




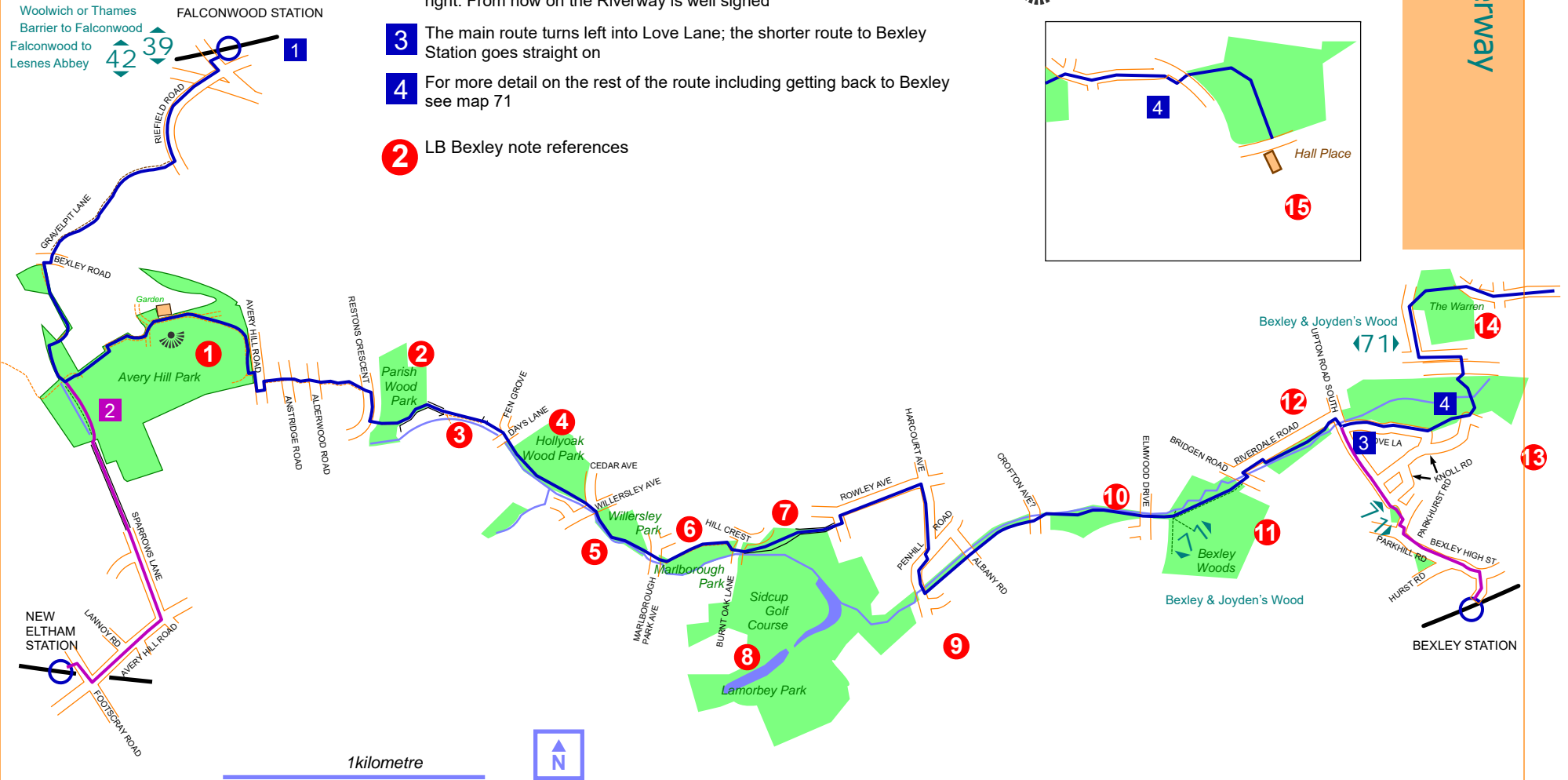
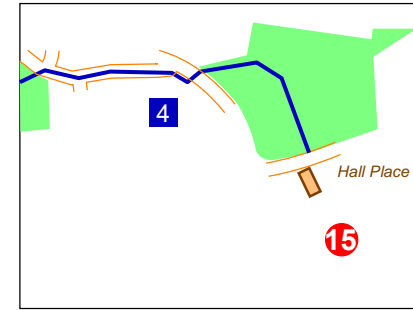


This walk is well documented by Bexley Borough Council and an informative leaflet is downloadable.

- 1** From Falconwood Station you can take the shortest route indicated or join the LOOP clockwise as far as the gate of the Tudor Sports and Social Club then bear left on a footpath to Avery Hill Park
- 2** When the path opens out you can go either side of the boundary/ditch and on arriving at a major cross path at the end of the large field turn right. From now on the Riverway is well signed
- 3** The main route turns left into Love Lane; the shorter route to Bexley Station goes straight on
- 4** For more detail on the rest of the route including getting back to Bexley see map 71

2 LB Bexley note references

-  Main route 10.9 km
-  alternative start & end 8.78 km
-  Railway
-  connection with another walk
-  vista



Shuttle Riverway

The walk starts in Avery Hill Park and picks up the watercourse, following all the way to Bexley. Some parts may be slightly muddy but much is on pavement. The notes here are taken from London Borough of Bexley Publication at

<http://www.bexley.gov.uk/shuttleriverway>

1 Avery Hill Park and the Source of the Shuttle

The main source of the Shuttle appears to be near Phippenhall 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 also indicates another source just to the east of Holy Trinity Church in Southend Crescent which is also on the boundary between these two beds.

Avery Hill House was built in the early 1800's and extensively enlarged and renovated in the 1880's when the house was brought 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 part of the Greenwich University Avery Hill Campus, whilst the park is used for many kinds of sports and outdoor activities.

2 Parish Wood

The name presumably refers to the old Parish Boundary. This followed much the same line as the present Borough one which is marked by a fence. The Park was once all wooded.

Underfoot the Park is often damp, so alders grow well. The trees along the bank are mainly crack willows, so called because of the brittleness of their twigs. This is a native species which has been present since the Ice Age.

3 Berwick Crescent

The bankside vegetation in this area 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.

4 Hollyoak Wood Park

A small patch of ancient woodland remains, supporting typical species such as dog's mercury, wood avens and field maples. When it was all woodland the area was a royal hunting ground. In the 1839 Bexley Tithe Map the name was written in separate parts - Holly Oak Wood. Its three acres were then owned by a Mr Thomas Lewin, who farmed the land. During World War II, all but a small area of woodland was dug over for allotment food production. Today one wood patch and an allotment corner in a grassy leisure area are left as witnesses of former days.

5 The Hollies

Walking through Willersley Avenue, The Hollies can be seen on the south side of the River Shuttle. This was the site of a Tudor house called Marrowbone Hall which was renamed 'The Hollies' in 1842. In 1858 it was burnt down, later to be rebuilt by the Lewin

family. It remained a private residence until 1900 when the Board of Guardians of Deptford and Greenwich purchased it to use as an orphanage. Part of the site has now been redeveloped for private housing, but 'The Hollies' and many of the original orphanage buildings remain and are being put to other uses.

6 Marlborough Park

Primitive plants such as liverworts and horsetails can be seen in quite large numbers in the damper areas along the river. The liverwort is one of the simplest forms of plant; each one is a flat structure called a thallus which may have tiny cup-shaped reproductive organs on the upper surface. The horsetails are more advanced, being differentiated into stems and branches with leaves represented by toothed sheaths around the stem.

7 Sidcup Golf Course

The Riverway passes to the north of Sidcup Golf Course. Along both banks of the river several alder trees can be seen. They can be recognised by their characteristic rounded leaves and the distinctive small black cones which often stay on the trees throughout the winter. Alder seeds have air pockets which enable them to float on water and so disperse along rivers. The seeds are an important winter food for finches such as siskin, goldfinch and redpoll.

8 Lamorbey Park

To the south of the golf course lies Lamorbey Park, which 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 part of the rose Bruford College of Speech and Drama.

9 Penhill Bridge

This area is notable for the presence of water voles, which can frequently be seen at quiet times of the day from Spring to Autumn, either swimming or feeding on grasses or water plants. Even when the voles are not out in the open, evidence of their presence can be seen in the form of the closely-cropped feeding areas and the obvious burrows.

10 Riverside Walk

Several non-native trees occur in this section such as the invasive sycamore, which grows all along the river, and the american red oak, horse chestnut and walnut found at the eastern end of the walk.

11 Bexley Woods

The most common tree here is hornbeam, which can be recognised by its oval, parallel-veined leaves and three-pointed fruits. 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 recut to provide material for building, fencing and firewood.

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, and these are called "Channel Bars".

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.

13 BETHS (Boys) School

Here the riverbank has abundant tree cover, principally composed of alder, crack willow, black poplar, trees which prefer damp soil. On the north bank the tree cover is extended to form an oak dominated woodland with a few sycamore and silver birch.

Some large black poplars and crack willows can be seen on the south bank. These trees are difficult to tell apart in winter, but in summer the poplar's kite-shaped leaves are easily distinguished from the long thin leaves of the willow.

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 the plague there in 1665 following a trip to London.

Warren Farmhouse was demolished in 1937 and its former site is now an open mown area bordered by long grass and shrub, whilst most of the hillside is covered by oak and elm woodland.

The abundance of insects which 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 in the shrub layer. Other species which do not feed solely on insects also take advantage of the variety of shelter and nesting sites available in the woodland.

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, owned it 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. The Grade 1 listed building is now managed for the Council by Bexley Heritage Trust, and houses museum and interpretation galleries and a Tourist Information Centre. 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. The 132 bus route will take you from Gravel Hill to the Avery Hill end of the Shuttle Riverway.

There is an illustrated PDF available on line