

## A short walk to the London Viewpoint

An all weather path beginning beside the information board at the east end of the car park leads towards the London Viewpoint. In early summer the space ahead is a riot of wild flowers. Prominent are white oxeye daisies *Leucanthemum vulgare*, yellow dark mullein *Verbascum nigrum*, red campion *Silene dioica* and violet field scabious *Knautia arvensis*. The area was sown with a native wildflower mix in 2015 and management of this area as ‘Meadow grassland’ is aimed at preserving this spectacular display.



Dark mullein

Image by Steve Bolsover

A little further down the path you pass a pond on the right. At the time of writing human visitors are welcome to enter, but dogs should wait outside. Dogs that jump into ponds damage the waterside vegetation, stir up sediment that chokes underwater plants and poison aquatic invertebrates with the flea treatment in their coats. In summer, look for dragonflies and damselflies hawking over the pond or resting on the waterside plants. In late summer, large numbers of swallows and house martins swoop over the pond to drink as they mass in preparation for their migration south.

As you walk look out for birds of prey, many of which hunt the voles and mice that scurry in the long grass. Kestrel,

sparrowhawk, buzzard and red kite all regularly hunt over Wood Farm. You soon reach the London Viewpoint. Even on a murky day you can see Wembley Stadium and St. Mary’s church on Harrow Hill. On a clear day you can see a wide panoramic view from Alexandra Palace in the east to Heathrow in the southwest, and over London to Box Hill in the south.

Nearer at hand notice the trees of Pear Wood to the east (the left hand side as you look downhill). Pear Wood is an ancient woodland and is home to a rich variety of plant and animal life that has been there since the last ice age - very different from Wood Farm, where what you see has been created in the last few years, and where we can therefore be more proactive in our management.

### Wood Farm Loop

You can see all the different aspects of Wood Farm by following the Wood Farm Loop, which is clearly signposted on the wooden bollards. From the London Viewpoint take the left hand path. The first area you will pass through is maintained as tussocky grassland. Rather than being mown every year, it is mown on a two to three year rotation. This means that there is more dead vegetation over the winter for insects and small mammals to hide in and seeds for them to feed on, but it also means that there is not the spectacular display of wild flowers that you saw earlier in the meadow grassland. At a fork, take the left hand path and follow the Wood Farm Loop as it leads around the southern edge of Wood Farm. You are now in an area dominated by bramble. This is wonderful for nesting birds. For example, in spring and summer listen for the fast, scratchy song of the whitethroat, a warbler that loves this scrubby, varied landscape.

You will pass a number of fenced enclosures. These are planted with native trees including hazel, oak and hawthorn. The intention is that as these grow they will form copses that blur the boundary between the open land of Wood Farm and the mature woods of Stanmore Country Park.

On the left as you walk along are the trees of Stanmore Country Park. You will pass three junctions where paths lead south or west into the Park. Stanmore Country Park is well worth exploring for its mix of woods, grasslands and streams. To learn more visit [www.harrowncf.org/SCP\\_home.html](http://www.harrowncf.org/SCP_home.html) or write to the Harrow Nature Conservation Forum for a free leaflet.

On this part of the Loop, look out for hemlock *Conium maculatum*, a member of the carrot family with white flowers that grows over six feet tall. In winter, its dead stems stand tall above even the bramble. You will also see goats rue *Galega officinalis*, a member of the pea family with pretty purple or white lupin-like flowers. Goats rue is pretty and is a good source of nectar for butterflies and insects. However it is very invasive. We are happy to let it romp away down here, but we don’t want it to invade the precious acid grassland of Stanmore Country Park to the south or the flower rich meadows up at the top of Wood Farm.



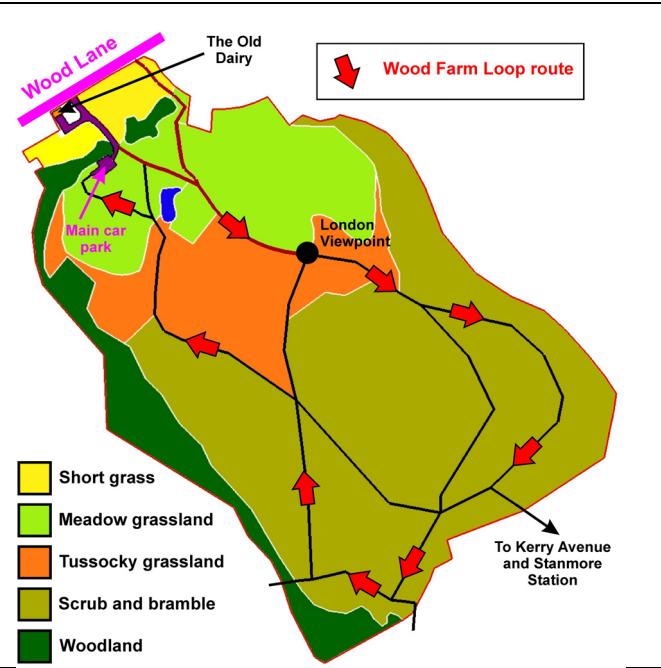
Clouded Yellow

Image by Peter Elton.

Eventually the Wood Farm Loop starts climbing steeply back up the hill. Half way up you will come to a bench and in good weather this is a good spot for a rest. Straight ahead of you is what remains of Cloisters Wood, another area of ancient woodland much of which is now buried under the rubble you are walking on. This is a good spot to look out for butterflies. One you may see here is the clouded yellow, whose caterpillar feeds on members of the pea family such as bird’s foot trefoil, clovers and goats rue.

As you climb you pass back from the scrub zone through tussocky grassland to the flower-rich meadow grassland. At the top, a bollard guides you to the left through a small valley and back to the car park.

On the slope south of the car park there is another fenced area planted with trees including field maple, beech and hornbeam. These are small now but as they grow will give the car park a more secluded feel, and will provide seeds to attract finches in winter.



## Welcome to Wood Farm

This site was a working farm until around the end of the 20th century. The main farm buildings were located where the housing development of The Cloisters now stands. The Old Dairy on Wood Lane was used for storing milk for distribution and has been converted to an attractive visitor centre.

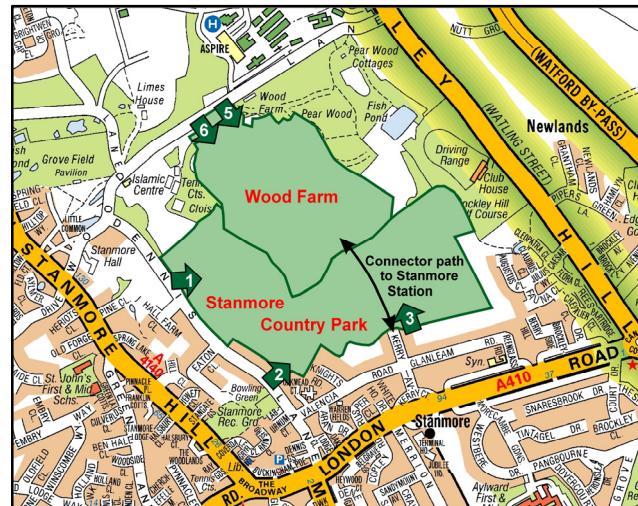
The site has been in public ownership from at least 1939 and was leased to agricultural tenants. From 1960 the tenant was Commonwealth heavyweight boxing champion Joe Bygraves, who bred pigs on the site for about 20 years. During this time the site was also used to dispose of building rubble. This has raised the ground level considerably, especially in the lower half of the site. The rubble has been capped with a thin layer of earth but lumps of concrete do still poke through in places.

In 2009 negotiations began with the aim of creating a public open space on the site. Much legal wrangling followed, but in December 2015 the site you see now was transferred to Harrow Council control. It is now managed by a volunteer warden supported by a management committee comprising council officers, elected councillors and volunteers.

## How to find the reserve

Entrance 5 is a pedestrian entrance to Wood Farm adjacent to the new Cloisters housing development.

Entrance 6 is the main entrance to Wood Farm, with a small public car park which is unlocked and locked daily by volunteers. At the time of writing the car park opens at 10:00 AM and is locked at 8:30 PM in summer, while British Summer Time is in operation (last Sunday of March to last Sunday of October) and at 4:30 PM at other times, however check signs at the site for up to date times.



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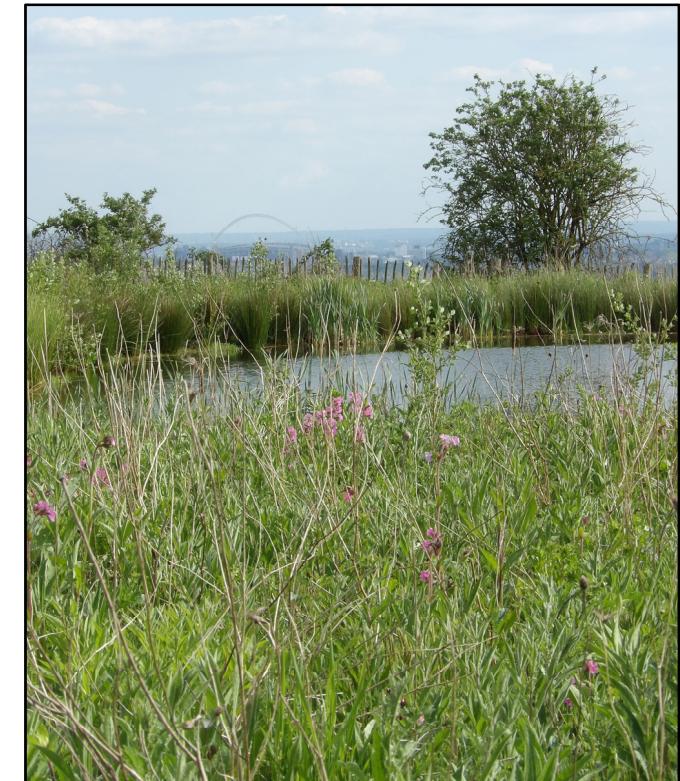
Harrow Nature Conservation Forum <[www.harrowncf.org](http://www.harrowncf.org)>  
email <[admin@harrowncf.org](mailto:admin@harrowncf.org)>  
40 Walton Drive, HA1 4XA



Please help Wood Farm! Volunteers regularly work to maintain and improve the reserve for both humans and wildlife. For a timetable see the information panel, visit [www.harrowncf.org](http://www.harrowncf.org) or contact the Warden.

# Wood Farm Nature Reserve

Find out more about your local nature reserve



The Old Dairy (Wood Farm Visitor Centre) is an excellent base for natural history study by small groups of children or adults. It can also be booked for other activities such as classes and exercise sessions. See [www.harrowncf.org](http://www.harrowncf.org) or email [info@harrowheritagetrust.org.uk](mailto:info@harrowheritagetrust.org.uk).