

An imaginative walk exploring Beckenham Place Park (45-60 minutes)

Start: the Mound (near the footbridge over the railway track)

Finish: the car park

A walk designed to encourage you to look at some park features in a different light. It is aimed at children but adults might enjoy using their imagination too!

- 1) Pick a small-medium sized leaf up as you walk towards the mound. From the top of the mound, see if you can work out which direction the wind is blowing from by throwing your leaf up in the air and seeing which way it flies. (Use the compass point on your map to help you. Looking over the railway line is roughly east).
- 2) When you leave the mound, turn left along the path and keep left when you reach the end of the lake. Walk around the wet woodland in a clockwise direction. About half way along the path, you'll see an interesting tree on your left (photo by map). It has a large split in its trunk. What might live there? Have a look inside, but take care not to remove anything as you might damage the tree or the homes of creatures that live there
- 3) Continue walking round the wet woodland. At its end, follow the path round to your right (away from the railway track). Then take the first main path on the left. As you walk along the path, see if you can spot a tree on your right that has two trunks that look totally different from each other (one smooth, one with bark). It's like a non-identical twin tree!
- 4) At a junction of paths, continue straight over, slightly up hill. Eventually you will see some large fallen trees on your right. Amazingly, some of them are still growing! Look closely at their roots. Can you see any faces or animals in the patterns the roots make?
- 5) Take the small path off to your left almost opposite the fallen trees. At the end of this narrow path, turn right onto a wider path. Then take the first left (at a big junction). Look up! Can you see the incredible zig zag tree? Can you think what might have made the tree grow in such an unusual shape?
- 6) Continue walking up this path. On your left (after a stretch of dead hedging) you will come to a large witches' cauldron (a muddy pond with lots of logs in it). Imagine a cackle of witches mixing up their potions in this pond! Maybe it was the witches that left the hand print on the tree a little bit further along the path (at a path junction). Does your hand fit the burnt hand on the tree?!
- 7) Take the path to your right by the hand tree (if you come out on Crab Hill you've missed the turning!). You should see a large insect at the start of the path. Is it a wasp? A flying ant? A bee? Can you think of a name for it?
- 8) Continue on this path for quite a long way. At the first junction, bear left. You will come to a junction with Crab Hill on your left. Don't go up onto Crab Hill, but follow the path round to the right. Keep following the path which wiggles to the left, then right, then left again (it's lined with branches so should be obvious). Can you spot any interesting shaped trees as you walk? Or hear any birds squawking or singing? Maybe you'll hear a woodpecker drumming on a tree trunk.

- 9) You will come out onto a wide path near Westgate Road entrance. Turn right and follow the wide path, keeping straight ahead (slightly left) at the big junction. As you pass that big junction, turn back and look at the tree on your right. It looks like it has a mouth! What might the tree say to you if it started talking?!
- 10) Further along the main path, just before you reach a junction with a bench and fingerpost, there is a tree on your right that looks like a dragon or dinosaur foot. What noise might this big footed creature make?
- 11) Continue on the path, ignoring any turnings left or right (bear left at the finger post, not right down the steps). There is a lovely view of the Homestead on your left before you walk downhill slightly along a path with black railings on either side. As you exit the woods, look up – this is a favourite place for ring necked parakeets and you might see (and hear!) some. Along this path there are some fabulous spooky looking oak trees on the left with spikey branches that look like witch's fingers!
- 12) Pass over the little bridge by the lake. Imagine you're a billy goat from the Three Billy Goats Gruff fairy tale. Can you hear a troll roar and shout, "Who's that trip trapping over my bridge?" as you walk over the bridge?
- 13) Continue straight ahead at the junction, so you walk uphill. Look out for the red squirrel statue on your right – a rare site in England where they aren't found in the wild! (except on Brownsey Island off the south coast near Bournemouth). There's a wonderful old mulberry tree just after the statue. It is over 200 years old! What would the park have been like when the mulberry tree was the same age as you?
- 14) Turn right up some steps (or a ramp) into a square garden with a cross of paths. This is the sensory garden and it is maintained by the Friends of Beckenham Place Park. Each quarter of the garden is designed for a different sense. Depending on the season, you might hear rustling bamboo in the sound corner, smell lavender and rosemary in the scent corner, feel soft leaves in the touch corner, and see lovely colours in the sight segment. Also look out for birds on the bird feeder in the middle.
- 15) Turn right through the formal gardens and then left at the end of the gardens, with the playground on your right. On your left is Gardener's Cottage and the community garden which is maintained by volunteers. Depending on the time of year, you might see vegetables growing in the raised beds. All year round you'll see a wildlife pond and a bug hotel (just before the gate). Are there any vacancies at the bug Bed and Breakfast? Which creatures might like to stay there? Perhaps you could write a story about them when you get home. Or draw some pictures of them enjoying their stay in the Bed and Breakfast full of dead wood, pine cones, bricks, straw and sticks! It might not be your idea of a nice place to stay, but to mini-beasts that is pure luxury!



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Finish: The car park



Split tree alongside the wet woodland. What might live here?



Further information and more trails available at www.beckenhamplacepark.com