

## Information

### Buses:

Avery Hill: B15 (N.S.), N21, 132, 162, 233, 286  
Gravel Hill (for Hall Place): B15 (N.S.), 132, 229, 492  
Parkhill Road: 132, 269.  
(N.S.) - No Sunday Service.

Transport for London: 020 7222 1234 [www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)

For detailed travel information from your home to any point on the Shuttle Riverway visit [www.tfl.gov.uk/plan-a-journey/](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/plan-a-journey/)

### OS map:

This leaflet is best used in conjunction with the Ordnance Survey Map Pathfinder 1:25,000 TQ 47/57.

For information on the London LOOP, and the other six long distance walks which make up the Strategic Walk Network for London, visit [www.walklondon.org.uk](http://www.walklondon.org.uk) or call 0870 240 6094 for free leaflets.

The Shuttle Riverkeeper Coordinator is working to improve the rivers environmental status and quality through educational programmes and community engagement. For information on how to volunteer ring 07585302623 or email [joanne.bradley@thames21.org.uk](mailto:joanne.bradley@thames21.org.uk)

### Please follow the Country Code:

Guard against all risk of fire, keep dogs under close control, leave no litter, help keep all water clean, protect wildlife, plants and trees, cross roads carefully.



If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different format, please call 020 8303 7777 and ask for Communications/Graphics.  
The reference to quote is 603191/11.14



**11 Bexley Woods** The dominant tree is hornbeam. This ancient woodland was once managed by coppicing, a system where the trees were felled to a few inches above ground level and allowed to regrow. Every 5-15 years this regrowth would be harvested to provide material for building, fencing and firewood. As well as being of economic benefit, coppicing favours many woodland plants and animals by allowing light to reach the woodland floor and providing a range of habitats from newly-cut glades to dense thickets.

There are a number of bends, or meanders, along this section of the Shuttle. Erosion is greatest on the outside (concave) bank, where the water is flowing fastest. On the inside of the bend the relatively sluggish flow encourages the deposition of sand, pebbles and other material derived from further upstream. Pebble deposits also occur in the centre of the river bed known as "Channel Bars".

*On leaving Bexley Woods cross over Parkhill Road, turn left and then right into Riverdale Road. On reaching the open grass area there is the opportunity to walk along the riverbank.*

**12 Riverdale Road** Mid-way along this section you may notice relatively shallow, rapidly flowing sections of the river called "Riffles", and deeper, more tranquil sections called "Pools".

Towards the down-stream end the river is cutting into the bank in a number of places, exposing the sediments. These sediments probably date from the Pleistocene or Ice Age epoch over 10,000 years ago.

*At the end of Riverdale Road turn right and cross over Upton Road South into Love Lane. At the end of Love Lane continue straight ahead along the unsurfaced pedestrian footpath and continue to follow the footpath round to the left when you reach the junction of Knoll Road with Hartford Road.*

*After crossing over the River Shuttle footbridge turn immediately right and follow the narrow surfaced path. The area to the left before you turn right is part of the BETHS Grammar playing fields.*

**13 BETHS Grammar** Here the riverbank has abundant tree cover composed principally of trees that prefer damp soil such as alder, crack willow and black poplar. On the north bank an oak dominated woodland, with a few sycamore and silver birch has become established. Some large black poplars and crack willows can be seen on the south bank.

*At the end of the surfaced footpath you need to turn left and cross the A2 via the footbridge. After crossing the footbridge cross over Rochester Drive and turn left. Turn right up Midhurst Hill and at the end of the row of houses you can either turn right and cross over the Warren or if you want to avoid the steep banks you can continue up Midhurst Hill and turn right along Broomfield Road to rejoin the Shuttle Riverway just opposite Faygate Crescent.*

**14 The Warren** The name has its origins in the 16th Century, when it was said that rabbits were kept for sale there. The farmhouse was used as a hospital for Hall Place School in 1845 despite being known locally as the "Pest House", after a carrier died of plague there in 1665 following a trip to London.

Warren Farmhouse was demolished in 1937. Its former site is now an open mown area bordered by long grass and shrubs, whilst most of the hillside is covered by oak and elm woodland. The abundance of insects that these woodlands support provides food for a variety of birds. Blue tits and treecreepers feed mainly in the trees whilst robins, wrens and dunnocks forage mostly on the ground and shrub layer. Other species, not exclusively feeding solely on insects also take advantage of the variety of shelter and nesting sites provided by the woodland.

*At the end of Broomfield Road you will need to take extreme care when crossing the busy Gravel Hill at the crossing. After crossing there is a pedestrian entrance to the northern area of Hall Place grounds. This open grassy area slopes steeply down to Hall Place where it links up with the Cray Riverway.*

**15 Hall Place** This site has been occupied since the 13th Century. The present house is part-Tudor, and part-Jacobean. The notorious rake Sir Francis Dashwood, of Hell-Fire Club fame, once lived here and it was occupied for 70 years by a private boarding school for boys.

The last tenant was the Countess of Limerick, who lived there until 1943, after which the American army used it as a base for code breaking. This grade I listed building is now a museum operated by Bexley Heritage Trust. It has renowned gardens with topiary. The visitor centre houses a shop, café and toilets.

*At Hall Place the Shuttle joins the River Cray and the Cray Riverway walk can be followed north to Crayford Marshes and the River Thames or south to Foots Cray Meadows and the London LOOP. The 132 bus route will take you from Gravel Hill to the Avery Hill end of the Shuttle Riverway.*



Bexley Woods

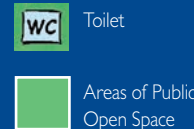
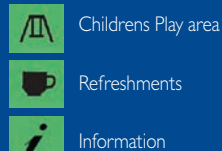
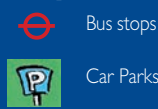
# Explore the Shuttle Riverway

Approx 5 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> miles following riverside, woods, parks and some linking roads. Well signposted with signs and way mark posts.

Generally flat surfaced paths but some steep slopes which may require a detour for wheelchairs and buggies.



### Key for map:



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The Shuttle Riverway is a signposted walk along the River Shuttle, a small tributary of the River Cray, that it joins at Hall Place near Bexley. The walk then joins the Cray Riverway, following the Cray through to the River Darent at Crayford Marshes and through the marshes to the Thames. A separate leaflet is available for the Cray Riverway.

The banks of the river, and some areas of adjacent land, contain remnants of the woodlands and agricultural land that formerly dominated the countryside of this region. Particularly obvious are the alder and willow trees that once formed extensive stands in the low lying wetland areas next to the stream. These remnants and the river, provide a valuable refuge for wildlife enabling a variety of animals to penetrate further into urban areas than would otherwise be the case without these corridors.

### History

The early history of the River Shuttle was almost completely related to agriculture. The Anglo Saxons settled by the river, cleared spaces in the forest, farmed and tended pigs. In 814 AD King Cenwulf of Kent made Archbishop Wulfred the Lord of the Manor and gave him ten ploughlands, through which the Shuttle is thought to have run.

Over time a number of large estates were established. Some buildings such as Lamorbey survive today while others such as Warren Farmhouse disappeared.

The Dartford Loop Railway was opened in 1866 and brought many changes with development encouraged by the new accessibility to London. Together with a boom in affordable houses, today's 'Dormitory Suburb' was on the way.

### Ecology

The alder woods along the banks of the Rivers Shuttle and Cray are amongst the best in London. Alder prefer to live in wet places and their fine root systems penetrate well below the water level preventing bank erosion by holding the soil together.



Alder

Much of the bankside vegetation along the Shuttle consists of nettles, brambles and coarse grasses. These provide cover and shelter for invertebrates and mammals, and food for a variety of insect species. Nettles are the food-plant of several butterfly species including the small tortoiseshell, red admiral and peacock, all of which can be seen in this area.



Marsh Marigold

Another interesting feature of the walk is the variety of water-loving plants. The most obvious examples are species that are rooted in the shallows and grow out of the water such as reed canary-grass, pendulous sedge and soft rush. Other plants can be seen growing at the water's edge such as the flowering water figwort and marsh marigold.

### The source of the Shuttle

The main source of the Shuttle appears to be near Pippenhall Stables just south of the A210 between Avery Hill and Eltham. Here there is a spring at the junction between the relatively freely-draining Blackheath Beds, and the more slowly draining Woolwich Beds. An old map indicates another source just to the east of Holy Trinity Church in Southend Crescent that is also on the boundary between these two beds.

### Route Guide

The following describes the route for walkers starting from the Green Chain Walk at Avery Hill Park and continuing eastwards to eventually join up with the Cray Riverway at Hall Place. The walk is approximately 5 ¾ miles but it is possible to start and finish this walk at various points.

*If starting from the Green Chain Walk major signpost follow the way markers east that take you directly past Avery Hill House.*



Peacock Butterfly

**1 Avery Hill House** was built in the early 1800s and extensively enlarged and renovated in the 1880s when it was bought by Colonel North. Perhaps its most outstanding feature is the Winter Garden with its three temperature controlled houses, and plant collections from every continent. The house, which was badly damaged by a bomb in 1941, is now used by Greenwich University whilst the park is used for many sports and outdoor activities.

*Continue to follow the way markers through the park leaving at the southern entrance. Cross Avery Hill Road at the crossing and continue straight ahead along the pedestrian path crossing over Anstridge Road and Alderwood Road. Continue straight ahead along the pedestrian path and turn right when you reach the next road Restons Crescent. After you have passed the blocks of flats turn immediately left at the Parish Wood Park entrance.*

**2 Parish Wood Park** The name may refer to the old parish boundary, this followed much the same line as the present borough boundary. The park was once all wet woodland and today the park is often very wet, so alders and willows grow well. The trees along the river are mainly crack willows, so called because of the brittleness of their twigs. This native species has been present in Britain since the Ice Age. Recent improvements to this park include a new playground, wetland habitat and path network.

*Follow the waymarked path through Parish Wood Park and exit adjacent to the school entrance onto Berwick Crescent footpath. Turn left and the path follows the northern bank of the River Shuttle.*

**3 Berwick Crescent** The bankside vegetation in this section includes hawthorn, willow and alder. In Spring white blossom appears on the hawthorn and its strong scent attracts many pollinating insects. In Autumn red fruits called haws develop in the fertilised flowers, and provide a valuable source of Winter food for birds such as blackbirds, thrushes, redwings and fieldfares.

*At Days Lane cross over the road and enter Hollyoak Wood Park.*

**4 Hollyoak Wood Park** The park was once all woodland and part of a royal hunting ground. During World War II, all but a small area of woodland was dug over for allotment food production. Today one small patch of ancient woodland and an allotment corner in a grassy leisure area are left as witnesses of former days.

*On leaving Hollyoak Wood Park turn right and cross over Willersley Avenue at the crossing and enter Willersley Park.*

**5 Willersley Park** *Follow the footpath. On leaving the park cross over Marlborough Park Avenue and enter Marlborough Park.*

**8 Lamorbey** To the south of the golf course lies Lamorbey Park, that can be reached by making a detour south down Burnt Oak Lane for 440 yards and entering the Park at the main gates. The estate dates from the end of the 15th Century. The present house, dating from c1750, has been enlarged and improved over the years, the architect John Shaw being responsible for its present appearance. The house had many owners and tenants and was at one stage a private hotel. It is now the home of Rose Bruford College. New buildings include a circular theatre and award-winning college buildings.

*To the east of Sidcup Golf Course the path continues along an unsurfaced track between residential gardens. At Dene Avenue cross over the road and turn left. At the junction with Rowley Avenue turn right. At the junction with Harcourt Avenue turn right and continue south to Penhill Road. Cross over Penhill Road at the crossing and follow the road until you reach Penhill Bridge.*

**6 Marlborough Park** *Follow the footpath. On leaving Marlborough Park cross over Burnt Oak Lane and follow the northern boundary fence of Sidcup Golf Course.*

**7 Sidcup Golf Course** Along both banks of the river several alder trees can be seen. Alder seeds have air pockets that enable them to float and so disperse along rivers. The seeds are an important Winter food for finches such as siskin, goldfinch and redpoll.

**9 Penhill Bridge** This area is notable for the presence of water voles, that can frequently be seen at quiet times of the day from Spring to Autumn, either swimming or feeding on grasses or water plants. Evidence of their presence can be seen in the form of the closely-cropped feeding areas and burrows.

*Having crossed over the bridge turn left following the river along Riverside Walk crossing straight over Albany Road and Crofton Road.*

**10 Riverside Walk** Several non-native trees occur in this section including the invasive sycamore, that grows all along the river, and the american red oak, horse chestnut and walnut found at the eastern end of the open space. Introduced trees are, generally, of less conservation value than native species because fewer species of insect feed on them.

*At Murchison Avenue cross over the road and directly opposite the walk enters Bexley Woods.*

