

BOGGART HOLE CLOUGH COMMUNITY ACTION TRUST

Protecting and revitalizing Boggart Hole Clough Ancient Woodland Park

Rubric: **“PROTECTING AND REVITALIZING BOGGART HOLE CLOUGH ANCIENT WOODLAND PARK”**

BOGGART HOLE CLOUGH ANCIENT WOODLAND PARK, 190 acres (including David Lewis Recreation Ground, 19 acres), forms part of the Irk Valley in north Manchester. The Clough, as it is called locally, is surrounded by the neighbourhoods of Blackley, Charlestown, Moston and Harpurhey.

BOGGART HOLE CLOUGH COMMUNITY ACTION TRUST, a *Friends of Park Group* voluntary sector organization, was formed in February 1999 by a group of local residents with the aim of making the Clough a safe, sustainable, thriving place for people and wildlife, through conservation-led infrastructure improvements, encouraging greater appreciation and usage, etc. The Trust is run by volunteers and membership is open to everyone.

The Clough consists of plateaus above a confluence of ravines and contains an **ANCIENT SEMI-NATURAL WOODLAND** (an unusual asset for an inner city park), an artificial lake with an island and old boathouse, a wildflower meadow, wetlands, ponds, brooks, nature trails and broad avenues, as well as a war memorial (topped by a bronze statue of a Winged Victory) on Angel Hill, and a café, children’s playground, athletics track, bowling greens, multi-sport play areas, etc. The Clough is in effect an *Ancient Woodland Park*, a combination of *Local Nature Reserve* and *Historic Municipal Park* with modern sporting facilities, providing Manchester with an important ecological, education, health, heritage, recreation and tourist resource.

PARTNERSHIPS. The Trust works closely with the Clough’s owners, **Manchester City Council**. Other partners include: Botanical Society of the British Isles, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, Civic Trust, English Heritage, English Nature, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, Manchester Children’s Fund, Manchester College of Arts and Technology, Manchester Community Information Network, Mersey Basin Campaign, Voluntary Action Manchester, Woodland Trust.

ACHIEVEMENTS. The Trust holds regular *open meetings* with Manchester City Council representatives enabling community participation, through democratic, transparent decision-making, in Park management and planning. These meetings have initiated several ongoing *action programmes*: to restore Ancient Woodland biodiversity (e.g. eradicating harmful invasive plants, regenerating degraded native ground flora), to extend wheelchair access where feasible (e.g. around the Fish Pond), and to introduce regular activities (e.g. in 2003 Brass Bands played in the Clough after an absence of 30 years).

The Trust is seeking more **MEMBERS/VOLUNTEERS & DONORS/SPONSORS** so we can develop and extend our action programmes:

1. Supporting further **new regular activities in the Clough**, perhaps e.g. Cycling for disabled people, T’ai chi, Speed-walking, Guided Natural Heritage Walks, Storytelling & Theatre (e.g. Boggart-themed Halloween Lantern celebration / performance / procession), Visual arts (e.g. banner/lantern/mask making, woodcarving), and more Music (e.g. jazz brass, orchestral);
2. Supporting further **improvement of the Clough’s natural & built amenity infrastructure**, perhaps e.g. create nature trails/wildlife corridors linking Clough to River Irk & Bailey’s Wood, regenerate Lake & Island, renovate Angel Hill War Memorial, excavate site of Easton Grange for permanent archaeological display, construct a Woodland Heritage Centre, a permanent Stage/Bandstand, and a second Children’s Playground (opposite side of Clough from existing David Lewis playground).

The Clough has an interesting **HISTORY** e.g. 10,000 BC: current interglacial epoch (Flandrian) begins – tundra & groves of Birch (beginning of Ancient Woodland in England)... 8,000 BC: Birch & Hazel abundant, Alder & Oak appear... 5,000 BC: Ancient Woodland fully developed... 2350-1500 BC: Early Bronze Age tanged spearhead (found AD 1959, kept in Manchester Museum)... AD 450-1066: Anglo-Saxon/Old English *bar-gheist* meaning gate-ghost (*boggart* etymology)... 1200s: Easton Grange monastic farmstead... 1282: document refers to *Deer Park & Eyries of Sparrow Hawks*... 1291: return refers to forest 7 miles in extent, deer warren grazing 200 fallow deer... 1538: John Leland’s *Itinerary* for Henry VIII refers to *blow shoppes* (charcoal furnaces)... 1648: New Model Army encampment... 1673: indenture refers to watermill - *fulling mill & tenter croft*... 1700s: Booth Hall estate... 1788-1872: Samuel Bamford, local resident, Peterloo leader, author of *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, etc., wrote about seeing *terrific shapes, some beastly, some part human* in the Clough !... 1894: Manchester Corporation purchases land, creates Municipal Park... 1896: Independent Labour Party mass meetings of up to 50,000 addressed by Ben Tillet (Dockers’ leader), Emmeline Pankhurst (Suffragette leader) & Keir Hardie (first Labour Party leader)... early 1900s: Lake, Boathouse, Fountain & 2 Bandstands constructed & Clough Bottom Farmhouse converted into Refreshment Room... late 1900s: Fountain, 2 Bandstands & Refreshment Room demolished, upper reach of the Clough landfilled with domestic waste... 3rd millennium: ...?

A clear understanding of the past (*genius loci* - sense of place) should benefit and inform our planning for the future. The Trust, with Manchester City Council and other partners, is therefore piecing together a detailed history of the Clough as an integral part of the process of creating a strategic **COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN**, a coherent, comprehensive combination of complementary action programmes **to protect and revitalize the Clough**.