



8. Holly and Blackthorn or Wild Plum form a dense thicket here. The fruit of the Blackthorn is traditionally used for wine making and flavouring gin. The Surrey Trust's working parties have dug out a pond behind the path.

9. A marsh has developed parallel with the river here, and a willow copse provides food and shelter for several kinds of warbler and other birds. *A poisonous member of the carrot family grows in this wet situation - the Hemlock Water Dropwort.*

10. Grass tussocks hidden beyond trees close to the path serve as winter hiding places for numerous creatures. Insects such as Damselflies are abundant here; the foliage of the tussocks is much warmer than the underlying soil.

In the spring the area is bright with Kingcups.

11. The second bridge is built in one of the places where the river flows fairly straight, instead of meandering and provides hiding places for ducks. The introduced Mandarin duck was first seen by the River Bourne in 1929-30 and the colony in and around Virginia Water is now probably the largest in the country and the British population is of international significance, due to its rapid decline in its native Asia. These birds come from Asia and the male is very brightly coloured. The mandarin is an unusual duck due to its preference for perching and nesting in trees.

12. The bridge returns us to the south side of the river, to the huge Oak, which marks the centre of a woodland play area. Look out for the galls on this tree; button-like spangle galls on leaves, spherical "oak-apple" on twigs and knobbly "knopper-galls", in place of acorns. They are all caused by tiny insects.

The map illustrates the boundaries and some of the interesting features of the land on either side of the River Bourne west of Virginia Water station owned by Runnymede Borough Council as Trustees of the Cabrera Trust.

The land is managed for the enjoyment of local residents by Runnymede Borough Council, with the advice and assistance of the Surrey Wildlife Trust, the Riverside Walk Advisory Committee, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers and local honorary wardens.

The Riverside Walk has been laid out at the eastern end of the land and you are invited to use it; we hope that these notes make your visit more interesting.

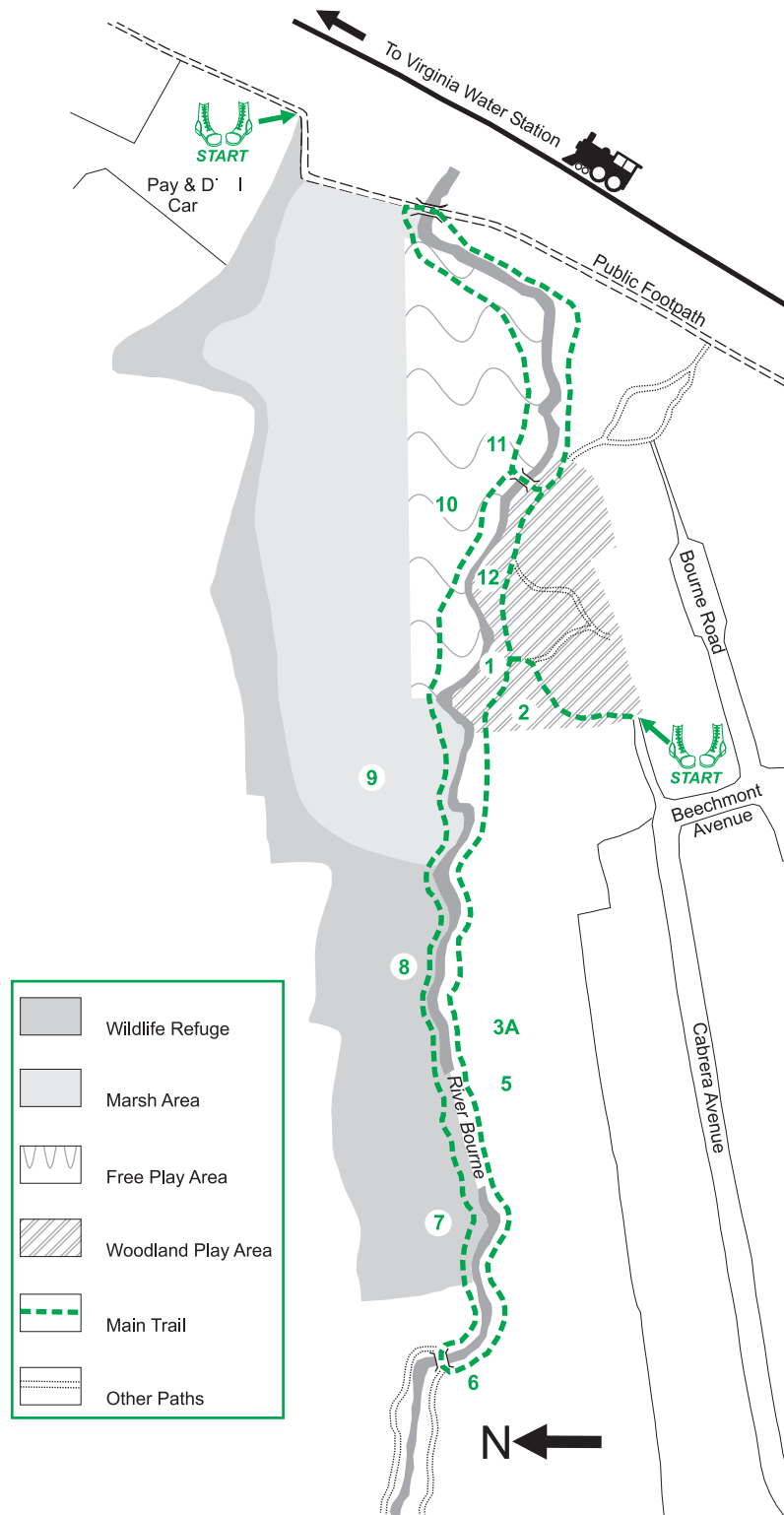


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River Bourne Riverside Walk Virginia Water



A TWENTY MINUTE STROLL AROUND A TRANQUIL AREA OF CABRERA TRUST WOODLAND



Follow the trail...

Paragraph numbers refer to map locations and numbered marker posts along the route.

This site is best accessed on foot from either The Bourne Car Park off Station Parade, or from Virginia Water Railway Station. Wheelchair access is possible from Beechmont Avenue. However, the site may be boggy in places and vegetation may obstruct the path on occasions. Therefore, we strongly recommend that wheelchair users are accompanied by a companion.

1. The River Bourne rises in Windsor Great Park, leaves Virginia Water Lake by the cascade at the eastern end and flows past the edge of Wentworth Golf Course before it passes through the narrow corridor of the Riverside Walk on its way to St. Ann's Hill, Chertsey and finally the Thames.

The Bourne area is geologically part of the London formation, where clays, sands and gravels overlie chalk; the soils are generally alluvium and the area low-lying. The local annual rainfall is about 25" (635mm). The northern bank receives more sun than the south. This affects the vegetation and microclimates, giving the occasional frost pocket and area of high humidity.

On this trail, the stream runs through wet and dry woodland in turn; occasional glades allow bramble and bracken to spread, but little direct light reaches the water in summer. As you walk, glance up to see the tree canopy change from Alder to Willow, to Oak.

2. The commonest tree growing along the riverbank is the Alder; its tiny woody cones provide the staple winter food of the Siskin (a small finch), which you can sometimes see here in flocks, particularly between January and April. The Alders along the riverbank are coppiced every 3 to 5 years to allow light to reach the river and woodland floor. This encourages a wider diversity of plant, insect, bird and animal life. From February to April you can find the attractive leaves and flowers of the Town Hall Clock or Moschatel, which is a tiny yellow-green flower, about 2.5" high with four faces at right angles - like the Town Hall Clock - hence the name.

3. Here is a place where the stream is eating away (or eroding) the bank at a sharp bend. A few yards to the left is a marsh, with some columns of Greater Tussock Sedge, which are located close to marker post 3. Additional columns can be seen further along the trail at marker post 3A, located after post 4. These splendid columns may have taken a hundred years to reach their present size. Kingcups (Marsh Marigolds) grow here and the old tussocks provide a niche for ferns and mosses. In spring you can find the white flowers and clover-like leaves of the Wood Sorrel or Oxalis. All the year the graceful fronds of the Broad Buckler Fern can be seen.

4. The ditches at each end of this drier patch of ground have lowered the water table in the soil, so the plant species growing here are different from those growing in or beside the ditches.

In the furthest ditch, look for the delicate blue flowers of Skullcap when it flowers in August.

5. Beyond this ditch is part of an old Blackthorn thicket. Listen for birdsong here; you can hear Tits, Chiffchaffs or other species of warbler according to the time of year.

6. This old girder bridge is a curiosity; its origin is obscure. Old maps show the valley as wet pastureland, probably suitable for cattle, so a strong bridge would have been necessary. In the more open areas here, Orange Tip butterflies lay their eggs on Garlic Mustard in the spring and Speckled Wood butterflies can be seen during the warmer months of the year.

7. The land near the river on this northern side is noticeably drier than on the southern side; so oak trees have formed a thriving colony and wood anemones bloom here in the spring.

