

# Recreation

The nature park offers an extensive network of paths, where walkers, cyclists and horse riders can enjoy the panoramic views of Oldham's hills. There are a variety of walks and paths suitable for all abilities.

Oldham Cycle Way passes through the Breeze Hill section of the park on well-made surfaces.

Horse riders can also explore a number of paths in Leesbrook and can spend the day trekking through the Medlock Valley to Strinesdale and beyond. Cyclists and horse riders are asked to be considerate of other users.

Platforms at Bank Top and Breezehill ponds provide an opportunity to pond dip and discover all sorts of creatures that live on and under the water. Please be careful near the water.

Other activities you can enjoy are picnicking, bird watching, kite flying, jogging and also exploring the history of Leesbrook and the magnificent views.



# How to find us

- ON FOOT**  
There are many routes in and around the park (see central map).
- BY CAR**  
Leesbrook is surrounded by an extensive road network including Lees Road, Huddersfield Road, Wellyhole Street, Abbeyhills Road plus many more. There are a number of small car parks located around the area at Constantine Street, Dunham Street and in the centre of Lees. There are also many small quiet roads that cars can park on safely.
- BY BUS**  
The nearest bus stop is on Lees Road to access either side of the park. Additional bus services stop on Abbeyhills Road, Stamford Road/St. John Street and Greenacres Road/Dunham Street. For information about bus timetables log onto [www.gmpte.com](http://www.gmpte.com) or phone 0161 242 6040.
- BY HORSE & CYCLE**  
There are routes within the nature park suitable for both cyclists and horseriders.

Leesbrook Nature Park is a key site in the Pennine Edge Forest. Pennine Edge Forest is a community woodland initiative on the eastern edge of Greater Manchester. The initiative covers the districts of Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport and Tameside and is a partnership formed in 2003 of the four local authorities, Forestry Commission and United Utilities.

Leesbrook Nature Park is joint funded by Oldham Council, Pennine Edge Forest, Forestry Commission, Veolia Environmental Trust and Green Tips.



# History

The history of Leesbrook can be traced back to early settlements in the area in the 14th Century. The name "Lees" means 'pasture of unploughed land', and during medieval times was probably used for grazing animals.

In 1794 Lees became renowned as a health resort, almost overnight, when a Dr. Walker of Huddersfield boldly proclaimed the virtues of the 'Lees Fountain of Health'. It was considered that a walk down the 'Spa' by the brook towards Hopkin Mill was beneficial to health and people flocked to Lees in droves, with over 60,000 visitors in August 1821. We can still see evidence of this legacy today in the street names such as Spring Lane and Spa Lane.

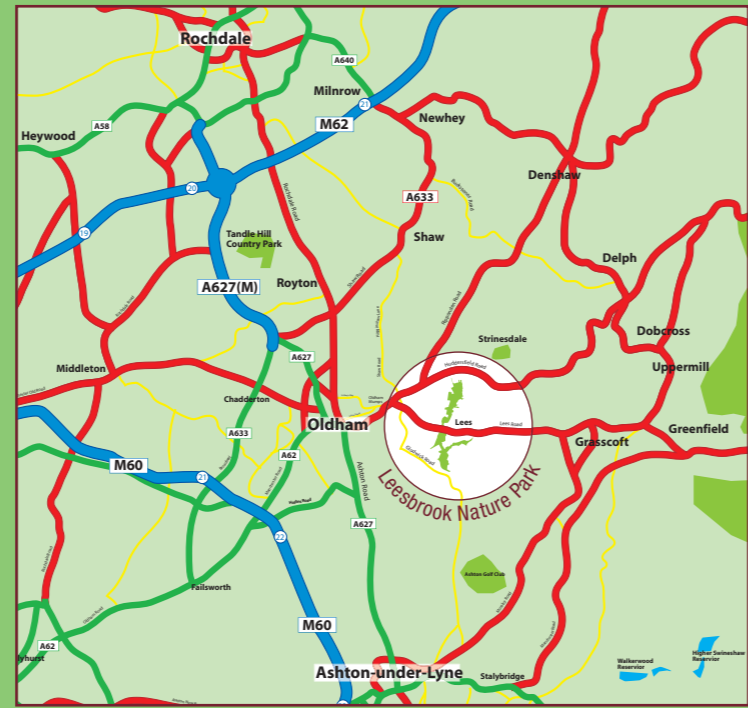


Leesbrook Mill formed part of the thriving cotton industry in the early 19th Century. Can you spot the blue plaque that recognises one of its former workers, Annie Kenney, born in Springhead in 1879? She became a leading suffragette campaigning for votes for women and was the only working-class woman to become part of the senior hierarchy of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).

In 1938 the north of the park became a neighbour to one of the first Prisoner of War camps, situated in an old cotton mill, on Wellyhole Street. Oldham was a transfer point and holding depot for German prisoners being sent to and from Canada in the Second World War. In 1950 the camp was taken over for rubber manufacturing. Today the mills are gone and an industrial works occupies most of the site.

Until the park's reclamation in the 1970's, Leesbrook was used as a landfill site and bottle tip. In 1976 the south section of the park was developed into Holts Valley Golf Course, which was only open for a short period of time and was closed in 1988. After the closure the area grew into a more natural green space and is taking shape into the park we know today.

**You can contact the Parks and Countryside Service at:**  
**THE STRINESDALE CENTRE,**  
 The Old Waterworks, Holgate Street, Waterhead, Oldham, OL4 2JW.  
 This is the head office, someone is usually available to help with enquiries  
 9.30am - 3pm Monday to Friday Tel. 0161 620 8202  
 email: [env.rangers@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:env.rangers@oldham.gov.uk)

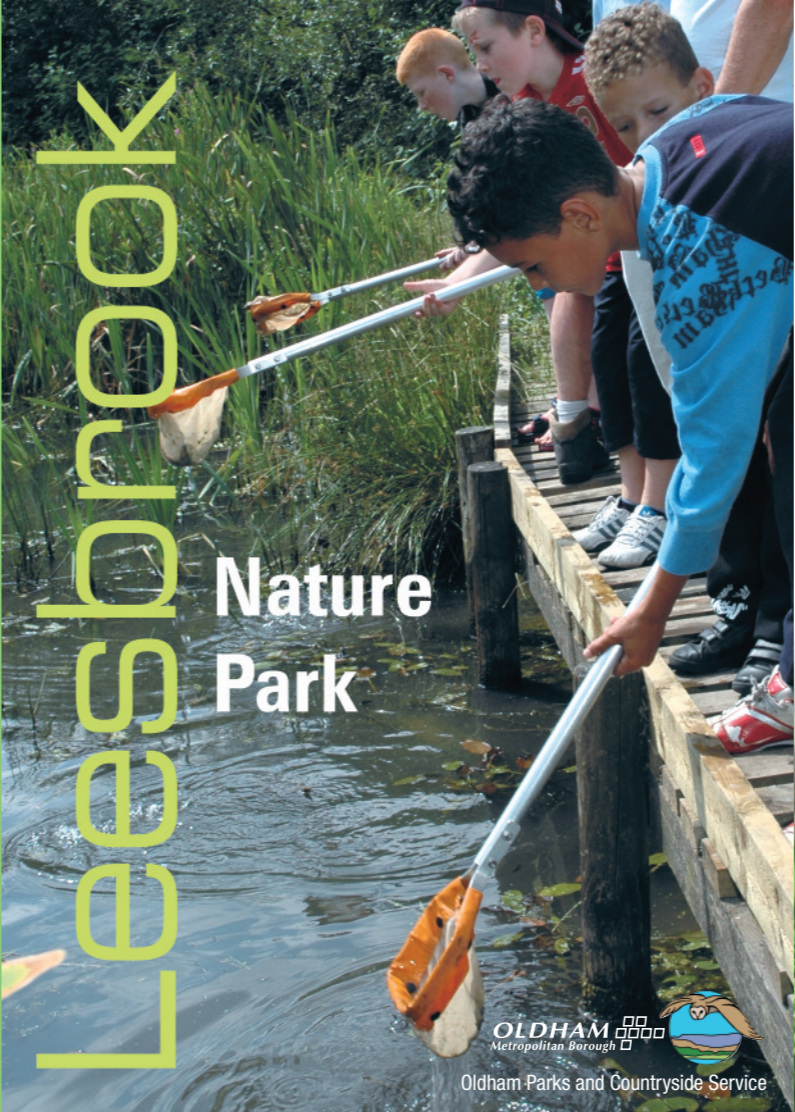


# Recent Developments

Work first began in Leesbrook Nature Park in the 1970's when the area was reclaimed and brought into public use. The Medlock Valley Warden Service then managed the area, with tree planting and footpaths being constructed. The Fox and the Owl Sculpture on Lees Road was the result of an arts project involving local schools and was officially opened on 26th April 1995.

The latest improvements started in 2004 and include footpath resurfacing, pond clearance, woodland improvements, wildflower meadow planting, installation of bins and benches, access enhancements to promote more use the nature park and installation of site and route signs to guide and inform visitors. Work is on going with many exciting improvements being planned for the next few years.

There are many opportunities for the community and schools to become involved in the nature park, through Family Fun Days, school workshops, guided walks, and volunteer roles. There will be more to come as the park develops.



# Wildlife

Leesbrook Nature Park has a rich variety of habitats supporting an abundance of wildlife. The River Medlock is home for many different invertebrates, which then in turn provide food for a number of fish and birds such as the dipper. In the ponds you can find frogs, newts, damselflies and the occasional heron. In the woodlands trees such as willow, alder and oak support many animals and birds including bats, owls and robins.

The wildflower meadows will provide food, plants and nectar for many invertebrates including butterflies, such as the small tortoiseshell and peacock, and for bees. If you see anything rare or unusual let us know, as it will contribute to the wildlife records for the area.



# Welcome to Leesbrook Nature Park

Leesbrook Nature Park, in the heart of the Medlock Valley was once renowned as the 'Spa of the North' and is now a valuable area of public open space and a haven for wildlife.

The nature park follows the valley of the River Medlock consisting of a network of sites including Constantine Street, Bank Top, Breeze Hill and Holts. Each site has its own unique character, from deep wooded valley bottoms to open meadows with great views to the Pennines.

Oldham Parks and Countryside Service manages Leesbrook Nature Park. They aim to provide a balance between the needs of people using the site for recreation and leisure and the wildlife habitats.

The service has undertaken improvements to several areas of the nature park, but there is still much more work to be done in the coming years.

**Remember:**  
*'Take nothing but memories and photographs, leave nothing but footprints'*





- Road
- Footpath
- Bridleway
- Leesbrook Nature Park
- Access Points
- Horse & Cycle Access
- Wooded Areas
- River Medlock
- Wildflower Meadows
- Pond



Leesbrook Nature Park