



Nature at its best....

Situated halfway between Manchester and Rochdale, nestled between Middleton Town Centre and the residential areas of Alkrington, Higher Blackley and Rhodes, this picturesque local nature reserve offers over 120 Acres of mature woodland, meadows, rivers and fishing lodges.

The reserve has a 3.5 mile long perimeter, 25 entrances, 3 public footpaths and miles of internal paths criss-crossing the varied natural habitats. It is ideal for walkers, cyclists, joggers, dog walkers, fishermen and nature lovers of all ages. Lever Bridge and Alkrington Hall are both listed by English Heritage.

Visitors can access the reserve directly from Middleton Bus Station or use the free car park in Rhodes (M24 4EA).

The footpath system links Middleton town centre to Heaton Park and Blackley Forest. It also provides a green network interlinking the local suburbs whilst avoiding the busy commuter route to Manchester and the M60 ring road. Wince Brook nature reserve is a short walk away and this connects to the Rochdale Canal footpaths.

The Rochdale Way passes through the reserve.

Alkrington Woods Local Nature Reserve



Greater Manchester
Walking

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Walking Trails Guide and Map

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Plantlife

Some quite old beech trees remain in the oldest part of Alkrington Wood together with sessile oak, sycamore and horse chestnut. If you explore the trees along the river footpath, you will see introduced species, including red oak, horse chestnut, sweet chestnut, European larch, fastigate hornbeam, whitebeam, rowan cultivars and Norway maple. There are naturally colonised downy birch and native rowan and goat willow in wetter areas.



The reserve has a fine range of grassland species occurring including goatsbeard, common spotted orchid, marsh orchid, tufted vetch, meadow vetchling, and creeping thistle. Wetland species have been successfully introduced around the lodges, including purple loosestrife, meadowsweet, ragged robin, sweet flag, common reed, galingale, branched bur reed, soft rush and tufted hair grass.

Wildflowers are abundant throughout the reserve and include cowslip, oxslip, ox eye daisy, red campion and angelica.

Wildlife



Walking through the woodland, it is possible to see or hear greater spotted woodpecker, tree creeper, goldcrest, wren, black bird, song and mistle thrushes, robin, long tailed tit, chaffinch, blue tit, great tit, coal tit, tawny owl, sparrow hawk, buzzard, nuthatch and ring necked parakeet!

If you meander around the lodges, look out for goosander, mute swan, moorhen, coot, grey heron, cormorant, mallard, tufted duck, Canada goose, great crested grebe, grey wagtail, dipper swallows and kingfisher.

Moths/butterflies include orange tip, common white, common skipper, spotted wood, brimstone, meadow brown, ringlet, peacock, red admiral, cinnabar moth and the 5 spot burnet moth.

The lodges are managed by Absolute Angling and are well stocked should you wish to try your hand

Heritage

The Manor of Alkrington was first documented at the end of the 12th Century when it was owned by Adam de Prestwich. It later passed by marriage to the family of Cardinal Thomas Langley, three times Lord Chancellor of England. The Lever family purchased the estate in 1627 and Lever bridge was constructed soon after and remains the oldest surviving bridge in the region.

Sir Darcy Lever was high sheriff of Lancashire and rebuilt Alkrington Hall in 1735. It is the oldest surviving example of a Palladian style house in Lancashire. Its architect Giacomo Leoni went on to design Lyme Hall.

Darcy's son Sir Ashton Lever converted the hall into one of the world's first natural history museums with over 4,000 live birds kept in the grounds. The Hall was refurbished in the 1990s and is now privately owned.

Salis Schwabe developed a huge calico print works at Rhodes. With over 1,000 employees it had a huge requirement for water so the lodges were built. Much of the Alkrington Farmland was developed into a Garden Village in the early 20th century.

