

Dartford Council's WONDERFUL WALKS

START

Posts 1-2

Leave the Heath Lane car park

Post 3

Keep an eye out for the man made glory bumps

Post 4

Post 5

Spread of bracken can result in the loss of open heathland

Post 6

Post 7

Post 8

These are World War Two metallated roads

Walk No. 1: Dartford Heath

Green Route Walk

Length: **3 miles** Time: Approx. **2 - 2.5 hrs** Difficulty: **Hard**

Special details: The route involves crossing Old Bexley Lane (post 11), which is a busy dual carriageway that may make the route unsuitable for families with younger children, pushchairs or prams and people with reduced mobility. The route crosses a pedestrian and a road bridge over the A2 (posts 15 and 32)

Sturdy footwear is recommended

walks@dartford.gov.uk

Posts 1-2: Leave the Heath Lane car park and follow the posts, passing the Donkey Pond to your left and a bench to your right. The Donkey Pond is one of 3 ponds on the Heath and is a seasonal pond, drying out most summers. The pond was named after the seaside donkeys that used to spend the winter on the Heath.

Post 3: As you follow the path, you will see the Glory Bumps to your left and right. They are made up of a series of parallel ridges and furrows that form a mosaic of bare, disturbed sandy ground with dense patches of scrub. They are a man made feature, created when minerals were extracted on the Heath. Follow the path until you reach post 4.

Post 4: Continue along the path through a wooded area.

Post 5: Turn left. To either side of the path you will see silver birch trees and bracken. In the past, bracken was used as compost and for animal bedding. Bracken is no longer used for these purposes and can be a problem on the Heath, as the spread of bracken can result in the loss of open heathland if left unmanaged.

Post 6: Continue along the path towards the open heathland.

Post 7: Turn left.

Post 8: You will see 2 paths in front of you. Take the right hand fork and follow this path across the open heathland. Here, you can see the different stages of ecological succession on the Heath from acid grassland, to heathland to woodland. Ecological succession is the change over time of the species composition of a community of plants and animals, due to changes in the local environment or climate.

"I met a resident in the town who suggested we produce leaflets showing some of our best walks around the town. I thought it was a grand idea so here they are - the first in a series that I hope you enjoy"



Councillor Jeremy Kite
Leader of the Council

Post 10

On your left, amongst the trees, you will see the Woodland Pond

Post 11

Post 12

Follow the path along the ride through an aspen coppice

Post 13

Post 14

Posts 15-17

Post 18-19

Petty Whin can be found here

Post 20-21

Post 22

Flowering cherry trees

Post 23

Post 24

Bexley Hospital, London's 54th asylum that was closed in 2001

As you walk across the open heathland, you will see a series of roads on your left in the shape of a figure of eight. These are World War Two metalled roads that were constructed by British Forces during the war to enable the servicing of anti aircraft gun emplacements and training camps.

Post 9: Follow the path through scrub and woodland.

Post 10: Turn right onto a wide ride, which is known as the gas main ride and follow the path towards Old Bexley Lane. The ride was created when a gas main was installed across the Heath and is now maintained as an open ride to benefit wildlife, such as butterflies and plants. The dominant tree is silver birch and in the autumn months you are likely to see fly agaric, is a fungus closely associated with silver birch.

On your left, amongst the trees, you will see the Woodland Pond. Management, such as the removal of silt, is carried out on a regular basis to maintain the pond in good condition for wildlife, such as newts and frogs. A bench beside the pond provides the perfect place for a pit stop.

Post 11: You have reached a wooden motorcycle barrier and you need to pass through the barrier to continue on the route. Caution – you will now need to cross over Old Bexley Lane, a busy dual carriageway. Signposts have been put into place to warn motorists that pedestrians may be crossing but you will still need to take care.

Post 12: You are now back on the gas main ride. Follow the path along the ride through an aspen coppice.

Post 13: Turn left and follow the path until you reach a tarmac road. This is the obsolete section of Denton Road, which was cut off when the A2 was built.

Post 14: Turn left onto the tarmac road and follow the road towards the A2.

Posts 15-17: Walk across the pedestrian footbridge over the A2, following the path to the left as you come off the footbridge. You are now on the corner of Denton Road and The Dell. Turn left and follow the path onto the recreation area in front of you.

Post 18-19: Follow the path alongside the gorse bushes to your left, keeping to the western edge of the recreation ground. Petty whin, a heathland plant which is rare in Kent, is found amongst the gorse. Management takes place to clear these areas and enable the Petty Whin to thrive.

Post 20-21: Turn left and follow the path into a wooded area. Continue along the path as it winds through the trees, until you meet a tarmac road.

Post 22: Turn right onto the tarmac road and follow the road. To either side of the path you will see flowering cherry trees, which provide a lovely display during the spring months. Continue to follow the road until you come out of the wooded area next to the Denton Road car park. Cross Denton Road and walk towards the pedestrian crossing ahead of you.

Post 23: Cross over Old Bexley Lane using the pedestrian crossing. Turn left and follow the existing pedestrian and cycle path. Cross Pinewood Place using the crossing point and continue to follow the path.



Post 25

Post 26

Post 27

Post 28

Walk through the trees until you come out into a clearing

Post 29

Post 30

Cross over Common Lane using the crossing point

Post 31

Post 32

Post 33

Back to Heath Lane car park

FINISH

Post 24: As you continue on the pedestrian and cycle path, you will pass some housing, a health and fitness centre and local shops on your right. This was the site of the Bexley Hospital, London's 54th asylum that was closed in 2001 after more than 100 years of service, as it could no longer provide the best care for patients. The hospital was built in Victorian times and was home to 2000 people at some points. The hospital was virtually self sufficient, providing a number of facilities including a vegetable and livestock farm, well, bakery and launderette. You will then cross the other end of Pinewood Place using the crossing point. Follow the pedestrian and cycle path until you reach the end of the tarmac path.

Post 25: Leave the tarmac path and continue the route on an unsurfaced dirt path through a wooded area by the side of the road.

Post 26: The path now forks in two directions, straight on and to the right. Take the right hand fork and continue on the path through trees.

Post 27: Where the path splits into two, take the left hand fork. You are now on the permissive bridleway, which is the only one on the Heath. The bridleway is managed to keep it open and to remove any overhanging branches that could be dangerous for people and for horses.

Post 28: Continue to follow the path through the trees until you come out into a clearing, with a bench to your left. Walk across the clearing, until you reach the next post.

Post 29: Turn right. You are now back on the gas main ride. Follow the path until you reach post 30.

Post 30: Turn left off the gas main ride. Follow the windy path through the trees until you reach a more open grassland area. Walk across the clearing until you reach Leyton Cross Road, opposite the Horse and Groom pub. Cross Leyton Cross Road, turn left, and continue along the pavement, passing the pub on your right. Walk along the pavement towards the roundabout at the junction of Leyton Cross Road and Oakfield Lane. Turn right at the end of the road and follow the pavement, past the phone box and bus stop on your right. Cross over Common Lane using the crossing point on your left then cross over Oakfield Lane.

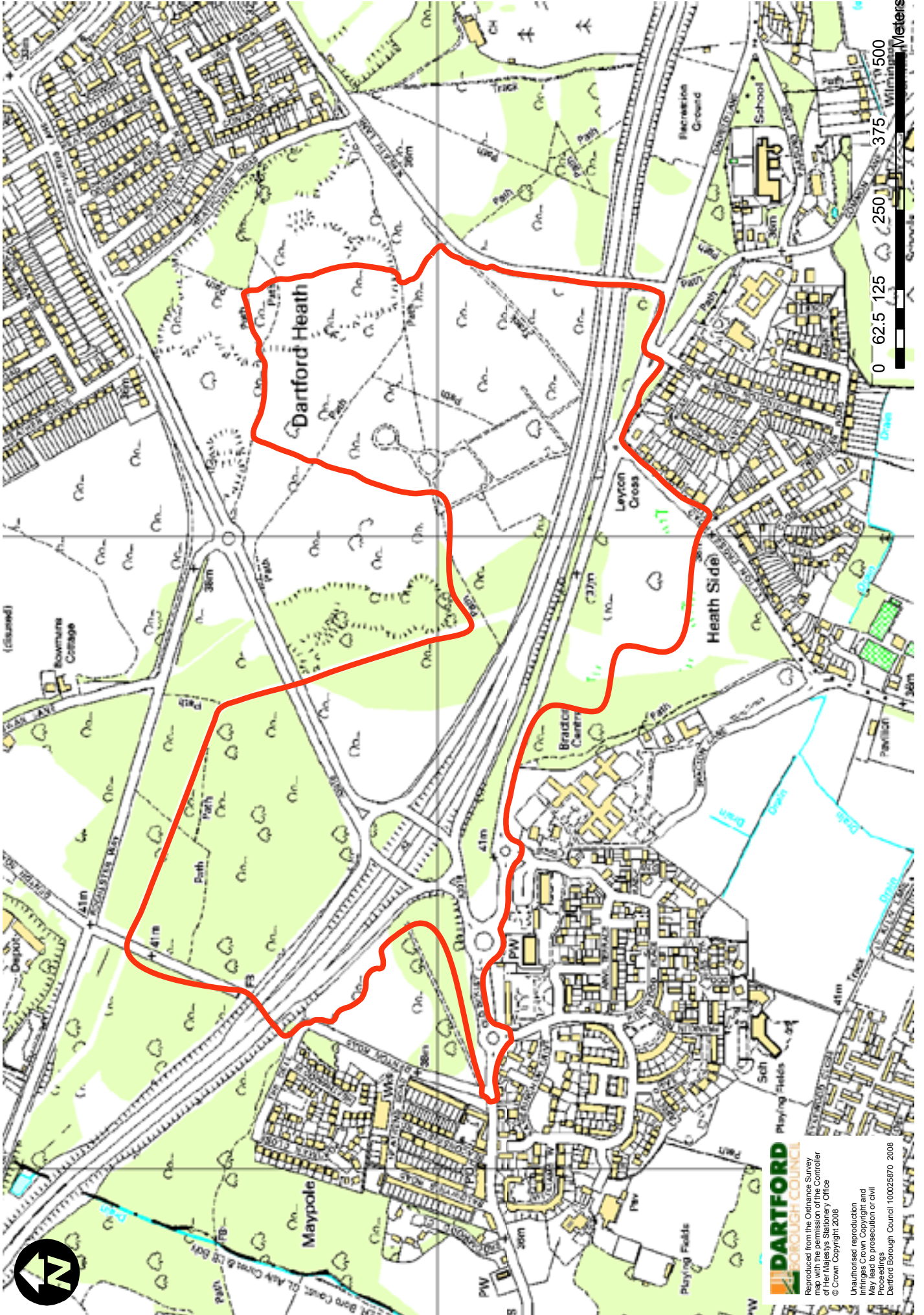
Post 31: Once you have crossed Oakfield Lane, turn right and walk along the pavement towards the roundabout.

Post 32: Turn left along the pavement onto Heath Lane Upper.

Post 33: Step off the pavement onto the path on your left. This will take you back to Heath Lane car park, completing the walk.

Submitted by:
Dartford Borough Council
& Groundwork.





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