

Bengeo Trails 13: Great Mole Wood and Waterford Marsh

This trail covers Great Mole Wood and Waterford Marsh. Great Mole Wood is one of two ancient woodlands, and Waterford Marsh is one of three Local Wildlife Sites cited in the [Bengeo Neighbourhood Area Plan](#). Both are excellent examples of natural, open spaces within Bengeo.

This trail was produced by the [Love Bengeo Community Group](#)ⁱ.

Starts and ends: The Orchard, Bengeo SG14 3HQ (If arriving by car, do not park in The Orchard, there is a layby with parking spaces further along Sacombe Road).

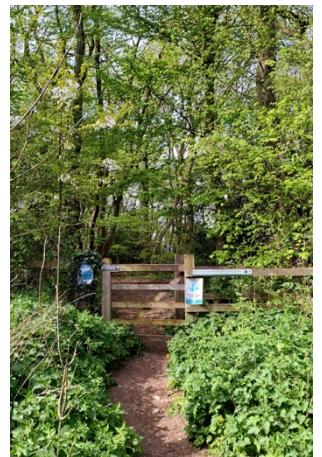
Distance: 2.5m/4km

Conditions: Footpaths and one short section on a quiet road. Some uneven surfaces which can be wet and muddy. Contains uphill and downhill sections. The trail passes through an enclosure that may contain livestock. Keep dogs on the lead and follow the [Countryside Code](#).

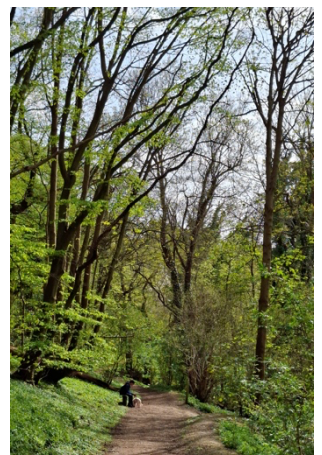
Starting at The Orchard go through the kissing gate into Great Mole Wood. Follow the path through the wood, bearing slightly to the right.



Just before reaching the gate posts, turn sharp left and follow the track downhill. (Do not follow Restricted Byway 09 or go through the gate to Waterford Heath opposite.)



At the bottom of the slope there is a waymarker post. Turn left here and immediately right on to Footpath 24. Follow the footpath around to the left passing a bench on the left. Continue straight on ignoring the steep downhill path to the right.

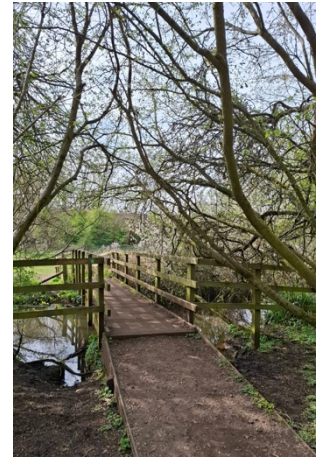


Follow the path through Great Mole Wood until it turns sharply downhill to the right. (Do not follow the path straight on towards the steel fencing alongside the railway line – this is a dead-end.)

Great Mole Wood is an ancient broadleaf woodland containing oak, hazel, willow and silver birch. As well as mature trees it also contains coppiced sections to encourage growth and increase biodiversity by allowing more light to reach the woodland floor. The woodland is a haven for wildlife and is full of bluebells and wood anemones in the spring.

Continue to follow the path downhill through the woods. It will curve around to the right with the railway line on the left.

Where the path meets the other path turn left and cross over the small bridge, through a gate and head towards the railway arch.



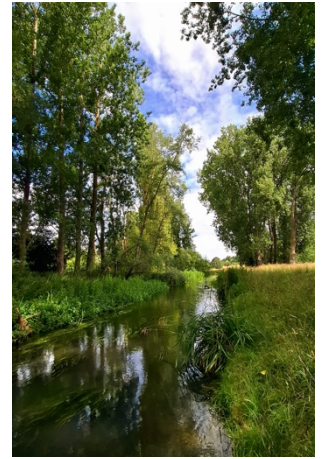
Pass under the railway arch, through another metal gate and proceed straight ahead, across Waterford Marsh towards the wooden kissing gate opposite. (This field regularly contains cattle during the summer months.)

Waterford Marsh is a wetland meadow adjacent to the River Beane. It supports many species of wildflower, insect and bird life - it is a delightful location to watch the Red Tail Kites gliding overhead. In the summer months cattle can sometimes be seen in the enclosure. These cattle play an important part in managing and conserving this vital grassland area.



Pass through the kissing gate, turn right and follow the path (FP 26) alongside the River Beane. Keep going, past a bench until you reach another wooden kissing gate to the field on the right. Do not go through this gate – although not marked as such, this indicates the location of the boundary of the Bengoe Ward.

Instead turn around and retrace your steps with the River Beane now on your right. Instead of turning left towards the railway arch continue following the path beside the river.



The **River Beane** is a chalk stream that rises near Sandon and flows into the River Lea (or Lee) at Hartham Common. Chalk streams are globally rare and vitally important natural habitats. The [River Beane Restoration Association](#), alongside partner agencies, have been instrumental in restoring and maintaining this precious waterway.



Just before the path meets the A119 (North Road) note the weir on the right-hand side.

The weir originally diverted water into a millstream that fed a corn mill in Molewood Road (now the site of the Molewood Pumping Station). Some years ago, the stream was breached and the millstream is now dry.

Turn around and return to the kissing gate you originally passed through besides the river.

Retrace your steps through the railway arch, over the small bridge and turn right following the path through the woods.

Walk past the bench and bear round to the right following the gravel track (Ignoring the path you originally followed.) The footpath (FP24) curves around to the left and emerges at The Orchard. (If you parked in the layby, go through the kissing gate on the left and walk through the woods back to the layby.)

Route mapⁱⁱ



ⁱ Formerly the Community Steering Group for the Bengo Neighbourhood Area Plan ⁱⁱ Route map sourced from openstreetmap.org