



Risley Moss – a wildlife haven

Risley Moss is a special place – one of few remaining mosslands in Cheshire and the United Kingdom. As well as the damp mossland with its distinctive plants and animals there are wildflower meadows, ponds rich in aquatic life and a mature oak ash woodland creating a mosaic of habitats.



The Moss

The mossland re-wetting scheme is a long term restoration project which began in 1994. The scrapes and bunds that can be seen from the Observation Tower retain water, creating the perfect conditions for bog flora such as cotton grass and sphagnum mosses to re-colonise. Although a significant amount of colonisation will take place over the coming years it will be a long time before full restoration is achieved.



The Observation Tower overlooking the mossland gives a panoramic view. On a clear day the Peak District can be seen.

The Woodland

The oak and ash woodland is a mix of mature trees with hazel coppiced in a traditional way. Hazel is cut at the base every few years to encourage re-growth. The resulting new shoots are harvested for use as walking sticks and other woodland products.



Fungi are abundant during late summer and autumn. Look out for the conspicuous red and white fly agaric found beneath birch trees in the Mini Moss and car park areas.

Wildlife on the Moss

The Rangers provide a mixture of seeds, nuts and fat at the hides. This attracts woodland birds such as great spotted woodpeckers, parties of long-tailed tits, jays and robins. As many as 60 species of breeding birds and 50 visiting species are seen on the moss in a good year including barn owls, hobbies and hen harriers. Newts, frogs and toads breed in the ponds and ditches whilst in summer dragonflies can be seen skimming over the water's surface. Of the seventeen species of dragonflies and smaller damselflies recorded recently in Lancashire and



Cheshire, 15 have been seen and 11 breed in ever increasing numbers on Risley Moss' protected woodland ponds and restored mosslands – making the Reserve a vital regional and national stronghold for their continued survival.

Adders, slow worms and lizards hunt out on the moss, while notable plants include northern and southern marsh orchids and insect eating round leaved sundew. Wildflower meadows hum with butterflies, bees and other insects during spring and summer. A hay cut is taken in late summer once the flower seeds have set.

Risley Moss Action Group

The Risley Moss Action Group (RIMAG) assists the Ranger Service in improving Risley Moss both for wildlife and your enjoyment. Volunteers are involved in management tasks such as monitoring habitats and surveying bird and mammal populations. They also raise funds for conservation projects and help with guided walks, events and activities, enabling visitors to find out more about the Reserve. For further information about RIMAG or free membership of the group please contact the Rangers on 01925 824339.

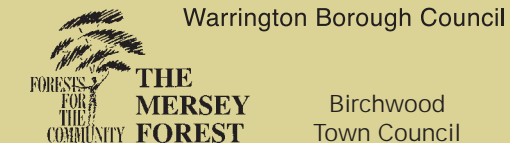


The Mersey Forest In This Area

The Mersey Forest is the largest of the country's Community Forest projects set up to help create a network of woodlands, reaching into the heart of urban areas. Most people think of a forest as one single area of many trees. The Mersey Forest is something entirely different – a network of woodlands around our towns and cities for work, for wildlife, for leisure and for education.


The Mersey Forest Team are based at Risley Moss, the Reserve providing a fine example of a local community woodland offering something for everyone.

For further information contact your local Rangers or call The Mersey Forest Team on 01925 816217. www.merseyforest.org.uk



Birchwood Town Council

Risley Moss Local Nature Reserve

 in the heart of The Mersey Forest

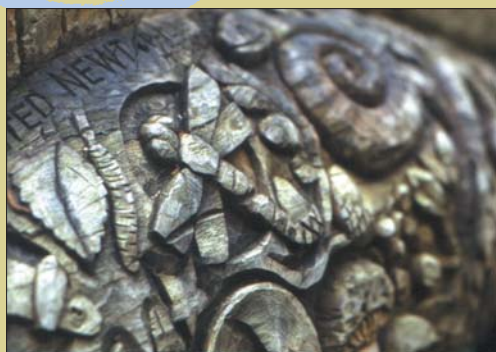


Warrington Borough Council

Welcome To Risley Moss Local Nature Reserve

Whatever the time of year there is always something different to see and do at Risley Moss.

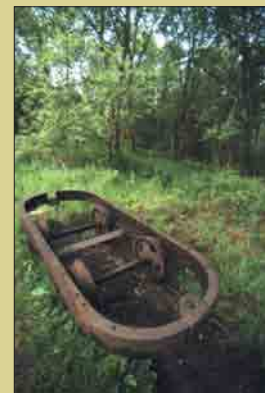
Explore this green flag award winning reserve on pathways winding through woodland and meadows. In general most of the paths are suitable for prams and wheelchairs. Sit and enjoy the sights and sounds of nature or join in a Ranger led event. Stop for a moment to watch butterflies and insects feeding in the meadows or look into the underwater world of the ponds. Climb the Observation Tower for a panoramic view of the mosslands at tree top height or spend a few minutes watching wildlife from the Woodland Hide – in winter you may see twenty or more different bird species



A huge wooden newt, carved beech pillars and grass covered Mother Earth are just some of the inspiring natural sculptures created by artists and local people - you'll find them sited around the Reserve close to the main paths.

History Of The Moss

Wild and mysterious even today, the 220 acres that make up Risley Moss are a last remnant of the boggy wastelands that once dotted much of the Mersey Valley. Shallow lakes created at the end of the last Ice Age gradually filled with layer upon layer of spongy Sphagnum moss. Over many thousands of years, this waterlogged vegetation built up to form raised peat bogs – of which Risley Moss is now an important surviving example.



Although once described as 'useless', most of the Mersey mosses were eventually drained for agriculture. But Risley Moss, which was wetter than the surrounding areas, remained an untouched wilderness until the early 1800's. Then came the Industrial Revolution and huge amounts of peat were needed for horse and cattle bedding in the rapidly expanding towns. And so, at first by hand and then at an increasing rate by machines, the peat was stripped and the fragile mossland changed forever.

The Second World War brought further changes. A vast munitions factory took shape on the edge of the bog, hidden from enemy bombers by mists off the Moss. Here 30,000 (mainly women) workers, labouring day and night, produced a staggering one million mines and 500,000 high explosive shells. Though the German Airforce targeted this supposedly secret site, only one enemy bomb fell anywhere close.

When the War was over, the site fell into dereliction. By the 1960's the factory complex had been demolished to make way for new houses. Thankfully Risley Moss and its significant wildlife value were recognised. Today Risley Moss is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a designated Local Nature Reserve. It is also situated within the larger Manchester Mosses Special Area for Conservation (cSAC).



Notes For Visitors

We ask visitors to observe the following:

- Take litter home or put in bins
- Observe instructions and notices
- To meet the different needs of people and wildlife the Reserve is divided into two main sections. While you are free to roam the woodland paths, access to the fragile mossland is restricted to Ranger led guided walks. This is to protect the habitat as well as for your safety.
- Please help everyone to enjoy the Reserve by taking care not to disturb plants or wildlife.



The Visitor Centre

The Risley Moss Visitor Centre is conveniently located next to the car park – the Rangers Office, information and toilets are located here. Thanks to Risley Moss Action Group (RIMAG) and ENTRUST the Visitor Centre now has a new permanent display. Call in for information about the Reserve and what you can see and do – leaflets about other places of interest are also available.

Access For All

The paths are wide and well surfaced but do undulate with the natural terrain in places. There are three designated waymarked trails of varying lengths. Please see the map outside the Visitor Centre for these routes. Regular resting points around the Reserve are complimented with wheelchair accessible picnic tables and two easy access bird hides. The Visitor Centre is also accessible for wheelchairs with disabled toilet facilities inside. Please contact the Rangers for further information.

The Ranger Service

The Rangers at Risley Moss are responsible for the management of the Reserve. The work undertaken is extremely varied – from the preparation and implementation of the site management plans, providing an environmental education service for schools and colleges, to organising events and activities, working with volunteers, conducting surveys and recording wildlife.

For further information contact:
Ranger Office, Risley Moss Local Nature Reserve, Ordnance Ave, Birchwood, Warrington. WA3 6QX

Tel/Fax: 01925 824339


e-mail RisleyMossRangers@warrington.gov.uk


For information on events at Risley Moss pick up a 'What's On in Warrington's Parks & Green Spaces' booklet or visit our web site at www.warrington.gov.uk



Dog Owners It's Your Business

Due to the increasing problem of dog fouling and disturbance to wildlife by loose dogs, the following regulations are now in force.

 **dogs must be kept under close control at all times in all areas of the Reserve.**

 **always clean up after your dog and deposit in the dog waste bin provided opposite the Visitor Centre.**