

## Horsenden Walking Routes

There are three signed walking routes around the Hill and Meadows which take in the main features and can be used on their own or in conjunction with the map.

The routes, **Red**, **Blue** and **Green**, all start and finish at the farm but are circular so can be joined at any point.

### **Red Route (Approx. 2km)**

From the car park follow the markers up hill to the main access path and turn left at the second path into Long and Home Mead. These are the grazing meadows where cattle browse the grass during the summer. The fields are full of Yellow Meadow Ant hills; some are tens of years old. Dyer's Greenweed also grows here, it is a rare plant in London and the Hill is

one of its few strongholds. The plant was used in the dyeing industry producing a yellow colour which when added to Woad (blue) produced a green dye. Follow the markers past the site of the old Ballot Box pub on your left just after the gate.

Continue downhill and turn right just before the new pub and continue through Whittlers Wood, a new plantation of trees, to Horsenden Wood. This 4 Ha (10 acre) remnant of ancient woodland once covered all the land you have just walked across. Follow the route uphill through the wood that consists mainly of English Oak and Hornbeam. A few rare Wild Service Trees grow in the wood as do Bluebells and Wood Anemones: all are ancient woodland indicators. Cross the summit and take in the

views to the south west and the Chilterns before descending downhill bearing left. The two flat surfaces you cross are underground reservoirs installed in the fifties. At the gate pause to admire the view of the North Downs, with the Reigate gap in the centre, Box Hill to the left and Leith Hill and Ranmore Common to the right.

Continue down the steps to the marker post and turn left to return to the farm.

## Blue route (Approx. 2km)

Leave the farm by the main entrance and walk up the tarmac path to the first gap. **Carefully cross the road.** Turn right and then left across Batts field into Wood field. These are among the best wildflower meadows on the Hill with many vetches, buttercups and knapweed. The meadows were designated London's Coronation meadows to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Queen's coronation in 2013. As you bear right to follow a hedge through Rockware field you are walking the line of a 50cm gas main which runs across the fields to Greenford road.

The hedge borders an area called the Plough which was seeded with cornfield wildflowers to demonstrate a cereal field before herbicides were used to increase

productivity. In a couple of oaks Barn Owl nesting boxes have been installed to encourage this iconic owl to breed. Follow the markers to an old boundary hedge and turn right following the route to an overgrown lane. This is all that remains of Brabsden's Green, a small hamlet established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Notice the hedging plants of privet and box. The route turns right just after some steps. To your left are the remains of the hamlet shop and a well. Continue through the wooded area ascending and descending some steps. You are walking through the grounds of Rohais House; built in the mid 1800s and demolished in the 1940s. Traces still exist – garden water features, rear steps and garden plants. On leaving the wood turn left and follow the left hand edge of Batts field back to Horsenden Lane. **Cross**

**the road with great care** turn right back to the farm.

### Green route (Approx. 1.2km)

This walk is step free but is steep and uneven in places. It affords wonderful views over London. From the car park follow the markers to the main access path. Continue straight ahead passing Well Meadow on your left. This relict meadow contains a glorious progression of wildflowers- Lesser Celandine, Ladies Smock, Cowslips, Bugle and Buttercups. The area to your right was part of the golf course but has been handed back to the Ranger service and is the extension of Well meadow. Follow the path uphill bearing right and continue to the end. Walk forward to the gap for a stunning view across London.

Turn round and walk up the righthand edge of the Activity Centre green and follow the

markers across the grassed area of the summit to the Capital Ring finger post. Turn left here across an underground reservoir to gain fine views to the Chilterns and the south west. On a clear day Windsor Castle can be seen. Turn left and follow the tree line round the summit (an iron age settlement). Continue to follow the tree line back to the path and return downhill to the Farm.

**Note: Beware flying discs on the green.**

The name Horsenden has been variously spelt, Horsenddun, Horsindune, Horsindun, Horsing Downe, Horsington and Horsenton over the last 7 or 8 centuries, and is thought to derive from the Old English *hors* *dun* or horses down. Another, probably more fanciful, theory is that the hill was named after the Saxon chieftain *Horsa* giving *Horsan dudu*.



