



Clayton Vale Past & Recent History

In the booklet "Manchester Walks and Wildflowers", which were extracts from the Manchester Weekly Times during 1st May 1859 to July 1859 Clayton Vale was described as "pleasant walks, especially near the borders of the Medlock, which winds among trees and green fields that are really picturesque."

There is a rich and varied history to the Vale with past industries such as a print and dye works and Bradford Colliery having a major impact with associated buildings, roads, railways and pollutions. It had a number of farms, a hospital, a nunnery, a church and a row of cottages in the earlier years.

In 1844 Clayton Bridge Railway Station opened where the level crossing is today. Unfortunately this closed in 1968. Andrews Brow was a small lane in the Vale which ran adjacent to railway off 'Pop Brew' (Edge Lane) which housed small cottages with thatched roofs. The occupants were workers from the Print Works at Bank Bridge Meadow located at Philips Park.

In approx 1907 Manchester Corporation began to purchase the buildings on this site for plans to use it as a tip for the ash cinders from Stuart Street Power Station and a Municipal Tip.

Many people visited the Vale or Clayton Alps as it was well known during the miner's strike of 1921 in the hope of gaining some coal. Frank Pritchard a local resident reported his mother sending him to the Dingle, another local name, with a large sugar sack to collect coal from the tip. On arrival he was amazed to see that there was already hundreds of people there doing exactly the same. He returned the next day only to find more people this time digging with shovels and picks just like a gold rush.

During this time much of Clayton Vale was still covered in grass especially the areas on the steep slopes leading down to the river.

Larger-scale tipping appears to have started in the early 1920's at western end of Clayton Vale, adjacent to Bank Bridge Street, Clayton Vale Lane and the Manchester Corporation Sidings.

Waste disposal activities spread eastward down the valley and by 1966 the maps indicate that the entire area of Clayton Vale had either been used for tipping or was in current use as a landfill site.

The landfill of the Vale took place prior to the Control of Pollution Act 1974 (which required that the disposal of all controlled wastes onto land be licensed); therefore the exact nature of the fill materials is not known. However, a review of documentation and historical maps held by MCC indicates that tipping commenced in Clayton Vale prior to 1909, with a small area of waste disposal located to the west of Clayton Vale House near Clayton Vale Bridge.

It is understood that tipping ceased prior to 1974 and the historical maps indicate that the site was disused by 1981. The site was heavily polluted by industrial waste throughout the industrial revolution and even up to 1983. In 1982 Manchester City Council purchased the whole valley and began the reclamation of the site to turn it back into open space for the public.

The huge reclamation took several years to complete. The aim was to provide a pleasant landscape setting to maintain and improve access for walkers and to create a wildlife haven.

Approximately 250,000 trees and bushes mostly native were planted over a period of 10-15 years in an area measuring 114 acres. A network of paths was installed and two ponds were developed and improved. The trees planted were of short-lived species such as fast growing like Willows & Poplars. Other trees included White Poplar, Aspen, Sessile Oak, Red Oak, Bird Cherry and Silver Birch and were planted to increase the wildlife habitat to include a wide range of woodland species which includes sparrow hawks and jays.

The Vale has many Manchester Poplars, which was originally provided from the English Native Black Poplar by the nursery at Carrington as it was resistant to the sulphurous smoke and fumes. A single male clone was used to breed the Manchester Poplar, *Populus nigra* var. *betufovia*, which was planted throughout East Manchester. Unfortunately, these poplars now have a fungal disease and will have to be replaced in the near future.

Sometime during 1914-1918 the Old Naylor's public house, situated next to the River on the north side between Culcheth Lane and the centre, closed. Its original name was Vale Cottage but gained the name Old Naylor's because of the landlord James Naylor who was well respected in the area. He sold mild bitter and ale together with tobacco. Later local residents knew the area down to Clayton Bridge as Daddy Naylor's.

St Cuthbert's Church used to be on the site to the left just before the level crossing. There had been a Sunday school on the site since 1880. St Cuthbert's opened as a mission of All Saints in December 1889. The church had its own pipe organ and belfry. The bell at the church was made by Taylor and Co of Loughborough in 1898. After 75 years of serving the local people it closed its doors in 1954. The church was later demolished in 1965. The bell from the church was given to Church of the Holy Family on Lord Lane, Failsworth where it is still rung today.

The salt road approached the area passing Clayton Hall through Clayton Mount, passed Clayton House and into the Vale. It followed a similar route as the present Vale Street going straight down through the Vale over Clayton Vale Bridge and up to Culcheth Lane.

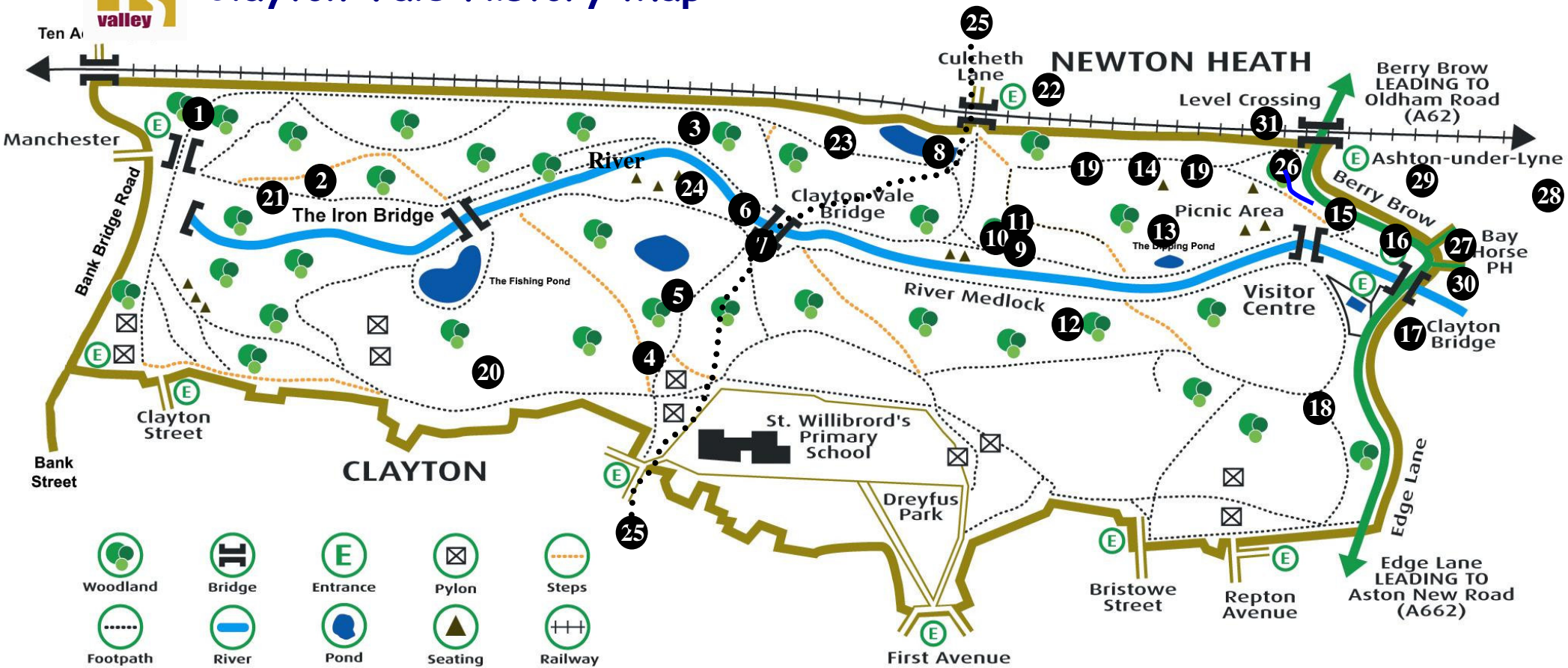
Messrs Wood and Wrights Clayton Vale Print Works was located on the southern bank of the river near to the Brick Bridge today. It was shown on Johnson's 1820s map and 1848 OS map. By 1888 it was indicated that the print works was disused. Between 1898 and 1909 the buildings were demolished. Near the Print Works the river burst its banks in 1872 during the great flood and caused massive destruction at the works.

There are no remains of structures on the Vale as these were all demolished to make way for the site to become a landfill. The only historical landmarks are the Brick Bridge within the Vale, the Bay Horse Pub and the bridge on Edge Lane which would have been a crossing for the river.

We have 4 ponds on Clayton Vale of which two have been identified as Sites of Biological Importance as they contain locally scarce plant species and habitats including common reed swamp. These are the fishing pond and the pond at Culcheth Lane. The other two ponds are the hidden pond between the Iron and Brick Bridge and the dipping pond that is situated near the visitors centre.



Clayton Vale History Map



- 1 - Mineral Railway Viaduct over Clayton Vale Lane
- 2 - Pumping Station
- 3 - Infectious Diseases Hospital (Small Pox)
- 4 - Clayton Mount
- 5 - Clayton Vale House (Nurses Home)
- 6 - Weir
- 7 - Clayton Vale Bridge
- 8 - Reservoirs (now Culcheth Lane Pond)
- 9 - Failsworth Dye & Finishing Works (1820-1932)

- 10 - Old Naylor's Pub (Vale House)
- 11 - Reservoirs
- 12 - River Medlock eastern meander
- 13 - Andrew's Brow
- 14 - Reservoirs
- 15 - St Cuthbert's Church [1889-1959]
- 16 - Coates Farm
- 17 - Clayton Mill Bridge
- 18 - Vauxhall Farm (1890-1932)
- 19 - Allotment Gardens (1932)
- 26 - Spring

- 20 - Football Ground (1932\)
- 21 - Clayton Vale Lane
- 22 - The Nunnery
- 23 - Culcheth Hall (1820)
- 24 - Wood & Wright Clayton Vale Print Works (1820)
- 25 - The Salt Road
- 27 - Bay Horse Public House
- 28 - Ten Arches
- 29 - No2 Berry Brow
- 30 - Messrs Taylor & Boyd's Calico Print Works
- 31 - Clayton Bridge Station

1	The Mineral Railway Viaduct ran from Clayton Vale to Ashton New Road. It was in place until the 1980s.
2	Pumping Station
3	On the opposite side of the river to the Print Works on the northern bank stood the Clayton Infectious Diseases Hospital. This was built as a result of the construction of the Manchester Ship canal as it was law that every port needed an Infectious Diseases Hospital to cope with isolation of diseases should the need arise. Later it changed name to the Small-pox Hospital with 32 beds to accommodate its patients.
4	Clayton Vale was not as landscaped as it is now. It had some hills but only on the side near Clayton Mount and the Dingle. The area became known as "Clayton Alps".
5	Clayton House stood approximately 50 metres away from the bridge by the path that leads uphill towards Clayton Mount. It was a Georgian building and was demolished in the 1960s. Due to original tipping and subsequent landscaping there is now no sign of these buildings or the ancient salt road.
6	The Weir on Clayton Vale was created a number of years ago to help the flow of the river. It is designed to raise the level of the stream. Its purpose could have been to divert the flow, or to catch and retain fish. As weirs have traditionally been used to create millponds we may assume that this is the case and it was created for the print works. It is very deep and dangerous.
7	There is indication from evidence collected over the years that Clayton Vale Bridge (the Brick Bridge) stands on the site of an ancient crossing place. It is known from map and documentary evidence that a salt road crossed the River Medlock at this point.
8, 11 & 14	There were a number of reservoirs on Clayton Vale; the one near Culcheth Lane is still existent whereas have been filled in over the years.
9	Failsworth Dye & Finishing Works was on the site from 1820-1932 when it was demolished. Dye works and printing works appeared in the valley from the late 18th century.
10	Between 1914-1918 the Old Naylor's public house, situated next to the River on the north side between Culcheth Lane and the Visitors Centre, closed. Its original name was Vale Cottage but the name Old Naylor's became common because the landlord James Naylor was well respected in the area. He sold mild bitter and ale together with tobacco. Later local residents knew the area down to Clayton Bridge as Daddy Naylor's.
12	Before the Industrial Revolution the area was mainly used for pastoral agriculture. The areas would have attracted local farmers because of the water supply from the River. The water supply would also have been attractive to industry. Weirs were constructed and the river channel was straightened at the eastern end of the site and reservoirs to the north were completely

	<p>filled. The fill is thought to comprise of domestic and trade waste, pulverised fuel ash and colliery spoil.</p> <p>Work began in 1905 on the brick channel from the Iron Bridge at Clayton Vale to the bridge at Mill Street, now Alan Turing Way. Locally the river became known as the Red River because of the red bricks used to help with the flow of the river and to prevent flooding such as the famous one in 1872. On a 1909 map The River Medlock is shown as being culverted (A structure used to enclose the river to allow it to pass underneath a structure such as a road).</p> <p>By 1923 the River Medlock was fully canalised.</p> <p>The river between the hospital and Clayton Bridge during the early 1920s was reported to have been reasonably clean with a sandy bottom. It was clean enough that local boys would paddle and sometimes swim in the river.</p>
13	<p>On the north side of the river a number of cottages used to stand on the flat area of grass on a lane named Andrew's Brow. Many of the people who lived here worked at Bank Bridge Print Works and would walk from their homes through the Vale under the viaduct to what is now Bank Bridge Meadow at the back of Philips Park. The old chimney at Bank Bridge Meadow is still standing. The cottages were demolished in the 1960s.</p>
15	<p>St Cuthbert's Church used to be on the left before the level crossing. There had been a Sunday School on this site since 1880. St Cuthbert's opened in December 1889. The church had its own pipe organ and belfry; the bell at the church was made by Taylor and Co of Loughborough in 1898. After years of service to local people the church closed its doors in 1954. It was demolished in 1965. The bell from the church was given to Church of the Holy Family on Lord Lane, Failsworth where it is still rung today.</p>
16	<p>Further round the bend of Berry Brow, just before Clayton Bridge, on the northern side of the River Medlock was Coates Farm. It contained a farmhouse and four outer buildings. Before the First World War the residents of the farm held a gala every summer for the local children with races and tea. The stone wall can still be seen next to the river. The house was demolished in the 1940s but was once owned by the Mather family, the founders of Mather and Platt.</p>
17	<p>A bridge on the site of Clayton Bridge is first mentioned in 1697. Before this point a ford was located here and indicates an ancient river crossing possibly in use since prehistoric times.</p>
18	<p>Vauxhall Farms stood on the site from 1890 till 1932 when it was demolished.</p>
19	<p>It is indicated on a 1932 map that the Vale has allotment gardens; people would have been encouraged to grow their own produce. Later maps show that these allotments no longer existed.</p>
20	<p>A football ground is indicated on a 1932 map. A famous football club used to be located next to Clayton Vale from 1893-1910. Known at the time as Newton Heath Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Football Club, it later became known as Manchester United Football Club.</p>
21	<p>Clayton Vale Lane was the road used by the works on the Vale as well as the farms and houses that used to be on the vale. It carries this name today.</p>

22	The Nunnery that was located just outside the Vale was a large house on Culcheth Lane.
23	Culcheth Hall was on the Vale close to Culcheth Lane. Not a great deal is known about this house.
24	Messrs Wood and Wright's Clayton Vale Print Works was located on the south bank of the river near to the Brick Bridge. It was shown on Johnson's 1820s map and the 1848 OS map. By 1888 it was indicated that the print works was disused, and the buildings were demolished between 1898 and 1909. In 1872 during the great flood, the river burst its banks near the Print Works causing massive destruction.
25	The salt road crossed the area passing Clayton Hall and over Clayton Mount, past Clayton House and into the Vale. It followed a similar route to the present Vale Street - going straight down through the Vale over Clayton Vale Bridge and up to Culcheth Lane.
26	The Vale would have had many springs feeding down to the river. One is still visible near Berry Brow.
27	The Bay Horse Public House served the small hamlet that developed at Clayton Bridge in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as a result of the nearby dye and printing works.
28	The viaduct near the visitors centre was built to carry the Manchester and Leeds Railway over Millstream Lane and the Medlock River.
29	John Readitt lived at no 2 Berry Brow. He was born at 34 Bamford St, Clayton on 19th January 1897. He became famous, as on leaving school he entered the family business of clogger and shoe repairer at 600 Ashton New Rd. It was here that he gained a ten year contract to repair the football boots of Manchester United F.C. He was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1917 for his service in the 6th Battalion of the Prince of Wales Volunteers (South Lancashire) Regiment.
30	During the great flood of 1872, at Messrs Taylor and Boyd's Calico Print Works at Clayton Bridge the river rose over 12 feet and one of the lodge embankments gave away.
31	The level crossing next to the Vale used to be a station. It was opened in the early 1840s as Clayton Bridge Station when the Manchester and Leeds railway line was constructed. This became the Ashton and Stalybridge branch of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Co. The station consisted of two platforms, booking office, waiting rooms and station master's house. The signal box that still stands on the site was used for operating the level crossing gates. Following the publication of Dr Beechings report "The Reshaping of British Railways" in 1963, more than 8,000 miles of track and 2,000 stations were closed at a cost of nearly 70,000 jobs. Clayton Bridge Station was a victim and was closed to traffic in the 1960s.