

Waterdale

HISTORY

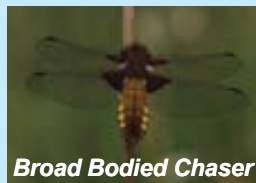
It is likely that Waterdale was farmland up until the end of the 18th Century. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution, factories were built on both of the tributaries of the Irwell that cross the reserve. The Waterdale dye works on Bradley Brook was probably built first, just to the south of the reserve around 1783. Dams Head Lodge, the main reservoir supplying the dye works was built sometime between 1783 and 1817. Molyneux Mill (later known as Outwood Bleach works), on the stream flowing from North Wood, was present by 1837.



A few years later during the railway boom, the Clifton to Accrington railway line was built, involving the construction of Clifton (Thirteen Arches) Viaduct across the Irwell in 1846. Next to the railway viaduct, on the edge of the reserve, is Clifton Aqueduct, built in 1796 to carry the Manchester Bolton and Bury Canal across the Irwell. Surprisingly, despite the industrialisation, the walk along the river from Bradley Brook to the Clifton Aqueduct was a popular Sunday 'promenade' in the Victorian and Edwardian eras. There was even a tea room near Red Rocks!

Motorway construction spoil and subsequent landscaping of the demolished factory sites has buried or removed many earlier features. Now only the mill lodges and the bridges remain, the latter both grade 2 listed structures.

WILDLIFE

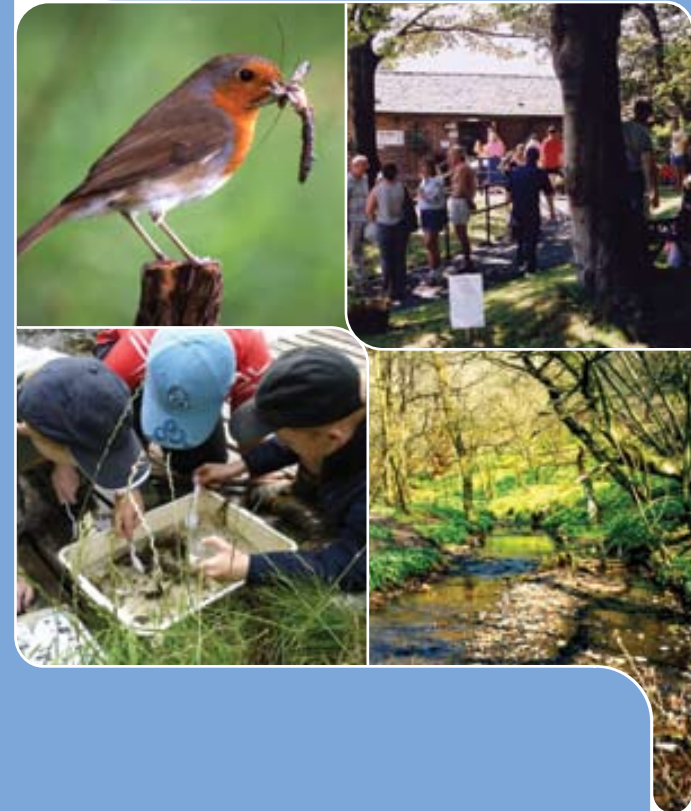


The entire Waterdale area other than the sandstone outcrops along the River Irwell has been heavily modified by man. However, wildlife adapts; Waterdale's main wildlife assets, the mill lodges at Kingfisher and Dams Head are man-made. They are of regional wildlife importance, abounding with some of the largest toad populations in the Borough, breeding mute swans, coots and mallard, and at least eight species of dragon and damselflies such as the broad bodied chaser and brown hawk. If you're really lucky you'll spot our resident terrapins at Dams Head!

Elsewhere in Waterdale, scrub and new woodland planted in the 1990's as part of Bury MBC's contribution to the Red Rose Forest initiative are home to whitethroat, reed bunting and willow warber, whilst kestrels patrol the long grass for voles. Along the Irwell kingfishers may be seen in the summer, whilst in winter small flocks of little grebe and goosander find shelter.

a walk in

Philips Park local nature reserve



redroseforest

Philips Park

HISTORY

The park owes its name to the Philips family who owned the land from 1799 to 1948. They were responsible for the construction of the buildings and for many of the landscape features such as the majestic beech trees, the iron railings and the layout of the fields and paths that can be seen today.



The Philips family retained some earlier natural and manmade features when they set about landscaping the park, the most significant being the ancient woodlands of North Wood, Mid Wood and Mere Clough and a Medieval Deer Pale that marked the southern and eastern boundaries.



The construction of the M62 (M60) in the early 1970's left its mark: much of the valley of North Wood was destroyed, excavation material was deposited on fields and new plantations created below South Wood, along the motorway embankment and on Cobster's Field.

It is intended that the historic features of the park will be preserved and restored to their heyday of around 1890.

WILDLIFE



Bluebells



Woodland



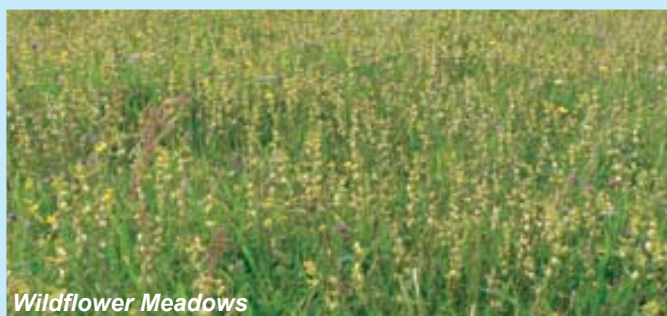
Song Thrush



Ramsons



Painted Lady



Wildflower Meadows

Philips Park has been locally renowned for its woodlands since at least the Victorian period, with local naturalists of the time enthusing over the wildflowers of Asylum (Mere) Clough. Today it is still the woods that mark Philips Park as a regionally important wildlife site; Mere Clough with its celandine and ramsons and Mid Wood with its bluebells, birch and bracken. The woods are also a stronghold for what were once common birds such as song thrush and chiffchaff. These in turn provide an abundant food source for sparrowhawks.

Woodlands do not however provide the only areas of wildlife interest. The farmland and grassland are managed under a Countryside Stewardship agreement and the benefits are starting to show, with wildflowers such as common spotted orchid and yellow rattle spreading across the meadows. These flowers encourage butterflies like the Orange Tip abundant in late Spring, meadow brown, and large and small skippers in mid-summer.

Philips Park LNR

Philips Park Local Nature Reserve is a mosaic of wildlife-rich woodland and grassland habitats on the boundary of Whitefield and Prestwich. Two thirds of the site is what was the Philips family estate and the remainder, known as Waterdale, is Irwell Valley land reclaimed following the demolition of two bleach and dye works.

Various works are in progress or planned to improve the park for wildlife and recreation, co-ordinated by the Friends of Prestwich Forest Park, a group made up of local people and officers of Bury Council.

HOW TO GET THERE



The main entrance to the park is on Park Lane, Whitefield. Limited car parking is available within the park. A 95 bus from Bolton via Radcliffe to Salford runs down Park Lane. Cyclists can approach via Park Lane or the cycle route in the Irwell valley. Pedestrians can approach by several routes such as the footpath down Mere Clough from M60 Junction 17. Horse riders can gain access where the Irwell passes under the M60.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the park and how you can get involved, ring the Local Nature Reserve Officer on 0161 253 7668. This leaflet has been produced by the Friends of Prestwich Forest Park and Bury Council. 2nd edition re-printed June 2006.

A Walk in Philips Park

Two walk options are suggested, a route around Philips Park and a slightly longer route taking in Waterdale. Both the walks shown on the map start from the Play Area. They then take you through the ancient woodlands of Mid Wood and Mere Clough before dividing at Dams Head Lodge, where you have the option of walking down to the River Irwell or taking the old Carriage Track through South Wood. The walks then rejoin at the Formal Gardens before returning along the main drive to the start point.

1. The Barn

Part of the original Estate Farm built by the Philips family around 1840. The Barn was converted with grant assistance from the Countryside Commission, opening in 1996 as an Environmental Education Centre.

2. Beech Trees

Beech trees were fashionable in the 19th Century as a landscape tree. The Philips family followed this fashion, planting the many fine specimens to be seen around the park, like these two by the play area.

3. Mid Wood

The path through Mid Wood would have been well known by the Philips family forming part of a circular woodland walk, now severed by the M60. Mid Wood is ancient oak/birch woodland, with the occasional beech, lime and rhododendron added by the Philips family.

4. Cobsters Field

Spoil was tipped during the construction of the M60 to a depth of several metres. Fifteen years of 'neglect' have led to it being the most important grassland for wildlife on the Park. Grazing was reintroduced in 2003 to stop the spread of willow scrub.

5. Ox Gap

A few courses of brickwork and some stonework is all that remains of the East Lodge. This was probably the main entrance prior to the Philips Family purchasing the site. The lodge was demolished around 1884.

6. Deer Pale

The oldest known structure in the park. It comprises a ditch and earth bank, which would once have carried a fence. It marked the boundary of Pilkington Deer Park, established in 1291, which covered an area that included, Ringley, Stand and Unsworth.

7. Mere Clough and Bradley Brook

Mere Clough is a sharp contrast to Mid Wood, with alder, willow, hazel and ash being more frequent and the ground layer a mass of celandine, and ramsons in spring. The lime, poplars and cherries were planted by Prestwich UDC in the 1960's.

8. Dam's Head Lodge

Dams Head provided water for the Waterdale Dye Works. An interesting feature is the brick built 'glory hole' outfall that takes water back to the Bradley Brook.

9. National Cycle Network Route 6

Cycling Charity Sustrans is co-ordinating a project to develop 10,000 miles of cycle route throughout the country. The Manchester to Preston leg of the Network passes through the Reserve.

10. Thirteen Arches

This viaduct carried the Clifton to Accrington line. Closed in 1966, it is now a grade 2 listed structure.

11. Kingfisher Lodges

These three mill ponds were associated with the Outwood Bleach Works. The platforms on the two smaller lodges are used for pond dipping by local school children.

12. Gardens and Hall

The Park, the Philips family home which stood where the car park is, was demolished in 1950, but the gardens, conservatory and estate buildings can still be seen.

13. Irwell Sculpture Trail

The Irwell Sculpture Trail follows the Irwell for 30 miles from Salford to Bacup. Currently one sculpture is found in the Park, a set of benches around the garden and on the lawn by Paul Bradley called 'Our Seats are almost Touching'.

KEY

Circular Route ———
Sustrans Route ———
Major Pathway ———
Minor Pathway ———
Steep Gradients in excess of 1:10 <<<

Woodland ———
Waterbodies ———
Fence ———
Pylon ———

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