

Ponds @ Nevill Hall

Nevill Hall Nature Spaces

Jan 2026



Overview

There are now two ponds on the site, one large Victorian pond behind the Nevill Hall mansion and a second smaller pond, in a Sensory Garden, formally a fish pond, now surrounded by a wheelchair friendly path.



History

In early maps of Nevill Hall there were three surrounding ponds. Two ponds, interconnecting, on the west side of the original drive leading up to the Hall are described as being “mediaeval fishponds” and thus must have predated the original building of the Hall. They lie on a likely natural water course that meanders on to the River Usk



The third, behind the Hall, could well have originally been a natural pond. It would seem that it was altered to create a scenic feature for the formal gardens. At the eastern end there is a retaining wall and overflow drain. The exact source of its water is unknown but a spring is presumed.



All the ponds are illustrated on this map of 1920.

During the building of the District General Hospital in the '60s the upper half of the western ponds was filled in to become part of the access road and car park.



The lower half remained, linking on to a slow flowing stream in the neighbouring field. The border fence and gate can be seen in the photograph.



The Sensory Garden, with access paths was created around this pond as part of the Millennium project in 2000. This was well maintained for several years, but sadly over recent years condition has deteriorated. Lately with the retaining dam open it has been quite dry. With the surrounding vegetation uncontrolled it is difficult to appreciate.



The pond behind the Hall is much larger and over the years also changed in character. It retains water most of the year but recent summers have seen it almost drying out. However it continues to attract numerous visitors !





Herons, ducks, geese, moorhens, kingfishers are regularly seen. Insect life abounds and surrounding water plants included a rare fern.



Massive trees including Cedar, Beech, Scots Pine and Giant Redwood along with Willows border this pond. A rare Black Poplar once grew at the eastern end but was felled by a storm in 2020. Its size made it impossible to be fully removed and is now an added feature, much enjoyed by wildlife.

The Biodiversity Report (2023), commissioned by ABUHB, makes important recommendations *“to enhance the ponds’ wildlife value via a tailored management plan aiming to increase plant diversity, preserve standing water areas and to create a more suitable habitats for aquatic invertebrates and amphibians.”*



Future Plans

Maintaining vibrant and biodiverse habitats around ponds adds both to biodiversity and the experience of all visitors. Ponds in the Nevill Hall grounds fully complement the variety of habitats that surround the hospital and their quality will be retained and enhanced.

- 1) As recommend by the Biodiversity report further detailed ecological analysis of the pond's wildlife is required.
- 2) Based on that report, changes may be required for borders and aquatic revisions and planting.
- 3) A primary requirement is to manage the water quality. This will require a structural analysis by a pond expert regarding the water flow of the pond and whether any changes are required.
- 4) Non-obtrusive safety measures for visitors need consideration
- 5) Signage and information both for safety and knowledge of the natural habitat.
- 6) As part of the Paths@ Nevill Hall project the completion of a circuit walk around the north-west perimeter of the Hall pond will need to be managed carefully.

Surveys, Initial Work and Longer-term Maintenance

- 1) Ecological survey of pond biodiversity: as a baseline. To be repeated as required.
- 2) Structural survey
- 3) Pond clearance work followed by a three yearly silt / leaf removal maintenance plan.
- 4) Planting
- 5) Signage and information

All these could be included in the Local Places for Nature bid as well as requiring some volunteer work

- 6) A Perimeter path - this will be included in Paths@ Nevill Hall project

Much of this maintenance and ongoing surveying could be carried out by volunteers and citizen scientists. .

Ref: **ABUHB – Nevill Hall Hospital Biodiversity Enhancement Report 2023 – Mott McDonald**

Projects