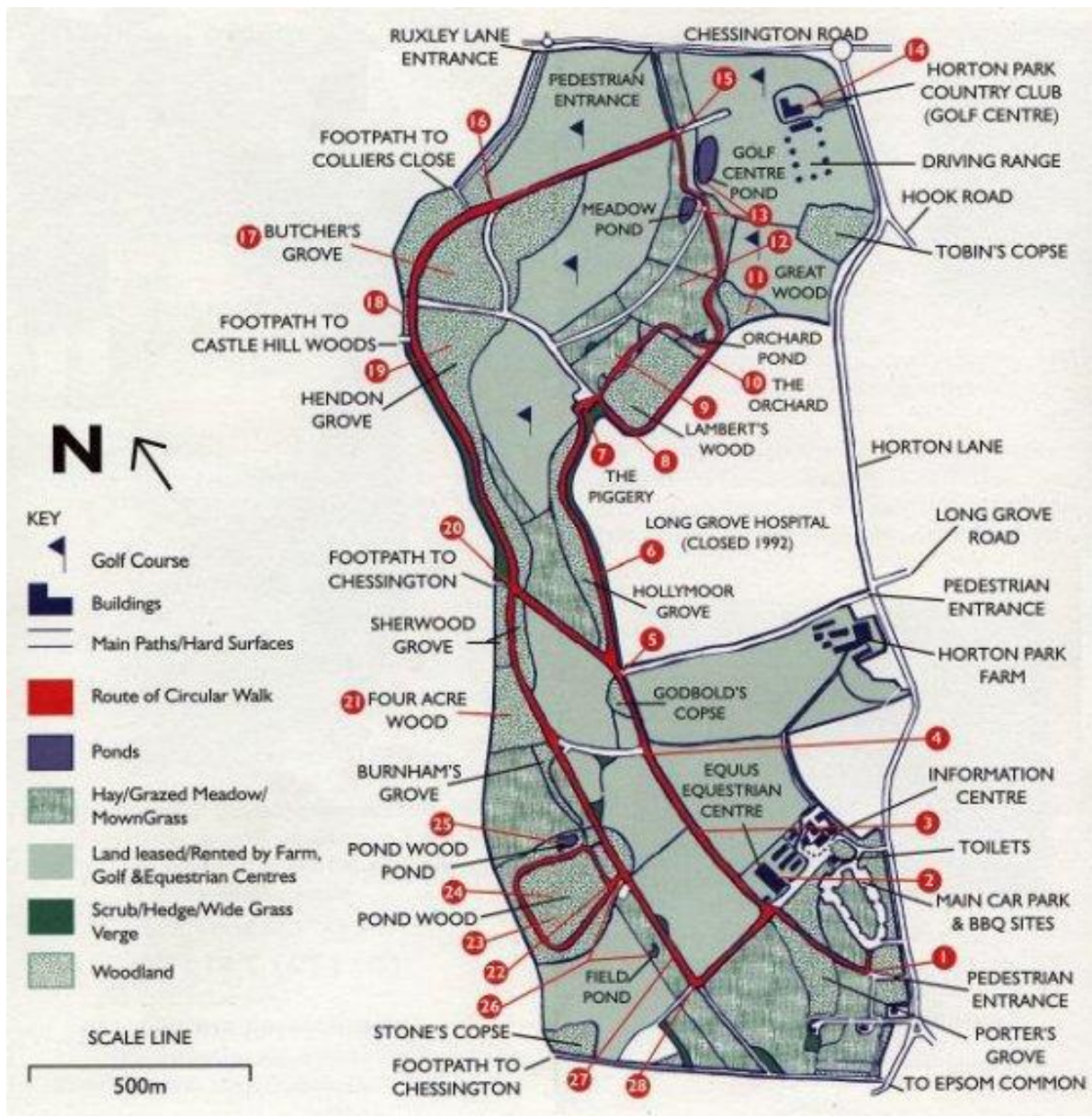


Horton Country Park LNR Map and Tour

This picture tour will take you through a rural landscape of fields, hedgerows, woods and ponds of great wildlife and historical value. Each numbered point on the map refers to one of the pictures below.

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Area = 162 hectares/400 acres

- 1. You are now on a Public Footpath leading from Epsom to Chessington. This very old route has been used by generations of local people.



- 2. The large building on the right is the Equus, Equestrian Centre, one of the three centres on the Country Park. The other two centres are Hobbledown and Horton Park Country Club (Golf Centre).



- 3. The path is taking you in a northerly direction along the highest point in the park at about 170 ft above sea level. On your right is an old hedge in which there are numerous old, and some very large, stumps. These were until the 1970s mighty Elm trees. Their loss to Dutch Elm Disease has had a great visual impact on the English Landscape.



- 4. **WATCH OUT FOR THE GHOST TRAINS!** The track on your left is a branch line of the former Horton Light Railway. This branch line supplied the hospital boiler house to your right with coal. On your left is a hedge which has been laid. This old form of management forms a living stock proof fence. Instead of the modern method of trimming, the stems or pleachers are cut but not severed. The cut allows the stem to be laid flat blocking any gaps. The stem remains alive and sends up many new shoots to thicken the hedge.



The engine 'Hendon' in January 1938 opposite 'Four Acre Wood'



- 5. On the right is a Public Footpath leading to Hobbledown Farm. Hobbledown farm is themed around a story and offers children an adventure experience along with a chance to meet animals. There is also a cafe and shop .Before 1973 the farm belonged to Long Grove Hospital and was known as Long Grove Farm. In those days the farm supplied the hospital with meat, milk, vegetables and therapeutic work for the patients.



- 6. On the right is the Clarendon Park housing development. The development was started in 1998 and is built on the site of the former Long Grove Hospital complex. Long Grove hospital was built in the early years of this century as a psychiatric hospital and closed in April 1992. The Hospital used to be one of Britain's most secure buildings and for a short time one of the infamous Kray twins was held here. The building in the picture, is all that remains of Farmstead School, which was demolished during October 2005. This part of the building was retained and converted into a bat roost for European Brown Long Eared Bats.



- 7. The concrete area is the remains of the piggy for Long Grove Hospital. Today it provides a useful storage area for timber and stone to repair the paths.



- 8. During wet winter months it's advisable to follow the hard surfaced track to the orchard rather than taking the path across the meadows.
- 9. You are now walking across a field known as Lawn Barn Meadow. If you are walking during the winter keep your eyes peeled for Long Eared Owls which are known to come here from the East during cold weather and have been seen in Lambert's Wood to your right.



- 10. This is part of the old orchard belonging to Long Grove Hospital which is now known as Lambert's Orchard. The orchard was badly damaged by the great storms of 1987 and 1990. Volunteers have cleared fallen trees and planted new fruit trees and during 2013 – 2015 restored the pond. The large pear trees are a rare variety known as Bellesime D'Hiver, a seventeenth century French cooking pear.



- 11. The wood on your right is called Great Wood. It is designated as 'ancient woodland', meaning that it dates back to at least 1600 AD. In recent years heron have started to nest in the wood using Meadow Pond and the Golf Centre pond as a food source.



- 12. These meadows have seen very few changes and are the same today as they were on the Tithe map of 1838. Today they are managed for hay, encouraging wild flowers to grow which in turn attract butterflies and other insects.



- 13. Meadow Pond, created in 1986 has been a great success. Look out for water fowl such as moorhen, coot and little grebe as well as heron and the occasional kingfisher. In summer, swallows, swifts and dragonflies can be seen feeding on the large number of insects the ponds support.



- 14. The golf course is also part of the Country Park and has developed as a popular local facility.



- 15. You are now on the route of the main line of the Horton Light Railway. Opened in 1913 the line operated until 1950 supplying the hospitals with coal and other goods.



- 16. The track branching off to the left is a branch line of the old railway which went to Long Grove Hospital.



- 17. The wood you are now walking through is called Butcher's Grove. The open areas that you will come across have been coppiced by the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project since 1985. Coppicing woodland is a traditional way of management where trees are cut down and left to regrow from the base, on a cycle dependent on the tree species and use for the wood. Coppicing a woodland initially allows in more light, encouraging wild flowers such as bluebells and birds like the now scarce nightingale. There is very good evidence that Butcher's Grove dates from the Middle Ages. The records from the Abbey of Chertsey, refer to the Abbot of Chertsey, John De Rutherwyk, ordering in 1307 an area of land to be enclosed and planted at Brettgrave, the old name for the wood. It is not known why the name changed, however there is an area of Hornbeam trees within the woods and butchers chopping boards are made exclusively of Hornbeam wood.



- 18. On your right the fence and hedge mark the boundary of the Country Park. On the other side is Castle Hill in the London Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames. Castle Hill has been designated as an Ancient Monument and is thought to be the site of a medieval moated farmstead known as Brettgrave. The path on the right leads around Castle Hill and on to Chessington.



- 19. On your left is Hendon Grove planted in the 1980's, and named after one of the locomotives which used to operate on the Horton Light Railway and is pictured at point 4 on this tour. This young woodland is now being thinned and managed to create future coppice.



- 20. You are now crossing over the Public Footpath on which you began your walk. As you can see it heads North West across the fields to Chessington. The photo below shows what this spot looked like in 1943, note the high wooden fencing to stop the public seeing in to the hospital farmland and the path went up and over the Horton Light Railway! On your left is Sherwood Grove named after the last engine to operate on the railway. Sherwood Grove is another young woodland that is now being managed as coppiced woodland having been planted in the 1980's. Look out for the green woodpecker, the symbol of the Country Park.





- 21. On your right is Four Acre Wood which is a carpet of bluebells, wood anemone and celandine in the spring. Look out for the Great Spotted Woodpecker! A little way ahead you can see the site of the points where the branch line to the boiler house joined the main line of the railway.



- 22. You are now entering Pond Wood which is also an Ancient Woodland and managed in parts as Hazel coppice. The wood is at its most beautiful in the spring when it is a sea of bluebells. Pond Wood is also notable for its large jackdaw roost.



- 23. As you walk around the wood you will enter an area that used to be a field inside the wood called peaked riding and on your left you will eventually see a path leading north across a small bridge to Great Riding a much larger hay meadow. As you walk through this part of the wood, notice how the trees are predominantly old gnarled Hawthorns and that the area is not the carpet of bluebells seen in Pond Wood proper, which has required a long and undisturbed history to produce such a beautiful sight.



- 24. On your right you will see a large crater which was caused when the railway was bombed in June 1941!



- 25. The pond in Pond Wood is on your left. It was restored in 1994 with the help of Kingston Conservation Volunteers, work having started in the summer of 1990. The pond's dam was breached by the air raid on the railway in June 1941.

- 26. Turn right you are now back on the old railway line. The tall building ahead is the water tower of West Park Hospital. After a short distance you will come to Field Pond on your right. Work has been carried out in recent years to deepen the pond to prevent it from drying out during the summer months when it is used for pond dips and a fence has been erected to stop dogs from entering the pond.



- 27. Before you turn left at the cross roads and walk up the hill back to the car park why not take a short diversion and continue straight ahead to have a look at the wetland that has been created in the field on your right, using the Greenman Stream that carries water from Epsom Common



We hope you enjoyed your virtual tour and that you will visit the Country Park for real! Remember the Country Park changes continually with the seasons and there is always the chance of spotting interesting birds, animals and plants.