



A WALK ROUND THE OUTSKIRTS OF MIDDLETON PARK

Middleton Park is a large green open space over 500 acres. The woodland is the second largest expanse of semi-natural ancient woodland in West Yorkshire, and has probably been woodland since the last ice-age, 11,000 years ago. Most of the park would have been part of the manor of Middleton, which has been owned by the Gramaire family (1166-1300), the Creppings, the Leighs (1330-1706), the Brandlings (1706-1865) and the Tetleys (1865-1920). Most of the land is now owned by Wade's Charity but leased to Leeds City Council on a 999 year lease.

This walk goes around the outskirts of the park trying to keep the boundary in view, where possible. The notes below refer to parts of the park identified by the red numbered points on the map overpage.

Visitor Centre – The centre of the park, from here upto the Rose Garden and Nick's View, was cleared of woodland and made into traditional parkland when Middleton Lodge was built in the 1760's. The wealth to support all this came from the extensive coal mining in the park. It has been a public park since 1920. The walk goes east from the visitor centre, through woodland and across the old meadow, which grew turnips during the WW II.

Point 1 – The park also covers land in the east that was until 1968 the extensive coal mine of Broom Pit. After the colliery closed in 1968 the spoil heaps were levelled and the low valley was in-filled with waste and then landscaped up to Newhall Road. The old mining village of Nova Scotia lay just the other side of Newhall Road, and was demolished in the early 1950's before the new housing was built. In the 1800's an incline with winding gear brought coal from the pits where the Middleton Estate is now, down to the valley.

Point 2 – Park Halt – Coal from Broom Colliery was taken away on Middleton Railway into Leeds. This Railway was first built in 1758 as a horse drawn waggonway, under the first ever Railway Act of Parliament. In 1812 steam locomotives were used to replace the horses. These were the world's first commercially successful steam locomotives. Coal was hauled along the railway until aprox. 1960, when coal was taken out by road and the railway line was taken over by volunteers and enthusiasts. Just near Park Halt, is the site of the original Belle Isle pit village. Originating in the 1700's, it was finally demolished in the 1950's.

Point 3 – In the 1920's a tramway was introduced, running a service from Middleton to Leeds, through the woods. Many people came from Leeds to Middleton woods at a weekend for events on the clearings.

In 1204, ownership of these woods was disputed, and after several acrimonious court cases a boundary ditch was built, which is still visible in parts today. The woods were purchased in the 1770's for mining purposes.



Point 4 – Next to where Gypsy Lane comes into the wood is a Hollow way – the remains of a well worn medieval track. This old road was diverted when Middleton Lodge was built in the 1760's. Further along, the paving stones of this old path are visible. From here point 5 is the site of part of the old municipal golf course. This part of the park is currently being converted into a bike hub with extensive cycle tracks.

Point 5 – This is the original entrance and road from Town Street to Middleton Lodge. The current entrance was made after the land became a public park.