

Ellis Green Local Wildlife Site



Scotch Patch Orchard is a nature reserve managed by Walden Countryside. Ellis Green Common has no known owner and is open to the public at all times

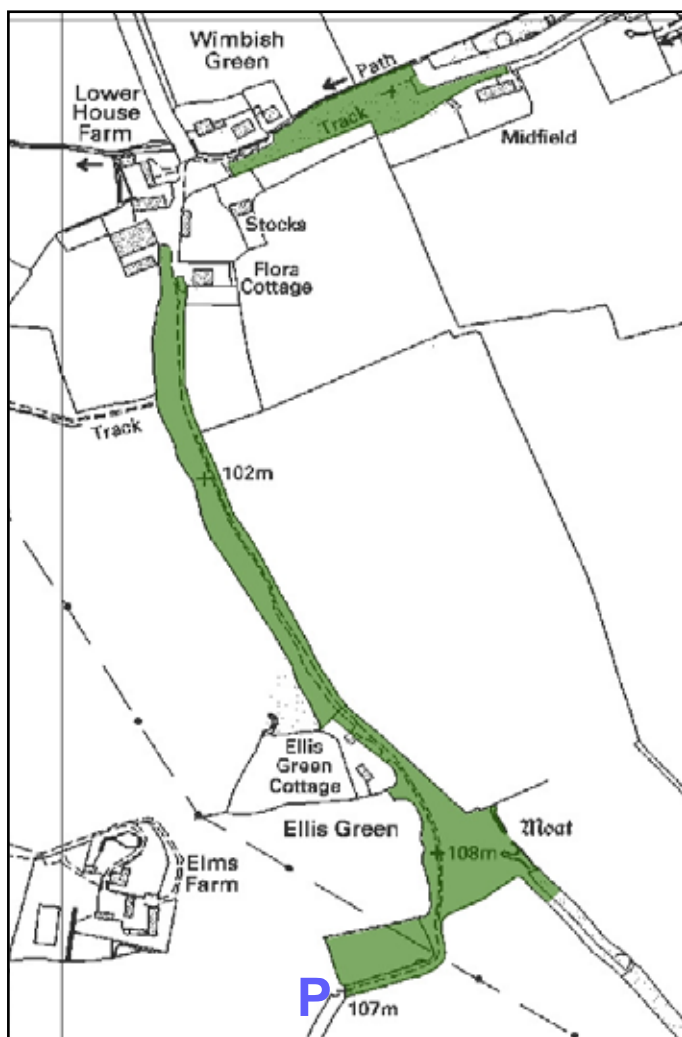
Parking

Please park on the grass verge (P on map) and be careful not to block the access to farm fields.

Access

The main length of Ellis Green Common (from Ellis Green Cottage to Lower House Farm) is a wide, green byway that is closed to motorised traffic and horse carts from November 1 to March 31 each year. The whole common is open at all times on foot and the access to Scotch Patch nature reserve is by permissive access (see details on the gate).

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Scotch Patch

This is a one acre orchard forming the southern end of Ellis Green Local Wildlife Site. As well as a collection of local or rare apple tree varieties, the grassland is never treated with chemicals and has a rich variety of flowers and insects. There is a beehive under the large Norway Spruce tree: do not approach too closely.

Ellis Green Common

Just north of Scotch Patch is a triangular area of hedged grassland with some large hawthorn bushes and blackthorn scrub. It has a good display of cowslips in spring.

Today the one house beside the Common (Ellis Green Cottage) was once two small cottages known as Vicarage Cottages. They belonged to the parish and were let out, not lived in by the vicar.

Ellis Green Moat

Hidden behind the thorn bushes on the north of the common is the one remaining side of a moat that once surrounded a mansion. There is little known about its history and there is no trace of it on old maps except the moat. Three sides of the moat on agricultural land were destroyed in the 1960s or 70s. The remaining moat is part of the Common and is accessible by a somewhat hidden path through the thorn bushes.

In a survey of 1670 the site was described as "one acre and a half called Bishops Garden whereon a large mansion house formerly stood encompassed in with moats between the Upper Fields and diverse woods and Groves on all sides." The house may have belonged to the Harvey family who later lived in Elms Farm.



Ellis Green footpath circuit 1 (2 miles)

Yellow circuit via Sampford WW2 airfield and **Ellis Green Byway**

Red: tracks that are not rights of way – to be used if right of way is unusable

Green: Ellis Green footpaths which are unusable as they have been blocked by householders

Start at Ellis Green Common and follow the footpath (once a minor road) running south-east through a narrow strip of woodland. This was once a lane leading to Highams Farm. It is now just a footpath and the final section to Highams Farm was ploughed out and is no longer a right of way.

The old lane near the Common once had some small cottages occupied by rather dubious characters. Scattered bricks and tales of their chicken stealing occupants are all that remains of the cottages. Where the wooded path ends, at the corner of a large field, turn left and follow the field-edge path. To your left are pasture fields usually occupied by cattle. On your right is a large arable field whose boundary path you follow until it reaches a grit road.

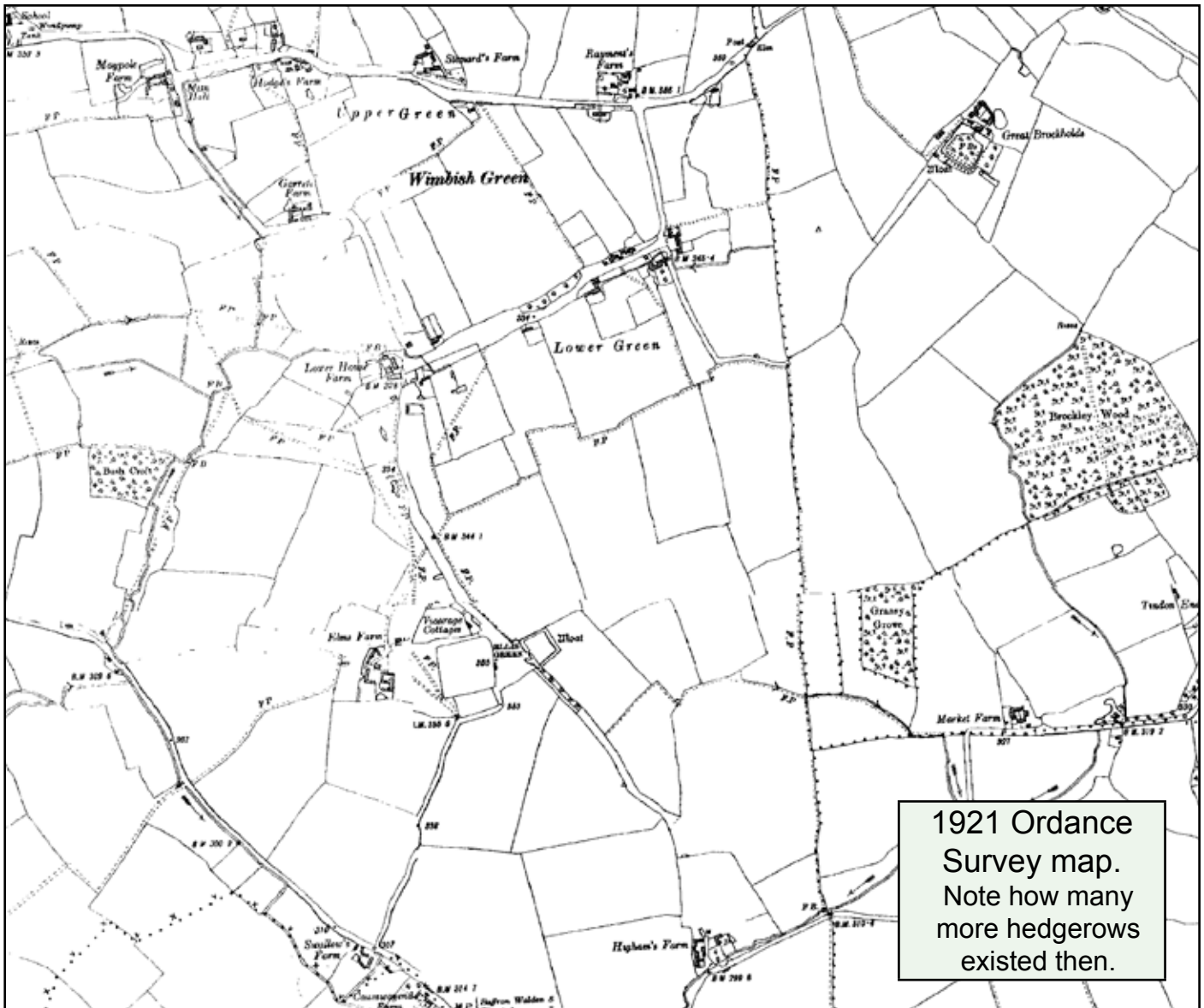
The footpath runs straight north, across an arable field, on the line of a Roman road that continues along the eastern boundary of the airfield. The path may be ploughed up or

difficult to penetrate in the bushy parts beside the airfield. Use the grit road and airfield perimeter track if the official footpath is impassable.

The airfield is now one huge arable field with a concrete perimeter track.

You will see from the 1921 map that what is now the airfield was once a patchwork of smaller farm fields with a large wood (Brockley Wood) at its centre. The wood and hedgerows were grubbed up when the airfield was hurriedly built in 1941/2.

Although the perimeter track still provides a complete circuit of the airfield there is no trace of the runways since these were built of wire netting secured by steel bars. Several Spitfire squadrons flew from this airfield but it always played second-fiddle to nearby Debden Airfield.



The unploughed land between the perimeter track and the Roman Road path has quite a rich variety of wild flowers.

Whether you are walking the Roman road footpath or the airfield perimeter track you will come to an exit gate on your left with pedestrian access beside it. This leads to an old road that served the airfield and is now a public footpath and also has a few houses beside it. Follow this road and then turn left down a green lane with rough motor track in the middle. This leads to Lower House Farm and is part of Ellis Green Wildlife Site once you get near the farm.

From the farm, walk south along the very wide green lane that is the main part of Ellis Green Common. You will go through entry gates that prevent vehicular access in the winter months. In summer, the common grassland has a good range of wildflowers including spiny retharrow.

At the end of the green lane you go through another anti-vehicle gate and you are back at Ellis Green Cottage and the Ellis Green Common triangle where you started.

WALDEN COUNTRYSIDE

This leaflet has been produced by Walden Countryside as part of its mission to encourage the public enjoyment of wildlife rich countryside by local residents.

Walden Countryside (our official name is Organic Countryside Community Interest Company) manages Scotch Patch Orchard at Ellis Green and has two other nature reserves: Noakes Grove at Swards End and Kings Field at Hempstead. All three are open to visitors on foot.

For more information visit:
walden-countryside.co.uk



Ellis Green footpath circuit 2 (1½ miles)

Blue/Yellow circuit via Elms Farm and Bush Croft

Red: track is not a right of way – to be used if right of way is unusable

Green: Ellis Green footpaths which are unusable as they have been ploughed out or blocked

Start at the sign board (entry to Scotch Patch) and follow the road south beside the Scotch Patch hedge, Where the hedge swings north, away from the road, is a footpath sign: the path is across an arable field to Elms Farm: it is usually clearly marked and walkable but if not retrace your steps and use the field edge path shown in red on the map.

Elms Farm is now a small collection of houses but was once the home of the Wiseman family who owned most of the farmland in this area.

From Elms Farm to the B184 main road is a public footpath along a private road. It has splendid displays of cowslips in springtime. At the B184 turn right and walk along the wide roadside verge for a short distance to the entry, on your right, to a green lane with mature hedges on each side. This path runs beside a small stream that runs into the River Chelmer.

After a few hundred yards, the path runs beside Bush Croft: a Local Wildlife Site in its own right. It is a traditionally coppiced wood with a beautiful display of spring flowers including oxlips and wood anemones. There are public footpaths on two sides of the wood but the path through the middle is not a public path.

Directly after Bush Croft, turn right along a field edge track with an ancient hedgerow on your right. Look carefully and you may spot a clump of the rare Polypody fern in the hedge bottom. Continue along the farm track until you join the wide green-lane that is Ellis Green Common. Turn right and follow the green lane (yellow on the map) until you reach Ellis Green Common triangle and Scotch Patch where you started.