

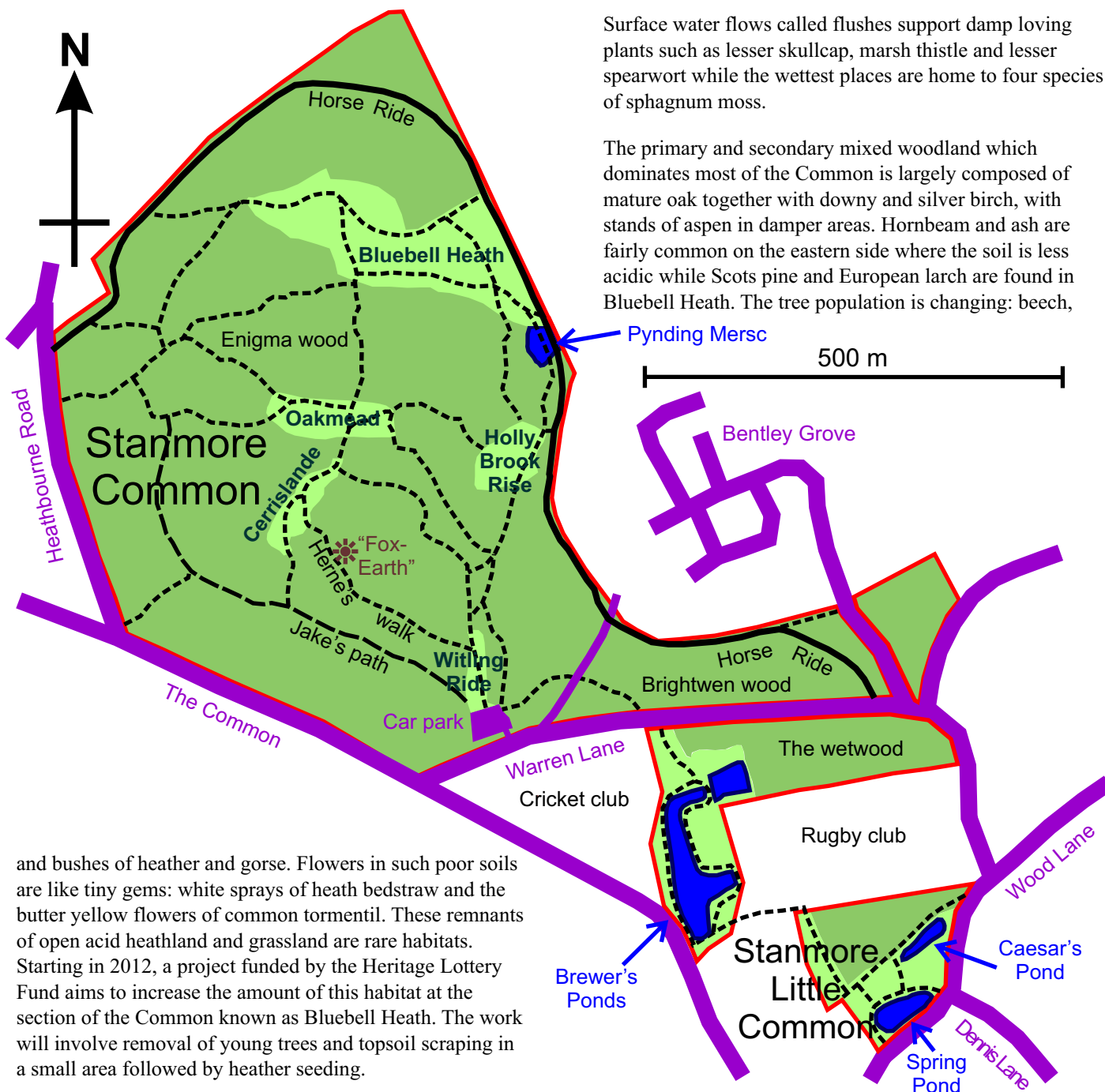
Stanmore Common is the northernmost of Harrow's open spaces. It is a wonderful place to explore: paths snake through woods to emerge suddenly in open glades, then enter the woods again where mysterious mounds hide among the trees. Streams cut tiny ravines through the yellow gravelly soil, spanned by wooden footbridges. To the south east, adjacent to Wood Lane, is Stanmore Little Common, a delightful wooded haven complete with picnic tables ideally placed for viewing the ancient ponds and the variety of wildfowl that inhabit or visit them.

Both Commons are open all year round and welcome all visitors. They can be explored on their own but also form part of the Bentley Priory Circular Walk, a guide leaflet for which can be obtained by post from the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum or downloaded from our website. All that we ask of visitors is that you treat the site with respect: that includes not dropping litter, not picking flowers or fungi, not lighting fires, not damaging trees or fences, and keeping dogs under control. A bridle path runs along the north and east perimeters of the common for the benefit of riders. Horse riding is not allowed elsewhere on the Commons.

Natural History

Below the two Commons lie the rounded stones of the Pebble Gravels, underlain by the relatively well-drained Claygate beds. Many streams rise on Stanmore Common and flow north and east to meet at the marshy Pynding Mersc, while springs feed the ponds on the Little Common. The pebbles create quick drainage which has leached out nutrients, generating acid soils, so that the Common is home to plants not seen in the rest of Harrow, including heather and heath spotted orchid.

The site was formerly a woodland used for pig husbandry by local "commoners", but many trees were removed by the 17th century. These areas remained open heathland grazed by sheep until the end of the 19th century, when livestock numbers fell and secondary woodland appeared. The remaining open clearings are complex mosaics of grasses, both tall and short, mixed with young tree saplings, bracken,



holly and yew are all increasing. The ground flora of the woods includes bluebells, wood sorrel and the wild garlic or “ransoms”. The woods to the south and west of Herne's Walk contain a high number of ancient woodland indicator species, indicating that although felling has removed old trees, these areas have been continuously wooded since at least 1600.

The Common is rich in animal life. There are foxes, muntjac deer, weasels, hedgehogs, moles and lots of mice, voles and shrews that are food for hungry tawny owls. At night pipistrelle bats flit around the trees chasing gnats and moths. Grass snakes are common. The bird life includes all three woodpeckers and breeding hobby. Buzzards call their cat like mews, red kites drift slowly overhead, while kingfishers are regularly seen on Brewer's Ponds. The reserve has an excellent invertebrate fauna many of which live inside the huge amounts of dead and decaying timber.

Archaeology

Within the Common, four to five earth mounds have been identified which probably all belonged to a 16th century or later rabbit warren documented in 1667 as the coney warren. These mounds were constructed to house rabbits, bred for meat and fur. The rounded hill-like mound called Fox-Earth is the most obvious, but this may possibly be an older mound re-used. South of Warren Lane lie Brewer's Ponds, created in the late 19th century as a reservoir to serve Clutterbuck's Brewery, the prominent 18th century brick building with the weatherboarded clock tower on the west side of the A4140 ('The Common'). The bell in the clock tower is dated 1726. Sadly brewing ceased in 1916 and the building is now housing. The ponds in Stanmore Little Common are also man-made. Spring Pond may be the 'stony mere' which produced the name Stanmore. This name appears in an 8th century Saxon charter, so the pond must be older. Caesar's Pond is named for an 18th century story that it supplied water for a supposed Roman fort, but unfortunately this is untrue. There never was a Roman fort here, but it is just possible that the Spring Pond supplied water to the Roman pottery kilns at the east end of Wood Lane on Brockley Hill.

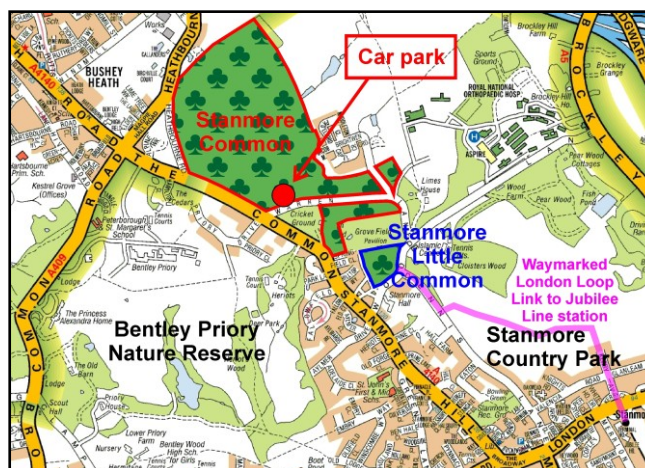
Management

Both Commons need continual management to keep them attractive for wildlife and people. Several of the open glades are cut annually by council contractors, but all the rest of the work, including mowing of the smaller glades, is by volunteers who also record species and remove rubbish.



If you would like to help, whether at one of our working parties or as part of the warden team, contact the chief warden or Harrow Nature Conservation Forum.

How to find the reserves



The number 142 bus runs along the A4140 “The Common” while the junction of the A4140 “The Common” and the A409 Common Road is served by the 258 bus. There is a car park off Warren Lane. For the walker the well-waymarked London Loop Link offers a pleasant and largely road-free route from Stanmore Jubilee Line station through Stanmore Country Park.

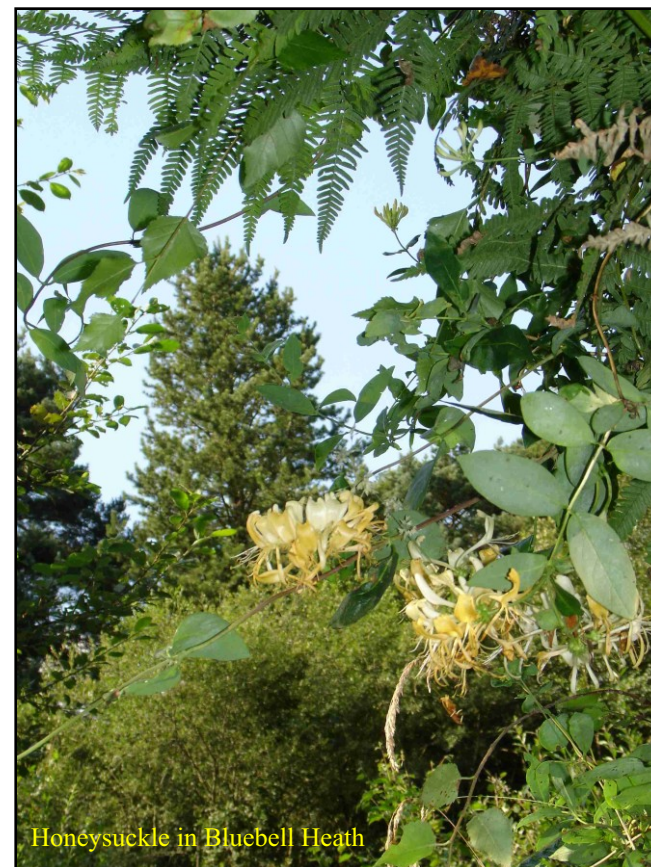
Contacts:

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Stanmore Common and Stanmore Little Common

Find out more about your local nature reserves



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