



Come and discover the magnificent countryside on your doorstep

Banstead Woods Nature Trail is approximately 3 miles (5km) in length and takes 1.5-2.5 hours. The trail starts from Holly Lane car park, near Chipstead (OS grid reference: TQ273 583)

This area is covered by Explorer 146 (1:25,000) and Landranger 187 (1:50,000).

The start of the trail can be reached by public transport. Chipstead railway station is around 500m from Holly Lane car park. For information about bus services and times please contact: **Traveline** on **0871 200 2233** or visit www.traveline.info



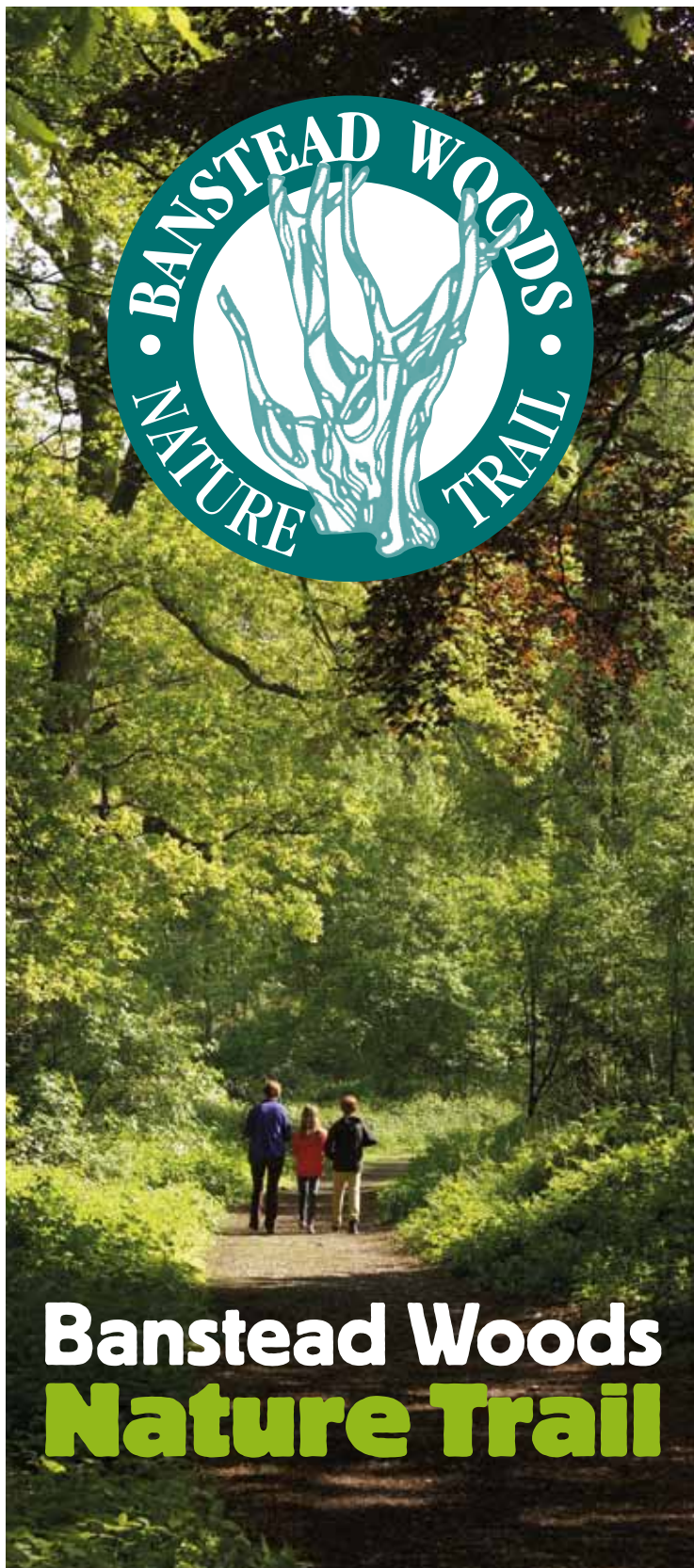
Most of the paths are in good condition, however some paths can be muddy in the winter or after rainfall so walking boots or wellies are recommended. There are some slopes and kissing gates.

Dog walkers – please clear up after your dog and please do not throw dog mess bags into trees or bushes, put them in the dog bins.

This leaflet has been funded by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

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Banstead Woods Nature Trail



Local walks

Why not try another self guided trail in the local area:

Banstead Countryside Walk

This 5-mile self guided trail explores the wider countryside around Banstead Woods, including Chipstead Downs, Fames Rough and Park Downs.



Shabden and Upper Gatton Circular Walk

This 7 mile walk takes you through some of Surrey's most scenic countryside starting from Chipstead Meads Recreation Ground.



Downlands Circular Walk

This 6-mile self guided trail starts from either Farthings Downs or from the Fox Public House near Old Coulsdon, and leads through ancient woodlands, farmland, past Chaldon Church (which dates back to the 1200's) and out onto the North Downs.



The Millennium Trail – main trail



The Millennium Trail is an 18 mile path from Banstead Downs

to Horley, but is linked to public transport so can be walked in shorter sections. It was created by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council to mark the new millennium.



For copies of these and other local self-guided trail leaflets please contact the **Downlands Project** on **01737 737700**, or email downlands@surreycc.gov.uk



The Downlands Countryside Management Project

The Downlands Countryside Management Project carries out local environmental improvements enhancing the countryside for people and wildlife. The Project involves the local community



Volunteers constructing a new catching pen at Hutchinson's Bank

and volunteers in a wide variety of practical conservation and access improvement. The Project area covers green belt countryside in north-east Surrey and adjoining parts of south London, and contains a variety of habitats and features, but is dominated by the important and threatened chalk downland habitat found on the scarp and dip slopes of the North Downs. The Project also manages conservation grazing livestock, which are an essential part of the management of the chalk grassland habitats.

If you would like to learn new skills, and get involved with helping to manage your local countryside please visit our website www.downlandsproject.org.uk



Corporate volunteer group helping to clear scrub

Banstead Woods Nature Trail

Come and discover the hidden secrets and the natural wonder of Banstead Woods. Banstead Woods is an amazing resource for wildlife and people, 250 acres of ancient woodland owned by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council and managed in partnership with the Downlands Countryside Management Project. Banstead Woods' recorded history stretches back for nearly a thousand years, to the time of the Domesday Book (1086 AD). The area is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) by Natural England.



(Left) Wild garlic



(Bottom left) Primrose.



(Bottom right) Willow warbler



(Above) Wood Sorrel



(Right) Late autumn



Purple emperor butterfly

Ancient woodland

Ancient woodland is one of the most valuable types of woodland for wildlife and is defined as land that has been continually wooded since at least 1600AD. Before 1600 planting of woodland was uncommon, so land that was wooded in 1600 was likely to be natural. Some ancient woods may even link back to the original wildwood that covered the UK around 10,000 years ago. Ancient woodlands have long continuity and undisturbed soils, they also often have large old trees which provide shelter and food sources for many different species including bats, rare butterflies such as the purple emperor and invertebrates such as stag beetles. Ancient woodlands are some of the prettiest woodlands, bluebells, wood anemones and celandines can be seen during the spring. Ancient woodlands were not untouched by people; they were often used to produce timber, and evidences of the different kinds of timber production used over the last 1000 years can be seen in Banstead Woods.

History and ownership

Banstead Woods (known as Banstead Park Estate) was a deer park in the medieval period sheltering the royal deer. Both King Edward I and II gave Banstead Woods to their wives, and hunted in the woods for deer. Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife, was the last Queen to have the woods as a gift. She owned the woods until her death in 1536.

In 1841 it belonged to the Spencer family when the name changed to Banstead Wood. Frances Baring, of the famous banking family, built a large house in the woods in the 1880's. This became the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Sick Children (which is now private apartments).

In 1934 the woods were bought by Surrey County Council, but ownership later passed to Reigate and Banstead Borough Council.

During World War II Canadian troops were based at Park Farm adjacent to the woods. They dug trenches and built tank tracks in the woods using rubble from the London Blitz. German and Italian Prisoners of War were also kept here.

In more recent times, many of the trees in the woods were blown down during the Great Storm in 1987.



(Above) The bark of the Sweet Chestnut. (Right) Blackcap



(Left) Linnet



(Above) Bluebells and rotting tree stumps. These provide the perfect habitat for insects. (Bottom left) Fungi

Woodland wildlife

The wood is situated on three geological formations; chalk, clay with flints and dry valley gravel. This means that different types of trees and plants that favour different soil types can be found throughout the woodland. The chalk areas contain trees such as pedunculate oak, ash and hazel with a wide diversity of other species including shrubs such as field maple and goat willow. The clay with flints area is dominated by sessile oak and downy birch, with only a few shrubs and one or two scattered crab apples and rowans. The dry valley gravel areas have many hornbeams and field maples. As well as a wide variety of trees, many other plants, fungi, birds, insects and mammals thrive in Banstead Woods. In the spring spectacular carpets of bluebells can be seen, and during the autumn and winter months a huge variety of fungi can be found throughout the woodland.

Banstead Woods Nature Trail



Purple emperor butterfly



Wood anemone



(Above) Field maple leaf.
(Middle) Pedunculate oak leaf
(Right) Hazel leaf



(Right) Ash leaf
(Below) Cherry leaf
(Bottom) Beech leaf



The Ramblers Rest public house

Starting point

To start the Trail, go through the kissing gate towards the information boards. Follow the path to the right of the boards; carry straight on up the hill until you reach post 1 at the entrance to the wood.

1 On entering the wood there is a strange looking old oak tree. This is a pedunculate oak and its odd appearance may be because it was damaged when it was young.

2 Look out here for two different methods of management, ancient and recent – coppiced hazel and a larch plantation. Coppicing is a sustainable method of producing small diameter timber and is also beneficial to wildlife as it allows more light to reach the woodland floor promoting the growth of flowers and plant. The larch plantation is a modern method of timber production, a single species of tree (or occasionally several), not native to the area is planted in lines to produce a crop of trees. After harvesting they need to be replanted. Some wildlife does use the larch trees, look out for siskins and redpolls during the winter months.

3 The multi-stemmed trees seen here are old hornbeam coppice stools. Hornbeam is the hardest British timber, which was used for early machinery parts such as mill cogs, and it was also widely cut for firewood.

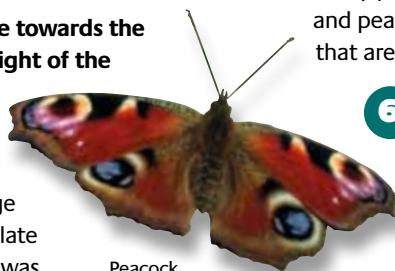
4 The magnificent standard tree here is also a hornbeam around 300 years old. Other tree species you can find here include a large sessile oak, a Corsican pine and an avenue of pollarded lime trees.



Old hornbeam coppice stools



In spring the orchard can be carpeted in bluebells



Peacock butterfly

5 Here you can see an old orchard that has been restored, by protecting the old trees and planting young apple and pear trees. The fruit trees are all traditional varieties that are an important part of our heritage.

6 Left of the path is a planted line of horse chestnut trees that are around 100 years old. To the right is a native cherry, noticeable in spring with its magnificent display of flowers.

7 The few beech trees left here are all that are left after many were destroyed in the Great Storm in 1987. All the young birches and ash trees growing in this area have grown up since then.

You are now coming up to the road leading to the former queen Elizabeth Hospital, which are now private residences. Please watch out for traffic.

8 Bare ground beneath the large beech trees is caused because the beech canopy casts dense shade. Much of the thickly growing evergreen scrub in this area is holly, which is shade tolerant. It is of great value to birds and other fauna, including invertebrates that feed on their fruits and disperse their seeds.

9 Invasive rhododendron was cleared from this area. The land is now starting to recover and native trees and plants are starting to grow again, including carpets of bluebells in the spring.

10 Look out for the scots pine here, one of only 3 native conifer species found in Britain. There is an owl nest box on the south side of the tree.

11 Look out for an ash tree to the left of the path. Ash is commonly found on chalk soils, so this tree indicates that there is an outcrop of chalk here.

12 Rowan, a small native tree with attractive red berries, is an important winter food for birds. This is also a good area to look out for flocks of finches in the winter (particularly redpoll).



Scots pine with owl nest box



Sweet chestnut coppice

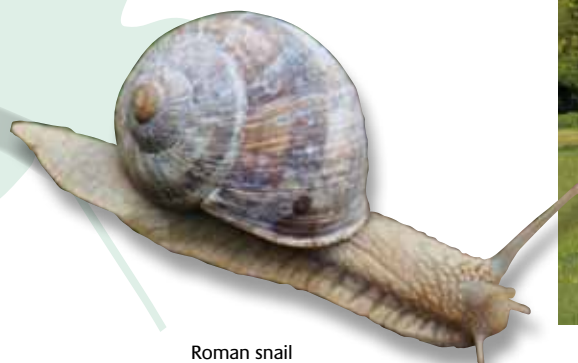
13 The massive sweet chestnut coppice stool here is probably around 300 years old; its large size is due to fast growth rather than old age. Sweet chestnut is not a native tree; it was introduced by the Romans over 2,000 years ago. The tree had two main uses, firstly as a food source and secondly for timber. It is thought the tree was brought here as the nuts were a good source of energy and could be ground into flour.

14 It is thought that this pond was created in medieval times for the benefit of animals that were hunted in the wood. This pond is the last of 7 ponds that were historically found within the area. Ponds like this are important for frogs, toads, newts and dragonflies, and are a vital source of water for badgers and deer. This pond was restored in October 2011.

15 These fields here were once part of the woodland, but were cleared to grow food during World War I. They were still used to grow corn up until the 1980's. Now the area has been replanted with trees so it can return to woodland. This is one of the best places to see summer migrant birds, including willow warbler, linnets, garden warblers, blackcaps and whitethroats. The goat willow tree here is an important food source for caterpillars of the purple emperor butterfly.



A juvenile Whitethroat



Roman snail



Stub oak coppice

16 The strange tree by this post is a stub oak coppice stool, half way between a coppice stool and a pollard, used to produce specialised timber for ship building.

17 Notice the ancient reverse ditch near to the pollarded beech tree. This ditch would originally have been 1 metre deep with a 1 metre bank on the left hand side. Topped with dead wood, this made a deer-proof barrier to stop deer grazing young coppice shoots.

You are now at the end of the trail, to get back to the car park carry on down the path, turn right and then left and carry on until you reach a gate. Turn right and follow the path through the flower rich meadow back to the car park.



Walk back across the meadow to the car park

Pollarding

Pollarding involves cutting a deciduous tree 2-3m above the ground. This does not kill the tree; instead it causes it to send out shoots around the cut.

These branches are allowed to grow to the required size and then the tree is cut again, producing the characteristic shape. Pollards tend to live longer than uncut trees, and have often been used as boundary markers.



Coppicing

Coppicing is an ancient, beneficial method of woodland management that has been carried out in this country

for thousands of years. The trees are cut in a similar way as pollarding, but at ground level. Hornbeam coppice is traditionally cut on a 20-30 year cycle, as opposed to hazel that is cut every seven years. The length of time between cuts depends on the size of timber required. This traditional method benefits the woodland ground flora, by allowing more light to reach the woodland floor.



Compass timber

For many years the woods were also used to produce 'compass timber'.

These are large structural pieces of wood used to make the frames of various naval and other wooden ships until iron ships became common from the 1850's onwards. The relative scarcity of suitable trees and their critical importance for shipbuilding meant these timbers were the most valuable and most expensive type of building timber. Stubb oak coppice is halfway between a coppice stool and a pollard – two or three years after coppicing, the new shoots were bent, staked and tied to produce timber with 45, 90 and 135 degree angles. This timber made extremely strong structures.



Orchards

Old orchards are increasingly rare, mainly due to the increase in imports of modern varieties that provide cheap fruit throughout the year. Old orchards have often occupied the same piece of land for centuries and have been managed without chemicals, making them a very valuable habitat for wildlife as well as preserving old, rare and locally significant fruit varieties. The old trees themselves provide lots of texture for invertebrates, including ladybirds that spend the winter under the loose bark. Pollen, nectar and fallen fruit are a good food source for insects which are in turn eaten by birds, bats and other mammals. This habitat is also good for stag beetles, as well as a wide variety of fungi.



Apple blossom

Rhododendron invasion

Rhododendron is a shrub that was introduced from Asia. In Britain there are no insects, fungi or bacteria to keep it in check, so it can spread rapidly through woodlands at the expense of trees and plants that are important for our wildlife. The dense shade restricts the growth of ground plants and saplings, and poison from the leaves kills off young plants and even mature trees. If rhododendron is left it would completely take over, and so it needs to be controlled. It is also a host of sudden oak death, a disease that kills oaks and other trees. The Downlands Project has spent over 20 years clearing rhododendron from the woods, mainly through the annual 'Rhodie round-up' which attracts help from over 150 volunteers from the local community, scout groups and other conservation groups. Most of the rhododendron has been cleared from the woods now; a great success for people and wildlife.



Many local volunteers have helped to clear the woods of Rhododendron