

MEANWOOD valley trail

Introduction

The Meanwood Valley has long been celebrated as a 'green artery' in Leeds, bringing rural countryside into the heart of the city. This 7 mile linear walk takes you through some of the highlights of the cultural and natural history of the Valley.

ACCESS TO THE TRAIL

The number X84 bus is a regular bus service along the A660 and connects Woodhouse Moor and Golden Acre Park enabling the trail to be completed as a linear walk. For up to date times and information please look up www.wymetro.com or call (0113) 245 7676.

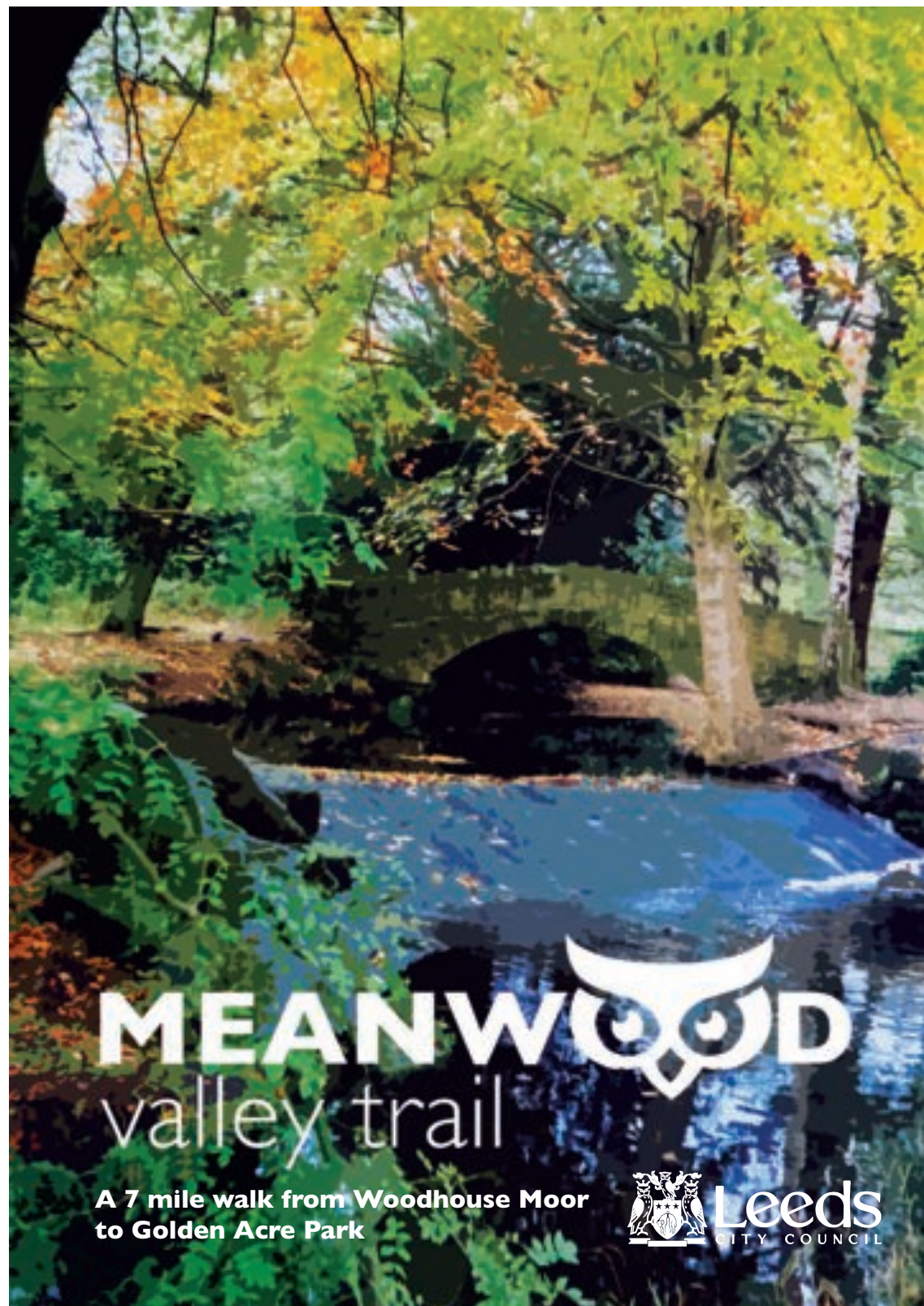
WHO CAN USE THE TRAIL?

The Meanwood Valley Trail is essentially a walking route however some sections are either public or permissive bridleway. These parts of the trail can also be used by horse riders and pedal cycles. For information on this or other rights of way issues please contact the **Public Rights of Way team** on 0113 395 7400.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The cultural and natural history of the Meanwood Valley is fascinatingly diverse. We can only give you a glimpse of it here. For more information please look up the **Parks & Countryside Service** on www.leeds.gov.uk or telephone (0113) 395 7400. We also advise that you reference the **Meanwood Village Association** who have published fantastic books on the history of the Valley (www.meanwoodvillage.org.uk).

The publication of this leaflet has been sponsored by **The Myrtle Tavern** in Meanwood and local community group, The Meanwood Valley Partnership. We are grateful for their continued support of the Trail and the Meanwood Valley.



A 7 mile walk from Woodhouse Moor to Golden Acre Park



Part one (2 miles) Woodhouse Moor to Meanwood Park

- 1** Starting at the statue of H.R. Marsden, close to the junction of Woodhouse Lane and Raglan Road, follow the latter down to where it meets Rampart Road. Turn right then continue down to Woodhouse Street, crossing over to Delph Lane.

Alderman Henry Marsden started life as a mill hand in Holbeck. He rose to become a Liberal MP and Mayor of Leeds. The plaques on his statue represent Education, Industry and Benevolence.

- 2** Continue to the end of Delph Lane, where it meets the wooded slopes of Woodhouse Ridge. Turn left and follow the footpath along its top edge, keeping the stone wall to your left. At the metal gate and boulders take the far right hand fork, down steps, towards the beck and meadows below. Turn left at the bottom of the hill, keeping the beck on your right, and continue on to Grove Lane.

Woodhouse Ridge was a gift to the people of Leeds in 1876 enhanced by the addition of Batty's Wood in 1901. The site was host to working mills and farms but once a public site, became a popular promenading spot for Victorians. In the spring the woodland floor comes to life with ramsons (wild garlic), wood anemone and bluebells and if you listen carefully you may hear the drumming of woodpeckers and the screeching call of the Jay.



- 3** Crossing Grove Lane, follow the footpath ahead, taking you past Woodhouse Ridge & Grove Lane nature area and through the gardens of the Brooklands until it emerges on Monkbridge Road. Turn right to the zebra crossing. After crossing Monkbridge Road, enter Mill Pond Lane, and follow the footpath immediately off to your left.

At this point you will bypass Tannery Park - the site of the former Meanwood Tannery built in 1857 by the brewer, Sam Smith. Prior to this it was a paper mill called Wood Mills and the probable location of a medieval corn mill which serviced Kirkstall Abbey (only 1 1/2 miles away as the crow flies).

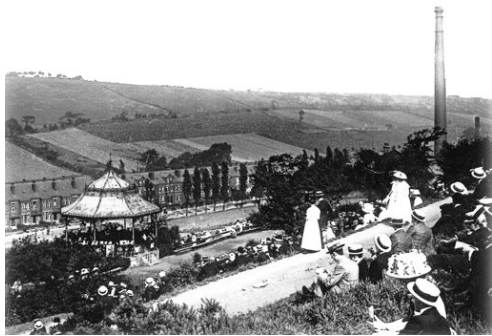
- 4** On crossing a wooden bridge over Meanwood Beck, turn right then left, following the path as it skirts the edge of the mill pond. The path takes a sharp turn to the right and passes through some allotments to emerge onto a track. Look out for the small bridge on your right by an old gatepost just before the tarmac road, and cross the bridge over the goit.

Continue on to a second bridge and enter Meanwood Park via a gap in the stone wall ahead.

As you follow Meanwood beck it is worth thinking about the creatures below water level. Over the centuries the beck was harnessed for the power it could bring to industry which in turn caused pollution. Now the water is much cleaner we have stone loach, bullhead, brown trout and the endangered native white-clawed-crayfish, present. In fact the Meanwood Valley is a regionally important area for crayfish.



White-clawed crayfish



Victorians promenading on Woodhouse Ridge



Bluebells carpet the woodland floor in spring



Part three (3 miles) Seven Arches to Golden Acre Park

- 10** Keep to the higher footpath through the woodland, with Adel Beck flowing below, to your left. Pass the slopes of Adel Moor on your right and the 'Slabbering Baby' as you meet a 4-way junction. Go straight on, down and over the small beck. The steps lead you up to a small mill pond where you should bear right. Bear left at a fork in the path, keeping to the woodland edge, and then straight on to Stairfoot Lane car park.

Adel Woods and its surrounding habitat mosaic is a wonderfully diverse area. Step just off the trail a little and you may find yourself in bogs and wet woodland or dryer grasslands and heath. If you are lucky you may even spot a common lizard!



Common lizard

The 'Slabbering Baby' is the stone carving around a spring at the junction of paths. Its origins are unknown but we do know that there was once a flax mill here which later became a popular Victorian teahouse.

Look out for Alwoodley Craggs on the right before the car park - reputedly a site of pagan worship.

- 11** Cross Stairfoot Lane to continue along the bridleway directly ahead. Turn right after the bridle gate to follow the path around a field and along the eastern edge of Headingley Golf course, until it emerges onto King Lane. Cross the road and follow the footway and verge, keeping the road on your left. Take care along the roadside.



You are now nearing Golden Acre Park. The lake here was originally built in 1825 to feed the mills downstream, the dam unfortunately breached in 1829 leaving damaged bridges, streams, mills and pubs in its wake. The land was bought in 1932 by Frank Thompson and turned into a hugely popular amusement park. After WWII Leeds City Council acquired the land keeping it for the people of Leeds as a popular park and horticultural venture.



Comma butterfly



Floral splendour at Golden Acre Park

- 12** At the junction of Five Lane Ends, continue on to a T-Junction where you cross Arthington Road to follow the bridleway directly ahead. Look out for a gate on your right, which leads into Golden Acre Park. Once through the gate, bear left, following the path around the lake, until you come to an arched underpass.

- 13** For the Leeds Road (A660) and bus stops, or for a rest at Golden Acre's cafe go straight on. Alternatively, go through the underpass which will take you to Golden Acre car park or, if you bear left you could take an extra loop around Breary Marsh and Paul's Pond.

The park and surrounding natural habitats are full of rare and endangered plants and animals. A least 5 species of bat feed over the water at night and on the hillsides, where wildflowers flourish, there are butterflies aplenty including the Painted Lady and Orange Tip. Take a walk into the rare and beautiful habitat of Breary Marsh Local Nature Reserve and you will find yourself in the finest remaining example of alder carr (a wet woodland) in West Yorkshire.

Congratulations!
You have completed
the Meanwood Valley Trail.



Part two (2 miles) Meanwood Park to Seven Arches

- 5** Once in the park, follow the paths ahead keeping the beck on your left. Cross the small bridge over the beck where the tarmac path ends and follow the path on the opposite side up to and around an old pond. Continue over the old humpback bridge and turn left to an archway in the stone wall. Once through the arch, turn left to cross a small foot bridge, then follow the next footpath bearing off to the right.

Meanwood Park (or Meanwoodside as it was known) has a long history of landownership from the Cistercian monks of Kirkstall Abbey to the famous Oates family, including Captain Lawrence Oates, the famous polar explorer. It was only in 1954 that the estate was brought into public ownership.



Oates memorial in the park

As you walk through the park you will see remnants of mill works, tanneries and gardens including the homes of past quarry workers on Hustler's Row.

Today, as a Local Nature Reserve, Meanwood Park is home to many mammals, birds, amphibians and invertebrates. The vegetation includes oak woodland, hazel coppice, wet woodland, flushes and mires. Stop still and enjoy the sights, sounds and smells around you.

- 6** Continue along this path, and once up the slope keep the goit on your left. You will pass bridges which lead up into the public gardens of The Hollies but keep ahead until reaching the large weir. Cross the bridge over the weir and turn left towards the meadows of Meanwood Grove, passing through a gateway. Follow the becksides path until it emerges onto Parkside Road.

Just before you leave the Park you pass a picnic area on the site of what was Grove Tannery where leather was processed. The oak trees in Meanwood Woods were planted to serve this and other tanneries as the bark and acorns were harvested to provide a source of tannin.



- 7** Turn left along the footway then take the second opening on your right just before the Ring Road. Follow this path, which runs parallel to the Ring Road, until it passes beneath it, via an underpass.

- 8** On emerging from the underpass, go right up a small flight of steps, then follow the path as it runs close to what is now Adel Beck. Take the left hand fork in the path. Looking down to your right you may be able to see the old ruins of 'Scotland Mill'.

Scotland Mill, a former flax spinning mill in the late 1780s, was the first factory in the world to successfully use water power to spin flax (or linseed as its otherwise known).

- 9** The path continues until it forks again. Take the left hand path up a slope as it meets an old dry stone wall. At the next major fork take the right hand path to the stone built sweep of the Seven Arches Aqueduct. Then, passing alongside the aqueduct, turn left into Adel Woods.

The 'Seven Arches' - Leeds' first aqueduct, was built in 1840 to carry clean water from Eccup Reservoir to the rapidly growing city.



Postcard dated 1905 showing Seven Arches aqueduct