

# Hollins Vale Local Nature Reserve

## THE VALE GRASSLAND

The grassland is effectively managed by the cattle, and receives no fertiliser or herbicide. The grazing is not so intense as to degrade the land, but does hold back scrub encroachment. Much of the Vale has been grazed and managed like this for many years and a diverse sward, full of wildflowers is the result.

The most diverse flora occurs where water springs from the steep scarp forming a boggy "flush". These flushes support carpets of Marsh Marigold, Marsh Violet, Marsh Valerian and Meadowsweet in season, just like wet meadows should.

Old maps show more woodland on the steeper slopes of the vale than there is at present, however there are scattered trees in the valley bottom especially along Hollins Brook, giving an extra boost to the habitat diversity.

## BIRDLIFE

Linnet and Reed Bunting nest in gorse and bramble patches in the valley bottom. Snipe and the declining Grey Partridge are occasionally seen taking flight from rushy areas. Wood Mice and Shrews go about their business unseen in the tall vegetation and the hedge bottoms.

Such a diversity of birds and small mammals attract predators; Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Buzzard and Tawny Owl have all been recorded here. There are also Weasels and Stoats, but they are rarely seen.



## THE 'COFFIN' FIELDS



The flatter areas of the upper fields, known by some as the Coffin site were ploughed to grow potatoes in the past and are now slowly regaining their diversity. The dry, steep slopes where the plough and

fertilizer did not reach harbour grassland plants such as Bird's Foot trefoil, Devil's Bit Scabious, Pignut and Harebell. These plants will slowly spread back to the rest of the fields if nutrient levels are allowed to slowly fall.

## HEDGES



Old hedges on the upper fields are managed and some new ones have been planted by the Hollins Conservation Group. These provide "corridors" of shelter connecting different parts of the reserve. In autumn and winter Redwings and Fieldfares gorge on the Hawthorn berries, and many common birds use the hedges for shelter, food and nesting.

## CHANGE

There have been losses and gains in wildlife since the M66 came in the 1970's.

Skylark and Lapwing no longer nest here, Hares have disappeared and Wall Brown and Small Copper butterflies are now very rare.

On the positive side several species of butterflies have moved in: Small Skippers and Speckled Wood are now abundant, and there are recent sightings of Common Blue, Holly Blue and Brimstone. None of these species were recorded here before the mid 1990's. Rabbits also seem to be re-establishing themselves after an absence of about 20 years.

a walk in

# Hollins Vale local nature reserve



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## INTRODUCTION

In contrast to Bury's other Local Nature Reserves (LNR) most of Hollins Vale LNR is grazing land, some of which has been designated as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI).

Other habitats includes Hollins Brook, Hollins Plantation (approx. 2 hectares of woodland), old and new hedgerows, bramble and gorse scrub, and recently planted woodland.

## HOLLINS PLANTATION

Hollins Plantation is an SBI in its own right. Most of the Plantation was planted probably about 120 years ago, but the abundance of Bluebells and Lesser Celandines indicate that there has been some woodland cover here since ancient times. Small patches of Wood Speedwell, Wood Anemone and Violets are worth searching out in spring, not least because of the chorus of birdsong here at this time of year.

The wood was threatened by a motorway proposal in the 1990's, but local groups fought the proposal and some members continued under the name of the Hollins Conservation Group to manage the Plantation.



Pond Dipping

The group is still active today and was at the forefront of encouraging Bury MBC to create Local Nature Reserves.

They organise their annual Go Wild! Day a family activity day to promote the nature reserve and the wildlife that can be found within it.

Some of the popular events that take place include pond dipping and guided walks led by members of the conservation group.

## THE CUT

Although the area was substantially rural until the coming of the M66 in the 1970's, the Vale has been touched by much earlier development, specifically the canal-like lodge, "The Cut", which is part of the Hollins Vale Works, just outside the reserve to the west. A glue factory here was recently shut down, but a fragrance factory still survives.



'The Cut'

The Cut, managed by Unsworth Anglers, teems with Dragonflies and Damselflies in the summer.

It is also a major breeding site for Common Toad. Herons and Kingfishers are regular visitors, and Mallard, Moorhen and Coot nest here.

The Site of Biological Importance (SBI) status is mostly due to the diversity of the waterside plants; Tufted Loosestrife and Greater Spearwort being particularly unusual, so this lodge is a very positive legacy of the valley's industrial past.



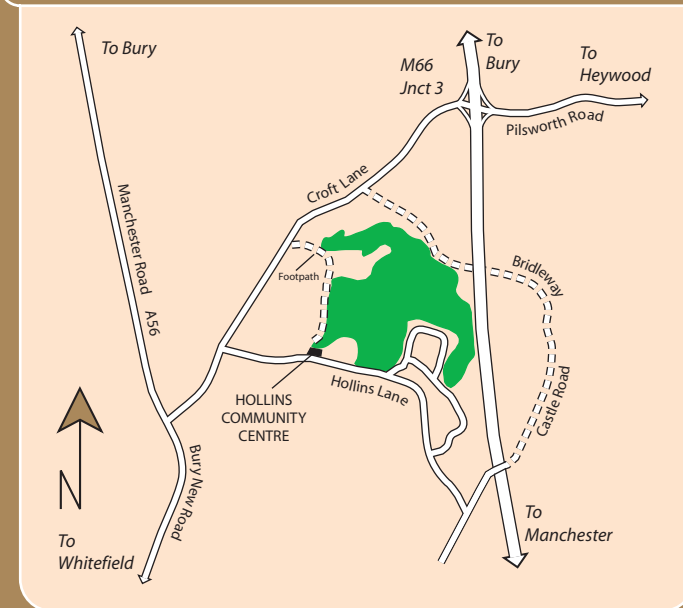
Hollins Brook

# Hollins Vale LNR

Hollins Vale is primarily a farmland reserve, with areas of woodland and wetland adding to its wildlife diversity. It lies between Bury and Whitefield not far from the Pilsworth Industrial Estate.

It is managed by Hollins Conservation Group and Bury MBC with the help of the BTCV and around 50 cows. The site is partly owned by Bury MBC and partly by Viridor Waste Management Ltd.

## HOW TO GET THERE



The reserve is best approached on foot from Hollins Lane either along the access road by the side of Hollins Community Centre or through the Church Meadow estate. There are no public car parks in Hollins and limited on road parking. The 137 bus service from Bury Interchange to Manchester, stops at various points along Hollins Lane.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the reserve and how you can get involved, ring the Local Nature Reserve Officer on 0161 253 7668

This leaflet has been produced by the Hollins Conservation Group, with the assistance of Living Spaces and Bury MBC.

# A Walk in Hollins Vale

We suggest that you explore the Vale from either Church Meadows or The Hags. Please note that some of the public footpaths in the Vale are not clearly defined on the ground. Walkers are also requested not to disturb anglers and to keep dogs on a lead if livestock are present.

## 2. New Plantation

Only trees grown from locally collected seed were used in the creation of this extension to Hollins Plantation. They were planted in 1999 by volunteers from the BTCV and Hollins Conservation Group.

## 3. Hollins Brook

Formed by the joining of the Whittle and Brightley Brooks, this tributary of the Roch, has a pleasant and natural meandering form through the Vale. Unfortunately it has only a fair general quality rating mainly because there is less life in the Brook than you would expect given the relatively low levels of phosphate and nitrate pollution.

## 4. 'The Cut'

This old mill lodge supplied water to the Hollins Vale Works up until the recent closure of Borden's. Built at least 160 years ago, the Cut as it is known locally is a popular angling lodge and important wildlife site.

## 1. Hollins Plantation

Trees were planted some time between 1848 and 1893 on the slopes of this small tributary of the Hollins Brook. The large willows, many now dead or dying, pre-date the oaks that now characterise the plantation.

## 6. Coffin Site

These fields gaining their name from the aerial layout of the farm fields, prior to the building of the Church Meadows estate are of relatively low ecological interest having been improved for agriculture in the relatively recent past. They are also unusual in a Bury context in that the current field boundaries were laid out after the first edition of the OS map was issued in 1848.

## 5. Vale Scarp

The steepness of this south facing slope has deterred any attempts to agriculturally improve the sward. The result is a botanically rich, mosaic of dry acid grassland, neutral flushes and scrub.

## 7. Hedgerows

These hedgerows are typical of late 18th and 19th century hedgerows in that they are straight and primarily consisting of hawthorn. Local volunteers have also planted a new hedge along the Hags and laid the main north to south running hedgerow, a traditional management technique, in recent years.

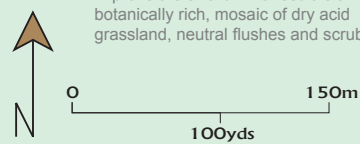
## 8. New Permissive Path

Funding from Living Spaces in 2005 has enabled Bury MBC and Viridor to create this new permissive path across their land from the Hags to the Vale enabling walkers to avoid the need to walk, through the Hollins Vale Works.

## 9. Haweswater Aqueduct

Built in the 1930's to provide water for Greater Manchester in conjunction with the older Thirlmere Aqueduct, the Haweswater Aqueduct crosses the site on route to Heaton Park Reservoir. Its route is indicated by the pipes crossing the Hollins Brook and the locked pedestrian gates in the hedgerows of the coffin site.

KEY		
LNR Boundary		Woodland
Footpath		Waterbodies
Permissive Path		Marsh
Fence		Hedgerows



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