

Part 2: A walking tour of our Public Art

We begin our walking tour in the Square, looking at the bus shelter, the first of the three we'll see that were designed by Geoffrey Owen, MBE. Also in the Square, by the War Memorial, is the metal bench donated by Age Concern and the Parish Council in 2014 to commemorate those who served in World War 1.

From the Square we head for the traffic lights and turn into Eastleigh Road, going along to the park by Oak Walk, where we see the tulips that commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

We continue along Eastleigh Road, cross over to Shorts Road, and walk up to the New Century Park entrance. Here we see the gate designed by Georgina Griffiths in memory of the Home Guard. Walking through the park, keeping the Village Hall on our right, we come to the other gate, which recognised the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002. Both gates were made by Colin Phillips, the blacksmith responsible for several items of our public art. Between these two gates, we could take a very short detour up to the high ground behind the Village Hall, where we can see the bench that the Fair Oak WI donated in 2018 to celebrate their centenary.

We now make our way to the Stoke Park Woods entrance at the end of Hardings Lane. There are several ways to get there: the choice is yours. Furthermore, if you would prefer to take the tour in stages, this is the first opportunity for a natural break.

North of the entrance to the woods we see the Lychgate and the decorated fences that flank it. This is our introduction to the widest variety of public art in the parish. From the Lychgate, we follow the path northwards until we reach a junction; where we take the path to the right towards the first of the five carved benches, featuring a magpie and fox. The carvings on these benches and on the Lychgate are the work of Paul Sivell. We return to the path junction and turn right, passing two more carved benches (leaves; owl). To our right we see five deer and to the left a metal arch over a pathway into the woods: the deer and the arch are further examples of Colin Phillips' work. Continuing along the loop of the path, we see the remaining two benches (deer, badgers) and then bear left to walk through the estate to the Woodland Community Centre. We follow the path, passing by the enclosure with black fencing and yellow gates, to Chiltern Crescent and then Savernake Way, as the Centre comes into view. Along its front, we see the very attractive set of mosaic murals that are the work of Will Rosie.

Our next site is another bus shelter, but it's almost a third of a mile away at Crowdhill, so as we will next be heading back towards the centre of the village and on to Knowle Park, this might well be a good chance for another natural break.

From the village, the quickest route to Knowle Park is via Stubbington Way, continuing along Noyce Drive and crossing the green space to enter the Park at its northwest corner.

Walking up to the high ground, we reach the triangulation point, from where we can look for landmarks, using the orientation base that is another example of Colin Phillips' work. For the curious, the original location of the trig point was on the edge of the woodland a short distance beyond the oak tree.

We next walk down toward the allotments, where two elegant floral posts guard the entrance from the car park. We continue to the southwest, crossing over the pond and following the path through Knowle Park towards the play area, but before we go through to reach it, we need to detour to the right and take a look at the carved bench around the oak tree. Moving back to and then along the path by the play area to the gate into the car park, we can see the acorns made by Roger Stephens, and Colin Phillips' flowers and railings.

For those of us who prefer not to miss anything, the remaining bus shelter designed by Geoffrey Owen is at the Horton Heath crossroads. The original shelter was replaced in 2010, retaining the original specification. Returning to the village centre, we pass the arch at the entrance to Fair Oak Cemetery, which dates back to 1997.

We are indeed fortunate, not only to have such a wide variety of impressive public art, but also to have so many walking routes within easy reach of the village centre.