

Bellfield Estate

Heritage / Nature Trail

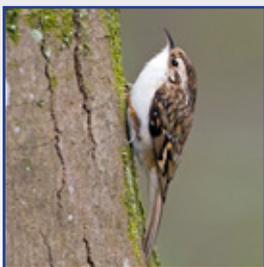
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Site 1 Bird Watch

Robin: With its bright red breast the robin is familiar throughout the year and especially at Christmas. Males and females look identical, and young birds have no red breast. Robins eat worms, seeds, fruits and insects.



Tree Creeper: A Tree Creeper is a very small, very active bird that lives in trees. It has a long, slender, down curved bill. It is brown above and mainly white below. The tree creeper eats insects and spiders. You

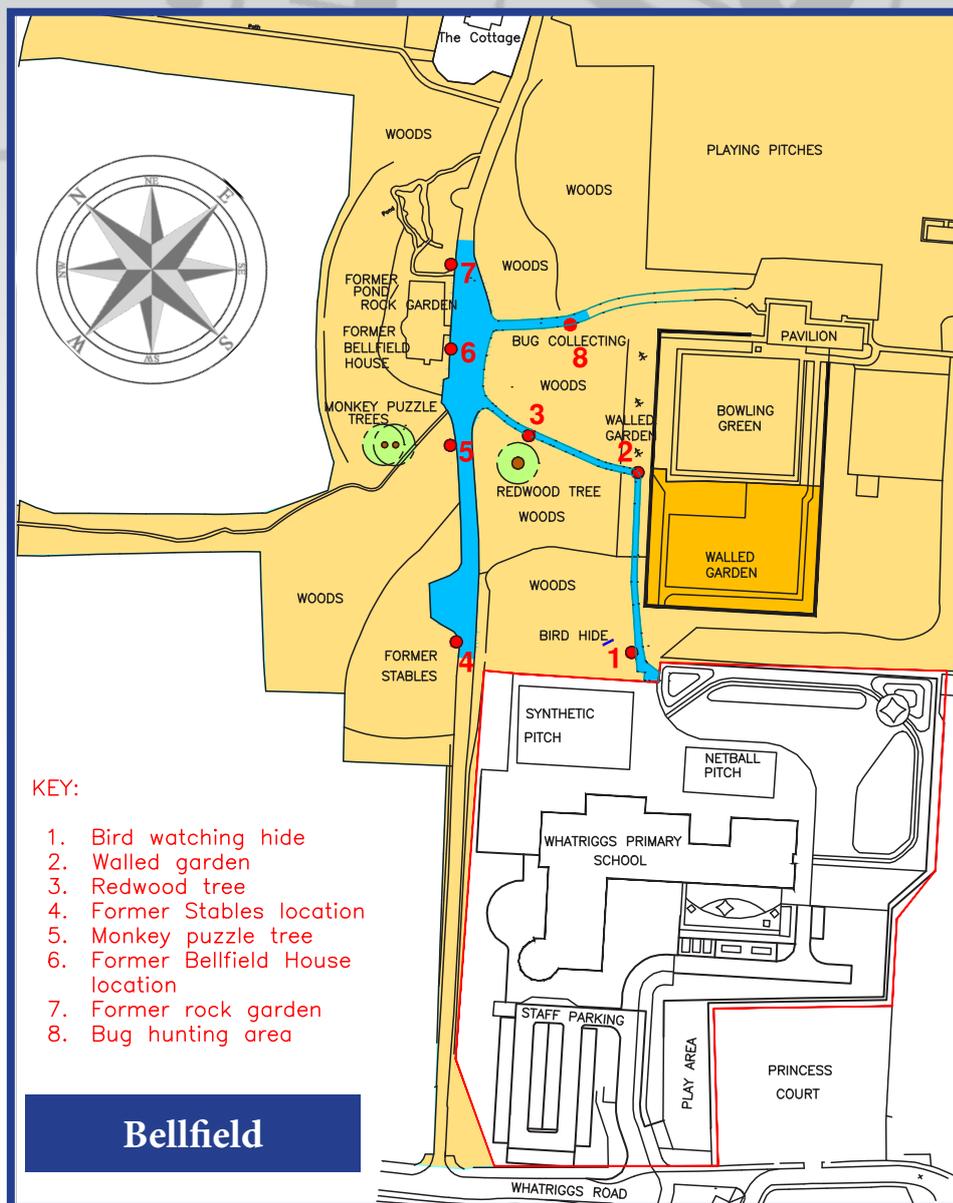


can spot it spiralling up the tree looking for food.

Buzzard: Now the most common and widespread bird of prey in the UK. The buzzard is quite large with broad, rounded wings and a short neck and tail. It eats small mammals, birds and earthworms.



Magpies: Magpies are distinctive because of their black and white feathers; they also have patches of blue and green. They're diet consists of berries and other fruit, they also eat dead animals. They are attracted to shiny things like phones and jewellery, they're fast so they can take them without getting hurt.



Blackbird: Female Blackbirds are often brown with spots and streaks on their breasts; they are the most common birds in UK. The Blackbirds eat insects, worms and berries. Blackbirds are found everywhere in gardens and countryside and from coasts to hills although not on the highest peaks.



Great Tit: The Great Tit is the largest of its kind in the UK and distinctive two syllable song. It is adapted to man-made habitats. The family that they come from are called Paridae, its scientific name is Parus Major. They eat insects, seeds and nuts.

Site 2 Walled Garden

The high wall that you can see in front of you belonged to the Buchanan sisters, Margaret, Jane and Elizabeth.

It was part of their Walled Garden and you can see the main entrance, which is now bricked up. The wall kept intruders and animals out. It had to be a high wall so that the wind, snow and frost didn't affect the exotic plants and destroy them. The walled garden is 87m long and 58m wide. In the picture, there is a glasshouse called a conservatory fixed to the north wall. If you look closely at the picture there is a chimney. The reason for that is there was a separate boiler-house, where water was heated. It was then run through heating pipes round the inside of the conservatory to keep it warm. The conservatory was full of



exotic plants and ferns from different countries around the world.

In the main garden, during the time that the Buchanan's lived in Bellfield, it would have grown apple, pear, quince, greengage, cherry and plum trees. Probably some walnut and hazels perhaps even a couple of sweet chestnuts. It would have been a working garden producing herbs and a full range of vegetables for the kitchen, flowers and ornamental plants for the house and soft fruit like strawberries, raspberries, currants and gooseberries. There was another glasshouse in the garden when the family lived there and it would have been used to grow things like grapes and oranges.

In later years, the garden was for flowers, shrubs and trees – several of these also were from around the world. The gardeners would have tried to keep the garden colourful all year round and in 1953 when Queen Elizabeth II was crowned, the garden was planted out with flowers in all the colours of the Union Flag, red, white and blue.

Now there is a bowling green within the walled garden. There is still an original yew tree in the centre, with red berries. All parts of a yew plant

are poisonous to humans. The roots are thin and the Latin name is *Taxus Baccata*. The yew can grow up to 20 metres high. The yew can live 400 to 600 years; also the yew is probably the most long-lived tree in Northern Europe.



Site 3 Redwood Tree

This Redwood Tree was planted around 1921 in the Bellfield Estate which makes it almost 100 years old, when we measured the circumference – 430cm this ages the tree slightly older. We also measured the height to be approximately 30 metres. Redwood Trees originate from California and can grow up to 116 metres in height. The scientific name for the tree is *Sequoiadendron Giganteum*. The bark of the Giant Redwood Tree is furrowed, fibrous and may be 90cm (almost 3.0 feet) at the columnar trunk.

In East Ayrshire there are around 74 Redwoods. There are two in the Bellfield Estate; one opposite to where the Bellfield house was. This tree could have been brought back from America by one of the Buchanan sisters close friends.

John Muir called Giant Sequoias 'Big Trees' as a nickname.

Your mission is to explore and find the other Redwood in the Estate.

Site 4 Bellfield Stable and Cottages

This is where the Bellfield stables and under gardeners cottage would have been located. One of the grooms, who looked after the horses, lived in



a cottage called the Groom's House. It didn't have a bathroom inside, but there was a separate building at the back of the houses called a 'dry lavatory', which they used. The bedrooms in the house were on the top floor next to the roof and in the winter, when it was very cold, the people who lived in the house moved down to where the fireplace was.

At the back of the cottage there was a well where the groom used to fill up buckets with fresh drinking water for the horses that lived in the stables.

Also at the back of the buildings was the 'bleaching green', where washing for the Mansion House was dried. Modern houses were built on the site around 1952. The stables were located near the first Monkey Puzzle Tree at the right hand side of the south end of the Estate. Behind the stables was a studio that Stuart Park an artist used to create his paintings. This is one of Stuart Park's pieces.



The stables and buildings, which were sited here were demolished in 1970, at the same time as Bellfield House.

There were gates at each end of the driveway and lodge houses inside the gates. At the south entrance you can still see the pieces of sandstone on the ground, which came from the pillars of the original gates. St. Ninian's Church is close to the site of the South Lodge.

Site 5 Monkey Puzzle Trees

In 1874 the Monkey Puzzle Trees were planted for the 3 Buchanan sisters Margaret, Jane, Elizabeth, meaning the trees could be as old as 144 years.



The Monkey Puzzle Trees can live up to be 1000 years old. The Latin for this is Araucaria Araucana. Monkey Puzzle Trees are thought to have been alive 200 million years ago.

Araucaria Araucana is a stately evergreen tree with branches clothed in sharply pointed, triangular dark green leaves. Mature plants may bear cones on the upper branches, male and female usually on separate trees. The Monkey Puzzle Tree has myths;

If you walk past a Monkey Puzzle Tree you have to be silent because a devil lives in the tree and if you disturb the devil it will give you a monkey's tail!

A view of the Monkey Puzzle Trees – you can just see one peeking out behind the other!

Site 6 Bellfield House

Bellfield House and Estate belonged to the three Buchanan Sisters, Margaret, Jane and Elizabeth. After the death of their father George Buchanan of Woodlands, they bought the house from Kilmarnock Postmaster James Fairlie of Holmes. They were a wealthy family from Glasgow. With the death of the last sister, Elizabeth in 1875, Bellfield House with its well stocked library



was given to the town along with substantial bequest. The gift also included gardens and an Estate of around 253 acres, Riccarton Mill and Kaimshill Farm. The sisters had not married and had no children to pass on their wealth on to.

Bellfield House and grounds were opened to the public in 1876. Throughout the years people believed that Bellfield House was haunted by a ghost. People from Kilmarnock used to enjoy walking from the town through the Estate. Sunday was a favourite when people wore their best clothes to church. In 1939 an extension called the Loggia was built, to be used for later wedding receptions and as a tearoom.

There was tremendous pressure on housing in the post war years and in the 1950s homes began to be built in the grounds. A new church was needed. Services were held in Bellfield House until the new parish church was built.

In September 1970, after years of neglect and lack of maintenance, Bellfield House was sadly demolished.



Layout: *On the Ground Floor* there was a supply room, two storage rooms, drawing room, kitchen – originally the library, dining room, and a bathroom.

On the 1st Floor there was one bedroom with en suite (originally dressing rooms), two bedrooms, two storage rooms, and a bathroom (later addition – originally the house had no internal plumbing. water came from an outside well, and was carried upstairs by the staff).

In the Basement there was the Butler's flat, the main kitchens and storerooms.

In the Attic there were five rooms (originally probably for staff & servants).

Site 7 Rock Garden

The Rock Garden had a pond where you could find alpine plants, pond plants, water lilies, algae and very long grass. Large goldfish were introduced into the pond by the head gardener's wife in the 1930s. The pond wasn't very big or deep but there was a small bridge to walk over where you could watch the fish. The pond was located to the right side of Bellfield House, as you face it.



The Rock Garden was also known as a Rocky Garden. Plants found in the Rock Garden would have been small and did not grow any higher than 1 metre. The Rock Garden was created in the 1930s. The remains of the sandstone wall at the Rock Garden measure 9 metres in length and 4 or 5 stones tall. The pond was drained in the 1950s as children kept falling into it. Around the end of the 1900s it was dangerous because a lot of the large stones had become loose, so the pond area was filled in. Today, you can still see the remains of the path leading into the Rock Garden. The path leading to the garden was made out of stone slabs and you can still see where the pond used to be.

Next to the Rock Garden area, on the driveway is a small semi-circle where a drinking fountain used to be. You can still see the base of the metal pipe where it comes out of the ground.

Site 8 Bug Hunt

Bug hunts are easy and so much fun. We have listed some things you might need to have an amazing bug hunt!!

1. You'll need a clear plastic tub or jam jar with air holes.
2. Tweezers for picking up creepy crawlies.
3. Camera or sketchbook and pencil for recording your findings, so you can search up what you found.
4. Hand wash gel / sanitiser, in case you touch anything.
5. Magnifying glass. (optional)
6. Check under rocks and logs to find smaller bugs but make sure to be careful.

When you find a bug make sure to put it back in its natural habitat as it is happy there.

We went on a bug hunt and it was so much fun and we made sure not to hurt the bugs whilst picking them up.

What you can expect to find:

Ladybirds:

1. Ladybirds are identical on both sides of their wings.
2. You can't tell a ladybird's age by counting the spots on their wings.
3. They are commonly yellow, orange, or red with small black spots on their wing covers, with black legs, heads and antennae.
4. During flight, the wings of a ladybird will beat a staggering 85 times per second.

An adult ladybird may eat over 5,000 aphids during its lifetime (about a year).



Centipede:

1. Although centipede bites may be painful, they are rarely fatal.
2. Centipedes have one pair of legs on each body segment, while millipedes have two pairs.
3. Legs on the first body segment are not used for walking. They are modified into venomous fangs.
4. Centipedes can detach some of the legs to escape from the predators.
5. Centipedes are nocturnal creatures (active during



the night).

Woodlouse:

1. Woodlice also known as slaters and pillbugs are terrestrial crustaceans.
2. Most species of woodlouse can reach 0.1 to 1.1 inches in length.
3. Their soft bodies are covered on the upper surface with a hard segmented shell.
4. Woodlouse has segmented body and 14 legs.
5. Most species of woodlouse are active during the night (nocturnal).

Caterpillar:

1. A caterpillar has just one job – to eat.
2. Caterpillars increase their body mass by as much as 1,000 times or more.
3. A caterpillar's first meal is usually its eggshell.
4. A caterpillar has as many as 4,000 muscles in its body.

