Bentley Priory Heritage Trail

Approx 7k, 4.3miles, 1.5 - 2.5 hours.
Ideal for Ramblers & Explorers

Landmarks on the Trail

1. Harrow View Point
2. The Hare
3. Bentley Priory Nature Reserve
4. The Old Master
5. Deer Park
6. Bentley Priory Museum
7. Squire's Garden Centre
8. Grimsdyke Hotel
9. Gilbert's Lake

HARROW VIEW POINT

Harrow Viewpoint, otherwise known as Old Redding, is an open space that offers a magnificent view across North London. On a clear day the North Downs and Surrey Hills are visible on the horizon. The car park was reopened in 2021 and is a convenient access point to Old Redding Nature Reserve and Harrow Weald Common. Old Redding is considered part of the Green Belt and contains Ancient Woodland.

THE HARE

First licensed in 1706 by local brewer Thomas Clutterbuck and has been made a pub ever since. In the grounds is a rare Sarsen stone track marker made of silicified sandstone. The original Public House was converted from a cottage and built from bricks made at the adjacent kiln.

BENTLEY PRIORY NATURE RESERVE

The 87 hectare Nature Reserve's habitats are varied with woodland and scrub, together with two lakes and several streams. It has seven possible entry points. The open grassland is 'unimproved' meaning that it has never been treated with fertiliser and hence, paradoxically, is rich in wild flowers. It has been designated as a Site of Special Scientific interest and some of the woodland is classed as ancient. A herd of cows can be seen grazing in the grassland in summer to maintain the pastures and promote the diversity of wild flowers.

THE MASTER

The Master, an oak tree, is estimated to be over 450 years old and is 7.25 meters in diameter. The Master is thought to be the oldest tree in the former county of Middlesex. Oak trees are known for their impressive lifespans, with some species living for over 1,000 years. Mature oak tress typically reach heights of 50 to 70 feet, with a branch spread of nearly 150 feet.

BENTLEY PRIORY DEER PARK

To the east of Heriot's Wood and alongside the public footpath is a private fenced off Deer Park, adjacent to Bentley Priory Nature Reserve. It is home to about 24 fallow deer. Fallow Deer are not native to Britain and were introduced by the Romans from the Balkans and Turkey.

BENTLEY PRIORY MUSEUM

Constructed by James Duberly in 1766, the estate was split and sold in 1926, a part of which was bought by the Air Ministry, and later was the Fighter Command HQ during the Battle of Britain. The museum opened in 2013 following a long campaign to preserve the main building after the RAF left in 2008. It housed an underground operations block ('the Bunker') that was in operation from March 1940 until the end of the Second World War. King George VI, Winston Churchill and General Eisenhower visited the Bunker on D Day on 6th June 1944. Did you know that Bentley Priory was once the home of Queen Adelaine, the aunt of Queen Victoria?

SQUIRES GARDEN CENTRE

Before it was a garden centre Squires was known for many years as The Kiln Nurseries next to the grounds of a house of the same name. The kiln used to make bricks was situated 60 yards south of the house. Bricklaying was a major industry in Harrow before the 19th century, much of which was produced here at the Kiln Nurseries. Now, it has been transformed into a light and modern garden centre that offers an array of gardening products and even beautiful Koi and pond fish.

THE GRIM'S DYKE HOTEL

Originally built for Frederick Goodall RA by Norman Shaw in 1872 it was acquired by W S Gilbert in 1890, who lived there until his death in 1911. After the death of Lady Gilbert in 1936 the house was used as a rehabilitation site for women with tuberculosis. It is now a Grade II listed hotel and is one of the few places in Harrow that has an English Heritage Blue Plaque. The grounds of the house are traversed by Grim's Dyke - a line of earthworks believed to be a defensive line against the Roman invasion.

GILBERT'S LAKE

The lake was part of the extensive garden development started by Goodall and continued by Gilbert. Gilbert died following a successful attempt to save a local girl who had got into difficulties while swimming in the lake. The Lake used to be a lot bigger and much of the lake was filled in on the orders of Lady Gilbert following her husband's death.

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