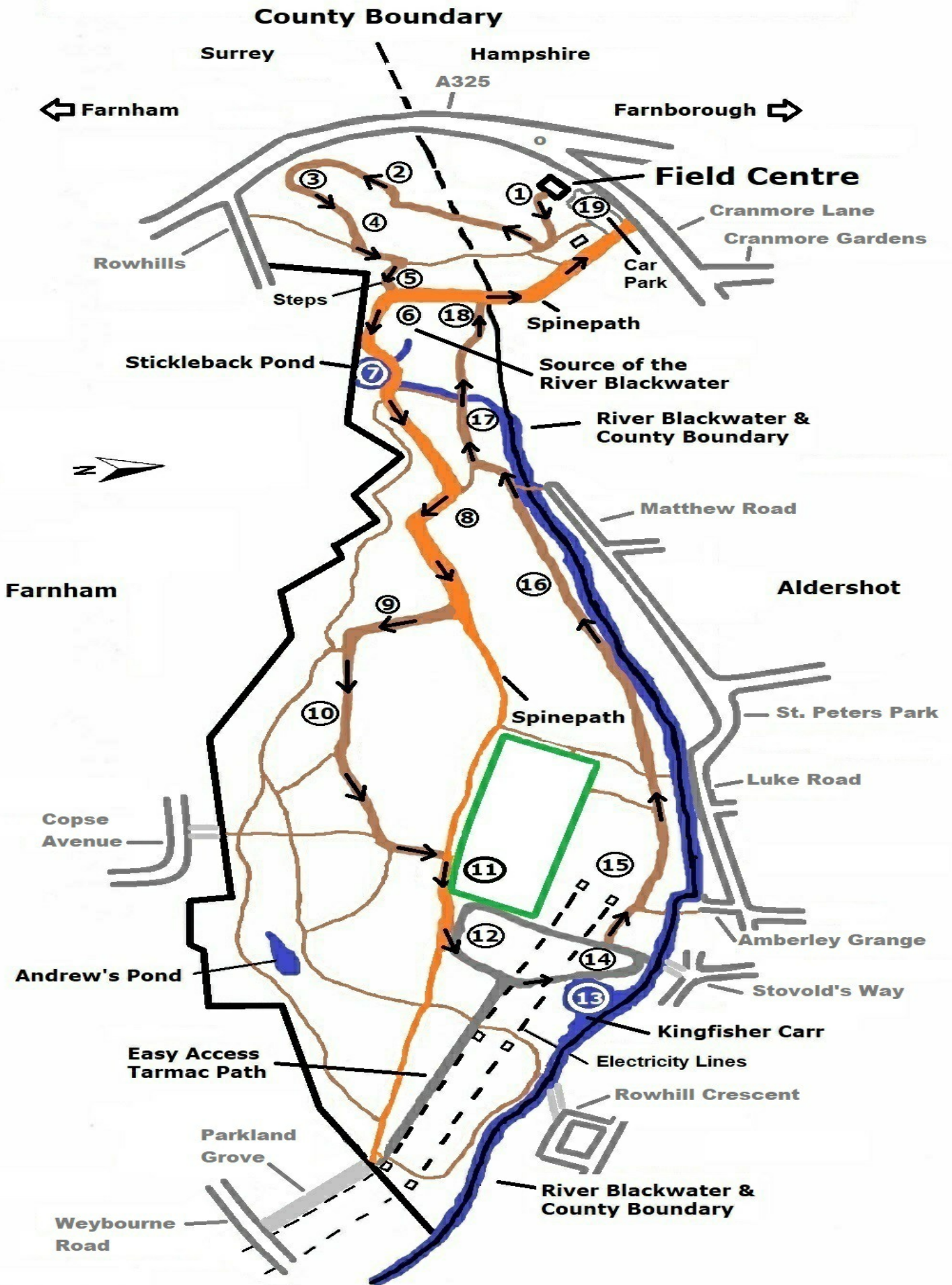


Rowhill Nature Trail Guide

approx. 2.75 km or 1.7 miles



Welcome to Rowhill Nature Reserve

Our Nature Trail is about 2.75 km (1.7 miles) long and can be muddy in places. The Reserve is open to everyone at all times but we ask your co-operation in maintaining a pleasant and peaceful atmosphere.

Follow the path round the back of our Field Centre (1) and up the 6 steps. Continue along to the T-junction, turn right, then in 15 metres turn right up a steady slope (with occasional steps) towards our Heath (2). This is Hallimore Hill which is made up of sand and gravel.

Heathland

As you leave the trees, the area on your left is dry grass heathland and contains more flowering plant species than the traditional heather heathland which covers most of the area on your right. Here you will see typical heathland flora, like bell heather, ling, bracken, gorse, broom, birch and pines. This area would revert to scrub and woodland if it was not managed.

The path climbs to (3) where you are rounding the highest point on the Reserve at 150 m (500 ft). Follow the path round keeping an old Victorian boundary bank on your left. (There are many boundary banks on Rowhill.)

Scots Pine

Descend to (4). In front of you is a mature stand of Scots Pine trees. Notice the pine cones squirrels have gnawed to eat the seeds. Use the steps (5) which were constructed by our Conservation Volunteers to descent the steep hillside.

The Bog

At the bottom of the steps is another boundary bank. This was a hedge bank and the stumps of the trees are still visible. In front of you is a seepage bog (6). The sand and gravel of the heath sits on the clay that make up the site. Water seeps out at this point as the sand and gravel is moderately free draining.

This is the source of the River Blackwater.

The area remains wet throughout the year and is very important for birds such as finches as in the winter they feed on thistle seeds.

Stickleback Pond

Follow the path (our 'Spinepath') down to the right and come to Stickleback Pond (7), the first of our ponds. The vegetation is restricted to one end due to the depth of the water. Kingfishers and herons have been seen here.

Continue following the 'Spinepath', ignoring the paths on the left and right of it.

Coppice

You are now entering deciduous woodland. When the path bends to the right you have reached (8) the working part of the wood. Here you can see the old chestnut coppice stools that are now about 12 foot across (having grown from a single sapling by repeated coppicing). Chestnut was planted to replace ash, because chestnut gave more durable poles for the local hops industry. The coppice in front of you is mixed chestnut and

hazel and is on an 8-12 year cutting cycle.

Follow our 'Spinepath' round to your right. You can see on the right scallops cut out of the rhododendron. This is to encourage native flora back along the edges of the path.

Rhododendron Avenue

Turn right off the 'Spinepath', down Rhododendron Avenue (9), which is a relic of the 19th century ornamental drive leading to what was the house of the then owner, Mr Wells. Notice the height of the rhododendron shrubs and how nothing grows under them. The drainage channels are thickly covered by mosses and liverworts.

Chestnut Glade

A left turn (and keeping left) brings you into Chestnut Glade (10). Again you can see the size of the coppice stools. These have not been re-cut since about 1948. Keeping to the left, you pass through more areas that are still coppiced. A further left turn brings you down to a causeway over a stream and a short slope up onto our Field (11).

The Field

This area, approximately 5 acres in size. It was once the clay pits to the brickworks, but has been filled and levelled. Two parts are managed as a meadow and a third part is cut regularly for recreational use. Around the field, the trees are pollarded to give growth of variable height, making the area a valuable habitat for small mammals, hedgerow birds and butterflies. An ideal spot for a picnic.

The Brickworks

Leaving the Field, go right on the Spinepath and downhill onto a tarmac path. Bear left on this path and as you round the bend look to your left to see the remains of the 19th century brickworks (12), two upright metal beams. Such works were common in those days.

Kingfisher Carr

Follow the tarmac path round left to Kingfisher Carr (13). This is a further reminder of the brickworks as these areas of wet woodland Carr were once part of the extensive settlement beds. These areas now support moorhens, mallard ducks, herons and the brightly coloured kingfisher may also be seen here. This area is wet woodland and not a pond in the usual sense.

You are now going to follow the River Blackwater back up towards its source at the bog. Following the path, there is a large badger sett (14) on you left and right.

Coppicing

Turn left at the T-junction then in 15 metres turn right to more actively coppiced woodland (15). Material that is cut from the coppice is sold and this money put back into the Reserve to maintain the footpaths, etc. Notice that the coppice is of a uniform height. This makes it a useful material for stakes and binders for traditional hedgelaying.

The ground flora makes use of the light that is allowed through to the woodland floor. Cutting in this part of the Reserve has given rise to a good show of bluebells and wood anemones

in spring. Another feature of this area is the dead hedges around each compartment. These are important as wildlife corridors for anything displaced by coppicing, such as mice, voles, etc. and very important for invertebrates and fungi.

Storm damage

Go straight on keeping the stream (River Blackwater) on your right. You will pass over some lengths of boardwalk (16); all the material has been cut from wind-blown timber, some being from the trunks lying after the storms of 1987 and 1992. The stumps were winched back upright rather than pulled out. These have survived as coppice stools since then.

At the junction turn right, here stumps can be seen uprooted, but still growing. These are also remnants of the storms.

When you cross a small tributary stream (17), a path goes off left that returns you to Stickleback Pond but the path in front goes up towards the bog where a steep path will get you across the bog (18).

Climb the steps and turning right will return you to the car park.

Hedgelaying

Having returned to the car park, you will notice that the hedges (19) alongside the car park are laid; this encourages the hedge to remain thick, ideal for nesting birds and small mammals. The stakes and binders for these hedges were cut from our own coppice.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to Rowhill Nature Reserve and will come back again.

Some facts

Rowhill Nature Reserve Society is a Registered Charity managing this site of about 55 acres on behalf of the landowners, Rushmoor Borough Council.

The Society has been managing the site since 1968 and if you would like to become a member you will receive copies of our newsletter and be made aware of events on the Reserve. Membership forms are available in our Field Centre (open most Sundays and Bank Holidays, 2 - 4.30 pm).

Rowhill Nature Reserve is maintained and managed by Volunteers. If you have any spare time and would like to help with the Conservation group or in the Field Centre, we would be pleased to hear from you.

Rowhill Nature Reserve Society

Registered Charity no. 267016


Managing Rowhill
on behalf of the owners:



Where to find us:

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