

A History Of Bury Field Common

Bury Field is a rare surviving example of a medieval Open Field. Its name comes from 'Burh' meaning 'manor' or 'town'. Its area is 180 acres (73 hectares). Farmed from at least the 9th Century, it is thought ridge-and-furrow ploughland changed to grazing in the 12th century when the Lord of the Manor made an arrangement with his tenants, forerunners of the present 120-plus Common Holders. These ancient rights remain vested in the owners of certain properties in the town.

Strict rules regulated how many cattle a Common Holder could graze. Cattle were branded by a Field Keeper who also repaired the fences and impounded any hogs found straying. He was paid two pence for each 'hogg', but he could also be fined 5 shillings if he neglected his duties!

By the 1800s the rules were less strictly enforced. The Town Land Feoffees record that stones were dug from small quarries and possibly from the Civil War defences, to repair roads.

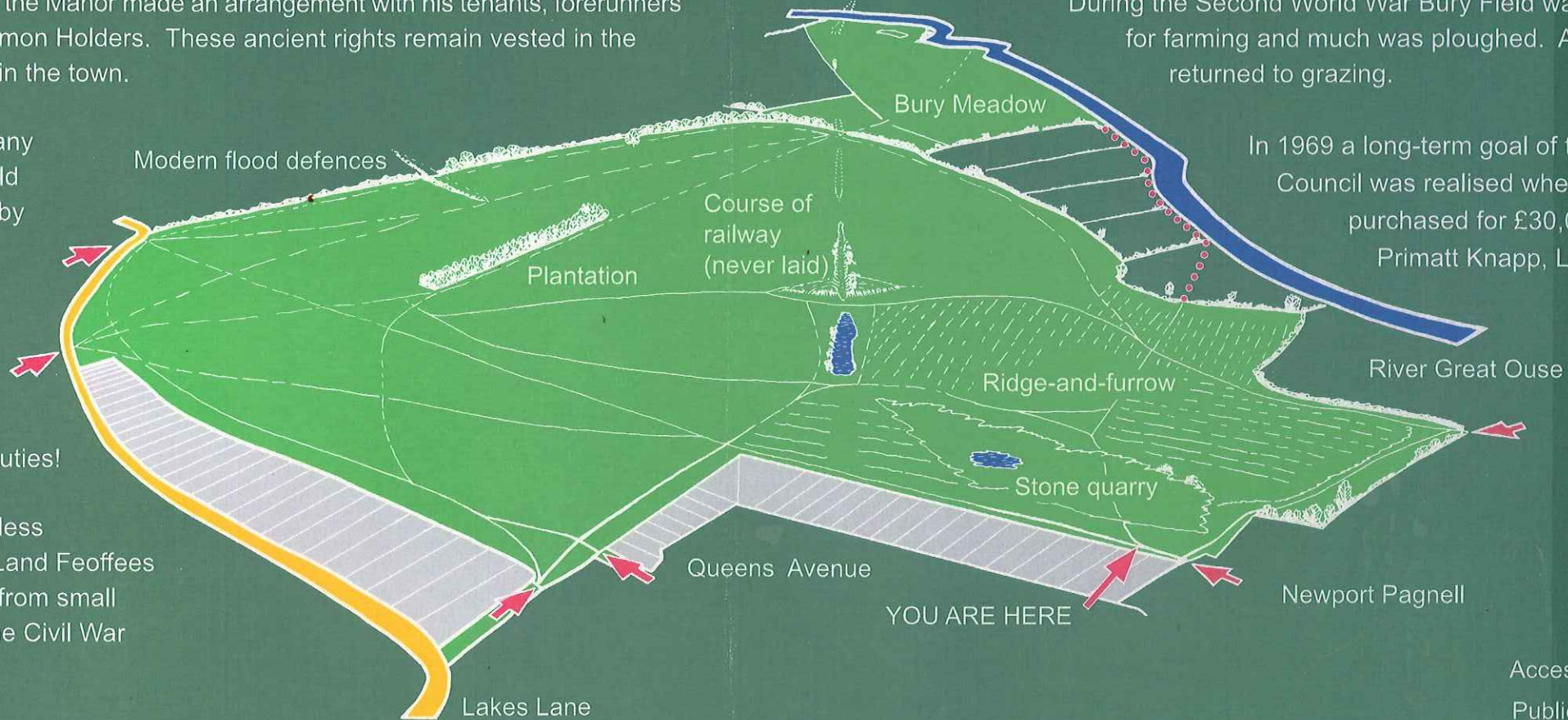
Horse racing took place between 1720 and 1760, and in 1828 was revived for a few years.

From the 19th Century the right to enjoy Bury Field belonged to everybody. In 1851 a public protest meeting prevented enclosure into smaller fields, and a committee was appointed to safeguard people's rights and privileges.

In 1865 Bury Field was crossed by construction works for the Olney railway, these were not completed and were abandoned in 1871 before a train could run.

During the Second World War Bury Field was requisitioned for farming and much was ploughed. After the war it returned to grazing.

In 1969 a long-term goal of the Urban District Council was realised when Bury Field was purchased for £30,000 from Mathew Primatt Knapp, Lord of the Manor.



Bury Field is a registered Common with public rights of access. In 1974 Milton Keynes Council became the owner, and now maintains the Common through a Countryside Stewardship Scheme. Its main aims are:

- Sustainable agriculture and land management
- Maintaining landscape character and quality
- Public access and enjoyment
- Wildlife conservation
- Protecting history and archaeology

