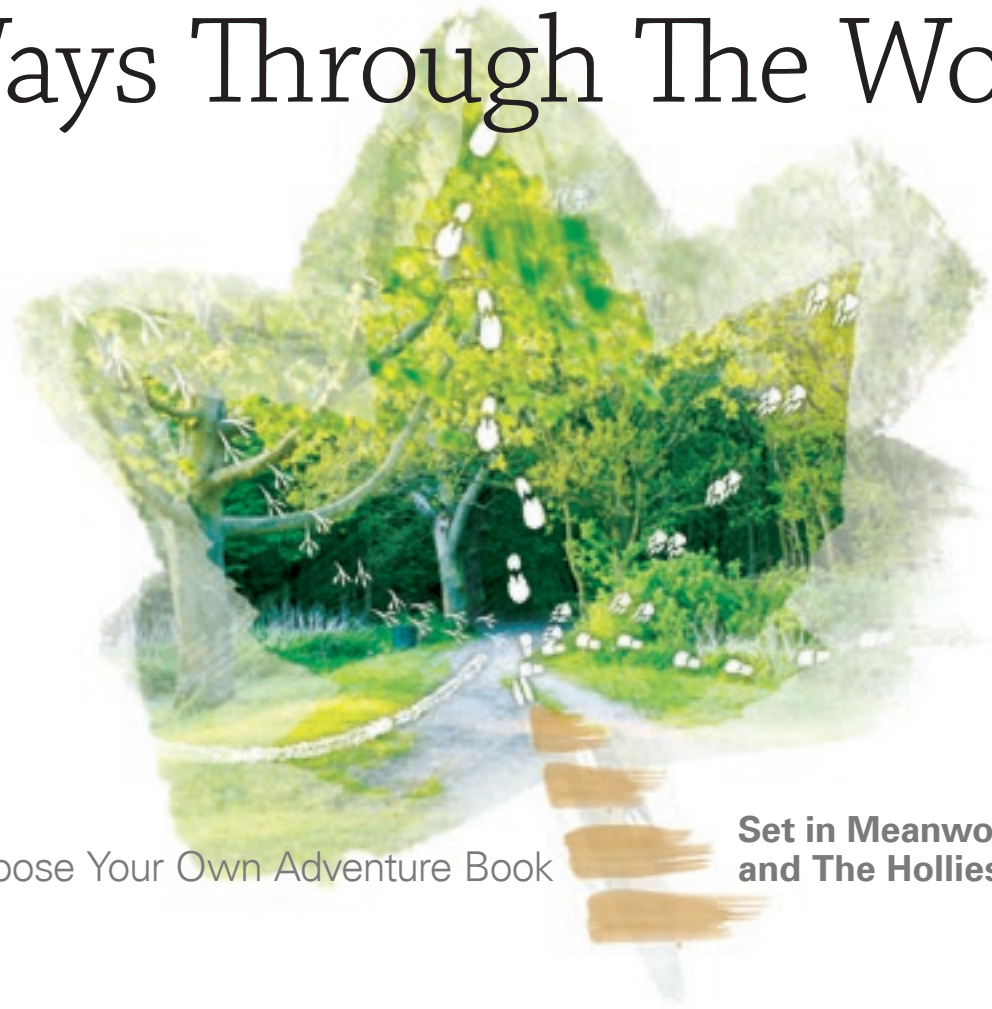


Ways Through The Wood



A Choose Your Own Adventure Book

**Set in Meanwood Park
and The Hollies, Leeds**





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In addition to this book, we have created an audio walk through the park.

You can listen to it online at www.365leedsstories.org

You can also read the full versions of all the pieces contributed by the *Ways Through The Wood* creative writing group.



Meanwood Park lies four miles north of Leeds City Centre. Much of the land that the park now covers was formerly the estate of Meanwoodside – a large private house belonging to the Kitson Clark family. The house was once owned by Edward Oates, the grandfather of Lawrence Oates, the polar explorer. A modern-day memorial to Lawrence now stands in the car park by the entrance on Green Road. The estate was bought by Leeds City Council on the death of Georgina Kitson Clark in 1954 and has been open to the public ever since.

Today, the park covers 72 acres and includes a wide variety of different environments – mixed woodland, open meadows, a beck, several ponds and mires, a children’s playground and various picnic spots. Historically, the park has connections with botanist John Grimshaw Wilkinson, painter Atkinson Grimshaw and women’s suffrage campaigner Mary Gawthorpe. It is also home to an abundance of wildlife – including foxes, deer, bats, common lizards, frogs, toads and newts, herons, kingfishers, chiff-chaffs and woodpeckers.

Lying alongside the park is The Hollies, another public leisure-space that was once a private garden. The Hollies was gifted to the people of Leeds by its former owner – in this case George William Brown – as a memorial to his son, Major Harold Brown, who was killed in the First World War. The Hollies has been open to the public since 1922 and includes a mixture of natural woodland and cultivated formal gardens.

The Hollies and Meanwood Park are nowadays part of the Local Nature Reserve. They are open all year round and there is never a bad time to go exploring. This book aims to offer

some ways to do that by suggesting routes both into, through and out of these important local areas.

Like the park itself, the book is not laid out in a linear manner. Instead it is structured to allow you to make your own way through the pages, visiting features of interest along the way. And as the park is a mixed topography of ancient woodland, formal gardens, shrubs, and tarmac, so the book is a mixture: of history, anecdote, poetry and reminiscence.

It has been assembled at a particular moment in time, Spring 2016, and its contents reflect that moment. A fallen tree referred to in one section may have been cleared away by the time you read the book, or a wall repaired. The book is also influenced by those who happened to come with us on the four Sunday walks we led, and those who attended the Wednesday evening groups in The Ranger’s Hut to write a poem or story.

Take the book with you on a ramble, or read it at home and stroll in your mind’s eye. Argue with the historical facts, dispute the names given to this path or that stile. If *Ways Through The Wood* gets you out into The Hollies and Meanwood Park and inspires you to discover your own way into the trees, it has served its purpose.



Ways in

There are a number of ways into the park at Meanwood – some of which are more formal than others.

The best known entrance is perhaps the one at the end of Green Road. Here there is a small car park and a café, the Ranger's Hut and the Lawrence Oates memorial. It is very close to the children's play area, so this is a good place to go if you are visiting with children.

If you'd like to enter the park here, please turn to 1

The entrance described above is not the only way in from Green Road. A little way back down the road is another entrance. If you are walking down from Meanwood, it is on your right-hand side. There is a wooden lychgate with a noticeboard beside it. This way leads you in past the tennis courts and the bowling green.

To enter the park here, turn to 2

If you are on foot, you could also keep walking – past the car park entrance and behind the café. Here the road sweeps into the park, past the children's play area. The road is closed to motor vehicles. The only exception is for access to Hustlers Row – the terrace of old quarry-workers' cottages that overlook the beck at the edge of the woods.

To enter the park here, turn to 3

Of course, not everyone wants to approach the park from Meanwood. You could also come in from Woodhouse Ridge – following the Meanwood Valley Trail past the old tannery and the nearby allotments. Here you enter the Park through a gap in the old stone wall and come out on a little path that runs between the beck and the Green Road Car Park

To enter the park here, turn to 4

There is another entrance at the bottom of Hollin Drive. Two stone gateposts are set just off the road. A red pillar box stands nearby beside the street sign for Weetwood Avenue. You can enter here and follow the drive down to a bridge across the beck.

To enter the park here, turn to 5

A little further down Weetwood Lane is another way in. This is the 'official' entrance to The Hollies. Here, a pair of stone gateposts form an entrance to a formal drive. The drive leads you past a lodge house on your left and the main house on your right. It ends in a small car park by the entrance to the formal gardens.

To enter the park here, turn to 6

Weetwood Mill Lane leads down into the park towards the beck from Weetwood Lane. You can walk down here, skirting the edge of The Hollies. As you go, you will pass a number of grand houses with fine gardens.

To enter the park here, turn to 7

You can also approach the park via Parkside Road. There are a number of ways to do this. First of all, by turning off the Ring Road. Follow Parkside Road down, past Valley Farm on your left. If you are in a car, it is probably wise to park at the bottom of the hill. The road is closed off to traffic further up. Once arrived you can step onto the woodland path by the old picnic area. This is on your right if the Ring Road is behind you. You can then follow the beck towards Meanwood.

To enter the park here, turn to 8

Alternatively, you could carry on up Parkside Road as it rises into the woods. If you keep going, you will reach Myrtle Square but this is only possible on foot. As you walk, you will see an old stone trough. It is set into the ground and full of water. Beside it is a small set of stone mounting-steps. To the right of this is Meanwood Grove – another route into the public park.

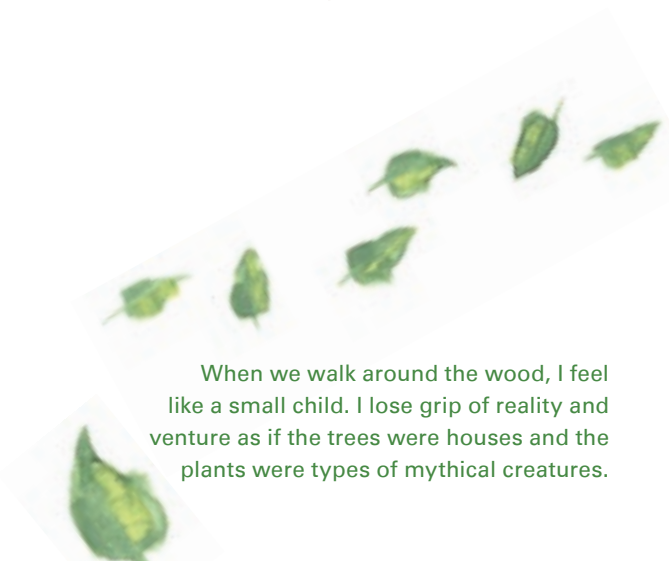
To enter the park here, turn to 9

Myrtle Square, off Parkside Road, is home to some of the oldest dwellings in Meanwood. They are clustered around the Meanwood Cricket Ground. To one side is The Myrtle Tavern, a historic public house.

To enter the park here, turn to 10

If you head past The Myrtle pub and into the beer-garden, you will find a little path that leads down into the woods. Here is a maze of tracks and fairy paths in which it is easy to lose oneself.

To enter the park here, turn to 11



When we walk around the wood, I feel like a small child. I lose grip of reality and venture as if the trees were houses and the plants were types of mythical creatures.



1 Green Road Car Park

You are standing in the car park at the Green Road entrance to the park. Behind you is an old stone wall and to your right a memorial to Captain Lawrence Edward Grace Oates – the famous polar explorer. The blue plaque on the wall was unveiled in 2012 on the centenary of Oates' death. You notice with amusement that the initial letters of his name spell the word LEGO.

To your left is a wooden hut, surrounded by a metal fence. This is the old Ranger's Hut. It was once the headquarters of the Meanwood Women's Institute and the land where it stands was given to the organisation by Colonel Kitson Clark in 1935. Kitson Clark was the former owner of the Meanwoodside estate, to which the land where the car park now stands once belonged. Nowadays the hut is rarely used.

Not far from the memorial, on the other side of the park entrance is a café and, outside it, a number of wooden picnic benches. The café building is known as Three Cottages. They too were once part of the Meanwoodside estate.

Before it was sold to the Kitson Clarks, the estate was owned by Edward Oates, a former lawyer and the grandfather of Lawrence. Oates built a house here, also called Meanwoodside, in 1838. The house was built on the stretch of land on the far side of the car park, but was sadly demolished when the Meanwoodside estate was purchased by the council in 1954.

Behind the café, Green Road continues into the park, though the only access for vehicles is for residents of Hustlers Row. On the right hand side of the road is a children's play area.


Straight ahead of you, beyond the car park, is a signpost and beyond it, an ancient-looking stone.

What would you like to do next?

To explore the hut further, go to 

To learn more about Captain Lawrence Oates, go to 

To investigate the café, go to 

To take a closer look at the strange-looking stone, go to 

To visit the children's play area, go to 

2 The Old Park Entrance on Green Road

You are standing before an old lychgate at the side of Green Road. To the left of the gate is Meanwood C. E. Primary School and to the right is the garden of a private house. Meanwood Park was opened to the public in 1922 and this was the original entrance. At that time, there was no car park or café further down the road. The land where they now stand was in private ownership – part of the Meanwoodside estate that belonged to the Kitson Clarks. The estate did not become part of the Park until 1954, so this was once the main way in.

You step through the gate into a small, well-tended garden. Ahead of you is a short flight of rickety stone steps. At the top of the steps is a fence and behind it is the bowling green. The gate in the fence looks as though it hasn't been opened for many years but the grass behind it is neatly mown and clearly well looked-after. As you watch, a fat blackbird comes scuttling across the green. In size and shape it is uncannily similar to a bowling ball.

You turn and look around the rest of the garden. To your left is a pathway that leads round towards the basket-ball and tennis courts. To your right is a wooden bench. On the back of the bench is a small gold plaque with words engraved upon it.

*This is our love story, first with Spring in our step ...
Making the memory of Summer last longer,
Your favourite time is the Autumn.
This is the season we became us ...*

Who wrote the words? Is it someone who lives nearby? Did they fall in love in the park – and if so, with whom? You take a moment to contemplate these questions and then take the path to the left of the bowling green and walk a little further in.

**To head towards the basketball and tennis courts,
go to **

I have been coming here since I was a teenager with my parents, and now I bring my little girl.
I have been here in all seasons and it carries many happy, relaxed memories.



3 The Children's Play Area by the Green Road Entrance

Just behind the Meanwood Park Café is a children's play area. It is fenced off and seems to be very well-equipped. It currently contains a set of swings, a roundabout, a climbing frame with monkey bars, a pair of slides, a rope swing, a tunnel beneath an earth mound and various other more unusual items.

Close your eyes as you stand by the fence. Are there children here now? Take a moment to listen to the sounds that they are making. Has the sound of children playing changed over the years or does it sound the same today as it always has done?

I lived on the Stonegate Estate from 1948 when I was born until I was sixteen. Then my parents moved to the Carrholms and I moved with them. I went to Bentley Lane Primary School and I went to Stainbeck Girls High School. We used to go through the main gates in the Park, where the car park is now. It wasn't a car park then. There were always the swings there though; always the swings and see-saw. It wasn't very modern but there were swings to play on, there was a see-saw, there was a slide.
—Avril

The playground was different in the eighties. The centre-piece was a bright red rocket ship with a yellow interior. You could sit inside and (if there was an amenable adult about to give you a push) the rocket could be launched into the stratosphere, only to sidle back to Earth as soon as it had reached the apex of its mechanical swing to the stars. —Matthew

Beside the play area is a fenced-off playground belonging to Meanwood C.E. Primary School. Behind it is a set of tennis courts. A path runs between the playground and the play area. It leads across a wide open field and disappears into the woods. Green Road runs along the edge of the field in the direction of Hustlers Row. Beyond it, another field leads down to Meanwood Beck.

To follow Green Road towards Hustlers Row, go to 46

To walk across the mown grass towards the woods, go to 20

To head towards the basketball and tennis courts, go to 14

To walk across the grass towards the beck, go to 35



4 The Meanwood Valley Trail Entrance Via the Old Tannery

The Meanwood Valley Trail begins on Monument Moor at the side of Woodhouse Lane and runs all the way along Woodhouse Ridge. It takes you into Meanwood Park at the point where the beck crosses the park's southern boundary. The trail then follows the path along the beck in the direction of Parkside Road.

Following the trail from Woodhouse Ridge, you enter the park via a gap in the old stone wall. A stone bridge crosses the beck to your left and beyond it stands a group of stone-built houses. To your right you can see the car park, the Ranger's Hut and the Meanwood Park Café. A rough pathway leads straight on towards a signpost, not far from which stands a strange old stone.

Just before you stepped through the gap in the wall, you noticed something hopping about amongst the branches of a small tree; a tiny bird with a red face and an ivory-coloured bill. Its head was black and white above its fat brown body; a bright yellow stripe was splashed across each of its black wings: a goldfinch. It flew off when you stopped to observe it but it seems to have returned. You can hear it now, trilling in the branches behind the wall.

To your left you notice an information board on a stand. It is all about the white-clawed crayfish, which are still thriving in Meanwood Beck. The board explains that the crayfish are endangered, due to an infectious water mould. The mould

was introduced to British waterways by an invasive species of American crayfish, which carry the disease but appear to be immune to it. The invading species arrived in the 1970s. It was bred on farms for the restaurant trade but escaped into the waterways. It is sobering to think that the ecosystem is so fragile and can be thrown so easily out of balance by human carelessness.

Arriving at the point where the beck runs past the old cricket pitch, I gazed down into the culvert just in case there might be kingfishers. I saw them once at this point, scooting turquoise, gone before you could blink... That stream is bigger, older and stronger than I or any of us. For years now it has been the background tempo of my life.

—From *Beware of Rituals* by Lucy Nokes

Where would you like to go now?

To walk towards the Green Road Car Park, go to 1


To explore the bridge to your left, go to 33

To follow the footpath and visit the peculiar stone, go to 13

5 The Entrance at the Bottom of Hollin Lane

You are standing at the bottom of Hollin Lane, where the road intersects with Hollin Drive and Weetwood Avenue. On your left is a bright red pillar box and ahead of you is the entrance to the park – a tarmacked driveway that leads into a wooded lane. A stone gatepost stands at either side of the entrance. The drive leads down to a little stone bridge across the beck.

As you walk along the driveway, you are suddenly startled by a strange noise – a peculiar, raucous cackle. You look around and, as you do, a large bird with pinky-brown plumage and a bright blue flash across its wings comes bursting from the trees. The jay drops down onto the path and surveys you with a pale blue eye. Then it raises its crest and lets out a loud alarm call before flapping up into the branches above your head. You crane your neck to survey this colourful sentry but, suddenly shy, the bird flaps away – further into the park and out of sight.



You pause for a second and, as you do, you hear it calling once again in the distance. There is something strangely exotic about the jay. Although they are native to Britain and present all year round, the rich hues of their bright feathers make them feel as though they belong in some brighter, warmer land.

You carry on walking along the path.

Ahead of you is a little stone bridge across the beck. To your right is a grassy grove and behind it a group of stone-built houses, partially hidden by a wall. To your left a muddy path leads off along the beck in the direction of a tall stone column.

Where would you like to go next?

To investigate the bridge across the beck, go to 34

To walk towards the grassy grove, go to 53

To take a closer look at the tall stone pillar, go to 26

6 Ways into The Hollies

You are standing before a low stone wall on Weetwood Lane. To your right is the entrance to Weetwood Mill Lane and to your left, the stone pillars that form the main gate into The Hollies. A little stile in the wall before you leads into a wild patch of trees and brambles. Local writer **John Hepworth** knows The Hollies well, and offers here some choice thoughts about crossing the park's boundary.

My generation grew up when a sense of discipline – a post-war-time respect for teachers, police etc. – hadn't yet been disrupted. You didn't even give a false address back then; and along with all that came the matter of land-ownership; knowing that 'The Other Lot' had got all the good stuff long ago.

Feelings like that were part of the baggage of student-aged newcomers to Leeds; many of whom were perhaps not always such actual newcomers to the city and its various colleges either. We were among many who found The Hollies accidentally – and with astonishment at having lived within easy reach for a relatively long time and not known that the wonderland was in there. The chances were you hadn't gone in through the main gateway (because, for quite a while, many of us didn't know there was a main gateway – or the odd case of one neighbour, who always kept away from that Weetwood Lane entrance because it looked like the way into somewhere you weren't meant to be).

If you didn't find your way in from the Ring Road, or down and across the water from Meanwood village, it could be by

the high-walled ginnel from the University sportsground and across Weetwood Lane; dipping through that stile down from the pavement (still a charmer even now) and past the triangular garden, briefly along Weetwood Mill Lane to the welcoming left-turn into woodland at a lower, cosier, more concealed-feeling level.

It could carry on feeling transgressive for quite a few visits, along with a lasting amazement of "wow, how can this have always been here and we didn't know?", and "this can't be somewhere you're allowed to be – better make the most of it before somebody catches us".

Trespass was a part of life, and – like poaching? – might have about its excitement some feeling of class entitlement to a share in life's liberties. But the poignancy of early ventures into The Hollies – and not knowing whether it might be snatched from you at any moment like a suddenly-interrupted bright dream – had a special character; one that magically – or simply because there's always more to know – manages to keep so much of its freshness.

Which way would *you* like to enter the Hollies?

To climb over the little stile and enter the wild patch of wood beyond, go to **51**

To walk to the junction with Weetwood Mill Lane and enter the park from there, go to **7**

To enter the park through the main gate, go to **29**



Weetwood Mill Lane

You are standing beside a large house to one side of Weetwood Mill Lane. A faded Mr Blobby and a stuffed replica of Paddington Bear peer out at you from behind a nearby window. A sign on the wall reveals the dwelling to be Weetwood Garden House.

This is a pleasant spot altogether – the atmosphere is calm and tranquil. It is strange to think that Weetwood Lane is not far away at the top of the hill, the busy road providing a stark contrast to the bubbling beck at the bottom.

At the top of the road, on the left-hand side, stands Weetwood Farm. Described as 'ancient' in the 1700s, the farm was once home to William and James Martin – father and son paper manufacturers who owned Weetwood Paper Mill from the late 18th to the mid 19th Century. The mill itself is long since vanished, but the goit which fed the mill with water still runs along the beck on The Hollies side of the park. Lower down, it ducks under Weetwood Mill Lane, emerging into the scrubland across from Hustlers Row. Of course there is no longer any wheel there for it to turn but it runs past the spot where the mill once stood and then heads down the side of the valley before disgorging into the beck, across from the old stone arch by Hippin Door.

Which way now?

To walk uphill and take a right into The Hollies, go to 

To walk uphill and head out onto Weetwood Lane, go to 

To continue down the hill towards the bridge by Hippin Door, go to 



Deep and sparkling stream,
Hiding stars in your grey depths,
Tumbling through the wood.



8 The Entrance at the Bottom of Parkside Road

You are standing on the pavement on Parkside Road at the point where the beck rushes under the road and heads off past Valley Farm in the direction of Scotland Mill. In one direction, the road climbs up into the treeline, towards Myrtle Square. In the other it slopes up towards the Ring Road.

A wooden fence runs along the boundary of the park. A gap in the fence and a metal stile allow access to the footpath, which runs along the edge of the beck. On the other side of the path is a picnic-spot. The picnic tables were placed there in the 1980s under the watch of Steve Joul, who was the park Ranger at the time.

You know that there is another entrance, higher up the road as you turn onto Meanwood Grove. It is also possible to head out from here towards the 'cattle creep' that runs beneath the Ring Road. This forms the boundary of the Meanwood Conservation Area. Beyond this lies Scotland Wood and Golden Acre Park.

What would you like to do next?

To enter the park and investigate the picnic spot, go to 32

To enter the park and follow the beck into the woods, go to 56

To head towards the Ring Road and take the footpath to the 'cattle creep', go to 30

To walk up Parkside Road in the direction of Meanwood Grove and Myrtle Square, go to 9

The park is the lungs of the city. The libraries are the brains – so where is the heart?







The Entrance to the Park Along Meanwood Grove

You are standing beside a tall black lamp-post at the edge of Parkside Road. Ahead of you is the entrance to the park at Meanwood Grove. At the entrance to the Grove is a string of quaint little cottages. They look down towards the beck across a series of open fields. The road narrows into a cobbled pathway as it heads towards the woods. A 'permissive bridleway' runs parallel with the road and the track along the upper edge of the boggy fields. There is something slightly risqué about the idea of a 'permissive bridleway'.

Just behind the lamp-post where you are standing, is a stone trough – set into the ground a little way off the road. It is bordered on two sides by a rough stone wall, encrusted with lichen and scraggly moss. Beside it is a small set of stone steps – perhaps once used to help riders mount their horses.

In one direction, the road slopes upwards leading off towards Myrtle Square and the old cricket pitch. In the other, the road slopes down, past the fields of Valley Farm towards the Ring Road.

What would you like to do next?

To find out more about the old stone trough, go to 39

To cross the road and walk along Meanwood Grove into the woods, go to 54

To head up the slope towards Myrtle Square and the old cricket pitch, go to 10

To head down the slope towards the bottom of the hill, go to 8

10 Myrtle Square

Here is a tiny cricket pitch with its own pavilion overlooked by trees and a pub. Not for the first time you catch yourself thinking: "I could be in the depths of the countryside". The game has been played here since 1870 and that story is the subject of Cynthia Ruston's book, *Over 100 Years of Cricket at Meanwood*. Cynthia also helped to raise funds for the restoration of the stone wall at the side of the pitch and she has written the authoritative history of quarrying in the area.

There's a stone connection with everything I get involved with. Don't know why. Maybe I was a stone mason or a Meanwood quarryman in a previous life! It's the strangest thing, as if it was meant to happen. —Cynthia

The houses in the square are all stone-built and certainly bear testament to Meanwood's history of quarrying. The largest quarry lay to the far side of the cricket pitch, but was filled in long ago by Leeds City Council.

A particular feature of Myrtle Square is Fairfax House. Once the site of an old hostelry, the date 1630 is inscribed on one of its lintels and it is reputed to be the oldest house in Meanwood. Bizarrely the whole house was demolished shortly after 1905 and then rebuilt with the original stone but at a

right-angle to the original. Why would anyone do that? Puzzling this, you make a mental note to pop into The Myrtle for a drink at the end of your walk. Or should it be The Bay Horse along the road?

Where to next?

At the far side of the cricket pitch, a pebble-strewn path sweeps round towards a large detached house. From here, you can turn down into the trees towards a crossroads in the woods.

To take this route, go to 

On the other side of the pitch is Parkside Road, which runs down the hill past Meanwood Grove in the direction of the Ring Road.

To take this route, go to 

Behind The Myrtle Tavern is another way in, down a little path along the edge of the old oak wood.

To take this route, go to 

11

The Little Path at the Back of The Myrtle

You head past the beer garden of The Myrtle Tavern, skirting past the picnic benches. Two little girls are playing on the wooden pirate ship in the far corner – arguing about which one of them will make the better captain. Their father and his friend sit at a nearby table sipping pints of Guinness. Beside them is a baby in a carrycot.

You keep on walking, past a pebble-dashed garage, until you come to the back of the pub. Here, on your right, is the entrance to the park – a scrubby path that runs down into the woods between the treeline and a tall wooden fence.

I've lived in Leeds all my life – 75 years this year! I was born in Leeds and I've always lived in Meanwood – with my family on Farm Hill during the war and then we moved in with my grandad in the Stonegates and then we moved to Stainbeck Road and now I live in the King Alfreds. I've been there 58 years now. I love it! I've always loved Meanwood. When I was young, we used to start off at The Myrtle Pub – just a few of us – you can go round the back and, just for the sheer hell of it, we used to run right through into the park – avoiding the old quarry of course – and I can still smell the autumn acorny smell. We'd take them home and make little animals with matchsticks for legs and little people. —Val

The woods here are criss-crossed by a multitude of tracks, a network of interlocking footpaths. You could follow them for hours, exploring every nook and cranny. The ground is uneven and made up of numerous crags and crevasses – evidence of the quarrying that took place all around the local area, until well into the 20th Century.

As you walk through the trees you idly contemplate the possibility of getting lost. The edges of the park are not far away but the wood is just big enough to feel truly wild.

Where would you like to go next?

To take the footpath towards the crossroads in the woods, go to 38

To head out of the woods at the top of the mown field, go to 47

To linger a while longer in the woods, go to 48



12 The Old Quarry

As you gaze down into the hollow of the crater, you could well be forgiven for thinking it was the biggest in Meanwood. But it is small-fry compared to the massive filled-in quarry up near Myrtle Square. **John Hepworth** is a self-confessed quarry-seeking controversialist:

Quarries used to be a secret the maps wouldn't tell you; big-earning holes opened and closed as quick as the temporary landfill sites of our own time, between the mapping's deliberative surveys.

As Leeds expanded, quarrying became a major industry, especially in Meanwood between the 1840s and 1880s. There are still families in the area whose menfolk, as masons, delvers and scalpers, made up the workforce of the Meanwood quarries. And their Millstone Grit, with its characteristic herringbone tooling, can still be seen in Mill Hill Chapel and Trinity, Boar Lane, in Leeds city centre.

Standing at the edge of the quarry's crater, you peer down and see the remains of buildings on the quarry floor. What were they? A dog bounds around the cliff and a group of small children with sticks in their hands appear to be climbing a rock face. Should you warn them to be careful?

Four of us are creeping up the embankment. We need to take the flag! We have our very own swords, axes, war-hammers, spears. We call our game 'Stickabout' and we come here every few weeks. The trap is sprung and we charge, screaming war-cries, yelling and hooting. —Owen, aged 12

The abandoned quarry is a perfect amphitheatre.

About 30 members of our local choir, Sing Meanwood, are slithering their way down to the heart of the quarry in the darkness of deepest December, adorned with twinkling Christmas lights. Gathered in an improvised circle, we sing a collection of festive songs, much to the bemusement – and entertainment – of early evening dog walkers who will only be seeing the necklaces of lights and hearing ghostly harmonies in the winter gloom. —Tony

Where to next?

To take the path towards the crossroads in the wood, go to [38](#)

To scramble down towards Hustlers Row, go to [15](#)

To head into the woods on the upper path, go to [52](#)



13 The Witch's Stone

I come to the Park on the Fire Festivals. I'm a pagan so I come in on the 1st of May (Beltane), 1st of February (Imbolc), 31st of October (Samhain), 1st of August (Lughnasagh). I walk along the top of the woods and take photos of what I see. I then pick one and put it on my Instagram. One of the things with being Pagan is integrating your life with Nature and the change in the seasons – so it's a point-marker for that – which we don't have so much, living in the city. —Anon

The pillar before you is old and weathered. It could have stood in its current spot for centuries – or perhaps for even longer. Could the marks and striations on the side of the stone have been carved into the rock by ancient people – or is there a more prosaic explanation?

Stone and bronze age artefacts have been uncovered in the local area – stone axes, flint knives and arrow-heads have been found nearby on Stonegate Road, at Miles Hill and in Moortown. Perhaps they belonged to early settlers or simply people passing through the valley as they trekked across the countryside. But this stretch of land was reshaped far more recently – by the industrial revolution in the 1700s and later by local landowners like Edward Oates. This is one of many standing stones which dot the surrounding area. Indeed, there is another on the far side of the bridge.

The likelihood is that these stones are simply old gate-posts or scratching posts for cattle, placed here at the whim of a Victorian gentleman. Why this one gained the title it currently holds is hard to say, but it has captured the imagination of many local people. In 2012 the stone became the site of a pagan wedding, conducted by the poet Becky Cherriman, and it seems as though the happy couple are not the only ones for whom it holds significance. At the base of the stone are a trio of feathers. They have clearly been placed there deliberately – one blue-grey, one black and white, one pale and sandy brown – an offering perhaps to the spirits of this place, of the stone and the beck and the valley.

Where to now?

To walk along the beck in the direction of Hustlers Row, go to 35

To cross the bridge and explore the grassy grove beyond, go to 53

To walk across the grass towards the Green Road Car Park, go to 1

To walk along the beck towards the Carriage Bridge, go to 33

14 The Basketball and Tennis Courts

We played in the park a lot. All the children in the street used to go down as a gang and play in the park. We walked through The Hollies, paddled in the stream, went fishing, looking for tadpoles, looking for newts – almost practically every day in the holidays. I would say in the holidays we lived down there. The tennis courts were there, by the playground, where they are now, just directly behind the school, because we used to watch them playing tennis – and at the other side is the Crown Green bowls. There was a putting green as well at one point, and there was always a man in a little box, that would give you the stuff to play with. I think it was free. I don't think we paid. —Avril

You are sitting on a wooden bench. Before you lie the tennis courts and a well-tended bowling green. Behind you, you can hear the sound of children's voices and the repetitive thump, thump, thump of a basketball. As you survey the flowerbeds, your eye is caught by the steeple of the Parish Church. You can see it in the distance, the tall spire stretching up into the sky.

The church, known as Holy Trinity, was consecrated in 1849 and endowed by Elizabeth and Mary Beckett who lived at Meanwood Hall. The building was raised, in part, as a memorial to their brother Christopher, a well-known local banker. Christopher Beckett died in 1847 and had been, by

all accounts, a generous and thoughtful man with a strong interest in the welfare of the district. If you squint a little, you can almost make out the face of the clock on the tower. The clock was added to the building in 1850 and designed by Edward Beckett Denison, MP, QC – a nephew of the founders. He also designed the famous clock at Westminster, which operates Big Ben. The Meanwood clock has a face on three sides only. Legend has it that when it was built, the land to the east was made up entirely of open country, and so the creation of a fourth face seemed pointless.

Whatever hour it is, perhaps the time has come to move on.

Where would you like to go next?

To take the upper path across the grass into the woods, go to 47

To walk across the mown grass, go to 20

To visit the children's play area, go to 3

HUSTLER'S ROW

A narrow alleyway between stone buildings. On the left is a large stone wall with a white street sign that reads "HUSTLER'S ROW". The alleyway leads to a green bin and a wooden shed. The right side is a mossy stone wall with trees and bushes in the background.

15 Hustlers Row

You are standing on the path near the edge of the woods. A terrace of old stone cottages stands before you. The doors are in a little ginnel that runs along the back of the houses. In one direction, a rough path leads off into the trees. In the other the road heads out, past the mown grass, and on towards the car park and the children's play area. Below you are the beck and the bridge by Hippiin Door.

This is Hustlers Row, built by a local quarry-owner, John Husler (later Hustler), as lodgings for his workers. The houses are a popular and prominent feature in the park, although they have been found wanting by some local residents. **Edward Oates** owned the Meanwoodside estate at this time and made entries in his diary about his neighbour's new properties in May 1850.

The twenty cottages of Mr Hustler now completed in the most extraordinary situation. Four more by James Martin (paper-maker) and one larger house, little better. —*Edward Oates and the making of the lost American Garden at Meanwoodside, 1834–1864*, by Colin Treen

As you stand and look at the houses you wonder idly what they are like to live in. You don't have long to wait to find out. The door to one of the houses opens and Mary Greenwood, one of Hustlers Row's longest-established residents, steps out.

I have a little house in a friendly, beautiful, peaceful place. It's never lonely. People are always calling in to say hello when they're having a walk. I've lived here over thirty years. When I lived on Cliffe Road, several dogs ago, I used to come and walk here, but never thought for a moment that I would live here. Apart from Socks the dog and my visitors, I have the company of the birds. I can sit in my chair and watch them at the window all day.

My favourite part of the park depends on the time of year. At the moment, it's over the back there because the bluebells are out. I used to go up to The Hollies every day. I enjoyed talking to Gordon Cooper, the gardener. He loved rhododendrons and did so much for the place. He definitely deserves a mention in your book.

—**Mary Greenwood**

To walk along the path into the woods, go to **16**

To follow the road towards the children's play area, go to **46**

To scramble up the rocks towards the old quarry, go to **12**

To take the path down to Hippiin Door, go to **37**

16 The Gate That Stands Alone

As you walk the path beside the beck, you feel your footsteps quicken and your heartbeat rise. Where the muddy depths were once languid and dark, now they are fast and clear. You find that you are walking almost as fast as the water as it courses angrily over the weir. You are not the first passionate soul to walk here; just over a hundred years ago, a determined young woman likely walked these ways too. She was **Mary Gawthorpe**, one of the country's most fearless suffragettes.

Mary was born not far away on Melville Street in 1881. She trained as a teacher from the age of thirteen and, by her early twenties, was an active and well-known figure in the Women's Suffrage movement. As you pass by the old metal gate that stands alone at the side of the stream, pause for a moment and imagine standing face-to-face with her through the rusty bars. Mary went to prison several times and endured harsh

beatings at the hands of the police, but her spirit was never broken. Listen to the sound of the rushing water and imagine her voice rising above it:

It is not that I rebel against Nature but that your new variation on the old theme, he for God and she for God through him, promises continued outrage upon her ... Your thought for Woman is too little. It is too cheap ... This civilisation might have, today, the glorious confident outpouring of a free and radiant womanhood ... The new Eve stands already at the door. Can it really be that you do not know her? —Quoted in *Rebel Girls* by Jill Liddington (2006, Virago)

Which way now?

To head towards the weir, go to **17**

To head towards Hustlers Row, go to **15**

17 The Bridge Over the Weir

You are standing upon a bridge above a weir in the middle of the woods. This is where the watercourse splits. On the higher ground, a man-made channel known as a goit funnels water away from the main body. The channel runs beside the footpath on The Hollies side of the park. The goit was cut to serve the needs of the long-vanished Weetwood Paper Mill. Below you the remaining water pours across the weir and comes crashing down into the valley basin several feet below.

You close your eyes and listen to the sound of the churning water. The paper mill was not the only industry that relied upon the beck. There were many other places up and down the valley which depended on its waters: wool, flax, oil and corn mills, tanneries and dye-houses. All of them are gone now – long since demolished or converted into flats or private houses. It is hard to imagine that the lives of thousands of local people were once built around the presence of this little stream.

You open your eyes and, as you do, you spot something further down the valley: a fleeting flash of kingfisher, orange-red and blue against the muddy brown water. It is only there for a moment – like the blaze of a firework – but it is long enough to appreciate its sudden beauty. You wait for a moment to see if it will return.

To one side of the bridge where you are standing, a footpath runs between the goit and the beck in the direction of

Weetwood Mill Lane. Beyond the path is a small wooden bridge that spans the goit. On the far side, a set of steps lead up into The Hollies.

If you would like to take the footpath in the direction of Weetwood Mill Lane, go to 28

If you would like to enter The Hollies, go to 19

On the other side of the bridge is another path that runs between the beck and the oak wood. In one direction it leads towards Hustlers Row, the humpback bridge and the duck pond. In the other it heads off in the direction of Parkside Road. This path takes you out of the woods and runs along the edge of the fields at the bottom of Meanwood Grove. A drystone wall forms the boundary between the woods and the fields. Along its length a steep path runs up into the trees above.

To follow the path in the direction of Hustlers Row, go to 16

To take the path in the direction Parkside Road, go to 56

To take the path that runs along the drystone wall and head up into the oak wood, go to 49



18 The Humpback Bridge

You are standing upon the crest of the humpback bridge that crosses the beck near the duck pond. The water babbles gently as it flows beneath your feet, heading down towards The Ridge and the Urban Farm. A little green leaf floats out from beneath the bridge, swirling in the eddies. The water is flowing towards the shallow slope of a stone dam and, as the current catches it, it bobs abruptly beneath the surface.

This bridge has stood over the beck for a long time. It was built by the park's former owner, Edward Oates, in 1861. At this time, Oates was engaged in enlarging his American garden, built to commemorate his family's support for the American colonists during the Wars of Independence (1775–1783). The garden contained a number of specially created pools and water features. The duck pond to one side of the humpback bridge is the only one of these currently remaining. The bridge was built as a means of uniting the existing American garden to the east of the beck, with a new extension to the west.

Since the estate was opened to the public in 1954, the bridge has featured in the lives of many local people.

There's a photo of me and my wife on the humpback bridge taken just after our honeymoon. My parents lived in Meanwood. Later, we bought a house in the area and lived there for forty-two years. We used to swim in the pool there. In fact we used to play in the beck all the time as kids, though I do remember a child being drowned. There's nothing there now to mark the spot. I also remember helping to rescue a cow that was caught in the bushes up beyond the bridge. We had to get a local farmer to help us. That was how rural it was here before the Ring Road was built. —Barrie

Where would you like to go next?

To cross the bridge and visit the duck pond, go to 27

To cross the bridge towards the duck pond and walk along the beck, go to 55

To cross the bridge on the Green Road side and walk along the beck, in the direction of the car park, go to 35

To cross the bridge on the Green Road side and walk along the beck, in the direction of Hippin Door, go to 37

19 The Whale Stone

You are in the heart of The Hollies now. The evergreens make it dark here all year round. Ahead, a thick canopy of trees and shrubs climbs the hill. This is no longer the world of playgrounds, frisbees, and football games. It is as if you have crossed into a different climate. After a short while, you arrive in a clearing. Listen! The trickle of a small stream.

There, beside it, is a large rock well-known to children as 'the whale stone'. This stone is the salient feature of *The Whale in the Woods*, a children's book by **Julian Oxley** with illustrations by **Clare Morgan**, about Florence and her dog Jem.

"You're here! You're here!" shouted Florence.

"Oh Whale, I am so glad to see you."

"Hello, little Florence," said the whale.

Keep an eye out. You may spy Jem himself. He likes to climb on top of the stone and sit there proudly. A stone carver has engraved a Celtic pattern on its back. And those stones in the stream beside the rock – are they the whale's calves? Perhaps, to your own eye, it is not a whale at all. Some think the stone is a frog. Or perhaps, on a lacklustre day, it is just a large rock.

Where to next?

To head up through the wood towards the old mill stone at the top of The Hollies, go to 36

To follow the path down the valley and into the woods by the weir, go to 17



20

The Mown Grass Between the Woods and the Children's Play Area

Seated on a bench with the trees at your back, and the houses just behind you to your left, you are looking over the gentle grassy slope that descends towards the school. You can sit here throughout the year. In Spring, the blades of the Council mower are set high, just for the first few cuts, and the mowings are left on the sward. In Summer they are removed to be composted. As the heat of the sun bakes the short tufts remaining, you can breathe in the scent of green – yes, you really can smell colour. In Autumn, red, amber, yellow, purple leaf-fall patterns the ground like an Axminster carpet. The grass is allowed to rest in Winter, when it hardly moves, except when the frost weighs each blade down towards the earth.

In any season, the voices of children float up on the breeze from the playground in front of you. Perhaps you see something here of your past self at play? How old were you when you first made the swing move without being pushed? Six? Seven? Stay for a moment in the past, looking at it spread before you. For the Aymara, a tribe in the high Andes, the past is known, and therefore is in front of us – it can be seen. The future is behind us, being as yet unknown. This is the reverse of the Western spatial sense of time. As you sit here on the bench, perhaps your thoughts turn to your

own future. For this present moment, keep the wood and the houses, the rest of the city, the world beyond, only in your mind's eye; these things that you cannot see are in your future.


Where to next?

To walk down the treeline towards Hustlers Row, go to 15

To take the middle path through the oak wood, go to 41

To walk across the grass towards the children's play area, go to 3

To walk down towards the road at the lower edge of the grass, go to 46



My name is Alex.
I love running in the park.

21 The Meanwood Park Café

The café is a fairly new addition to the park. It opened on 16th August 2014, but the building in which it is based – known as Three Cottages – has been here for a long time. The end cottage once belonged to the gardener on the Meanwoodside estate. The big house at Meanwoodside is long since gone, but the cottages remain. The café stands at the entrance to a little stone courtyard. There are wooden picnic benches here and, in the Summer months, there is a bouncy castle at the far end. The lady at the counter is **Karly**. She is tall, blonde and smiley. The glass counter behind which she stands is full of cakes, buns, flapjacks and bowls of salad and sandwich fillings. The soup of the day is tomato and a sign advises you to “help yourself to the sauces!”

The staff are all local. Karly used to live on Green Road and remembers playing in the park as a child. The café is always busy, though business slows down through the Winter months. According to Karly, it’s a nice place to work.

The re-enactors come in on Sundays for a cup of tea and we have a few regulars that come in that you look forward to seeing. One guy remembers coming to the building before it was a café. Apparently the football teams used to use it as a changing room.

You order a cup of tea and a slice of something sweet and then take a seat by the table in the window. Round the frame a string of fairy lights flashes on and off. A young couple eat chip butties and a trio of smartly dressed older ladies gossip and discuss “pain management” on the next table over. On the wall opposite the counter, a television bumbles softly to itself.

On the back wall of the café is a large mural. The painting shows the woods in Autumn. It is incredibly vivid, almost psychedelic. The tree trunks are a deep blue and the leaves explode from the branches in a riot of colour – pinks, reds, oranges, yellows – it looks as though the forest is on fire. The sun peeps from behind the branches of one of the taller trees, its golden rays spilling out around the light-fitting on the wall. You wonder if the woods will look that way today. You finish up your snack and gulp down the remnants of the tea. Fortified for the day ahead, you gather your things and head out into the car park.

To return to the Green Road Car Park, go to **1**

22 The Hollies Tennis Courts

You are in a stand of magnificent trees by a green wooden shelter. Mixed doubles is being played on one of the tennis courts, whilst another has been appropriated for tai chi. It is hard to believe this serene scene was once the site of Bateman's quarry. Many local people have enjoyed playing on the courts across the years – though back in the early 1980s, **Doug Sandle** nearly lost a great deal more than the tennis match he was playing:

About forty minutes into the game, someone shouted over to us from the courts' entrance. As he approached we gathered he was asking if any of us had a car – a silver grey one parked near the park's entrance. "Is there a problem?" I asked. "I guess so," he replied. "It's been crushed by a steam roller!" We thought he was joking, but he insisted that it was the case.

Apparently some lads had stolen the parked council steamroller and lost control of the vehicle. Astonishingly, Doug's silver grey Renault hatchback, his pride and joy, survived the incident.

On the gate of the courts hangs a sign:

If you enjoy using the free tennis courts, why not come along and help out on one of our working parties? No gardening experience necessary. Friends of The Hollies are a group of volunteers committed to the maintenance, preservation, and enhancement of the natural beauty of The Hollies.

There is hard, but enjoyable, work to do, as hinted at in **Linda Marshall's** poem, *Wilderness*.



Bewildered in wilderness
Not the name of a village
Not manicured gardens
But a place where nature
Throws an outrageous party
Acts out its desires
By spreading profusely
Leaves, shoots and berries
Liberated and laughing
At us humans with our hoes
Trying to tame the overgrowth
Which is oddly unyielding

Where to next?

To walk up the side of the tennis courts and visit the formal gardens, go to **24**

To take the path below the courts and head out onto Weetwood Mill Lane, go to **7**

To take the path towards the old mill stone above the woods, go to **36**

23 The Lawrence Oates Memorial

The memorial to Lawrence Oates consists of a blue plaque and a set of display boards. Below these is a stone cross, surrounded by a small flowerbed – a memorial to Oates' grandfather Edward. The plaque reads:

“A VERY GALLANT GENTLEMAN”

To commemorate Captain Lawrence E.G. Oates
a member of Capt. Scott's expedition to
the South Pole 1910–1912
a frequent visitor to Meanwoodside
the Oates family home. Died 17th March 1912.

Oates was a career soldier, first in the West Yorkshire Regiment and later in the 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons. He accompanied Robert Falcon Scott on his Terra Nova expedition to Antarctica. Oates was taken on to supervise the ponies which Scott had, perhaps foolishly, chosen as pack animals. The expedition reached their destination on the 18th January 1912 but on arrival, found that they had been preceded by Roald Amundsen, a Norwegian explorer, whose expedition had arrived some thirty-five days earlier. The disappointed explorers attempted to return to their base camp, but the adverse weather slowed them down.

Owing to the gangrenous condition of his feet, Oates was unable to traverse the icy wasteland as quickly as his

colleagues. Knowing that he was slowing down the party and aware that any delay could be potentially lethal, Oates elected to leave the expedition camp and walk out into the snow alone. His final words, as recorded in Scott's diary, were, *'I am just going outside and I may be some time'*.

The date of his death was 16th March 1912, the day of his 32nd birthday. In recent years, Oates' reputation has been somewhat tarnished. A biography was published in 2002 by the writer Michael Smith which alleged that, at the age of twenty, Oates had an affair with a twelve-year-old girl named Etta McKendrick. The liaison resulted in the birth of a child, who was taken away from Etta to avoid a scandal. Of course this does not undermine Oates' courage and self-sacrifice but if, as Smith's research suggests, the story is correct, it paints a far more complex and morally dubious picture of this local hero than his Meanwood memorial might suggest.

Where to now?

To investigate the Ranger's Hut, go to **43**

To head towards the standing stone beside the beck, go to **13**

To visit the café, go to **21**

To investigate the children's play area, go to **3**

24 The Hollies Formal Gardens

You are standing in The Hollies Car Park, when you hear the unmistakable hollow knock of a woodpecker. How many different types of woodpecker are there? Can you recognise the call of a nuthatch?

The woods of Meanwood are full of birdsong. Here is an extract from the diary of **Mary Greenwood**, Hustlers Row resident of many years:

One morning recently in The Hollies, I heard what I thought was a brown owl making its “tewitt” sound. I thought it odd to hear an owl in the morning, so I took a good look and the sound came from a jay and others replied, all sounding uncannily like owls, making a sound I had never heard from jays before. Then I heard a distant “woo” in response which I feel sure could only have come from a real owl!

Can it be that you are only two miles from the centre of a modern city? Perhaps it is the variety within these woods, the contrasts between wild and planned, that regular visitors love so much. But now you open the metal gate at the side of the car park and, closing it behind you with a delicate clang, you enter the most formal corner of The Hollies.

The National Plant Collections exist for the ‘*preservation and protection of our garden plants*’. Leeds Parks and Gardens holds eleven nationally recognised collections. The information board recommends a June visit to see and smell the Deutzia and ‘Mock Orange’ Philadelphus here.

Where next?

To leave the gardens and investigate the tennis courts, go to 22

To leave the gardens and walk down towards the old mill stone above the woods, go to 36

To walk through the gardens and take a closer look at the House, go to 31

To leave The Hollies and head out onto Weetwood Lane, go to 6



25 The Path Behind the Duck Pond

The narrow track around the back of the duck pond is muddy and studded with rocks, but you have no trouble making your way along it. Ahead of you a moorhen is picking its way through the reeds at the edge of the pool, its black head bobbing up and down as it pads across the soft mud. The bird has the most extraordinary feet, bright yellow with widely-splayed toes. Perhaps sensing that it is being observed, the moorhen suddenly bolts towards a cluster of strange-looking plants. What are they? You step in closer and your nostrils are assailed by a peculiar smell. The air around the plants is scented – sweet, foetid and slightly garlicky. The plants themselves look like triffids or something out of *Doctor Who*. Thick stalks emerge from amongst a mass of bright green leaves, each one topped by a fleshy spur, covered in tiny flowers. Each one of these spurs is surrounded by a bright yellow hood, like the hollowed-out rind of a giant lemon. This is *Lysichiton Americanus* – commonly known as the American Skunk Cabbage. This striking piece of vegetation is not a native plant. How did it get here? Perhaps it is yet another remnant of Edward Oates' American garden.

Just beyond the skunk cabbage, the path is crossed by a shallow stream that tumbles over the rocks and into the pond. Beside it is a tall stone pillar that stretches upwards, high into the branches of the tree. Edward Oates brought this from the old Mill Hill Chapel in City Square. It was erected in 1864 after being kept in storage since the chapel was rebuilt in 1847. It

is likely that the stone from which it was carved originated in Meanwood, cleaved from the ground by local quarrymen, back when the chapel was first built in 1672. There is something pleasing about the thought that the stone has come back home.

As you continue your journey, you notice that there is a tiny graffito on the side of the column. Someone has stencilled a pale pink slightly simian face upon it. As you walk on, you could recall the scene at the end of *Planet of the Apes* – the one where Charlton Heston finds the Statue of Liberty – all that remains of human civilization. What will the Park will be like in the future. Will the pillar still be there? And will there still be people to enjoy it?

Happily, before your thoughts get too apocalyptic, you are back on the main path.

Where to next?

To take the path towards the humpback bridge, go to 18

To take a stroll along the side of the beck, go to 55

26 The Kitson Clarke Memorial Pillar

An odd structure rises from the ground before you. It looks like an ancient Doric column. No matter how hard you search, however, you will not find the remains of a Greek or Roman temple to accompany it anywhere nearby (although, if you know where to look, you may come across its twin). You read from a bronze plaque affixed to the pedestal:

IN MEMORY OF EDWIN KITSON CLARK
LT. COL. D.L. T.D. M.A. F.S.A., AND
[GEORG]INA KITSON CLARK WHO LIVED AT
MEANWOODSIDE FROM 1904 TO 1954,
AND GAVE TO LEEDS UNSTINTED SERVICE.

Mary Greenwood, a resident of Hustlers Row, has an old diary from 1985. It includes the following entry about one of her neighbours, Jack Bumby. Jack had lived in the row since he was a child:

Jack has been telling me about the Kitson Clarks and what Meanwood was like when it was their estate. It was a mass of many-coloured rhododendrons in which you could get lost, like The Hollies is now, instead of a field. The stream was stocked with trout. A high wall blocked it off from the lane across the park. The Hustlers Row kids, including Jack and Eric Bumby used to climb in early in

the morning and poach the trout. They could go in the estate legitimately, though not of course to fish, if they got permission from Colonel Kitson Clark. He would give them a pass for one day only. All the Kitson Clarks, he says, talked in very loud voices, and the daughter Mary wore big hats and very flamboyant clothes. Mrs Kitson Clark was a painter.

Of all the family, it is Mary for whom this column would perhaps form the most fitting tribute, for she was an expert in Roman antiquities and wrote several classic tomes on the subject across the course of her hundredyear life which ended in 2005. But the column actually stood here a good fifty years before any of the Kitson Clarks arrived at Meanwoodside – and, before that, spent nearly two hundred more in the centre of Leeds. In fact, Edward Oates had it brought over from the original Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel in Park Row (built in 1672) when it was demolished and replaced in 1847.

Where to next?

To walk along the beck in the direction of the duck pond, go to **55**

To cross the beck by the bridge nearby, go to **34**

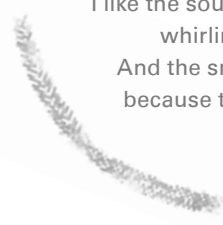
To walk along the beck towards the grassy grove near the Hollin Lane entrance, go to **53**

27 The Duck Pond (Henry's Pool)

You are standing on a tarmacked path at the edge of a muddy brown pond. The pond is surrounded on all sides by plants and vegetation and scattered across the surface is a motley flotilla of strange, white blobs. As you stare at them, you realise that they are pieces of bread, pale and bloated by the water. A pair of mallards drifts idly by in the middle of the pool, seemingly uninterested in the doughy bounty scattered all around them.

To your left a rough track leads off the path and disappears into the trees behind the pond. Does it run the whole way round? The foliage is so dense that it is hard to tell. What you can see however is a little waterfall, trickling down into the water from the opposite bank.

The pond has been here for a very long time and once formed a part of Edward Oates' American Garden. Oates, a former lawyer, bought the Meanwoodside Estate in 1834, and one of the alterations he made was the creation of a number of water features at what was then the northern end of his estate. The features included four ponds, two large and two small. The larger ones – Henry's Pool and Harris's Pool – were used for bathing, fishing and boating. The smaller ones – Violet Pool and Perch Pool – were primarily used as silt traps, to ensure that the water in the larger ponds remained clear. Three of the ponds are long since gone, drained and filled by subsequent landlords, but one of them still remains. This is Henry's Pool – the duck pond where you are now standing.



I like the sound of the water
whirling and flowing.
And the smelly cabbages
because they are yellow.

Where would you like to go now?

To follow the path towards the humpback bridge, go to 18

To take a stroll along the side of the beck, go 55

To explore the path behind the pond, go to 25

28 Bridge Across the Goit at the Lower Entrance to the Hollies

As you walk along the path through the woods, you take a moment to survey the surrounding area – on one side the beck and beyond it the ancient woodland, on the other, the goit and the exuberant foliage of The Hollies. Rhododendrons are actually alpine plants but there is something strangely tropical about this side of the valley – the wild profusion of waxy green leaves falling over the rich dark mud at the edge of the goit. Perhaps it conjurs up mangrove swamps and equatorial riverbanks; prehistoric reptiles basking on the waterline.

Idly contemplating this primordial idyll, you are woken from your reverie by the sound of laughter up ahead. You look up and see before you a small wooden bridge across the goit. The bridge leads up into The Hollies above, but it is currently being used for quite another purpose. A group of children from the nearby school are sailing paper boats along the mill-race – dropping them in at one side of the bridge and then swinging round to peer over the railing. They shriek with delight as the current carries the boats under the bridge and out the other side. More children throng the path. As the boats float past them, they follow them along, calling out expressions of encouragement. Further downstream, a teacher in a pair of wellingtons is standing in the water. In her hand she holds a net. It appears to be made from a bamboo cane and the remains of a pair of old tights. As the boats reach her, she fishes them out in order of arrival, calling out the names that are written on their sides. One little boy, with bright red hair,

cheers and jumps and punches the air when the name of his boat is called out.

You pause for a moment, enjoying the pleasure the children are taking in their race. As you do, the teacher catches your eye and asks the children to step aside to allow you to pass along the path. You skirt past them and suddenly realise that the bridge presents you with another direction of travel.

Where would you like to go next?

To carry on along the path in the direction of the weir, go to [17](#)

To carry on along the path in the direction of Weetwood Mill Lane, go to [44](#)

To cross the bridge and head up into The Hollies, go to [19](#)



29 The Hollies Car Park

Two brass plates on stone pillars at the main entrance to The Hollies on Weetwood Lane announce the gift of the land to The City of Leeds 'in memory of Major Harold Brown, DSO, MC'.

As you pass through the gates, the driveway divides. The left fork will take you into the car park. But first you take the right fork, not into the house itself which is private, but across to a secret garden – one of the least frequented corners of The Hollies. This former croquet lawn is a paradise. Can you spot the *Cercis Siliquastrum* – the Judas Tree? How did it come by its name? The lawn is fringed by benches and you sit and ponder for a moment, your back against the bright-red steel poppies.

Heading back to the drive, you face The Lodge where the greatly-respected Gordon Cooper lived. Gordon was Head Gardener at The Hollies for many years and added much to the wealth of Rhododendrons here. The high rocky outcrops on your left remind you of The Hollies' quarrying history. As you enter the car park, you cannot help but notice to your left the beautiful tree standing on its own on a small patch of lawn. One of The Hollies gardeners explains to you that the tree is Buddleia Alternifolia, but to local poet **Linda Marshall** it has always been The Goddess Tree:



Go to the Hollies in May
Somewhere near the entrance
Away from rose bushes and rhododendrons
You will find the goddess tree, a prayer
To an otherworldly eye

So delicate, so fragile-looking
She conjures up blossoms
This is where her power resides
She is the finest tree in an ancient park

She will tutor you in delight
She will make you sing rapturous elegies
She will sweep your grief away
Go to the Hollies in May

Where to next?

To take a walk in the formal gardens, go to **24**

To walk down the hill in the direction of the tennis courts, go to **22**

30 The Cattle Creep

You are standing before a huge dark tunnel that runs beneath the Ring Road. At the end of the tunnel, a circle of light is visible in the distance. To your right the beck flows noisily into a second tunnel nearby.


This is known as the 'cattle creep' and it is undeniably rather creepy. The name seems suggestive of some creature of folklore – a scuttling bovine vampire perhaps – but of course the explanation is rather more ordinary. Meanwood remained rural until well into the twentieth century and a cattle creep is simply a passageway for cows.

The floor is covered in concrete but is overlaid with a layer of silty mud. You take a breath and step inside. The air is slightly musty and your footsteps echo around you as you walk. As you approach the centre of the tunnel, the mud gets thicker. You pause for a moment. There is no one around. What would it sound like to shout in here – or sing?

You open your mouth and let forth a burst of sound into the air. It bounces off the corrugated walls, repeating itself at intervals before slowly dying away. There is something cathartic about the noise in the darkness. You carry on walking towards the far end of the tunnel, emerging into the light on a little patch of

rough ground. Ahead of you is a wooden fence and behind it a field. To your right, a set of steps lead you on towards Scotland Wood. The wood was once the site of Scotland Mill, which was built by James Whitely in 1785. Originally a woollen mill, it was later leased by the famous John Marshall as a flax mill in 1788.

On the gate in front of you is a little sign saying PATH. It is made out of rusty iron nails. Beside it an arrow points temptingly in the direction of the steps. Golden Acre Park and the source of the beck are only a couple of miles away but there are still parts of Meanwood to be explored – and besides, you can always come back here another time. You take a final look around and then plunge back into the darkness.

To make your way back to Parkside Road, go to 



31 The Hollies House

Adjacent to The Hollies Car Park, but tucked away from public view, is The Hollies House, a magnificent villa crowning the ninety-three acres that Bradford cloth merchant William Brown bought here in the 1860s. Imagine the view in those days from the top windows across the Meanwood Valley. Perhaps it hasn't changed much. But what about the sounds you may have heard on a midsummer's night before the arrival of the Ring Road's low susurrations?


Before the Brown family's tenancy, the land had been used for quarrying stone but, being a 'wet wood' (the origin of the name Weetwood), it turned out to be ideal for the kind of botanical gardens William had in mind. Colonial exploration had made the collection of exotic plants a fashion and Harold, William's grandson, was just as keen to develop the gardens. Sadly however, Harold was killed in action in May 1918 at the age of 39 and his bereaved father donated the house and gardens to The City of Leeds in 1921, in memory of his son. Since then, the house has been a sanatorium for children with tuberculosis, a residence for the elderly and a women's refuge. The modern extension to the house is now apartments.

You take a final look at the magnificent house. The scale of the loss that Europe and the wider world suffered in the First World War is hard to comprehend.

Time to move on.

To head out of the gardens and down towards the tennis courts, go to [22](#)

To leave the gardens and walk down into the woods, go to [36](#)



I'm here today for the first time in twenty years. I wanted to show my daughter where I came on Summer's days as a student for picnics and tennis. I used to love it here in The Hollies.

The Old Picnic Area Below Meanwood Grove

You step into the little field and discover the ghost of a picnic area. Seats and tables took pride of place in this unexpectedly flat and square piece of land in the 1980s, but they have not been maintained; some are missing and the remnants look decidedly shabby. Who levelled this otherwise neat little patch and how was it originally used?

The answer lies in the woods at the back of the field where a few more ghosts sleep soundlessly among the trees. The path is twisty and a little steep, but a stone basin about the size of a bathtub on the left piques your interest so you continue boldly into the shadows. And there it is: a sliver of brick-lined blackness cut into the hillside, deep enough to swallow the light but not wide enough to permit your entry. It is where a water wheel once stood. Around you lies the pit and, if you climb just a little higher, you will find the footprint of the pond that supplied the water. These are the remains of Grove Tannery where animal hides were treated and turned into leather. The flat area you crossed below was the filter bed where pollutants from the tanning process were captured before the water made its way into the beck.

The tannery was built around 1814 by Matthew Sawyer, a butcher, but the plot of land on which it stands was acquired much earlier (in 1801) in exchange for one red rose (an eccentric 19th Century lease loophole). Sawyer suspected there might be more value in the skins of the beasts he slaughtered than the meat. He was right, and his savvy business decision made him a wealthy man over the next four decades until his death in 1846. After eighty more years as a tannery, the Council stepped in and bought the land for public use.

On the opposite side of the field is the gate where you came in. Beyond it is the track that runs along the beck. In one direction the track takes you out onto Parkside Road. In the other it heads off into the woods of Meanwood Park.

To leave the picnic area and head out onto Parkside Road, go to  8

To take the path into the woods, go to  56



33 The Carriage Bridge to Meanwoodside

You are standing upon the bridge near the Ranger's Hut looking downstream. To your left are a smattering of picnic tables, and the stump of an old hazel tree. From one of the tables, you can hear the sound of a young mother trying to tempt her recalcitrant child into eating a carrot stick. On the other side of the bridge is a high stone wall and behind it a collection of stone houses. This was once the site of the old Whalley Tannery, which later became Hollin Lane Farm.

This was the 'carriage bridge', built in 1834, the same year that Edward Oates purchased the Meanwoodside Estate. The Oates family's main residence was at St Anne's Hill, a large estate between the villages of Burley and Headingley, but Oates seems to have spent the majority of his time here, planting, shaping and landscaping his property. In 1838, he built a second home on the land where the picnic spot now stands. This house was *also* known as Meanwoodside and the bridge would have led directly to it. It eventually became the home of the Kitson Clark family in 1904, before being demolished in the 1950s.

You lean over the edge of the bridge and watch the water emerging beneath your feet. Directly ahead is a stone wall that forms the park boundary. The beck is dark and sluggish here – the current slow and ponderous – as though the water is somehow reluctant to leave. You imagine the journey it will take, once it disappears beneath the wall – on past the old cricket ground and the allotments, past the flats that were

once Meanwood Tannery, behind the back of Waitrose and on towards Monkbridge Road and Woodhouse Ridge. Later still, it will cross under Meanwood Road and run through the centre of the Urban Farm before vanishing beneath Buslingthorpe Lane – only to emerge in a cobbled culvert that runs down to Leeds city centre.

As you stare at the water, you suddenly notice that there is something carved upon the bridge, etched into the stone directly below you. You crane your head and are able to make out a stone plaque which bears a pair of initials and a set of roman numerals.



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Where to now?

To cross the bridge and explore the grassy area on the far side, go to 53

To cross towards the picnic tables and walk towards the witch's stone, go to 13

To cross towards the picnic tables and head towards the Car Park, go to 1

34 The Bridge Beside the Witch's Stone

You are standing upon an old bridge that crosses the beck between a cluster of large holly trees. Traversing the bridge is a tarmacked path. In one direction, the path leads off in the direction of the car park. In the other it heads out towards the edge of the park at the bottom of Hollin Lane. Looking upstream, you can see a second bridge. It is no more than six or seven feet away and sits directly alongside the one on which you are standing. This other bridge looks much older – positively ancient – although you have no proof that this is so. It consists of a number of flat stone flags which have been laid across the water. There is no balustrade. Lying across the beck, between the two bridges are a pair of fallen trees.


On the bank beside this 'ancient' bridge are a pair of standing stones, one on either side of the water. The one on the left has been almost swallowed by the holly tree nearby. The one on the right is fully exposed and stands a little way from the water's edge. This is the famous witch's stone! You feel the skin prickle on the back of your neck. Perhaps you do not believe in magic but, nevertheless, there is something intriguing about the monolith, something that makes you want to take a closer look.

Where to next?

To investigate the witch's stone, go to **13**

To follow the path in the direction of the Car Park, go to **1**

To cross the bridge and visit the grassy grove on the other side, go to **53**



We went into the woods one day and some students were filming 'Robin Hood'. It was really exciting. It is a magical wood and a good place to use your imagination.

35 A Stroll Along the Beck

A stroll from the old yew tree, which many children know as 'the climbing tree', towards Meanwood Beck is a favourite of dog-walkers. Here is where The Dales Way begins, finishing up in The Lake District. **Colin Speakman** writes:

In the late 60s, The Hollies took on a new meaning for me. Fleur and I were involved in developing one of England's most popular long distance footpaths, the Dales Way, an eighty mile walking route through the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District National Parks, from Ilkley to Bowness on Windermere. The highlight of the Dales Way Leeds Link is surely The Hollies.

I come here every day. You get the regulars. This one's Bruce and the other's Paddy. I love it in winter especially. —Anon

Count the dogs you meet on your walk. Apart from Bruce and Paddy, among them may be regulars Will, Tilly, Daisy, Sparky, Mungo, Alfie, Meg, Pumpkin, Dylan, Roxy, Ronnie, Zero, Mabel, and – of course – Stanley. But now a man hails you on the path. It is Billy, newly retired Park Gardener. He tells you that the park has hardly changed since he started here in 1966, except that there is far less vandalism now.

To continue walking in the direction of the humpback bridge, go to 18

To continue walking in the direction of the witch's stone, go to 13

To walk across the grass towards the road, go to 46



36 The Old Mill Stone in the Hollies

Walking along the top path in The Hollies, you resist the impulse to search in the undergrowth for the round-topped gravestone of Jack The Pony, a four-legged character who died in 1900. As you approach a rubbish bin on your right you look down the slope – and there it is: the large circular stone that some people call ‘the millstone’. So was it really a millstone?

Peter Smithson has an answer:

This large flat circular stone is actually located close to the overgrown foundations of the workshop from which the blacksmiths in the quarries operated. Apparently this stone, together with a small cooling trough, was part of the tyreing platform for metal rims, where the cartwheels would have been repaired. This, being close to the cobblestone pathways was where the quarry carts used to trundle down to the goit on the eastern boundary.

Peter has for five years led a history walk for The Meanwood Village Association.

They are always held on what would be termed Easter Tuesday, with about thirty to thirty-five walkers. We always conclude with tea and hot cross buns at the Institute, supplied by the MVA committee.

You look at the stone, noticing the hole in the middle filled with rainwater – a good birdbath. Across the path is a tree with a heart and initials carved on the bark. You recall the saying: ‘As the letters grow, so will our love’. Did this particular love grow and, if so, in what direction?

Below you are some higgledy stone steps leading down the wooded slopes towards the beck. Perhaps you are wishing you had stronger and more waterproof footwear here in the ‘wet wood’ where ‘fern and moisture-lovers thrive’. Here also is a maze of old quarrymen’s paths over-towered by rhododendrons. Where to go now?

To walk along the path in the direction of Weetwood Mill Lane, go to 7

To head down into the woods, go to 19

To walk up and visit the tennis courts, go to 22

37 The Wooden Bridge at Hippiin Door

You are standing upon the wooden bridge that crosses the beck at Hippiin Door. To your left a rough track leads up towards the bottom of Weetwood Mill Lane, while another track heads off into the woods. To your right a tarmacked road sweeps away in the direction of Hustlers Row. Behind you is a wall and a little stone arch that leads you down to a humpback bridge while, ahead, the beck comes rushing down the valley towards you. To your right is another building – standing at the edge of the water. The building is made of blocks of roughly shaped stone. Set into the front is a pair of dark blue doors and above them and to either side are a trio of arched windows. The windows appear to be made of concrete into which have been set a number of coloured glass bottles like a set of boozy stained-glass windows. Pinned to the door of the building is a laminated sheet of paper, upon which are printed the following words:

Hippiin Door. This place is Hippiin Door, so named on estate maps pre-dating the building of Hustlers Row in 1849/50. Hippiin is an old Northern dialect word for stepping and refers to the stepping stones formerly at the site of the footbridge. The ford remains and was used for droving stock on Hippiin Lane. From this gatepost, access to a small field and sheep enclosure on the site of the shed was gained. No doubt the ford was also gated for droving, hence the Hippiin Door name. Some time between

the 1930s to early 50s Jack Bumby, with the estate's permission, roofed from the wall across to the side of the privy block (now gone) servicing 1–4 Hustlers Row. The building served as a practice space for Jack's dance band 'The Futurists'. The band members were local and included Florence Tomkins of 15 Hustlers Row. Shed reconstructed 2006–12 by Michael, No. 4.

Mary Greenwood of Hustlers Row remembers Jack Bumby, a Meanwood man throughout his life and a stalwart member of the community. He had lived in Hustlers Row since childhood and his grandfather had been one of the very first residents, back when the cottages were built in 1850. Jack died in 1986, but it feels only right that his name should be remembered and the Hippiin Door is the best kind of memorial, completely unique and full of character.

Where to now?

To take the road towards Hustlers Row, go to 15

To head through the arch towards the humpback bridge, go to 18

To cross the bridge and take the track that leads up toward Weetwood Mill Lane, go to 7

To cross the bridge and follow the path that leads into the woods, go to 44

38 The Crossroads in the Oak Wood

You are well inside the wood now. Ahead is a place where two paths cross. Four different directions are possible, and now you have a choice of paths to take. But there is no signpost. What to do? Poets have offered some thoughts on the situation. **Robert Frost**, writing in 1920 tells us in his poem *The Road Not Taken* that:

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
And sorry I could not travel both.

At the end of the poem you find out which road he chose. There are many interpretations of the meaning of the poem and you can add your own. From the 14th Century, **Dante** famously speaks to us in Italian in Part One of *The Divine Comedy*:

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura
che la diritta via era smarrita

We have helpful translations into English, including from **Thomas Brooksbank** in 1854:

Midway upon the journey of my days
I found myself within a wood so drear,
That the direct path nowhere met my gaze.

And more recently from **Seamus Heaney** in 1993:

In the middle of the journey of our life
I found myself astray in a dark wood
where the straight road had been lost sight of.

There are hundreds of translations of these lines of the opening of Canto 1. Clearly we have been trying to find the straight road through the wood for some time.

To take the track towards Myrtle Square, go to 10

To take the track towards the old quarry, go to 12

To take the track into the woods behind The Myrtle Tavern, go to 48

To take the track that leads down towards the mown grass, go to 41

39 The Stone Trough at the Side of Parkside Road

You stand at the edge of the little stone trough. If you were riding, this would be a good spot to stop and water your horse. You kneel down and put a hand into the water. It is icy cold. You pull out your hand and shake your fingers dry. As you do so, a tiny robin hops up onto the wall and peers at you, its beady black eyes shining like polished jet. It bounces towards you, pauses again, and then flies away.

There is an empty Twix wrapper hanging below the surface of the water. You fish it out and put it in your pocket. This is a lovely spot and it would be a shame to allow it to be spoiled by the debris of a chocolate biscuit.

You wonder how the trough came to be there. You reach into your pocket and pull out a copy of Arthur Hopwood's book on Meanwood. At the back of the book is a section called *Fact or Fiction* and it is here that you discover what you are looking for.

Opposite Meanwood Grove is an ever-flowing spring stated in a deed of 1763 to be the "cold bath commonly called Hazelwell" but in more recent times occasionally referred to locally as "The Roman Well". This was the site of the demolished Well House Inn, behind which stood a little bath-house. The *Leeds Intelligencer* of 18 July 1769 advertised "This is to acquaint the Public that the well-

known Cold Bath at Weetwood in the Parish of Leeds is now completely fitted up; where Ladies and Gentlemen may depend on civil usage by their most obedient humble Servant, Mary Wilson'. It was still used early in the present century but all that now remains is a depression in the ground with low stone walls on two sides.

Was the water in the public bath as cold as that in the trough? Mary Wilson must have been quite the charmer to entice people to take the plunge.

Where to now?

To cross the road and enter the park at Meanwood Grove, go to 54

To head up the slope towards Myrtle Square and the old cricket pitch, go to 10

To head down the slope towards the bottom of Parkside Road, go to 8





40 The Suicide Stone

Ahead of you is a large and thriving holly bush, dark green leaves glinting with a waxy sheen. It is so large that it almost blocks your way. As you reach it you carefully push the branches aside and, as you do, you notice that there is something odd about the stones in the wall nearby. One of them has something written on it. The letters have been carved into the rock. They are well-weathered and hard to read but you run your hand across them, in an effort to make them out. It appears to be a name – HTW Hancock – or is it a J? It is hard to tell. Beside the letters and etched more deeply still is a cross.

A second stone sits beneath the first. It is set forward from the other and sticks out into the path. Together, they create what appears to be a little stone seat. As you peer at it, you notice that there are carvings here as well. Once again, you run your hand across the stone, following the grooves of the letters with your fingers. S ... H ... O ... T. Shot!

What has happened here? When did it take place and where did this strange memorial come from?

You look up and notice that someone is walking along the path towards you – an older man with grey hair and a moustache. “You looking at the suicide stone?” he asks.

You nod your head. “Why do you call it that?”

The man smiles grimly. “That cross is for a chap called Hancock. He travelled up from London to see a girl and she spurned him, so he shot himself – just there, where that stone is. They removed his body up to The Myrtle until someone came and sorted it out, because it was cold in the cellar.”

“When did that happen?” you ask, your eyes wide.

“Oh a while back, I think. End of the 19th Century. I’ve no idea who made the stone. I tell you something though – they spelled his name wrong. It should have been Mr Hancock with a “D”. It says so in Arthur Hopwood’s book. Mind you, I don’t suppose he minds too much. After all, beggars can’t be choosers, can they?”

“I suppose not,” you say.

The man nods and continues on his way. You pause for a moment before doing the same.

**To continue walking towards Meanwood Grove,
go to 45**

**To continue walking in the direction of the old quarry,
go to 52**

41 The Middle Path Through the Oak Wood

The rotting trunk of a fallen tree. It is long and straight, a torso shorn of limbs. It flares in the middle like hips. Someone has painted on a pair of Y-fronts. It makes me smile every time I pass.

—Malcolm

As you walk along the middle path through the old oak wood, you will find this amusing piece of post-punk sculpture. Someone has certainly made their mark on the environment. Is this 'Art' or vandalism? This particular personification of a fallen tree also acts as a landmark – you could arrange to meet a friend “by the Y-front tree”.

Finding our way through the natural environment is a skill for which some are better suited than others. You can get lost even in Meanwood Park, they say. Who knows how to use a map and compass now? Certainly 'reading' the trail by looking at snapped twigs and footprints is a rare skill. Back in 1908, Baden-Powell was keen to inculcate the scouting knowledge of First Nations people in a generation of British boys, as he founded the Scout movement.

Hansel left breadcrumbs on the ground as a trail for him and his sister Gretel to follow. Was that an enterprising survival move or just littering? They did eventually find their way out of the wood, and back home, but it was a long journey. At this point, you might want to consider how far *you* want to go in, and how you will find your way out again.

To continue along path in the direction of the crossroads in the wood, go to 38

To continue along the path in the direction of the mown grass, go to 20

To head off the track past the y-front tree and up into the woods beyond, go to 48

42 A Pool in the Woods

You leave the waterfall behind and set off down the little path. The goit runs along your right-hand side and on your left is a wooden fence and a line of trees. As you walk, your attention is caught by the sound of birdsong – a simple repeated two-note chorus – chiff-chaff-chiff-chaff-chiff-chaff. You look around in an attempt to spot the little brown bird whose name reflects the nature of its call. There it is – hopping about in the branches of a nearby hawthorn. The singer is small, dumpy and dull, with greeny-brown plumage. Each eye is bordered above by a flash of white feathers – as though it is wearing mascara. The chiffchaff opens its dark bill and calls once again. Then it suddenly flits into the air and vanishes into the wood beyond.

Before long, the goit opens out into a sizeable pond at the back of a private garden and a small fence with a broken gate blocks your way. A sign on the gate says:



PRIVATE PROPERTY – PLEASE TAKE CARE
IF WALKING THROUGH.

You cannot decide if this is a warning or an invitation, but you decide not to risk it. You turn, and look across the pond. Beyond it is a patch of lawn, a set of stone terraces and a large, stone-built house.

The water here was once used to power the old Weetwood Paper Mill, which stood on the other side of Weetwood Mill Lane. The mill belonged to William Martin and his son Thomas from the late 18th Century. The Martin family had long been connected with the area. William's father, also called Thomas, had run a paper mill further down the beck. This was Wood Mills, later Meanwood Tannery and later still Highbury Works. Wood Mills was taken over by James Martin, William's brother, and drew water from its own goit which runs from the pool below the humpback bridge.

Weetwood Mill was closed in the mid-1800s but the site continued to be used for industry. It became first a bleach works and then, in 1870, a dye works before falling into disuse and disrepair. The story goes that dye from the works escaped into the beck and poisoned the fish, much to the displeasure of Charles Oates, the then owner of Meanwoodside. Oates, an animal lover, persuaded the dye-works' owner, Benjamin Grey, to leave, with the help of a generous financial pay-off. The pond seems clean and clear today. As you leave you notice several patches of pale grey jelly floating in the water. In a few weeks' time, the eggs within will have hatched and the water will be teeming with tadpoles.

**To head back along the path towards the waterfall,
go to  44**

43 The Ranger's Hut

I love the moss on the roof of the Ranger's Hut.
It reminds me of a carpet from the Seventies.

—Vera

The Ranger's Hut was built for the use of the local Women's Institute. The Meanwood branch was founded in 1919 and one of the members was Georgina Kitson Clarke, who lived at Meanwoodside with her husband Edwin. The couple bought the estate from the Oates family in 1917, though they had rented the house there from 1904.

The land where the hut stands was gifted to the W.I. by the Kitson Clarks and the building opened its doors in 1935, as a venue for meetings and theatrical productions. Inside the building, at one end, is a raised stage, behind which was a small room which served as the 'wings'. The first piece to be staged there was a production of *The Wharfedale Witches* by Georgina (Ina) Kitson Clark. You smile to yourself as you imagine the ladies, in costume, whispering nervously in the little back room as they wait for their entrances.

The stage is still there, to your left, as you step inside, though nowadays the hut is rarely used. The roof and the interior walls are speckled with mildew and the air carries a musty fungal scent.

In the 1980s the Park Ranger was Steve Joul, who opened up the Ranger's Hut as a visitor centre. The centre contained a small collection of plants and wildlife found within the bounds of the park. One item not displayed was the 'Meanwood crocodile', which lived in the beck and which Steve fondly remembers describing to numerous parties of schoolchildren over the years.

On the walls of the hut are various photographs and documents pertaining to the park, remnants perhaps of its days as a visitor centre. These include a copy of the Oates' family tree. The Oates had the estate from 1830. It was previously owned by the Whalley family, who had been there since the 17th Century. Oates and his wife Susan had five children altogether – though sadly only three of them, Frank, Charles and William, survived into adulthood.

You take a final look around the room and then turn around and step back out into the car park.

Where to next?

To take a look at the Lawrence Oates memorial, go to 23

To head towards the standing stone by the beck, go to 13

To investigate the café, go to 21

To visit the children's play area, go to 3

You are standing on a bridge at a crossroads in the path. Before you, is a wooden balustrade and, behind you, the little goit that runs through the woods below The Hollies. A channel beneath the bridge funnels water from the goit into a lively waterfall which crashes down a set of narrow stone steps and into the beck below.

You peer down at the water, enjoying the noise that it makes as it crashes off the rocks. The water knows exactly which way it is going – but do you? To your left, the path leads into the woods, towards Meanwood Grove and the Ring Road beyond. To your right, it forks into two. One branch veers down towards a lower track, that runs along the side of the beck towards Hippien Door. The upper branch follows the course of the goit in the direction of Weetwood Mill Lane. As you contemplate your next move, a little wagtail flits down onto the balustrade. It observes you for a moment and then flits away decisively, along the path into the woods as though daring you to follow.

To follow the wagtail into the woods, go to 28

To follow the course of the goit, go to 42

To head down onto the lower path, go to 37

We've been coming to the park for thirty years or more. I walked here the day that my son Owen was born. In fact, I stood on the bridge over the waterfall because I thought it might speed up the process. It did! He was born that evening.

45 The Patch of Cobbles in the Woods at the End of Meanwood Grove

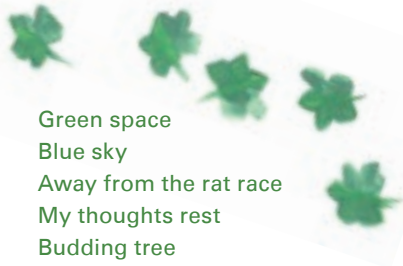
You are standing upon a patch of cobbles at the top of the old oak wood, at a point where many footpaths seem to meet. You are looking down the hillside in the direction of the beck below. To your right is an open field, bordered by an old stone wall. To your left is a muddy path that leads off into the trees. A steep track leads you down the side of the field towards the bottom of the valley. Running along the upper edge of the field are a fence and another stone wall. Between them runs a bridleway. On the upper side of the wall but running parallel to it is a narrow footpath. Both the path and the bridleway lead off towards Meanwood Grove.

You stay for a little while, drinking in the silence, enjoying the solitude of the forest. In a moment you will need to make a choice about where to go next. But a moment, of course, has no fixed length. It can last for as long as you want it to. Take your time. The paths will wait. The park is in no hurry.

To follow the steep track down towards the beck, go to [49](#)

To walk along the footpath in the direction of Meanwood Grove, go to [54](#)

To head along the footpath through the trees and deeper into the wood, go to [40](#)



Green space
Blue sky
Away from the rat race
My thoughts rest
Budding tree
Grant me a wish
Blossom
Into leaves

46 The Road by the Mown Grass

You stroll along the road, enjoying the feeling of the breeze on your skin and the sounds of the park around you. There is a bird singing loudly in the trees nearby and you listen carefully, trying to work out exactly where the sound is coming from. You are so engrossed that you almost do not notice that a man in a brightly-coloured pullover is walking in the opposite direction. He is an older man, perhaps in his seventies or eighties, with a bald head and a wide smile.

This is **Dennis Wrigglesworth**. He has lived in the local area all his life and was educated at the school next to the park. He grins at you and you exchange a few pleasantries. Before long, you are chatting like old friends.

I was the postman in Meanwood. I enjoyed it. Everybody knew me and I was on the round for twenty-eight years – but it's twenty-four since I retired. I tell you something, I used to have to do a second delivery – that shows how long ago it was – and at the end of the day, I used to have to go down to Hustlers Row. A van driver used to do it on the first delivery. Well, if I had something to take, I used to borrow a bike from a little lad who lived at the end of Green Road and ride down to the houses and then ride back again. It was a big house at the end of the road, the school is at one side and the house is next door, at the end of a great big garden. It's a long way down, so I used to go in and say "Would you let the old boy here borrow the bike?" And I used to leave my bag there and bike down. I don't think he minded. Well, he was at school.

To carry on towards Hustlers Row, go to 15

To head towards the children's play area, go to 3

To wander down towards the beck, go to 35

To head up onto the mown grass, go to 20

47 The Upper Path Across the Mown Grass

You are walking along the upper edge of a field of mown grass. To one side of you is the park boundary and beyond it the back gardens of the bungalows that run along the length of Sunset Road. Below you the field stretches down towards the beck. You can see the rough track that the locals call Sandy Lane, leading up into the middle of the wood and, below it, the road that leads towards Hustlers Row.

As you walk, you suddenly notice that you are being observed. A smiling woman with short grey hair is looking out into the park from the window of her bungalow. Seeing that you have spotted her, she waves.

I've lived on Sunset Road for twenty-eight years. I like to sit in my chair in the window and look out on the park. I can see the playground and people walking the dogs. I can see right across to Headingley. The view alone puts at least £1000 on the value of the house! I used to love walking in The Hollies. Season? I love them all. My favourite time is sunset. You get a lot of lovely sunsets. Perhaps that's why they call it Sunset Road. I like to watch the planes cross the sky. —Marjorie

You smile and wave back and then continue on your journey. The sun has come out and the breeze is rippling the grass. The field feels like a great green ocean.

Which way will the tide carry you next?

To head down onto the mown grass, go to 20

To head down onto the road, go to 46

To keep on walking in the direction of the basketball and tennis courts, go to 14

To keep on walking and head into the woods, go to 48



48 The Oak Wood #1

How do you feel? No doubt you are asked this question from time to time. Now, as you make your way through the woods, reaching out a hand to steady yourself against the trunk of an ancient tree as you navigate a muddy puddle, the words spring into your mind again. How do you feel? With your fingertips? Your palm? The old bark is rough but reassuring against your skin.

One Leeds resident who visited these woods throughout his life, from the mid-19 Century to the 1930s, was **John Grimshaw Wilkinson**, Master of Science at the University of Leeds, but better known to most locals as The Blind Botanist. Left sightless by a bout of rheumatic fever in his twenties, John was forced to give up his job as a grocer. But he nevertheless went on to become one of the most respected experts in the study of British plant life, reclassifying many species wrongly identified by his colleagues. His method?

With my tongue I began to touch every part of [a] leaf, and so got its various details and characteristics thoroughly into my head, till I was sure I could recognise a beech leaf anywhere ... My great success in this – owing, no doubt, to my extremely fine sense of touch in the tongue – led me to experiment in the same fashion with flowers, with stems, with fruits, until I grew just as confident and skilful with respect to them also. —From *The New Hope for the Blind: An Interview with Mr. John G. Wilkinson, Mast. Sci.* by George A. Wade, B.A.

Close your eyes and take a moment to experience the world as John Grimshaw Wilkinson did.

Where to next? There are many paths here.

To follow the path towards the crossroads in the woods, go to 38

To follow the path towards The Myrtle Tavern, go to 10

To head out of the trees onto the mown grass, go to 47

To linger a little while longer here, go to 50

49 The Steep Path Through the Trees

You make your way along the forest path that runs along the side of the old stone wall. It is steep but manageable. The woods here are quiet but as you slip and scramble through the trees you are sure you can hear the sharp shrill call of a nuthatch somewhere nearby. You look around to spot it and as you do you notice something else – growing on the branches of a nearby tree is a little crop of mushrooms. The mushrooms are a reddish-brown and slightly translucent. The strange thing about them is that they look uncannily like human ears! They are dotted about the branch and make it look as though the tree is listening out for something. You reach out a finger. The mushrooms are soft to the touch, jelly-like and covered in what feels like a soft down. These are *Auricularia Auricularia-judae*, also called the wood ear or jelly ear mushroom. They are apparently edible if properly cooked, but their strange appearance makes them look singularly unappetising.

There is an odd piece of old folklore attached to these mushrooms. They are sometimes called the Judas ear mushroom, because they often grow on the branches of elder trees. The elder is traditionally supposed to be the tree from which Judas Iscariot hanged himself after his betrayal of Christ. The ears are supposed to be manifestations of his restless spirit and all that remains of this infamous biblical traitor.

Where to now?

To climb down the path towards the weir, go to 17

To climb up the path towards the top of the woods, go to 45

The border between the settlement and the forest is a powerful place. It has magical properties. In so-called “primitive” societies, it is customary for the healer (the shaman) to build his hut or dwelling-place in this no-man’s land.



50 The Oak Wood #2

You are not sure how long you have lingered in the woods, but the light seems subtly different to when you came in. Above you, in the deep blue archway of the sky, the clouds drift like sleepy sheep towards a horizon smouldering with gold. You make your way to a pathway that looks like it actually leads somewhere – towards places with names, and changes of shoes, and the warm windows of The Myrtle Tavern.

And then you are reminded of a painter you like. An artist from Leeds who captured night's mysteries with the clarity of day; whose 1861 painting 'A Mossy Bank, Meanwood' must have been conceived somewhere near here – inspired perhaps by the way the light slants just so through the trees, striking a half-buried boulder so sharply and so keenly amongst the strewn leaves that you can almost hear the sound it makes. This is how **John Atkinson Grimshaw** saw the world, and this was his favourite time of day:

When the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanili, and the warehouses are palaces

in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens, and fairy-land is before us – then the wayfarer hastens home ... and Nature, who, for once, has sung in tune, sings her exquisite song to the artist alone, her son and her master – her son in that he loves her, her master in that he knows her.

—Quoted in *Atkinson Grimshaw: Knight's Errand* by Sandra K. Payne (1987, Wokingham: Corporate Link)

Where to next?

To follow the path towards The Myrtle Tavern, go to **10**

To follow the path towards the crossroads in the woods, go to **38**

To head out of the trees onto the mown grass, go to **47**

51 The Wild Patch at the Top of Weetwood Mill Lane

You squeeze through the stile in the wall. It may remind you of a Beatrix Potter illustration, perhaps one featuring Mrs Tiggly Winkle. You descend the five rough steps and follow the narrow path ahead past holly and sycamore and, on your right, a semi-cultivated garden. You notice the tangle of blackberry bushes. The fringes of these woods offer ripe pickings for blackberries in the season. Each picker has their favourite spot, but they may not willingly tell you where it is.

At the bottom of this secret path, you come to Weetwood Mill Lane. As you step out onto the road, keep your eyes peeled for the massive Tree with Two Mouths on your right. It looks surprised to see you.

Where to next?

To follow the lane downhill towards Meanwood beck, go to [7](#)

To follow the lane uphill towards Weetwood Lane, go to [6](#)

To take the path into the Hollies and walk towards the tennis courts, go to [22](#)



We made the den out of bracken and leaves – anything! It was very basic but it was our little den, our little hideaway – you know what you're like when you're kids.



52 The Woods Near the Old Quarry

As you walk through the wood, your eyes alight on a perfect, chocolate-brown bubble affixed to the underside of an oak leaf. On closer inspection, you note a tiny hole on one side. It's like a tiny bowling ball – if bowling balls were designed to be held with one finger.

You recognise it instantly; you have seen these before, but finding one always occasions a further investigation. You run your finger over the bumpy surface. The hole means that the original occupant – a gall wasp – has eaten its way out and flown away, but does not necessarily mean the gall is empty. These little spheres are more like planets than egg shells. Inside, as the wasp develops from larva to winged adult, other species assume squatters' rights: tiny beetles, caterpillars, moths and other wasps, most of which are content to feast on the spongy gall tissue and ignore the infant insect. Others, usually also wasps, are ruthless parasites, however, and attach themselves hungrily to the larva. Then, finally, there are the fungi, the plant life of this miniscule world-within-a-world, some of which can be as deadly to the gall wasp as the parasites.

The leaf wobbles in the wind, weighed down by its orb-like appendage. You are tempted to pluck the gall as you would a grape, and crack it open. You give it a squeeze and, as you do, a fully-formed wasp zooms out, as unsurprised by your intrusion as if it had been waiting. You flinch and drop the shattered gall, and watch as the insect – in that short moment, the youngest of all the wasps in the world – disappears into the wide white sky.

Where to next?

To head towards the old quarry, go to [12](#)

To head toward the crossroads in the wood, go to [38](#)

To keep on walking through the trees in the direction of Meanwood Grove, go to [40](#)

53

The Grassy Grove Near the Hollin Lane Entrance

You are standing within a little grove near the entrance to the park at the bottom of Hollin Lane. It is shady here and the atmosphere is tranquil. The sound of the beck is muffled by a line of trees. The grass beneath your feet is scrubby and worn away by the tramp of feet. A tarmacked path runs through the grove. In one direction it leads out of the park towards the bottom of Hollin Lane. In the other, it sweeps down towards a bridge across the beck. Lying by the side of the path, near the entrance is what looks like an old millstone – smooth and round with a square hole in the direct centre. Just behind it, a shallow waterway emerges from beneath the path. This channel is the goit that was cut from the beck to feed the old Meanwood Tannery. The water in the goit still has some way to go before it reaches its destination. The mill pond where it empties is still there, just behind Stone Mill Close and Mill Pond Lane, though the tannery it once served has long since been converted into flats.

Not far away from where you stand is a woman in a bright pink tracksuit. She is bending down in the middle of a patch of foliage, her fists full of spring green leaves. The ground on which she squats is thick with wild garlic. The plant is related to the chive family. The leaves are aromatic and can be used for cooking. The Latin name is *Allium Ursinum* or Bears' Garlic. Apparently the bulbs are popular with brown bears which

are known to dig up the ground in search of them, although you suspect that bears are in short supply in Meanwood Park. You watch as the woman gathers several handfuls of the savoury leaves, pushing them down into a small plastic bag. After a minute or so, the bag is full. Task completed, she stands and walks out of the park. Perhaps she is going home to prepare a meal?

Where to now?

To follow the track towards the bridge across the beck, go to [34](#)

To leave the grove and follow the beck upstream, go to [26](#)

Further downstream is another bridge, which crosses the beck near the wall at the Southern edge of the park.

To cross the beck here, go to [33](#)

54 The Path Above the Fields at Meanwood Grove

You are on the little cobbled path that runs between the woods and Meanwood Grove. Below you, open fields run down to the beck. The fields are dotted with molehills, thistles and dandelions. As you walk along the path you take a moment to appreciate the view. You can see right across to the other side of the valley. From here the woods seem almost endless, stretching out across the skyline.

Above the path are more trees, mostly oaks by the look of them and, in amongst them, you suddenly spot a profusion of tiny white flowers. These belong to the *Anemone nemorosa* – the wood anemone. The flowers are beautiful; the pale petals tinged on the outside with a purple blush; the yellow stamens forming a tiny golden sun in the centre. It is hard to believe that these little plants are poisonous – but they are! The plant contains a toxin called protoanemonin, which can cause all sorts of horrible symptoms. Like exhibits in an expensive gallery they are here to be seen, but not to be touched.

Of course not everything growing in the park is so hazardous. It is simply a question of knowing what to avoid. Nowadays, people run foraging courses in the woods, looking for fungi, berries and flowers. It has become quite trendy but of course, in the past, there were times when people relied on the bounty of the greenwood simply in order to survive. Over the years, the trees have provided people with wood for making furniture and tools, kindling for fires, bark for tanning and paper-making, nuts and seeds for animal feed. Even today, our

houses are filled with wooden objects and of course the trees give shelter to numerous species of animals, birds and insects.

Local writer **Lis Bertolla** knows this all too well. She recalls a time, some years ago, when Leeds was fortunate enough to have a visit from the peace activist Satish Kumar, founder of the magazine *Resurgence*. He was offered an overnight stay with friends living close by.

Satish rose early and went into the park to walk and meditate. Later, in his address to followers at Leeds Town Hall, he spoke warmly of the welcome he met with in the 'Far North' and made special mention of his 'walk through the wood'. He mused upon the name Meanwood and its possible origin. Then he added, with a mischievous smile, "Those woods are not mean. They should be called 'generous woods'."

To keep on walking towards Parkside Road, go to **9**

To keep on walking towards the oak wood, go to **45**


55 The Avenue of Saplings

You are standing in the middle of a grassy avenue that runs along the side of the beck. The sapling oaks that flank this path were planted recently by The Meanwood Village Association. They replace the trees that originally stood on either side of Memorial Drive by the War Memorial. Those original oaks, one for each of the Meanwood men known to have died in The Great War, were paid for by the village and planted in the 1920s. Major Walter Rowley had provided the funds for the War Memorial itself, now restored again by the MVA. However, the trees were taken out when the land was sold by The Church to Leeds Federated Housing.

You look down the avenue of young oaks running beside the beck. For a moment each of the trees becomes in your mind a man in uniform standing, as if on parade, waiting for you to pass through. Reflecting on the phrase 'hearts of oak', you walk on.

To keep on walking towards the humpback bridge, go to 27

To keep on walking in the direction of the Hollin Lane Entrance, go to 26




When my grandchildren were small, we couldn't go for long walks together. Now they're grown up, but I can't go far. But that's the way life goes! At least I'm here today. I'm glad I put my boots on though!

56 The Path Below the Fields at Meanwood Grove

You are on the scrubby path that runs between the oak wood and Parkside Road. On one side of you, open fields stretch up towards Meanwood Grove and the woods beyond. On the other, the beck sparkles silver in the sunlight, the water splashing and bouncing across the rocks beneath the surface. The watercourse has many moods as it journeys through the valley, but at the moment, it seems almost joyful. There are fewer trees here than further downstream and the beck somehow feels as though it is making the most of the light before it plunges into the dappled shade of the woods.

Despite its vigour, there is something soothing about the splashing of the water. You pause for a moment upon the bank and close your eyes to listen. It is the sort of sound that might inspire poetry – and indeed it has. Here is a short piece, by local writer **Lis Bertolla**.



I saw my shadow walking by trees,
My spirit bathing in streams.

I saw my gladness dance with the breeze;
And my yearning sang in my dreams.

I saw my sadness bend with the reeds,
My weeping watered the flowers.

I saw my shadow walking by trees
And my soul lay, taking its ease

You open your eyes and as you do you suddenly realise that something magical has happened. Standing in the water, no more than a few feet away from you, is a heron. You remain stock still, your eyes fixed on the tall and slender bird. It seems unbothered by your presence. Ashy grey, with a black streak across its yellow eye, it stands one-legged in the shallow water. Then, as you watch, it suddenly darts its head beneath the surface, its slender neck unfurling as it strikes. It comes back up with something wriggling in its beak: a small, brown fish. The heron gulps it down and then, lazily, as though in slow motion, it flaps into the air. You watch as it flies towards the trees on the far side of the valley and, as it finally disappears from sight, you slowly release the breath that you have been holding.

To keep on walking towards the bottom of Parkside Road, go to 8

To keep on walking towards the weir in the woods, go to 17



