Waymarked Trails

In 2008 a £2.3M grant was approved by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Big Lottery Fund to help restore South Hill Park grounds to their former glory.

The South Hill Park - Parks for People Project has seen the restoration of many of the park’s original heritage features, as well as the creation of four new waymarked trails so that you may explore the parkland and re-live what it would have been like to walk around these magnificent grounds some 120 years ago.

On your journey around the trails, you will be able to admire many attractive parkland features and enjoy fabulous views across the north and south lakes to the mansion. There is also an abundance of wildlife in the lakes, reedbeds and woodland.

The trails are all named after famous people who have been associated with South Hill Park at some point in its history including a famous author, a diplomat, a noted architect and a former Prime Minister!

Park History

Over the years a succession of owners, including nobility, a later Prime Minister and the BBC, have helped shape the park to make it the popular site it is today. The place where the park now stands was once part of the ancient manor of Easthampstead which existed before Domesday (1086). The park first started to take shape when it was enclosed from Windsor Forest and developed around the 18th and 19th centuries to include pleasure grounds, shrubberies, serpentine walks and lakes and woodland all of which surround a Grade II Listed mansion. The park, which has a Green Flag Award for its quality, is an ideal place to enjoy a range of activities including walking, picnicking and bird watching.

Paws in the Park event

Postcard of front of South Hill Park, after c1900

The current chain of ownership began in 1766 when William Watts bought the estate on his retirement from service in Bengal and built a classical villa. The mansion and grounds were further extended by George Canning, later Prime Minister, who worked the farm with cattle and sheep, wheat, barley and hay, built a kitchen garden and developed a beautiful arboretum and shrubbery. He is reported to have plagued the British Empire in Lisbon for good large orange trees for his conservatory! Today the building is used as an Arts Centre, with the grounds owned and managed by Bracknell Forest Council and Bracknell Town Council.

For more information on the history of the house and grounds see the exhibition on the upper landing of the mansion.

Directions

By Car: South Hill Park is about 7 minutes drive from Bracknell town centre just off the A322 Bagshot Road. It is easily accessible from the M3 (Junction 3) and the M4 (Junction 1). Look for the brown road signs saying ‘Arts Centre’ or showing a comedy mask.

FREE Parking is available at South Hill Park for up to 200 cars. Time limited parking is available at Birch Hill Neighbourhood Centre.

For details of Sat Nav use RN 92 7YA.

By bus: A number of buses serve the park, for more details visit www.traveline.info or call 0871 200 2233.

By train: Bracknell is well served with train services from London Waterloo. Reading and trains in the surrounding areas. For details call 08457 49 50 50 or visit www.nationalrail.co.uk.

By bike: Three adopted cycle routes run through South Hill Park and bicycle parking is available. To plan your route visit www.gov.uk/maps

Get Involved

The maintenance of the grounds of South Hill Park is the responsibility of a full time manager and gardener who are always happy to answer any questions you may have while on site.

The Friends of South Hill Park Grounds represent the needs and views of the local community and park users. They meet on a regular basis to share information and discuss issues and initiatives affecting the park. Please contact them on fo@shp.org.uk for more information.

South Hill Park Gardening Group

Every Wednesday, 10am - 12 noon

Join our small, friendly group who help to keep the grounds of South Hill Park looking beautiful.

Tea/coffee provided. No gardening experience is necessary, just a willingness to get involved and enjoy the outdoors! Please bring gardening gloves if you have them. Meet: Rear terrace at South Hill Park, RG13 7PA. Please contact shp@bracknell-forest.gov.uk for further details.

Acknowledgements

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Photo’s courtesy of Peter Hayward (Swans), Rachel Johnson (Bluebells), Geoff Brandon (Temple Moore), Old-Print.com (Captain Arthur Divett Hayter and Thirstnbrookffice (Oscar Wilde and William Gladstone)) and A.H. Echells (Postcard of front of South Hill Park, after 1903).

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Waymarkers and map artwork created by Fred Baer Associates.

Visitor information

Please help keep South Hill Park a safe and welcoming space for everyone to enjoy

• Don’t feed bread to birds (please use grain only), as this can cause serious harm both to the birds and the surrounding environment

• Protect plants and wildlife

• Please note no BBQs or fires are allowed anywhere on site

• Use the bins provided or take your litter home

• Keep dogs under control, keep them on the lead on the terraces by the café and around the lakes to prevent them from approaching or chasing wildlife

• Please clean up after your dog

• Please consider other users of the park

• Be safe – follow any signs and take care when crossing the road at the front entrance

Refreshments are available from the Airline Bar & Restaurant. For opening times visit: www.southhillpark.org.uk or contact the Box Office on tel: 01344 484 123.

Copies of this document may be obtained in large print, easy read, Braille, on audio tape or in other languages. To obtain a copy in an alternative format, please telephone 01344 352000.
From the Rose Garden pass through the walled yard, and cross the two driveways between the beech hedges and hornbeam trees to reach the main mansion.

Cross over the road and turn left to head towards the small car park. Continue along the path keeping the lake on your right, until you reach the Wellingtonia tree, take the path on the left to return to the start, passing the Italian Garden and terrace. For those who would like to avoid the steps, from the Italian Garden pass behind one of the majestic cedars of Lebanon that lead back into the woods. As you continue along the path, note the ampitheatre on your right, a popular setting for story telling.

The reconstructed Yew Walk is a delightful feature with two yew arches in fork as well as a rose arbor and herbaceous border.

Features you might spot are the coat of arms of the Hayter family, owners in 1840, over the mansion door and nearby, the Bull at the Gates sculpture by Marcel Baert (1995).

Paths, track and roads are traditionally used as linear reservoirs by household ‘grey water’ and it seems likely that during the time of the 1890s works the lake and reed beds serve as balancing ponds to absorb excess water and prevent local flooding. Wildlife such as dragonflies thrive in these damp conditions.

Pass behind one of the majestic cedars of Lebanon that used to encircle the whole estate. Some still remain but others have been newly planted as part of the restoration project – the Rings of Pacharnarma (pictured left) by Barry Mason. Also see (on your right) the remains of formal stonework which was the original headland to the lake. Continue on the path, keeping South Lake on your right.

The lakes are fed both by earth drains, and Gormoor Brook, which rises in Swinley Woods south of Bracknell. There were previously at least two lakes on the site: one was a pool, one remains in吸毒 under the car park and the South and North Lakes remain for us to enjoy.

Cross over the road, turn left and walk for about 50 metres. Take the opportunity to look to your right towards the restored gates and courtyard in front of the Wilde Wathes and the main mansion. From the restored gates and courtyard in front of the Wilde Wathes and the main mansion, take the path back towards the mansion. Cross over the road, turn left and walk for about 50 metres. Take the opportunity to look to your right towards the restored gates and courtyard in front of the Wilde Wathes and the main mansion.

Features you might spot are the coat of arms of the Hayter family, owners in 1840, over the mansion door and nearby, the Bull at the Gates sculpture by Marcel Baert (1995). When you reach the Wellingtonia tree, take the path on the right behind the Wilde Wathes. Pass through the gate to the Upper Italian Garden and descend the steps on the right to return to the start, passing the Italian Garden and terrace. For those who would like to avoid the steps, return to the front of the mansion rejoining your steps and either cut through the building, or go back via the route you came across the driveways to end back at the Rose Garden.

When you reach the end of the lake, go straight on at the cross walkway between the beech hedges and hornbeam trees to the pavement. Carefully cross the road, then across the terrace back to the start.