

Haw Farm Airfield was a satellite airfield for the main airfield at Harwell. Building started in 1938 and it was commissioned in 1940. It was used mainly for the training of Wellington bomber crews and as a base for ferrying bombers to the Middle East. Later in the war it was used for the training of glider pilots. After the war it was used by the Fleet Air Arm. It was then decommissioned and returned to agriculture, but many war time relics remain. For example, the narrow strip of trees mark a runway.

There are many stories about the airfield. After one raid returning bombers were diverted here because their own field was under attack. Several ran off the end of the runway into the field beyond the road and one sat on the road with a collapsed undercarriage. When it was lifted a crushed van was found beneath it, the driver of which was still alive! The other aircraft were towed back from the field along the road and the roadside lime trees were still small enough for a gang of men to bend them down so that the wings could pass over them!

The Munitions Store is on private land and permission must be obtained from Yattendon Estate to visit it. It was designed so that an accidental explosion would be directed upwards and minimise the damage to the locality. A badger has made a home in the bank!

Pill boxes were small forts provided to defend the airfield from ground attack. They were equipped with light machine guns.

The site still has strong connections with flying. It is a Registered Airfield and is still used by aircraft. Also the strange structure on the west side is a Doppler VHF Omni Range radio beacon marking the centre line of the outward bound airway from Heathrow.

Haw Farm is part of Yattendon Estate and is managed by their Farms Division based at Yattendon.

Haw Farm is a very ancient site. The name means *enclosures* in Early English and it appears on the earliest maps. It seems likely that the area was used for extensive grazing of sheep and cattle. Several Green Lanes lead away from it down which cattle were driven to market.

Lousley Memorial. Job Lousley (1790-1855) was a notable local scholar and philanthropist.

The Fields. The eastern side of the fields were part of Ashampstead Parish until they were transferred to Hampstead Norreys in 1972. In the 13th century they may have been part of the Common Fields of the Manor of Coleridge (now disappeared). Two small farms called Turville Farm and Buttonshaw Farm were destroyed to make space for the airfield.

The shallow hollows in the fields and deep pits in the woods are chalk pits from which chalk was dug to reduce the acidity of the soils.

The hard flinty soils mean that crops are confined to those that grow above ground, such as cereals, and many thousand tons of wheat and barley are grown every year. The grain dryer was built in 2000 to handle these crops.

This computer controlled unit dries 48 tonnes of grain an hour. It can also store 8,000 tonnes of grain. Other more exotic crops are sometimes grown. Opium poppies have been grown here for a pharmaceutical company at Henley on Thames.

The beetle bank is a strip of rough grass providing a refuge for insect predators from which they move out into the crop to prey on insect pests. It is an effective way of reducing pesticide use.

The wide field margins were created as part of the Countryside Stewardship plan which Yattendon Farms entered in October 1998. These wide strips of uncultivated land provide habitats for many insects and mammals and hunting grounds for owls. They also function as beetle banks.

Permitted Paths. Yattendon Estate have agreed with West Berkshire Council to create a network of paths around the World War II airfield site at Haw Farm. These are legal Permitted Paths, not Public Rights of Way and may be closed after a defined notice period. They are designed to link existing Rights of Way and public roads so as to allow this fascinating area to be explored by the public and to link to other path networks without using busy roads.

However, it should be remembered that this is an active airfield and a working farm. Taxiing aircraft may be encountered. Modern farms use large, powerful and fast moving equipment. Dogs and children should be closely controlled when aircraft or farm machinery are moving nearby.

FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE

- Be safe-plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

For the full Countryside Code and information on where to go and what to do visit

www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

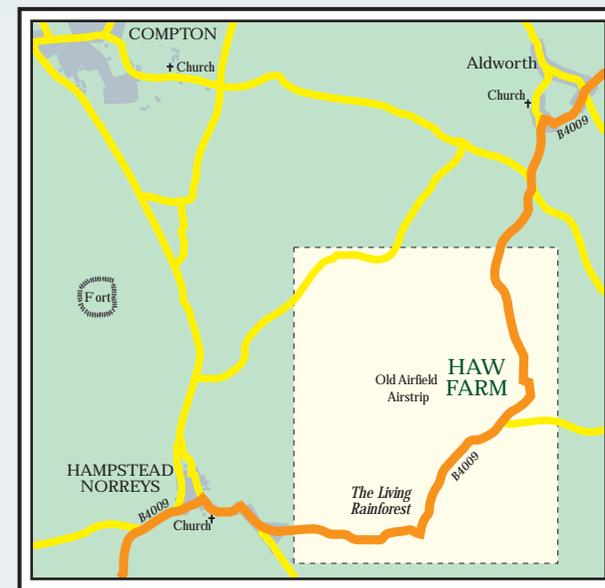
Always wear appropriate footwear and take care when walking in the town or countryside. No responsibility is accepted by the authors of this leaflet for the state or condition from time to time of the paths comprised in these walks.

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HAMPSTEAD NORREYS PARISH

HAW FARM

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Hampstead Norreys Parish Council

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