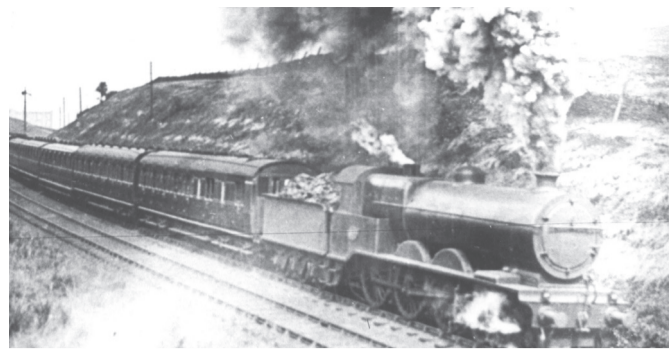


# Woodnook Vale

## LOCAL NATURE RESERVE

Woodnook Vale Local Nature Reserve offers local residents and visitors 51 hectares of woodland, heathland and wetland either side of the steep-sided river valley of Woodnook Water.



Speckled Wood

## Wildlife

At least 61 species of birds, 291 plants, 13 fish, 108 invertebrates, 12 mammals and 3 species of bats have been recorded in Woodnook Vale.

## Priestley Clough

Priestley Clough is ancient woodland which means it has been wooded since AD 1600. The woodland gets its name from John Priestley, a cotton manufacturer who once ran Woodnook Mill. There was a mill pond (front cover picture) next to the Bath Street path which held the water to power the mill's water wheel. Like the rest of the valley, the Clough has a long association with coal mining and its medieval name was Coal Pit Holme.

Priestley Clough has been a popular area for local people for many generations. It was perceived as a local beauty spot and several picture postcards of the area exist.



Great Spotted Woodpecker



Bluebells



Meadow Brown



Nuttall St 1936

## Railway

The Accrington to Bury section of railway line was opened in 1848 and was notorious for its steep 1:40 gradient. The line was also unusual for crossing a mill lodge (Platts Lodge). The original railway bridge over Nuttall St was widened in 1936 to allow lorries through to the industrial area. A datestone has been incorporated on the wall at the Nuttall St entrance to commemorate the rebuild. The line closed in December 1966.



Nuttall St after 1936

The Five Arches Bridge at Shoe Mill remained until 1981 when it was demolished and replaced by the current bridge in 1992.



Five Arches Bridge at Shoe Mill

## Industrial Legacy

The wildlife is interwoven with an industrial legacy that includes demolished mill buildings, former mill lodges and the Accrington to Manchester railway line. The disused railway line stretching from Platts Lodge in Accrington to the Kearns Allens lodges at Baxenden is now a 2.8km multi-user trackway.



Priestley Clough 1920s and today

Surviving mature Beech trees in Priestley Clough can be seen in old postcards (above). Where Beech creates a continuous canopy, trees are thinned out to bring sunlight to the floor and encourage young trees to grow.



Priestley Clough mature Beech trees

## What YOU Can See

Look out for	Best time to see	Notes
Ramsons	April-May	Also known as Wild Garlic
Wood Anemone	April-May	An indicator of ancient woodland
Silver Birch	July-August for leaves All year for white bark	Its sap can be used to make wine. Can be seen all the way up the line.
Hazel	Anytime	Look out for new shoots on coppiced stumps in Hollins Wood
Nuthatch	All year	Climbs up the tree trunk then flies down to the base of another tree in search of insects
Dipper	All year	This bird has a white bib and walks along the river bed looking for food
Speckled Wood butterfly	July-August	Enjoys sunny, sheltered woodland edges
Dragonflies	Sunny spells throughout summer	Common and Brown Hawker can be seen flying across the main line
Bats	Warm evenings between early Spring and late Autumn	Bats can be seen flying under the bridge at Five Arches Bridge/ Shoe Mill and skimming over Kearns Allen Lodges
Railway bridges	Anytime	Some stones have the signature marks of the masons that carved them which is called dressing



Pictures drawn by children from Baxenden St John's CE Primary School

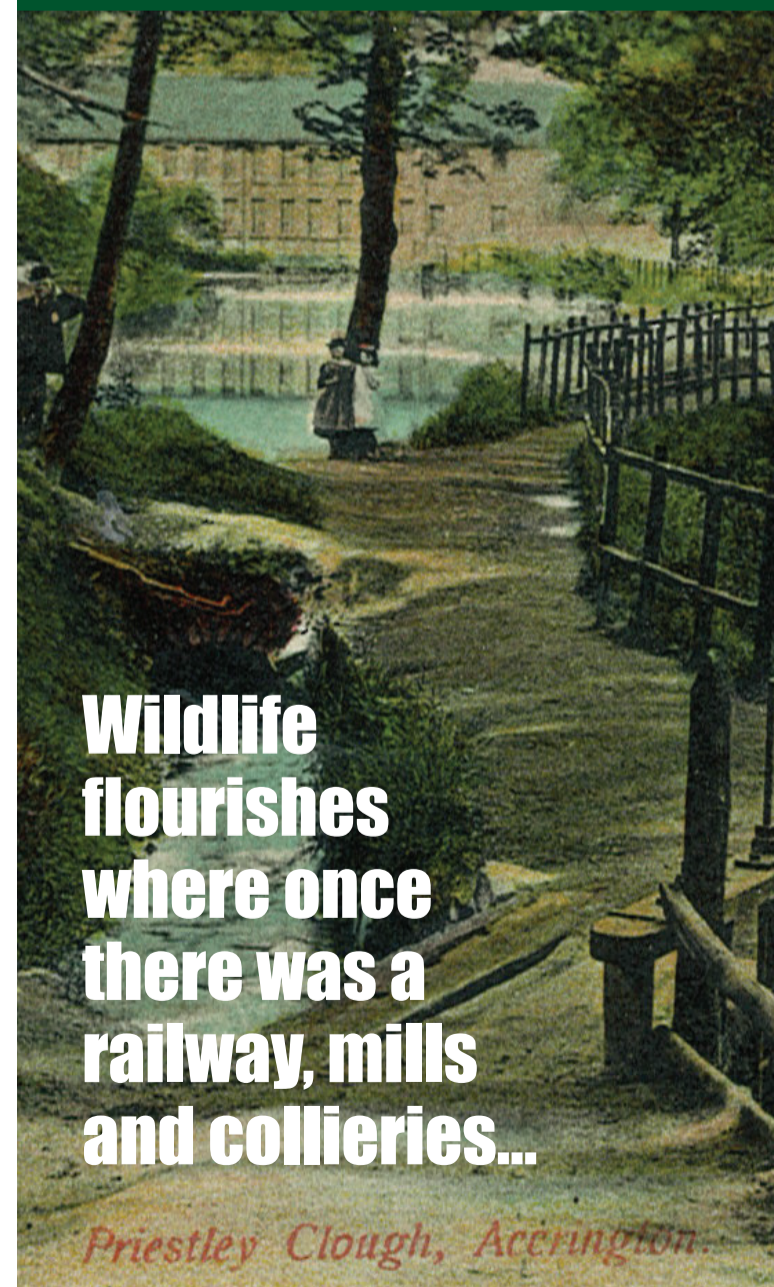
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# Woodnook Vale

## LOCAL NATURE RESERVE



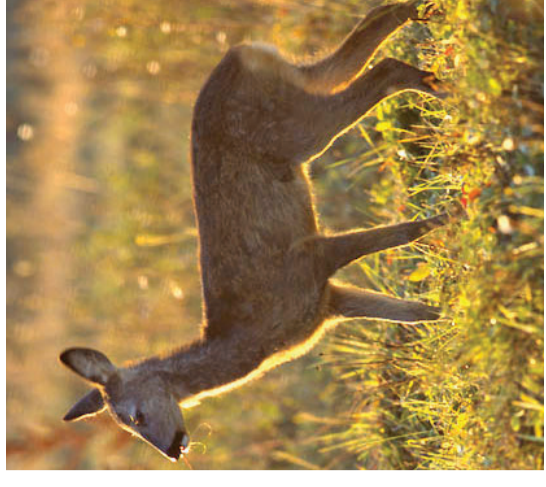
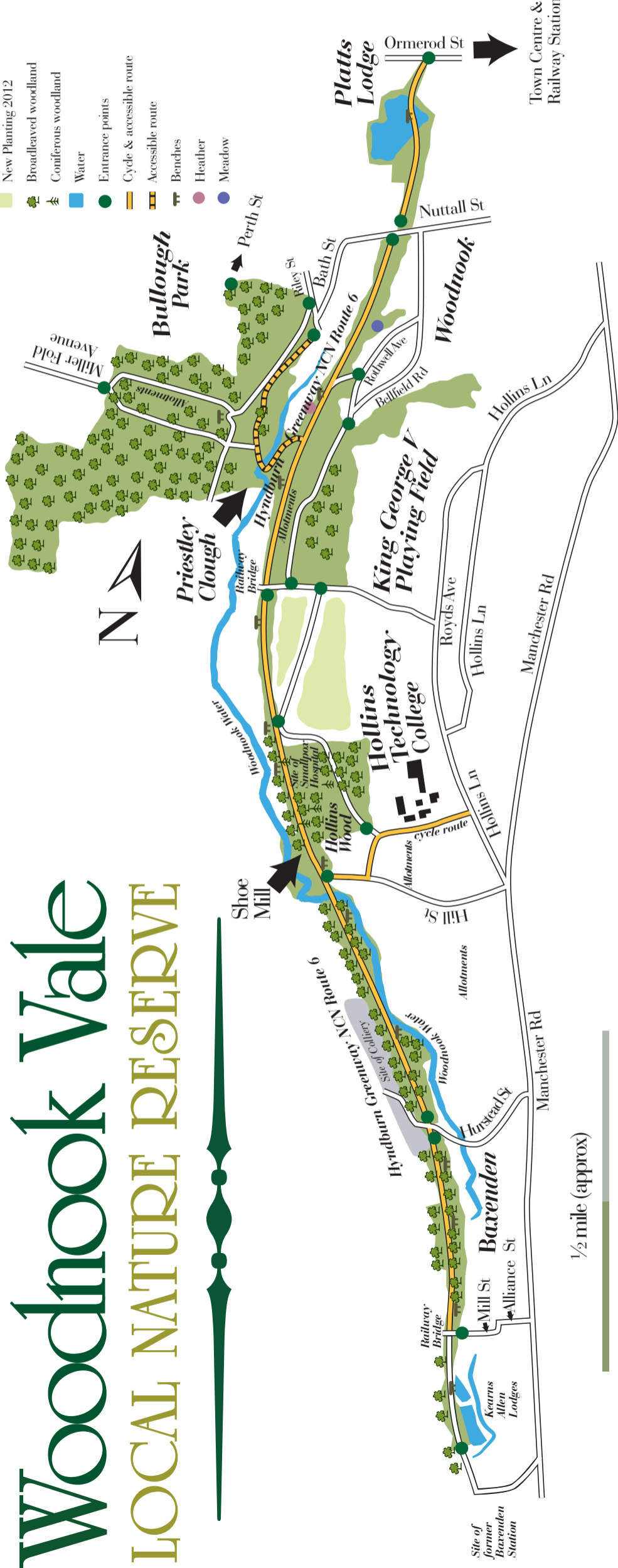
**Wildlife flourishes where once there was a railway, mills and collieries...**

*Priestley Clough, Accrington.*



# Woodnook Vale

## LOCAL NATURE RESERVE



Roe Deer



Glade with Heather and Silver Birch



Silver Birch between the Railway Bridge and Hurstead St



Sessile Oak (no stalk)



Pedunculate Oak (long stalk)



Silver Birch

**Woodnook Vale Nature Reserve contains areas of Oak-Birch woodland which is characteristic of Lancashire valleys or cloughs**

Silver Birch is easy to recognise with its delicate leaves and white, papery bark which peels easily. They make pretty glades and young trees are often found invading patches of Heather.

Both types of native British Oak are found here: Sessile and Pedunculate Oak. The oaks can hybridise combining these two characteristics and examples of the hybrids can be found at Woodnook.

Roe Deer can often be seen crossing the line in the early mornings. All year round, you can see the Blue Tits, Great Tits, Bullfinches and Chaffinches flying from one side of the path to the other looking for food.

Deadwood is important for wildlife in woodland and any woodland management must include leaving some trees as standing deadwood for birds, insects and fungi. Look for dead standing trees with woodpecker holes and Bracket Fungi. You may also see piles of wood left after coppicing and tree felling which are habitat piles for ground beetles and other invertebrates.

The Shoe Mill Baxenden Signal Box was situated near the Five Arches Bridge and



Bracket Fungi

operated from 1875-1962. In the valley bottom, you can see the remains of Shoe Mill. The cotton mill, thought to have been built in 1790, was powered by water but closed following a serious fire. Remnants of the buildings are clearly visible. The filled circular depression near the chimney is probably an old colliery shaft.

Hollins Wood is broadleaved plantation of Hazel, Oak, Norway Maple, Silver Birch and Alder with coniferous trees. It was also the site of a small pox hospital shown by overgrown brick foundations. Coppiced trees such as Hazel, creates sunny glades for butterflies like Speckled Wood. Wood from coppicing and felling is left to create habitat piles for wildlife. The adjoining field was planted up in 2012 and named Jubilee Woodland. Yellow Rattle can also be found in the field.

Knapweed, vetches and thistles can be seen flowering in the meadow in July. Every year, the meadow is cut and raked to maintain its wildflowers and will buzz with hoverflies



Small Skipper on Knapweed

and bees feeding on the flowers. Small Skipper butterflies will rest on the purple flowers in the sunshine. Large White and Meadow Brown butterflies can be seen flying along the disused railway line on warm days in late summer.

Patches of Heather and Bilberry survive on the banks up the railway line. To protect it, invasive non native species such as Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendron are removed and Silver Birch and Ash trees are cut back. Heather is easiest to see when the pink flowers appear in August and is a particular favourite of bees.

Meadowsweet and Willowherb are rich sources of nectar for bees which will also



Meadowsweet & Willowherb

visit Bramble, Dog-rose and Heather flowers. Delicate flowers of Enchanters Nightshade occur in patches on the path edge up the



Enchanters Nightshade

line. Brooklime can be seen in the ditch that follows the line.

The southern end of the railway has mining features. While most traces of Baxenden Colliery have gone, you can still see drift mine entrances at the Hurstead Street entrance.

Walk past Kearns Allen Lodges to see remnants of Baxenden Station including the southbound platform. An engine shed and another platform edge can be seen in the transport yard of Hollands Pies. While Baxenden Station closed to passengers in 1951 the nearest bus stop on Manchester Road is still called 'Baxenden Station'.



Baxenden Station Bus Stop