

THE MERSEY VALLEY

by Pete Hines

all maps are at the end of this guide

CHORLTON WATER PARK



Formerly farmland, then a gravel extraction pit for the construction of the M60 motorway, the lake was created and surrounding land landscaped during the mid-1970's. The site, managed by the Mersey Valley Countryside Warden Service, has been awarded SBI status (Site of Biological Importance) and designation as a Local Nature Reserve. A well maintained path one mile long, part of the Trans Pennine Trail, surrounds the lake with disabled access and seating/picnic areas. There is a free car-park with CCTV cameras, public toilets and an information point which is staffed in the mornings at weekends.

Water based recreation consists of non-motorised craft confined to pre-arranged local youth groups between April and September. This in order to minimise any disturbance to the wintering wildfowl. The closed season for anglers is from 1st January to 30th April. Birds occasionally encounter problems with fishing line and tackle and any such problems should be reported to the wardens.

Chorlton Water Park is an important mid-winter daytime roosting site for populations of *aythya's* which feed at night at Salford Quays and on the River Irwell. In recent years Pochard numbers reach the 300's to 400's, peaking during January or February (compared with 1400 in February 1988 and 1200 in January 1990). Tufted numbers reach the 200's to 400's, peaking in December or January. These flocks annually include Scaup and interesting *aythya* hybrids. Ferruginous Duck is always a possibility. In 1981 a drake initially located further up the River Mersey at Gatley Pool, commuted between there, Salford Quays and Rostherne Mere, Cheshire. A drake wintered annually at Chorlton Water Park from 1983 to 1986, two drakes in 1988, a female in 1989, a drake in 1991 and a female from 2000 to 2001. *Aythya* hybrids assuming Ferruginous genes are annual.

Tufted Duck has bred annually since 2003. Great Crested Grebes nest at each of the two islands. There has been a small heronry since 2000, with no more than a pair on each island to date. Reed Warblers have held territories in the Phragmites since 2000. Mixed winter finch flocks of Goldfinch, Siskin and Lesser Redpoll feed in the surrounding alder and birch trees, occasionally reaching notable numbers. Bullfinches are resident and in the early winter of 2003 numbers reached 14.

Wildfowl, such as Wigeon, Gadwall, Pintail and Shoveler are irregular. Uncommon species such as Long-tailed Duck, Common Scoter, Smew and Red-breasted Merganser have also occurred. Scarcer species have included a Ring-necked Duck in 1991 (another, one mile down river in 2006), a Great White Egret roosted on the east island on 11th August 2002 (and was re-discovered feeding at Broad Ees Dole, Sale Water Park the following morning), several records of Firecrest, a Siberian Chiffchaff and a Great Grey Shrike in 1984. Chorlton Water Park is situated at the end of Maitland Avenue off Barlow Moor Road (A5145) opposite the Southern Cemetery, Chorlton-cum-Hardy. Grid reference SJ820915.

KENWORTHY WOODS



The site of a former refuse tip, Kenworthy Woods, managed by the Mersey Valley Countryside Warden Service, is comprised of grassland, scrub, woodland plantations and hedgerows. There is a small community orchard, a coppice trail and a poplar trail (an avenue of cultivar *Populus* and *Salix* species). There is a comprehensive network of footpaths and bridleways.

SPRING & SUMMER: Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Blackcap, Garden warbler, Lesser Whitethroat, Common Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Willow warbler.

WINTER: Woodcock, Lesser Redpoll, Siskin, occasionally Short-eared Owl.

RESIDENT: Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Pheasant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Bullfinch, Reed Bunting.

ACCESS: From Chorlton Water Park via the bailey bridge across the River Mersey. Alternatively, there is a small parking area along the Northenden access road, an extension of Willenhall Lane, Northenden. Grid reference SJ 815921.

BARLOW TIP



Barlow Tip (a.k.a. Barlow Eye) is neither owned nor managed by the Mersey Valley Countryside Warden Service. The site is owned by the Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority Ltd. who have established a methane extraction plant recently at the west end of the site. During the mid to late 1970's the site was used for gravel extraction, Sand Martins colonised the banks of the pit and Little-ringed Plovers and Redshanks frequented the pools. During the early to mid 1980's the pit was an active refuse tip and both Glaucous and Iceland Gulls were regular during the winter, feeding amongst the refuse and bathing on Chorlton Water Park. The tip was capped, seeded and planted by the early 1990's. Nowadays the site is comprised of young woodlands, grasslands and

scrub and is one of the highest points of altitude within the Valley.

SPRING & SUMMER: Grasshopper Warbler, Common Whitethroat, Blackcap, Chiffchaff, Willow Warbler, occasional Tree Pipit, Redstart and Whinchat.

WINTER: Snipe, Jack Snipe, Woodcock, Green Woodpecker, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll, occasional Short-eared and Long-eared Owl, Stonechat. Twite has occurred.

RESIDENT: Kestrel, Sparrowhawk, Pheasant, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Bullfinch, Goldfinch, Greenfinch, Reed Bunting, Grid reference SJ 815921. Barlow Tip is situated at the west end of Chorlton Water Park adjacent to the River Mersey. Pedestrian access is possible from both points, although there are no formal pathways or seating areas.

CHORLTON EES & IVY GREEN



Designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 2006, Chorlton Ees and Ivy Green are managed by the Mersey Valley Countryside Warden Service with the water courses managed by the Environment Agency. Situated on the sites of the former Withington Sewage Farm, a brick-rubble tip and farmland, the two sites are separated by Chorlton Brook and flanked by the River Mersey and Chorltonville. The habitat is comprised of woodlands, grasslands, ponds and water courses. There a well maintained network of footpaths with disabled access and seating areas.

SPRING & SUMMER: An active heronry, Grasshopper Warbler, Sedge Warbler, Reed warbler, Blackcap, Lesser Whitethroat, Common Whitethroat, Chiffchaff and Willow Warbler.

WINTER: Willow Tit, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll, occasional Short-eared Owl.

RESIDENT: Sparrowhawk, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Bullfinch, Reed Bunting. Historical rarities have included a Dowitcher species at the Withington Sewage Farm on 24th August 1964 and Serin in the early 70's. Scarcer species have included over wintering Hen Harrier, Great Grey Shrike and Water Pipits during the early and mid 1980's. The same dog flushed a Nightjar from a woodland clearing in May 1983 and a Corncrake in April 1984. Siberian Chiffchaff and Firecrest have also occurred. More recently a Red-rumped Swallow was with hirundines down river at Stretford on 6th May 1991 and a fine drake Ring-necked Duck on the River Mersey on 26th April 2006.

ACCESS: Two free car parks are accessed via Brookburn Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, opposite the Bowling Green pub and at the end of the cobbled road which starts just before Brookburn Primary School. There is pedestrian access from Ivy Green Road. Grid reference SJ 805932.

Pete Hines, November 2010

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