



Hogsmill local nature reserve

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Access

The Hogsmill Local nature reserve is situated in the Northern half of the Borough and comprises two open spaces, the Hogsmill Open Space and the Bonesgate Open Space. The Hogsmill open space follows the course of the Hogsmill River and leads from the Lower Mill in Ewell village to our boundary with the Royal Borough of Kingston, opposite the Hogsmill Pub on Worcester Park Road. The Bonesgate open space extends from Chessington Road near the Bonesgate Pub to the confluence of the Bonesgate and Hogsmill Rivers adjacent to Tolworth Court Farm Meadows local nature reserve. The site can be accessed on foot or by bicycle from numerous points.

The reserve is open all year round. The paths on the site are for pedestrians and cyclists. Dog walkers are welcome on the site but please note there is no equestrian access. Please remember when visiting the countryside to act responsibly and show consideration for wildlife and other visitors. Dog walkers are reminded to keep their dogs under close control and that it is an offence to allow your dog to foul any open space. Please put all dog faeces in a bag and place it in a dog waste bin or litter bin. For more information about responsible access to the countryside please look at the [Natural England website](#).

Activities

Activities that visitors to the reserve can enjoy include:

- walking
- cycling
- running
- dog walking
- nature watching

We also run guided walks and there is the opportunity to volunteer (please see the link on our website and our events calendar or telephone 01372 732000 and ask to speak to a member of the Countryside Team or email contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk for further details.

Facilities

The Hogsmill local nature reserve comprises 33.4 hectares of wild open space with a network of grass and surfaced paths. For those wanting to explore a wild part of the Borough this is a good site. There are many different bird species to be found, including kingfishers.

History

The open space along the Hogsmill is all that remains of the farmland that ran down to the banks of the Hogsmill River before the encroachment of the various housing developments that border the site today. The Hogsmill River has played a very long and important role in the history of Ewell both as a source of power for several mills, including the gun powder mill complexes, and as an inspiring landscape for famous artists.

The river has its source in Ewell village, where it is fed by several springs that fill the

ornamental pond at Bourne Hall and the adjacent Horse Pond. This pond is so called because it is where carters used to size their cart wheels and water their horses in the days before lorries and vans. Water from these ponds flows under the road to the Old Mill Pond and into the Hogsmill. The white wooden building beside the Old Mill Pond is evidence of the former history of the Hogsmill. This building retains the style of an old mill originally built in the 18th century, however it is probably on the site of one of two much older mills mentioned in the Domesday Book. This area has been home to a great deal of industry and there has probably been some sort of wheat milling here for as long as there has been a settlement.

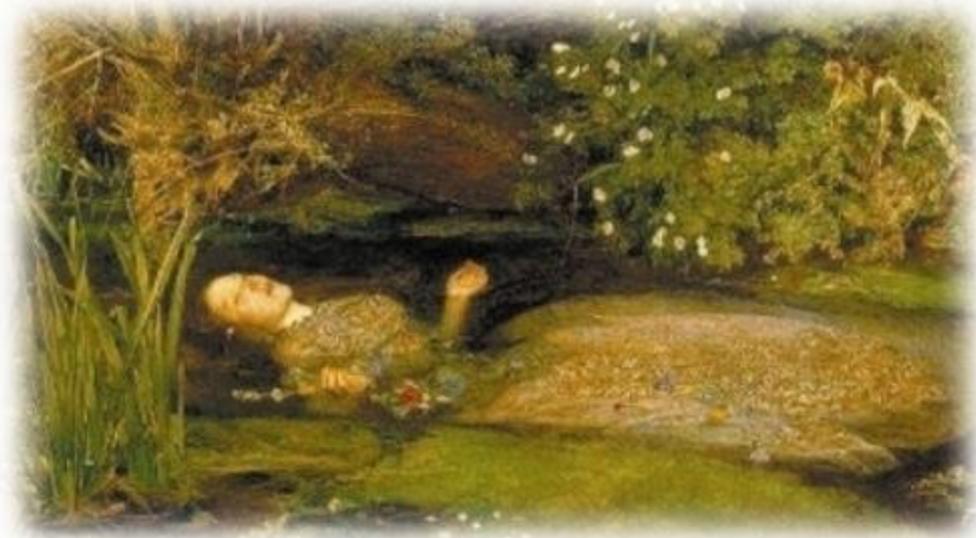


Further downstream on the south side of the river from about 1754 to 1875, the Hogsmill was occupied by a Gunpowder Mill Complex. At its height, in the mid-nineteenth century, it employed 156 men. The gunpowder from Ewell was said to have been used in the American Civil War (1861-5). New restrictions on the production of gunpowder under the Explosives Act of 1875 probably made the mills uneconomic and they closed. Within the King George V Recreation Ground evidence of the industrial past of the Hogsmill can be seen. One of the mill stones from the gunpowder mills has been set on a plinth, thereby preserving a small part of this significant aspect of the Hogsmill's history.

The line of impressive old Oak trees adjacent to this park provide a clue to the Hogsmill's agricultural past. Most of the straight lines of trees along the Hogsmill represent former field boundaries planted in the days when the land would have been grazed as meadow pasture. At the north western boundary of the reserve, across the Bonesgate Stream, lie the hay fields of Tolworth Court Farm Meadows Local Nature Reserve, managed by Kingston Borough Council. The view across these meadows gives some indication of what the former landscape by the Hogsmill would have looked like before the encroachment of housing and other development.

The open nature of these fields, the occasional cluster of scrub and trees and the Willow lined banks of the river, formed an inspiring landscape for which the Hogsmill was once revered. Artists such as the 19th century pre-Raphaelite painters, for example Holman Hunt and John Everett Milais, found the Hogsmill to be a source of inspiration for their

work. It was along the banks of the Hogsmill that Milais painted his famous "Ophelia". Hunt's painting "The Light of the World" in which he depicts Jesus knocking at a door, was set against one of the disused huts of the Gunpowder Mills.



Milais' "Ophelia"

Today the natural beauty and wildlife of the Hogsmill is still appreciated by many and its importance has been recognised and protected through its formal designation as a Local Nature Reserve.

If you wish to learn more about the history of the Hogsmill there is now a video entitled The Life, History & Art of a Ewell River available from the museum shop at Bourne Hall, Ewell. Alternatively, if you would like to undertake our self-guided trail for the reserve, there is a link on the website to the information. We provide an annual history walk, taking you on a two to three hour walk around the site. To check the date, please view our events calendar.

Leaflets

There is a comprehensive leaflet for the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve. If you would like to obtain a copy and see our current range of leaflets please [contact us by email](#).

Management plan

We have produced a 10 year management plan for the Hogsmill LNR. To view the plan, please click on the link on our website.

Working in accordance with this plan, the habitats on the Hogsmill are managed to improve their value for biodiversity. If you would like any more information about the management plan or the wildlife along the Hogsmill, please contact a member of the Countryside Team on 01372 732000 or email contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk.

Playgrounds

There are two playgrounds on the Hogsmill Local Nature reserve, one on the open space adjacent to Curtis Road, the other on the Bonesgate open space at the bottom of Gatley Avenue. Both are fenced playgrounds with safety surfaces. For more information about the playground facilities within Epsom & Ewell please contact the Ranger Service on 01372 732000 or email [contact us by email](#).

Projects

Hogsmill local nature reserve improvement projects

A series of projects have made (and continue to make) significant improvements in biodiversity and public access alongside both the Hogsmill River and Bonesgate Stream.

The projects are linked with the Green Arc initiative intended to improve urban fringe countryside around London.

The latest project is the Thames2Downs Project which aims to upgrade the existing Thames Downs Link footpath which connects the Thames at Kingston upon Thames to the North Downs Way. The route passes through the Hogsmill local nature reserve alongside the Bonesgate Stream.

The project has already brought significant improvements since 2007 with the Environment Agency creating new meanders in the stream near Gatley Avenue, removing many tons of rubbish and unnecessary concrete weirs. Volunteers from the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project have helped enhance the area for nature conservation and public access by cutting encroaching scrub away from paths and restoring views of the stream. In addition, they have begun the process of tackling the invasive exotic Japanese Knotweed that is present in several locations along the Bonesgate open space. They have also installed a new information board which informs about the site and has room for information posted by the Friends of the Hogsmill. This work has been carried out under the guidance of our Habitat Management Plan for the Hogsmill LNR.

The Lower Mole Project, with funding from ourselves and Surrey County Council, has also carried out a pilot project to remove garden dumping from the rear of selected properties which back onto the Bonesgate. This is with a view to fulfilling the longer term aim of the Steering Group to tackle the issue of dumping along the boundaries of the site.



Debris cleared from the Bonesgate Stream by the Environment Agency, March 2007

Local community groups, the Friends of the Hogsmill and the Ruxley Community Partnership, form part of the partnership along with Surrey County Council, the Environment Agency, Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, the Lower Mole Countryside Management Project and Epsom & Ewell Borough Council.

If you would like to know more about the 'Thames2Downs' Project or are interested in volunteering, please contact a member of our Countryside Team on 01372 732000 or [contact us by email](#).

Volunteers and community groups

The Friends of the Hogsmill is a community group set up to help us look after the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve. They have been involved in organising volunteer litter picks and have started taking part in practical tasks identified in the 10-year management plan for the Hogsmill. They have regular meetings and keep us informed of anything they see or hear that can help us manage the area. For more information about the Friends of the Hogsmill, please contact a member of the Countryside Team on 01372 732000 or [contact us by email](#). Find out more about conservation volunteering in the borough please see the link on our website.

Lower Mole Countryside Management project

The Lower Mole Countryside Management Project has been working on the Hogsmill and Bonesgate Open Spaces for many years carrying out work to improve public access and for nature conservation. To find out more about the project please contact them on 01372 743783 or visit their [website](#).

Wildlife

The Hogsmill Local nature reserve is a haven for a variety of local wildlife. The river itself is most noted as being home to the colourful kingfisher which nests along the river banks and can sometimes be seen perched on a branch waiting to dive for a fish. The combination of open grassy rides and woodland copses provide habitat for a range of mammal, bird and insect species. Regular walkers along the Hogsmill will most likely catch sight of our more familiar wildlife neighbours such as the fox, chaffinch, blue tit and blackbird. The scrub and woodland in particular is a haven for an abundance of bird

life. More notable bird species found on the reserve include the firecrest, the fieldfare and the redwing. The nettles and thistles surrounding the woodland edge attract a number of butterflies such as the red admiral, the peacock and members of the brown family.



Along the river, dragonflies and damselflies are a common sight. Look out for the beautiful banded damoiselle. Some very mature trees, particularly oak and willow, are also found along the Hogsmill. Some of these trees are noted nationally as champion trees. Find out more at www.tree-register.org. When these trees die, the dead wood is left in situ as it provides excellent habitat for a variety of insects.