

Cheshire West & Chester Council

# Discover Rivacre Valley

## Local Nature Reserve

### Welcome

Explore Rivacre Valley, a local nature reserve on the edge of the industrial town of Ellesmere Port, and discover for yourself this green oasis of beautiful woodlands and meadows.

Rivacre Valley covers an area of countryside over 300 acres in size. An acre is about half the size of a football pitch. The area is ideal for quiet walks, watching wildlife and picnicking. A network of paths and trails lead you through old woodlands, colourful meadows and along the meandering brook.

There are many ways to enjoy Rivacre Valley. Come for a quiet, Sunday afternoon stroll, or a brisk walk with your dog at lunchtime. Follow the trails and discover the recently installed wood sculptures. Enjoy a family summer picnic or investigate the wildlife on a nature walk with the children. Why not test your map reading skills on the orienteering course or take part in one of the many events the Rangers organise throughout the year.

### Wild life

The valley's rich habitat is perfect for many plants and animals that otherwise may not inhabit such urban areas. As you explore the valley in spring look out for woodland flowers like wood sorrel and wood anemone and be sure to visit in late April for a superb display of bluebells. The old hay meadow known as Fairways is worth a visit in summer with its pretty harebells and unusual yellow rattle and an abundance of butterflies on a sunny day.

The meadow also provides a valuable habitat to other insects and small mammals such as shrews and field voles. The ponds in the valley are particularly good for dragonflies and damselflies that can be seen on bright, warm days in July and August. Don't forget your binoculars to see the best of the birdlife in the valley, listen out for the drumming of the greater spotted woodpeckers and look out for a flash of blue as the kingfishers speed along the brook.



### History

A large part of Rivacre Valley was once owned by the Poole family from Poole Hall. They used the woods for hunting. Some areas are known as semi-natural ancient woodland and are very important for wildlife. The wildflowers found here indicate that the woods are very old.

Rivacre was once famous for its popular open-air swimming pool which opened in 1934. It attracted hundreds of people in the summer months and was known as 'the pool in the garden' thanks to the beautiful rose gardens. The water was pumped from the Manchester Ship Canal nearly one mile away before being filtered and then fed into the pool. Unfortunately the pool closed in 1982 due to maintenance costs. The site is still part of Rivacre Valley and has been planted with trees and wildflowers.



### Church Wood

This area of old woodland was once part of the access route to Histon Hall with the ornate gateway and entrance off the A41. It is now separated from the main part of Rivacre Valley by the golf course, however a public footpath provides a link between the two.

### Clayhill Wood

This wood is a slope of semi-natural ancient woodland stretching up to the golf course and down to Rivacre Brook at the bottom. The stretch of path passing through the wood is one of the best to get a glimpse of the kingfishers racing along the water course.

### Well Wood

The wood takes its name from St Helens Well which was situated here. In fact there were three such wells and a water tower which can be seen near the roadside, and these provided water for Bowdler's paper mill.

The woodland is a mixture of trees such as poplars, elms, sycamores, oak and a hazel copse. There are many woodland wildflowers especially in spring, with a carpet of celandines, wood anemone and bluebells.

### Cornfield Meadow

This meadow is at its best in late summer when it is awash with colour from poppies, marigolds and corncockles which attract numerous insects and butterflies to the area.



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