

Cooksbridge Meadow

A quiet, peaceful pasture and a small woodland backing onto a stream

At first sight Cooksbridge Meadow appears to be little more than a large field with a few scattered oak trees. In fact 'parkland' oaks like these can live to a great age, able to spread their limbs in all directions free from competition with other trees. They become extremely valuable for lichens that live on their bark, and for hosts of insects, particularly as older limbs begin to die back and the wood softens.

However, Cooksbridge's real value lies in the strip of woodland bordering the small stream. The land slopes towards the stream underneath a widely-spaced canopy of tall oak and ash, with coppiced hazel filling in the gaps. In spring plenty of light reaches down to the woodland floor which is carpeted by the flowers so typical of a southern English woodland — bluebell, wood anemone, stitchwort and dog's mercury.

Cooksbridge is one of those many places that prove that it is not always necessary to be a site of scientific importance — or indeed to be home to a rare species — to be somewhere that is special for its own value and to be worth saving. The song of the blackcap, the breeze in the trees, and the soft babble of water in the brook are reason enough.



stitchwort

Getting around

The site is one mile south of Fernhurst on the A286. There is a footpath through the eight hectare reserve (over a stile from the main road). However, it is likely to be grazed during the summer, so please keep dogs on a short lead. No parking nearby.

Grid Reference SU895270

Nearest Postcode GU27 3EZ

Lat Long N 51.035843, W 0.724213