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Thank you for supporting us

The farm

Features of our farming system to look out for on the farm trail

The trail is a permissive path that was set up under our Countryside Stewardship Scheme so that members of the public can enjoy the wildlife and habitats that we have created through participation in the organic agri-environment scheme. A key element of our farming system is working with nature to maintain biodiversity. Defra and Natural England support organic farming systems in recognition of the benefits for wildlife conservation.

You will see 'weeds' in most fields. They are 'weeds' only when they are not wanted. We use 'weeds' and wild flowers to encourage a diversity of insects, invertebrates and micro-organisms in the crops, and to give our livestock a more varied diet. When weeds become a problem we control them with mowers, harrows and cultivators.

Also look for:

- a) white **clover** in all of the pastures to create natural fertility,
- b) crop **rotations** where the natural fertility created in grassland is used to grow a variety of arable crops,
- c) arable **field margins** sown with grasses and herbs to sustain the beneficial insects that control pests of arable crops,
- d) **compost** from the yards where cattle are kept in winter, which re-cycles **nutrients** back to the land and adds to the soil organic matter,
- e) **cattle** that are maintained on a natural diet, kept in family groups as far as possible and allowed to **behave naturally**,
- f) cow pats that are alive with **insects** and other invertebrates,
- g) **hedgerows** that are managed individually, some left to grow for many years, and others cut more often so that a diversity of hedgerow habitats can be used by wildlife with different preferences,
- h) **5 species of bats** that live in some specially designed roosts in the roofspace of the new conference rooms and office buildings. In places there are metal roof tiles that allow access for the bats. Our land has large populations of flying insects for the bats, and for birds such as swallows, housemartins and swifts.



this project has been part funded by the North Wessex Downs Sustainable Development Fund www.northwessexdowns.org.uk

Farm trail walks

Farm walks, guided by the staff of Elm Farm Organic Research Centre, are arranged at different times of year. Please visit our website for details of planned walks and other activities.

The trail

The trail is a footpath, open to the public at all times, which follows a circular route through the farm including several areas noted for biodiversity and conservation value. There are leaflets available on the trail providing guidance on where to go and what you may see.

Some statistics and guidance

Location: Elm Farm is in the village of Hamstead Marshall, approx 3 miles west of Newbury (OS map ref. SU414,654). The post code is RG20 0HR.

The trail is about 2½ miles long and takes up to 1½ hours to complete. It is a circular walk that starts and finishes at the farm, and crosses 3 public rights of way that can be walked in combination with the trail. See Page 4 for locating the start of the trail.

Public transport to Elm Farm is by the bus service between Hungerford and Newbury. Newbury Buses service no.13 connects Hamstead Marshall with Newbury, and with Hungerford via Kintbury and Inkpen. Nearest stations are at Kintbury and Newbury. For further travel information, see www.traveline.org.uk, or call them on 0871 200 22 33

Car parking is available for up to 4 cars on the ungated hard standing opposite the main entrance gate, or on the roadside near to the farm.

Access and Amenity

In spring 2008 we replaced all of the footpath stiles with pedestrian gates. There are also bridges over ditches and streams.

At two positions on the trail there are interesting observation points where we have placed benches (see map).

Elm Farm is a working farm with livestock. The cattle and sheep that may be encountered in some fields are usually inquisitive and will approach walkers, but they are not dangerous if ignored. Never approach a cow with a young calf, and if you have a dog that is threatened by cattle, the dog should be allowed to run off the lead.

Dogs should normally be kept on the lead and please leave all gates as you find them.

Links with public paths

The farm trail is linked with other local places of interest by public footpaths. The River Kennet and The Kennet and Avon canal are a mile away at Hamstead Lock, near to the historic Hamstead Park and Craven House which were the home of the Lords Craven from the early seventeenth century. Footpaths also link the farm to the villages of Kintbury, Marsh Benham, Enborne, Ball Hill and Inkpen.



The Organic Farm Trail at Elm Farm



Now with improved access, information and amenity

The trail is a permissive path, open to the public throughout the year

How YOU can help The Organic Research Centre

We rely heavily on donations to fund our important and diverse work. From developing crop varieties for organic systems, through the protection of organic principles and best practice in a rapidly expanding UK market, the Organic Research Centre's unique efforts need your support.

You as an individual, or an organisation, can make a valuable difference if you can help us in one of the following ways:

Become a **"Friend"** of The Organic Research Centre, or make a friend a Friend (£25 minimum annual donation).

In addition to the regular *Bulletin*, you will also receive newsletters on our activities, free publications, discount on specified events and many more of our Special Invitation-Only events.

If you would like to make a **Donation** to The Organic Research Centre please complete the donation form overleaf. Please tick the box if you wish to become a Friend and sign the gift aid declaration.

If you would prefer to make an annual **Donation** directly from your bank account please contact us for our bank details.

To to make an **online donation** please go to:
www.charitychoice.co.uk/donation.asp?ref=3260

You may also wish to leave a **Legacy** to The Organic Research Centre. By including us in your Will, you are enabling us to continue to develop our work and activities well in to the future.

For more information on any of the above, please contact Lawrence Woodward on **01488 658298** or email lawrence.w@organicresearchcentre.com

Please complete the form overleaf and return to:

**Freepost Plus RRRH-SAXU-GTXC
Progressive Farming Trust Ltd
The Organic Research Centre - Elm Farm
Hamstead Marshall, Newbury, RG20 0HR**

www.organicresearchcentre.com

Progressive Farming Trust registered in the UK no. 1513190

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The Farm Trail

Key to the farm trail map

When followed in an anticlockwise direction the trail starts at the information board near the gate into the farmyard (point **5**)

From the main roadside farm entrance, walk westwards to the start of the trail near the farmyard entrance. Follow the path, cross the footbridge and turn left.

1 Slurry tower. The big, round, green tank on your left is the slurry tower. It holds over 1,000 cubic metres of liquid manure collected from the cattle over winter, which is spread on the land as organic fertiliser when the crops are growing and need nutrients.

Now head for the gate and into Creek.

2 Old hedge lines. About 220 years ago Creek and Sunnyside were split into five fields. By 1843, six hedges had disappeared leaving only the oak trees to mark their location. Old isolated oaks in the pasture up to your right are an important habitat for many insects and other invertebrates. There are over 90 oak trees on Elm Farm, up to about 300 years old.

Continue following the hedge then turn left through the gate in Home Field.

3 Wildlife habitat. The fenced scrub area at the top of Home Field was planted in 1994 with a mixture of woody hedgerow species, to provide an additional wildlife habitat. Flowers, fruits and nuts on the various bushes are food for many different insects and small mammals.




Continue to the gate in the corner, over the small bridge, cross the public footpath and go up the farm track.

4 Track verges. Fleabane, lesser water parsnip, birds-foot trefoil, woundwort and vetches can all be found in the track verges and wild honeysuckle grows in the hedge.

At the top of the track go through the gate into Hunchback, then along the fence to the next gate on the left. Follow the field margin of Kennels to the bottom corner, and down steps into Donkey Field.

5 The old meadow and pond in Donkey Field. This is rough natural grassland that has never been ploughed or managed intensively. The anthills and the number of wild plants are important biodiversity indicators. There are over 90 different flowering plants in this field; many of which are now rarely found in Berkshire.

From the signboard near the pond go left through the scrubby area then round to the right. Walk down through the field and cross the bridge on your right.

-  Trail route
-  Public Rights of Way
-  Roads



6 The Seat in Donkey Field. After crossing the bridge a seat is visible on top of the bank to your right. It is positioned to give a good view of the insects and birds that inhabit the rich pond habitat in the old clay pit.

From the gate, walk across the middle of Gully on the public footpath to another gate on the edge of Gully Bank. Follow the path over bridges to the next gate into Sheepfield, then turn left and go down to the roadside.

7 Willow pollards. Near the roadside gate a willow tree has been pollarded; that is cut repeatedly at a height of about 2 metres. Willow pollards were one of Vincent van Gogh's favourite subjects, and were once widespread and attractive features of farmland. They were cut at this height to avoid cattle browsing on the new growth that was used either for basket-making or to feed cattle in winter.

Cross the road to the gate into Ditchfield and follow the field margin on your left. Continue along the hedge and around the clay pit to a gated bridge over the ditch.

8 Old clay/lime pits. The scrubby holes in Ditchfield and Flatbottom are old clay pits that were used to supply a brick kiln on the hill north of the farm. The kiln was first built by the Romans and stayed in use until the middle of the nineteenth century.

After crossing the bridge into Flatbottom, turn right and follow the field margin.

9 Wildflowers. The previously coppiced hedge on your right is now a dense haven for wildlife. The base of the hedge contains many wildflowers including nettle-leaved bellflower, agrimony, betony and yarrow.

Follow the hedge to a seat near the bridleway.

10 Rest place. The seat is an interesting place to sit and study the landscape features in view and how these features contribute to the nature and character of the countryside.

Continue to the gate into Quarryfield, turn left and follow the hedge to the gated bridge over a ditch into Woodcotes.

11 Woodland edge. This is a favourite place for predatory birds to hunt. Buzzards, kestrels, sparrow hawks and red kites can often be seen or heard as you walk alongside the woodland edge. Common darter and emperor dragonflies also hunt alongside the ditch on sunny days.

Keep to the right of the clay pit, then turn left. At the main track turn right returning to the farm buildings.