

Follow the path around the corner of the moat.

Headstone used to be one of the largest farms in the London area. The outlying fields were gradually swallowed up by new factories and houses, until the last farmer moved to Pinner Park Farm in 1928. The open space that remained became a community recreation ground.

The moat is home to a variety of waterbirds, including mallard, coot and moorhen. Look carefully and you may see a heron, or even a kingfisher.

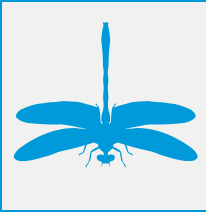
The moat also protected the house from flooding. The ground here is heavy clay, so water can't easily drain into the ground. But it collected in the moat instead, a safe distance from the Manor House.

This is the only complete, water-filled moat in London. Built around 700 years ago, it was an impressive sign of Headstone Manor's importance.

Start your walk by the moat information panel.

Headstone Manor and the surrounding parkland is a little piece of old rural Harrow, with its farms and villages. This walk will guide you around the moat and Headstone Manor island, giving you a glimpse into the rich natural history of this special place.

Welcome to the  
NATURE  
FINDERS  
Trail!



Mallard duck



Coot



Moorhen



Kingfisher

You are now in an old field known as the king's Croft. A croft is an old English word meaning a small piece of arable land close to a house. Until the 1960s there was evidence of farming here. People could step from ridge to ridge across the furrows, which had been made by ploughing. Part of the field has been replanted as an orchard, to reflect the fruit trees that were grown here in the past.

Follow the path around to the left.

Old maps show a spring rising here, and the ground used to often be boggy underfoot! The new sedimentation ponds have been built to help drainage and clean the water before it enters the moat. The waters of Headstone eventually flow into the River Thames. To your right you can see the Kodak Camera Lens sculpture – a memorial to the Eastman Kodak factory (built in 1890 on seven acres of Headstone Manor farmland). Kodak made cameras and their products meant that more people than ever before could take their own photographs. Only the large white chimney remains to show where the factory once stood.

## Explorer Backpacks

Families can enjoy our explorer bags full of activities to help younger children find and learn things in the museum. Borrow one from our Volunteer Wardens in The Parlour.

## Do you have a smartphone?

Use [www.uksafari.com/wildfiles](http://www.uksafari.com/wildfiles) to find out more about the plants and animals you can see around Headstone Manor.

## Make your own trail with:

<http://www.wildlifewatch.org.uk/spotting-sheets>

## Find out more about our native trees at:

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

With thanks to the Harrow Natural History Society (and particularly the late A.M. Pollard, who funded the original trail on which this version is based).

This trail was made in memory of Geoff Corney, who loved this place.



Heron



Fox



Roe deer



NATURE  
FINDERS  
at Headstone Manor



Terrain: flat, on path.  
Duration: 30 mins





Sloe berries



Blackthorn hedge



Oak tree



Bramble



Yellow flag iris



Mugwort

Turn left towards the back of the Great Barn.

- 5 The name ‘Headstone’ comes from the Anglo-Saxon names ‘Heggeton’ or ‘Heggeston’, meaning a farm surrounded by hedges. Hundreds of years ago, this farm was probably surrounded by blackthorn or hawthorn hedges, both of which would quickly have grown into a prickly barrier.

Blackthorn

The blackthorn (or sloe) is laden with beautiful white flowers in early spring. Its leaves provide food for the caterpillars of many species of moth.

Blackthorn wood is hard-wearing, so it was traditionally used for making walking sticks and tool parts. According to folklore, it was also used for making witches’ wands!

The blackthorn’s name comes from its black, spiky thorns. Its fruits (sloes) are traditionally used for flavouring gin.

Double back and take the path to the left.

Hawthorn

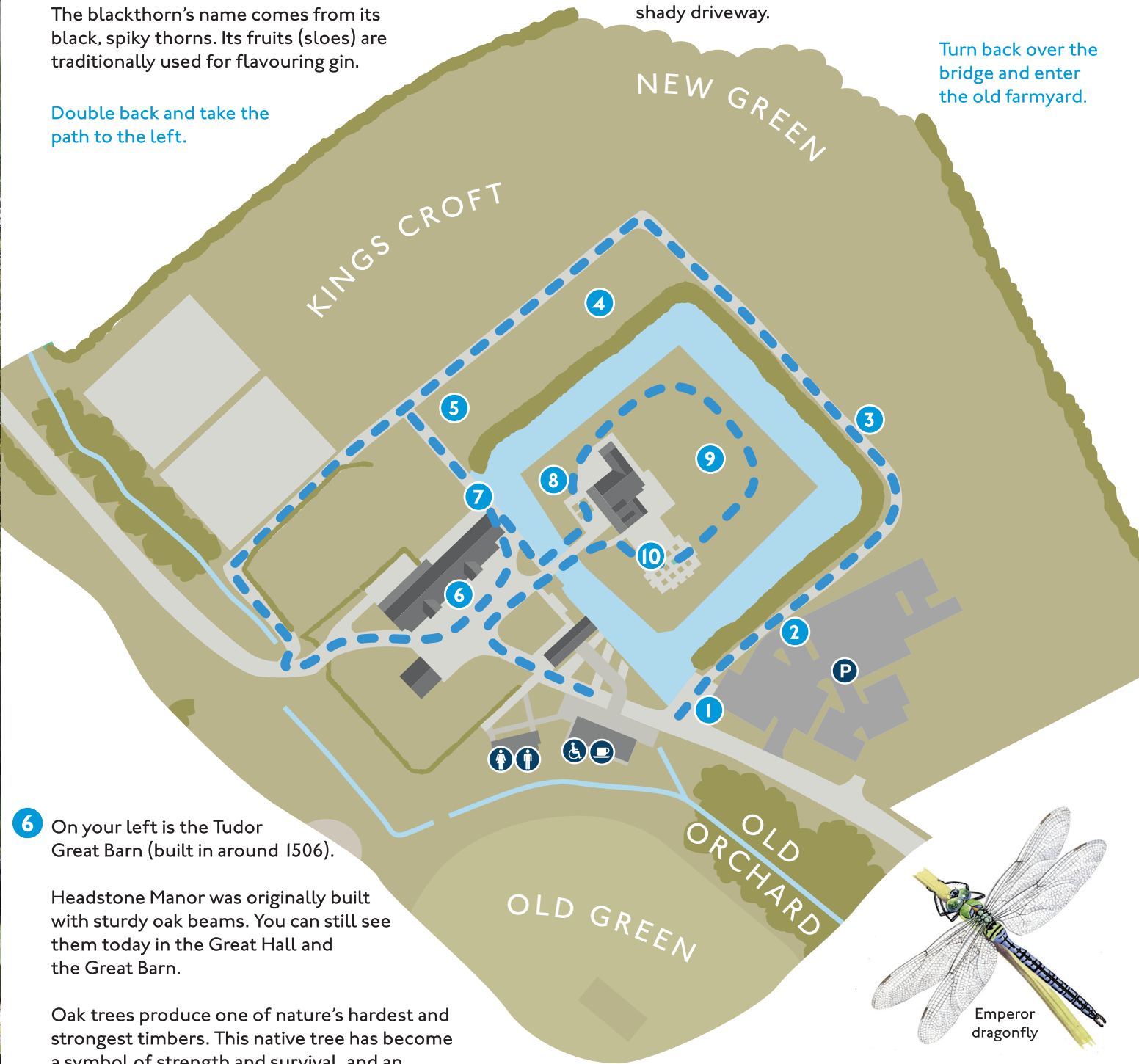
Hawthorn is nicknamed ‘the May Tree’, making it the only British tree to be called after the month when it blossoms. Hawthorns can support over 330 species of insect.

Hawthorn blossom was traditionally associated with death. More recently, scientists discovered one of the chemicals in hawthorn blossom is also one of the first chemicals produced when animal tissue decays. So, the traditional association makes sense after all!

Follow path round to the left then turn right and cross the bridge.

The path in front of you used to be the main entrance to Headstone Manor. During the Georgian period it was flanked with Elm trees to create a shady driveway.

Turn back over the bridge and enter the old farmyard.



- 6 On your left is the Tudor Great Barn (built in around 1506).

Headstone Manor was originally built with sturdy oak beams. You can still see them today in the Great Hall and the Great Barn.

Oak trees produce one of nature’s hardest and strongest timbers. This native tree has become a symbol of strength and survival, and an emblem of England.

Oaks are brilliant for wildlife because they support more species than any other native tree. They can be seen growing at the back of the moat.

Turn left at the end of the Great Barn to look down at the moat.

- 7 The banks of the moat are home to many plants including bramble, cow parsley and dock. Plants such as yellow flag flourish at the water’s edge.

Yellow flag iris

Yellow flag iris is a tall plant that thrives in damp, marshy areas and on riverbanks. In some parts of the country it’s known as ‘sword grass’ because of its blade-like leaves. But it’s most famous for its large yellow flowers or ‘flags’, which bloom between May and July. The ‘fleur-de-lis’ that is often used on coats of arms may be based on the yellow iris.

Go over the bridge to Headstone Manor (built in around 1310).

- 8 Take a moment to enjoy the smells of the plants in the herb garden, including sage and lavender.

After that, go around the building to the rear.

Please be careful on the island, because the edges of the moat are not fenced.

- 9 We know from old records and maps that the garden around the house was used as an orchard in the past. There is still a walnut tree, an apple tree and a pear tree on the island today.

- 10 This fine old yew tree can be seen in the 1800 illustration of Headstone Manor, shaped into a human form. Yew trees were often used in topiary, and were commonly found in churchyards. Their strong, flexible wood was also useful for making longbows! The yew tree here is around 300 years old.

Blackbirds and song thrushes enjoy eating yew berries, but almost all parts of yew trees are highly poisonous to humans.



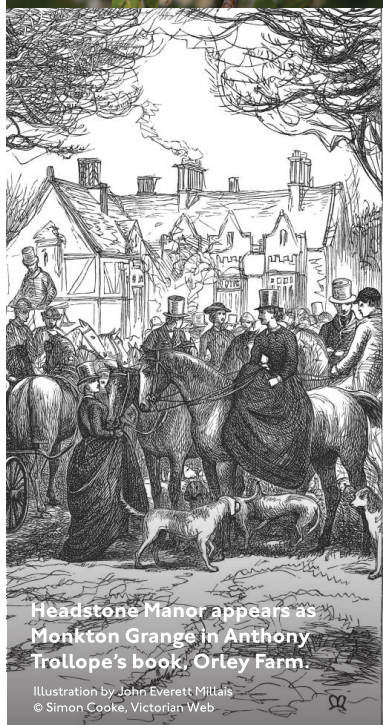
Blackbird

Follow the path back to the bridge and leave the island, bearing left just after the Small Barn.

The trail finishes at the bee-friendly planters outside the visitor centre.



Hawthorn blossom



Headstone Manor appears as Monkton Grange in Anthony Trollope’s book, Orley Farm.

Illustration by John Everett Millais © Simon Cooke, Victorian Web



Apple



Woodpecker

