

A Walk in Hampden Park

Prepared by the Friends of the Hampden Park

Directions to Hampden Park

By car

From the west, i.e. Eastbourne or Willingdon, approach Hampden Park via King's Drive, turning into Decoy Drive and then right into Hampden Park Drive, following this round until you see the Lakeside Café on your right where the walk directions commence. The road named Park Avenue is a cul de sac and will only give pedestrian access to the park, not vehicular.

From the east go through the level crossing to Hampden Park Village, Brassey Avenue, and take the third turning left into Rosebery Avenue. This leads directly through to Hampden Park Drive. Follow this road until you reach the café on your left where the walk directions commence. There is free parking in the park.

By train and on foot

Hampden Park Station is just one stop outside Eastbourne. When alighting at Hampden Park turn left, away from the village, down Station Approach. After approx 200 yards turn right into the twitten, across the bridge over Decoy Stream, and you are in Elm Grove Field. Turn right on the path which passes Park Practice Medical Centre on your left and at the left bend passes the Scout Hut on your right. Follow this path until you reach a road leading to the David Lloyd Club which can be seen to your left. Cross the road to continue the path on the other side. You join the walk here (*see 8 on the map*) as it enters the Ham Shaw woodland area of the park.

The walk takes approximately one hour.

Introduction

Prior to 1901 the land now called Hampden Park was part of the Ratton estate owned by Lord Willingdon. The Ratton estate and Ham Shaw woodland are mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1087 and for a very long time the woodland and Decoy Pond was a working decoy attracting wildfowl for estate kitchens. By the end of the 19th century the decoy had fallen into disuse. Lord Willingdon agreed to sell almost 32 hectares (78 acres) to Eastbourne Corporation on condition that a new road, King's Drive, was built from Eastbourne to Willingdon. Hampden Park, named after Lord Willingdon's grandfather Viscount Hampden, was opened by Lord Roseberry on 12th August 1902 and was the first Corporation-owned park in Eastbourne.

Today the park has many attractions. The northern section is dominated by Decoy Pond and surrounding woodland with many pleasant paths. To the East there is the Ham Shaw woodland and the south various sports fields and clubs. There are numerous fine specimen trees and spring bulbs in several areas throughout the park.

Directions for the Walk

The walk starts and ends in front of the Lakeside Café (*see 1 on map*) on Hampden Park Drive. Just to the left of the café as you face it is the Arboretum and History Garden, (*see 2 on map*), which was planted in 2007. The theme of the Arboretum is a history of trees, shrubs, plants and bulbs depicted in groups to reflect, historically, when they were introduced into the British Isles. The garden has two main planting themes that are both important to British garden history and the provision of our food and raw materials. One easy way to appreciate the garden is to do two complete circuits of the path in a clockwise direction from the entrance nearest the road, one lap looking at the trees and one lap to view the plants and flowers. There is a pictorial map at the entrance to the Arboretum or a booklet giving full details of plants can be downloaded from the Friends website*.

Next, walk down the road leaving the Arboretum on your right and, just past the entrance to the car park in front of the indoor bowls club, you will come to the children's play area. Cross the road, immediately opposite the children's play area where there is a gravel path leading to the War Memorial. The Friends were able to source sponsorship for the total restoration and rededication of this memorial in 2009. There is now an annual service on 11th of November.

To the left of the memorial, cross a small bridge into the new Sensory Garden (*see 3 on map*), officially opened spring 2010. A century ago this was laid out with a central fountain and streams and called the water garden. The streams still run through tumbled rocks on either side but the central area of the garden now holds a magnificent specimen of a Monkey Puzzle tree (*Araucaria Araucana*). In the outer beds in this area you will find all kinds of plants to delight the senses. Bluebells and snowdrops have been planted into the bank by local schoolchildren. Spring bulbs, colourful annuals and perennials abound sponsored by local people. There is perfume from shrubs such as lavender, rosemary, sage, buddleia, bay, thyme, eucalyptus, etc, and a number of these are deliberately placed so they can be brushed by hand as you pass to release their scent. You can also enjoy the subtle noise of the wind in the bamboo and the babbling streams coursing over the rocks on either side, the squirrels that abound and the birds visiting the feeding stations. There are benches here to enjoy exploring the senses.

After walking around the sensory garden retrace your steps to return across the same bridge towards the memorial but this time take the gravel path which leads diagonally across the lawns to the road, continue across the road to locate a narrow, partly tarmaced path on your right. If you are visiting in springtime look to your left and under the tree canopy you will be able to enjoy more bluebell dells planted by local schoolchildren in this area, or the daffodils that follow a little later. Follow the tarmac path to a wooden bridge (*see 4 on map*) over a stream and take the path between the tennis courts and the bowling green, up to a T junction facing the public courts and second outdoor bowls pitch.

Turn left here to walk along the path between the private club (astro-turf) tennis courts (*see 5 on map*) on your left and the public (hard) courts on your right. Just after passing the end of the courts, you enter the wood. Turn right at the paths junction and, after about 50 yards, there is a triangle where you have a choice. Active walkers (*wheelchair users – see notes*) should take the right-hand path. You are now passing through the woodland called Ham Shaw with its impressive canopy of native field maple, oak and ash trees. Follow the path and just after a map of the path on your right you will exit the wood into the playing fields (*see 6 on map*). Turn left.

At first follow the edge of the woodland then bear right alongside the stream until, after about a hundred yards or so, you reach a bridge on your left and some steps. Cross the bridge and at the top of the steps follow the path to the left. (see **7 on map**). The David Lloyd Club is on your right. As you reach the far end of the unfenced portion of the club car park on your right, take another path left back into the woodland (see **8 on map**) where there is a further pictorial map of the park, adjacent to the bridge on the right hand side. This is where walkers from Hampden Park Station join the park.

Just inside the park you will be walking on a raised section of the path where you can enjoy on either side a bog garden planted by the Friends of the Hampden Park. Continue through the woodland until you reach the triangle again. After about 50 yards four paths meet. Turn right and follow the path heading away from the tennis courts. Cross the Decoy stream and shortly afterwards you will reach the road. As you join the road, turn left and you will see a sign stating Hampden Park Drive, with a large tree in the pavement next to it. (see **9 on map**)

Cross over to the other side of the road at this point to enter the woodland. You can follow the main path northwards through the woodland here but first, for the slightly adventurous, there is a piece of history to be found on a small track to the right leading through the bushes from the point where you have crossed the road. If you take this track and make your way through the overhanging undergrowth for about 20 yards you will come to an Edwardian urinal. It's in a somewhat sad state of repair (and no longer in use!) but is one of the few surviving examples in the country of its type and you can still admire its patterned cast-iron panels. (see **10 on map**)

Return to the main path and continue through majestic trees, crossing over one path after a hundred yards onto another that takes you slightly left. After a further 200 yards you reach a T-junction with a large oak tree in the centre. Turn right here onto a wide gravel path and then, after 50 yards, take the first turn left, crossing over another path before reaching the road about 200 yards further on. (see **11 on map**)

Carry straight on over the road and continue down the path leaving the park wood chip storage area to your left. You will shortly come down a slope to a grassy clearing. On the far side behind the Sussex style fence is a wild-flower meadow. (see **12 on map**) Here, depending on the time of year, you can admire a wide variety of native wetland wild flowers and beyond see the stream that feeds the park's pond which, at this point flows from right to left and is fed by natural springs from the lower slopes of the Downs.

Turn left following the fence around the meadow and bear left when you reach the small bridge. The path will lead you to the road once more. Cross the road and follow the gravel path down to the Decoy Pond with its abundant bird life including heron, mallards, gulls, moorhens, coots. Canada geese and swans.

Just before the bridge at the edge of the lake there is splendid oak tree, a favourite of the former Lady Willingdon and, just over the bridge, right next to the pond, a magnificent plane tree rises from gloriously gnarled, intertwined roots. (see **13 on map**) From here you can choose to walk around the pond on either side to arrive back at the café. (see **1 on map**)

If you choose the right hand path and it is spring time you will be rewarded with a wonderful display of crocuses in the grassy banks with daffodils in the woodland beyond. If you choose the left hand path, you will enjoy lovely mature trees and parkland.

Notes

***Guide** – the Guide for Hampden Park is to be found on the Friends website www.friendsofthehampdenpark.co.uk This will identify 17 species of trees planted around the Decoy Pond and on the north side the red and fibrous barked red coastwood. There is an additional guide available for the Arboretum and History Garden with details of plantings.

More details can be found on the www.eastbourne.gov.uk/ website by following the links to leisure and culture/parks and gardens/parks.

****Wheelchair users** - At this point wheelchair users should take the left-hand path which will take you over the raised footpath towards the exit from the park by the David Lloyd Club. At the map by the exit, you can either rejoin the main walk by retracing your steps or you can turn left and, with the David Lloyd Club car park on your right make your way to the bridge over the stream on your left. Cross over this bridge and walk down this road leaving the club behind you. At the T-junction, turn left into Roseberry Avenue and follow this road until you enter the park and rejoin the walk (see 9 on map)

