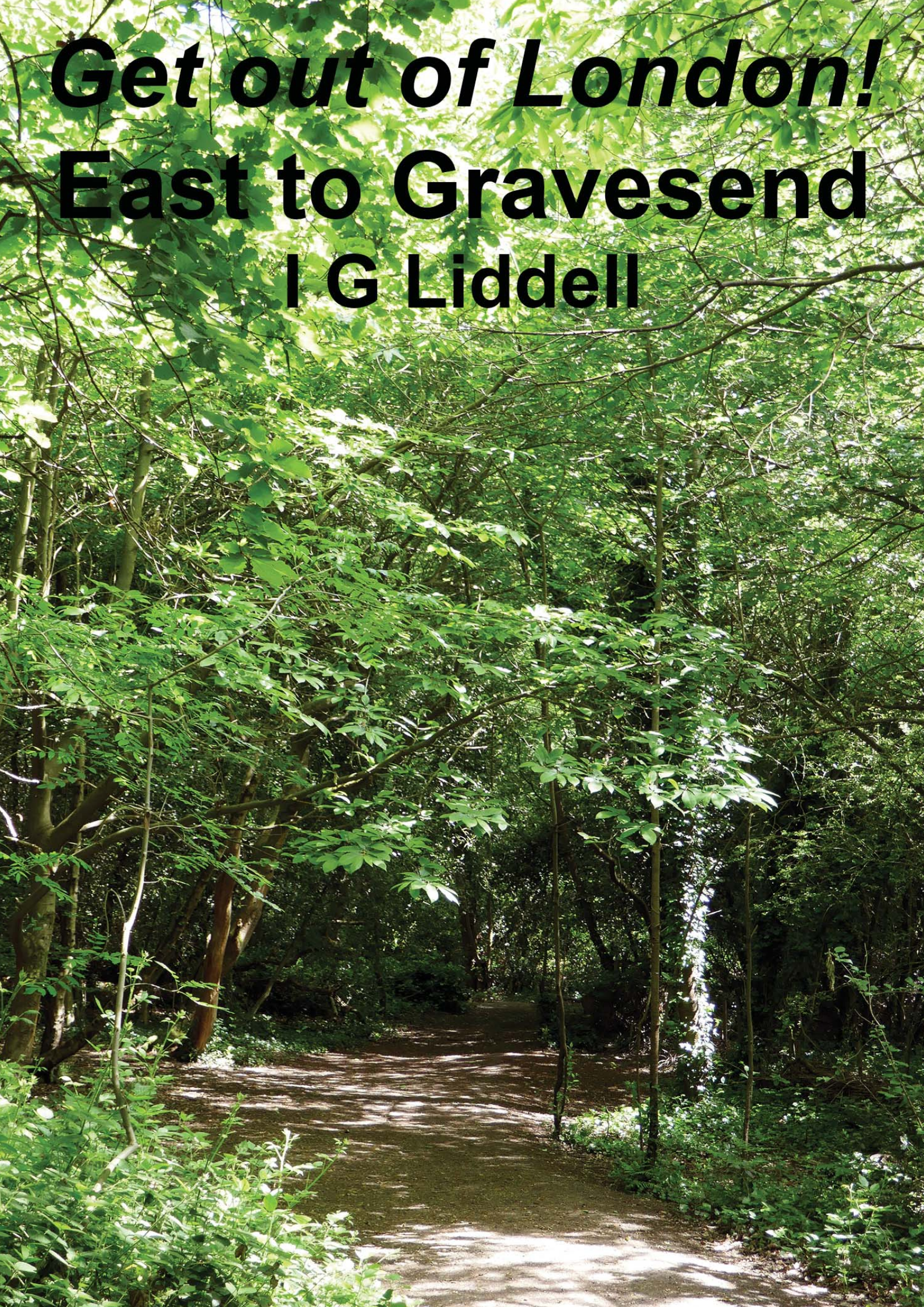


***Get out of London!***  
**East to Gravesend**  
**I G Liddell**



The text in this document is merely an indication of what might be possible ... or what might have been possible at the time of researching (2019) or later revision. All walking routes are subject to change, but the pace of urban change is greater than in rural areas.

Each reader must assess whether each part of the route qualifies as suitable or safe for public access. The author does not warrant any point of legality or safety in any part of the description of the route.

Thanks are due to many people who have helped me with route-finding and with intelligence local to a number of areas traversed by the route. Their contributions enrich the route and the stories along it. Clearly, any mistakes and misinterpretations remain with the author.

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Front cover photograph:  
Oxleas Wood

# Trafalgar Square to Gravesend

# CARD E(S)

Start	Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square — <b>WC2N 5DU</b>
Finish	Gravesend station — <b>DA11 0HP</b>
Distance	51.1km
Duration	10 hours 59 minutes
Ascent	468m

## Introduction

The route of the walk starts at the foot of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, one of the most iconic spots in London.

Trafalgar Square was laid out from 1830, on land which used to be royal mews stabling for Whitehall Palace (which is down Whitehall on the left). Work began on the National Gallery in 1832, and Nelson's Column was erected in 1843 (the Landseer lions only arrived in 1867).

*Landseer lion and the aptly named Grand Building, on the corner of Strand and Northumberland Avenue*



The equestrian statue of King Charles I to the south of the square is the London zero-point for road distance measurement. Rather confusingly, the epicentre of road *numbering* for England and Wales is at St Paul's Cathedral, next to St Martin le Grand, which was the headquarters of the General Post Office. The days of the post-coaches may have passed — indeed, those days had already passed when the road-numbering was introduced in 1921 — but the atavistic streak maintained the GPO at the heart of the road system.

The route is split into four sections, *viz*

- Trafalgar Square to Blackheath (*see* page 5)
- Blackheath to Bexley (*see* page 21)
- Bexley to Sutton at Hone (*see* page 29)
- Sutton at Hone to Gravesend (*see* page 35)

Maps are referenced in the introduction to each section.

# Trafalgar Square to Blackheath

## 13.9km; 2hr 54min

### 80m ascent

## Introduction

**1.1** This section follows the south bank of the River Thames for most of the way to Greenwich, cutting off the Rotherhithe peninsula via Southwark Park and Surrey Quays. From Greenwich Pier, the route takes the ascent through Greenwich Park to the Old Royal Observatory, then makes its way across the heath to reach Blackheath at its church.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/2194114> covers this section of the route.

## Route

**1.2** Start off by walking to the south side of the Square (to the east of the column). You will reach the corner of Strand and Northumberland Avenue: cross Strand to the Grand Building using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Turn right after crossing the road and walk down the left-hand footway of Northumberland Avenue to the (South) Korean cultural centre.

Another cultural icon (if only vicariously) is on the left — the Sherlock Holmes pub. The pub has been around for many years, and manages to draw a fair crowd of Baker Street devotees. It was (in the author's experience) the recommendation of choice from the police constables on duty at the Palace of Westminster during the last great London smog in December 1975.

*An elementary choice of refreshment opportunity*

Continue ahead to the foot of Northumberland Avenue to reach the Embankment. Cross the river by the Hungerford Bridge — it is your choice whether to take the upstream bridge with views of Parliament and the London Eye, or the downstream bridge with views of the City and the South Bank and descend to the riverside path on the South Bank.

Turn downstream, with the water on your left, and pass across the waterside frontage





*From the downstream Hungerford Bridge, the Shard appears behind the Queen Elizabeth Hall*

hundred years after the first bridge on the site was opened: the earlier bridge had to be demolished for reasons of consistent weaknesses. The culverted River Fleet flows into the Thames beneath the bridge on the north side.

The second “bridge”, now reduced to only pillars and abutments, was built for the London, Chatham and Dover Railway Company to carry their line extension over the river to the City. It was built

in 1864, and was removed in 1985. The southern abutment, which bears the insignia of the railway company, is a Grade II\* listed structure.

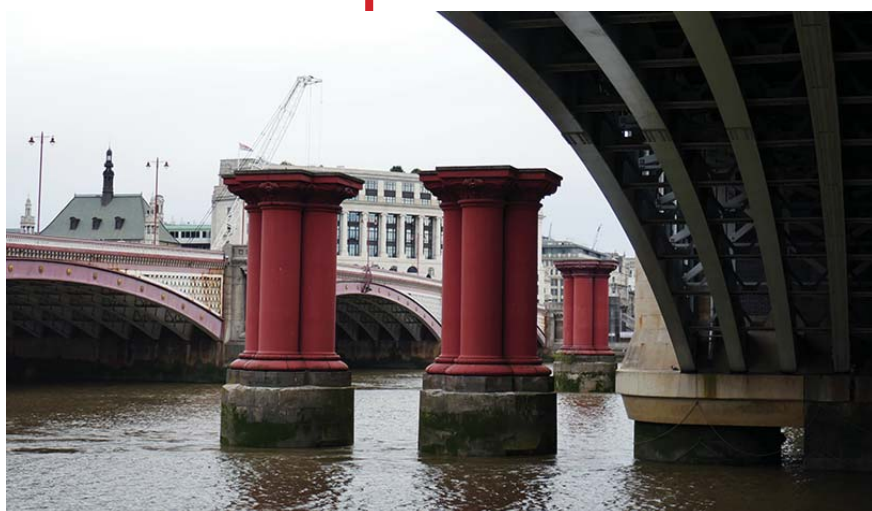
The third bridge carries the modern railway across the Thames, and now includes a station which spans the river. The railway bridge was designed by Henry Marc Brunel, second son of Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

In 2009, the railway station was modernised and expanded to span the bridge, with entrances on both sides of the river, though it is only via the south bank that you may change

*Above left — heraldry on the former rail bridge abutment, with the current rail bridge in the background*

*Left — the road bridge and the pillars of the former rail bridge, seen from beneath the current rail bridge.*

*Unilever House and the City of London School form the backdrop across the river*





*Millennium Bridge*

between the platform islands without exiting and re-entering the ticketing gates. The roof above the platforms is covered in solar panels.

Blackfriars station (Thameslink and a few Southeastern services) has its southern entrance beneath the bridge. The Underground station is only accessible from the north side of the bridge.

**1.3** From Blackfriars Bridge, continue along the riverside to the Millennium Bridge (officially the London Millennium Footbridge), with a fine view of St Paul's cathedral beyond the far bank.

The Millennium Bridge opened in 2000, but closed two days later, because pedestrians felt an alarming swaying while they walked across the bridge — the swaying was caused by the natural sideways swaying of the pedestrians as they walked. After two years' work to stabilise and strengthen the bridge, it re-opened and has been in use ever since.

You will then pass Tate Modern (the former Bankside power station) and the Globe Theatre, before dipping beneath Southwark Bridge. Once you have passed beneath Cannon Street rail bridge, you will walk along Clink Street.

Clink Street occupies the site of the infamous Clink Prison, and is the origin of the informal word *Clink*, meaning a prison. The prison was constructed to be the prison attached to the bishopric of Winchester in 1144, and which lasted until it was destroyed in 1780 during the Gordon riots. The only ecclesiastical remnant is the ruin of the bishop's palace, which boasts a fine rose window at its western end. At the end of the street is a late-twentieth-century replica of Sir Francis Drake's ship. The (modern) *Golden Hinde* has emulated its illustrious predecessor by undertaking a global circumnavigation.

At the far end of Clink Street, bear right at the *Golden Hinde* to reach the west end of Southwark cathedral.



Left to right —

Winchester Palace;

Golden Hinde;

Roman Soldier, Southwark  
cathedral (with the Shard)

The celebrated Borough Market is just off to the right here, and there are many other options for refreshment nearby.

Turn left to pass to the north of the cathedral, passing a modern statue of a Roman soldier as you go. Continue round to the right to take the left-hand footway of Montague Close, which passes beneath London Bridge.

The southern bridgehead of London Bridge, and the building on your left, form part of the City of London. The same is true of Blackfriars Bridge's southern bridgehead: the City thus straddles the river at these two points. The only London Borough (the City of London is a separate county) to have land on both sides of the river is upstream at Richmond-upon-Thames.

There has been a river crossing here since Roman times: theirs was the first of a succession of timber bridges. In 1209, a stone bridge was built: it lasted until 1831, when it was superseded by another stone bridge.

The current bridge dates from 1973: the nineteenth-century bridge was dismantled in 1968, and was rebuilt in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. In fact, only the outer 200mm of the bridge was re-used as cladding on a locally-built frame. There is apparently no truth in the rather persistent rumour that the American purchaser thought that he was in fact buying Tower Bridge. London Bridge was the sole fixed crossing downstream from Kingston-upon-Thames until 1729, when Putney Bridge was built. The current London Bridge was opened in 1973.

After you emerge from beneath the bridge, you will pass St Olaf House to merge onto the left-hand footway of Tooley Street, which comes down off the bridgehead.

St Olaf House takes its name from the St Olave church which formerly occupied the space. There had been a succession of churches here, but the final one was declared redundant. The modernist Art Deco building was erected between 1928 and 1932 to house the administration of the adjacent Hay's Wharf: it is now part of London Bridge Hospital.

The main entrance to the lower concourse of London Bridge station (Southern, Southeastern and Thameslink services; also Jubilee and Northern Lines) is on the other side of Tooley Street here, accessible by a light-controlled pedestrian crossing: this is the most convenient entrance for the Underground lines.

**1.4** Just beyond a light-controlled pedestrian crossing opposite the new entrance to London Bridge station (best for National Rail), you will turn left into Hay's Galleria (the retail spawn of the original warehouse at Hay's Wharf). Turn left and walk through the galleria to regain the riverside and turn right to advance to meet HMS Belfast, moored on the river bank.

There are several restaurants in and around Hay's Galleria and on the concourse of London Bridge station on the other side of Tooley Street.

The light cruiser HMS Belfast was launched in 1938, and was retired from active service with the Royal Navy in 1963. Among the theatres of service were the Arctic convoys, D-Day, and the Korean War: the *Belfast* is the last of the largest and most powerful cruisers of the Second World War era still in existence. The ship now holds a museum, part of the Imperial War Museum.

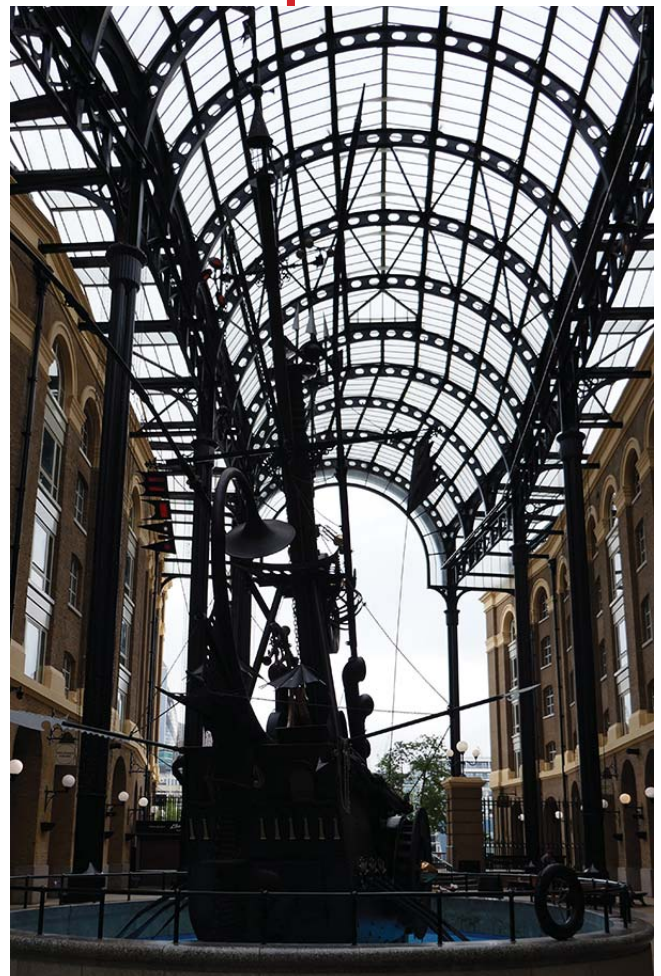
After leaving HMS Belfast behind, the route advances along the riverside to pass City Hall and approach Tower Bridge.

Tower Bridge is by far the most recognisable of London's bridges, and it is an icon worldwide for the city. It is a mixed bascule and suspension bridge, and was completed in 1894. Early criticism has been extinguished in favour of 'national treasure' status.

River traffic still has priority over road traffic, and the bridge is opened (with 24 hours' notice required) about 1000 times per year.



*St Olaf House*



*Hay's Galleria*



*Tower Bridge  
from the south-west*

Tower Hill station (Circle and District Lines) and Tower Gateway station (Docklands Light Railway) are at the north end of the bridge.

Pass beneath the bridge to the downstream side.

On emerging from beneath the bridge, the view ahead is of a canyon between old brick warehouses, now converted to shops, offices and flats. This is Shad Thames (originally St John at Thames). Take the first alleyway on your left (Maggie Blake's Cause — as in "causeway") to reach the riverside.

**Shad Thames has many shops and restaurants, and even a brewery.**

Glance over to your left at Tower Bridge, then turn right and walk on downstream: restaurants front the buildings, and there are sculptures of chains and anchors on the walkway.

After about 230m on the riverside walkway, just before a white building (formerly the Design Museum, which has now moved to Kensington), an alleyway leads off to the right, away from the river.

This is the point of divergence of an alternative route (see Neckinger Diversion below), should the footbridge ahead be closed.

If you can, then, continue along the riverside to St Saviour's Dock. Cross the bridge, and follow the path out onto Mill Street, and turn right onto Bermondsey Wall West.

The bridge crosses the outflow of the River Neckinger, which is now almost entirely subterranean. The river rises behind the Imperial War Museum, taking all of 2.5km to reach St Saviour's Dock. The dockhead was frequently the location for hanging pirates: a neckinger was an old name for the hangman's noose, and the river gained the name from that. Charles Dickens, in *Oliver Twist*, had Bill Sikes meet his grisly end here.

*Butler's Wharf,  
Shad Thames*



If the footbridge is closed, you will need to cross the River Neckinger at Tooley Street. Turn right, away from the riverside, and pass between a restaurant and the former Design Museum. Continue ahead into Maguire Street, with the Wheat Wharf building on your right. Beyond Wheat Wharf, the red-brick building on your right is a sewage pumping station. At the end

of Maguire Street, turn left onto Gainsford Street, and then right onto Shad Thames. Follow the street all the way out to Tooley Street, where turn left. Cross the River Neckinger and pass a small supermarket. Take the first street on the left (Mill Street). Pass Lloyds Wharf on your left, and continue all the way down the street to its end at Reed's Wharf. Here, the road turns right to become Bermondsey Wall West: this concludes the diversion up and down the River Neckinger at St Saviour's Wharf.

Advance along the left-hand footway of Bermondsey Wall West as far as East Lane, where a Thames Path sign will guide you to turn right. At the end of East Lane, turn left onto Chambers Street, still following the left-hand footway. Pass the Tideway Project works, then turn left onto Loftie Street, and right onto Bermondsey Wall East.

The Tideway Project is a new super-sewer for London: the Victorian system (part of which is the pumping station passed in Maguire Street) is simply unable to cope with a city which has expanded vastly since Joseph Bazalgette's day.

**1.5** Follow the left-hand footway of Bermondsey Wall East (still with the Thames Path), taking advantage of the riverside walkway where it is available. Pass the end of West Lane (which is to the east of East Lane, naturally!), with the Angel Wharf building on your right. The next piece of riverside walkway, just before the Angel pub, and across from a grassy area with historic building ruins) has three bronze statues — a man, a woman and a child. Cathay Street goes off to the right here.

The adults are Alfred and Ada Salter, staunch Liberals who spent their time campaigning for better living conditions for the poor, particularly here in Bermondsey. The ruins are of a fortified and moated manor house of King Edward III. On Cathay Street, there is a very good example of inter-war London County Council housing.

*King Edward III's  
moated manor house*





*Alfred and Ada Salter*

Turn right onto Cathay Street, and follow the right-hand footway to its end. Cross busy Jamaica Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to enter Southwark Park opposite. In the park, trend slightly left to follow a path to a bandstand. Pass the bandstand, and take the path opposite, which goes off in a vaguely south-easterly direction. A path joins from the left, then there is a fork: take the left fork to continue to the south-east, with a metal railing on your left. Join a park road, and keep to the left-hand footway. At Southwark Park

Café, do not continue out to the adjacent street, but cross the road at the barrier.

Take the path ahead, with a lawn and some flats on your left, and a play area on your right. At the Gallery, bear left (eastwards) to follow the path out to the park gate onto Lower Road. Turn right, and follow the right-hand footway to the junction with Hawkstone Road. following the footway round the corner. Turn left to cross hawkstone Road by the first of three light-controlled pedestrian crossing to reach a triangular islend. Turn left to cross Rochester Old Road to another island, then turn right to cross to the corner of the building at Surrey Quays station. Turn left to follow the right-hand pavement to reach the entrance to the station on your right.

Surrey Quays has Overground services northwards towards Highbury and Islington, with connections to the Jubilee Line at Canada Water, and to the District Line and the Hammersmith and City Line at Whitechapel. Southbound from Surrey Quays,

*Surrey Quays station*



Overground trains serve New Cross, Crystal Palace, West Croydon, and Clapham Junction.

If you are arriving at this point by train, turn right when you reach the station concourse from platform level.

There is a coffee kiosk adjacent to the station entrance.

**1.6** From Surrey Quays station, cross Lower Road by the light-controlled

pedestrian crossing, turn right, and immediately bear left to enter the Surrey Quays shopping area through the metal arch. Cross an access road, and then turn right onto the left-hand footway.

Beyond a bus stop, you will reach the corner of a huge supermarket: keep going straight ahead past another two bus stops. Do not exit onto Redriff Road, but keep to the supermarket wall to descend, turn right, and pass beneath the road. The old (red) bridge used to take the road over the entrance to the docks where the shopping centre now stands: follow the path out to the expanse of Greenland Dock.

Turn left to follow the northern edge of the dock (Brunswick Quay), with the water on your right.

On your way along Brunswick Quay, you will pass a memorial to James Walker. He was an engineer, originally from Falkirk, who worked for the Surrey Commercial Dock Company for many years (hence the monument), but this was not his sole engineering enterprise. He also constructed lighthouses, and created Granton Harbour as the 1830s extension to Edinburgh's port. He was consulting engineer for what is now known as the Elizabeth Tower of the Palace of Westminster (containing Big Ben and the rest of the bells), and undertook a survey for the railway between Leipzig and Dresden. He designed and completed the Caledonian Canal between Fort William and Inverness.

Turn right at the Moby Dick pub to keep to the water's edge, round a corner, and cross over a side-wharf before reaching a road. Turn right onto South Sea Street, and cross the main entrance to the dock. Turn left onto Princes Court, and then right to regain the riverside. The first landmark is Greenland Pier.

Greenland Pier has river-bus services across the river to Canary Wharf, and up and down the river. River services are not covered by Oyster, but there is a discount on standard river-bus services for Oyster cardholders with a travelcard, 60+ pass, or Freedom Pass.



*Redriff Bridge*



*Greenland Dock*



*Pepys Park, Deptford*

**1.7** Cross the entrance to South Dock via the lock gates, and continue downstream, until the way is blocked, just where a couple of cannons are placed on the riverside. Here, turn right and make your way through Pepys Park, crossing Millard Road on the way, to come out onto Grove Street: turn left.

Samuel Pepys was Chief Secretary to the Admiralty, and a goodly proportion of this work was carried out at the Royal Dockyard in Deptford, hence the naming of the park.

After walking along the left-hand footway of Grove Street for about 300m, turn left through a gate into Sayes Court Park. Cross the park to the far right-hand (south-east) corner, keeping a play area on your right, and exit along the left-hand footway of Sayes Court Street to reach the junction with Prince Street, adjacent to Evelyn Street.

The little park, barely heralded, is all that is left of the land around Sayes Court, which was inhabited by Samuel Pepys while he was Chief Secretary to the Admiralty, renting it from the diarist and gardener (and much, much more) John Evelyn. Sayes Court had previously been owned by Cardinal Wolsey, until his falling-out with King Henry VIII: it then came by marriage to Evelyn via the Duke of Suffolk.

In his novel *Kenilworth*, Sir Walter Scott sets Sayes Court as the location where Queen Elizabeth goes to meet the Duke of Sussex at his home.

There are bus stops on Evelyn Street to local destinations and (on the 188 service) through to Greenwich and Russell Square.

**1.8** Turn left onto Prince Street, following the Thames Path signpost, all the way along the left-hand footway to its junction with Watergate Street, just beyond the Dog and Bell pub. Turn left onto Watergate Street, and follow the left-hand footway to the junction with Borthwick Street.

There is a tiny park on the right called Twinkle Park, which may be closed to others if the local primary schoolchildren are using

it. Turn right onto Borthwick Street. Pass some gable-fronted brick buildings on your left, and follow the street through a right-and-left zigzag. At the end of the street, the roadway takes a right turn (and the street-name changes to Deptford Green).

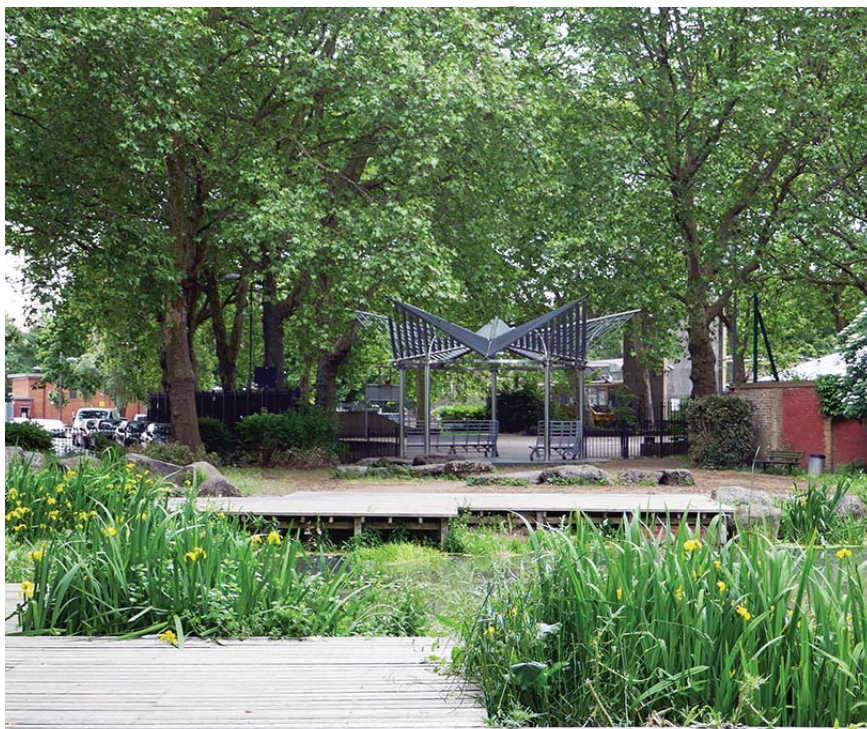
Do not turn right, but head straight on along a path, turning left to come out onto the riverside. Turn right, and follow the riverside to the outflow of Deptford Creek, and turn right. Here, there is a statue of Peter the Great.

Peter the Great, Tsar of Russia visited Deptford in 1698, staying at Sayes Court (another of John Evelyn's tenants, but via a subtenancy which had to seek recompense from King William III for the Tsar's depredations), to learn all he could about the Royal Navy — how the ships were built, and how the navy was managed. Today, this might be described as a form of industrial espionage, but who was going to stand up to the might of Russia, embodied in its undisputed leader?

Bend to the right alongside the creek: here, we may steal a march on the Thames Path by crossing the new footbridge (or divert via Creek Road bridge following the National Trail if tidal conditions demand), and return to the Thames riverside. Follow the riverside path to the pepperpot terminal of the Greenwich Foot Tunnel: ahead lies Greenwich Pier and the *Cutty Sark* clipper ship.

The Greenwich Foot Tunnel was inaugurated in 1902, with the principal objective of allowing workers to commute to and from their work on the Isle of Dogs.

The *Cutty Sark* was built on the Clyde and launched in 1869 for the tea trade with India: faster than all previous ships on that route, the trade would be turned around and monopolised by similar ships. The opening in the same year of the Suez Canal dealt a mortal blow to sail on that route, and newer steamships were used. The focus of the ship therefore turned to



Twinkle Park

Statue of Peter the Great





the Australian wool trade until that too was monopolised by steamships. After a number of other uses (including a cadet training facility), the ship was placed in permanent dry dock at Greenwich. Despite two major fires during the current century, the ship is a major attraction, being almost unique of its kind.

The name *Cutty Sark* derives from the Scots for 'short shirt': its best-known appearance is in Burns' poem *Tam o' Shanter*, wherein the most comely of the witches (wearing a skimpy nightgown) is hailed by Tam with a "Weel done, Cutty Sark!" as she danced a particularly pleasurable measure.

Greenwich Pier has river-bus services to and from central London, and also occasionally downstream. River services are not covered by Oyster, but there is a discount on standard river-bus services for Oyster cardholders with a travelcard, 60+ pass, or Freedom Pass..



**1.9** Pass between the tunnel portal and the bow of the *Cutty Sark*, and turn right at the pierhead. Walk past the ship (on your right), with the Old Naval College on your left. Continue ahead onto King William Walk, turning left onto the busy Trafalgar Road for a few metres to reach a light-controlled pedestrian crossing.



*Top — Greenwich Foot Tunnel, south portal*

*Middle — Cutty Sark*

*Bottom — Monument for a Dead Parrot  
( photograph © Peggy Droesch)*

Cross Trafalgar Road by the crossing, and turn right along the left-hand footway to the junction, where turn left to regain the left-hand footway of King William Walk.

At the corner, you will be able to see, through the railings, the *Monument for a Dead Parrot*, though the subject does not appear to have been modelled on the famed Norwegian Blue. It is, in fact, a sulphur-crested cockatoo, and is a work of 2009 by Jon Reardon.

Just to the south of Nelson Road is a prime candidate for the worst public toilet in London, if not Europe. You have been warned! At the time of review (2022) the “inconveniences” are padlocked shut, we might hope that this will be for ever. Fear not, though: there are facilities ahead in Greenwich Park (or turn back and buy some food and/or drink at one of the many cafés or pubs in the town centre, if the hill daunts you in your present state).

At the end of King William Walk, you will reach St Mary’s Gate.

Beyond the statue of King William IV on the left, you will see the National Maritime Museum.

Go through St Mary’s Gate, and take the path nearest to the left-hand side of The Avenue (running south of east). Cross over one path, then where six paths come together, take the fourth path (clockwise from where you stand: it rises in a south-south-easterly direction).

Where it splits, take the left fork to climb to the summit of the park, at the Old Royal Observatory, and cross to the statue of General James Wolfe, of the Québec campaign.

The northward vista from this point is exceptional. The financial district on the Isle of Dogs is prominent behind the National Maritime Museum, and the City of London may be seen to the left. Behind the Docklands skyline, the northern horizon is taken up by Epping Forest: Pole Hill in Chingford is the visible limit along the meridian due north of the Observatory.

The Royal Observatory Greenwich was established (as proposed in 1674) here, and its line of longitude became the prime meridian for Britain in 1851: this status was confirmed by Greenwich’s adoption

*National Maritime Museum, backed by the financial district centred on Canary Wharf: the City of London is on the far left.*





*The Observatory  
and General Wolfe*

as the world's Prime Meridian in 1884, at a conference convened by Chester Arthur, President of the United States of America, Thenceforth, all mapping and timekeeping was based on the meridian, creating the convention of Greenwich Mean Time.

**1.10** With your back to Wolfe's back, continue in a south-south-easterly direction on Blackheath Avenue, exiting the park by the park gate at a mini-roundabout. Press on ahead on the short stub of Duke Humphrey Road, and cross Shooter's Hill Road at the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. You are now on the open land of Blackheath. Keep straight ahead on

*Springtime, Greenwich Park*



a path, towards the spire of a church.

Ignore a crossing path, and continue ahead, the path easing slightly to the right, to reach the corner of Talbot Place. Follow the path which branches off to the left and make straight for the church. Pass to the right of the church to reach a crossroads with bus stops on your right on Royal Parade. This is the point in Blackheath which marks the end of this section.

Bus stops lie off to the right; for Blackheath station

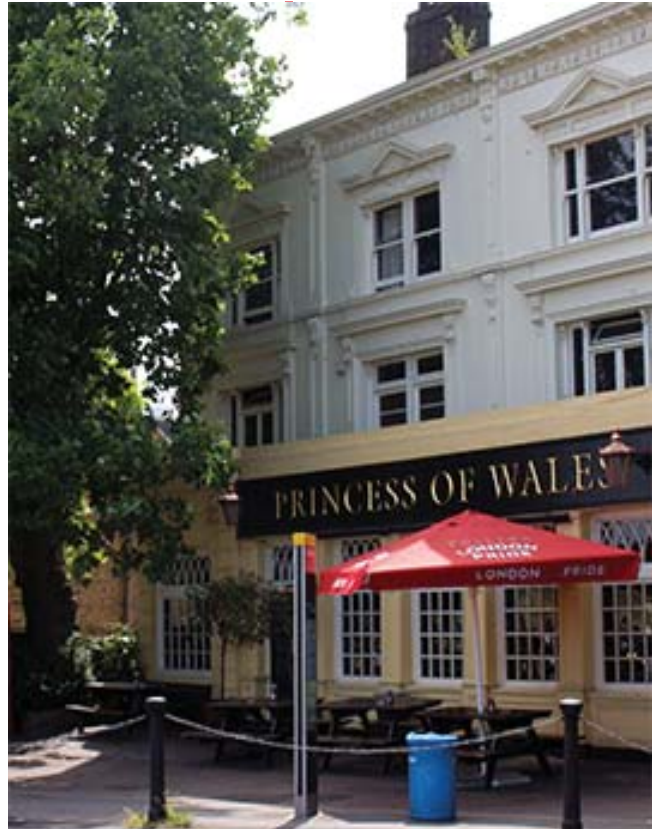
(Southeastern and Thameslink services), turn left beyond the stops: the station is 300m from Royal Parade.

All facilities and refreshment opportunities abound in Blackheath, between the Princess of Wales pub and the station. On Sundays between 1000 and 1400, the station car park hosts a busy Farmers' Market.

The suburb we see today is mainly Victorian, but the area has a long history, recorded as far back as the middle of the twelfth century. In the seventeenth century, it was used (as was Hounslow Heath on the west side of London) for the mobilisation of armies: notably, the Blackheath Army of 1673 was assembled here to serve in the war against the Dutch. In earlier times, Blackheath had seen the assembly of less structured armies, in the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 and the Kentish rebellion of 1450.

The first established golf club outside Scotland, the Royal Blackheath Golf Club, was formed here in 1766.

Blackheath Rugby Club was constituted in 1858, the oldest documented rugby club in England. The club also hosted the first international rugby match between England and Scotland in 1871, and then between England and Wales three years later. The changing-rooms for these early internationals were facilities borrowed from the Princess of Wales pub.



*Princess of Wales Inn*



# Blackheath to Bexley

## 13.3km; 2hr 53min

### 141m ascent

## Introduction

**2.1** This section contains a good deal of parkland and woodland, as well as some streets. The highlight, though, must be the vista from the café at Oxleas Meadow, where the eye is drawn to the North Downs horizon, behind the various valleys of the Croydon Basin. The distinctive tower of Saffron Square picks out the location of central Croydon. The section ends next to Bexley station, the final staging-point within London.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/2194115> covers this section of the route.

## Route

**2.2** If you are arriving at Blackheath station, cross the road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn left. Take the right-hand footway, bearing right into the local one-way system at the next set of pedestrian-controlled traffic lights. Climb Montpelier Row to come out onto the heath at the end of Royal Parade.

Sir Richard Branson was born in Blackheath, and Charles Gounod, Donald McGill and Nathaniel Hawthorne are among the varied clientele who have called this part of London home at some time in their lives.

*Blackheath Pond*





*Paragon*

From opposite the church, take the right-hand footway of Royal Parade to the north-east, joining Montpelier Row. At the next corner, by the Princess of Wales pub (whose changing-rooms have been re-purposed since those early rugby internationals), bear right onto the right-hand footway of South Row, with the pond across the road on

your left. Continue along South Row past the pond, and across Pond Road which comes in from the right.

You will reach the corner of a graceful crescent of houses: look up at the corner to find a pale plaque announcing an award for architectural merit, bestowed at the Festival of Britain in 1951.

The road in front of these buildings is called the Paragon. Cross over its end, bearing right at the next fork to continue down the right-hand footway of Morden Road.

Where the Paragon re-appears on your right, at the far end of the delicate crescent of houses, turn left to cross Morden Road and take a small tarmac path which leads straight ahead, diagonally across the junction, and makes for the corner of a brick wall just to the left of some trees. Do not go downhill towards a red-brick house with ashlar corners.

Just beyond that building is where the French composer Charles Gounod stayed during his time in Blackheath.

At the corner of the wall, carry straight ahead through a gate onto an enclosed tarmac path which makes its way through the estate of Morden College.

*Morden College*



Morden College was founded by Sir John Morden in the late seventeenth century as a home for merchants who had fallen on hard times. It was originally built to house forty single or widowed men: today, it has quarters for women and for married couples. In its time, it has housed poor merchants of the trade with Turkey and India, while today it is a generic retirement home. The College manages other such homes in the locality.

Sir John Morden's Path zigzags between buildings of the

College, crosses Kidbrooke Grove, and comes out onto Kidbrooke Park Road opposite a petrol station. Use the pedestrian crossing to reach the forecourt of the petrol station.

Turn left onto the right-hand footway and cross the end of Brook Lane. Take the next road on the right, Wricklemarsh Road, opposite the signboard for St James's church.

Follow the right-hand footway to the far end, where turn right onto the right-hand footway of Rochester Way. Beyond a bus stop, turn left to take a footbridge over the seething Rochester Way Relief Road, the A2.

**2.3** Once over the bridge which conveys cyclists and pedestrians above the main road, turn right to follow the footpath, with the A2 now roaring beneath you on your right-hand side. The path eventually comes to the level of the A2 (with a cycle path ahead) just before Dursley Road approaches from the left.

At this point, do not stray onto the main road, but turn left onto the right-hand footway of Dursley Road, then turn right onto Woolacombe Road. following its left-hand footway.

This estate of houses was laid out in a modernist style in the 1930s, with fashionable curved windows maximising the light-trapping capabilities. It is sad to relate that there are very few houses which retain these features (here or elsewhere), such has been the relentless march of hard-sell double glazing without much thought for conservation and aesthetics. 92 and 150 Woolacombe Road are beacons of authenticity in this detail.

At the far end of Woolacombe Road, turn left onto Broad Walk, crossing onto its right-hand footway. This is another of those long, straight, suburban streets along which we must pass, but there is soon a little relief from the houses on the right, where there are sports fields and a youth centre.

In 1832, Montagu Samuel was born to a Jewish watchmaking and silversmithing family originally hailing from northern Germany, but which had migrated to Britain in the middle of the eighteenth century. His studies took him to the Mechanics' Institution, and on his graduation his parents changed his name to Samuel Montagu. He joined his brother (who had not had to change his surname from Samuel) and the resultant bank

*Samuel Montagu  
Youth Centre, Kidbrooke*



(Samuel and Montagu) soon dominated the silver market. The brothers split, and the bullion bank dropped the “and” from its name. The Samuel Montagu bullion bank eventually became part of the Midland Bank, now subsumed into HSBC.

Samuel Montagu was elected a Member of Parliament, and subsequently was elevated to the peerage as Lord Swaythling. He advised the US Government on the creation of the Federal Reserve, and he and his descendants were philanthropists for Jewish and other causes.

The Samuel Montagu Youth Centre on Broad Walk is one result of this philanthropy. Created first as the Samuel Montagu Boys’ Club, it is now more inclusive. In 1978, the author was invited to assist the club in walking the length of Offa’s Dyke Path, due to his local knowledge of the Welsh borderland traversed by the path. It was heartening to see the urban teenagers grow into their first extended encounter with the countryside, though perhaps we should be kind enough to draw a veil over the impromptu role-play of *One Man and his Dog* with several boys and a live flock of sheep “somewhere in Shropshire”.

**2.4** Continue along Broad Walk past the Youth Centre: there are extensive sports fields on your right. Beyond the sports fields, Broad Walk eventually climbs to reach the South Circular Road (which is here named Well Hall Road).

Severndroog Castle



**2.5** Thread your way across this busy road by means of the light-controlled pedestrian crossing over to your right, turning left to climb the right-hand footway. Before you reach the junction, turn right to follow the edge of open ground upwards towards Shooter’s Hill Road, but do not go as far as the road.

Climb through the woods to a car park, now following the Capital Ring. Turn right to follow the Capital Ring and reach the gateway of Severndroog Castle.

Severndroog Castle is a folly, built as a memorial to Commodore Sir William James, who died in 1783. He had seen naval action at Suvarnadurg (which was at that time mangled into English as Severndroog). General Roy used the tower in his trigonometric survey which linked London and Paris. The castle is run by a private trust, and is open to the public when not in use for private functions.

Go through the gate and, passing the castle on your left, bend round to the left to reach the head of the formal gardens. Beyond the parterres, turn left. Do not take a path (Stone

Alley) which leads off to the left, but continue (helped by the Capital Ring signage) to a path junction, where turn left.

Note that the formal gardens are in a rather dilapidated state, and access may be restricted or barred.

In such an instance, follow the path round to the east of the castle, to pick up a track on the right which descends to a building. Pass the building on your right and continue ahead, ignoring a path to your left, to reach a T-junction of paths, where turn left to re-join the main path in Jackwood.

Continue through Jackwood until you come out onto the expanse of grass slope called Oxleas Meadows.

There are extensive views to the south and south-west; you may be able to pick out the colourful tower block of Saffron Square, the prominent gnomon in the heart of Croydon, with the line of the North Downs and (to the right of the tower) Wimbledon Common behind. Oxleas Wood is at least 8000 years old, and is an important repository of native species such as oak and hornbeam.

More immediately, there is a clear view (due east) of the welcome and welcoming Oxleas Wood café, which will sell you anything from a biscuit to a breakfast.

Public toilets are contained within the building, but they are accessed from the outside (*i.e.*, not through the café). Ladies should find their facilities on the western flank of the building (that is, the side of the building seen as you approach the café), while the gentlemen should go round to the eastern flank.

Behind the café, there is a car park and access to and from local bus services at Shooter's Hill. Access from Shooter's Hill is via Kenilworth Gardens, then taking the first turning on the left to reach the car park.

**2.6** Cross the frontage of the café, and follow the Capital Ring into the woodland beyond. Look out for a right turn which will take you down the slope. At a four-way path junction, the route of the Capital Ring turns



*Looking south towards Croydon and the North Downs from Oxleas Meadow*

*Departure from the route of the Capital Ring in Oxleas Wood*



right, heading for Eltham Palace, and the Green Chain Walk goes off to the left towards Welling.

Continue straight ahead in a generally south-easterly direction to reach a barrier. Take the path beyond the barrier to reach the end of a suburban street (Ashmore Grove). Follow the right-hand footway to its end, bearing right onto Falconwood Avenue.

**2.7** Turn left at its end and follow the left-hand footway of Welling Way to its end on Bellegrove Road.

If you miss the barrier and end up at the foot of the woodland, simply turn left and follow Welling Way to its end.

Turn right, and cross Welling Way using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Take the right-hand footway of Bellegrove Road, passing beneath the railway, to reach the junction with Central Avenue.

Welling station (Southeastern services) is accessed off Central Avenue on your left. There are bus services which run along Bellegrove Road.

Welling contains all facilities for refreshment and replenishment of supplies.

Bellegrove Road is the ancient Roman road, Watling Street, which connected Dubris (Dover) with Uriconium (Wroxeter) via Londinium. Much of its route is covered by the A2 and A5 — or at least, the lines of these numbered routes when the numbering system was set up in 1921. Motorways and by-passes have moved and re-numbered roads since then, but the line should be obvious on the map.

If you are arriving at the station, descend Station Approach and turn left onto Central Avenue. Follow its left-hand footway to Bellegrove Road, crossing it by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turning left onto the right-hand footway.

Continue eastbound (*i.e.*, towards Dover and Rome) on Bellegrove Road, following it for 500m to a major junction, where two roads

branch off to the right. Cross Hook Lane by the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then bear right onto Danson Crescent at the cannon.

The Welling Cannon was captured during the Crimean War after eighty years' service, and is on loan from the Royal Artillery Museum in Woolwich. Its presence acknowledges the part played during the Great War by munitions workers at Woolwich, many of whom

*The Welling Cannon*



were billeted in and around Welling.

**2.8** Follow the left-hand footway of Danson Crescent (which, curiously for a “crescent”, is a long straight road) to its end and cross the road ahead to enter the parkland which surrounds Danson House. Carry on straight ahead — it is good to get your ears away from the relentless traffic of Bellegrove Road, and the lesser traffic of Danson Crescent.



*The lake in Danson Park, seen from its western end*

Soon, you will have a little lake on your left: this is preceded by a quiet parkland walk (quiet, that is, apart from the endless and mindless bellowing of people into mobile phones). Take the path to the right of the lake, following it along the full length of the lake.

At the far end of the lake, bear right to exit the park at the top gate, onto Danson Road.

**2.9** Cross the street and turn right to follow its left-hand footway towards a roundabout. Bear left at the roundabout, joining Lodge Lane and following its left-hand footway as far as its filter onto Rochester Way. Do not join the main road, but cross it using the underpass, emerging onto Banwell Road. Make your way along the left-hand footway of Banwell Road to reach and cross Blendon Road.

There are restaurants and shops (including a funeral director, should the walk be taking sufficient toll) off to the right: the buses on Blendon Road connect North Greenwich (for the Jubilee Line) with Bexleyheath.

Continue ahead onto the left-hand footway of Beechway: at a crossroads, where Beechway swings off to the left, go straight ahead to continue on the left-hand footway of The Avenue. At the end of The Avenue, cross Bladindon Drive ahead and turn right to follow the left-hand footway, then turn left onto Crofton Avenue.

Descend on the left-hand footway of Crofton Avenue, cross a bridge, and take the clear path on the left, with the River Shuttle on your left. Take the riverside walk past a play area on your

*Entry into Bexley Woods, just before the branch off the riverside path*



right to reach a road (Elmwood Drive). Cross the road and forge ahead.

**2.10** Where the backs of the houses give way to woodland, do not follow the more obvious riverside path, but bear half-right on a path which rises through Bexley Woods. Emerge from the woods onto a passage between houses to reach a street (Camden Road).

Cross Camden Road and continue ahead on the left-hand footway of Parkwood Road. At the end of Parkwood Road, turn left onto Hurst Road and follow its left-hand footway to the war memorial.

Turn right to cross over Hurst Road using the refuge, and make your way down the right-hand footway of Bexley High Street to reach Station Approach on your right.

Bexley station (Southeastern services) is, naturally enough, along Station Approach.

There is a wide variety of replenishment opportunities on High Street.

# Bexley to Sutton at Hone

## 10.1km; 2hr 11min

## 115m ascent

### Introduction

**3.1** This section of the route is largely rural in character (as indeed is the next section), so much so that lightweight walking boots are to be preferred at any time of the year to protect against mud and against the possibility of turning an ankle on a rut or a stone. There is little or no road walking on this section between the short bookends of the departure from Bexley and the arrival into Sutton at Hone.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/2194119/> covers this section of the route.

### Route

**3.2** Start eastbound along the right-hand footway of High Street (turning right off Station Approach if you are arriving by train at Bexley station), picking up the route of the London Loop (anticlockwise), soon, you will pass Freemantle Hall on your left.

Freemantle Hall was built as a village hall in the 1890s through a fund organised by William Freemantle, a local grocer. It is now managed by the London Borough of Bexley.

Continue along High Street, taking its bend to the right to pass beneath the railway. Cross the road to the left-hand footway using the pedestrian crossing beneath the railway bridge. Bend to the left with the road, which crosses the River Cray. Pass the west gate of the church, and take Manor Road on the left, just where the main road swings to the right.

Follow the left-hand footway of Manor Road past the lychgate. After 15m, pick up a footpath on the right (to the left of the gateway to Manor Farm House) and follow it to the end of the brick wall on the left.

Here, you will leave the London Loop, which continues straight ahead.

Take the footpath at right angles on the right, and follow it out to a lane. Continue along the lane to its end at Vicarage Road at a bus stop.

*Freemantle Hall*





*Early morning on the west side of Joydens Wood*

*Hurricane tree sculpture, Joydens Wood*



Cross Vicarage Road and turn left, then turn right onto Stable Lane. You will see, appropriately enough, stables to your left. Continue along the road, past National Grid signs. After 700m, having studiously ignored the road to the left which leads to the National Grid facility, you will reach Mount Mascall stables.

**3.3** Walk right through the stables courtyard and continue to its far left-hand corner. Take the bridleway ahead (in a southerly direction). After 170m, take the left fork to enter Joydens Wood at a Woodland Trust sign. Ignore two paths leading off to the left, then a pair leading off to the right. Ascend, making sure that you never stray to the west of south, until you come upon a patch of open land to your right, opposite the very welcome sight of a wooden bench on the left. This is the summit of Joydens Wood.

Looking ahead to the right of the path, you will see the rim of a depression in the open area. If you explore this area, you will find a tree-trunk on the far side of the depression, carved into the shape of a broken-backed Hurricane fighter plane. This is to acknowledge the fighter pilots of the Battle of Britain, two of whom came down in these woods.

Joydens Wood has a long and vivid history, and it was an important rallying-point and fortified place for the locals as the Roman Empire crumbled in the fifth century. Here, three centuries before King Offa of Mercia built his dyke along the Welsh border, the locals of

Joydens Wood built the *Fæsten Dic* for protection against the retreating Romans and the other, more local looters who came from Londinium in their wake. A mediæval manor house was constructed around 1280, but it seems to have been abandoned after about forty years, possibly as a result of the Black Death.

**3.4** From the bench at the summit of the path, continue along the main path in a generally south-easterly direction, descending slightly to its end, where a path crosses from left to right.

Turn right to take the path adjacent to Birchwood Park golf course (do not take the broad track to its right), and ascend with the golf course immediately on your left. Ignore a first gap on the left, but at a second gap, turn left to the golf course. You will know that you are on the right track by a sign to “keep to the bridleway” and by the fact that you are near the forward end of an elevated tee.



*Bridleway crossing  
Birchwood Park golf course*

If there are golfers on the tee, remain stock-still and silent until they have left, or until you are beckoned to cross. Walk beneath the front of the elevated tee and follow the path across a fairway to enter some woodland opposite, not far from its left-hand edge.

The clear path then makes its way through the trees, shielding you from distracting the golfers by your movement, until you descend to another tee and green. Bear right to walk behind the green (keeping it on your right and remembering to remain motionless if a golfer is addressing the ball to play a stroke), and follow the path out through the scrub to reach Birchwood Road.

Cross the road (which can be rather busy with golfers and with others travelling between Dartford and Swanley) to take the lane opposite: there are signs for Stanhill Farm’s shop.

**The farm shop could be a source of emergency supplies if it is open.**

**3.5** Pass through the farmyard and continue straight ahead. The track becomes a path alongside a belt of trees, with the trees on the left and fields on the right. About 750m beyond the farmyard, bear left at the end of the field to come out onto Puddledock Lane, with the Ship Inn on your right.

Puddledock is no more than a cluster of houses between Joydens Wood and Hextable with a surviving pub attached.

**3.6** Set off to the north-east from Puddledock Lane on a path which runs to the left of the Ship Inn. The path soon slips to the right to follow the same direction,



*Path approaching the  
Ship Inn, Puddledock*



*Poppies spring up beside the path to Wilmington*

*Footpath through crops at Shirehall Farm*



but keeping within woodland. After some time, you will reach an outcrop of monstrous houses on the left, and the path becomes an access track for these residential behemoths. The track then joins Rowhill Road as it descends to the east (that is, from behind your right shoulder): there is no footway.

Where Rowhill Road turns sharp left (to go northbound), continue ahead on a path, initially between hedges, but which soon opens out into a field. Follow the path eastwards across the field, all the way to its far end. Work your way through the left-hand corner to come out onto Barn End Lane, in the south-western corner of the village of Wilmington, next to a matching pair of bus stops.

The bus stop on your left has services to Bluewater via Dartford, while the stop opposite serves Orpington via Swanley.

**3.7** Cross the road, and turn right to reach the end of Capel Place. Turn left, but then immediately turn half-right to follow the street towards a turning circle. Immediately after passing 41 Capel Place, turn left to take a footpath along the house-backs. At the end of this path, turn right onto a crossing path which leads you to Shirehall Road, this time with house-backs on your right.

Turn left onto Shirehall Road and, after 60m of tramping the tarmac without the benefit of a footway, turn half-right to follow a footpath diagonally across the field.

Here, the farmer's re-instatement of footpaths across sown fields is exemplary.

Follow the footpath almost straight (but with a little bend to the left), until you reach a path running to the south-south-east. Follow this path downhill, almost as far as some hedges. Take a crossing path to your left, then turn right to descend a path on the right-hand side of a field. At the foot of the field, turn left alongside a hedge: this will lead you to a gate on the right, which leads onto a road (Clement Street).

Go through, and turn left along the road (there is no footway until you reach the church in Sutton at Hone): this leads you onto a bridge over the M25. Continue along Clement Street from the M25 bridge until you reach the first road junction, where Church Road goes off to the right.

Here, there is (theoretically, at least) a footpath which crosses a field diagonally to reach Church Road closer to the church. However, the evidence on the ground is consistent with wilful deterrence against using the footpath: the access has not been maintained, and bags of rubbish have been strewn on the path and in the roadside ditch. There is no visible path across the unkempt field, and there is similar evidence consistent with deterrence at the far end.

The practicable route, therefore, is to take Church Road for its full length. You will bend left and continue to the end of the unkempt field, then descend past the church. Take the left-hand footway and descend, crossing the road where the footway changes sides, to reach the school at the foot of the hill. Here, the road takes a turn to the left, and exits onto the main road running through Sutton at Hone — it is called Main Road.

Turn right onto Main Road and, after 60m, cross the road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to reach the village hall on the corner of Tallents Close: this marks the end of this section.

Just ahead on the main road, there is a convenience shop on the left. The pub marked on some maps is no longer, having been converted into a residential property.

Farningham Road station (Southeastern services) is 1.3km from this point, all the way down Main Road, across the railway, and then to the right.

There are buses which link Sutton at Hone with Dartford.

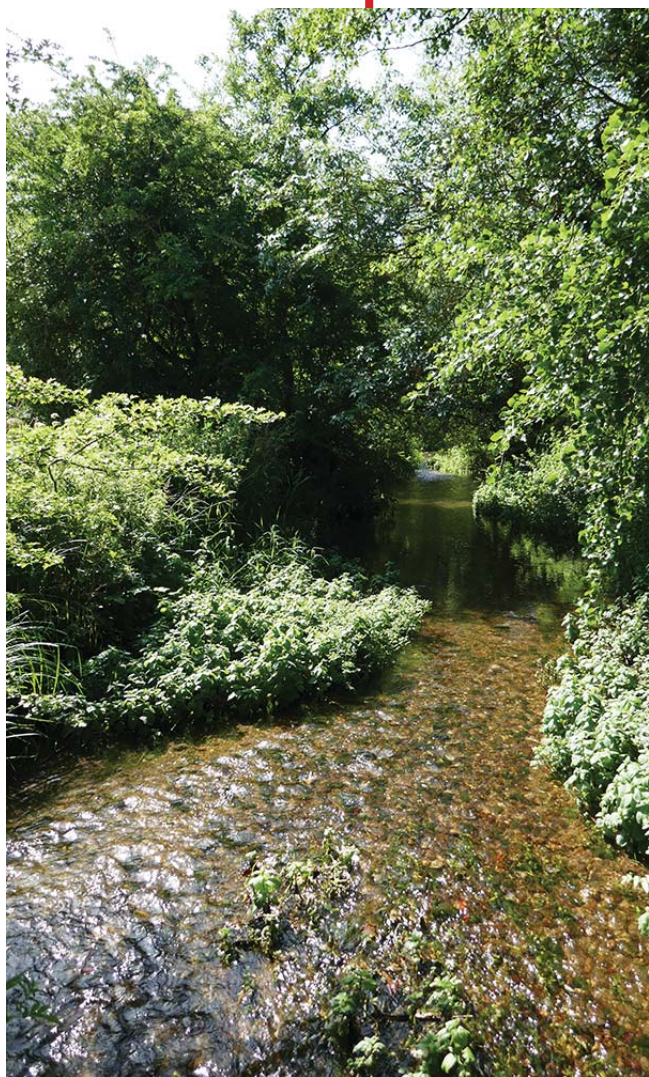
The village of Sutton at Hone is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. A Commandery of the Knights Hospitallers of the Order of St John of Jerusalem was established here in 1199: it is now a National Trust property, open on Wednesday afternoons in the summer.

The church has been on its site since the eleventh century, with rebuilds in the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. Helped to grow by the arrival of the railway, Swanley was detached from the parish of Sutton at Hone in 1955 as an independent parish.



*Sutton at Hone church*

*One of the main streams of  
the River Darent from  
the footbridge*



# Sutton at Hone to Gravesend

## 14.4km; 3hr 05min

## 132m ascent

### Introduction

**4.1** The final section is mainly rural until the A2 is reached, after which it is an efficient route to the riverside at Gravesend and, after a nod to Pocahontas, an ascent to the railway station.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/3600522> covers this section of the route.

*Footpath alongside link to  
Channel Tunnel rail line*

### Route

**4.2** Set off down Tallents Close, with Sutton at Hone village hall over to your left. Continue ahead on an enclosed path (noting the National Trust sign). The path leads to a series of footbridges across the streams of the River Darent, and eventually gives out onto a large field.

Turn to the right and follow the riverside edge of the field: this is a popular local dog-walking area. After you have followed the path round to the left, away from the river, take a path off to the right (it is part of Kent County Council's Darent Valley Path) to lead out to the road. Turn left to climb Holmesdale Hill. The houses end at a crossroads at Roman Villa Road.

**4.3** Continue up the hill to the next junction, with St Margaret's Road on the left and Gill's Road on the right. Do not keep to the road here, but advance straight ahead onto a footpath.

**4.4** With the buildings of St Margaret's Farm over to your left, when you reach a crossing track, cross it, then bear half-right on a clear path diagonally down through some fields: eventually, you will reach the top of a field which, at the bottom, adjoins a road (Green Street Green Road). Turn right along the top of the field for about two-thirds of its length, then (with a stile in the hedge





*The former railway cutting does not offer a route to Rosherville*

on your right as a marker) turn left to cross the field. Pass between houses to emerge onto the roadside. Turn right along the right-hand footway to reach a restaurant.

**4.5** Continue along the right-hand footway, ignoring Sandbanks Hill which branches off to the left. Pass a crane-yard on the right, with the historic former Ship Inn on your left. On the bend between a speed limit reminder sign and a *Reduce speed now* sign, cross the road and the green, and seek out a footpath which leaves the green on an eastbound trajectory (aim towards the wooden pole of a power line), making its way up the right-hand side of a field.

Continue to ascend for almost 600m until the path comes up against a crossing track which is narrow and overgrown. Here, turn right and beat your way along this path. After about

200m, take a path off to the left: after about 150m, it reaches the corner of a paddock. Here, keep to the right-hand side of the fence.

This leads you to some buildings: pass between them and descend to a stile with a stable hut beyond to your right. Here, bear half-left to cross the paddock diagonally: you will come out onto Highcross Road. Turn right along the road to the crossroads at the Wheatsheaf: once a pub, but now just another house in Westwood.

**4.6** Turn left, and walk up the road for 60m, then turn right into a field. Here, the re-instatement of paths is not well practised, so turn right again to walk along the field edge, turning left at the end to reach the railway, then turning left to keep the railway fence on your right, until you come to a crossing beneath the railway.

This railway was the route taken by the Eurostar trains from Waterloo: it has now been superseded by the route via Ebbsfleet from St Pancras, but this less-used stretch still falls under Channel Tunnel Rail Link jurisdiction.

**4.7** After passing beneath the railway, turn left and immediately turn half-right to cross the field on a clear path, bearing right to exit the field. Turn left onto Hook Green Road, and follow the right-hand footway for 400m to reach, on your right, the Ship Inn in the centre of Southfleet.

The Ship opens at noon and serves a wide range of food during normal licensing hours.

There is a bus stop ahead on the left, but the service is very sporadic. It is better to plan your day to have sufficient time and energy to push on to Gravesend.



**4.8** Walk eastwards from the inn along Warren Road (with the inn on your right). At the foot of the hill, take a footpath on the left which skirts some trees, keeping to the valley floor. Keep along the floor until you reach the railway, then ascend to rail level: a fruit farm is on the right. At the end, pass out of the field onto New Barn Road.

Turn left and cross the railway on the left-hand footway. Next, cross a roundabout using the left-hand side (*i.e.*, clockwise). Cross the A2 by the left-hand footway of the bridge, then use the two light-controlled pedestrian crossings to reach the right-hand footway, and advance to another roundabout at Pepper Hill.

**4.9** This time, walk a little way to the right to cross at the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then turn left to return to the roundabout, bearing right onto the right-hand footway of Springhead Road. Walk down Springhead Road as far as Waterdales, and turn right.

There is a disused railway line just beyond Waterdales, but there is no access (though it would be a very useful facility). There is also a path parallel to the cutting on the far side, but it is blocked soon after leaving Springhead Road. So Waterdales it must be.

Walk along the full length of the left-hand footway of Waterdales to the bottom of the hill.

There is a convenience shop about half-way down Waterdales: if you are aware of that possibility, you will have been able to avoid the trek of a lengthy detour across the supermarket car park at the Pepper Hill roundabout.

Turn left onto Vale Road, and advance to the junction with Thames Way. Cross Vale Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then cross Thames Way by the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Turn right to follow the left-hand footway of Thames Way.

*Tilbury docks and cruise terminal from Rosherville*



*Pocahontas*

Pass beneath the railway, then pass beneath Dover Road to reach yet another roundabout, at the junction with Rosherville Way.

Here, keep the roundabout on your right as you cross Dudley Road using the refuge. Continue ahead onto the left-hand footway of Rosherville Way, through the tunnel beneath London Road. Beyond the tunnel, use a refuge to cross to the right-hand footway, and advance to the junction with Crete Hall Road, where turn right.

You are now entering the area which was, throughout the reign of Queen Victoria, Rosherville Gradients. The pleasure garden, with a maze, a lake, an archery ground and even a bear pit (among other facilities) was built in a disused chalk pit, and it attracted many thousands of Londoners who arrived by paddle-steamer for a day out in North Kent. Funfairs, balloon rides and tightrope acrobatics were added later, and the gardens were very popular for about forty years. However, they declined following the death of the entrepreneurial owner, and the park closed in 1901. They have been described as the Disneyland of the Victorian age.

Continue along the right-hand footway of Crete Hall Road through the new housing development to reach the river at Cable Wharf. On the right is a fine Art Deco building which has been restored after ruinous neglect.

**4.10** Turn right to follow the left-hand footway of The Shore to the White House, at the junction with Clifton Marine Parade. Bear left to follow the right-hand footway of Clifton Marine Parade past industrial premises on the left, until you are able to ease left to return to the riverside at Baltic Wharf. Follow the riverside until you are forced to the right, onto West Street at a roundabout.

Cross West Street using the refuge and turn left to follow the right-hand footway as far as a roundabout. Use the refuge to cross to the left-hand footway and follow it to the junction with Church Street.

The Gravesend ferry terminal (for services across the river to Tilbury) is ahead and to the left. Note, though, that the future of this service is in doubt.

The ferry between West Tilbury and Gravesend is first mentioned in 1571, though other ferries in the area pre-dated this one. The service we see today was essentially settled when the London, Tilbury and Southend Railway Company began operating the ferries from their Tilbury Pier station. The ferry now operates every 30 minutes with joint sponsorship of Thurrock Council and Kent County Council.

The etymology of Gravesend has nothing to do with death and bodies: it is related to the residence of a Grave (as in the German *Graf*): a count. It is an ancient town, mentioned in the Domesday Book, but there is evidence of much earlier, in fact pre-Roman, settlement. It holds a strategic place on the Thames, and there have been fortifications down the ages, in particular, a fort ordered by King Henry VIII.

Turn right to ascend the left-hand footway of Church Street. Enter the church gate and aim to the right, then to the left past the church entrance. Ahead, you will see the statue of Rebecca Rolfe, better known as Princess Pocahontas.

Pocahontas was the daughter of a native American chief, Powhatan, in Virginia. In the line of contact with the British colonists, she met and married John Rolfe, taking the name Rebecca. They had been in London, and were setting out to return to Virginia in 1617 with their young son, when Rebecca fell ill. She was taken ashore at Gravesend, where she died shortly afterwards. She is buried under the chancel in the church. In 1957, the statue (a copy of one erected in Jamestown, Virginia in 1922) was donated to Gravesend by an American to mark the 350th anniversary of the death of Pocahontas. In fact, 1957 was the 340th anniversary of her death.

**4.11** Turn left at the statue and make your way out of the churchyard by the gate in its north-western corner, and turn right onto Princes Street. Follow the right-hand footway and cross New Road next to the traffic barrier. Continue to ascend on the right-hand footway of Stone Street. Cross the railway, and turn right to reach Gravesend station, the end of the route.

Gravesend station has Southeastern services to London, including high-speed services to St Pancras in under half an hour.

The Saxon Shore Way begins in Gravesend, following the Kent coastline as it was a thousand years ago.

The Wealdway starts in Gravesend and goes south to reach Eastbourne.

The Darent Valley Path is crossed by the route at Sutton at Hone.

Each of these paths has a subsite of a Kent County Council website about walking in the county — go to <https://explorekent.org/activities/> and search for “walking” then “long walks” for these and other Kent paths.