

Welcome to Manor Farm Park

Opened to the public in 1951, Manor Farm Park was originally the grounds of Northfield Manor House.

The park comprises around 50 acres of public open space with woodlands, meadows and a lake.

Although a relatively recent public park, the landscape has a much longer history. In the Middle Ages it was owned by the Earls of Dudley, lords of the manor of Northfield. The Dudleys constructed nearby Weoley Castle as the main hunting lodge for their local estates.

A farm was recorded on the site in the 18th century. Traces of medieval ridge and furrow and an ancient hedgerow dating back to the 16th century survive.

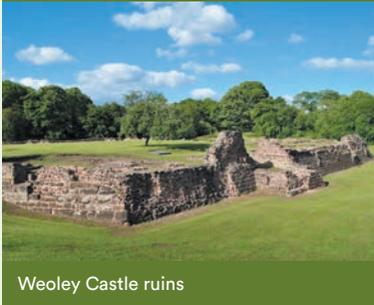
The Manor House was home to the Quaker philanthropists George and Elizabeth Cadbury between 1894 and 1951. After George died in 1922, Elizabeth continued to live there until her own death at the age of 93 in 1951.

For much of its history the landscape surrounding what we now know as Manor Farm Park was predominantly rural. However, the area experienced extensive development between the two world wars and by the 1950s it had become a substantially populated suburb of Birmingham.

In 1951, on the death of Elizabeth Cadbury, the park was gifted to the City Council (who hold it in trust) and the Manor House sold to the University of Birmingham.



Dame Elizabeth Cadbury by lake, c1950



Weoley Castle ruins

Further Information

Further reading

Images of England - Northfield
Pauline Caswell (1996)

Images of England - Northfield Vol II
Martin Hanson (2003)

Northfield Memories
Jean & John Smith (Sutton, 2003)



For more information on the history of the park scan or click this QR code

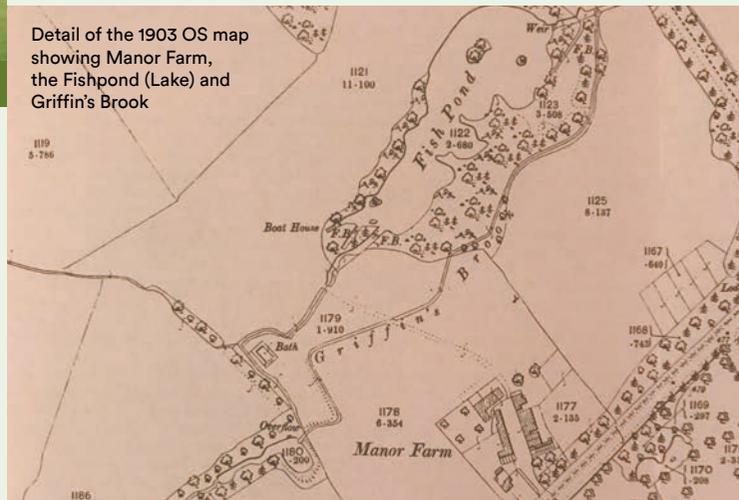
The Friends of Manor Farm Park

We are a group of park users and local residents who are interested in the well-being of Manor Farm Park. Established in 1985 we work closely with the City Council's Parks for the improvement of amenities within the park.

For more information visit
www.friendsofmanorfarmpark.org.uk



Designed and produced by Dave Walsh Creative



Detail of the 1903 OS map showing Manor Farm, the Fishpond (Lake) and Griffin's Brook

Manor Farm Park Heritage Trail



Manor Farm Park Points of Interest



Cadbury Barn exterior with young people, c1911

1 Farm buildings

These agricultural buildings – known as Manor Farm – were constructed in 1895 by the Cadburys. At present they are used by the City Council's parks team as a maintenance depot.

2 Site of the Cadbury Barn

In 1895 George and Elizabeth Cadbury had a rustic wooden 'barn' constructed to provide a venue for summer entertainments for their workers and their families. The building, which could seat up to 700 people, also hosted numerous parties for children from the poorer parts of Birmingham, enabling them to enjoy a day out in the countryside. Sadly this building was destroyed by fire in 2017.

3 Ridge and furrow

Faint traces of medieval ridge and furrow ploughing can be seen in parts of the park, a reminder of the landscape's distant agricultural history.

4 Griffin's Brook

The Cadburys diverted the course of Griffin's Brook and created a Paddling Beach and Bath for their children's summer parties. Although traces of these last two features survive, neither are clearly visible today.

5 Lake

The Lake (also known as the Fish Pond) was created during the 19th century by damming Griffin's Brook. It originally featured a Boat House which is marked on the 1884 First Edition and later OS maps.

6 Manor House

Northfield Manor was originally a farmhouse called New House Farm. In 1835 the farm was purchased by Joseph Frederick Ledsam, a local manufacturer and landowner. He altered and extended the building, and in his will of 1861 it was referred to as Northfield Manor House. In 1894 the house was acquired by George and Elizabeth Cadbury who turned it into a comfortable suburban mansion. Unfortunately the manor was destroyed by fire in 2014, although a reconstruction has been built as part of the adjacent residential development.



7 Ancient Hedgerow

Parts of an ancient hedgerow dating from the 16th century survive on the western side of the Great Meadow, another reminder of the park's rural origins.

8 Old Park Farm

Grade II listed Old Park Farm dates from around 1800. Although it has undergone changes over the years it is nonetheless a rare survival from the area's agricultural past.

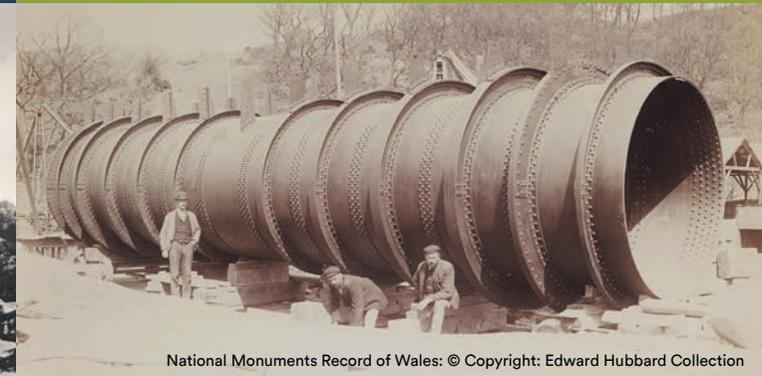
9 Elan Aqueduct

A short section of the Elan Aqueduct runs under the southern corner of the park. The aqueduct was constructed between 1896 and 1906 to provide a proper drinking water supply for the city of Birmingham. Constructed mainly underground, the aqueduct runs 73 miles from the Elan Valley in Mid-Wales to Frankley Reservoir.

10 Northfield Manor Gate Lodge

Although Northfield Manor House has now been lost, its attractive gate lodge and stone gate piers c1895 survive at the entrance into New House Farm Drive 100 metres up the Bristol Road from the Park.

Clockwise from left:
Old Park Farm, The Lake, Building the Elan Aqueduct, Northfield Manor House



Manor Farm Park



Nature and Wildlife



The park boasts a mixture of woodland areas (the Plantation, the Spinney, the North Copse and Millennium Wood) and meadows. These are home to over 30 species of birds, together with a variety of mammals and invertebrates. The lake attracts a range of waterfowl and in recent years has been regularly visited by rarer species including little egrets and rosy-billed pochards. In Spring and Summer the Great and Top Meadows are transformed with a spectacular carpet of native wildflowers.

Leisure Activities



Today the park is a well-used urban green space that is popular with the local community. Many people use the park for walking, running and cycling. There is a 2km circular walk around the park which uses both paved and grass pathways. The main north-south paved route through the park forms part of the Merritt's Book Greenway Cycle Trail.

The Friends Ambulance Unit

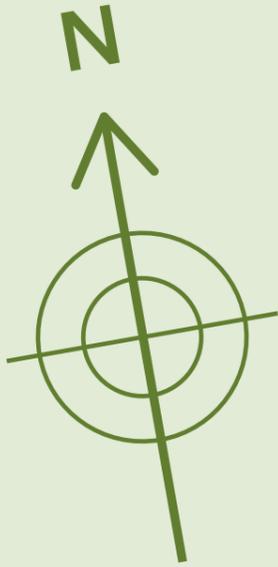


During the Second World War the Park and Cadbury Barn were used as a training camp by the Friends Ambulance Unit, a Quaker organisation

dedicated to serving in non-combat roles in line with their pacifist beliefs. 1300 ambulance drivers and medical orderlies were trained and went on to serve in 17 different European countries during the war.



For more information on the history of the park scan or click this QR code



Millennium Wood

Ley Hill Park via Merritt's Brook Greenway

