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Manchester &  
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# PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF ARDEN HALL, PEEL PARK & THE COPPICE -

A summary of the Management Plan for

2012-16



environment...  
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## PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF ARDEN HALL, PEEL PARK & THE COPPICE - a summary of the Management Plan for 2012-16

Arden Hall, Peel Park and The Coppice, on the eastern edge of Accrington in East Lancashire, is a 50 hectare site owned by Hyndburn Borough Council. It includes woodland, heathland, grassland and mill lodges interwoven with an industrial legacy.



Aerial photograph from 2000 by airimages ([www.aerialphotography.com](http://www.aerialphotography.com))

### **Archaeology, geology and history**

There are 23 key features of archaeological and historical interest within the site, of which five are of importance at the County level, i.e. the remains of First World War practice trenches excavated by the Accrington Pals, Second World War anti-glider trenches, Hillock Farm, Plantation Mill and sandstone quarries.

Peel Park has been associated with the Accrington Pals battalion and they may have practised entrenching in rough ground to the northeast of the memorial before going to fight in the First World War in 1916. More obvious are the narrow trenches that can still be seen across the plateau and which were almost certainly excavated as anti-glider trenches during the Second World War.

The Riley family settled at Fearnihalgh, later Hillock Farm, in the early 15th century and it became one of Accrington's most important farms.

Plantation Mill, a fulling mill and later calico print works, was established on the banks of Pleck Brook. Arden Hall at the end of Plantation Street was built in 1847 by Benjamin Hargreaves, son of John & Robert Hargreaves who built the nearby Broad Oak Mill. Arden Hall was demolished in the 1940's after the Second World

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War but the servant's quarters still survive as the Coach House. The cobbled Plantation Road that gave access to the mill buildings and former mill lodges is claimed to be the longest cobbled road in Hyndburn and possibly the whole of Lancashire.

To the north of Peel Park, quarrying began in the 19th century, first with sandstone quarries supplying building stone, and later a large clay pit which supplied the Plastic Brick and Terra Cotta Works in Huncoat.

The underlying geology of the site is barren coal measures of the Carboniferous era, formed around 345 Million years ago. These coal measures were a major contribution to the early industrial exploitation of the area.

In 1909, Mr. William Peel gifted 35 acres of land on The Coppice and sold the rest to the Council. As a mark of appreciation, the new amenity was called "Peel Park". The park was formally opened on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 1909 with the ceremonial unveiling of the memorial to William Peel.

### **Access, landscape and recreation**

Arden Hall, Peel Park and The Coppice are conspicuous and important features to the people who can see the site from their homes, educational or work places and anyone who visits the site. It is also a prominent in the landscape when viewed from the Colne-Preston railway, the M65, A56 and numerous vantage points including Accrington Town Centre, Great Harwood, Huncoat and Rishton.

Footpaths and bridleways criss-cross the site and a multi-user path provides access for all from Avenue Parade up to the Peel Park monument.



Steps up from Avenue Parade and multi-user path up to Peel Park monument by Amelia Dew, 06/09.

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The site is crossed by the Huncoat Trail and is used as part of a Walking the Way to Health Initiative based in Accrington called 'Stepping Out'. Horse riders use the bridleways and a running club (Clayton-le-Moors Harriers) uses the site for fell racing.

From the top of Peel Park, there are stunning views over Accrington and beyond including Darwen Tower, the Forest of Bowland, Pendle Hill and Great Hameldon.



Views over Accrington from Peel Park by Amelia Dew, 01/09.

As part of the preparation of the Peel Park Masterplan<sup>1</sup>, a questionnaire was distributed in 2008 and 442 responses were received. The main uses of the site were walking/running (64%), dog walking (36%), using the playground/visiting with children (19%) and appreciating the views/scenery/nature (11%).

The responses to the question, 'What do you like about Peel Park?' were Nature (39%), Views (30%), Open spaces (23%), Close to where I live (20%), Peaceful/quiet (14%) and Good for walking (13%).

The lower lodge (Clarendon Lodge) is owned and managed by Hyndburn & Blackburn Angling Association (HBAA) who also lease the upper lodges for fishing. The smallest lodge is not used due to its nature conservation interests, including the presence of newts.

### **Flora and fauna**

The site is a haven for wildlife and can offer the visitor a wilderness experience just a few minutes away from the edge of town.

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<sup>1</sup> The full document is available at <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?REMADE/20214>

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Each season offers the visitor something new, from the first blossoms of spring and the sounds of migratory birds singing their hearts out in the woodland courtyards, to summer wildflowers blossoming in the meadows and pastures followed by a riot of colour and bountiful harvest of fruits and berries in autumn, which feed the wintering Redwing and Fieldfare. If you are lucky you may see a family of Roe Deer or catch a glimpse of a Fox.

The number of flowering plants and ferns recorded on the site is over 300, of which more than 250 are native to Britain. In addition, over 120 mosses & liverworts, 70 birds, more than 40 invertebrates, 13 mammals, 9 fish and 4 amphibians have been found on the site so far but there are many more, especially invertebrates, yet to be discovered.

Seven of these species are important at the European level, i.e. one fish (the Bullhead), two bats (Daubenton's and Pipistrelle) and four species of Bog-moss (*Sphagnum*). Many of the birds are Birds of Conservation Concern in the UK and/or are specially protected by law.



Bullhead



Pipistrelle Bat

### Wildlife habitats

Over 20 different types of habitat have been recorded on the site, including broadleaved, coniferous and mixed plantation, semi-natural woodland, dense and scattered scrub, acidic, neutral and marshy grasslands, flushes, standing and running water, heathland, hedges, ditches and bare ground.

Heathland is a habitat of European importance and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) has increased significantly on Peel Park since the site was first surveyed in 1988. Now that the majority of Peel Park is heathland and it should qualify as a Local Wildlife Site (called Biological Heritage Sites in Lancashire).

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Heathland on Peel Park with Great Hameldon beyond by John Lamb, 02/06.  
The Rhododendron bushes have been removed in 2010 & 2011.

Many of the habitat types are nationally important even though the site itself isn't. Parts of the woodland and grassland between Arden Hall and the upper lodges were first identified as a Biological Heritage Site in September 1993.

### **Past management and use**

- Community and Council tree planting between 1972 and 1996.
- Huncoat Trail launched in 2004 and marked with waymarkers in 2005.
- Bird, bat and owl box installation in 2004 and 2006.
- New entrance gates commissioned by the Friends of Arden Hall in 2006
- Environmental arts projects led by Mid Pennine Arts in 2005 including lantern procession.



Environmental arts project at Arden Hall in 2005.

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- Guided natural history walks on specific themes such as archaeology, bats, birds, wildflowers and trees since 2007
- Invasive species management by volunteers including cutting back Rhododendron next to Arden Hall in 2007 and hand-pulling of Himalayan Balsam since 2007.
- Cutting the species-rich grassland south of Plantation Road since 2009.
- Multi-user path from Avenue Parade providing access for all up to the Peel Park monument was constructed in 2009 as part of the centenary celebrations.
- Rhododendron spreading in the heathland on Peel Park was removed in 2010 & 11.
- Woodland management started on a small scale in 2010.
- Enhancements made to the Avenue Parade entrance in 2012.
- Foundations of Arden Hall excavated in 2012.



Arden Hall gates by Amelia Dew, 06/09

Excavation of the foundations by Ian Miller, 07/12.

### Plans for the future

1. Further access improvements by:
  - surfacing footpaths,
  - installing waymarker posts and
  - providing benches and seats.
2. Organising programmes of guided walks and events each year.
3. Providing information and education by:
  - producing on-site interpretation boards,
  - publishing leaflets, factsheets and identification guides,
  - providing education packs and worksheets for schools and
  - putting information on websites and podcasts as well as using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter.
4. Organising environmental arts and events such as sculptures, lantern processions and outdoor theatre.
5. Designating the Council-owned land as a Local Nature Reserve.
6. Managing the woodlands by:

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- thinning out trees where they are too dense/closely planted,
  - converting coniferous and mixed plantations to semi-natural broadleaved woodland in the longer term (e.g. over the next 20-25 years).
7. Maintaining the views over Accrington from Peel Park by:
    - maintaining the gaps in the skyline trees and
    - creating new gaps by felling specific trees that are obscuring the views.
  8. Improving the condition of the non-woodland habitats, in particular within the Biological Heritage Site, by:
    - creating firebreaks through areas of heathland on Peel Park,
    - cutting areas of species-rich grassland and raking up the 'hay', and
    - clearing out excessive vegetation from the lodges.
  9. Maintaining and enhancing the populations of notable plant and animal species that are resident or breed within the site.
  10. Providing bird tables filled with bird food to help our feathered friends from autumn through to spring.
  11. Controlling invasive non-native species such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendron.
  12. Surveying the populations of notable flora and fauna and recording those species groups for which there is a lack of records.
  13. Conserving and enhancing the archaeological features by:
    - managing the features to stop them deteriorating,
    - including information on interpretation boards and leaflets and
    - progressing opportunities for further excavations.

Each of the plans above need staff time and resources to deliver the necessary works on the ground between 2012 and 2016. £30-40,000 is needed every year to achieve the vision for the site but much can be achieved by volunteers. Your involvement and support would be appreciated.

You can help by joining the Friends of Arden Hall and the Coppice carrying out wildlife surveys (contact Claire Pritchard on 01254 381394) or by volunteering with Prospects and the Wildlife Trust.

For further information contact the Parks Department at Hyndburn Borough Council on 01254 388111.

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This document was produced by Lancashire Wildlife Trust ([www.lancswt.org.uk](http://www.lancswt.org.uk)), funded by Prospects ([www.prospectsfoundation.org.uk](http://www.prospectsfoundation.org.uk)) through an Access to Nature grant from Natural England ([www.natural-england.org.uk](http://www.natural-england.org.uk)) with the support of Hyndburn Borough Council ([www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk](http://www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk)).



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