

Ham Street Woods National Nature Reserve:

If you go down to the woods today...

Get your walking boots on and come and discover Ham Street Woods National Nature Reserve. This magical woodland is full of wonderful wildlife just waiting to be discovered by you and your friends. Walk this route at different times of year to see and experience the range of wildlife.

Introduction to the walk

This walk will take about 1.5 hours at a slow pace and take you on an enjoyable circular walk through the woodland. The paths can be uneven in places and muddy after rain, so make sure you wear appropriate clothing. Please follow the marked paths to avoid disturbing the wildlife.

To start your walk go through the car park and main entrance. Go over the bridge and pause for stop 1.

Point 1 – Bluebell galore!

Spring is a fantastic time to visit the woods, which are famous for their incredible display of spring flowers. After all, is there anything more English than a bluebell wood in full flower? The colour begins in March when a blanket of brilliant white wood anemones spreads across the woodland floor, in April a dense carpet of bluebells takes over. If you can't see the bluebells today make sure you come back in spring to be wowed!

Follow the path straight ahead until you reach a red arrow pointing left. Look out for hornbeam coppice alongside the path as you go. The Ham Street spotter guide will help you identify the leaves.

Point 2 – Oaks or hornbeam?

Look at the marvellous towering oak tree in front of you. The woods here have a long and ancient history, and as far back as the Iron Age its great oaks were felled for timber. Hornbeam is another dominant tree in the woods. It is a very hard wood and was once used for making cogs. Most of the site has traditionally been managed as coppice with trees cut down to

ground level and the timber used to make products such as charcoal, fences and stiles. Although demand for these local products has declined, Natural England still coppice areas of the woodland to maintain the traditional management methods.

Go straight on, following the red arrows until the next marker post.

Point 3 – Fluttering butterflies

Stop here and see if you can spot our wonderful butterflies. The white admiral is one of our most stunning, its black and white wings hardly moving as it glides along the sunny, open rides. The speckled wood, with its dark brown and orange spots, prefers dappled shade, while the brimstone, when it folds its wings, becomes perfectly disguised as a leaf. Keep an eye out as you walk the woods to see what you can spot in the wide glades. They love it here.

Continue straight on and follow the red arrows until you see the next marker post.



Point 4 – Moth magic and batty bats!

Stand at the post and see if you can see some boxes on a large oak on the left hand-side of the path. Can you spot them? These are bat boxes. Bats use echolocation to find their food. They make a sound which is inaudible to the human ear and the way the sound is echoed enables a bat to tell the location and shape of objects around it, including the insects being hunted!

The varied habitats on the reserve attract many types of insects ensuring a food source for bats including moths. An incredible 500 species of moth have been recorded at the reserve, among them some true rarities such as the stunning scarce Merveille du jour, with its beautiful green wings, speckled with black and white. A bit easier to see is the speckled yellow, a day time flyer that's often out and about in May and June.

Continue straight forward and follow the red arrows until the next marker post.



Sulphur tuft – just one of the many fungi you may encounter on your walk

Point 5 – Funky fungi!

In autumn the reserve bursts into life as weird and wonderful fungi push through the soil. Look along the path edges here. Over 300 different types of fungi have been recorded in the woods so if you look carefully you'll be bound to spot some. The green staining fungus is truly incredible and at one time was used for inlaying into wood for decorative purposes! Remember, please look but don't touch, as many are poisonous.

Carry straight on following the red arrows until you reach a clearing and the next marker post.

Point 6 – Is that a great tit I can hear?

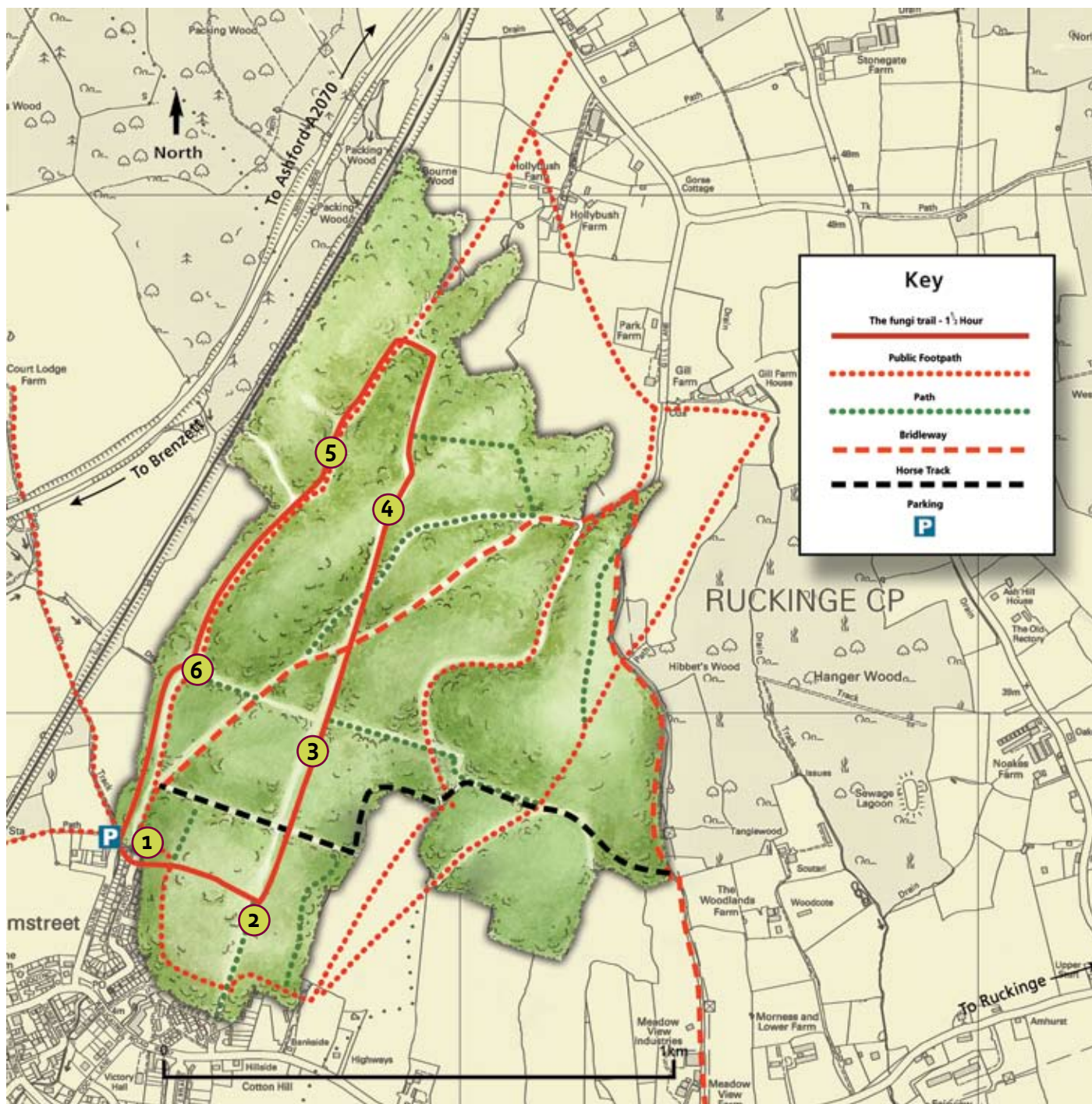
Take a moment to stop, look and listen from the bench here – all around you are some of our most charming woodland birds. Throughout the year these woods are home to green woodpeckers, treecreepers and majestic sparrowhawks. In the summer, listen for the song of the nightingale, and look out for the flash of a spotted flycatcher as it catches an unsuspecting insect on the wing. An easy song to spot is that of the great tit – listen out for 'teecha, teecha, teecha'.

Follow the red arrow and continue along the path until you reach the exit.

This walk is marked out with information posts, so if you wish you could just print or take the map and read the posts as you go round.

We hope you enjoyed your walk. Come back and walk it at different times of year and enjoy the seasonal changes.

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Ham Street Woods is part of a much larger complex of woods which are all that remain of a large post-Ice Age forest. Ham Street Woods was one of the first National Nature Reserves in the country and is still actively managed in a traditional way.

These woods are a fantastic place for people to explore and enjoy. We want to keep them that way, so please respect them and the wildlife that live here. Enjoy your walk!