

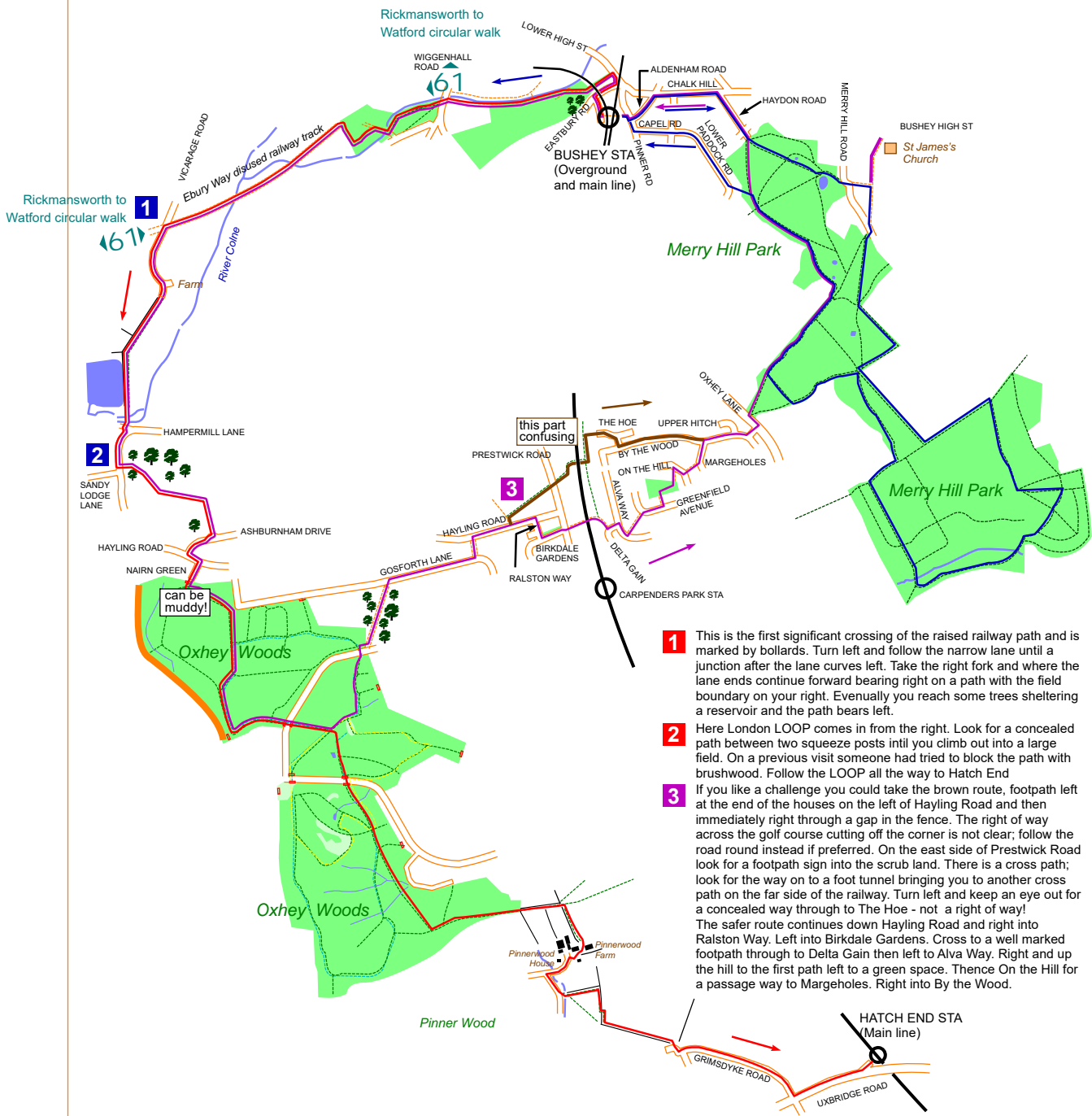


Bushey to Merry Hill and/or Oxhey Wood and Hatch End

- Merry Hill circular route 7.7 km
- Bushey to Hatch End 9.3km
- Ebury Way, Oxhey Wood Merry Hill circular 11 km
- Railway
-  Connection with another walk
-  1 kilometre



- 1** This is the first significant crossing of the raised railway path and is marked by bollards. Turn left and follow the narrow lane until a junction after the lane curves left. Take the right fork and where the lane ends continue forward bearing right on a path with the field boundary on your right. Eventually you reach some trees sheltering a reservoir and the path bears left.
- 2** Here London LOOP comes in from the right. Look for a concealed path between two squeeze posts until you climb out into a large field. On a previous visit someone had tried to block the path with brushwood. Follow the LOOP all the way to Hatch End
- 3** If you like a challenge you could take the brown route, footpath left at the end of the houses on the left of Hayling Road and then immediately right through a gap in the fence. The right of way across the golf course cutting off the corner is not clear; follow the road round instead if preferred. On the east side of Prestwick Road look for a footpath sign into the scrub land. There is a cross path; look for the way on to a foot tunnel bringing you to another cross path on the far side of the railway. Turn left and keep an eye out for a concealed way through to The Hoe - not a right of way! The safer route continues down Hayling Road and right into Ralston Way. Left into Birkdale Gardens. Cross to a well marked footpath through to Delta Gain then left to Alva Way. Right and up the hill to the first path left to a green space. Thence On the Hill for a passage way to Margeholes. Right into By the Wood.

walk notes

Bushey to Merry Hill via Oxhey Woods

This varied terrain walk makes use of the Ebury Way to gain access to Oxhey Wood. Merry Hill Park can be used to make the walk circular or it can be accessed on its own for a shorter walk

Oxhey Park

The area remained undeveloped until the Metropolitan Railway was built in the late 1880's. The land where Oxhey Park is now was part of the Wiggshall Estate. Although privately owned, after WWI most of it was controlled by the the Board of Agriculture and Food as a result of the 1916 Defence of the Realm Act. The Board used its power to keep possession of the Wiggshall land for another two years. By the start of 1919 the heirs were willing to sell the estate and Watford UDC was anxious to buy it to solve a pressing problem of poverty and slum housing, to clear the slums and build decent homes for the displaced residents. It also saw a continuing need for allotments and for green space for recreation. The land was conveyed in 1920.

Subsequently the Council bought 'land adjacent to Oxhey Park, by the railway viaduct' from the Watford Engineering Works Ltd in 1932: 'all that piece of land situate in the Parish of Watford... fronting on the High Street and Eastbury Road and bounded on the north west and south west side respectively by a public footpath, so completing Oxhey Park as it is today.

Ebury Way

Robert Grosvenor, 1st Baron Ebury was a British courtier and Whig politician. He was the third son of Robert Grosvenor, 1st Marquess of Westminster. In 1860 he led the business venture with the Great Western Railway to build the railway from Watford, near his mansion at Moor Park, to Uxbridge in Buckinghamshire. The Watford & Rickmansworth Railway was the shortest of Hertfordshire's branch lines – only three miles long with a single stop – because the intended six mile extension from Rickmansworth to Uxbridge was never built. The line was level but had to cross the rivers Chess, Gade and Colne, and the Grand Union Canal. It was built quickly and opened in 1862, but much of its passenger traffic was taken by the new Metropolitan Railway (to Amersham) in 1887 and the line never operated at a profit. Unlike Hertfordshire's other branches the line was electrified in

1927, but passenger use still declined and the stations closed in 1951. The line has since been converted into a cycle path which bears his name, the Ebury Way.

Oxhey Woods

The woods occupy high ground and have always been woodland. There is a variety of woodland cover including ancient, semi-natural, scrub and some ornamental planting. There is evidence of wood pasture and the woods were one of the last sites in the county where bilberry was recorded in the 19th century. There are a great variety of trees and shrubs within the woods, ranging from towering oaks to elegantly twisted hornbeam and more unusual species such as the wild service tree and the Midland hawthorn. More recently, areas have been planted with commercial crops, including larch. On the woodland floor there is a range of plant life: in the clearings there is natural regeneration of birch, and bluebells, violets, foxgloves and remnant areas of heather survive.

Merry Hill Park

Merry Hill Farm comprised 180 acres of arable land between the communities of Bushey, Little Oxhey and Carpenders Park south and southeast of Attenborough Fields. In 1994, it came up for sale. The Woodland Trust initiated purchase with various funding. It is a mixed habitat of old trees, newly planted woodland and orchard, a stream and vast open meadows that stretch across the peaceful Hertfordshire countryside.

The mix of landscape features and habitats has greatly improved the biodiversity of the woodland and in addition there are some splendid views across the Hertfordshire countryside and the neighbouring town of Watford, as well as the north-western fringes of Greater London.

Lying within Watling Chase Community Forest, over 62,000 broadleaf trees have so far been planted on the Merry Hill site, including oak, hornbeam, ash, birch and aspen - most of which are locally native species produced from seed collected from nearby woodland. In addition, 5km of hedgerow has been laid, with schoolchildren and the local community taking part in regular tree and hedge planting events. These plantings are attracting a wide range of invertebrates such as the emperor dragonfly and the marbled white butterfly; and bird species including great spotted and green woodpecker, yellow hammer and stone chat.