

reserve, and a number of species can be seen around the pond. The large trees, with long thin leaves and branches that often hang downward, weeping willow fashion, is the white or great willow *Salix alba*. Sallow, *Salix caprea*, is best known for its yellow “pussy willow” catkins. Osier, *Salix viminalis*, and Crack Willow, *Salix fragilis*, are also common.

f: The western end of the reserve is closed off with a hedge of blackthorn. Blackthorn bears its lacy white blossom on bare leafless branches in April; in summer it bears small bitter plums or “sloes” that are used to flavour gin.

Animals

The birds spotted at Roxbourne Rough include blackcap, bullfinch, chiffchaff and heron. Frogs disperse through the meadow for most of the year but congregate at the pond in early spring to spawn.

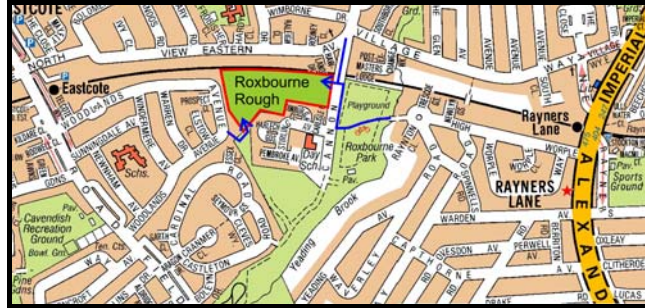


How to find the reserve

The blue arrows on the area map show the access routes to Roxbourne Rough. Buses 398 and H12 serve the Cannon Lane/Eastern Avenue/Village Way junction, from where a short walk south along Cannon Lane leads to the entrance to Roxbourne Rough on the right hand (west) side of the road. Look out for a short length of wooden fence in the thick hedge - this marks the entrance .

Alternatively one can walk from either Eastcote or Rayners Lane stations. To reach Roxbourne Rough from Eastcote station, walk to the southeast corner of Woodlands Avenue. A

short side street, between house numbers 124 and 132, leads to an entrance to Roxbourne Park. Once in the park, turn sharp left and walk about 30 metres to a signpost reading "Nature Reserve" which points to a kissing gate leading into the reserve.



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From Rayners Lane walk along High Worples to its western end, where a short path leads over the Yeading Brook into Roxbourne Park. Walk straight ahead through the park to Cannon Lane, then turn right and walk up Cannon Lane towards the bridge over the railway. As noted above, a short length of wooden fence on the west side of the road marks the entrance to Roxbourne Rough.

Limited roadside parking is possible in both Woodlands Avenue and Cannon Lane.

Contacts:

Warden: Dave Bolton ☎ 020 8868 9517

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email:<admin@harrowncf.org> 40 Walton Drive, HA1 4XA



Roxbourne Rough needs volunteers. If you would like to help at one of our regular working parties contact the warden or Harrow Nature Conservation Forum.

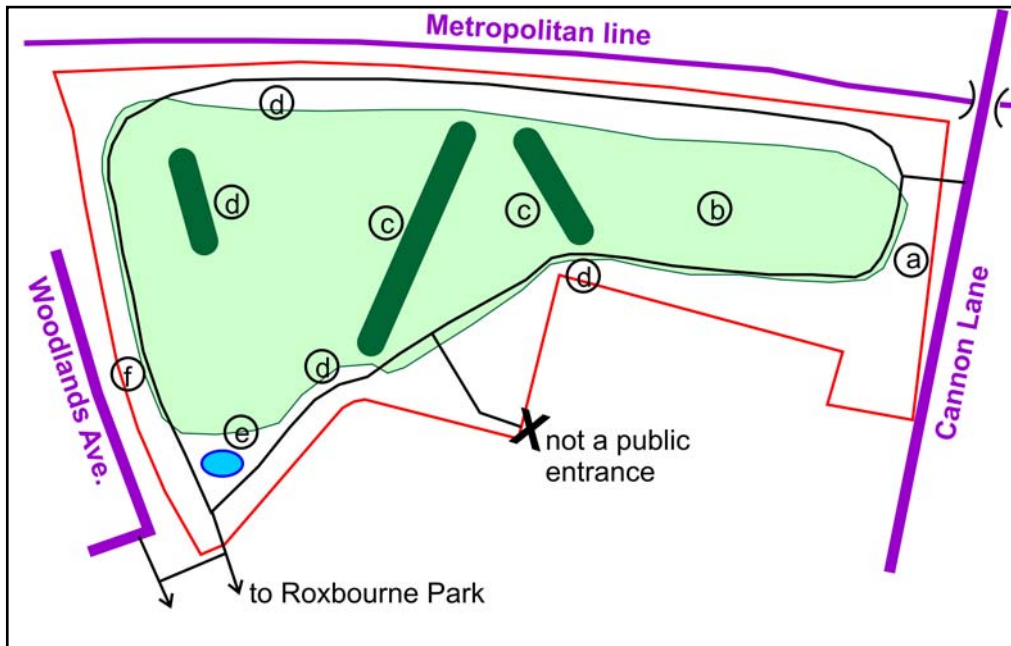
Note that working parties meet at the vehicle entrance to the site, beside house number 2 on Stirling Ave, off Cannon Lane.

Roxbourne Rough

Find out more about your local nature reserve



Leaflet produced by Harrow Nature Conservation Forum October 2009



Roxbourne Rough is a series of species-rich grassy meadows with a total area of 13 acres. It forms part of the Roxbourne Park open space, close to Rayner's Lane in the south of Harrow. The reserve is open all year round and welcomes all visitors. 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.

The Common is managed by voluntary wardens who work to record species and enhance the site's biodiversity. Larger scale work, such as mechanical cutting of the open area to prevent scrub growth, is performed by council contractors.

Natural History

The lower ground lies on the sand, loam and pebbles of the Woolwich and Reading beds, while the slightly higher ground lies on the London Clay. The ground is damp for much of the year, although the stone-surfaced perimeter path is always dry. The damp and distinct geology means that the site contains a very different set of species from the dryer, more acid heathlands and grasslands of the Harrow Weald ridge where

the other Harrow Nature Conservation Forum reserves are located.

History of the site

Old maps show that the site was still entirely agricultural land as recently as 1903. More recently the site was owned by British Gas for a number of years. In the early 1990s a small group headed by Councillor Brian Clark fought to save the land from development, and in 1992 the council acquired the land in a land swap. A group of volunteers including Dave Bolton and Nicky and John Aubrey worked to turn the site into the natural landscape we see today.

Points to note (see plan)

a: The eastern end of the reserve is closed off with a hedge of

hawthorn. The bushes are lovely with its white blossom – or “may” in Spring and are covered with red fruits called haws in Summer.

b: The species-rich grass meadows contain many grasses and wild flowers. In 1992 the London Ecology Unit wrote “the range and rarity of the species found in this rare fragment of old meadow bring it close to the quality to be regarded as site of Metropolitan importance for nature conservation, i.e. London wide significance.” The flowers of the meadows include the attractive vetches, members of the pea family. A relatively rare member found at Roxbourne Rough is the Grass Vetchling *Lathyrus nissolia*, shown at right. Unlike its relatives it has no tendrils and indeed looks very like a grass until it produces a typical pea flower

c: The dividing hedges are dominated by hawthorn but contain many other tree and bush species. The hedges were in poor shape and showed gaps in 1992. Since then management by the voluntary warden and council workers have restored these hedges to the splendid size and species diversity seen now.

d: The tallest trees on the reserve are poplars, with characteristic triangular leaves on long thin stalks that allow the leaves to quiver in even the lightest breeze. In later summer the leaves turn bright yellow before falling to carpet the ground.



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e: The pond is at the lowest point of the reserve but nevertheless often dries out in summer. One of the main management aims is to divert and retain as much water as possible into the reserve, to maintain not only the pond but also the wet meadowland habitat. Willows are common on the