



History of Arfleet Mill Lakes

A visit to Dorset Adventure Park can be used as an opportunity to look at the history of the area and look at redevelopment of old industrial sites.

The oldest records of Arfleet Mill Lakes show the area a being full of several ball clay pits. Ball clay is rare and only found in a few places in the world and was used for pottery. Ball clay was extracted from the pits by hand, loaded onto carts and transported on tracks to the railway and then onto boats in Poole Harbour to be taken to London and beyond. The track in the field at the end of Castle Lake is the site of one of these tracks. Some of the metal railway lines can still be seen in the woods surrounding Castle Lake.

Corfe River used to flow through what is currently Castle Lake. At the end of Castle lake was Arfleet Mill, which used the power of the river to turn a water wheel.

When these clay pits ceased operating in the early 20th century. The land fell into disrepair. Arfleet Mill became derelict and eventually fell into the river. In fact in 2016 when we dredged out Castle Lake we found old flag stones and tiling that we assume to have come from the mill.

In the 1970's a new tenant decided to construct a new fishing lake. Since the old clay pits had become very overgrown and been infilled with a lot of the spoil from the site, the new fishing lake required some excavation. Arfleet remained a fishing lake from the 70's until 2015, when we took over the site.



In 2016 we set about dredging the lakes and making sure they were safe to use for a Waterpark, opening the park to the public in May 2016. All of the fish in the lakes were netted and transported to a new home by a local fishing club.

In 2018 we opened the Mud Trail, using land on the site that was naturally muddy because of all the clay we have here.

It's amazing to think how one piece of land can be used in so many different ways and is developed according to what is in demand at the time.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

- *Can you think of any reasons why the clay pits may have closed in the early 20th century?*
- *Why do you think we made the decision to open a Water Park rather than continue operating the lakes as a fishery?*
- *Can you think of another example of a site near to where you live that has gone through a change of use over the last century? What do you think was the reason for that change?*
- *What are your predictions for how Arfleet will be used by the year 2100? What kind of activities do you think will be happening then?*