

# Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands Trail Guide

Discover the wetlands on the  
Manhood Peninsula in West Sussex





# Introduction

The Manhood Peninsula is a low-lying, triangular coastal plain, directly south of Chichester. Ditches are interwoven across the Peninsula and they feed into relic farm ponds. The management of this unique network of waterways is vital for wildlife and people.

From 2015 to 2021, the Heritage Lottery Funded project, Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands (FLOW), assessed the condition of all ditches on the Peninsula and transformed a number of previously unmanaged ditches and ponds into idyllic, interconnected wetland features, now cherished by local communities and enriched for wildlife.




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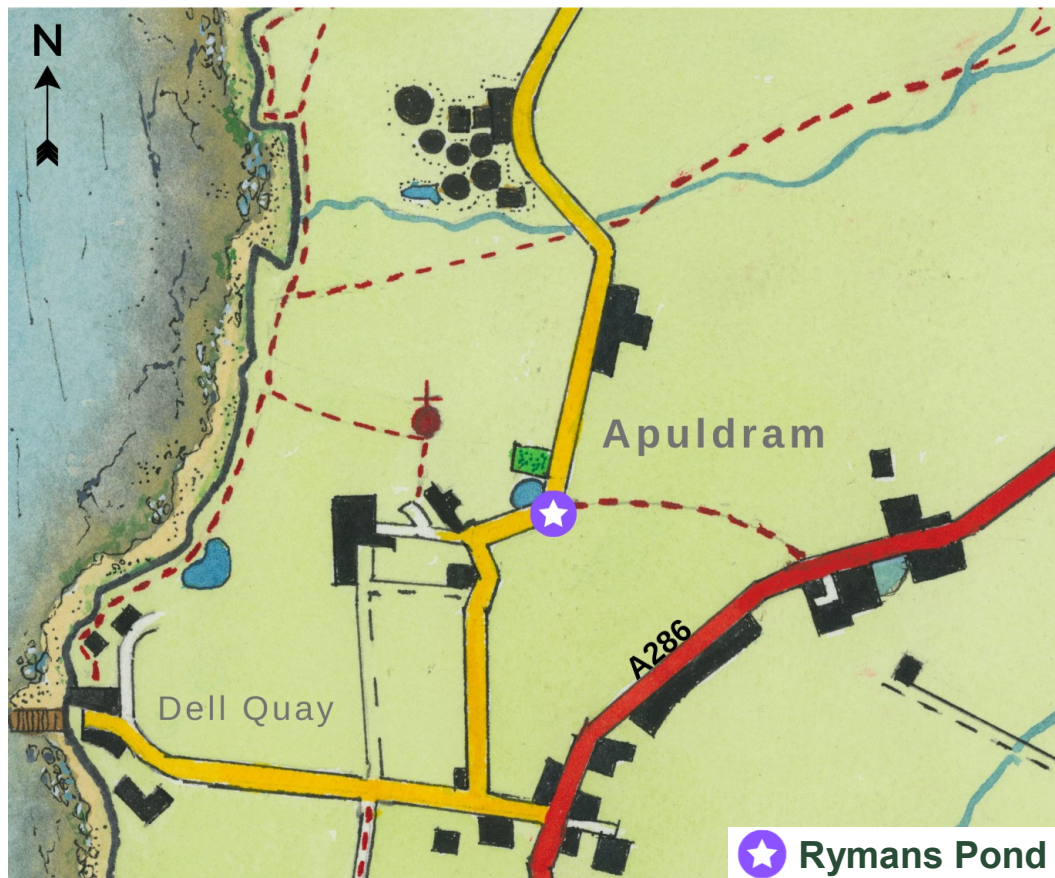
## **How to use this Trail Guide**



The Trail Guide is divided into nine out of the eleven parishes on the Manhood Peninsula. Each parish has a map showing the site locations, and some parishes have a short walking route option, giving you an exciting opportunity to encounter other fascinating local heritage features along the way. Just look out for the footprints... 

# Apuldram

Apuldram lies on the north-east coast of Chichester Harbour with the River Lavant running through it.



**Parking:** Church of St Mary the Virgin, PO20 7EG

**Public transport:** Bus 52/53 stops along the A286

After viewing the pond from the roadside, stroll west and take the footpath to the 12th century church. Take the footpath left to enjoy harbour views. Head south to Dell Quay, once a major sea port that exported large amounts of wool from sheep on the South Downs. Head back the way you came.



# Rymans Pond

Named after the medieval stone house and walled gardens that it belongs to, Rymans Pond plays an important role in local drainage and habitat connectivity.

A relic farm pond, it appears on the 1838 tithe map and was once used for watering livestock and cleaning cartwheels. However, it became neglected and full of silt and rubbish.

Hardy FLOW volunteers cleared overgrown vegetation and picked litter from the banks. Tree surgeons cut back the dominating willow trees to improve visibility for road users on the bend and increase the amount of sunlight on the water.

The pond bed was deepened to increase its carrying capacity so that it holds water year-round. Native trees like **hazel**, **crab apple** and **field maple** have been planted on the banks, and much of the area has been left for wildflowers, attracting **bees**, **butterflies**, **birds** and **aquatic invertebrates**.



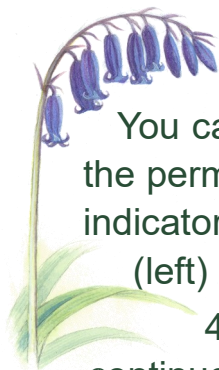
# Hunston

Hunston is a small village situated just south of, and about half way along, Chichester Canal.



**Approx 1.5 miles:**

1. Starting at Church Lane Pond, continue down the lane towards St Leodegar's Church. Hunston has had a church since at least the 12th century, but the present one was rebuilt in 1885.
2. Walk to the end of a gravel driveway by Church Farm and take the footpath left, along a track between fields.
3. After a third of a mile, Hunston Copse, a clump of ancient woodland, will be on your left.  
You can walk around the edge of the woodland, or take the permissive footpath through it. Note ancient woodland indicator species such as **butcher's broom**, **bluebell** (left) and **wood anemone**.
4. When you reach the other side of the copse, continue south along its periphery and cross a footbridge then turn right. You eventually come out on the B2145 road.
5. Turn left and walk 50m down the main road, then turn left along Church Lane to return to the pond.



**Parking:** Car park at Poyntz Bridge, Hunston. PO20 1NR  
**Public transport:** Bus 51, stops outside the Spotted Cow pub





# Church Lane Pond

Church Lane in Hunston features an important ditch that carries water away from surrounding arable fields. However, this ditch was prone to unexplained severe flooding.



In 2017, the FLOW team began investigating the reasons behind why the lane was flooding, and they discovered this secretive pond. The pond was clogged with greater reedmace (left) and its bed was full of silt, unable to hold more than just a shallow pool of water.

With the help of volunteers, the pond has been restored into a tranquil wetland habitat with a deeper bed to significantly reduced the flood risk. Coir rolls—large cylindrical rolls of natural coconut husk fibre—were integrated into the pond’s banks. Coir rolls prevent erosion and provide a fertile base for wetland plants to grow and stabilise their roots.



In summer, the banks are blooming with **great willowherb, yellow flag iris, meadow buttercup and marsh woundwort**. Look out for a small, chestnut brown bird of prey. **Kestrels** (left) will rest on hedgerows and gateposts. They also frantically hover in the nearby fields, looking for small mammal prey.





## Before

Pond inaccessible  
and overgrown with  
greater reedmace



## During

FLOW volunteers  
installing coir rolls



## After

Open areas of water  
with wildflowers on  
the banks

# North and South Mundham

Situated at the northern-most edge of the Manhood Peninsula, this parish contains two scenic wetland sites that you can walk or cycle between.



 **Approx. 2.8 miles:**

1. Starting at the Relic Canal, wander up and down the footpath alongside the canal and take in the sights.
2. At the western end of the canal path, head south along Church Road, past St Stephen's Church, and turn right onto Fisher Lane. After 250m take the footpath left across fields. At the lane, turn left and Camic Pond will be on your right.
3. To make the route circular, head north along Runcion Lane and take the first footpath on the left that appears just before a triangle junction. The footpath takes you along field edges and is partly parallel to Pagham Rife.
4. Emerge on Post Office Lane turning right, then right again onto Church Road, back towards the Relic Canal.

**Parking:** North Mundham Village Hall car park, PO20 1LA

**Public transport:** Bus 600, stops outside the primary school 10





# Relic Canal

This was once part of the Ford to Hunston canal which opened in 1823 and stretched 12 miles from Ford on the River Arun to Salterns Lock. It was used for transporting cargo, including gold bullion from Portsmouth to the Bank of England, complete with armed guards on the barges.

Intended as a key trade route, it was not a success. The canal closed in 1847 because bigger and better ships, coupled with an end to the Napoleonic wars, meant that the coastal route was a cheaper and easier option.





# Wildlife at the Relic Canal

This segment of the canal sadly regressed into an untidy rubbish tip with a low diversity of wetland plants and overcrowding trees. However, it has been transformed by the FLOW team into a bright and colourful space that is cherished by the local community.



The canal was deepened to hold water year-round, and trees were cut back to let sunlight through. It now has a wider diversity of plants and has become an important wildlife corridor for **amphibians, hedgehogs, bats, and birds.**

In summer, vivid **foxgloves** and **yellow flag iris** attract busy **bumblebees**, and you might see the woolly grey leaves and tall yellow flower spikes of the **greater mullein** plant (right).



Native fruiting trees, including **cherry, blackthorn, holly** and **spindle**, were planted along the footpath. Trees were carefully selected for their bounties of nuts, fruits and berries, relished by **blackbirds, song thrushes, bank voles** and **wood mice**. And the tree blossom is loved by pollinating insects. Look out for the **speckled wood butterfly** (left) on a dry, sunny day.





# Camic Pond



This relic farm pond appears on the 1846 tithe maps for the parish. It would have originally been used for watering livestock and cleaning cartwheels. Left unmanaged, the pond filled with silt and was unable to hold water, so after heavy rainfall events the lane would flood.

FLOW volunteers cut back the overgrown willow and brambles to let more sunlight onto the pond and banks and to make room for wildflowers. The pond was dug deeper to increase its capacity so it can now hold lots of water year-round without flooding. This wet habitat suits **frogs**, **toads**, **nests**, **waterfowl**, and **water voles**.

Before the improvements, the central island could not be seen and was only brought into view when vegetation was cut back. The island is a sanctuary for wildlife, offering protection from people and predators.

However, the non-venomous **grass snake** (right) is a competent swimmer and enjoys feeding on amphibians, fish and waterfowl eggs.



# Wildlife at Camic Pond

Dead hedges and log piles were created around the pond to make habitat for **stag beetles**, **slow worms**, and **hedgehogs**, as well as to act as a buffer from the lane. Native fruiting trees were planted to increase the diversity of tree species.

Marginal wildflowers such as **yellow flag iris**, **water mint**, and **purple loosestrife** are a great source of nectar for pollinating insects. In summer, look out for the **gatekeeper** (left) and **meadow brown** (right) butterflies.



On a summer's evening, you might catch a glimpse of **bats** pursuing flying insects as they dart over the pond. **Roe deer** and **badgers** are occasionally spotted drinking from the pond in summer, and they leave their tell-tale footprints in the mud.





# Birdham

Birdham is a sailing village situated on Chichester Harbour, just south of Chichester Marina.



**Parking:** St James' Church, Church Lane, PO20 7HG

**Public transport:** Bus 52/53 stops along the A286



**Approx. 1.5 miles.** At the 14th century church—note the magnificent, twisted cedar tree in the churchyard—cross the triangle to see the village pond. Turn left to visit the other two ponds and continue along the lane. Take the next footpath right, onto the coastal path. At Court Barn Lane, turn right heading back to the church.



# Birdham Village Pond

This pond used to fill up with silt and it was shaded in overgrown vegetation. The FLOW team dug out the silt and deepened the pond bed. Thick vegetation was cut back to allow sunlight onto the pond and to support important **oxygenating plants**.

Since the improvements, the pond holds more water and is less likely to become stagnant as sunlight can reach it. **Bats** have been observed feeding here in summer, and **water voles**, the UK's fastest declining mammal, have moved back after many years of absence!



Water voles are small, semi-aquatic mammals that thrive on the variety of wetland plants here. The Manhood Peninsula is a stronghold for them.



Before



After

# Triangle Pond



Previously overlooked and neglected, this pond was too shallow to hold water and the copse was too overgrown to offer much variety for wildlife. The FLOW team widened, deepened and reconnected the pond to the wider ditch network so it can carry water out to sea.

Dominating sycamore and willow trees were cut back to create new open areas that were seeded with native wildflowers, including **ox-eye daisy**, **teasel** and **red campion** to feed birds and pollinating insects. **Hazel**, **cherry**, **crab apple** and other fruiting trees were also planted for wildlife.

Coir rolls were partially-submerged in the pond. The rolls contain a mix of wetland plants such as **yellow flag iris** and **purple loosestrife**, a favourite with **bumblebees**. The winding wood-chip path was added so everyone can enjoy the copse.



Can you hear the delicate, high-pitched squeaky song of the **goldcrest**? It is the UK's smallest bird weighing only 5-6g!





# Kingfisher Pond

Torrential rainfall events in 2012 and 2013 left this section of the lane completely underwater. The pond was congested by willow trees, whose roots had inadvertently built a dam, resulting in a backlog of silt. This was compromising a nearby culvert and grill which are both designed to carry flood water away from the lane.



To improve this pond, the obstructing willow trees were removed and the bed was dug deeper to increase its capacity. This has significantly reduce the flooding risk here, and as the pond is more open it is home to lots more wildlife.

Wetland plants such as **water forget-me-not** and **water mint** are a great food for rare **water voles** which have been sighted here since improvements were made.



*Water mint*

# West Itchenor

Famed for its world-renowned sailing club and home to Chichester Harbour Conservancy.



**Parking:** Layby opposite St Nicholas' Church, PO20 7DA

**Approx. 2.5 miles.** From the 13th century church, head towards the coast and take the footpath that leads straight on, where the road bends right. Follow this footpath to the coastline and turn right to walk through woodland. Pass through the boatyard and once out on the main road, turn right to walk back to the church.



# West Itchenor Village Pond

West Itchenor has suffered from flooding in the past. This can be exacerbated during high tide when water is locked on the landside of the seawall.

This pond takes water from a large catchment area. Overtime, it filled with silt and was inadequate as a flood defence, because it could not take in lots of rainwater. The exit weir on the other side of the lane was lowered to allow more water to gush through quickly.



*Hemlock water dropwort*

Dominating plants like **hemlock water dropwort** were reduced and a variety of wildflowers and wetland plants were introduced to enrich the biodiversity around the pond. **Frogs, toads, newts** and **invertebrates** thrive in the pond and **bats** skim over the water, feasting on midges on a summer's evening.



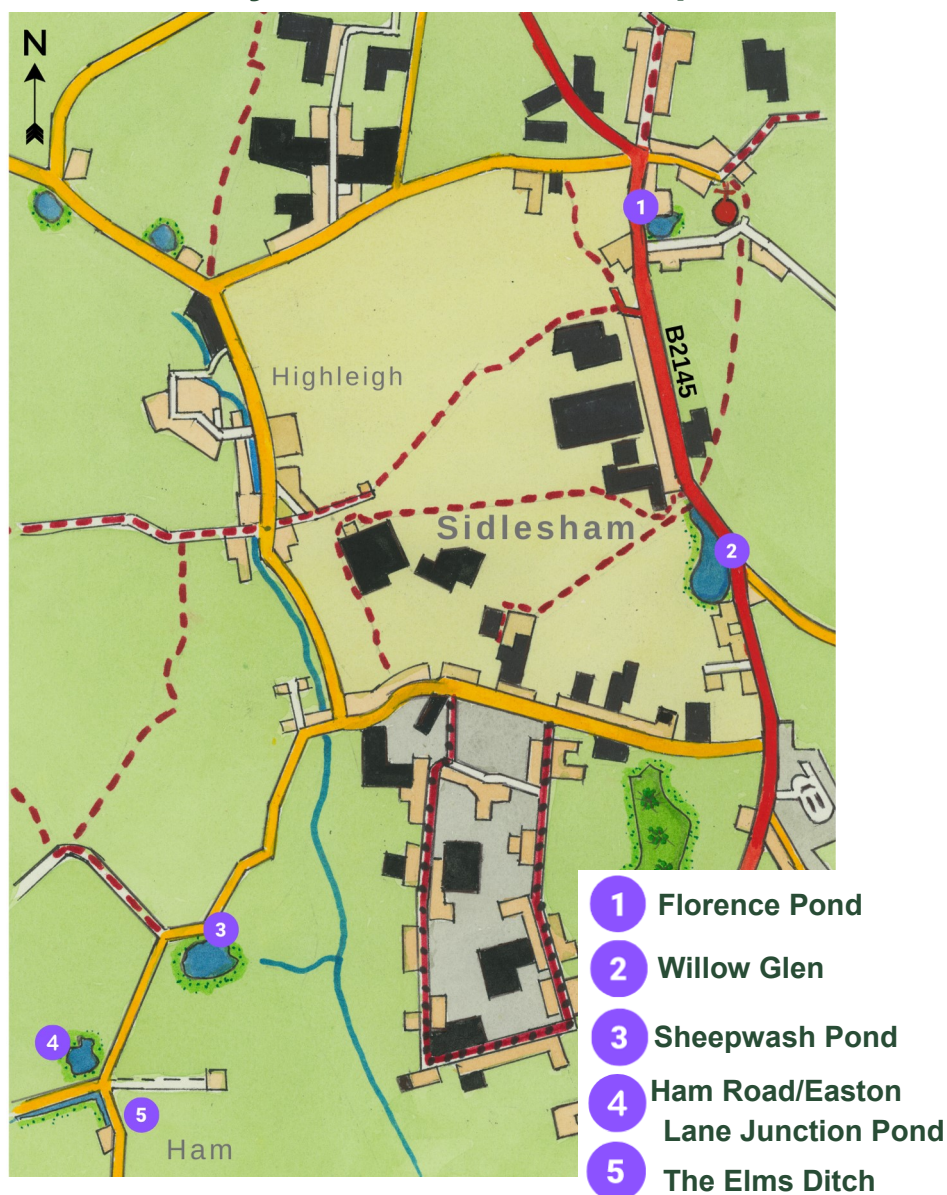
**Before**



**After**

# Sidlesham

This large parish is a flat, low-lying area with an extensive ditch system and relic farm ponds.



**Public transport:** Bus 51 stops along the



# Florence Pond

Florence Pond lies at the heart of the village, adjacent to the village hall and near the Church of St Mary Our Lady. It was historically used by farmers for washing cart wheels

The pond is home to a colony of rare **water voles**, and it is one of the only places on the Peninsula to see the **bog bean** plant (right) which blooms with star-shaped white flowers in the spring.

The FLOW team have gently managed the vegetation in the autumn to ensure that the banks still receive lots of sunlight, encouraging a diversity of wildflowers to grow.

Dead wood material is piled beneath the trees for **slow worms**, **hedgehogs** and **short-tailed field voles**. In early summer, you might see a **bee orchid** on the banks of the pond if you are lucky!



*Bee orchid*



# Willow Glen

This large pond was historically used by Selsey fishermen to make crab and lobster pots from the new willow growth that they cut annually.

However, when this tradition stopped, the pond was left unmanaged and the willow took over, along with bramble and nettle. Some willow trees were cut back and the banks were sown with native **wildflower** seed and a mix of **fruiting trees** for wildlife.

Willow Glen receives water from the very north of the parish and carries it out to sea via Pagham Harbour. The pond bed was dug deeper to carry more water after heavy

rainfall and to stay wet year-round. Wetland plants such as



**marsh marigold** (left) were established in the pond and the response from wildlife was immediate.

**Bumblebees, butterflies** and **birds** moved in just weeks after the works, and even **eels** were seen in the pond, where it wouldn't have been possible for them to thrive before.



Before



During



After



# Sheepwash Pond

This was not a pond when the FLOW team discovered it, but a clump of willow trees. It appears on an 1846 tithe map of the parish, but it had not been managed in decades.

Some mature trees had potential **bat** features—rot holes, cracks or splits—and were left alone. Other trees were gently cut back to reveal the pond.

Log pile habitats were made for wildlife such as **hedgehogs** and **wood mice** (left).

Once thick bramble was reduced, a large depression in the pond was discovered. A digger was used to deepen this section, along with two adjoining ditches that carry water into the pond.

The lane is now well-protected from flooding as this pond can capture lots of water after heavy rainfall.





# The Elms Ditch

This ditch used to be completely hidden by fallen willow trees and a thick wall of bramble.

FLOW volunteers, a digger and a tree surgeon removed the fallen trees and widened the ditch to allow it to hold more rain water.



The ditch now alleviates severe flooding on the lane while providing local wildlife with fresh water, food and shelter. Wetland plants, native fruiting trees and wildflowers were established to improve local biodiversity. **Bank voles** can be heard rustling among the grasses and **roe deer** sometimes stop here for a drink.





# Ham Road-Easton Lane Junction Pond



This relic farm pond appears on old tithe maps of the parish. However, it was unmanaged and had become shallow. The headwall—a small retaining wall placed at the inlet or outlet of a culvert—had been badly damaged by traffic.

The headwall was replaced and planted over with a mix of bee and butterfly-friendly wildflower seeds, including **knapweed**, **cornflower**, **teasel**, **red clover** and **borage**.



The pond was dug out so it would stay wet year-round, and it was reconnected to adjacent ditches so that wildlife can move across the landscape easily along natural channels known as ‘wildlife corridors’.



After

# West Wittering

At the mouth of Chichester Harbour, West Wittering is renowned for its large expanse of firm sand and East Head, a sand dune spit with salt marsh nestled behind it. Common seals can be spotted here at high tide.

 **Approx. 2 miles with optional 1.5 mile add on.**

1. From the western end of the main beach car park, take the footpath right, overlooking saltmarsh on your left. Look for wading birds such as the orange-billed **oystercatcher**, listen for the 'peewit' calls from a **lapwing**, or spy a camouflaged **curlew** (right) with its long, downcurved bill.
2. After a third of a mile you will emerge onto a triangular grassy field. Keep right and follow Coastguard Lane. At the first footpath fork, turn left to walk between caravans and out across a small field.
3. Hop over the stone stile leading up to St Peter and St Paul's Church. Walk towards the church and exit the churchyard through a gate on your left.
4. Turn right, passing the primary school on your left. When you emerge onto the lane which runs south to the beach car park, you'll see both the FLOW wetland sites in front of you as they are opposite each other. There is a narrow gravel footpath that separates the sites and is a good place to view the stream from.
5. Continue back to the car park by heading down the same lane you drove in on.
6. To make your walk 1.5 miles longer, go back to point 1 and head straight onto the spit to walk a circular loop around East Head. You can either walk on the beach or along the boardwalk through the dunes, keeping to the permissive paths.







**Parking:** West Wittering Car Park, Pound Rd, PO20 8AJ

**Public transport:** Bus 52/53 stops in the village

# Cakeham Manor Estate



This wetland copse was previously being used as an unofficial green waste area, leaving it cluttered and unsightly. Dominating willows and bramble had taken over, hiding the small stream.


**Before** Local residents and FLOW volunteers transformed the site by cutting back the overgrown vegetation, including non-native leylandii trees and bamboo, and removing lots of garden waste. Native fruiting trees were then planted around the site to support wildlife.

Ongoing management ensures sunlight can reach the stream supporting the abundance of **wildflowers** that flourish on the banks and form the basis of a healthy food chain.

Look out for a dazzling electric blue jewel darting across the stream, it could be a **kingfisher**!



**After**



Can you see the **pendulous sedge** fringing the stream? Its leaves are so strong they could be used as rope!



# West Wittering Estate

This site is connected to the Cakeham Manor Estate via the stream. It used to be full of willow and sycamore trees that cast dark shade across the site.

Some trees were removed with planning permission, and the wood was used to create a bordering dead hedge and log piles. These dead wood habitats are ideal for **wood mice**, **slow worms**, hibernating **frogs** and **hedgehogs**.

With the increase in sunlight, wildflowers including **lesser celandine**, **yellow flag iris**, **teasel** and **red campion** sprung to life and colonised the understory and stream banks.



The stream is home for semi-aquatic **water voles** (left) who eat a huge variety of tasty wetland plants including rushes, sedges and reeds!



# Bracklesham and East Wittering

**This area is dominated by urban and agricultural land, so the creation and management of wild areas here is particularly important.**

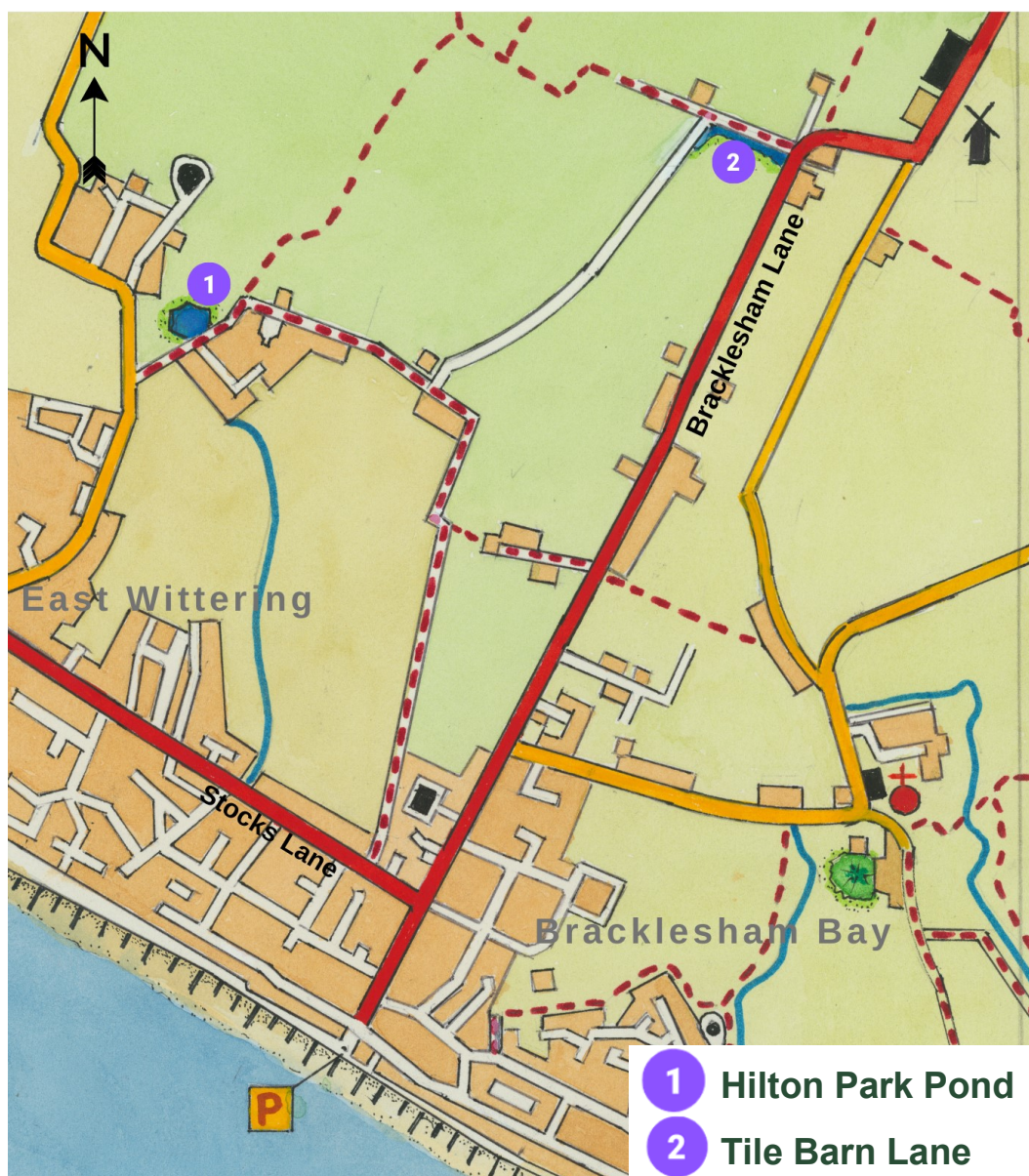
 **Approx. 2 miles.**

1. Walk north-east from Hilton Park Pond, keeping the tennis court and fence on your left, following the road as it bends left and then take the footpath leading straight on as the road bends right.
2. Follow the footpath between fields. At the first footpath fork, turn right, and ignore an upcoming footpath on your left.
3. The path bends to the left and then right again, before you emerge onto Tile Barn Lane.
4. Keep walking straight ahead to view the managed ditches and then retreat your steps to head back to Hilton Park Pond.



**Hilton Park Pond**





- 1 Hilton Park Pond
- 2 Tile Barn Lane

**Parking:** Church Farm Lane, East Wittering, PO20 8RL

**Public transport:** Bus 52/53 stops in East Wittering

# Hilton Park Pond

Hilton Park Pond was originally a dried-out rubbish tip, shaded by willow trees and overcrowded with brambles, yet it had huge potential for wildlife as it is connected to the surrounding arable fields by hedgerows.



The pond was dug deeper, enabling it to hold water year-round and several willow trees were cut back. Now that the sun shines on the banks there is a variety of wetland wildflowers, including **purple loosestrife** (left) which forms tall, dense stands of bright purple flower spikes and is a great source of nectar for **bumblebees** and **butterflies**.



**Dragonflies** and **bats** feast on the variety of **aquatic invertebrates** that dwell in the pond. Look for **long-tailed tits** (right) flitting between the trees.





# Tile Barn Lane



Before

In the past, Tile Barn Lane has suffered from severe flooding, and mature willow trees on the southern side were hiding a large relic ditch with potential to hold water.

FLOW volunteers cut back the willow trees and dug out the ditch. The banks were planted

with wildflowers for **pollinating insects** and the existing hedgerow was re-enforced with native fruiting trees including **hazel, spindle, blackthorn** and **cherry** to feed **birds** and **small mammals**.



During

The ditch is now a vibrant and diverse wildlife corridor for **amphibians, reptiles** including the water-loving **grass snake**, and, in time, **water voles**.



After

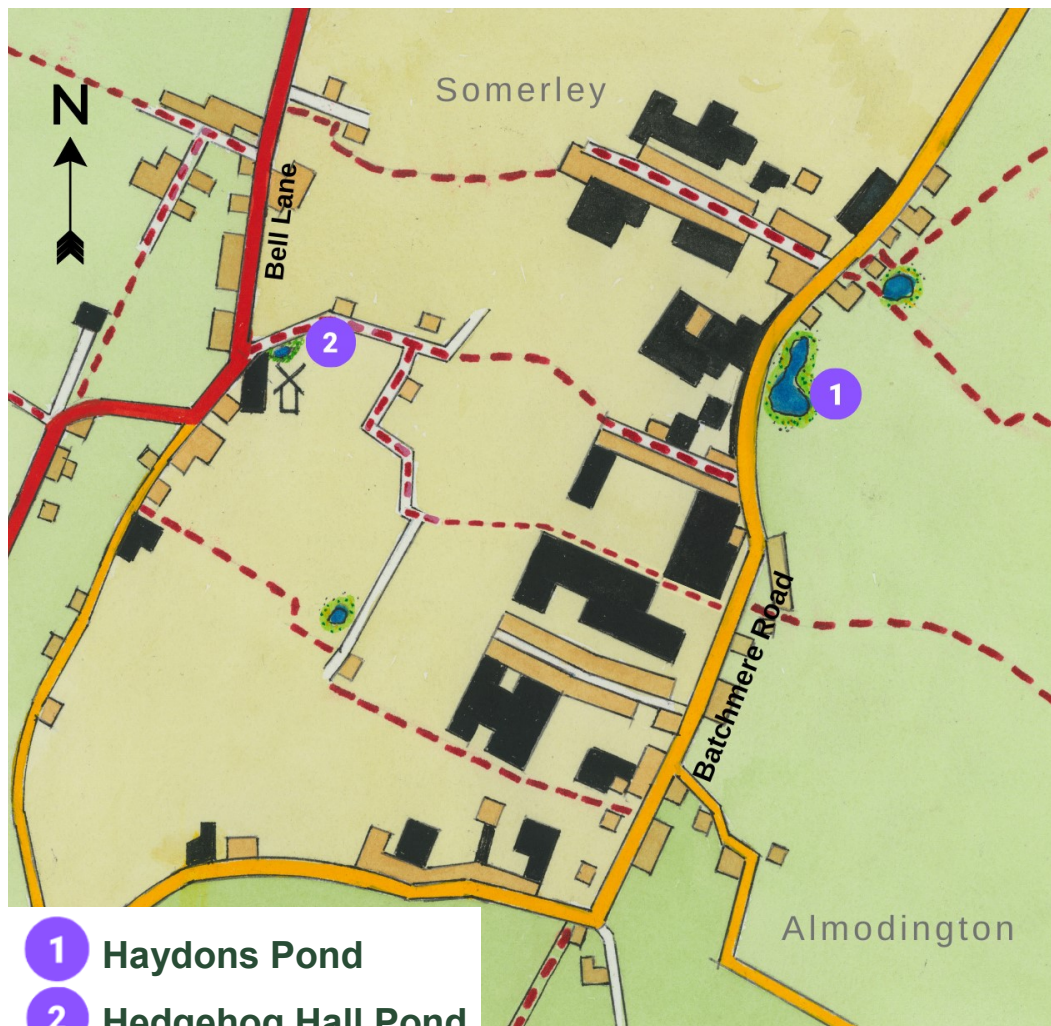
**Earnley has suffered from recurring flooding in the past, and there are two ponds in this parish that FLOW has worked on to help combat this.**

 **Approx. 2 miles.**

1. Starting at Haydon's Pond, walk south and take the first footpath on your right heading down Second Avenue.
2. Continue to the end of the lane and turn right, following the footpath along the edge of two fields before it bends left behind a garden and then right onto Somerley Lane.
3. Continue straight along the lane for 300m to view Hedgehog Hall pond on your left.
4. Retrace your steps back up Somerley Lane and at the first fork, take the footpath right until a left footpath signpost.
5. Follow this footpath straight across a field, then between greenhouses and eventually out onto Batchmere Road.
6. Turn left and walk back up to Haydon's Pond.







**Parking:** In the small car park at Batchmere Nurseries, opposite Haydon's Pond, PO20 7LG.

# Haydons Pond

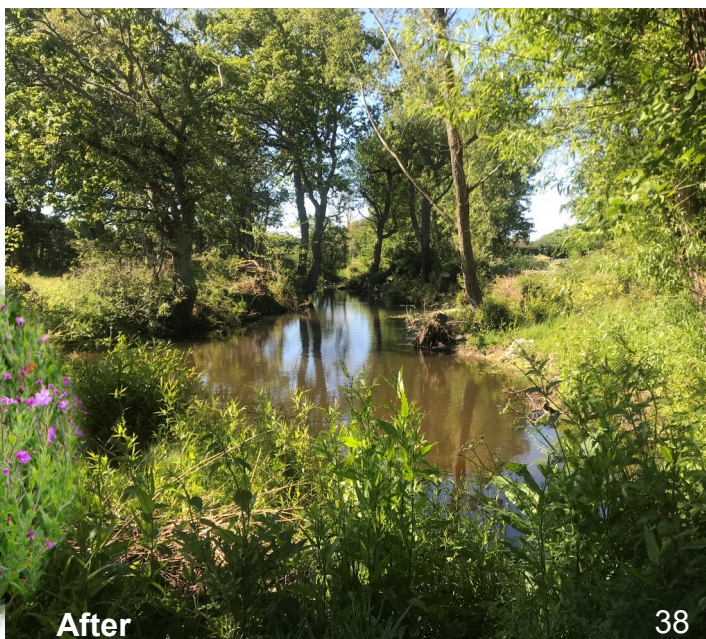


This two-part pond comprises a section running alongside the road surrounded by willow, and a circular area dominated by mature oaks. One of these oak trees supports a colony of the rare **jet-black ant** and the even rarer **giant oak aphid**.

The pond was overgrown and neglected for many years. The FLOW team transformed the pond by lowering the height of the willow trees to allow more sunlight onto the water, giving wetland plants such as **great willowherb**, **water mint**, and **water cress**, a better chance to establish.

The bed of the pond was dug out so that it can carry water away from the road and out to sea, whilst retaining a reliable supply of water for wildlife year-round.

**Great willowherb** flourishes on damp ground. Butterflies love its bright pink flowers in summer, and it can grow almost two metres tall!



After



# Hedgehog Hall Pond

This relic farm pond is no longer used for cleaning carriage cartwheels, but still serves the important function of carrying water from one ditch system to another which greatly reduces flooding.

When the FLOW team discovered the pond, oak trees were shading it from the south, and willow trees on the roadside. Hardy volunteers cropped the height of some trees and cleared clusters of brambles, making space for wildflowers.



Plenty of thick scrubby patches have been left for wildlife though, with the addition of log piles and a dead hedge. The willow trees sprout every spring and queen **bumblebees** sip nectar from their yellow catkins. Listen out for a low humming buzz!



# Thank you to our volunteers

Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands was made possible by our amazing team of dedicated volunteers. Thank you so much to every volunteer for all your hard work and making such a huge difference to our wetlands and the local community!

If you would like to become a volunteer, please email  
**hello@mwhg.org.uk**



**Connect with us:**

[www.mwhg.org.uk](http://www.mwhg.org.uk)



**Fixing and Linking Our Wetlands  
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