The Firs

Location

Royal Wootton Bassett SN5 0AJ

Grid ref SU047864

Access The nature trail can be very muddy after wet weather and isn't suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. Dogs on leads are welcome.

Directions

If driving - From Royal Wootton Bassett, head along the B4042 towards Brinkworth. Take first right after motorway underpass to B4696, signposted Ashton Keynes and Cricklade. After 1.25 miles take the first turning left signposted Brinkworth (Wood Lane). The Firs can be found on right after about 0.5 miles. Look for kissing gate and information board. Space for two cars in front of gate.

If using bus - The 31 Malmesbury-Swindon service runs via Callow Hill. From here follow Wood Lane for 1.5 miles. Reserve entrance will be on left. Walk takes approximately 30 minutes. Visit www.wiltshire.gov.uk/parkingtransportandstreets

If cycling - Follow National Cycle Route 254, along Wood Lane. Where cycle route turns left onto Queen Street, continue on Wood Lane. Reserve entrance will be on left. Visit www.sustrans.org.uk

Nearby reserves - Echo Lodge Meadows, Ravensroost Wood

About Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

Our vision is to create a county rich in wildlife and help people live sustainable lifestyles that protect the environment for the benefit of everyone.

We have about 18,500 members, look after almost 40 nature reserves, are supported by hundreds of volunteers, and work with local communities, schools, businesses and public bodies to achieve our aims. To do all this we rely on the support of our members.

If you would like to join us, or to find out about how you can help the environment, please visit www.wiltshirewildlife.org

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Front cover: Common puffball, Les Binns
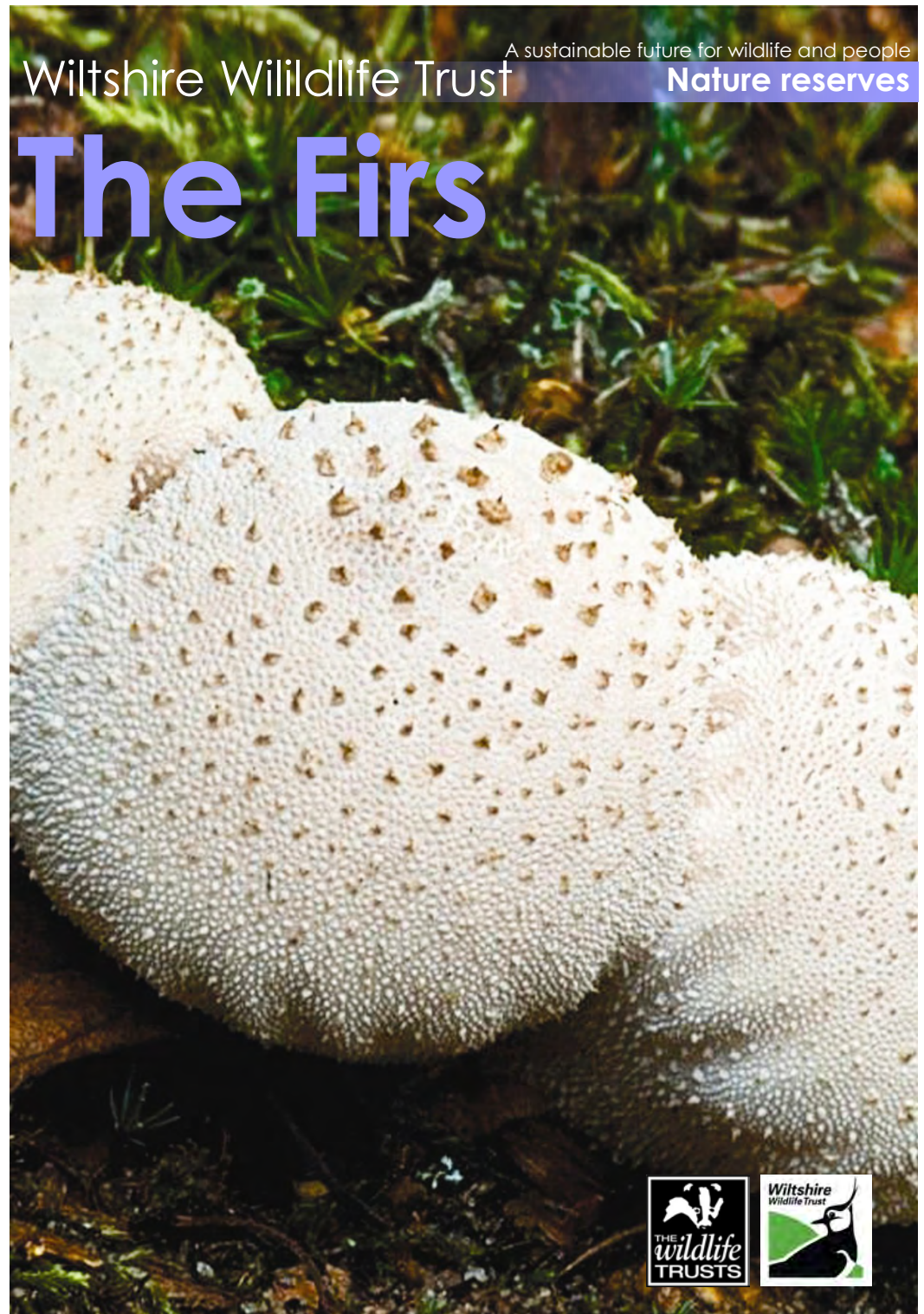
The Firs

11.47 hectares

In this peaceful, secluded pocket of woodland in the heart of what was once the Royal Forest of Braydon you can enjoy a gentle half hour stroll along the circular woodland path and wander down the coppiced central ride (path) to the glade.

Until the beginning of the 19th century the area was open fields. It was planted in the mid-1800s, felled for timber and replanted in the 1920s with oak and ash.

To create open spaces favoured by certain birds and insects we coppice some of the trees along the central ride in rotation. In the rest of the wood we occasionally thin canopy trees to allow oak and ash to grow as large standards.

Wildlife

Wood anemones, primroses and bluebells herald the coming of spring while summer brings the pungent aroma of wild garlic, also known as **ramsons**. The bright crimson heads of ragged robin are speckled among them. Honeysuckle climbs up young trees and shrubs throughout the wood.

Some woodland plants have gradually spread from Webb's Wood, which once adjoined. They include wood sorrel, enchanter's nightshade, sanicle, **guelder rose**, and redcurrant.

The Firs is situated on Oxford clay and the ground is wet for much of the year. Mosses and **ferns** thrive in these damp conditions.

Dead wood is an important habitat in the reserve and birch stumps are especially important for mosses and bracket fungi. In autumn look for small **puffball** fungi on the ground.

Insects and other invertebrates live on this dead wood, providing food for green and **great spotted woodpeckers**. Other birds you may see include tits and **nuthatches**.

In the summer spot ringlet and **meadow brown butterflies** along the central ride where lush grasses provide suitable food plants for their larval offspring.

A rare tree, the small-leaved lime, can be found on the southern boundary bank near the entrance and 200-year old oak pollards stand on the western hedgebank. The uncommon Midland hawthorn also grows in the wood.

KEY

- Reserve boundary
- Woodland
- Clearing
- Information board
- Vehicular gate
- Gate
- Footpath
- Boardwalk
- Track
- Ditch
- Bridge
- Gully
- Pond

Main entrance

0 50m

N

Ramsons, Stephen Davis WWT. Lady fern, Rob Large WWT. Nuthatch, Neil Aldridge

Meadow brown, Nick Upton. Great spotted woodpecker, Darin Smith. Guelder rose, Steve Day WWT