



**Washingwell Wood** adjoins the park and is ancient semi-natural woodland. It is mainly a coniferous woodland that once provided pit prop trees for the colliery. It is often referred to as the Bluebell Wood due to the large numbers of bluebells flowering in the Spring.

There are numerous footpaths winding through the woods connecting with the Park and other countryside sites nearby, including **Bucks Hill** which is a small area of plantation woodland which lies close to Washingwell Wood.

riders and walkers.

**Watergate Riders Route** a 3.25 mile route suitable for cyclists, horse

countryside.

**Watergate and Washingwell Wander** a 3 mile walk through Watergate Forest Park into Washingwell Wood and the surrounding

**Wildlife Trail** a 1.4 mile circular walk around the lake.

including a miners lamp.



The park has many features to look out for during your visit including wildlife, flowers, sculptures, streams and waterfalls. A series of trails and paths take you through woodland, around the lake and willflower meadows and past the various sculptures such as the Green Heart or Out of Darkness, a set of steel spheres featuring fossils

and a great recreational site for visitors.

**Watergate Forest Park** is located on the site of the former Watergate Colliery on the outskirts of Gateshead. Following reclamation work in the 1990's the site has been transformed and now provides a haven for wildlife

## Watergate Forest Park Local Nature Reserve

## History

The history of the site we now call Watergate Forest Park dates back to the end of the 1st Century. From the air, evidence of a Roman Fort can be seen. This is now a willflower meadow (*map reference 4*).



Fugar Manor House is in charters written in the 13th Century indicating the estate covered just over 100 acres. By the 19th Century it was a courtyard farm on the edge of Washingwell Wood on the Sunnyside to Lobley Hill Road. Records show that the farm was demolished in or before the 1970's and the site became the original car park for visitors to Washingwell Wood. Traces of its orchard are all that can be seen today with species of cherry, apple and pear trees to be found.

The Miner's Steps were built by Priestman Colliery Ltd to connect the miner's homes to the Watergate Colliery. The steps are still used now (*map reference 5*).

The Tanfield Railway opened in 1840 taking coals from Tanfield Moor Colliery and others along its route (including Watergate) to Dunston on the banks of the Tyne. Part of the Railway is still operated by volunteers. However, the line the Washingwell Wood now forms an important recreational route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, linking the operational railway and Dunston.



After the colliery closed, the remaining spoil heaps were left unmanaged for approximately 30 years and public access was denied during this time. In the late 1980's Gateshead Council acquired Watergate Colliery land from the National Coal Board with the help of grant funding, and designed and implemented a reclamation scheme for the site.

Initial reclamation work, organised by the Council's Development and Enterprise Group, was hindered as the spoil and colliery workings caught fire in the early 1990's taking several months to extinguish by capping with clay. One of the spoil heaps is now the location of the Floating Rocks (*map reference 7*).

The park was officially opened to the public in 2000.



# Watergate Forest Park Local Nature Reserve

including Washingwell Wood and Bucks Hill Plantation

You may also be interested in...



### Parking

The main car park is located on the Whickham Highway, just south of Central Nursery. A smaller car park is located on the Consett Road just beside Emmanuel College.

### Buses

Telephone Nexus Traveline on 0871 200 2233 for up to date information.

### Please follow the Countryside Code and...

- Be considerate to all other users.
- Cyclists must slow down and give way to walkers and horse riders.
- Horse riders must give way to pedestrians.
- Dog owners must keep their dogs under close control and 'scoop the poop'! Bag it and Bin it!
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.

### Water Safety – Be Aware of the Dangers!

Rivers and ponds may look safe but they can be dangerous. Hazards like hidden currents, deep water, sudden drops, rubbish, reeds and thin ice can cause serious accidents.

The best way to keep out of trouble is not to enter the water.

If you would like this leaflet in another format please contact us.

If you enjoy your countryside visit, why not make a difference? Join Gateshead Countryside Volunteer Rangers today! To find out more, contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator on 0191 433 3524.

### Contact Information

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Map • Information • History • Walks • Trails



# Watergate Forest Park Local Nature Reserve



## Things to look out for on your walk

Look out for the waymarked trails as you wander around Watergate. If you're interested in wildlife then take the Wildlife Trail and look out for the many species of wildlife that call Watergate their home.

If history and art are more your thing then choose the Watergate and Washingwell Wander and soak up the history surrounding the area or simply gaze at the many artistic sculptures as you take in the beautiful surroundings.



### Waymarked Trails

#### Wildlife Trail 🐾

This is a circular route around Watergate's Lake that gives good opportunities to see the wildlife that lives in the Park. The 1.4 mile / 2.6 km route can be accessed by families, people with pushchairs or mobility scooter users. People with walking difficulties, visual impairments and some wheelchair users may need assistance. This route has undulating gradients and rough surfaces in places. 📏 This point is 0.71 mile / 1.2 km from the main car park.

#### Watergate and Washingwell Wander 🏠

This 3 mile / 4.7 km walk takes you through Watergate Forest Park into Washingwell Wood and the surrounding countryside. Taking in views of natural and historic features as well as the sculptures along the way. This route includes several steps, undulating and steep gradients and is rough under foot in places, once you are away from the wildlife trail.



#### Watergate Riders' Route 🐾

This circular route gives you good surrounding views and several options to link up with other countryside routes. It is a mixture of both permissive and official bridleways as well as restricted byways. Suitable for cyclists and horse riders also giving walkers an alternative 3.25 mile / 5.4 km trail.



Please be aware of other users and follow the countryside code.

## What we do for Wildlife

The Countryside Team works to provide high quality habitat for wildlife along with providing access for members of the public.

They also run a popular events programme and education service.

When you are out and about you may come across the Countryside Management Team in action such as:

- Tree felling
- Scrub cutting
- Hay cutting
- Pond clearing
- Footpath improvements



Often the immediate effect is quite drastic but usually within one season the benefits to wildlife can be seen.

