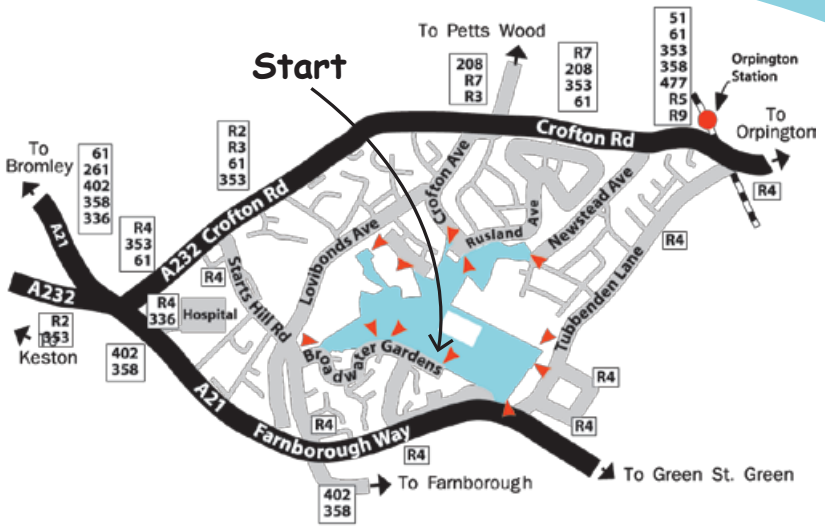
Darrick & Newstead Woods Local Nature Reserve

How to Get There..

Darrick & Newstead Woods can be reached using the following bus routes:-

61 Bromley to Chislehurst via Locksbottom & Orpington Stn.
208 Orpington to Lewisham via Petts Wood & Bromley
261 Princess Royal Hospital to Lewisham via Bromley & Grove Park
336 Bromley to Locksbottom via Bickley
353 Orpington (Ramsden Estate) to Addington via Orpington Stn., Locksbottom, Keston Mark & Hayes Stn.
358 Orpington Stn. to Crystal Palace via Farnborough, Bromley, Beckenham & Penge
402 Bromley to Tunbridge Wells via Farnborough & Sevenoaks (Mon-Sat, not evenings)
R2 Petts Wood to Biggin Hill via Orpington Stn. & Locksbottom
R3 Princess Royal University Hospital to Chelsfield via Petts Wood & Orpington Stn.
R4 Princess Royal University Hospital to Paul's Cray Hill via Orpington & St Mary Cray
R7 Bickley to Orpington via Orpington Stn. (Mon-Sat, not evenings)



Access point
Local Nature Reserve

Trains: Nearest Stn: Orpington
The following additional buses call here: 51, 477, R5, R6, R8, R9, R10

Correct at time of going to press. For up-to-date information about train and bus times phone Traveline on 0843 222 1234 or see http://journeyplanner.tfl.gov.uk

If you are interested in finding out more about Darrick & Newstead Woods Local Nature Reserve or would like to become involved in caring for the site and its wildlife there is a Friends of Darrick & Newstead Woods Group. For more details and up to date information about Bromley's Countryside, including accessibility and nature trails contact: Bromley Countryside Service on 01689 862815, e-mail countrysideandparks@bromley.gov.uk or see www.bromleybiodiversity.co.uk

EMERGENCY PHONE: 020 8464 4848

Drawing & Design by Alchemy Art & Design
Bromley THE LONDON BOROUGH
Countryside & Parks Service Bromley
grassroots grants
The Capital Community Foundation

What to see in Darrick and Newstead Woods

The trail leads through 25 hectares (ha) of woodland and meadows which form part of the watershed between the Rivers Ravensbourne and Cray. The area was probably part of the 200ha estate attached to Crofton Roman Villa (by Orpington Station) and it has been managed by man ever since. Look for some of the many plants and animals which live in this historic landscape. Some are indicated by posts numbered and banded in green. Others may be difficult to spot and are shown in some of the pictures opposite. Tick the circles and see how many can you find!

Score: 15-20 Very Good Vole! 20-50 Wonderful Woodpecker! over 50 Brilliant Bullfinch!

Looking back to the past

Flint scrapers and fire-cracked stones found around Darrick & Newstead Woods show the area was used by man over 4000 years ago. In the Domesday Book (1087) it was part of Crofton Manor which was sold in the early 1500s to Sir Robert Rede, Chief Justice for Henry VII and VIII. He donated it to charity and in 1553 it came into the possession of St Thomas's Hospital. Darrick Wood is ancient and was an important source of fuel, timber and wood products, obtained by regular coppicing (cutting the trees to just above ground level and allowing them to regrow). Gypsies used to spend the winter here and were probably employed to do this. The meadows were farmed to meet changing local needs and those of expanding London; the 1841 tithe map records them as growing crops.

The area near the swimming pool formed part of the grounds of Darrick Wood House, built in 1890 and from 1926-1939 the home of the Newport Market Army Band School, a Shaftesbury charity school originally set up for poor boys in Victorian London. Houses were built around the area from the 1930s and Kent County Council bought the remaining land from St Thomas's Hospital in 1957. Ownership passed to the London Borough of Bromley in 1965.

How to get around

The trail is about 2.5 miles (4 kms) long and shown by numbered or marked posts. It may be muddy at times, with steps and some gradients of more than 10% (1:10): see map, centre page. Please follow the Countryside Code, keep to main footpaths and remove your dog waste. Horse riding and cycling are not allowed. Bromley's Parks and Open Spaces By-laws apply.

Some of the living things that make this area special


A


B


C

In the semi-natural ancient woodland...

A Early Purple Orchid: Flowers in April, pollinated by bumblebees and some solitary bees.

B Pignut: Root is edible and was eaten by pigs.

C Wood Spurge: Nectar secreted by horseshoe-shaped glands attracts flies for pollination in April-June.


D


E

Lycogala terrestre: Above left: immature fruit body. Above right: mature fruit body produces spores

Fungi & slime moulds

D Dryad's Saddle: a parasite of deciduous trees.

E Slime Mould: About 360 species occur in the UK. Most feed by engulfing bacteria. They are often brightly coloured. Their spores produce individual swimming cells which group together to form a plasmodium- a slimy mass of protoplasm containing nuclei which creeps to places such as the tops of logs where it stops moving and forms a new fruitbody.

In the meadows...

F Meadow Saxifrage: a declining species of old grassland.

G Bee Orchid: found some years in the meadows.

H Field Vole: mark their runways with an unpleasant scent to warn away other voles but this emits ultraviolet radiation which can be seen by predatory birds eg kestrels.

I Cockchafer Beetle: larvae eat plant roots; pesticides often used to control them have reduced beetle numbers which has affected numbers of the larger bat species which feed on them.

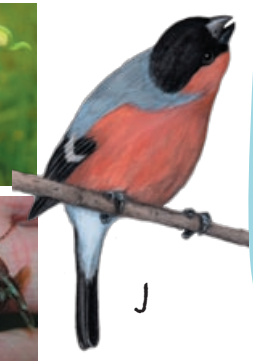
J Bullfinch: declining. Nests in thick scrub at the meadow edges.


F


G


H


I


J

In the wetland.....

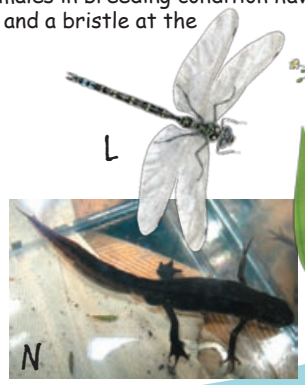
K Meadowsweet: grows in damp meadows and streamsides.

L Southern Hawker Dragonfly: hunts along hedgerows.

M Water Plantain: pollinated by tiny flies, its delicate lilac flowers close at night.

N Palmate Newt: males in breeding condition have webbed back feet and a bristle at the end of the tail.


K


L

N


M

The Nature Trail

Start opposite Hale Close where the footpath crosses the old ditch and bank along Broadwater Gardens. This marks the ancient boundary between Farnborough and Orpington parishes.

1 Look for green woodpeckers feeding on ants in the meadow. In summer cinnabar moth caterpillars feed on ragwort here. They are immune to the poisonous alkaloids it contains, store them and pass them on to the adult moths. The bright colours warn birds that both caterpillars and moths are poisonous. In autumn a type of puffball fungus can be found beneath the scrub. Like all fungi, it reproduces by dust-like spores. When raindrops fall on it they force spores out through a pore on the upper surface.

Above: Puffball-*Calvatia excipuliformis*

Right: Green Woodpecker
Top: Cinnabar Moth
Above: Cinnabar Moth caterpillars

Lovibonds Avenue
Swimming Pool
Crofton Avenue
Rusland Avenue
Stables End
Darrick Wood Secondary School
School playing field
Newstead Wood School for Girls
Tennis Centre
School playing field
DARRICK WOOD
School playing field
Tubbenden Primary School
Darrick Wood Junior School
16 steps
Community Centre
Broadwater Gardens
Broadwater Gardens
N
Start
16 steps
Cherrycot Hill
Tubbenden Recreation Ground
A21 Farnborough Way

Key
- Nature Trail
- London LOOP
- Public Footpath
- Entrance
- View Point
- Bench
- Steps

2 You have just crossed the watershed between the River Ravensbourne which drains to the north-west and the River Cray which drains to the north-east. At the viewing point ahead you can see the spire of Chelsfield Church and the North Downs.

3 As you walk down the hill look for field horsetail. This primitive plant belongs to a group which fossil evidence shows grew into tall trees at the time of the dinosaurs. Keep to the path, but in July see if you can spot pink pyramidal orchids. The yellow spikes are tall melilot which was often planted in the past to improve soil fertility. Many bees visit it- how many different types can you spot?

Above: Pyramidal Orchid
Middle Pictures: Field Horsetail: vegetative shoot
Field Horsetail: reproductive shoot with spore-bearing cone
Far right: Tall Melilot with Solitary Bee (*Halictus sp.*)

4 The soil at the foot of the slope is deeper and more nutrient rich than the upper slopes so plants growing here are those which need higher nitrogen and phosphate levels, eg nettle and hogweed. Follow the meadow edge looking for large white butterflies feeding on yarrow in summer and cherry plum which provides nectar for minibeasts in early spring and fruit for birds in autumn.

Above: Large White Butterfly on Yarrow
Below: Cherry Plum: blossom and fruit

5 Yellow meadow ants have built anthills at the edge of the scrub where tractors can't go. These nests may reach down 1 metre. The workers search amongst the grass at night for fly larvae and wireworms. They also feed on sweet honeydew exuded from aphids living underground on plant roots. Jackdaws nest in trees here. In winter look for starlings probing the meadow soil for insects, jackdaws look for minibeasts and seeds where grass is longer.

Starling with winter plumage

Above: Yellow Meadow Ant
Left: Jackdaw

6 The hedgeplants provide food and shelter for many minibeasts which are food for other minibeasts, toads, birds, shrews and hedgehogs. On warm summer evenings common pipistrelle bats feed on midges above the hedgerow, on windy nights they use it to mark the route from roosting sites to the more sheltered woodland. In winter, flocks of fieldfare and redwing from Scandinavia feed on berries here or search for minibeasts in the field. As you near post 7 look for lichen on the bark of two ash trees. Lichens are formed of a fungus and an alga living together.

Above: Common Pipistrelle Bat
Below: Left to Right
Lichen: *Lecidella elaeochroma*
Guelder Rose: fruit & flowers

Fieldfare

7 You have just crossed the ancient boundary into Darrick Wood. Look for coppiced stools which show where wood has been harvested many times. A coppiced ash stool 2 m in diameter may be 500 years old. How old do you think some of the ones you can see are? Listen for wrens: these tiny birds weigh less than a £1 coin but sing very loudly.

Above: Wren
Far left: Ash
Left: Coppiced stool

8 In front of you is Newstead Meadow, arable in 1841. In damp areas look for lady's-smock in spring, a food plant of orange-tip butterfly caterpillars. The adults fly April-July. In summer look for meadow vetchling which was encouraged by farmers because like other members of the pea family, its root nodules contain bacteria able to fix nitrogen in the air, forming nitrates which increase soil fertility. Its pods are therefore nutrient rich and improve hay quality.

Above: Orange-tip Butterfly on Lady's-smock

Meadow Vetchling

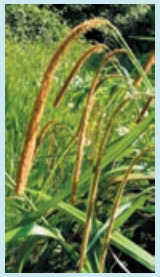
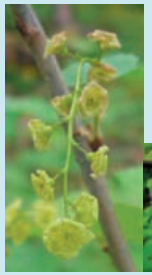
9 This area is marked on old maps as Darrick Common and adjoins Newstead Woods. Old ditches in the woodland show ancient boundaries. Look for wood anemone and greater stitchwort in spring, wych elm throughout the year. At night tawny owls sometimes call here, the females call 'twit' the males 'to whoo'.

Above: Wych Elm
Right: Greater Stitchwort

Tawny Owl

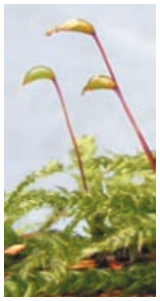
Turn left. Walk 100m along Crofton Ave then turn left along the London LOOP path to re-enter Darrick Wood

10 Frogs breed in this seasonal pond in early spring. Look for pendulous sedge with its triangular stems typical of sedges. Each flowering stalk has 4-5 female spikes but just one male flower spike at the top. Red currants grow in damp soil here.


Above: Pendulous Sedge
Above Right: Red Currant: flowers & leaf
Right: Common Frog

11 To your left is an ancient coppiced field maple. As you walk on, listen for woodpeckers drumming to declare their territory in spring. In winter look for mosses growing at tree bases where it is damp- they need water to reproduce. Broad buckler fern grows in the shade, reproducing by dust-like spores which are shed from protective 'sori' in late summer. Turn over a frond gently to have a look. Keep to the path, but in wet or snowy weather look for animal tracks which cross it and see if you can guess who lives here.



Left to Right:
Moss- *Hypnum cupressiforme*
Broad Buckler Fern
Great Spotted Woodpecker

12 The soil to the right of the path is sandy and well drained, so birch and bracken are common. On the other side of the path, the soil is richer and wetter; look for wild garlic in May, and sanicle, which was used in medieval times as a medicine. In autumn see how many different fungi you can spot.



Left to Right:
Shaggy Parasol Fungus
Sanicle
Wild Garlic

13 Coppiced alder grows in damp areas near the ditch. In February look for purple alder catkins (male) which will shed pollen, and small, pink, female cones on the same tree. The cones turn green, then brown and shed seeds in autumn. Nodules on alder roots contain bacteria which fix nitrogen in the air into a form which the tree can absorb. The tree supplies the bacteria with sugars made when it photosynthesises. This relationship allows alder to grow in waterlogged soils where nitrogen available to plants is low.


Alder: male catkins & female cones (spring)
Alder leaves & green cones in summer

14 In front of you is wild cherry. Look at its smooth, shiny bark with horizontal lenticels (channels for the movement of gases). Behind you a path leads past pollarded hornbeam. If you are very lucky you may see treecreepers climbing up the trees, spiralling around the trunks as they search for insects and spiders. At night they roost in crevices and in spring often build nests behind loose bark.

Tree Creeper



Cherry Bark
Hornbeam
Left middle: male catkins in spring
Left: fruit

15 In summer see how many minibeasts are drinking nectar from the bramble flowers and look for ichneumon wasps vibrating their antennae as they search for the scent of butterfly or moth caterpillars to lay their eggs on. In winter look for eggs of purple hairstreak butterflies at the base of oak buds. In spring tiny caterpillars hatch to feed on the buds. After pupating, adult butterflies emerge in July. Cowslips bloom amongst the grass in April.



Cowslip
Above right: Purple Hairstreak: eggs near oak bud
Ichneumon wasp

16 Look for grass vetchling in May. In summer listen for grasshoppers and crickets and look for creeping thistle which provides many insects with nectar. In autumn its seeds are eaten by goldfinches. See if you can spot galls on thistle stems. These protect the developing larvae of tiny thistle gall flies.




Above: Left to Right
Thistle Gall
Meadow Grasshopper
Goldfinch
Left: Grass Vetchling

Re-enter the wood by the barway

17 Both native oak trees and hybrids between them grow in this part of the wood. See if you can spot all 3. Moles have been digging underground tunnels close to the path. Look for wood melick, a grass of ancient woods, and lesser periwinkle.



Above- Left to Right:
Wood Melick
English Oak
Lesser Periwinkle

Sessile Oak

When you reach the edge of the wood walk straight on to return to the start. We hope you enjoyed the trail, come again soon.