



## ADEL DAM NATURE RESERVE Self-guided walking trail

*Follow the numbered wooden posts around the reserve. Some of the features mentioned below are unchanging, while others vary with the seasons, so you will not be able to see everything in a single visit.*

The tall Beech trees at the entrance (1) formed part of a field shelterbelt planted before the land was enclosed; the rest of it can be seen next to the Reserve entrance. Beeches live for about 200 years and these trees are now past their best - one that snapped off in a gale in 1990 can be seen to the left. The dead tree lying on the ground just behind the Reserve Map is a Wych Elm killed off by Dutch Elm disease. The Corsican Pines at (2) and elsewhere in the Reserve were probably planted around 1900.

The Marsh Hide (3) was renewed in 2009. Several ageing trees that threatened to fall on the new hide or the approach path and ramp were felled or pollarded. The dead wood has been left *in situ* as habitat for insects and fungi. From the Marsh Hide you look out onto the silted-up bed of the lake that has been dry, or dryish, land for many years. A pond has been created in the marshy area in front of the Hide, and behind this you can see Adel Beck as it runs from Golden Acre Park down towards the lake. In autumn and winter food is provided for birds and many Blue Tits and Great Tits are usually seen. You are also likely to see Coal Tits, Chaffinches, Robins, Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Nuthatches and other birds (a Sparrowhawk or Kingfisher if you are very lucky). In early spring frogs come to breed in the pond. In the summer there is usually a chance of seeing a Blackcap or a Willow Warbler, dragonflies and damselflies patrolling the water or settling on pond-side vegetation and butterflies feeding on the wild flowers. Marsh plants include Hemlock Water Dropwort, Meadowsweet and Forget-me-not.

From the Marsh Hide the footpath passes through woodland that is mostly Birch with some Sycamore. Bluebells flower under the trees here in the late spring. There are some well-grown Yew trees (4) to the left of the path and also some smaller bird-sown saplings. Birds eat the berries, (properly known as 'arils') but the seeds, which are poisonous, pass through undigested and ready to germinate. The ground beyond and elsewhere in the Reserve is covered with brambles.

A stone gatepost (5), still complete with hinge bracket, marks the site of an old field boundary. The end of the dam lies to the left of the path. On the right is another group of Corsican Pines. From the path underneath the pines you may be able to see the outfall from the lake through the trees to the left. The dam was built about 200 years ago to provide water power for Adel corn mill which was just beyond Adel Mill Farm on Arthington Lane. The mill buildings have now been converted into houses and some of the old mill machinery has gone to a Leeds museum.

From the Lake Hide (6) you have a view of the lake and any waterfowl that may be present. In the Spring these could include Canada Geese, Mallards, Mandarin Ducks, Coots, Moorhens, Little Grebes and Herons. One or two Kingfishers may also be around but of course you may have to wait for a while to see one. In the winter Teal, Moorhens and Goosanders may be present. The hide is built on the dam itself; the sluice gate and other working



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parts are to the right and are inaccessible and dangerous.

Leaving the Lake Hide you cross over a stream running down from the sluice gates. The mill leat at the top of the bank ahead (7) was the channel that emerged from the lake and ran along to the mill, but it now has no flow. Marsh Marigolds grow here in the spring. On the opposite side of the mill leat from the path is a wooded area with many Alder trees that Siskins use as a food source in winter. Nuthatches and Treecreepers may also be seen in this area. About half way along the mill leat you can see a tall, leaning silver birch on the opposite bank, with large bracket fungi (Birch Polypore) showing like steps sticking out from the sides of the trunk. The fern growing in profusion here and elsewhere in the Reserve is the Broad Buckler Fern that is common in damp woodlands. The woodland to the right of the path along the bank is the Reserve's best bluebell area.

The fallen tree next to the bridge over the mill leat (8) is the top half of a horse chestnut which was blown off during high winds in winter 2006/7. You can sometimes see Fungi on the fallen trunk. Many trees around the reserve have been damaged or blown down during gales over the last few years. Dead wood is an extremely important habitat for insects and fungi, and standing deadwood is crucial for hole-nesting birds such as Woodpeckers, Nuthatches and Willow Tits. Dying and fallen trees are therefore left unless they cause obstruction or constitute a danger through proximity to the path.

The bridge over the mill leat was built by in 1992. After crossing it the path leads past a stand of Scots Pine on the left (9), and then heads towards the field that forms the eastern side of the reserve. In this section of the wood, look and listen for Tits, Goldcrests, Chaffinches, Robins and Treecreepers. The path now turns left and continues parallel to the field boundary.

To the right of the path at (10) is a Hornbeam, a tree uncommon in Yorkshire. Half of the tree to the right of the path was blown down a few years ago, but the remainder still survives. The flat area under the Beech trees to the left is good for fungi in the autumn. Further on, next to a large Holly bush, there is an unusual Scots Pine with a double trunk (11). After about 100yds, on the left you will see a huge alder tree with multiple trunks arising from coppicing when it was young (12). Alders grow in wet places: when this tree was young it was probably standing on the edge of the lake that has long since receded.

The remains of the old boat mooring can still be seen on the left hand side of the path (13). Beyond this only a narrow belt of, mainly, willow scrub separates the path from the lake. Some invasive willow scrub at the lake margin has been removed to make space to create Phragmites reed bed to diversify the habitat. If you look carefully at the Birch trees further along in this section (14) you may see more examples of trees carrying the hard remains of the large bracket fungus mentioned earlier, the Birch Polypore. This fungus appears to attack only trees that have been damaged or are coming to the end of their lives. Birches seldom live longer than about 80 years and are usually succeeded by Oak rather than by young Birches. Beyond the birches to the left of the path there is an area of alder carr with a carpet of green Sphagnum moss. This important area of fragile habitat is very boggy, so please do not leave the path to look at it more closely.

Beyond the raised boardwalk is an area that was cleared of invasive rhododendrons, where new trees and shrubs are now being established to provide an area of low scrub cover for birds. Redwings can sometimes be seen near the field boundary in the winter and Chiffchaffs can be heard singing here in the spring. As the path nears the



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northern end of the Reserve there is another clearing where there is a good show of Foxgloves in summer.

The path continues towards the bridlepath fence. The steps down lead to the channel that was the original overflow from Golden Acre Park Lake. Standing water here is often coloured rusty brown by iron staining bacteria. On the left is an area of Alder carr: Alder trees and other plants growing on the silted-up bed of the lake. From (15) you look over a large marshy area with several coppiced alders. Attempts are being made to diversify the flora and the habitat here by planting native marsh plants and creating small ponds next to the path.

As the path leads back to the entrance, on a wall to the right approaching the bridge over the stream there is a dense colony of Hart's Tongue Fern (16). This is not common in Leeds; its presence here is probably dependent on the lime-mortar in the wall. Also on the right the tall fronds of Male Fern can be seen in the summer. A holly hedge is being established along the bridlepath boundary. Each holly must be protected from Rabbits and Deer which would otherwise chew the bark and kill the plant.

## ***Revised March 2010***

*We hope that you have enjoyed this walk and have been able to see some of the many things to be found in the Adel Dam Nature Reserve. Why not visit again at another time of year and see how things change with the seasons?*