




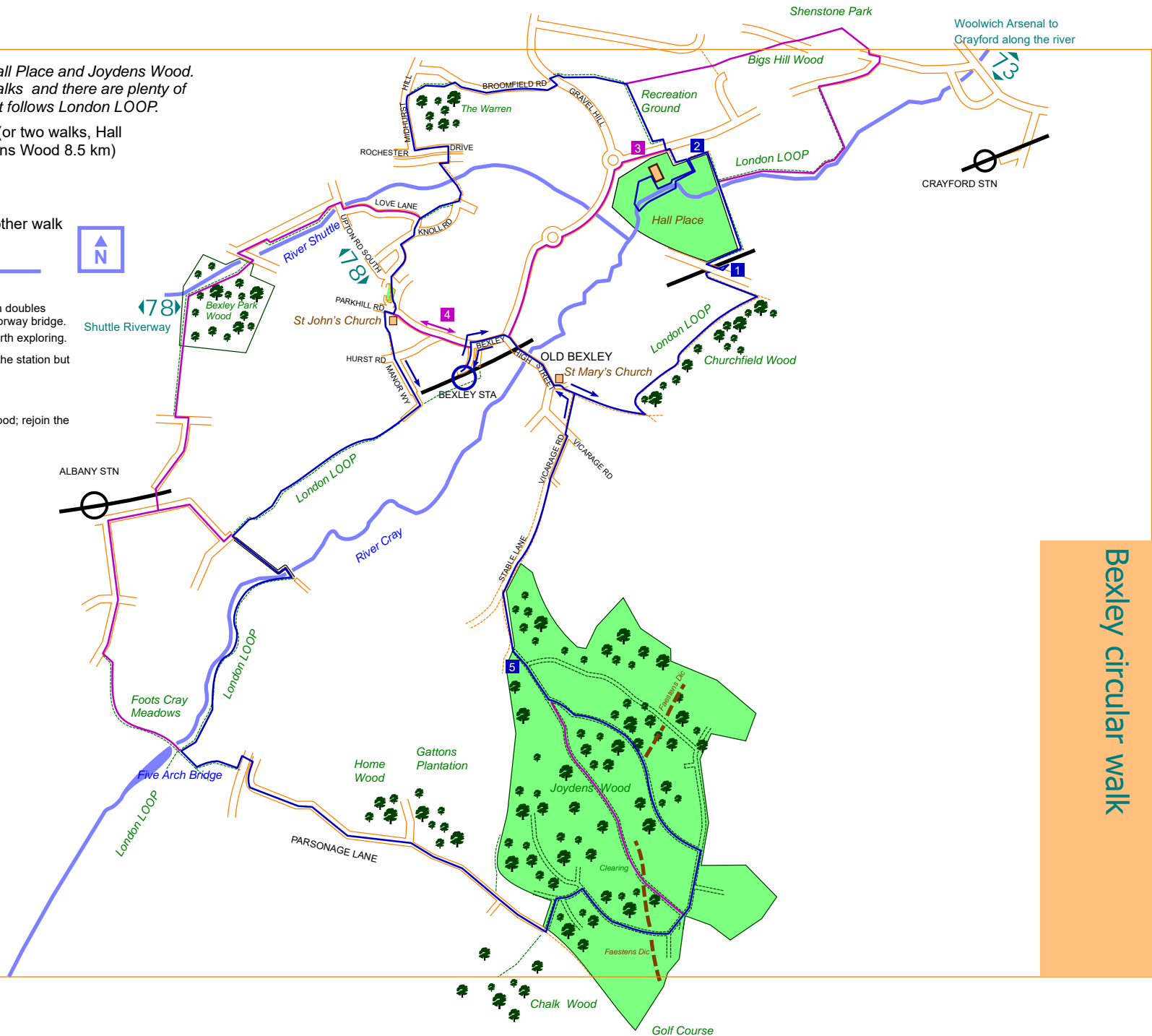


This walk connects Old Bexley, Hall Place and Joydens Wood. It can be split into two separate walks and there are plenty of options for expanding it. Much of it follows London LOOP.

-  Main route 14.4 km (or two walks, Hall Place 6.4 km, Joydens Wood 8.5 km)
-  Options
-  Railway
-  connection with another walk
-  1kilometre

- 1 The walk goes under the motorway then doubles back up and over the railway using motorway bridge.
- 2 Hall Place grounds are free and well worth exploring.
- 3 This option is the quickest way back to the station but it follows a main road..
- 4 Use this option to split the walk in two.
- 5 There is much to explore in Joydens Wood; rejoin the route here at Keepers Cottage.



Bexley circular walk

*This is a varied walk including Old Bexley, a walk along the Cray, a magnificent wood and a fine country house. The terrain is variable and there can be pockets of mud.*

### **Bexley**

Bexley originated pre-Domesday as a crossing of the River Cray and a meeting of two routes; the traffic that created it now spoils it as a pleasant walk. The manor of Bexley was granted to Oxford University by William Camden and subsequently leased to the Leigh Family. The finest house on the main street is Highstreet House. St Mary the Virgin Church [http://www.stmarysbexley.co.uk/content.php?folder\\_id=5](http://www.stmarysbexley.co.uk/content.php?folder_id=5) has been a place of worship for over eight hundred years. It probably succeeded an earlier Saxon church on the same site, which was mentioned in the Domesday Survey. The current interior of the church dates from 1883, following a make-over by the Victorians. This sees a raised altar some distance from the people, a formal choir space copied from the great English cathedrals and the congregation seated beyond the choir in ranks of pews. All of the windows were replaced with stained glass and flint cladding was added to the external walls.

### **Hall Place**

Sir John Champenois, wealthy merchant and Lord Mayor of London in 1534, purchased Hall

Place in 1537 and started to build his house there. The stone- and flint-built house was altered and enlarged by his son, Justinian. His son sold it to Robert Austen in 1649. Sir Robert Austen extended the southern part of the house using brick instead of stone. Hall Place remained in the Austen family until 1772 when the seventh baronet died childless and the estate passed to Sir Francis Dashwood. The Dashwood family owned the estate for the next 150 years, although they seldom lived there, and for seventy years the house was let as a private school. From c 1870 the property was let to a series of tenants, until bought in 1926 by American financier James Cox Brady, who sold it to Bexley Council in 1935. The grounds are now a public open space and the mansion is used to house Bexley Museum and Bexley Local Studies Centre.

### **Joyden's Wood**

Joyden's Wood is a 325 acre swathe of ancient hilly woodland. The name derives from the family of William Jordayne, an early resident of Dartford. The wood has also been known as Jordans in the past. The Forestry Commission acquired Joyden's Wood in 1956 and later placed it under the management of the Woodland Trust, which opened it to the public in 1988. There are over eight miles of public and permissive paths and three miles of

bridleways. The trust has been felling conifer trees planted during the 1950s and replacing them with native deciduous species like oak, beech, silver birch and sweet chestnut. With more sunlight reaching the ground, bluebells, lily-of-the-valley, honey-suckle and wood sage are flourishing. A patch of open heathland in the centre of the wood is a popular picnic spot. A mile long Saxon earthwork known as Faesten Dic (Strong Dyke) runs north-south through the wood. Other ancient features include the remains of two Iron Age roundhouses. South-west of Joyden's Wood, Bexley's Chalk Wood has 69 acres of ancient woodland, traversed by a bridle path.

### **Foots Cray Meadows**

The walk also borders 250 acre Foots Cray Meadows. Foots Cray Meadows are the largest public open space in the London Borough of Bexley, situated in the South East of the Borough bordered by Sidcup, Albany Park, North Cray and Bexley Village. The River Cray forms a central feature of the landscape. Foots Cray Meadows have evolved from the estates of: Foots Cray Place and North Cray Place. They are rich in Natural History with the River, Woods and Meadows providing valuable pockets of nature conservation. For more information visit

<http://www.footscraymeadows.org/index.htm>