

= Kersal Moor =

Kersal Moor is a recreation area in Kersal , Greater Manchester , England which consists of eight hectares of moorland bounded by Moor Lane , Heathlands Road , St. Paul 's Churchyard and Singleton Brook .

Kersal Moor , first called Karsey or Carsall Moor , originally covered a much larger area , running down to the River Irwell . Evidence of activity during the Neolithic period has been discovered and the area was used by the Romans . It was the site of the first Manchester Racecourse and the second golf course to be built outside Scotland . It has been extensively used for other sporting pursuits , military manoeuvres and public gatherings such as the Great Chartist Meeting of 1838 , prompting the political theorist Friedrich Engels to dub it " the Mons Sacer of Manchester " .

With the increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of Manchester and Salford during the 18th and 19th centuries , the moor became one of the remaining areas of natural landscape of interest to amateur naturalists , one of whom collected the only known specimens of the now extinct moth species *Euclemensia woodiella* . It is now a Site of Biological Importance and in 2007 was designated as a Local Nature Reserve by English Nature .

= = Geography = =

Kersal Moor is one of the many fluvioglacial ridges that formed along the Irwell Valley during the melting of the glaciers at the end of the last ice age . Typically for this type of landform , the subsoil is composed of sand mixed with coarse gravel . The 19th century botanist Richard Buxton described this as " Mr. E.W. Binney 's drift deposit no.2 ... a deposit of sharp forest sand , parted with layers of gravel composed of Azoic , Palaeozoic and Triassic rocks , well rounded , parted with layers of fine sand , and having every appearance of a regular deposit by water . " This deposit is overlaid with a thin topsoil supporting a range of mosses , heathers , grasses , ferns , common broom , gorse and some trees , which are predominantly oak with some rowan , cherry and other broadleaved species . The land to the south is elevated , rising to a high point towards the south west . From this elevated position there are views across Manchester to the Derbyshire hills in the south , to the Pennines in the north east and across the Irwell Valley and Salford in the west . The land falls away to the north , ending with two drumlin @-@ shaped hills on the northern edge , which were probably formed by sediment from the meltwater of the receding glaciers , in a process known as sedimentary fluting . The moor is criss @-@ crossed with footpaths , many of which cut through to the sand and gravel below . Singleton Brook , to the north of the moor , denotes the boundary between Salford and Prestwich .

= = History = =

Flint scrapers , knives and other materials associated with neolithic humans were discovered on the moor in the late 19th and early 20th century by local antiquarians such as Charles Roeder . The Roman road from Manchester (Mamucium) to Ribchester (Bremetennacum) roughly followed the line of the A56 road (Bury New Road) which is just to the east of Kersal Moor . There was a Roman camp at Rainsough just to the west , and some have speculated that there may have been a second camp to the east , in the area known as Castle Hill , making a defensive line across the moor to protect the north of Mamucium .

The 18th century historian John Whitaker said of the moor :

" The moor of Kersal was in the time of the Romans , perhaps in that of the Britons before them , and for many ages after both , a thicket of oaks and a pasture for hogs ; and the little knolls , that so remarkably diversify the plain , and are annually covered with mingled crowds rising in ranks over ranks to the top , were once the occasional seats of the herdsmen that superintended these droves into the woods . "

However , the last of these trees were burnt around 1880 .

= = = Sport on the moor = = =

The first Manchester racecourse was sited on the moor . The earliest record of horse @-@ racing is contained in the following notice in the London Gazette of 2 ? 5 May 1687 :

On Carsall Moore near Manchester in Lancashire on the 18th instant , a 20 £ . plate will be run for to carry ten stone and ride three heats , four miles each heat . And the next day another plate of 40 £ . will be run for at the same moore , riding the same heats and carrying the same weight . The horses marks are to be given in four days before to Mr. William Swarbrick at the King 's Arms in Manchester .

The racecourse is shown on the map of 1848 as a roughly oval @-@ shaped course extending around the west , north and east of the moor , crossing Moor Lane and carrying on around the ground that is now the home of Salford City F.C. , roughly following the line of what is now Nevile Road . John Byrom (1692 ? 1763) , the owner of Kersal Cell , was greatly opposed to the racing and wrote a pamphlet against it , but the racing continued for fifteen years until , probably through Dr Byrom 's influence , they were stopped in 1746 , the year of the Jacobite rising . After this there is known to have been at least one race in 1750 ; regular fixtures recommenced in 1759 , and were then held every year until 1846 , when they were transferred to the New Barns racecourse . Racing carried on there until the new Castle Irwell Racecourse was built , just across the river from the moor , in Lower Broughton in 1847 . Today part of the course can still be seen as a wide , well @-@ worn path stretching from east to west along the northern side of the moor .

During the 18th century the moor was also used for nude male races , allowing females to study the form before choosing their mates . Indeed , in 1796 Roger Aytoun , known as " Spanking Roger " (who was later a hero of the siege of Gibraltar) acquired Hough Hall in Moston through marriage to the widowed Barbara Minshull , after such a race .

The moor has also been used for a number of other sporting activities . In the 18th and early 19th century archery was still practised as a village sport , and the archers of Broughton , Cheetham and Prestwich were renowned countrywide . The Broughton archers practised their sport on Kersal Moor and in 1793 the Manchester writer , James Ogden , composed a poem in praise of them , which begins :

The Broughton Archers , and the bowmen good
Of Lancashire , keep up the former name
Their sires acquir 'd , for skill in archery ...
and ends with :

... Near Kersal Moor the Broughton archers fix
Their targets pierced with many a well aimed shot .

By 1830 , however , archery had become the sport of gentlemen and an exclusive club called the " Broughton Archers " was formed , the membership of which included some of the most influential men in the town . They originally met at a public house nicknamed " Hard Backed Nan 's " on the site of Bishops court where the Bishop of Manchester now resides , but after Bury New Road was built and the site became too public , they moved to the Turf Tavern on Kersal Moor . In 1818 a golf course was founded on the moor for the Manchester Golf Club , a group of Manchester businessmen , some of whom had emigrated from Scotland . This was only the second course to be built outside Scotland . The course at that time consisted of only five holes and had no fairways or greens as the players had to share the ground with other users . The club was very exclusive and by 1825 a club house had been built on Singleton Road . By 1869 the course had increased to nine holes and the club continued playing on the moor until 1862 when a new course was built a few hundred yards away at Kersal Vale .

The archery ground became Kersal Cricket Ground in 1847 and in 1881 the Northern Tennis Tournament was staged there . In 1919 the ground became the home of Manchester 's oldest rugby club , Manchester Football Club . When Manchester F.C. moved in 1968 they were replaced briefly by Langworthy Juniors and then Salford City F.C. , who still lease the ground today .

= = = Public gatherings and military use = = =

As one of the largest open spaces close to Manchester , the moor has a history of use for army manoeuvres and large public gatherings . In his book *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844 , Friedrich Engels referred to it as the Mons Sacer of Manchester . This was a reference to the hill to which the plebs (common citizens) of Rome withdrew en masse in 494 BC as an act of civil protest .

In 1789 and 1790 there had been a spate of highway and house robberies . Gangs of armed men had entered houses in the middle of the night and taken away all they could carry . Armed patrols were placed around the neighbourhood to little effect until , at last , a man named James Macnamara was arrested with three others for burglary at the Dog and Partridge Inn on Stretford Road . Macnamara was tried at Lancaster Assizes and sentenced to be hanged on Kersal Moor as a warning to other criminals . A large number of people came to watch the execution but , as Joseph Aston said in his *Metrical Records of Manchester* " no one could suppose that the example had any use ... as several persons had their pockets picked within sight of the gallows and the following night a house was broken into and robbed in Manchester " .

The Stockport , Bolton and Rochdale Volunteers were reviewed on Kersal Moor on 25 August 1797 and in June 1812 , 30 @, @ 000 troops from the Wiltshire , Buckinghamshire , Louth and Stirling regiments were camped there ready for action to suppress the Luddites . In 1818 a protest meeting was held on the moor by coal miners to publicise their case for better pay , because of the dangers they faced at work .

A duel was fought on the moor in July 1804 between Mr. Jones and Mr. Shakspeare Philips . Mr. Jones fired at Mr. Philips without effect and Mr. Philips then fired his pistol in the air , upon which the seconds interfered , the two men shook hands and honour was satisfied . Two weeks later , two other men who had been quarrelling in the newspapers met on the moor to gain satisfaction . However , the magistrates had been informed and the men were arrested before the duel could take place .

On 12 April 1831 the 60th Rifle Corps had carried out an exercise on the moor under the command of Lieutenant P.S. Fitzgerald , and a detachment of 74 men were returning to their barracks in Salford by way of Lower Broughton and Pendleton . As the men were crossing the Broughton Suspension Bridge , built four years earlier by Fitzgeralds 's father , they felt it begin to vibrate in time with their footsteps , and before they had reached the other side the bridge collapsed . Although no one was killed twenty men were injured , six of them seriously . It was this incident that caused the British Military to issue the order for soldiers to " break step " when crossing a bridge .

The largest of a series of Chartist meetings was held on the moor on 24 September 1838 . The meeting , which was planned as a show of strength and to elect delegates for the Chartist national convention , attracted speakers from all over the country and a massive crowd , which was estimated at 30 @, @ 000 by the *Manchester Guardian* and 300 @, @ 000 by the *Morning Advertiser* .

The Chartists were active for the next eight months but the poor attendance at a second meeting , held on the moor at the same time as a racing fixture on 25 May 1839 , signalled the end of the movement . Although the movement was not successful initially , most of the Chartists ' demands were eventually met by Parliament .

In 1848 , the moor was used as an encampment for the East Norfolk Regiment as part of an increased military presence in Lancashire brought about by the unrest caused by Chartist agitation .

= = = Other pursuits = = =

As a relatively rural environment in an increasingly urbanised area , Kersal Moor was also used for more peaceful pursuits . During the 18th and 19th centuries it was much frequented by amateur naturalists and botanists . One of the botanists was Richard Buxton who went on to write *A Botanical Guide to Manchester* . In 1829 an amateur insect collector named Robert Cribb collected a series of about fifty small yellow and brown moths from a rotting alder on the moor . These turned out to be a previously unknown species of moth , but they were mistakenly attributed to a friend of

Cribb 's , the collector R. Wood , who had asked an expert to identify them . The moths were classified as *Panalia woodiella* (today *Euclemensia woodiella*) in Wood 's honour .

The only specimen I have seen of this beautiful Moth , which is larger than the others , is a female ; it was taken on Kersall @-@ moor the middle of last June by Mr. R. Wood , of Manchester , to whom I have the pleasure of dedicating it ; ? a most zealous and successful naturalist , to whose liberality I am indebted for many valuable insects . - John Curtis writing in *British Entomology* 1830

Enraged by this , and by accusations of fraudulently passing off foreign moths as British , Cribb gave up collecting and left the rest of the specimens with his landlady as security for a debt . Here the stories from Manchester University and The Australian Museum , Victoria differ as to whether it was Cribb 's pub landlady or the landlady of his lodgings , but either way the result was the same . The debt was not paid on time and when Cribb went back for the moths , which he had already sold to another collector , his landlady had burnt them . Subsequent efforts by other collectors to find more of the moths were unsuccessful , and the three specimens left in existence are thought to be the only representatives of an extinct species .

Towards the end of the 19th century a Mr. Cosmo Melvill contributed an article to the *Journal of Botany* in which he gave a list of more than 240 plants and flowers , not including mosses , that he had found on the moor .

Shortly after 6.00pm on 10 September 1848 the " celebrated aeronaut " George Gale ascended in a hot air balloon from Pomona Gardens in Hulme . After discharging a number of fireworks from a height of over 1 @,@ 000 feet , Lieutenant Gale drifted in various directions and made abortive attempts to land in a number of locations . Eventually , at about 10.00pm , the balloon descended safely in the farmyard of Mr Josiah Taylor on Kersal Moor .

In 1852 , Queen Victoria commissioned a painting by the artist William Wyld which became *A view of Manchester from Kersal Moor* (pictured) . The painting , which depicts the moor as a beautiful pastoral scene overlooking Castle Irwell racecourse and the industrial landscape of Manchester , is now in the Royal Collection where it is listed as *Manchester from Higher Broughton* . A steel line engraving of the painting by the engraver Edward Goodall was also commissioned .

= = Literary references = =

The English radical and writer Samuel Bamford mentions Kersal Moor in his book *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (1840 ? 1844) when he advises one of his friends to make his way from Middleton to Bolton via Kersal Moor to avoid the authorities :

Healey I advised to go to his brother at Bolton , and get some money , and keep out of sight entirely , until something further was known . His best way would be to avoid Manchester , and go over Kersal moor and Agecroft bridge ; and as I had a relation in that quarter who wished to see me , I would keep him company as far as Agecroft .

The races on the moor were mentioned in the 19th @-@ century novel *The Manchester Man* by Mrs. G Linnaeus Banks (1874) . The hero of the story , Jabez Clegg , meets a street boy named Kit Townley , of whom Mrs. Banks says :

He knew him to be not over @-@ scrupulous . He had seen him at Knott Mill Fair and Dirt Fair (so called from its being held in muddy November) , or at Kersal Moor Races , with more money to spend in pop , nuts , and gingerbread , shows and merry @-@ go @-@ rounds , flying boats and flying boxes , fighting cocks and fighting men , than he could possibly have saved out of the sum his father allowed him for pocket @-@ money , even if he had been of the saving kind ; and , coupling all these things together , Jabez was far from satisfied .

It is also mentioned in a collection of poems by Philip Connell called " *Poaching on Parnassus* " published in 1865 .

Lines to Mr. Isaac Holden by Philip Connell on his Drawing of the Prestwich Lunatic Asylum :

And Southward at due distance the huge hive ,
Of busy Manchester is all alive ,
Its towering chimnies , domes and steeples rise ,
In strange confusion thro ' the hazy skies ;

There Broughton glimmers in the evening sun ;
Here Cheetham Hill o 'ertops the vapours dun ;
There Kersal Moor the same bleak front doth shew ,
That met the view Eight hundred years ago ,
Where Clunian Monks there with their God did dwell ,
Within the precincts of its holy cell .

In 1876 the Lancashire dialect poet and songwriter Edwin Waugh moved from his Manchester home to Kersal Moor for the " fresher air " . Waugh 's early life was spent in Rochdale and although he worked in Manchester he yearned for the moors he remembered from his youth . He wrote the following poem about Kersal Moor

Kersal Moor

Sweet falls the blackbird 's evening song ,
in Kersal 's poised dell ;
But the skylarks trill makes the dewdrops thrill ,
In the bonny heather ;
Wild and free
Wild and free
Where the moorland breezes blow .
Oft have I roved you craggy steeps ,
Where the tinkling moorland rills ,
Sing all day long their low sweet song ,
To the lonely listening hills ;
And croon at night
In the pale moonlight
While mountain breezes blow .

As his health declined , Waugh moved to the seaside town of New Brighton . On his death in 1890 , his body was brought back to be buried in the graveyard of St. Paul 's Church , on the edge of the moorland he loved so well .

... Oh lay me down in moorland ground ,
And make it my last bed ,
With the heathery wilderness around ,
And the bonny lark o 'erhead :
Let fern and ling around me cling ,
And green moss o 'er me creep ;
And the sweet wild mountain breezes sing ,
Above my slumbers deep . - from The Moorland Breeze , Edwin Waugh (1889)