

# Walk: Hatchet Pond & 'Beaulieu Letters'

Set off from Chapel Stores along Chapel Lane back to the main Road. Cross over and turn left to the Village Hall and walk through the Hall's car park continuing on the track heading west across Bagshot Moor towards the Lymington Road.

Follow the trail round to the left as you approach the road and cross over, following the track ahead. This brings you into Beaulieu Heath car park; turn right from the second car park area onto a trail heading approximately North East towards the western end of Hatchet Pond.

PTO For more about this special pond.



Chapel Stores – for hot and cold drinks, snacks and ice cream.

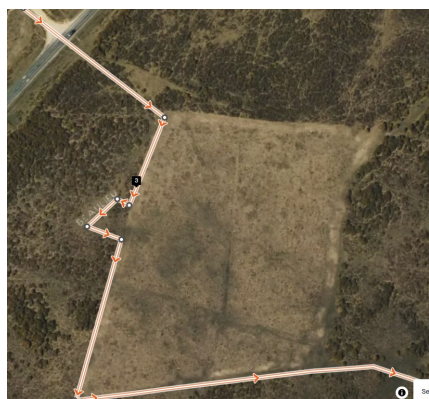
A circular 3.6 mile walk from East Boldre's Chapel Stores across Bagshot Moor to Hatchet Pond & the Beaulieu Letters.

QR code for the route on Strava.



Stick to the path as you approach the crossing at the Western end of Hatchet Pond as the path is surrounded by soft ground (shown in hatched in yellow above).

Splash through the crossing (wellies or walking boots/shoes may be a good idea) and continue on the trail, taking the first track to your right. Follow this along the pretty northern shore of Hatchet Pond. At the eastern end of the pond follow the shore line round as shown in the route map above. On reaching Hatchet Moor car park turn left and head to the car park exit. You will pass 'Little Hatchet' pond which, depending on the season, can have a glorious display of waterlilies. Cross the road continuing on the trail ahead.

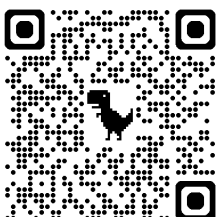


After a short distance you will reach a roughly rectangular open area. Turn right following its border and about a third of the way along take a short detour into the shrubbery to the right where you will find the Beaulieu letters. To see them from the ground you do have to get up close. (Zoom in on the satellite view on your phone's map app to help you to find them).

The 4.5m high letters cut into the turf spell BEAULIEU were used to help early planes identify the aerodrome from the air. It is likely they date back over 100 years to the flying school that was established at East Boldre in 1910. These early moorland runways were hard to pick out amongst the gorse so the letters were a practical solution in the days before radio.

The letters gradually became overgrown. In March 2012, after a period of monitoring to check no sensitive species would be disturbed, the letters were restored by volunteers and this was filmed by the BBC (QR code left).

Leaving the 'Letters' continue around the rectangular open area which will bring you to a trail. Turn left heading east along it then bearing right on the track towards the village's heathland football pitch.



Follow the path around the west side of the football pitch. Turn left to the main road and make your way back to chapel stores via Chapel Lane.

We hope you enjoyed the walk. Pop in to Chapel Stores for refreshments on your return!

# Hatchet Pond – A Special Place

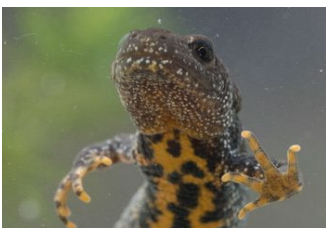


Hatchet Pond is the New Forest’s largest body of fresh water. This small, shallow lake is home to freshwater animals lost from many other parts of the UK and almost 90% of the rarest wetland plants in the UK. Many species found here have long since become extinct from other parts of the country.

It has the highest possible conservation status - both a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Special Area for Conservation. A major restoration plan is in place and changes have been made to protect it for future generations. Visitors have a critical role to play in helping to ensure this special place can survive by not entering the water for any reason, and not allowing dogs into the water.

## Plant-life

- Stoneworts are a unique group of complex algae that typically grow in clear, unpolluted fresh water. Hatchet Pond is an important area for these plants.
- Coral necklace is a rare flowering plant with long trailing red stems and clusters of white flowers resembling beads threaded along a necklace. With the widespread loss of heathlands across the UK it is now only found in a few areas including here in the New Forest.
- Pillwort is a small creeping fern with grass-like leaves with tiny round spore cases or ‘pills’ at its base. In decline across Western Europe, it is widespread in the New Forest making it one of the most important populations in Europe.
- Marsh Clubmoss has already been lost from much of Europe with the UK now holding a large part of the global population. Its long spikey stems are a distinctive bright, lime green in colour and grow up to 20cms long.



## Wildlife

- The New Forest is home to 75% of all species of dragonflies and damselflies and Hatchet Pond is home to the extremely rare southern damselfly.
- A home to great crested newts, the UK’s largest newt species with adults growing up to 17cms long. They are a protected species across Europe.
- The mighty medicinal leech is found in just five water bodies in the New Forest. The largest of all leeches it can grow up to 20cms long. It uses its three jaws and 100 teeth to feed on amphibians and occasionally a New Forest pony.
- The Pond also supports a wide range of wildlife who visit it to mate, lay eggs, feed, or source water. These include reptiles, amphibians, snakes and bats, as well of course visits from the ponies and livestock who freely roam the Forest.

Please note: to reduce the risk of pollution into the pond there are no longer toilet facilities at Hatchet Pond.

**Chapel Stores has a toilet for use by its customers – just ask at the counter for the key.**

