



Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve

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 the Borough 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 William Bourne 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 litter bin. For more information about responsible access to the countryside please look at the [Natural England website](#).

Activities

Activities available on the reserve include walking, cycling, running, dog walking, [guided walks](#), nature watching and [volunteering](#) (please telephone 01372 732000 and ask to speak to a member of the Countryside Team or email contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk).

Facilities

The Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve comprises 33.42 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 and butterfly species to be found, including kingfishers and the elusive brown and white letter hairstreak butterflies.

Playgrounds

There are two playgrounds on the Hogsmill Local Nature reserve, one on the Hogsmill 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 [contact us by email](#).

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 building 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 building 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.

Leaflets

There is a comprehensive [leaflet](#) for the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve covering the history and wildlife to be found on the site. It is laid out enabling you to take yourself on a self-guided tour around the nature reserve.

Management Plan

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have produced the management plan for the Hogsmill LNR. To view the plan, please click on the link below.

[Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve Management Plan 2017-2117](#)

Subject to ten year reviews this plan aims to describe the important features of the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and set out an agreed approach for the continued management of the site to benefit both the people and wildlife of Epsom & Ewell for the next one hundred years. This plan prescribes in detail how the site will be managed from 2017 to 2027, ensuring that the Hogsmill LNR continues to provide excellent access to nature whilst at the

same time protecting an internationally important habitat (Chalk Stream) and providing a home for wildlife of national and local importance.

The key components in managing the Hogsmill LNR which are unlikely to change in the next one hundred years are as follows:

- Ensuring the protection, maintenance, monitoring and enhancement of biodiversity and cultural heritage of the Hogsmill LNR.
- Assisting the Environment Agency in the management and maintenance of the important features of the river channel.
- Ensuring good public access via a network of well-maintained and signed paths.
- Encouraging and supporting the work of volunteers.
- Interpreting the Hogsmill LNR to the public
- Maintaining a close working relationship with the owners of the Hogsmill River and banks (Environment Agency) and other partners such as the South East Rivers Trust (SERT).

The previous plan (2006-2016) is available on request

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.

Projects

Over the lifetime of the last management plan, 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.

In 2004 The Doorstep Green Project was implemented under the banner of the Hogsmill Improvement Project which involved the local community, the Borough Council and the Environment Agency working together to improve the area. Lottery funding was provided via the Countryside Agency (Doorstep Green Scheme) which paid for a 2.5m wide hard surfaced path from the A240 to Ruxley Lane, with feeder paths to Curtis Rd playground and Riverview footpath. The scheme also paid for new benches, new entrance gates and new information boards, (including maintenance of the new amenities provided for a 25-year period). In addition to the Doorstep Green, the Environment Agency created a new meander and retained the old river channel as a backwater (wildlife refuge). The banks were then planted up with native flowers and grasses. Deflectors were also positioned along the banks to encourage the river to meander and erode a more natural line.

The Doorstep Green also funded the refurbishment of the green bridge crossing the Hogsmill River just before the confluence of the Bonesgate Stream. A Living Spaces Grant secured funding for the construction of a new bridge across the Bonesgate Stream just before it joins the Hogsmill River. Following on from the investment of the Doorstep Green Project, the Borough Council found funding to surface further sections of path along the Hogsmill and Bonesgate Open Spaces, totalling 5km/3 miles of new footpaths/cycleways. It is now possible to walk the entire length of the LNR and beyond on a surfaced path, from Bourne Hall, to the A240 Kingston Road and along the Bonesgate Stream to Chessington Road.

In addition to improvements along the Hogsmill River attention has also been focussed along the Bonesgate Stream under the banner of the Green Arc Initiative which focused on improvements to the peri-urban area around London. An exemplar project called Thames 2 Downs was set up to carry out landscape scale improvements and improve access and habitats for people and wildlife all the way from the North Downs to the Thames at Kingston upon Thames. A section of the Bonesgate Stream near to Gatley Avenue Playground was realigned removing several concrete weirs, adding new meanders and riffles. In addition logs were

positioned along the banks and backfilled to create artificial meanders to allow the water to naturally erode the banks

in to a more natural line. At the confluence of the Bonesgate Stream and Hogsmill River the concrete stream bed and weir were completely removed. In addition, the surfacing of the path along the Bonesgate was upgraded in 2012 with the laying of 'Fibredeck' surfacing. This was paid for by Sustrans and was carried out as part of the Thames2Downs landscape scale project under the banner of the Green Arc initiative.

The Borough Council has also installed two bridges, one across the Bonesgate Stream near Gatley Avenue, linking the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames with Epsom and Ewell and across the Green Lane Stream just before its confluence with the Hogsmill River. There have also been new benches and information boards installed along the length of the reserve.

More recently, EEBC has been working with the South East Rivers Trust (SERT) and Environment Agency (EA) to remove all the concrete weirs in the Hogsmill River to aid fish passage. The weir located just upstream of the Alway Avenue bridge and the weir beside the running track of Poole Road Recreation Ground were removed in 2013.

Work has also taken place where the Green Lane Stream joins the Hogsmill River to naturalise the confluence with the removal of the concrete base and stone side walls in 2014. In 2015 a rock ramp was installed immediately downstream of the A240 bridge and volunteers began a programme of managing vegetation along the banks to ensure more light reaches the river and the banks. In addition some of the material produced by the volunteers' activity has been used (2016) to create artificial berms to help scour the river channel and naturalise flows. EEBC would like to continue working with SERT and the EA via the now established Hogsmill Catchment Partnership.

Volunteers & Community Groups

There is a 'virtual' Friends of the Hogsmill group. An email list of interested people is kept by The Countryside Team enabling them to be contacted and to receive occasional newsletters. If you would like to be [added to this list](#), please get in touch.

In 2007 Epsom & Ewell Borough Council set up its Countryside Team Volunteers who carry out a weekly nature conservation task on either Epsom Common, Horton Country Park or the Hogsmill Local Nature Reserves. To find out more call 01372 732000 and ask to speak to a member of the Countryside Team or visit our volunteering [web page](#). Other volunteering opportunities are also provided with regular practical conservation tasks and opportunities to help with biological monitoring of the site, supported by the Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's

Countryside Team and partnership working with the [South East Rivers Trust](#), the [Lower Mole Partnership](#) and [Zoological Society of London](#) (ZSL).

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. The site is also lucky enough to support the elusive Brown Hairstreak and White letter Hairstreak butterflies due to the abundance of their larval food plants, Blackthorn and Elm respectively.



Along the river, dragonflies and damselflies are a common sight. Look out for the beautiful and banded demoiselle. 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.