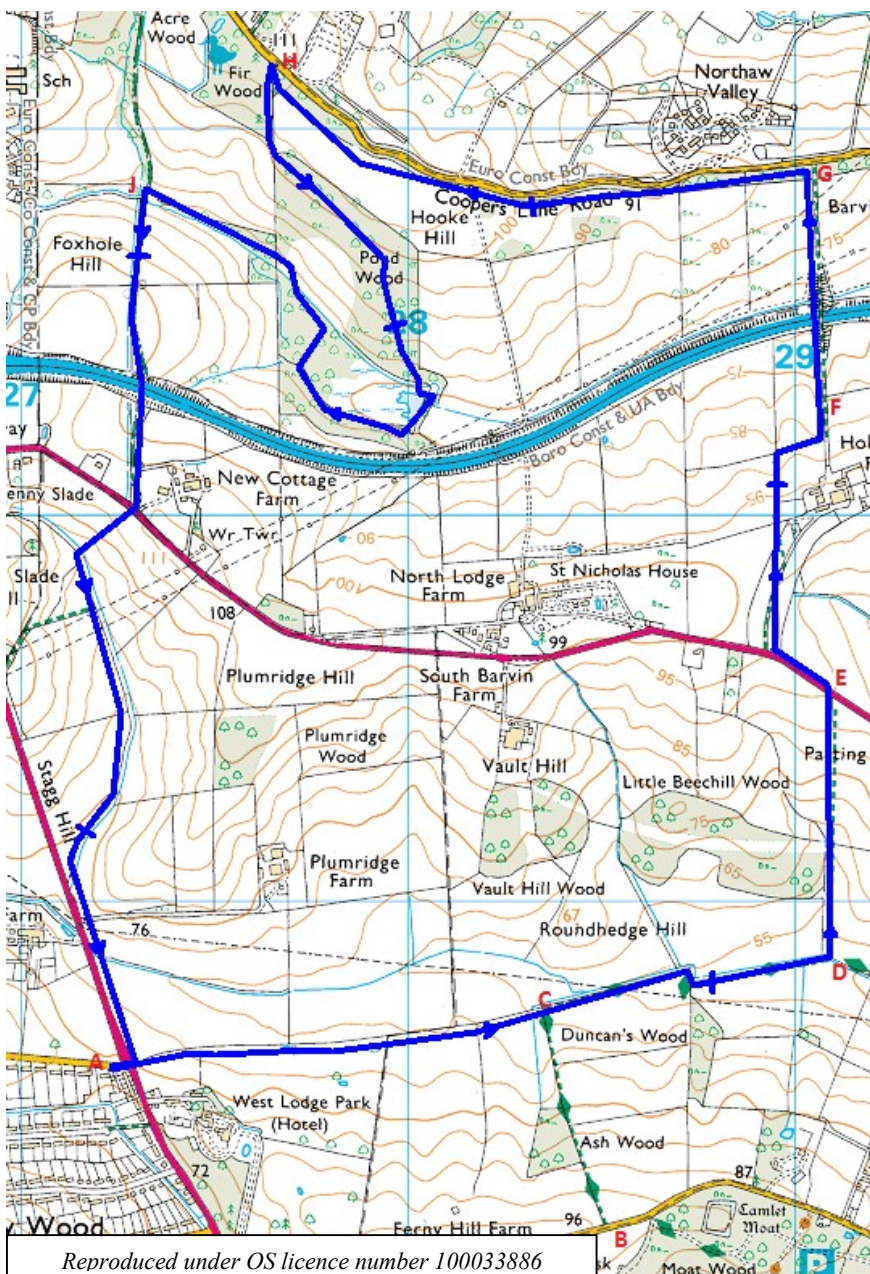


Explore Enfield Chase and Fir & Pond Woods

Enfield Chase was once a royal hunting ground covered by woodland. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have hunted there when still a princess. In 1777, it ceased to exist as an entity and its land was divided between local parishes. Within the London Borough of Enfield, much of the historic Enfield Chase is farmland, owned and rented out by Enfield Council. With the help of local footpath volunteers, Enfield Council has developed a network of footpaths, many of which you will not find on your OS map.

You will see many signs of the work of the Groundforce volunteers on the walk, as it uses some of these to explore Enfield Chase. A highlight is Fir & Pond Woods, old oak and hornbeam woodland widely thought to be the best remaining part of the ancient Enfield Chase. It is rich in wildlife with diverse woodland, meadow and wetland habitats, and includes a medieval fishpond. It is managed by the Hertfordshire Wildlife Trust, with its own team of volunteers.

The rights of way around Holly Hill Farm are rather less attractive. This is an unconventional working farm where novel ways of earning a living can be seen in action - not a typical rural scene. The paths are poorly maintained here, but the more we use them the better they will be.



Starting point: The East end of Waggon Road where it joins Stag Hill [A] (TQ 272 985). Limited free parking.

Public Transport to Waggon Road: 298 bus north from Cockfosters Tube Station, Piccadilly Line, or south from Potters Bar station, Great Northern trains.

[You could also join the route from Trent Park, by parking in the layby on Ferny Hill opposite the obelisk [B] (TQ 285 981), or in the northern car park inside Trent Park.] Length: 6.5 miles (7.2 miles from the layby on Ferny Hill)

There is no refreshment available on the route, but it is less than a mile north through Hook Wood to the Two Brewers pub at Northaw. If you would like a longer walk (10 to 12 miles) exploring further paths in Enfield Chase, go to our Area website at

www.ramblers.org.uk/hertfordshire-north-middlesex and follow the link to Walk Routes.

Waggon Road joins Stag Hill at a mini-roundabout [A]. To start the walk, take the path going east straight across the road at the mini-roundabout, following the field boundary hedge on your left. (The path is currently a lovely grassy swathe along the side of the field, but it is due to be upgraded by the end of 2017 to complete national cycle route 12 from Enfield Lock to Peterborough and beyond). After just over 1km, the path is joined by a path from Ferny Hill, Trent Park coming in on the right [C].

[From the alternative start point at the NW corner of Trent Park [B], walk down the signed path opposite the obelisk on Ferny Hill and turn right at [C]].

Continue straight ahead, the path becoming narrower with trees on the left beside Salmon's Brook and a low hedge on the right. You have now joined the London Loop path. 400m later, there is a kink right then left, then after a further 400m, the path turns left over a footbridge to cross Salmon's Brook [D].

From the footbridge, continue straight on up the hill. [The London Loop turns right alongside the brook. This is where the alternative long route branches off – see Area website]. In 700m, at the top of the hill, the path reaches The Ridgeway [E]. Cross the road: almost opposite (slightly to the left) you will see a gap in the hedge where a path takes you into the field (OR walk left along the road to use the right of way up the farm track, turning off to the left when you see the permissive coming in on the right- see * below). Turn left (west), following the hedge on your left, then through the hedge at the end of the field. Turn right (north), and walk up the field aiming for a point on the left side of the field short of the farm buildings. You will cross a fence via a stile half way up the field. At a rather hidden finger post, turn left over a stile to cross the farm track*. Your route ahead loops round the West side of Holly Hill Farm: the map is not entirely accurate, but follow the yellow arrows on green discs. After crossing the track, you enter a narrow path between a hedge on the left and a fence on the right. A large number of dogs were being exercised here when I walked through, but you are well protected from them. Follow the signs straight ahead through a rather overgrown path, then along the left edge of an open field and over a stile to turn right into woodland (planted by Groundforce volunteers). The path bears left as it emerges from the trees, passing an enormous compost heap (on your right) and then a long builders' fence (on your left). This fence guides you down a temporary diversion. The path finally turns right (east) through a gap in the hedge then left along a farm track (north) towards the M25 [F].

Continue on the track over the M25 and on up to Coopers Lane Road [G]. Here, turn sharp left (west) along the new bridleway. This route was created over 20 years ago by the same Groundforce volunteers, who planted the now maturing woodland you will pass through, on what is now a Right of Way. Follow the bridleway through the woods for about a mile, until you see a small green pond ahead of you (ignore a smaller pond you pass on the way). The path turns right to the road, then left. On your left, you will see the entrance to the Fir and Pond Woods nature reserve [H].

[If you want to have lunch at the Two Brewers in Northaw, continue 100m alongside Coopers Lane Road, passing the end of Firs Lane Close. Cross the road at the bridleway, taking you north into Hook Lane and past houses, until it becomes the track through Hook Wood. Turn left when you reach the road and you will see the pub on the right. Retrace your steps to return to the main route. The Nature Reserve entrance is opposite the entrance to the Oshwal Centre, a large estate owned by the Jain community with its own Jain Temple.]

Enter the nature reserve, passing the green pond on your left to an information board. Within the nature reserve, there are 3 marked trails – yellow, red and blue. Use the coloured posts to follow the yellow trail, which takes you south from Fir Wood into Pond Wood through two gates, and then left to do a large clockwise loop through coppiced hornbeams. If in doubt, the path keeps fairly near to the edge of the woods (on your left). At the lowest point of the woods, cross the stream on a footbridge. You will pass the medieval fish pond with a couple of viewing platforms. The trail continues through wetlands, finally crossing a footbridge and then on to rejoin the blue and red trails.

At the first 3-coloured post, go straight ahead (leaving the marked trails which are turning right) to cross a plank footbridge. The path takes you west through a strip of trees, with Turkey Brook to your left (the same stream that continues down to Forty Hall Estate), and open fields above you on your right. It finally emerges at a wide track by a bridge over the brook [J].

Turn left down this track, over the bridge. Continue south, uphill and then downhill towards the motorway. The now dense hawthorn hedge on your left is more of the work of Groundforce. Continue down through the underpass under the M25 (may be some flooding) and up past houses to The Ridgeway. Cross the road, and take the right of way downhill (good blackberries on the right in season!) Over the plank bridge at the bottom of the hill, turn left to follow the path through the trees. At a gateway, the right of way turns right up the hill. Continue straight ahead along the path following the brook on your left until the path comes close to Stag Hill. Just before you reach the end of the narrowing field, watch out for a gap in the hedge on your left with a plank bridge to take you over the stream into the next field. Continue south parallel to Stag Hill, which is through the hedge on your right. Pass through kissing gates to cross a farm track, then along the field edge, turning right over another footbridge. Continue down the edge of the next field and over a plank bridge to your start point on the right [A].

[If you started the walk from Ferny Hill, turn left here. Follow the field boundary hedge on our left for over 1km to the path junction [C]. Turn right up the hill to your start point [B]]