



## Horton Country Park local nature reserve

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## Access

Horton Country Park local nature reserve is situated in the northern half of the borough. There are many access points to the site. The main car park for access to walk/cycle and explore is off Horton Lane towards the southern end of the Country Park. There are also car parks for the Golf and Equestrian Centres.

There is a map and tour of the county Park on our website. The site is accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders from the following locations:

- the main public car park off Horton Lane
- the public footpath at the entrance to West Park Hospital leading to Park Farm - pedestrians only
- the lane leading to the Guide camp and cottages off Horton Lane
- the Farm Centre, footpath leading to the main public car park - pedestrians and cyclists only
- the public footpath off Horton Lane adjacent to the rear entrance of the main public car park, leading to Green Lane, Chessington - pedestrians only
- the public footpath opposite Chantilly Way, leading to Green Lane, Chessington - pedestrians only
- footpath from 'Castle Hill Nature Reserve' in the Royal Borough Of Kingston - pedestrians only
- footpath from Collier Close - pedestrians and cyclists only
- footpath off Chessington Road opposite the end of Ruxley Lane - pedestrians and cyclists only
- footpath off Chessington Road midway between Ruxley Lane, Chessington Road roundabout and the Hook Road/Chessington Road roundabout - pedestrians and cyclists only
- the Golf Centre from the car park - pedestrians and cyclists only
- equestrian-only entrance off Horton Lane from Horton Farm Stables and from the Riding for the Disabled stables on Hook Road.

Horton Country Park is open all year round. The paths and tracks on the site are for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists only. Please remember to act responsibly and show consideration for wildlife and other visitors. Dog walkers are welcome on the site but are reminded to keep their dogs under close control and that it is an offence to allow a dog to foul any open space. Please put all dog faeces in a bag and place it in a dog waste bin or litter bin. For more information about responsible access to the countryside, please take a look at [The Countryside Code](#)

## Activities

Activities that visitors to the reserve can enjoy include:

- walking
- cycling
- running
- horse riding
- dog walking
- nature watching

- kite flying
- orienteering
- golf (call 020 8393 8400)
- polo (call 01372 743084),

We also run guided walks and there is the opportunity to volunteer (please see the link on our website and our events calendar or telephone 01372 732000 and ask to speak to a member of the Countryside Team or email [contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk) for further details.

## Facilities

Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve covers 162 hectares. The site is divided into four distinct areas. Around half of the Country Park is public open space designated as Local Nature Reserve. Where possible we manage the land, to maintain and improve ecological diversity and provide good public access. The remaining area within the Country Park is divided between the Hobbledown, Golf and Equestrian centres.

- Further information can be found on the [Hobbledown](#) website
- The Golf Centre is called [Horton Park Golf Club](#) and offers an 18-hole course, driving range and restaurant.
- The Equestrian Centre is called [Equus](#) and offers livery, pony trekking and polo.

For those wishing to explore on foot, by bicycle or by horse, Horton Country Park is a wild and wonderful site full of wildlife.

## History

The recorded history of Horton Country Park goes back to medieval times. We provide an annual history walk taking you on a three hour trip around the site. Please view our [Events Calendar](#) to check for dates of the tour.

There is more information in the map and tour leaflet available on our website.

## Leaflets

There are currently two leaflets available for Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve. The leaflets are available from the Information Centre at Horton Country Park, the Town Hall and can be found on our website. They are:

- The general site leaflet Horton Country Park local naturer showing paths and giving information on the wildlife and history of the site
- Days of Steam giving the history of a railway line that used to supply the complex of hospitals in the area
- Walks at Horton Country Park - a self-guided trail around the Country Park.

## Management Plan

We produced a 10 year management plan for Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve commencing in 2006. To view the plan please use the link below.

## Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve Management Plan

Working in accordance with this plan, the habitats on Horton Country Park are managed to improve their value for biodiversity. If you would like any more information about the management plan or the wildlife on Horton Country Park, please contact a member of the Countryside Team on 01372 732000 or email [contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

### Projects

We are continuing with the management of woodland on Horton Country Park Local Nature Reserve. In January 2011, a ten year programme of woodland restoration works agreed with both Natural England and the Forestry Commission is due to commence.

### Why are we doing this?

Horton Country Park is a Local Nature Reserve and Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). Its variety of habitats harbour rich and varied plant and animal communities. Of particular importance are the communities associated with woodland.

Some of the woodland on the Country Park is Ancient coppice woodland meaning that it was present in the landscape before 1600. Volunteers from the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project have been slowly restoring the ancient woodland by recommencing coppicing. After the creation of the country park in 1973, there was a great deal of tree planting. This means that today these young plantations are in need of management to thin out the trees and allow more light to reach the woodland floor. In turn, this encourages flowering plants to thrive and also allows for the creation of new areas of coppice woodland. Encouraging a diverse flora on the woodland floor attracts a variety of wildlife including butterflies, birds and small mammals.

Please note that the tracks will be used by large vehicles for several weeks during the winter period once work starts during January 2011. Please keep dogs under close control and out of the cleared area where there will be fires and machinery in use.

### Restoration of Coppice Woodland

Coppicing is a traditional form of woodland management where trees and shrubs are cut down to ground level. This results in strong regrowth that produces a regular, sustainable supply of timber products suitable for a variety of uses. Coppicing has enormous benefits for nature conservation due to the increased amount of light that reaches the woodland floor. This promotes a greater variety of ground flora and enhances the biodiversity throughout the coppiced area.

There is evidence that coppicing was practiced in Butcher's Grove, Horton Country Park from medieval times. [The Lower Mole Project](#) has been working on the restoration of this Coppice Woodland for nearly 30 years.

To find out more about coppicing at Horton Country Park, or other current projects on the Reserve, please call 01372 732000 and ask to speak to a member of the Countryside Team.

## Volunteers and community groups

For many years, Horton Country Park has benefited from the efforts of volunteers. Three groups in particular are currently active:

- Countryside Team volunteers
- The Friends of Horton Country Park
- The Lower Mole Countryside Management Project.

The [Countryside Team volunteers](#) carry out a conservation task every Thursday on either Horton Country Park, Epsom Common or the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserves.

The Friends of Horton Country Park was formed in October 1999 to provide a line of communication between Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (the owners) and members of the general public interested in improving Horton Country Park. The group is well established with regular newsletters and conservation tasks. To find out more visit the 'Friends' web site at [www.friendsofhorton.co.uk](http://www.friendsofhorton.co.uk).

The [Lower Mole Countryside Management Project](#) has been working on Horton Country Park for many years carrying out work to improve public access and for nature conservation. The project has been managing the reintroduction of coppicing in Butcher's Grove. The project offices are based in West Park Farm House on the Country Park and the project are actively seeking new volunteers.

## Wildlife

The starting point for anyone wishing to study the Country Park's wildlife is to know its geology. Horton Country Park lies on a very thick layer of London Clay unlike the nearby chalklands of Epsom and Walton Downs.

Today we manage the Country Park to allow good public access whilst at the same time maintaining and improving the ecological diversity of the site. The Country Park has an assortment of distinctive habitats ranging from Ancient Woodland to open grassland, and finally the various large and small ponds. Much work has been carried out in recent years to reintroduce coppice management into Butcher's Grove.



There are many species of trees and other plants, which provide habitats for a number of mammal, bird and insect species. The Country Park holds many wildlife treasures, such as bluebell woods and the Green Woodpecker, the symbol of Horton Country Park. Throughout the summer, you can find an abundance of butterflies among the varied grasses and flowers. Look out for Roe deer in the meadows and Heron on Meadow Pond. Each time you visit, you are sure to see something different.