

# EASTLEIGH & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



## THE CLAYPIT LAKES & QUARRIES OFF BOYATT LANE



Paper 103

## **NOTES**

### **The Claypit Lakes and Quarries.**

The site is thought to be part of the Cranbury Estate, and is a great asset to the Community as people are not prevented from being there even though it requires effort to find a way in. The area is adequately, yet minimally, managed to appear as a natural environment, which makes the area covered seem far greater than it actually is.

Remarkably, it manages to feel isolated and is like an island cut off from the rest of the world even though it is in a well-populated area.

Nothing is signposted and therefore it is an adventure to explore it, and by the time one becomes familiar with it, the season will have changed to give an entirely new experience.

I thought that places like this were a thing of the past. There are no facilities whatsoever and they are not needed. It is a fantastically different place to visit which is within easy walking distance of the town.

## MAP OF AREA SHOWING FOOTPATHS



## How to find the claypit quarry lakes.

There seem to be at least three ways in and out of the site. One starts from a path between Knowle Hill (off the Allbrook Hill Roundabout) and the Boyatt Lane underpass, another off Boyatt Lane nearly opposite Broomhill Cottages and one from the sign that reads 53-71 Allbrook Knoll, in that road via a Playing Field.

Entrance/Exit 1. Walk towards the end of Knowle Hill.



Behind bollards at the end of Knowle Hill is a weighbridge made by Pooley & Son Ltd of Birmingham. The footpath is in the front of those bollards.





Just past the bollards there is a footpath alongside a gravel drive.





This path passes fields on the right.



It goes as far as the Boyatt Lane underpass but ....

..... after about a quarter of a mile there is a distinctive left turn into the bushes, but natural features change rapidly.



**Way in (or out).**

This is an entrance to the main brickworks site - a path, its North-west boundary, eventually leads to part of Boyatt Lane near Broomhill Cottages. It runs alongside the original foot-path for a while but then winds left. Tracks to the left of this lead down to the lakes and gullies of the brick-field. There are two lakes on the map, but there are smaller ponds not on the usual maps.



Beyond the end of the large lake houses can be seen as it approaches its exit at Boyatt Lane







This is the Boyatt Lane Entrance which is just past Broomhill Cottages looking south. The notice is on the tree on the left of the path, hidden by foliage in summer.



Entrance/exit is marked with the arrow.

I have not strayed from the main north-west boundary path in my description so far because it is the escape route should you get lost.

A third entrance is off Allbrook Knoll and leads to a small football field

...



.... beyond the bollards.





The path to the lakes is in the bushes on the right - the black hole in front of the goal-posts.





Pictures of the paths are all very similar so I have not shown them from here. There are minor hazards which deter cyclists and there is a left or right branch. The left is more strenuous with a number of trees across the path. The right hand branch leads to the 'pipes' landmark , but either way the area of southern end of the large lake is reached unexpectedly quickly.

This route leads directly to the he pipe landmark



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I have still only found three entrances to the Lake-site but have found more routes to these. This one is interesting. Walk along Allbrook Knoll until on the left you see a signpost on a wall pointing to Little Boyatt Farmhouse.



Follow this drive and turn right at the gate.



The left turn leads to Highcliffe Drive. There is an obscure path from there at the end of Walmer Close to Woodside Avenue.

This right hand path passes another exit from the Allbrook Knoll Play Area directly opposite the footpath leading between the houses. (which I had not noticed previously).



It then comes to, and crosses, a road, **Oakfields** - a branch off Portchester Rise.



In the centre of the path a short distance after the crossing there is a stone with a metal insert which puzzles me. Perhaps it is connected with the narrow gauge railway.



There appears to be a steep drop, down to trees, to the right of this path. Further on there is a new gravel path on the left which leads to Hazelwood Grove, a branch off Boyatt Lane. (Not yet on maps)



The original path continues and meets the path which starts from near Broomhill Cottages, Boyatt Lane, at the point where it turns towards the Lakes.

The same path can start at Woodside avenue where there is a gap in the bushes near a manhole in sight of the 40mph sign before Allbrook roundabout.



A path from here leads to Walmer Close.



A path behind this hedge, nearly opposite Chilham Close leads to the gate of Little Boyatt Farmhouse and the path previously described.



Walmer Close and Chilham Close are branches off Highcliffe Drive which is a branch off Bosville which is a branch off Woodside Avenue.

# THE LAKES



## Part of the Large Lake.



Other Ponds – This one is east, below the large Lake.



Facing the 'Pipe landmark' side on, turn down and to the right to reach this.



The same pool further to the left. Rather spooky.



The same pool even further to the left.

I could not get close to a pool which is south-east and at a much lower level than the small lake but could glimpse water deep in the canyon. It is probable that there are ponds that dry up in hot weather and overflow when it is very wet.



There is a tree trunk surrounded by water in this one. Picture zoomed.

There are very few distinctive landmarks. This one of large pipes is the most obvious.



This is as it is viewed from the path from Allbrook Knoll sports field.

A path to the left eventually descends to the Large Lake A path down to the right goes to the eerie pool not on the map. A path ahead after a depression I find difficult but not impossible to get up or down leads on round the large Lake in an anticlockwise direction.

The path along the eastern side of the large lake has a short section paved with tree-trunks embedded in clay where there is water at a lower level in a pool on the other side of the path.



**The Smaller Lake.**



It was rather clogged with algae in this picture

There are also deep dry gullies which you will have to explore yourselves if you can reach them.

It was claimed that terrapins are common in the waters of the lakes but I saw none.



They do exist.

A terrapin at the north end of the Large Lake.



Picture by Samantha Blackburn 21/06/2020



Ducks.



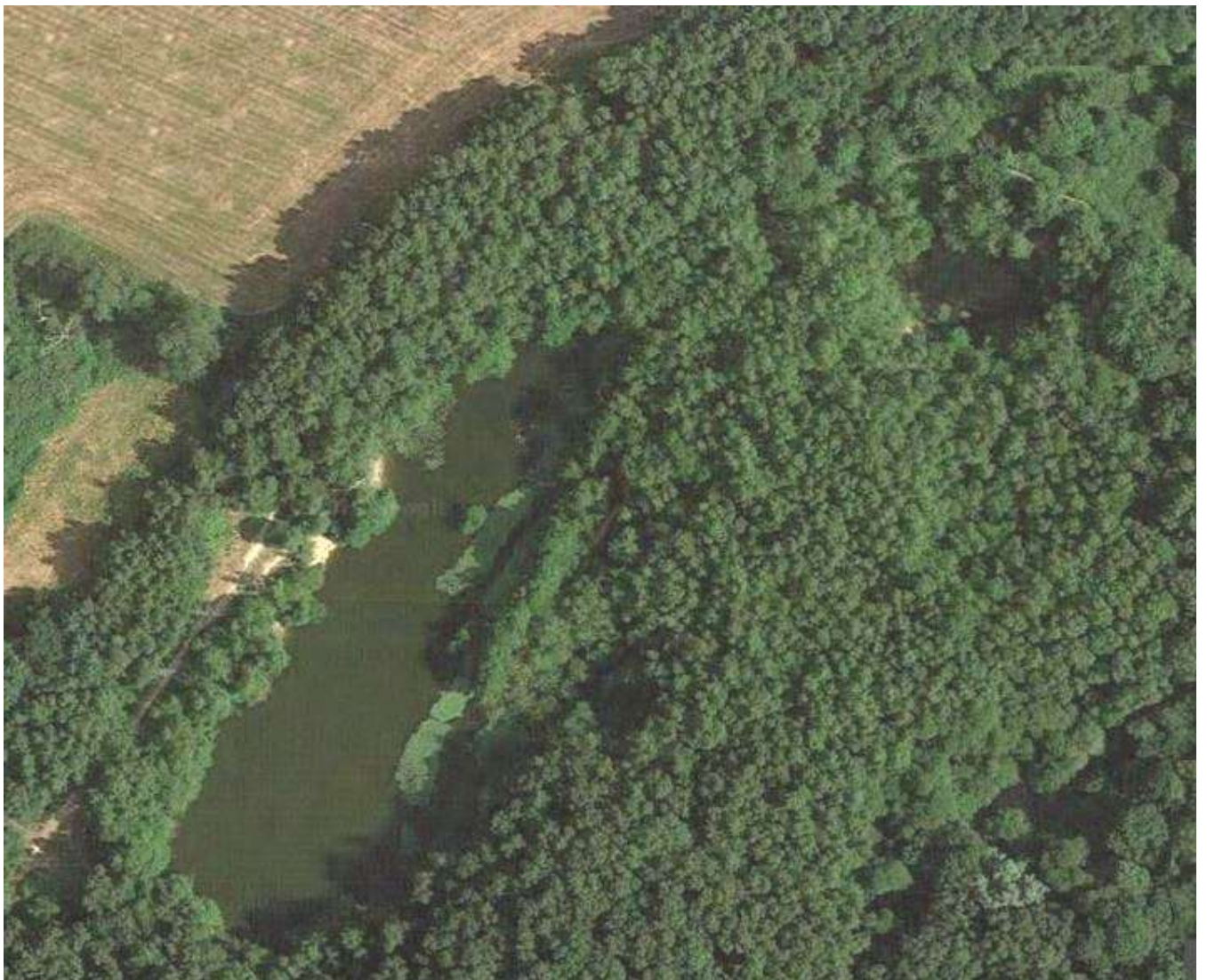
Ducks in the water-lillies. There are moorhens.



The Lakes from above.



Other darker spots seem to be the smaller ponds.



# **REMAINS FROM THE OLD WORKINGS**



## Interesting survivals

In the bank of the path between Knowle Hill and the Boyatt Lane underpass, just beyond the site entrance from Knowle Hill, there is one of the narrow gauge rails used in the quarry from the 1930s.



### CROSS-SECTION OF RAIL



There is also one of the sleepers in the bank nearby and there are other sleepers on paths.



I have not yet found the route of the narrow gauge railway-line or what the trucks carried. I assume they took bricks from the kiln to lorries waiting at Knowle Hill where there was a weighbridge, and could be transported to their destinations..



When speaking to a dog-walker at Knowle Hill I discovered that he was one of the first to occupy a house on the site. In fact he thinks he lives in a house exactly where the old chimney used to stand.

He remembered that when he was first there, there was a piece of rail-track in what is now a very densely wooded patch close to the weighbridge and said he thought it was still there.

I have looked and it is totally inaccessible,

There may have been a branch to take unfired bricks into the kiln, but I have gathered no information about brick-making. That was not my intention.

# **HISTORY**





Jonas Nichols 1836 -1891

(The Southern Informer, No 20, 9 October 1880)

No evidence has been found to connect Jonas Nichols with this brickworks. but his enterprises with the Chamberlayne Estate in Eastleigh were, at this time, using large quantities of bricks.

The most difficult 'paper' I have produced was that in which the Council's politically motivated plans of the late 1950s to systematically destroy all of Eastleigh's Terrace Houses over a period of years were revealed. - Paper 82.

A Councillor criticised and condemned the perfectly practical grid pattern layout of the Town (probably because car parking had not been allowed for originally.) and described the Victorian terraces built under the direction of Jonas Nichols' son Sidney in insultingly scurrilous terms as badly built and with inadequate foundations. This was untrue. They were built and designed to the high standards of the period so were lacking bathrooms, indoor toilets and electric power, but are still much sought after today, having been modernised. The brickwork is often artistic and superb. Go and look! but most of the colourful tiled front paths were not cared for and have been damaged and lost. A handful however remain.



A few terraces were destroyed and replaced, but most have survived, and it is the appalling replacements which have had to be demolished. The earliest houses opposite the Railway Station in Southampton Road were without any foundations and could not be preserved, but the late Victorian ones were built to last and although constructed by various builders to their own designs there was clearly cooperation and coordination.

The Swan Centre was designed to intentionally wreck the grid-pattern, and although it is one of the best of its type, causes much confusion to newcomers or strangers by splitting two of the streets into separate parts.

It is sad that the terrace houses are tainted by the false allegation that they were generally poorly built, based on the lies reported in the press when the Council was looking for slums to clear in order to obtain housing grants, when there were no slums. My Uncle and Aunt lived in a house built by the Jonas Nichols agency and it is bigger and of far superior quality than mine built in the 1930s. However, the lies about the Jonas Nichols' period persist.



These 'Jonas Nichols' bricks, used in garden walls, were usually laid with the initials inside the double wall. Thousands are still there in brick walls south of Leigh Road, supposedly fired on site using the clay already there. Having completed printing this 'paper' I took a copy to Cemetery Lodge, and whilst there looked at a book of typewritten extracts in the 'James Collection' to see what was recorded about Sidney Nichols, son of Jonas. Although he lived in Southampton Sidney was prominent in Eastleigh. He employed

enough men to field a Cricket team to compete in the district. He championed good quality building in the Town and was probably just as, or even more, influential than his father who had died in 1891.

On my way home I walked along Leigh Road and noticed a damaged garden wall, alongside a house that my mother's cousin, Florence and her husband Alan Smith once owned – a Nichols House (No. 91). To my amazement I spotted a brick (which I have since exchanged for one just as functional but less interesting):

This is a Sidney Nichols brick.



Builders took a pride in their workmanship and often named the houses or terraces after themselves.

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Around 1887 Jonas Nichols purchased or obtained the use of a great deal of land around Eastleigh from the Chamberlayne Family of Cranbury Park. I have not looked into the exact terms.

Jonas Nichols seems best described as a property developer. He is named as a house builder and employed qualified staff and contractors.

I have taken a block of buildings the west side of High Street in Eastleigh as an example. In 1887 Jonas Nichols 'built' the Chamberlayne Arms on behalf of Eldridge Pope the Brewers, then between 1888 and 1890 he 'built' row of ten houses alongside this which was called 'Chamberlayne Terrace', now numbers 107 to 125 High Street. Ten more



on  
a

house, numbers 11- 20, were added to this by a 'builder' called Filsell and they became 127-145 High Street. The houses were very similar to those which went before but not quite identical. Jonas Nicols died in 1891 and his son Sidney succeeded him. A 'builder', William Franklin, between 1893 and 4 added six more houses still very similar but called them '**Sidney Terrace**' these are now 147-157 High Street. The final shop and house in the row, called 'Orme Cottage' was built for William. Henry Gover, a baker, and has become 159 and 161 High Street. All the houses in the whole block have identical chimneys. I wonder if the 'builders' were in fact managing foremen for the Jonas Nichols organisation. The choice of 'Sidney' for the name of a Terrace may not be a co-incidence.

The Railway Institute was built on the corner of Leigh Road and Market Street by Jonas Nichols for the London & South Western Railway Company in 1891 to designs prepared by William Henry Mitchell who worked in Southampton in partnership with his son W E Mitchell and Alfred Fowler Gutteridge, showing that he did employ respected Architects.





Gordon Cox mentioned that he was threatened, in advance, by someone associated with the redevelopment of that area, not to campaign against its demolition. He did not take it as intimidation. He was just astonished that it was thought that he could have any influence. If the trustees of the property and club were satisfied with the compensation little could be done to prevent it. Some people still regret its demise.

The fact that it seems that the construction of the terraces around the turn of the century was not haphazard has given me the idea of using Census records to find out how the characters named as builders of houses are described. Could they, working independently, have achieved what they did? The houses show some signs of originality but they also conform to basic parameters as though there was overall organisation.

This is not the place to begin a new investigation.

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Mosaic from the porch of **EDWARD COTTAGE** 87, Desborough Road – A Jonas Nichols House.

These do not survive from **HENRY COTTAGE** or 7 – 1 Wilton Terrace, the other Nichols' Houses in the block. The houses North of these were 'built' by George Frederick Hedges at about the same time, and are architecturally even more elaborate than those of Jonas Nichols.



I have heard it suggested that the area was or is part of the Cranbury Park Estate owned by the Chamberlayne Family. In the 1890s **Jonas Nichols** was an Agent for the Estate and was responsible for much of the development in Eastleigh. He was renowned for his building enterprises in Southampton and is known to have taken an interest in brickmaking as bricks bearing his initials are found in the Eastleigh. He probably set up the original Bishopstoke Brickworks on this site.

## 1895 Map



Called **Bishopstoke Brickworks**  
(An Allbrook Brickworks was north of Allbrook Hill)



Still called **Bishopstoke Brickworks**

# 1931 Map



Now called **Eastleigh Brickworks** and has a chimney on the kilns.

# 1958 map



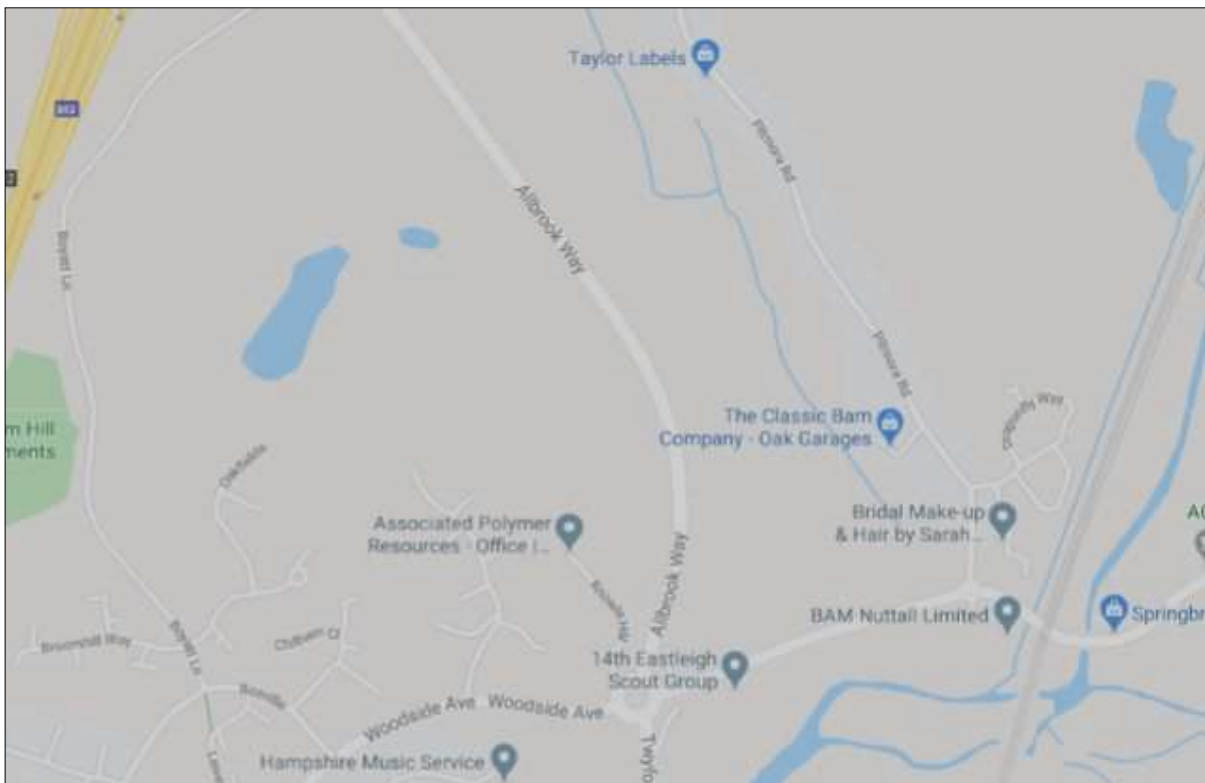
Just called **Works**.

1958 Map with a faint satellite underlay



The site of the Works is now built on.

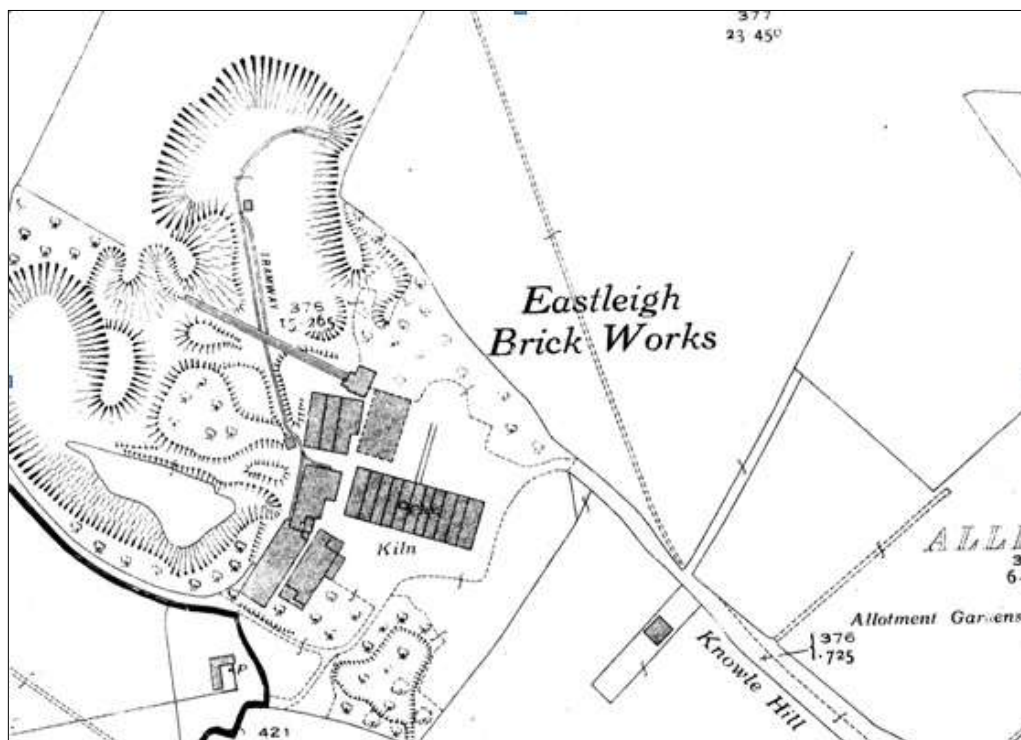
2020ish map



A secondary source incorrectly states that "This brickworks started in 1927" but as the Eastleigh Brickworks; it changed to the Allbrook Brick Company in 1946. In 1948 it became Eastwoods and in 1967, the Redland Brick Company. It closed in October 1971. In 1971 the kilns and chimneys were still standing but were demolished in the first months of 1972. This works produced multi-coloured facings which were widely distributed in Hampshire and sent to London. The site is to be developed as a housing estate by Eastleigh Council."

I remember that the area at the end of Knowle Hill was occupied by UBM Dibbens for a while and then by Elliotts who supplied building materials but I have not checked dates.

This 1939 plan of the works shows some excavations but does not seem to cover the entire site.



This is only picture I have found myself of the buildings and chimney. It is accidentally in the corner of a photograph in one of the Ordnance Survey books of 1948.



**Fortunately this better picture exists.**



**This picture taken around 1930 shows the narrow gauge railway line and one of the trucks.**





Quarry truck.  
from the 1930 photograph



During the decommissioning  
of the site in the 1970s this  
warning sign was displayed.

September 1973 pictures



September 1973





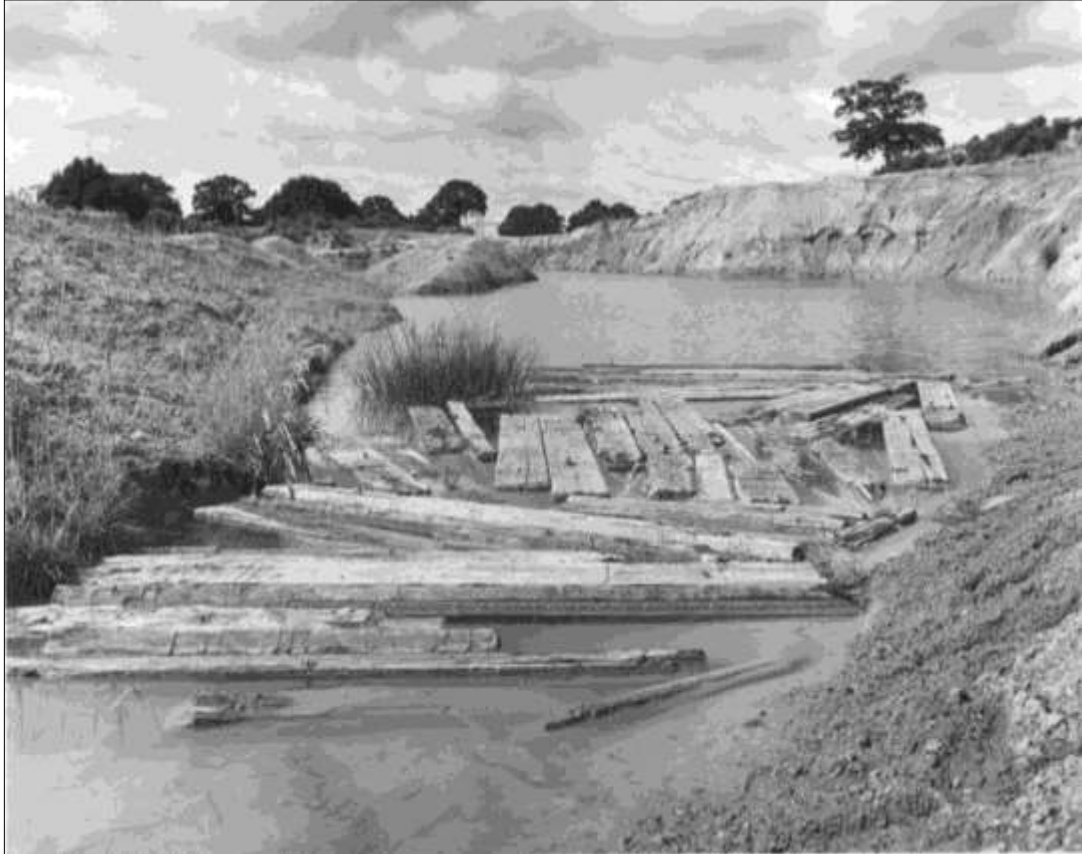
September 1973



September 1973



July 1974



Narrow gauge railway sleepers.  
July 1974



January 1976



February 1976



February 1976



February 1976



February 1978



October 1978



October 1978



September 1982



Small Lake

Large Lake

Houses in Oakfields

UNDATED



UNDATED



UNDATED



UNDATED





SNOW SCENES



## To find the Small Lake (and to encourage you to get lost.)

Making certain that the weather has been dry for a while, as mud can be a hazard, starting at the entrance from the external footpath from Knowle Hill you walk parallel to this footpath and follow its meanderings until you find a clear entrance to a path on the left.



Enter this and go down a level down a fairly nasty slope (for me), to the edge of the small lake. At this point there is both a left and right turning.



There was a fallen tree on the path to the right along which I hoped to return after circumnavigating the small Lake. (It was removed a day or so later, by an enterprising visitor who brought a saw with him) I turned left because I intended to keep going in a clockwise direction. I stopped to photograph the small Lake.

## The Small Lake.



Half-way round I came to a path which ended at a high bank blow the main path. I did not bother to go close to it or climb it. I was just using it as a landmark. I have zoomed the photograph to make it clear.



From here I took the **lower** path to the right (clockwise) which led me back to the start, past the fallen tree, which had not actually fallen over the path. The path is narrow by water in places but I was not in danger of falling into the water.

The entrances to the upper and lower paths are very close to each other.

## To find the Large Lake from here.

I went to the place where I photographed the small lake, turned about and crossed to a near-by parallel path, and followed it slightly anticlockwise, (the second time, I discovered an inviting right turn which led to a dead end with water on three sides. It happened then to be marked by an article of clothing.) The item of clothing draped on a branch, is not exactly a permanent landmark, but it stopped me from making the same mistake more than twice.



I had to descend a difficult slope (for me) I might have been able to walk down it but I always took a route to its left where I had to climb over a branch which I could hold on to.

At the bottom of this was a path, so I walked clockwise again and reached higher ground where I could see the Large Lake a slope went down to the water where there was a popular place for picnics and fishing. There were always people there and was a small blue air conditioning unit, which had vanished a day or so later..



Below is a picture of a popular fishing and picnic area looking north. It was several days before I noticed the sign on the tree requesting that litter should be taken away.



A little further on, continuing clockwise, (along a slightly narrow bumpy path by the water) I soon met the main path and found I could go back to the start on the other side of the Lake or turn in the other direction to the Boyatt Lane exit.

Until I had explored there for several days all the paths looked the same, and even then it was easy to take a wrong turning.

I doubt if anyone can find their way using these instructions, but you will get where you want. If it was easy it would not have been worth the attempt.

# **FLORA AND FAUNA**

This section has been updated into 2021

## FLORA & FAUNA

It amazing that such a degree of tree cover has appeared during the last 40 years.

It would be a good area for a student to list the species because there are probably only a limited number.

The species of plants noticeable are of course seasonal and I was not concentrating of this subject . Flowers were the common ones for the time of the year but included the pinkish introduced parasitic flower which I have seen in our area. I cannot identify trees because I have never tried. There are a few rhododendrons, which although showy, really ought to be eradicated as they are not indigenous and will eventually overwhelm everything else. Blackberry bushes make going off the paths a painful experience but do not flourish in woodland



There were a few blue damsel-flies and a heavy looking grey dragon fly near the small lake, a couple of pairs of quite tame Mallard ducks but wild-life was more sparse than I would have expected, though again, I was not looking for it.



May



HERB BENNETT



HERB ROBERT - CRANESBILL



COW PARSLEY



BLACKBERRY



GERMANDER SPEEDWELL



LICHEN



June



EARLY PURPLE ORCHID



RED CAMPION



LADY'S SMOCK



HORSE-TAIL



BRACKEN

July



YELLOW FLOATING HEART



PINK WATER LILY



CARP

October



Perhaps *Amanita pantherina* but I know little about fungi, It is poisonous.

January



It looks like scrambled egg.

DOG VOMIT SLIME FUNGUS – The description fitted

It was actually Purple Toothwort. (*Lathraea clandestina*)  
– Kew gardens identified it for me.

What I thought was dog-vomit fungus had flowered in March



It is *Lathraea clandestina*, a parasitic plant, usually on tree roots but not causing them harm. It is also called purple toothwort.



LESSER CELANDINE



VIOLETS



PERIWINKLE



GORSE



?



?



HAWTHORNE



BLUEBELL



**SCARLET ELF CUP FUNGUS**  
*Sarcoscypha austriaca*

# **NEWSPAPER ARTICLES**



I seem to remember that there were accidents, even fatal, reported in the past but I have yet to locate the articles, as the newspapers are not indexed. This one from the Hampshire Chronicle is on line..

13th July 2006

## Midnight rescue as girl, 17, is pulled from flooded pit

**A 17-YEAR-old girl has told of the moment when she thought she was going to drown in muddy water at the bottom of a claypit.**

Jennie Kipling had gone out with friends last Friday evening to celebrate the end of their exams at Eastleigh College and the birthday of one of the group.

They ended up at disused Allbrook brickworks, at the northern end of Boyatt Wood, near Eastleigh, well-known locally for its rugged beauty, but also for the danger lurking in its deep waters.

Speaking at her home in Eastleigh on Tuesday, Jennie described what happened during the two hours around midnight, after she slipped into the water.

Jennie said: "We were just about to leave and I went over to look at the water. I must have been closer than I thought, because the ground just went underneath me.

"I don't remember hitting the water."

She slid down a near-vertical bank of mud for about 15 to 20 metres.

"I swam back to shore but it was getting harder. I was chin deep, and weed was wrapping round me. My head went under and I panicked. I thought I was going to die," she said.

In the chaos that followed, another girl fell into the water and other members of the group became stuck as they joined in the rescue attempt.

Through her ordeal, Jennie's best friend, 17-year-old Izzy Beirne, from Southampton, held her hand and comforted her, and others in the group, which included Steven Price, 17, Andy Kane, 14, Chris Jurd-Gibbens, 15, and Matt Nicholl, 16, did their best to rescue her, linking hands in a vain effort to pull her out.

Two of the boys made sure her head stayed above water.

One of the group rang 999, but firefighters were faced with the difficulty of carrying their rescue equipment in pitch darkness through the overgrown footpaths across the brickworks site. Nearly 20 firefighters were involved in the rescue operation.

Eventually, covered in mud, Jennie was winched to safety. She had been up to her neck in water for about 40 minutes.

"I had really bad hip pain and hypothermia, and they thought I had broken my pelvis and dislocated my hip," she said.

She was admitted to the Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester, and released on Saturday evening, suffering from cuts and bruises.

A second girl who had been in the water, who suffered from asthma, was released on Saturday morning.

Jennie, who praised the firefighters and ambulance personnel who came to their rescue, said she would not have survived without the help of her friends.

Allbrook claypits are notorious as a spot where youngsters go to drink, but Jennie said: "We were not drinking.

"We were just there to have a laugh with some of our mates."

Her friend, Izzy, added: "Don't go down there to drink. Keep away from the edge at all times, because you are not going to get out."

Jennie's mum, Judith Kipling, said: "The main thing is they realise how lucky they were. None of them realised how dangerous it was.

"There are no life-preservers, it is in the middle of nowhere.

"It could have ended very differently we could have been looking at fatalities."

This week, on the eve of the long summer holidays, Hampshire Fire and Rescue issued its own warning not to take risks near water.