



Northwood and Ruislip

There are several endings to this rather long walk. The start of the walk can be extremely muddy after continuous rain. Investigation of the final part of the circular walk has yet to be completed.

Ruislip Lido

Ruislip Lido is within the wider area of Ruislip Woods and was formed from a lake originally made in 1811 as a feeder to the Grand Junction Canal, by damming a tributary of the Pinn thereby inundating the hamlet of Park Hearne. A feeder channel was built to carry water down to Hayes, which is on the Paddington Arm of the canal.

The grounds around the Lido were laid out in 1934-36 by TH Mawson for the Grand Union Canal Company as a prototype for what would now be called a leisure centre, with the lake for boating and sailing, and a beach. The central building was designed by George W Smith with a restaurant and dance floor, later becoming the Water's Edge public house. The Lido was purchased by Ruislip-Northwood UDC in the early 1950s when the Grand Union Canal Company became part of British Waterways, at which time Ruislip Woods were preserved as a result of Green Belt legislation and designated a SSSI in 1950. The miniature railway that runs round the lake dates from c.1945 and had been established by the Grand Union Canal Company as part of the leisure facilities it provided. It initially ran along the eastern edge, now running

as far as the pub on the west. An accident in the 1970s led to its closure by the Council but it was later re-opened by volunteers who now continue to run it, having formed the Ruislip Lido Railway Society in 1979. It is the only narrow gauge railway in London.

Ruislip Woods

Ruislip Woods National Nature Reserve is 'ancient semi natural woodland' and some parts are a remnant of the woodland that once completely covered England after the last ice age. When the land was first cleared for agriculture some woodland was left to provide timber and firewood. In the case of Ruislip Woods the native trees are oaks and hornbeams. Ruislip Woods now consists of Bayhurst Wood, Copse Wood, Mad Bess Wood, Park Wood, Poor's Field/Ruislip Common, the Ruislip Local Nature Reserve, The Northern Finger, Grub Ground, Tarleton's Lake and surrounding land in Hillingdon. Ruislip Woods National Nature Reserve, at 305 hectares or 755 acres, is the biggest single area of woodland in Greater London. Park Wood is one of the largest ancient woods in England in a completely semi natural state.

There is no accepted explanation for the name Mad Bess Wood. Bayhurst Wood Country Park, in Harefield, looks as though it has a history but I have found little.

St Mary's Harefield

St Mary's Parish Church is Harefield's oldest

building, and situated away from the geographical centre of the village. It has a wealth of monuments. At the Domesday Survey of 1086 Harefield had a priest, and therefore presumably a church which was probably on the present site. The Living was first owned by the Knights of St John of Jerusalem, the Hospitallers who had a Priory half a mile away near the present Moorhall Road and were the owners of Bayhurst Wood. After the Dissolution of the Order in England, the Living passed to the Newdigate family, for many years also Lords of the Manor, and patrons of the Living to the present day. In 1100's there was a Chancel and a Nave, traces of which remain in the West Wall of the present Nave. In 1200's the present Chancel was built; a lancet window is still visible outside in the North wall. A North Aisle or Chapel was added at about the same time. In 1300's the present nave was built, and the front two bays of the South Aisle were added as a Chapel. In 1500's the present North Aisle and Breakspear Chapel were built and the Tower added which houses six bells, the earliest dated 1629. In 1700's a major restoration took place.

Grand Union Canal

For information about the canal see notes for walk 26

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