

Two Brooks Valley



TWO BROOKS VALLEY AN INTRODUCTION

The Two Brooks Valley nestles in the triangle of land surrounded by Hawkshaw, Greenmount and Tottington, approximately 4 miles north of Bury town centre. The valley is defined geographically by three main roads, Bolton Road, Turton Road and Holcombe Road and many thousands of drivers pass along these routes each day, unaware that this now quiet and peaceful valley - the proverbial 'backwater', was once a hive of activity, at the hub of industrial progress in this part of Lancashire.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the valley sustained a community in itself, with a number of mills, works, farms and several groups of cottages. The remains of many of these can still be seen within the valley, and the network of public paths in the area is evidence of the previous activity.

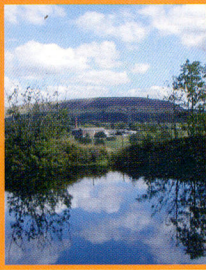
These paths, once busy links for horses, carts, and workers, now provide the opportunity for a leisurely stroll in the delightful setting of woods, brooks, lodges and fields, or for a more in depth exploration of the wildlife, industrial and architectural interest of the valley.

Many paths are already well signposted, and waymarking improvements are being constantly undertaken, but remember that most of them do cross private land, and please consider farmers and landowners in the area. Public footpaths are open for use to all, but please keep to these paths, use stiles and crossings, close gates, and remember to follow the Country Code.

GENERAL ADVICE

Car parking for visitors to the Two Brooks Valley has been provided at Toms Cattery, Three Gates Farm, which can be reached via Turton Road, Tottington and is signposted. The time taken to cover the trail is approximately 1 hour.

This leaflet is one of a number of trails which explore the Borough's natural and built heritage.



Wildlife

The Valley has a great variety of wildlife habitats including grassland, heath, open water and marsh. Species rich ancient oak woodland occurs on some slopes, with thriving populations of bluebells, violets and golden saxifrage. Woodlands with these characteristics are ideal habitats for a variety of birds including the greater spotted woodpecker and tawny owl.

The remnants of the former industrial installations such as the old mill lodges support a variety of plants including water forget-me-not, branched bur-reed and brooklime, which in turn create the habitat for damselflies and dragonflies. Moorhens and coots are common on the open water while kestrels can be seen hovering in search of prey.

The more open grass land areas support communities of bilberry, heather and colourful herbs such as devils bit scabious and tormentil.

Certain parts of the Valley have been officially recognised and protected as Sites of Biological Importance, these are Hawkshaw Brook (containing the former Two Brooks Mill area) and Bottoms Wood.

**PLEASE REFER TO THE PLAN AND
ADVICE AT THE BACK OF THE LEAFLET
FOR INFORMATION ON THE TRAIL**



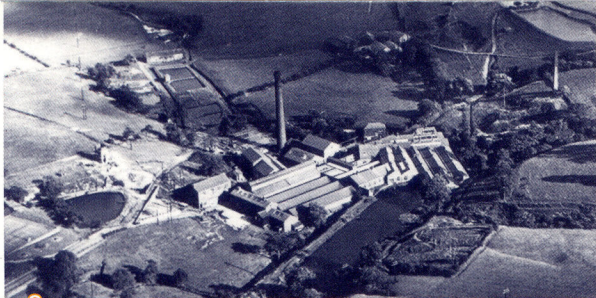
1 - Croich Hey

Croich Hey, in Hawkshaw, was built by Fred Whowell in 1904 as his family home, it took its name from a much older house on the hillside where Top o'th Brow farm now stands. Croich Hey became a local 'Liberty Hall' where Whowell often welcomed people from the village and from further afield. The extensive gardens were the scene of many garden parties, fetes and village gatherings. The tennis courts, bowling green and sports pavilion provided for his employees were yet another instance of his kindness. The building was for many years used as elderly persons home but has since been converted and developed into a number of private residences.

2 - Two Brooks Mill

The mill, in existence since the eighteenth century, was bought by the Whowell family in 1850, and continued the bleaching business which had been established in the mill following its earlier use of producing printed cloth.

Conditions there had never been good, in common with many mills of that time. Unfortunately Charles Whowell did not follow the example set by Samuel Horrocks, the owner of a Bradshaw mill, where conditions were the best in Lancashire. The Royal Commission of 1855 gave a poor report of the mill at Two Brooks. Mary Greenhalgh, one of the women working there, and a William Johnson gave evidence of the long working hours starting at 6am and finishing at 11pm with the Saturday shift ending at midnight. Mary Greenhalgh reported how "little ones fell asleep



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at their work my heart is so sore for them I cannot speak to them".

Two Brooks, although not one of the better mills, was certainly not the worst. Unfortunately bleachworks and calico mills were not effected by the Factory Act of 1833, forbidding the employment of children under 9 years of age. Charles often left the supervision to his manager and claimed he was unaware of all that went on. The complaints of sore legs and aching feet were however preferable to the dangers of the boiler houses in Bottoms Hall Mill and Two Brooks Mill, where in separate incidents in 1858 and 1860 both boilermen were fatally injured in violent explosions.

In 1830, before Charles Whowell arrived, there had been a major bribery scandal at the mill, involving two excise officers. At that time the works were producing printed cloth, on which duty was payable. The excise men had to stamp the cloth and some of the printers got into the habit of plying two officers with free drinks, gifts of salmon and free dresses for their wives.

A stroll through the remains of Two Brooks Mill no longer gives the impression of the scale of the former enterprise, where up to two hundred people were employed at its peak. Closer investigation of the many overgrown remains which are still visible on site in the form of stone walls, slabs, channels and lodges will however give some clues as to the extent of former activity. The mill chimney still stands on the hill side at some distance from the works itself, and was served by a flue which ran underground from the boiler house in the valley bottom.



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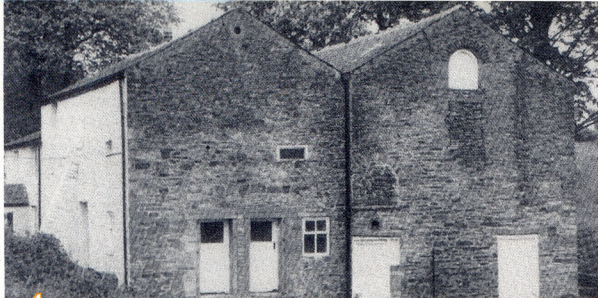
3 - Two Brooks Chimney

The Chimney stood on the hillside overlooking the mill some distance from the actual industrial complex, served by a flue from the boiler house in the valley bottom, which for its location, is very unusual for such a construction within a narrow valley. The mill, boiler house and engine house have been demolished leaving the chimney as the only visual remainder of the working history of the locality.

The construction of the chimney is random coursed sandstone with ashlar quoins on a square plan, measuring 2.8m sq and tapering to a flat, sandstone flag coping at approximately 15.0m high. Having fallen into disrepair over the years, the Chimney has now undergone major restoration works which have secured its long term structural integrity.

The chimney restoration project was made possible with grant assistance from the Pilsworth Environmental Company and the Greening Greater Manchester Fund.





4 - Higher Brook Bottom/Two Brook Farm

The substantial barn and hay-loft of Two Brooks Farm is where, on three successive days in June 1861, a bazaar was held which raised £231 towards the building of the Day and Sunday Schools which opened in 1869 on Hawkshaw Lane.

5 - Site of Former Sunday School

The present church in Hawkshaw, St. Mary's, rose from humblest of origins. During the 1850's local people began to meet for fellowship in a room over a loom shed which then stood on the site of 249 and 251 Bolton Road. It was far from ideal as a place of worship - the room was inadequate, and the occupants of the downstairs room were supposedly antagonistic towards the worshippers and burnt cotton waste as an attempt to disrupt the services.

It was soon deemed necessary to find alternative accommodation. Charles Whowell (owner of Two Brooks Mill) provided one of the two Brook Bottom Cottages for use of church-goers, Sunday School pupils, and for day and evening classes for children and mill workers. Accommodating up to 140 worshippers in its time, would have been an extremely pleasant setting, surrounded by trees and fields, with a stream running nearby.

The cottages were demolished earlier this century, and only overgrown stone footings and uneven ground bear evidence to this early centre for the community. (*see drawing of former sunday school in history section*).



6 - Hawkshaw Brook (SBI)

Hawkshaw Brook has been classed as a Grade A Site of Biological Importance (SBI). This site includes woodland, scrub, acid and neutral grasslands, heath and water bodies associated with the valley of Hawkshaw Brook. A substantial hay meadow north east of Three Gates retains a sward rich in yellow rattle, ribwort, sneezewort, clovers, meadow and creeping buttercups, lady's mock, sorrel, autumnal hawkbit, meadow foxtail, crested dog's tail and Yorkshire fog. The woods are mainly oak-birch with sycamore, ash alder and crack willow. The ground flora includes bluebell, wood sorrel, golden saxifrage but is mainly grassy - wavy hair-grass, creeping soft-grass and common bent.

Lodges, mostly managed by anglers, contain Canadian pondweed, broad-leaved pondweed water startwort, branched bur-reed and reedmace. The aquatic invertebrate fauna appears to be quite rich.

7 - Bottom Hall Cottage & Former Factory

Little is known of this factory with the exception of entries in the 1811 census, where James Rothwell is recorded as owner, and the 1881 census showing ownership by James Holt and Company. The surviving and occupied Bottoms Hall Cottages pinpoint the vicinity of the former works, and indications are still apparent on site of the installations associated with factories of the time.



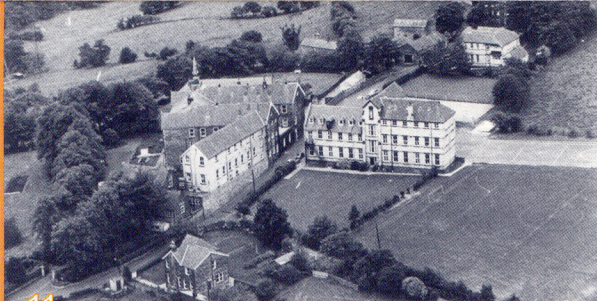
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8 - Bottoms Hall Wood (SBI)

Bottoms Hall Wood has been classed as a Grade B Site of Biological Importance (SBI). This complex of habitats includes areas of mature woodland, scrub, carr woodland, marsh and acid grassland/heath matrix. The wooded areas range from recently developed secondary woodland and areas that have the character of long established woodland. In the more open areas a mosaic of acid grassland and heath occurs. The ground flora is typical of acid oak woodlands, with locally dominant wavy hair grass, other species include frequent creeping soft-grass, bilberry, heather and wood sorrel with abundant bluebell and bramble. The habitat is also home to many woodland birds, including the Jay, blue and great tit, several species of warbler, great spotted woodpecker and tawny owl.

9 - Croichley Fold

A Grade 2 Listed Building comprising an 18th Century exterior around an earlier cruck-framed structure. This is possibly an early barn which was converted into weavers cottages, which were a typical feature of this area during the early years of the industrial revolution. A tradition of monks staying here on their way to Whalley Abbey could relate to the ownership of land hereabouts by that institution, while by 1516 'Croichlow' was in the possession of Henry, heir of the de Bury family, who were formerly Lords of the Manor of Bury. A legend of an early church and burial ground here could represent a distant folk memory of a prehistoric burial site in the locality.



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10 - Bleaklow Mill

This mill was built by the Fletchers of Bleaklow Hall around 1850 and subsequently passed to the Rigg family in the late 1870's, who themselves took occupation of the hall in 1883. The mill was known over time as both 'Fletchers' and 'Riggs', and produced several types of cotton cloth of a fine quality. The business was transferred to Malta in 1962, when the buildings were purchased by a dyeing company.

11 - Holly Mount

Holly Mount was built in the 1860's and run by its founders Messrs Hudson and Hainsworth, as a 'College for Young Gentlemen' but was forced into closure in 1885. It was reopened in 1888 as a Convent and Poor Law School, pioneered by the Sisters of Charity of Jesus and Mary, from Belgium. By 1897 the Chapel, the school and several brick buildings had been added. Claremont House was purchased in 1904 and the following year it became a private secondary day and boarding school. A nursery training school opened, and a farm of 50 acres was acquired. A new hostel was completed in 1914 to serve as temporary accommodation for Holly Mount pupils.

Since that time the complex has extended its services to refugees as an Auxiliary Hospital to wounded and sick Allied soldiers. Mother Mary Duggan was awarded with the 'Queen Elizabeth Medal', and an OBE for her work during this time.



The Spanish Civil war left its own mark with Basque children being temporarily placed here, and World War II brought refugees from Manchester and the Channel Islands as well as displaced German and Austrian Jews.

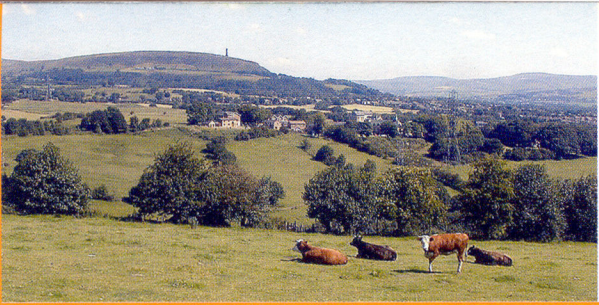
The residential school, the orphanage, and the retirement home that occupied parts of the complex in its post war years have now gone, leaving only Catholic Primary day school, and the new homes in the refurbished older buildings as links with the past.

12 - Greenhalgh Fold

A Grade 2 Listed Building dating from the 17th or 18th Century. A datestone above the door reads

G B T B 1 7 4 4

and may well have been placed there by the original builder. It was common for those commissioning building work at the time to have both husbands and wives initials cut into the datestone, and these could relate to several wealthy families in the area at that time - the Barons, Booths, Bentleys, Brooks, Bridges. The building probably derived its name from its occupation by a branch of the ancient Greenhalgh family of Brandlesholme who are likely to have been in occupation prior to the datestone. Other families living in and around the fold, then a hamlet, were likely to have been employed as hand loom weavers, a prominent trade in the early 19th Century.

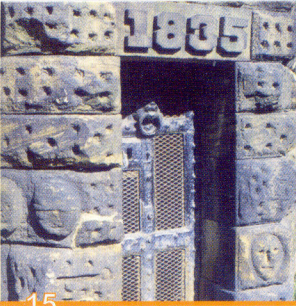


13 - Ferns Mill and Cottages

The mill was originally owned by Edward Smalley, and following his death, was passed on to his son-in-law, Arthur Potter, who carried on the family business. The mill subsequently became known as the 'Potter Factory'. Built for cotton spinning, the mill was originally powered by a small waterwheel, and was subsequently one of the first factories to produce its own gas to power the new gas engines of the 1860's. Despite these innovations the business was unable to stave off the fierce competition of the 'Oldham Limiteds', and the mill was disused by 1900. The site is now marked only by uneven ground, and the rubble remains of the nearby cottages - used by evacuees in wartime. One of the two mill lodges remains albeit somewhat overgrown, the other having been infilled.

14 - Stormer Hill

At the eastern end of the valley, adjacent Holcombe Road lies Stormer Hill House built by the Smalley family in the 18th Century and regarded as one of the most elegant and well proportion houses in the area. It has two notable features, firstly a pair of large fire-place surrounds built from intricately carved wooden printing blocks from Knowles' Printworks in the Kirklees Valley, and secondly, an underground Ice House where ice, cut from ponds in winter, was buried, wrapped in straw, for use in the following months.



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15 - The Dungeon

The Dungeon in Turton Road was built during the Industrial Revolution and is now a Grade II Listed Building. It is broadly hexagonal with the south east facing side forming the doorway face. It is constructed from large roughly cut stone blocks, some of which are carved with human faces, and others small holes carved in the stone face. It would have been used for cooling-off village drunks or the temporary incarceration of offenders prior to their appearance in court. Although once well used the Dungeon is now a curiosity for visitors.

16 - Whitehead Gardens

Whitehead Gardens was established on the site of terraced houses, which were hit by a bomb in World War II, Christmas Eve 1944. A donation from the Whitehead Family helped build the park, whose other gifts to the town are Elton Recreation Ground which opened in 1886, and Whitehead Memorial Tower, in memory of Walter Whitehead 1914.

17 - Old Kays Park

The Family Tree Scheme, introduced by the Tree Council, has a designated plot at Old Kays Park. The scheme commemorates a very special person or marks a significant occasion by helping to create new woodlands throughout the UK.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been possible within this leaflet to give only a flavour of the valleys busy past, and its current tranquillity and recreational value. Much of the information has been taken from two publications which would form interesting further reading, these are:

- **Campbell F; 1989.** *'Through East and West: Bury - A Metropolitan Miscellany'*. Publisher - Neil Richardson;
- **Bragg M, Hodgson JR.** *'St. Mary's Hawkshaw 1892 - 1992: The History of a Village Church'*.

Thanks to John Bray, Mike Malpass and Peter Coyne for supplying photographs.

Thanks also to Jonathan Ali, BBC bi-media reporter, for valuable local historical information.

Special thanks to Tom Baldwin, owner of Toms Cattery, Three Gates Farm - for providing car parking facilities for visitors to the Two Brooks Valley, which can be reached from Turton Road (see map).



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TRAVEL INFORMATION IN AND AROUND BURY

BY METROLINK & BUS

The metrolink and buses stop at Bury Interchange.
Travel information is available from GMPTE
on 0161 228 7811 between 8am & 8pm.

BY BICYCLE

The 'Bike Rides around Bury' leaflet, available at Bury Tourist Information Centre, recommends cycle routes throughout the Borough of Bury.

CAR PARKS

Car parks are marked on the enclosed map.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Bury Tourist Information Centre (0161 253 5111)
Bury Archive Service (0161 797 6697)

WEBSITES

Bury Tourist Information: www.visitbury.com

East Lancashire Railway: www.east-lancs-rly.co.uk

Bury Markets: www.bury.gov.uk/bury/council_markets.asp

Irwell Sculpture Trail: www.getoutguide.co.uk/outdoors/outdoors/sculpture_trail.htm



www.bury.gov.uk/Planning/Home.htm



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(April 2005)

Philip D Allen CPFA

Director of Environment & Development Services

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