

Wildlife

WOODLAND

Prestwich Clough was designated a Site of Biological Importance in 1981 in recognition of its contribution to the wildlife heritage of Greater Manchester. This interest is derived from the woodland, which, though heavily modified at the western end by industrial activity and in the central section by landscape planting of horse chestnut, rhododendron and manchester poplars at the beginning of the 20th century, still retains remnants of its ancient woodland flora.



Clough

This can best be seen on the oak-covered slopes below St Mary's Park or on the steep northern slopes at the western end in spring. Bluebells are abundant in these areas, with yellow pimpernel, wood avens and enchanters nightshade scattered along the edges of the path.

Birds are another feature of the site. The combination of abundant nesting sites coupled with plentiful food supply both natural and from the surrounding gardens has led to high densities of common species such as wren and robin, and good numbers of declining species such as song thrush. More typical woodland species such as woodpecker and treecreeper are also present, searching for insects under the bark of the ancient trees.

GRASSLAND



St. Mary's Church from Gardner Mount

Remnants of unimproved acid grassland can be found on Gardner Mount and behind the houses on St Anns Road. Both are former farmland that existed prior to the urbanisation of the area. Of particular interest on Gardner Mount are the autumn crocus, mentioned in 1849 by Buxton, some of which can still be seen under the remains of the hawthorn hedge along the boundary of Gardner Mount with the Clough.

Behind St Anns Road, common spotted orchids and catsear can be found growing among the fine leaved grasses such as wavy hair grass and common bent, typical of this type of grassland. Unfortunately the lack of grazing or mowing has resulted in the loss of grassland on both sides of the Clough to oak scrub, bracken and bramble. Volunteers from the BTCV and the Friends of Prestwich Forest Park are now reversing this trend.



Common Spotted Orchid



Greater Spotted Woodpecker

Prestwich Clough

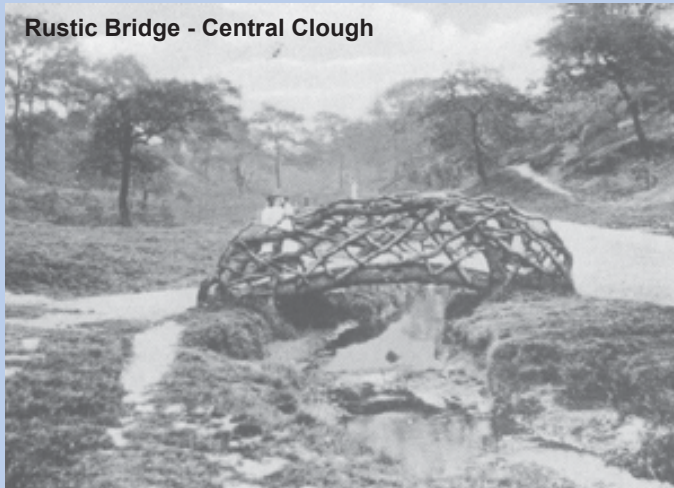


Prestwich Clough

HISTORY

Prestwich Clough is ancient woodland, wooded since at least 1600 and probably since the last ice age. It gets its name from the neighbouring settlement, derived from the Anglo-Saxon for Priests dwelling and Clough, a steep sided valley.

At one time the Clough stretched as far as the Heys Sports pitches. By 1893 the woodland only stretched as far as the railway, now the metrolink. The section between Bury New Road and the railway was tipped, grassed and built on between the two world wars.



Rustic Bridge - Central Clough

A Bleach and Dye Works operated at the western end of the Clough from approximately 1762 to the 1930's. Associated with the works was a large house, once home of the Buckley family, the owners of the mill. The buildings gradually fell into disrepair and were robbed of stone. The remains are still clearly visible as an extensive area of wall remains and rubble.

In 1986 the Prestwich archaeological group carried out some investigations of the site and discovered fragments of medieval sculpted masonry. These had formed part of a rockery in the garden of the house and are thought to have been derived from the original St Mary's Church, Prestwich. Some of these pieces are exhibited at the Church Inn.

RECREATIONAL USE

The Clough, as it is locally known was opened as a park in 1906, nine acres having been donated to Prestwich Urban District Council by William Gardner and a further 13 acres purchased for £2,000.

Local naturalists and no doubt residents had however enjoyed walking in the woodland for many years prior to this. Buxton's Botanical Guide to Manchester of 1849 refers to the Clough on a number of occasions, and there is a stone slab dated 1827 near the church asking people to keep off the grass.

In its heyday the Clough boasted a bandstand and tea rooms, sadly both gone and an extensive network of footpaths, the majority which were constructed by Prestwich Council following acquisition.

Today people visit to enjoy the wildlife, relative tranquility and artwork.



Prestwich Clough House

Prestwich Clough

Prestwich Clough is an ancient wooded valley linking Prestwich town centre to the Irwell Valley and associated recreational routes such as the Irwell Sculpture Trail.

Various works are in progress or planned to improve enhance and restore wildlife, heritage and recreational features of the Clough. This is co-ordinated by the Friends of Prestwich Forest Park a group of local people in partnership with Bury Council.

HOW TO GET THERE



The Clough is best approached from Church Lane or through St Mary's Park. There are regular bus services on Bury New Road from Bury and Manchester and the Clough is in easy walking distance of Prestwich Metrolink Tram Station.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For more information about the Clough and how you can get involved ring the Wildlife Officer on 0161 253 7667.

This leaflet has been produced by the Friends of Prestwich Forest Park and Bury Council with the assistance of a Forestry Commission Woodland Improvement Grant.

A Walk in Prestwich Clough

Prestwich Clough is best approached through either St Mary's Park or from Church Lane. The most popular routes are the paths alongside the stream and the one through the churchyard that follows the top of the stream valley below Gardner Mount and the allotments. Feel free however to explore.

1. Clough below St Mary's Park

The slope below St Mary's Park is where to go if you want to see the most natural area of the Clough. Bluebells cover the ground layer whilst oak predominate in the canopy. Visit in May to see it in its full glory.

2. St Mary's Church

St Mary's Church, a grade 1 listed building, dates from at least the 14th century. The graveyard has considerable interest with an excellent range of post medieval burial monuments. The original parish included Oldham!

3. Central Clough

The central Clough was purchased by Prestwich Urban District Council in 1904 at a time when photographic evidence indicates there were few trees. There followed an intensive programme of tree planting, path creation and step building. The manchester poplars, beech and horse chestnuts date from this time.

4. Gardner Mount

Gardner Mount also known as Spion Kop after a battle fought during the Boer War, was farmland prior to its purchase from William Gardner. Extensive views over Prestwich, the Irwell Valley across to Salford and the Cheshire plain are possible on a clear day.

5. Site of Bandstand

The bandstand was constructed by Prestwich UDC not long after acquiring the site. The oak tree in the picture with the circular bench around its trunk is little changed today.

8. Beech Mound

This local landmark, as its name suggests, is a large mound covered in beech trees. Whether the mound is natural is matter for debate, the beech trees would probably have been planted by the owners of the bleach works, hence it's other name Buckley's Plantation.

9. Site of Prestwich Clough House

Some brickwork is still evident, standing up to 1m high, of the house occupied by the owner of the Prestwich Clough Bleach and Dye works in the nineteenth century.

10. Mill Lodges

Five large mill lodges and a number of smaller ponds occupied the two valleys above the bleach works by the end of the nineteenth century, providing water and power for the bleaching and dyeing process. All have now been infilled but restoration of one or more mill ponds is being investigated.

11. Bleach Works

There is evidence of a bleach works on the site as far back as 1762, when it was owned by John Travis. By 1883 it was owned by John Buckley and the works appear to have reached their peak around this period. Now all that remains is rubble.



KEY			
Major Pathway		Built Area	
Minor Pathway		Woodland	
		Stream	

0 250m

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