.

Walking along the scrub-edged paths from one area to another offers a chance to glimpse a variety of wildlife species, from the beautiful blackthorn blossom of spring, to the prehistoric looking bracken, and hedgerow plants of summer, followed by the browns and reds of Autumn. As you walk along you are likely to see many small hedgerow birds such as robins, blackbirds and finches.



1 WAR MEMORIAL

2 STONE CIRCLE

3 IRON AGE RAMPARTS

4 LIME KILN

5 DEEP QUARRY

6 STRIP LYNCHETS

7 TIME STONES

8 WITCOMBE



Outside Ham Hill Country Park - please stay on clear paths.

## Introduction

Offering superb views across the Somerset countryside, Ham Hill has something for everyone. Large wildflower meadows, peaceful mature woodlands, steeply sloping Iron Age ramparts, and a deserted medieval village all offer fantastic opportunities to explore this unique piece of Somerset countryside. There is an exciting landscape of hilly mounds left from Victorian quarrying on the hill, which makes Ham Hill such an interesting place to come and explore

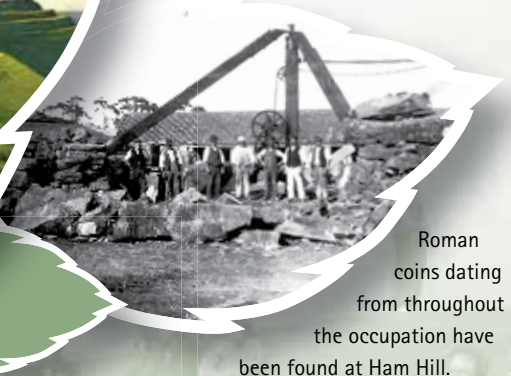
## History

Ham Hill forms part of the **Iron Age hillfort** called Hamdon Hill, the largest of its kind in Great Britain, possibly in Europe! Built between 600BC to 100BC, the earthwork defences (ramparts) are man-made slopes



and ditches that follow the natural contours of the land. The ramparts are almost 5km long, and enclose an area of approx 200 acres (about 100 football pitches!) where people used to live during the Iron Age. Archaeological digs in the early 1900s and recent geophysical surveys have produced some evidence for at least two concentrated areas of occupation on Ham Hill. Roundhouses, trackways and field systems divided up the hillfort's plateau. The hillfort was a busy settlement, with its inhabitants farming the land and trading for goods and weapons.

The **Romans invaded** Ham Hill around 55AD, their occupation has left behind remains such as coins, brooches, roof tiles and pottery. Masses of archaeological evidence has been found relating to the Roman occupation of Ham Hill. The settlements focused on two sites; a military base out near the war memorial and a 19 roomed hamstone villa in the field known as the Warren.



Roman coins dating from throughout the occupation have been found at Ham Hill.

The most significant discovery of coins was of 3 full jars of over 2000 coins, which were found in 1882.

Later on, in **medieval times** (12th – 16th century) there was a village in an area just outside the hillfort called Witcombe Valley. The villagers used to farm the slopes, and every year they used to have a fayre near to where the war memorial now stands.

As well as farming, quarrying was one of the key activities that took place on Ham Hill in the medieval era. Many buildings were made from Hamstone from the 10th to 16th century, especially from 1400 – 1530, the great building age.

In **Victorian times** (1850 onwards) Ham Hill's quarries developed – getting deeper as technology and quarrying methods progressed.

## Education and events

The environment at Ham Hill offers diverse study opportunities that easily link into the National Curriculum and your school/college project. From the Iron Age to Victorians (via the Romans!), and wildlife & habitat studies to erosion and geology – we can offer outdoor, hands on opportunities for your students from pre-school to sixth form. For higher level students we can offer a range of resources such as management plans, visitor surveys and artefacts to enable you to complete independent research projects.

We can provide formal and informal learning opportunities for all groups of all descriptions; from parent & toddler groups and out of school clubs to groups with disabilities, special interest societies and also corporate team building days. There are a range of ways in which everybody can learn and discover more about the fascinating history and wildlife of Ham Hill, either in your own venue or at Ham Hill.

**Contact the ranger team for details and prices. If you wish to be independent our Ham Hill Centre can be hired for your group visit.**

## Rangers

Ham Hill Country Park is managed by a small ranger team and a dedicated group of volunteers. With so many important historical features and habitats within the Country Park, a detailed management plan has been written for the site. As a team we need to make sure that we protect and conserve the geology, archaeology and ecology of Ham Hill, whilst also managing the Country Park for the huge range of visitors it attracts. To find out more about the ranger team go to [www.southsomersetcountryside.com](http://www.southsomersetcountryside.com)



## Volunteers

To manage Ham Hill effectively we need the valuable assistance and support of practical conservation volunteers to help with a variety of tasks. No formal qualifications or experience are needed; all that is required are enthusiasm, some old clothes, a sense of humour, and a willingness to help conserve your local wildlife and heritage. If practical conservation work isn't for you, why not help us lead children's activities, school visits and maybe even help out with wildlife surveying or in the busy Ham Hill office!

If you are interested in getting more involved either by volunteering or by joining the Friends of Ham Hill group, please contact the Ranger's Office on **01935 823617** or email [countryside@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:countryside@southsomerset.gov.uk) Please use the same contact details if you would like to book a ranger led talk/walk/activity session for your school or community group.

