

Friends of Gorse Hall

The group, Friends of Gorse Hall, was established in 1999 in cooperation with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and Groundwork Tameside. Their aim is to promote the use and knowledge of Gorse Hall to residents and visitors.

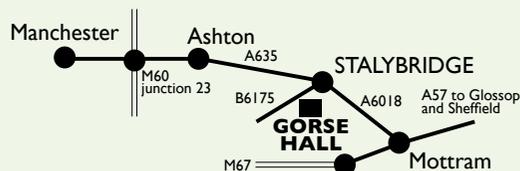
To date the group has raised awareness of the historical and educational value of the site aided by conducted walks around Gorse Hall, giving visitors an insight into the diverse history and facilities of the site. These facilities now include an attractive nature trail, an orienteering course and a trim trail.

The group also liaise with local residents and other groups regarding the future development of the site and to encourage more links with schools and other interested parties. Members are pleased to talk to local clubs and societies and to organise displays for the public.

There are also weekly practical workdays to maintain and enhance the site. If you are interested in helping, please contact Friends of Gorse Hall.

The location

The new gates to the site of Gorse Hall are on High Street, Stalybridge, (B6175) opposite the junction with Caroline Street. Limited parking is available on Quarry Street.



Contacts

Gorse Hall is managed by The Friends of Gorse Hall, who have a lease on the land which is owned by Tameside MBC.

You can find more information about the Friends at:

www.gorse-hall.co.uk
and
www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk

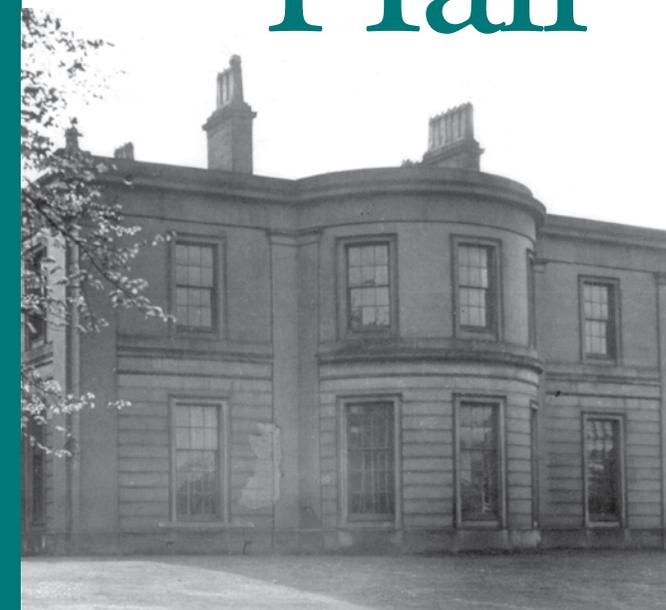
Tameside Countryside Service

Tameside Countryside Service works closely with the Friends of Gorse Hall to preserve and enhance the natural environment and heritage of Gorse Hall, and to help the local community and visitors to appreciate, enjoy and care for this area.

You can find out more about Tameside's Countryside Service by visiting: **www.tameside.gov.uk/countryside**



Welcome to Gorse Hall





Gorse Hall

A brief history of Gorse Hall

The earliest documentary reference to the site occurs in the will of Robert Duckenfield of 1621.

'The 16th century ruins of 'Old Gorse Hall' (Gorses) can still be seen, with the remains of an inglenook fireplace and a later 17th century one. The building was taken down in the late 1950s and excavated in 1997/8.

Other features of historic interest include the site of Hunters Tower; built in 1807 by Francis Dukinfield Astley, Lord of the Manor of Dukinfield. Some of the site has been excavated and recorded by Greater Manchester Archaeology Unit.

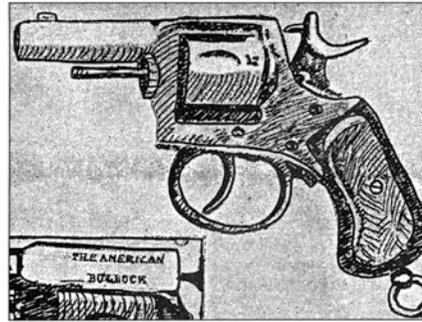
Francis Dukinfield Astley also formed the Astley Volunteer riflemen, and the remains of the rifle range wall can still be seen near to Masefield Close.

The new Gorse Hall was built around 1835 by John Leech, married to Jane Ashton, who were to become the grandparents of Beatrix Potter. Beatrix visited her relatives at Gorse Hall regularly and we can only guess whether she received inspiration for her stories during her stays in Stalybridge.

The final episode of the hall's history was when in 1909 the owner; George Harry Storrs, was brutally murdered. In 1910 his widow, Maggie, ordered the demolition of the hall when she moved to Morecombe Bay, never to return. Stone from the hall was reused in renovations to bank buildings in Stalybridge.

Murder at Gorse Hall

On the night of September 10th 1909, at about 9.30pm, George Harry Storrs and his wife, Maggie, were in the dining room of the mansion. Suddenly a window was broken, and from outside a shout of "hands up or I'll shoot" was heard.



The police could find no clues to the perpetrator and so it was agreed that a policeman would patrol the grounds each night and, because telephones were still uncommon, a bell was installed on the roof to summon help if needed.

Nothing more happened for another two months until the night of 1st November. This was election night and all available police officers were needed for crowd control duty in the town.

Shortly after 9pm an intruder armed with a gun crept through the kitchen. Disturbed by the cook, he came face to face with George Storrs and his wife in the hallway. A fight ensued and the bell was rung to call for help. By the time two policemen arrived after running up the long driveway, George was dying from loss of blood caused by 15 stab wounds. He died shortly after 10pm.

Cornelius Howard, a cousin, was arrested and tried but acquitted. A local man named Mark Wilde was also tried and acquitted and to this day the identity of the real culprit is not known despite much speculation and many investigations.

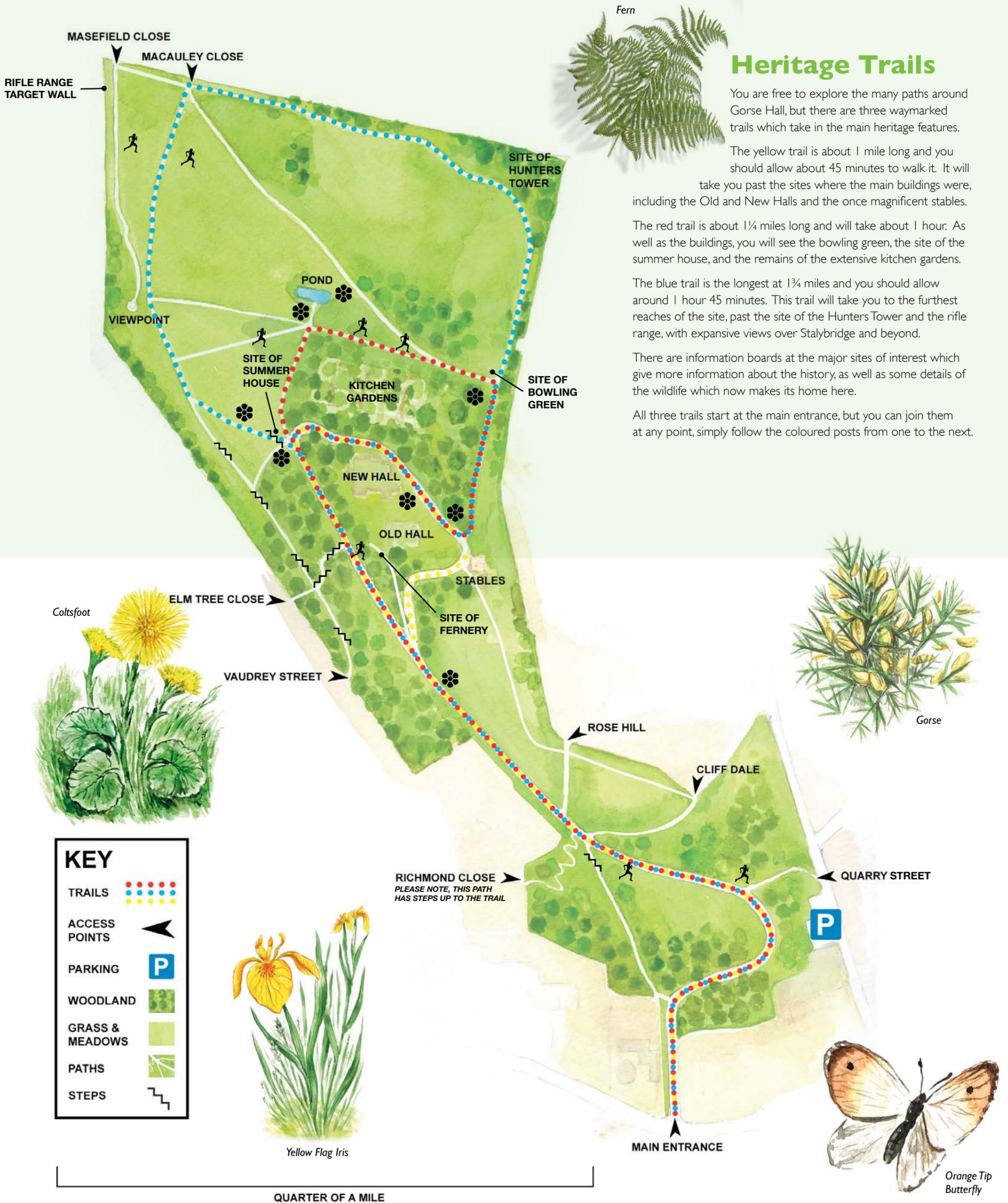
A natural history of Gorse Hall

It is a common misconception that open spaces and urban fringe parkland have little or no wildlife. This parkland supports most common British mammals from urban foxes down to small mice and the common shrew. Amphibians such as frogs and toads can be seen around the pond and in marshy areas. There is also a wide range of birds, many of which breed on the site and several which are just visitors to the area.



There are myriads of invertebrates, many breeding in rotting wood and providing food for the birds. There is also an improving number of species of butterflies, moths and, particularly in recent years, various species of dragonflies.

The plant life is now more abundant and the wild flowers are improving by careful conservation work and tree planting. The upper meadows are cut and the hay removed annually. Autumn and winter pruning is steadily showing good results in the woodland and fringe areas.



Trim Trail

Get fit on the Gorse Hall trim trail. At various places around the site are 'exercise stations', with pieces of equipment for you to work out. They are marked on the map with this symbol (🏃). By combining exercise at each station with a run between them, you can turn the 1 1/2 mile circuit into a full exercise programme.

Orienteering Course

Test your navigation skills on the permanent orienteering course at Gorse Hall

You can get an orienteering map from Ashton tourist information centre, or from the Greater Manchester Orienteering Activities website: www.gmoa.org.uk

Nature Trail

This is a short walk aimed especially at children. Discover the animal sculptures and tableaux inspired by nature and the stories of Beatrix Potter who visited Gorse Hall when she was a child.

There are eight sculptures, marked on the map with this symbol (🌸) – can you find them all?