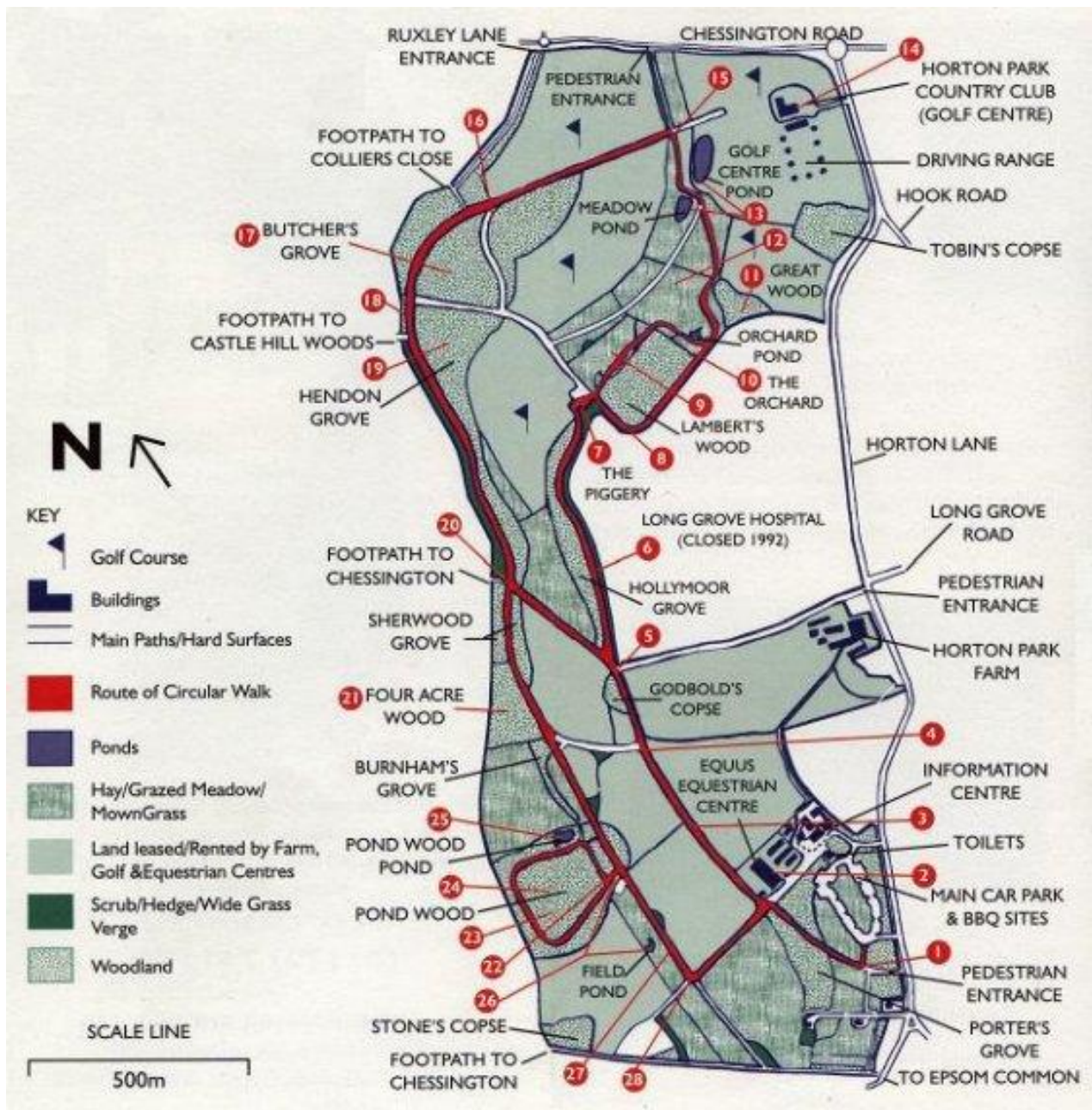


### Horton Country Park local nature reserve map and tour

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.



Area = 160 Hectares

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 takes you in a northerly direction along the highest point in the park at about 52 metres above sea level. On your right is an old hedge containing numerous old and some very large, stumps. These were, until the 1970s, 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 laid hedge. This method 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. 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 Kray twins was held here. The building in the picture below is Farmstead School. This was one of the last hospital buildings visible from the Country Park and was demolished during October 2005. Part of the building visible on the left side of the picture has been retained and converted into a bat roost for European Brown Long Eared Bats.



7. The concrete area is the remains of the piggery for Long Grove Hospital.



8. During wet winter months it is 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 Lambert's Mead. If you are walking during the winter, keep your eyes peeled for Long Eared Owls that are known to come here from the East during cold weather and have been seen in Lambert's Wood.



10. This is part of the old orchard belonging to Long Grove Hospital. In 1991, Kingston Conservation Volunteers restored the pond and cleared fallen trees from the great storms of 1987 and 1990. The 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 by Natural England as ancient woodland, meaning that it dates back to at least the sixteenth century. 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.



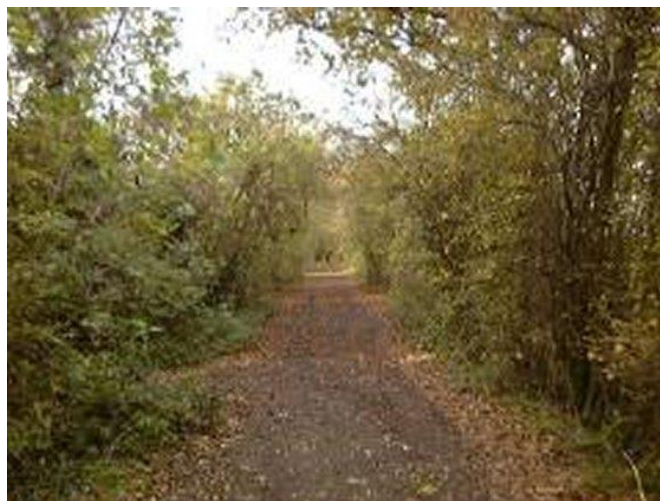
13. This is Meadow Pond, created in 1986 it has been a great success. Look out for waterfowl such as moorhen, coot and little grebe as well as heron and the occasional kingfisher. In summer, you can see swallows, swifts and dragonflies feeding on the large number of insects the ponds support. In recent years, swans have nested in the reeds.



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 is 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. As you can see, a great deal of tree planting has taken place in this area forming Hendon Grove; it is still just possible on a clear day to see the North Downs around Banstead. Hendon Grove is named after one of the locomotives that used to operate on the Horton Light Railway and is pictured at point 4 on this tour.



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. Look out for a bird with bright blue flashes on its wings. The jay is commonly seen in this part of the park. Look out too, for the green woodpecker, the symbol of the Country Park, and the little owl; Britain's smallest owl.



21. On your right is Four Acre Wood that is a carpet of bluebells, wood anemone and celandine in the Spring. To your left you will regularly see cattle and rare breeds of sheep grazing in the fields. 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. The wood is at its most beautiful in the spring when it is a sea of bluebells. Pond Wood is also one of the largest roosts for jackdaws in the London area.





23. As you walk through this part of the wood, notice how the trees are predominantly old gnarled Hawthorns. This area used to be a field called Peaked Riding and is shown on the Ordnance Survey Maps of the nineteenth century. In spring, notice that this 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 frequently by visiting schools for pond dips.

27. Turn left at the crossroads and walk up the hill; you will soon find yourself nearing the start of your walk.



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.

With the exception of two pictures on this tour (4 and 27), all were taken in October/November 1999.

