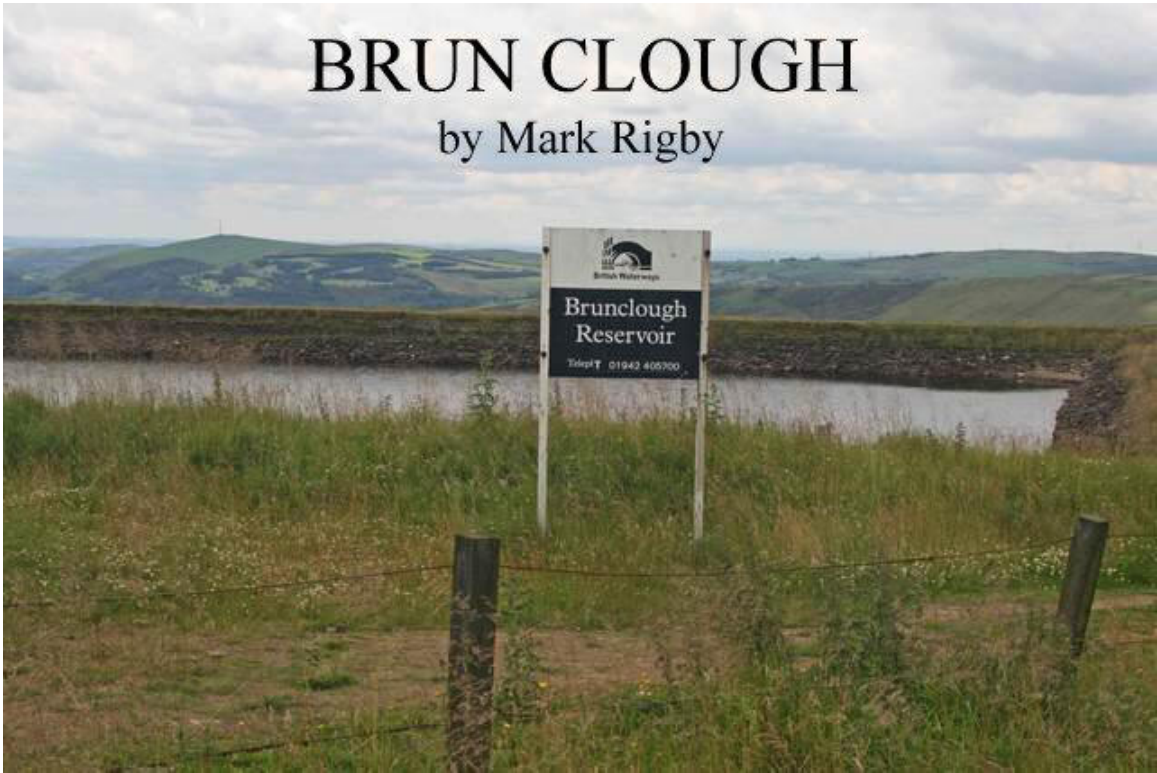


# BRUN CLOUGH

by Mark Rigby



Brun Clough is situated high on the Pennines approximately seven miles north east of Oldham. At the head of the clough is Brun Clough Reservoir. At a height of 1246 feet above sea level, Brun Clough Reservoir is one of the highest water bodies in Greater Manchester. The reservoir was built as a 'header' for the Huddersfield canal to supply water for the locks, and during the winter months can hold 8,600,000 gallons of water. However, during the summer months, the reservoir level can drop dramatically. For access, follow the A62 from Oldham town centre for 7.2 miles. There is an obvious car park on the right-hand side which proves popular with ramblers and day trippers who are walking the Pennine Way. The Pennine Way and other footpaths give good access to the area, but can be steep and uneven in places.



View looking east towards the car park. In the distance, the Pennine Way and the back of the County boundary sign can be seen.  
(Photo by Mark Rigby)

The reservoir is surrounded by peat moorland with the exception of the clough itself which is a mixture of rough/damp pasture used for sheep grazing. The dry stone walls and wire fencing proves popular with passerines as the area is virtually devoid of trees. There is one Sycamore tree in the clough and six conifers in the car park area, so the actual number of recorded passerine species is very low. In fact, any tit species would be a bit of a rarity!

The reservoir itself is constructed of steeply sided stone slabs but the eastern shore has a sandy and peat 'beach' which is exposed in summer months as the water levels drop. This area can be productive for typical moorland wader species with Redshank, Snipe, Dunlin, Oystercatcher, Lapwing, Curlew and Common Sandpiper seen regularly as well as Little Ringed Plover on passage. Unfortunately, the area does get a lot of disturbance, especially on sunny days with picnickers sat on the water's edge and a few brave souls actually swimming in the reservoir.



Above: View of the 'beach' looking south. If you stare at the water for long enough, you will eventually see three Mallard. (Photo by Mark Rigby)



Above: A view of the surrounding moorland (Photo by Mark Rigby)



Above: A view of the Sycamore tree, looking down the clough (Photo by Mark Rigby)

The clough itself can be explored by taking a track from the car park, along the edge of the reservoir and following the obvious track past the derelict building in the distance. A small pond has Moorhen and Mallard on most visits and the fields are home to the usual upland species such as Meadow Pipit, Linnet, Wheatear, Curlew and Lapwing. Passage species such as Ring Ouzel, Whinchat and Yellow Wagtail have all been recorded here and numbers of the 'resident' Wheatear and Meadow Pipits are swelled during passage, with good numbers of Wheatear regularly reaching into double figures.

The surrounding moorland is home to the usual breeding species of birds such as Curlew and Lapwing, and small numbers of Golden Plovers can be seen and heard during the summer months.

I have only been watching this area regularly for the last twelve months whilst diligent birdwatching has only been undertaken since 2010 some good birds have been found during that time. You will not see many birds during a visit but the beauty is that you never know just what might turn up. The occasional Short-eared Owl, Little Ringed Plover, Whinchat, Ring Ouzel and Hobby are to name but a few!

It is hard going at times, and the area is very under watched. I started a feeding station at nearby Castleshaw Reservoir which was a huge success during the winter months, so have decided to start a feeding station at Brun Clough. An area of rough ground adjacent to the car park will be regularly seeded to see what it attracts. You just never know...

**Mark Rigby, July 2011**

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