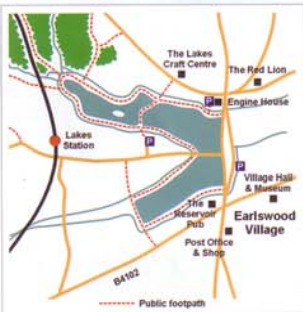


WM00284 Earlswood Lakes Interpretative Project



Earlswood is 9 miles south of Birmingham's city centre



For further information about Earlswood Lakes contact: British Waterways, Brome Hall Lane, Lapworth, Solihull, West Midlands, B34 5RB
Telephone 01564 754634 or visit their web site www.britishwaterways.co.uk

For local public transport information contact Centre on 0121 200 2700



Leaflet designed and illustrated by Steve Tomlinson ©2003
Engine House illustration by Peter Bayley ©2003
Photographs courtesy of Earlswood Village Museum



LHI is a partnership between the Heritage Lottery Fund, Nationwide Building Society, and the Countryside Agency

I-SPY

Nature Detective

How much wildlife can you find on your visit to Earlswood Lakes?
Tick the boxes so you'll remember what you spotted.



Betony- Usually found in grassy places but seems to like the ditches here.



Great Crested Grebe- Watch their elaborate courtship dances in the spring.



Coot- Look out for its funny lobed feet!



Banded Snail- Take a close look under the leaves and see how many you can find.



Yellow Flag Iris- Likes the marshy edges of the lakes and ditches.



Gipsywort- A member of the mint family, but has no minty smell.



Mink- Not the fisherman's friend! Mink hide out in hollow trees and prey on small birds and fish.



Privet- Once formed a hedge around Terry's Pool but has now grown wild.



Heron- Keep perfectly still and you might see it catch a fish.



Jay- Look for the blue stripe on its wings.



Damselfly- You'll need a sunny day in spring to spot this one!

THE SECRET HISTORY OF EARLSWOOD LAKES



Be an I-Spy Nature Detective.
Find out why the lakes were called 'The Scarborough of the Midlands'.

Discover how they supply water to the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal.

Earlswood Lakes

Earlswood Lakes were built in the early 1820s to supply water to the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. They have gradually been colonised by wildlife and now look like a natural part of the landscape. However, hidden in the undergrowth are all sorts of clues to their past. Find the cast iron trail markers at the places numbered on this map to discover more!



1 Engine House

A steam beam engine was once housed in the tall part of this building. It pumped water from Engine Pool into the canal feeder channel for 110 years before being replaced by electric pumps. Small boys would gather on the bridge to watch the polished beam engine pumping up and down. Can you see the marks in the brickwork where the tall chimney carried smoke from the steam engine fire?

2 Building the Lakes

The dam, ditches and pools took 5 years to dig as most of the digging was done by hand. Wooden safety barriers were placed along the dam in 1883 after a horse and cart fell down into the water on a dark night. The lack of street lighting in this area at that time resulted in a high death rate from drowning.

Some local people call the land between Engine and Windmill pools the 'kidpile'. Brushwood from nearby Kidpile Farm was stacked here and used to protect the banks from wave erosion.



3 Water Channels

A network of channels was built to move water between the lakes. They have become full of interesting pond life. Tall reed sweet grass, angelica, great willowherb and meadow sweet offer resting places for dragonflies and hiding places for shy waterside birds like moorhens.



4 A Secret Garden

This place used to be a hive of activity. A bathhouse stood here until it was destroyed by fire in 1975. All that is left are the concrete pillars.

Local people remember the Water Bailiffs who lived here. In the 1920s, Ralph Davenport made sure that the largest fish taken from the lakes were displayed in glass cases in the Red Lion pub. More recently, Bill Dolphin served mugs of tea and pies in his garden to hungry fishermen and walkers. Some of Bill's garden plants are still growing here. Can you see his lilac, laurel and conifer tree?

5 Keeping the Water Flowing

Managing the flow of water between the lakes was essential to ensure that enough water was released into the canal, especially at the peak of its commercial operation in the early 1800s. Water from Terry's Pool could be moved into Engine Pool by turning a handle on the sluice to raise the water gate 3m below.



Terry's Pool is now a nature reserve. The island in the centre has been rebuilt as a nesting site for water birds.

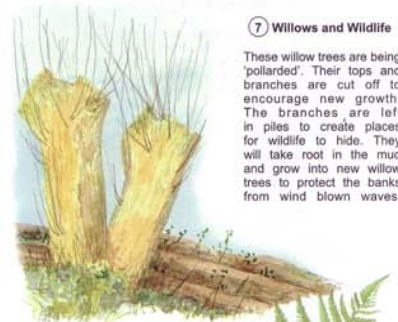


6 'The Scarborough of the Midlands'

Look out for sections of old iron fencing and gates. These date back to the early 1900s when Earlswood Lakes were so busy that they were known as the 'Scarborough of the Midlands'. People arrived at weekends in droves by train, horse and cart, bicycle and motor bus to enjoy fishing, boating, walking and fresh air.



Amphibious Broom



7 Willows and Wildlife

These willow trees are being 'pollarded'. Their tops and branches are cut off to encourage new growth. The branches are left in piles to create places for wildlife to hide. They will take root in the mud and grow into new willow trees to protect the banks from wind blown waves.

8 Water Supply

Nearby streams are channelled into Terry's Pool via this large sluice. The dense cover of trees here is ideal for shade loving plants such as buckler ferns. The woodland, called New Fallings Coppice, is a carpet of bluebells in spring.



Buckler Fern

9 Terry's Pool Nature Reserve

This is a special place for wildlife. Great Crested Grebes use this area to build their floating nests. It is a good place to spot Pipitrelle and Daubenton's bats swooping over the water at dusk in search of insects.



Great Crested Grebe with chicks

Daubenton's Bat