

SPRING

Woodlands are generally at their best in Spring. At Chesham you can see Bluebells and Red Campion and, along the stream edges, Pink Purslane, a plant introduced from North America. In the open, disturbed areas where buildings have stood look for the dandelion-like Coltsfoot, a very early flowering species which is important for insects at this time of year. The resident birds such as the Blue Tit, Great Tit, Robin, Song Thrush, Blackbird and Wren will be in full song and establishing territories. Listen for the drumming of the Great Spotted Woodpecker.



Bluebells at Chesham Woods

SUMMER

More shrubs are flowering now, such as Elder, Dog Rose, and alongside the old house pathways, the introduced Rhododendron. In the wetter areas by the streams, Marsh Marigold and Valerian are in flower and Hawkweed is found in the hedges. Particularly prominent on disturbed ground is, the invasive Japanese Knotweed.

The bird population has now been augmented by summer migrants such as the Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff, Speckled Wood butterflies may also be seen.

Houses in the Woods

CHESHAM

The settlement of Chesham probably pre-dates the Norman Conquest. The origin of the name 'Chesham' is obscure but 'ham' is saxon meaning farmstead and 'ches' is a celtic word for wood.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the farming settlement was supplemented by a number of residences of wealthy local cotton manufacturers.

CHESHAM HOUSE

In 1826 the occupier of Chesham was Thomas Haslam (1770 - 1826) who owned the nearby Hudcar Mill. He employed workhouse children for whom he established a factory school under the 1808 Apprentices Act. The school taught reading, writing, arithmetic and sewing to around 40 children.

In the late 1840's Chesham was sold to one of the locally well known Walker family, Oliver Ormerod Walker (1794 - 1870), whose brother Richard (1784 - 1855) was Bury's first M.P. The 1851 census records Oliver as living at Chesham with his wife, son, two daughters, three servants and coachman and wife. He presided over a farm of 220 acres tended by 10 labourers, and a cotton spinning business at Moorside, jointly owned by brother William and John Lomax, employing 954.

Chesham was inherited by Oliver's son (another Oliver, 1833 - 1914) who became a Colonel, a J.P. and an M.P. Unlike his non-conformist forebears, Colonel Walker was Church of England and was a major contributor to the Bury Parish Church rebuilding fund in 1870.

On the death of the Colonel, the estate passed to his four daughters, none of whom had children. After the last surviving daughter died the estate was bought by Bury Corporation in 1957. In 1959 the house was in poor condition and was demolished.

AUTUMN

The Hedgerows are now full of berries - Hawthorn, Elder and Bramble just in time for the arrival of Winter Thrushes - Redwings and Fieldfares. Jays and Squirrels are hoarding acorns, conkers and ash and sycamore keys for the winter.

WINTER

A very quiet time in woodlands. You may see flocks of Tits and Finches. The only green leaves are provided by the Holly, Ivy and Rhododendron.



The Jay, a common visitor to Chesham Woods

GREEN GYM

Green Gym[®] is a scheme developed by BTCV a national conservation charity, which inspires people to improve both their health and the environment at the same time.

The Chesham Fold Green Gym meets most Sundays to carry out practical improvements to the woods giving people the opportunity to tackle physical jobs in the outdoors - improving their strength and stamina, whilst boosting their practical skills and confidence.

For more information contact BTCV on 0161 795 6404 or check their web site.

GREEN BANK

In the 1830's Green Bank was owned by John Harrison, a cotton manufacturer. In 1851 it was occupied by a Manchester mill owner, William Wanklyn who married Oliver Walker's sister Mary. They lived at Green Bank with a young son and daughter, three servants and a gardener.

William's son, John was shot by a fellow merchant in Buenos Aires in 1897. Heir-less, Green Bank passed on the death of John's wife to the Walker family. Having for a time been rented out, it was eventually demolished in 1975.



Chesham Green Cottages

CHESHAM GREEN

Chesham Green and Chesham Green cottages date from pre-industrial times (though the cottages were eventually re-built around the turn of the century).

Probably the best known occupier of Chesham Green was John Just (1797 - 1852). He moved to Bury from near Kendal in 1831, working as a private teacher. In 1832 he applied for and got the vacant deputy-head post at Bury Grammar School. He wrote extensively on Roman Britain and Agriculture for the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. In 1832 he set up (a short-lived) Bury Literary and Philosophical Society.

Chesham Woods are a group of six woodlands on the edge of Bury.

Three are semi-natural and the remainder are the semi-natural grounds of demolished large houses.

Various works are in progress or planned to manage and improve the woods for wildlife and people. Chesham Local Nature Reserve has several active groups helping to manage and develop the woods for people and wildlife; Friends of Chesham Local Nature Reserve, Chesham Fold Tenants and Residents Association, Chesham Fold Green Gym, BTCV and Bury Council.

HOW TO GET THERE



The woods can be best approached from Clarence Park on Walmersley Road. There is a car park on Millar Avenue from which a path leads to the woods. There are regular bus services on Walmersley Road running from Bury Interchange.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the woods and how you can get involved in improving them ring the Bury Accessible Natural Greenways Officer Tel: 0161 253 7764

This leaflet has been produced by Friends of Chesham Nature Reserve and Chesham Fold TDA with the assistance of Bury Council.

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a walk in

Chesham Woods

local nature reserve



