



A WINTER WALK IN MIDDLETON PARK

Middleton Park is a large green open space of over 500 acres. The woodland is the second largest semi-natural ancient woodland in West Yorkshire, and has probably been woodland since the last ice-age, 11,000 years ago. The park was 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.

Visitor Centre – The land from here upto the Rose Garden and Nick's View, was cleared of woodland and made into parkland when Middleton Lodge was built in the 1760's. The wealth for all this came from the extensive coal mining in the park. It has been a public park since 1920. The walk goes past the lake and over to the old golf course and upto the Rose Garden (**Point 1**) and the site of Middleton Lodge.

Point 2 – The Ice House. In 2006, Robin Silverwood recalled the name “Ice Hill” for a north facing slope. The Archaeologist, Martin Roe, guessed that would be where the Ice House for the Lodge would be. Paul Hebden of FoMP, searched and found a few old bricks showing through the soil. Excavations by South Leeds Archaeology in May 2013, and Leeds YAC in July 2017, confirmed that this was indeed an Ice House. There will be a further excavation in June 2019 by Leeds YAC..

Point 3 – The Route of the old Tram Way. 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.

Point 4 – The Clearings - Originally the “Clearings” were just part of Middleton Woods. But in the 1860's, Francis Tetley bought the Middleton Estate, and this area of the woods was cleared of trees, presumably to be sold for timber. After being cleared, the land was possibly used for pasture or hay for the pit ponies.

After Leeds City Council took control of the park, in 1920, the clearings were used for various sports and entertainment events. By 1939 the Clearings had 6 cricket pitches, 6 football pitches and 3 hockey pitches which were all affected by the establishment of a wartime searchlight station and two listening posts. Today, South Leeds Aeromodellers, fly their aeroplanes here.

Point 5 – Park Halt – Coal from the Middleton Colliery was taken away on Middleton Railway into Leeds. This Railway was first built in 1758 as a horse drawn, wooden waggony, 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 approx. 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 6 – 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 to the south, and was demolished in the early 1950's before the Manor Farms were 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.

