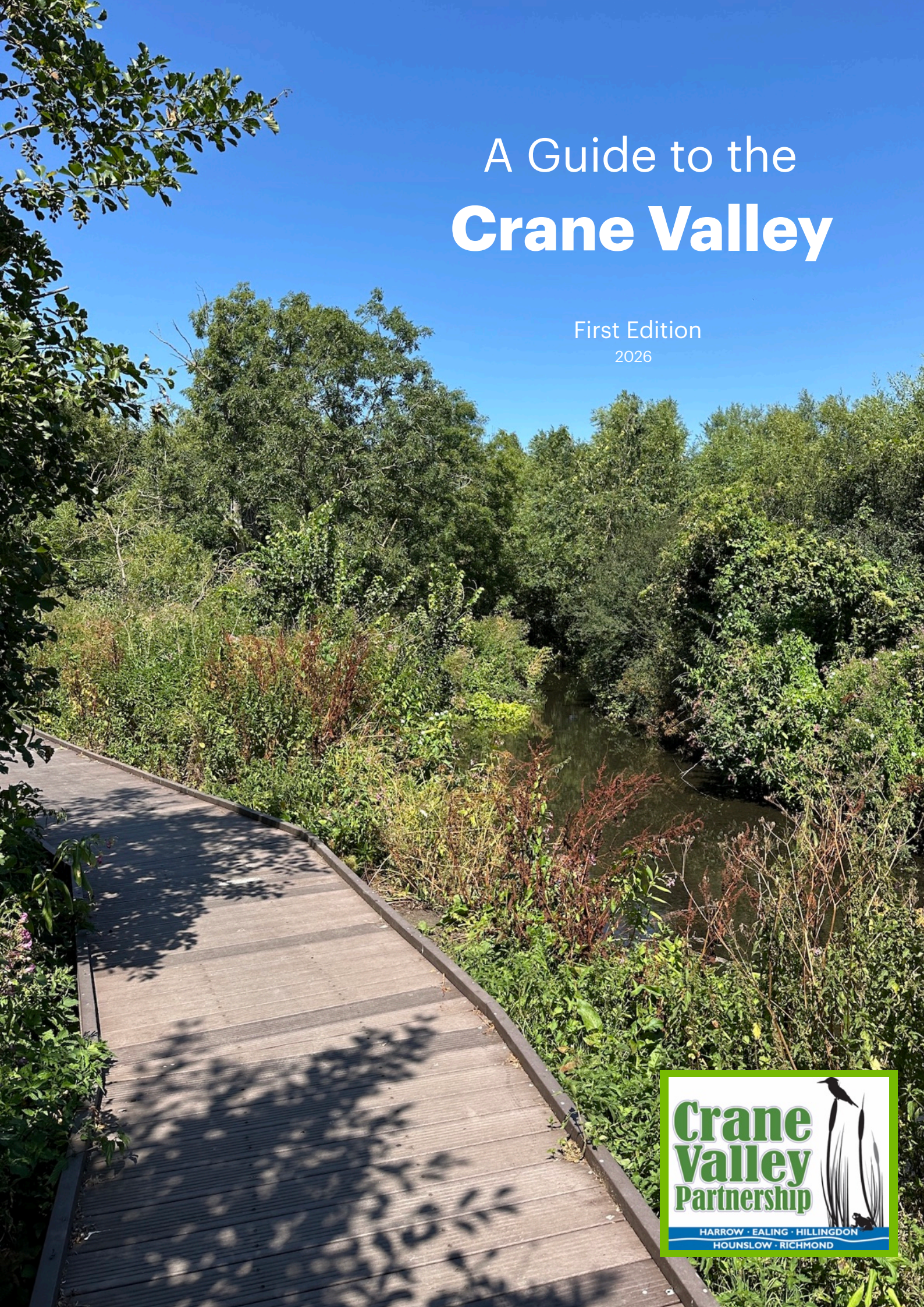


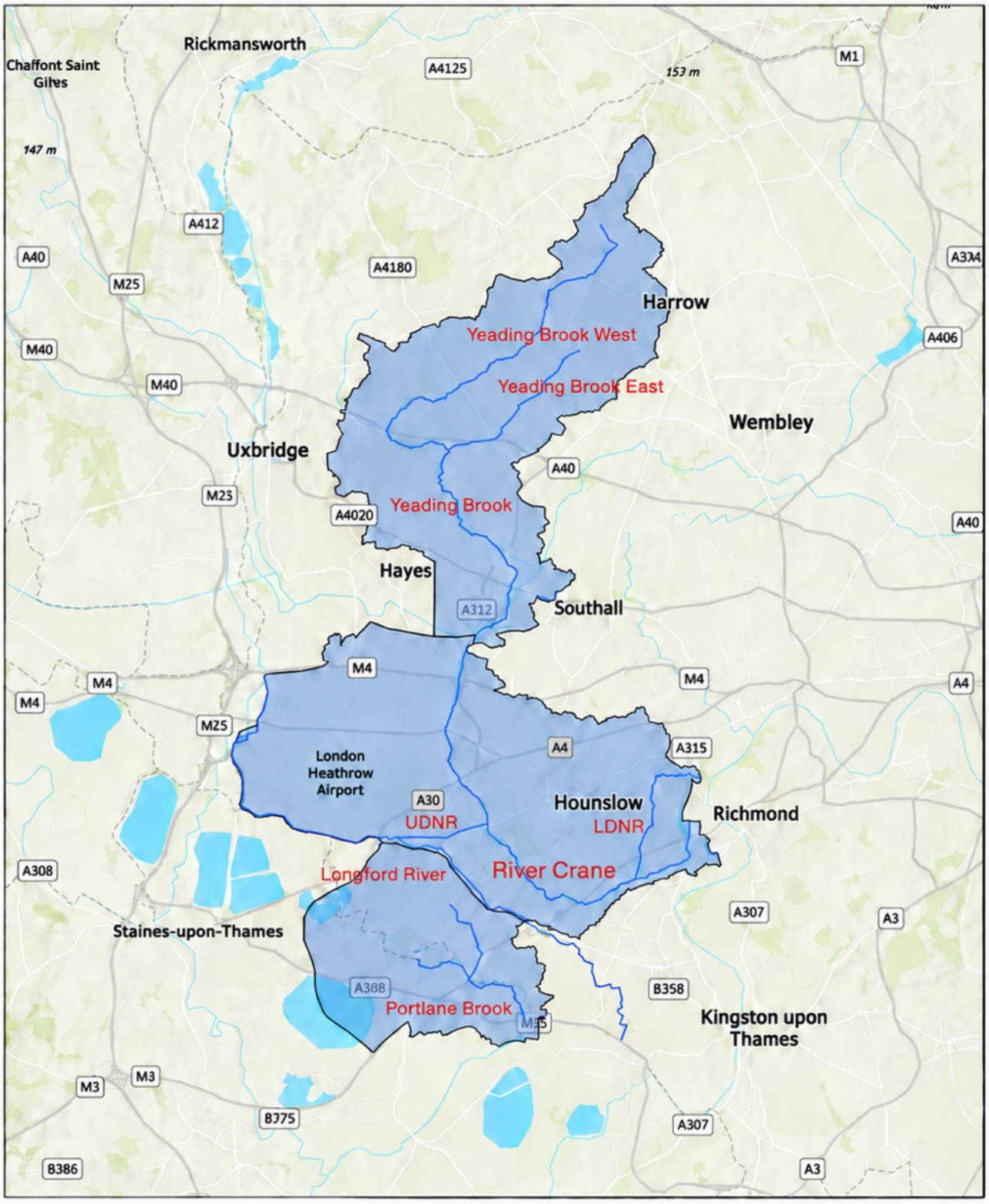
A Guide to the **Crane Valley**

First Edition
2026

Crane Valley Partnership
HARROW · EALING · HILLINGDON
HOUNSLOW · RICHMOND

Cover image: The River Crane and the riverside boardwalk at Donkey Wood, North Feltham

Area Map



Crane Catchment plus Portlane Brook Catchment

N.B. This map is indicative. Not all of the river network is shown.

1:146,865

0 1 2 4 mi

0 1.75 3.5 7 km

Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community. Esri, Intermap, NASA, NGA, USGS.

Introduction 1

Overview 2

The river system 3

Catchment issues (in a nutshell) 29

Nature reserves and cattle grazing 30

A historical perspective 32

Exploring the Crane Valley 44

Parks and open spaces listing 48

Introduction

This guide provides a basic introduction to the Crane Valley in west London. It is intended for anyone with a general interest in the rivers and associated open spaces of the area - whether they are a local resident, a visitor, a policy maker, a professional water management practitioner, a conservation volunteer, a citizen scientist, a researcher or a student. The guide takes the reader on a tour of the Crane Valley, describing what can be seen and where. It also covers some of the history of the area. It's definitely not comprehensive in its coverage but it does hopefully capture the essence of the place.

Over the past six years I have been making short videos that document sites and activities along the river corridors of the Crane Valley. These videos are all available to view on the Crane Valley Partnership YouTube channel, and the narrative in this guide makes use of many of them via embedded links coloured **green**. The older videos in this collection don't capture recent changes of course (of which there are many!) but they still function as useful scene-setters for anyone who is generally unfamiliar with the rivers and associated open spaces of the Crane Valley. And they also serve as an historical record of the sites they feature.

The guide's narrative draws on some information that is or has previously been publicly available on the Crane Valley Partnership website or that has appeared at some point in a CVP newsletter. But it also utilises some material derived from other sources and my own observations and impressions too. Acronyms and jargon have been minimised but not avoided altogether. If you need a handy primer that doesn't get you deeply embroiled in the technicalities of river catchment management, then this may well be the light-touch document you are looking for! Its principal aim is to introduce people to the Crane Valley as a place, rather than give chapter and verse on the work of the Crane Valley Partnership. [If though you are looking for more technical stuff, please do check out the Library page on the CVP website.] But, peppered with images I have captured in my travels up and down the valley, it also serves as a celebration of what is a wonderful and sometimes beautiful landscape asset.

One can look at urban river systems from a purely technical water management perspective and value them for the wildlife habitat, water purification and flood protection they provide. But it is important to acknowledge that rivers such as the Yeading Brook and the River Crane also offer essential cultural services linked to recreation and tourism, mental and physical well-being, education, artistic creativity and a sense of local identity. Very often in the course of my work I am struck by how picturesque and relatively tranquil some stretches seem in the bustling urban and suburban environment. In some areas, particularly in Hillingdon, there is a surprising amount of open space to appreciate and enjoy. But even in places where the river

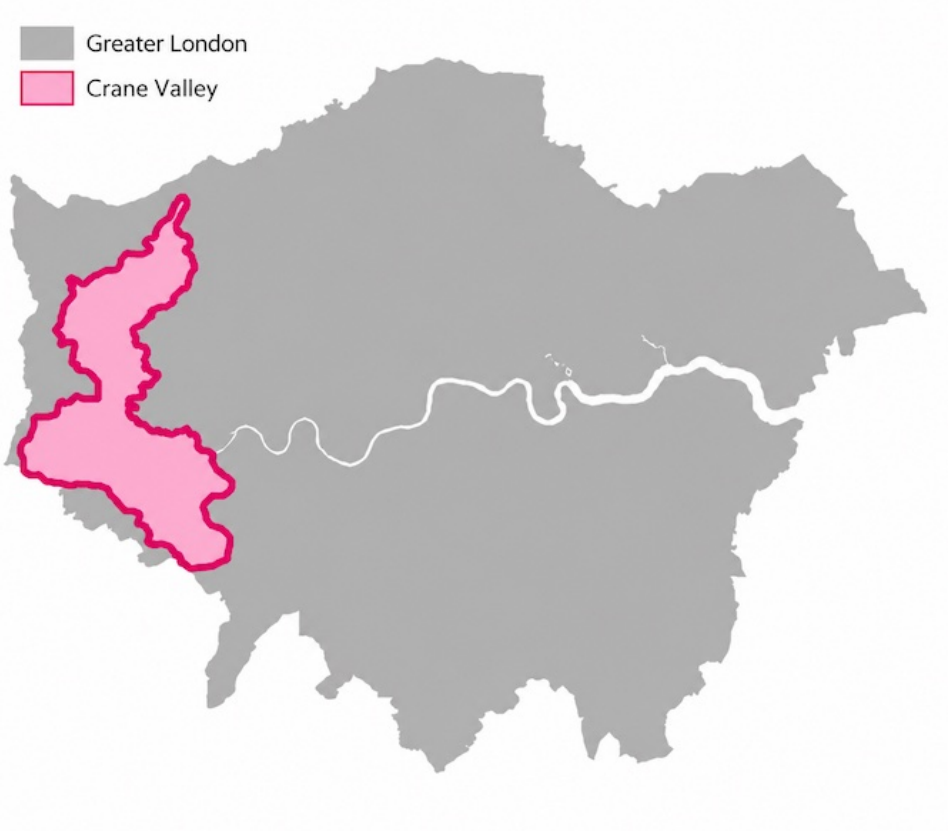
runs close to residential or industrial development, it is still possible to experience and appreciate moments of wonder and serenity.

Hopefully you will find the guide informative and useful but if you spot any errors, or disagree with any of the information or opinions in the narrative, please feel free to let me know at cvp@cvcic.org.uk . The guide is a living document that will be revised periodically so that it remains accurate and up to date. Enjoy your read!

John Waxman, CVP Development Manager - guide editor

Overview

The Crane Valley is a major geographical feature in the west of London, incorporating sections of five London boroughs that were once wholly or partly in the historic county of Middlesex. The valley is heavily urbanised in many places but the main Crane river corridor provides a continuous belt of semi-natural habitat stretching from Harrow to Richmond-upon-Thames.



The Crane Valley has a total land area of approximately 125 km^2 and is home to about 650,000 people. The valley's population is diverse both in terms of people's ethnicity and their socio-economic status. There are areas of deprivation and also areas of affluence. Some locations along the river corridors have a neglected (sometimes

almost dystopian) feel about them, blighted by littering, fly-tipping and other anti-social behaviours. But in stark contrast, some locations support the dream of a leafy, well-heeled suburban lifestyle, with plush houses, clean streets and artisan shops.

The river system delineates some administrative borders in west London, sections of the Yeading Brook and River Crane forming the boundary between neighbouring local authorities. [Where opposite banks are located in different boroughs they may be subject to different management and maintenance regimes.] However the rivers of the Crane Valley are by no means always conspicuous in the local landscape - in some locations they are difficult to access and view due to dense vegetation, fencing or development, or are completely hidden away in underground culverts.

Much of London Heathrow Airport lies within the valley's boundary and various important transport routes cross the valley including the M4, the A40, the A30, the Great Western Railway, the Waterloo-Reading Line and (as a recent addition) an underground section of HS2. The Grand Union Canal also passes through the valley, crossing over the main river corridor in the Hayes area. Although much of the land in the valley has been built on, there are some parts that retain a more bucolic character, although they are not necessarily immune to the hum of busy roads or the roar of low flying aircraft!

In a hurry?
To view a short introductory video that provides a pithy overview, please click **here**

The River System

In basic terms, a river catchment is the entire geographical area in which rainfall drains naturally to a particular river either directly or indirectly. Interchangeable terms for 'river catchment' are 'river valley' or (less commonly) 'river basin'. Often river catchments are simply referred to as 'catchment areas' or 'catchments'. A river catchment can itself be part of another, larger, river catchment. The Crane river catchment (aka 'Crane Valley') is a sub-catchment of the Thames river catchment because the Crane drains into the Thames.

[In truth, there is very little that is natural about drainage in the heavily urbanised Crane Valley - much of the rainfall is quickly conveyed to rivers via surface water drains and sewers, and many sections of river channel have been heavily modified by river engineers over the years in a well-meaning effort to reduce flood risk. Furthermore, some rain falling in the Crane Valley will actually never get into the Crane at all because (intentionally or in some cases unintentionally!) it is directed to the foul sewer system.]

The River Crane originates in the low hills of west Harrow as the Yeading Brook West and flows south to converge with the Yeading Brook East in Hillingdon. It then continues south, briefly skirting the London Borough of Ealing, and becomes the River Crane in the Hayes area.

The river continues its path through Hillingdon and Hounslow, where it is joined by the Upper Duke of Northumberland's River (an historic water transfer channel) at North Feltham which brings in water from the Colne catchment to the west. So the Crane is connected to the Colne, although their catchment areas remain completely separate.

The Crane then flows southeast and east through the London Borough of Richmond, where its tidal section stretches for over a kilometre before joining the Thames at Isleworth. The Lower Duke of Northumberland's River splits off from the Crane at Kneller Gardens and flows north-east to the Thames, suppling water to the ornamental ponds at Syon Park via an offtake. Sluices control the flow into the park and the River Thames.

The Longford River, another artificial waterway that diverts water from the River Colne (at Longford), flows south-east through Bushy Park and then into the River Thames. It does not connect to the River Crane.

The look and character of the Crane Valley's rivers changes over the seasons as can be seen from these video diaries: **2020**, **2022**, **2023**, **2024**, **2025**. See also this **video montage** of images captured from Cranford Park Bridge showing seasonal variation in a single reach.

What do you mean by 'Crane'?

For descriptive purposes, the Crane river system can be split into four distinct zones - the Upper, Middle, Lower and Tidal Crane and indeed this guide does just that. *'Crane'* is often used as a catch-all term to describe the entire river system but it is important to recognise that for many people living within the Crane Valley their local watercourse might well be the Yeading Brook or the Duke of Northumberland's River rather than the actual Crane itself. Or perhaps they may live somewhere close to the Longford River - which is not even connected to the Crane. It's quite possible for someone residing in Harrow to be familiar with the Yeading Brook but not be aware that their local stream eventually becomes the River Crane in the Hayes area. It is also worth mentioning that the Yeading Brook is longer than the River Crane and drains a greater land area (more than 40% of the Crane Valley is in LB Hillingdon), so the Yeading Brook in no way plays second fiddle to the River Crane from a hydrological perspective!

Upper Crane - the Yeading Brook

The Yeading Brook (sometimes referred to as 'The Yeading') drains the upper section of the catchment and forms the headwaters of the River Crane. There are two branches initially which eventually merge in the Hillingdon area. These watercourses have been artificially straightened in many places and suffer from heavily modified banks.



The moat at Headstone Manor. The manor house is behind the trees on the right - one of its chimneys is visible in this image.

The western branch of the brook forms part of the main spine of the Crane river system. It rises from a spring in Pinner Park (North Harrow) and flows into Headstone Manor Park where the nascent watercourse's flow is considerably boosted by the outflow from the historic moat. Grade I listed **Headstone Manor** is now a museum telling the story of Harrow. The park also notably offers toilets and a cafe which are rare commodities at riverside sites along the river corridor! An impressive **constructed wetland** which was **officially opened in 2021** purifies water entering the moat and provides additional habitat. A sculpture of a lens alongside this **wetland** is a nice touch - a nod to the fact that adjacent residential land was once the site of a Kodak factory (of which only the locally iconic chimney still remains).

Towards the south western, downstream, end of Headstone Manor Park there are two flood basins constructed around the same time as the wetland. Recently a channel has been cut into the basin closest to the brook. When the river level is high enough brook water overflows into this channel and this arrangement has created wetland habitat in the basin.

On leaving the park the brook flows into an underground culvert, designed to divert flood waters away from housing developments and North Harrow underground station. It is joined underground by the Greenhill Stream prior to emerging at the Cambridge Road Car Park. From here the brook flows through **Yeading Walk** with its formal planting beds and riverside promenade, through some allotments and then on to the woodier Streamside Open Space where the brook is mostly screened from view by dense bankside vegetation.



Yeading Brook West at Yeading Walk, North Harrow

At **Roxbourne Park** the brook receives water from the Smarts Brook - a now lost tributary which is culverted almost in its entirety. A significant stretch of the Yeading



A recently enhanced section of the Yeading Brook West at Roxbourne Park

Book West at Roxbourne Park has very recently been enhanced with the aim of improving habitat for wildlife.



Roxbourne Park is the home of the 'Roxbourne Railway', run by the Society of Harrow & Wembley Model Engineers. The society moved its miniature railway operation to the park in the 1970s. Rides are available every Sunday afternoon (weather permitting) during British Summer Time.

Towards the southern end of Roxbourne Park the brook flows into the LB of Hillingdon. A short distance downstream, beyond the Queens Walk area, is **Spider Park** where a section of brook in the Bridgewater Road Fields area was enhanced in 2025 to give it a more naturalistic form.



A view of the naturalised section of the Yeading Brook West at Spider Park

Beyond Ruislip Gardens much of the river corridor has a more open and less developed feel, particularly in the **Ickenham Marsh** area where there is a London Wildlife Trust (LWT) nature reserve. Just downstream of the reserve it is joined by another tributary - the Ickenham Stream which is part of the historic 'canal feeder' system. The brook then flows under the A40 Western Avenue, then alongside the

delightfully named Elephant Park (*spoiler alert: there are no elephants!)*, and then through another LWT nature reserve - **Gutteridge Wood**, immediately before it meets up with the Yeading Brook East on open farmland. In total the Yeading Brook West is approximately 11 Km long.

So what's the 'Canal Feeder'?

The canal feeder was originally constructed in the early 19th Century to transfer water from a reservoir in Ruislip (which later became Ruislip Lido) to the Grand Junction Canal (now Grand Union Canal) near Southall. Unfortunately there wasn't much of a drop in level along the feeder route so the flow was sluggish and siltation proved a problem. After 40 years of use it was taken out of water transfer service, although it continued to serve local drainage functions. Today, remnants of the canal feeder system remain in the landscape despite all of the urbanisation that has taken place in the interim, and some sections still usefully convey water - most notably the **Ickenham Stream** which was rebuilt in the early twentieth century. [There's also a fairly conspicuous often flowing section to be seen alongside the Yeading Brook in the Elephant Park area.] All canal feeder water now ends up in the Yeading Brook and there's no longer any outflow to the Grand Union Canal.

The shorter (c.7 km), eastern branch of the Yeading Brook - the Yeading Brook East - also rises in the London Brough of Harrow and can be first sighted above ground at Newton Farm Ecology Park in the Rayner's Lane area. From here it flows into nearby **Newton Park West** where all the base flow is fed through a **wetland** system constructed in 2018.



Yeading Brook East at Newton Park West

In the **reach directly downstream of Newton Park West** the narrow watercourse is difficult to follow because it runs behind private property. And for a notable length in South Ruislip (between Field End Road and Civic Way) the brook flows through an underground culvert so is even more incognito. But towards the bottom end of its course, the YBE can be easily viewed at the bridge at Field End (off South Park Way) and also from a riverside footpath close to Stonefield Park. Beyond Stonefield Park it goes out of public view again, flowing through the Priors Farm area before entering a short underground section that takes it west, past the Polish Air Force Memorial. It emerges into view at the western end of the memorial site and runs for a short distance in a overground concrete culvert alongside the southern perimeter of RAF Northolt airfield before crossing under the A40 Western Avenue. It finally converges with its westerly counterpart on farmland on the southern side of the A40.



The Yeading Brook East culvert viewed from the Polish Air Force Memorial site close to RAF Northolt

Isn't the YBE marked on maps as the Roxbourne?

The Yeading Brook East is often locally referred to as 'the Roxbourne' and indeed it is often shown on maps of Harrow and South Ruislip as such. However in reality the Roxbourne is a short tributary of the Yeading Brook East. It rises in the Rayners Lane area and flows (to a great extent underground) to join the YBE under Alexandra Avenue just upstream of Newton Park West *(although there is also an overflow system that at times of high flow diverts water from the Roxbourne to the pond at Newton Farm Ecology Park.]* The watercourse you see in Newton Park West is therefore the Yeading Brook East.

In some ways it would actually be more straightforward if the Yeading Brook East was called the Roxbourne, thus avoiding the confusing duality of 'Yeading Brook West' and 'Yeading Brook East'.

Shortly after the two arms of the Yeading Brook merge in Hillingdon, the watercourse - now just called the 'Yeading Brook' - passes through another LWT Nature Reserve at **Ten Acre Wood**. From here it enters **Yeading Brook Meadows** - an extensive area of species-rich grassland - where a 1 km stretch along the eastern bank lies in London Borough of Ealing. The Ealing bank can be directly accessed from Ten Acre Wood via the exotically named 'Golden Bridge' - which is actually made from concrete. The Hillingdon parts of Yeading Brook Meadows are managed as a nature reserve by LWT, whilst the Ealing section is managed as a nature reserve by Ealing Council's parks department.



The Yeading Brook at Yeading Brook Meadows

On leaving Yeading Brook Meadows, the brook continues its southward journey through Hillingdon, passing through the **Brookside** area before reaching **Minet Country Park**. Between these two sites the brook runs in a deep channel (the banks heavily reinforced in places with corrugated metal) and is mostly hidden from view by residential and commercial development. A little way upstream of Brookside a flood relief channel takes overflow from the Yeading Brook and feeds it back into the brook at the bottom end of Minet Country Park. This channel is a Transport for London (TfL) asset built when the A312 ('The Parkway') was constructed but is often incorrectly marked as the 'River Crane' on online maps!



The point at the southern end of Minet Country Park where the flood relief channel (left) rejoins the Yeading Brook (right)

After leaving Minet Country Park, the watercourse flows south through an industrialised part of Hayes. Here there is no riverside path to follow but the channel can be viewed from above via the A312 flyover. The watercourse passes under the Grand Union Canal in the Bulls Bridge area. The canal is an historic transport link that spans 220 km between Birmingham and London. It crosses over the Crane via an aquaduct in Hayes, splitting into two arms just to the east of the crossing point, serving Paddington and Brentford. Water from the Grand Union Canal can and does enter the Yeading Brook at Minet Country Park via an overflow. The canal towpath along the stretch of the Brentford Arm between Brookside and Bulls Bridge



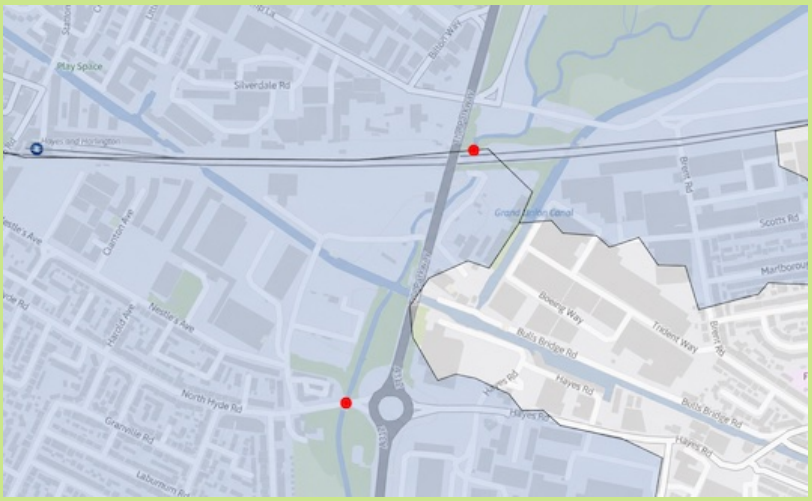
A view from the A312 flyover of the point where the Grand Union canal crosses over the Yeading Brook in Hayes. The brook runs in the deep-sided channel in the foreground

offers a picturesque off road alternative walking route but it does mean you will bypass Minet Country Park.

The reach between Minet Country Park and the northern section of Cranford Park is notable for the fact that there is a lot of new development (including data centres) and also because this is where the Yeading Brook transitions to the River Crane. The exact point where this transition occurs is not at all obvious to the casual observer, (there is no signpost or other visual indicator on the ground), but the key thing to note is that by the time the watercourse reaches Cranford Park it is definitely the River Crane rather than the Yeading Brook!

So where does the River Crane actually 'start'?

A good question - the answer to which depends on whether one takes a hydrological or historical perspective. According the the Environment Agency's 'Catchment Data Explorer' (an online tool that provides definitive maps of catchments), the Yeading Brook transitions to the River Crane in the general vicinity of the Great Western Railway bridge in the Southall area *(Grid ref: TQ106794)*.



However, according to a Wikipedia author, the Yeading Brook becomes the Crane a little further downstream at the Hyde End Road bridge (Grid ref: TQ104788). This bridge apparently *'marks the straight northern boundary of the dominant manor and former medieval parish (and still of the Church of England ecclesiastical parish) of Cranford.*' The two candidate starting points (shown as red dots on the map above) are over 600 metres apart (as the fish swims!) on opposite sides of the Grand Union Canal.

Middle Crane



River Crane viewed from the historic Cranford Park Bridge in April 2026

Cranford Park (or to give it its more modern name 'Cranford Countryside Park') is an historic countryside estate - originally the grounds of Cranford House - that offers a compelling mixture of heritage features and recreational space. It is split by the M4 into a northern (mainly woodland) and **southern** (mainly grassland) section. Although the house in the southern section was demolished at the end of the second world war, the impressive stables remain in situ as do the house's cellars. Very soon a new cafe and toilets facility will open on site and this will offer public access via stairs or a lift to the underground space. **Avenue Park** is on the opposite bank. There is a gauging weir located under the metal footbridge that directly links the two parks which the Environment Agency routinely uses to measure river levels. The information gathered on the Crane appears in monthly 'Water Situation Reports' for the Hertfordshire and North London Area which are publicly available on the Defra website here.

At the southern end of Cranford Park the river is joined by a small tributary, the charmingly named 'Frogs Ditch' which drains from the area to the north west of the park, taking run-off from the M4 in the process.

From here the Crane flows through Berkeley Meadows, a small park which is notable for that fact that an area of ground close to the river has been sculpted to form a large detention basin to store water that overflows from the Crane after heavy rainfall.



The detention basin at Berkeley Meadows shortly after some heavy summer rainfall

From Berkeley Meadows the river flows on under the A4 Bath Road to Waye Avenue Open Space, **Huckerby's Meadows** (another LWT nature reserve) and Cranebank Water Meadows (aka Cranebank Nature Reserve) on the outskirts of Heathrow Airport.

A new riverside path has very recently been constructed along the previously inaccessible stretch between the **A4 Bath Road and Waye Avenue Open Space**, removing the need for walkers and cyclists following the river corridor or London Loop to take an inconvenient diversion through a local residential area. However, crossing over the A30's busy dual carriageway to leafy Causeway Water Meadow remains problematic, requiring a detour away to the east of almost 1 km from the river corridor to find the nearest pelican crossings at the A30/Causeway/Parkway junction. The Piccadilly Line runs along the northern side of the A30 in this vicinity and due to



The Piccadilly Line bridge

the high water table it briefly emerges from underground tunnel to cross over the Crane by bridge.

Heathrow Airport is obviously a significant presence in the Crane Valley. It occupies a very large land area and in terms of infrastructure is like a city within a city. The noise of aircraft arriving or departing the airport is a key component of the valley's normal soundscape, particularly in the Hounslow and Richmond upon Thames areas. At the airport's busiest times, a plane takes off or lands roughly once every 45 seconds to a minute. The airport handles about 1,300 total flight movements (around 650 arrivals and 650 departures) across its two runways during its roughly 17-hour operating day. If you are flying into Heathrow from the east, the Crane river corridor would likely be the last geographical feature you spot from the cabin window prior to touchdown.



The line of trees stretching away to the north indicates the position of the Crane river corridor in this image captured from the window of an airliner approaching Heathrow's northern runway from the east. Avenue Park and Cranford Park can both be clearly seen in the distance

If you stand on the boardwalk in **Donkey Wood** under the Heathrow flightpath at times when the southern runway is in use for arrivals, you can often experience the ghostly noise and rustling of the trees caused by the wake turbulence of low flying aircraft. From here you can also get a view of Green Lane Water Meadows on the opposite side of the river. This is one of London's few remaining undisturbed flood meadows and offers a glimpse of what London's floodplain would have looked like prior to development in the 20th Century. Access to the wetlands is restricted to protect the precious habitat. There is a long term aspiration to secure SSSI designation and provide means for the public to sensitively view the site.



An airliner coming in to land at Heathrow over Green Lane Water Meadows, viewed from the riverside boardwalk in Donkey Wood

At a point just upstream of the northern end of the boardwalk in

Donkey Wood the Crane receives water via a channel from Heathrow's Eastern Balancing Reservoir (EBR), a facility designed to receive and treat runoff from the impermeable landscape of the country's largest airport.

The water the river receives from the EBR is much needed in terms of improving river depth and flow. During cold winters, glycol-based anti-icers and de-icers are used at the airport to protect aircraft and runways. To prevent glycol getting into the river a bespoke treatment facility - the Moving Bed Biofilm Reactor (MBBR for short) - is located on the Eastern Balancing Reservoir site to deal with the contaminated water. So although there are no sewage treatment works on the Crane river system there is a glycol treatment works, albeit only operating in the colder months.

So how does the MBBR work?

During cold spells, glycol contaminated water from the airport's runways and hardstanding areas is fed into two large tanks that are filled with small plastic 'Active Biofilm Carriers' covered in bacteria. Under the aerobic conditions in the tanks these bacteria break down the organic matter present in the water, including any glycol. 720,000 litres of water can be processed every hour. The water is then dosed with a coagulant and a polymer to aid filtration before being fed through a special 'HydroTech Discfilter' to separate out the solids. It is then discharged to a separate clean water lagoon system that forms part of the Eastern Balancing Reservoir (EBR). From here the water discharges to the River Crane. The discharge to the river is subject to a permit issued by the Environment Agency (EA).



The two treatment tanks at the MBBR



Bridge in Donkey Wood over the EBR outlet channel

The Eastern Balancing Reservoir isn't the only source of 'extra' water entering the Crane in Donkey Wood. Towards the southern end the Crane is joined by an historic artificial tributary bringing water from the River Colne - the **Upper Duke of**

Northumberland's River (UDNR). The extra volume of water provided by the UDNR, like the outflow from the EBR, helps maintain the main river's flow.

After leaving the outskirts of the airport the river continues south, flowing through Brazil Mill Wood and then past Hounslow Heath, to the east, and Feltham Marshalling Yards, to the west. Brazil Mill Wood was home to a dye works in the 16th-17th century, making pigment from the Brazil wood grown on site. The bridge, sluices and mill race associated with the mill still exist on this part of the river today.



The mill bridge in Brazil Mill Wood

The main river channel passes through the c.685 metre long Cavalry Tunnel in the Marshalling Yards area. The riverside footpath goes into the northern end of the



The entrance at the northern end of Cavalry tunnel, October 2026

tunnel but emerges again after only about 30 metres so walking this unlit bit is not as daunting as it may seem at first sight!

What's to see at 'Feltham Circles'?

In Pevensey Road Nature Reserve, close to its boundary with Leitrim Park, are the remnants of a former municipal sewage treatment works that once discharged to the River Crane. The site has become a local landmark referred to as 'Feltham Circles'. The circular concrete walls of the old filter beds now serve as a canvas for talented graffiti artists and the urban artwork on display is creative and colourful. This outdoor exhibition is constantly changing, with new artworks replacing existing works on a regular basis, and indeed you can sometimes see artists working on new pieces. Definitely worth taking a look if you are in the area. [Access from the southern end.]



The Crane next enters the **Pevensey Road Nature Reserve/Little Park reach**, which has a managed wilderness feel about it and features areas of meadow, scrubland, woodland and wetland habitat. The small wooden footbridge connecting the two spaces towards the upstream end of the reach was installed in 2019 and is a welcome addition to the local path network. In this beautiful reach there have been recent **enhancement works** to support water vole colonisation and indeed there are encouraging signs that these interventions have been effective. From here the river flows underneath Hanworth Road and enters Crane Park.

Crane Park is located on the most southerly section of the main river corridor. The park is a glorious public amenity site that provides a mosaic of woodland, scrub, meadows and reedbeds. Kingfishers and herons can often be spotted in the park



This carved bench in the Mill Road area of Crane Park has a stag beetle theme

and it is a favourite port of call for many conservation groups, volunteers and school groups. One group - Friends Of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) - has installed some wonderful carved wooden benches in Crane Park as part of a wider network that stretches into Twickenham.

There are a number of islands scattered throughout the river here, one of which is home to London Wildlife Trust's **Crane Park Island nature reserve**. Crane Park Island was created in the old mill pond that drove the once active mill race that can still be seen near the park's historic brick **tower** and ruins. The Grade II listed tower is an icon of the Crane Valley and now, thanks to a catering concession is a place where refreshments are available.



The cafe trailer at the tower in Crane Park, pictured in November 2026

'Diaco's Cafe' (operating from a trailer at the foot of the tower) is typically open 9am to 5pm every day except Monday. The toilets in the tower are also available for use by the public at times when the cafe service is operating. Management of the tower itself has recently transferred back from London Wildlife Trust to the owners London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

A mill stream legacy

The Hounslow Heath Mill Stream (aka the Mill Stream), built in the 18th Century, splits away from the main river in Brazil Mill Wood and flows alongside the main channel until it eventually rejoins the river in the upper section of Crane Park. There is also a mill stream system at Crane Park Island and another mill stream towards the downstream end of the park.

Following habitat enhancement works and **survey** activity, a **water vole release** occurred in the general vicinity of Crane Park Island (and further upstream in the Pevensey Road Nature Reserve/Little Park stretch) in 2024.

Upon leaving Crane Park the river takes an easterly direction and enters Kneller Gardens where it is bordered by allotments and residential housing. This park offers a range of amenities including a cafe and toilets. It is a popular local destination that can get quite crowded sometimes. The Lower Duke of Northumberland's River (LDNR) is a distributory (as opposed to a tributary) of the River Crane and leaves the Crane at Mereway Road, significantly reducing flow in the Crane downstream of the weir.

Lower Crane

The Environment Agency's Mereway Road Weir marks the start of the Lower Crane. Historically the weir prevented fish from migrating upstream from the Lower Crane but a **fish pass** (which became operational in June 2024) now makes this possible. The weir also serves an important secondary function in that it diverts some flow from the Lower Duke of Northumberland's River into the Lower Crane at times when the water level in the upstream Crane isn't high enough to overtop the weir gate.



Mereway Road Weir in May 2025. The green strip on the right is the cover of the fish pass channel

Downstream of Mereway Road Weir the Crane is constrained within a wide concrete channel with high sides that offers little in terms of quality wildlife habitat. There are many low weirs in the channel that can impede fish movement when there is low flow. However, in recent times habitat enhancement works have been successfully delivered at **Twickenham Rifle and Pistol Club** and more latterly at Mereway Nature



Straight, wide and walled - a typical stretch of the Lower Crane in the Twickenham area



Pictured shortly after construction works were completed in 2025, this backwater area was created at Mereway Nature Park by removing a section of concrete wall and sculpting the river bank

Park as part of the Lower River Crane Restoration Strategy. The rifle club site is not publicly accessible and views from the opposite bank are quite restricted. However, you can get some excellent views of the enhancement works at Mereway Nature Park. At both sites a section of concrete wall has been removed to create a backwater area

and some in-river features have been added to improve the flow regime. Further works are planned at the rifle club site and at new sites along the Lower Crane.

The river flows on through central Twickenham with its many shops, pubs and cafes, passing close to the mainline railway station offering direct links to London Waterloo, Windsor and Reading. A relatively new **riverside path** links the railway station area to Moormead Park, an open space where the river channel is mainly hidden from view behind a mesh fence.

Tidal Crane

The Crane flows into the River Thames at Isleworth and the tidal influence of the Thames extends a distance of around 1.5 km up the Crane. The tidal section is hidden from public view behind residential properties for much of its length but it is still possible to get some glimpses of it on a street **walk** from Moor Mead Bridge to the



The view upstream from Northcote bridge, looking towards the Cole Park area where there are some riverside allotments

River Thames. A small tributary - the Whitton Brook - joins the Crane close to the A316 road bridge, immediately upstream of Cole Park Island.

Generally speaking, views of the tidal Crane are limited to what can be seen from road bridges. You can get a good view in both directions at the Northcote Bridge at the eastern end of Northcote Avenue in St Margarets.
It is also possible to glimpse the tidal river from **Northcote Nature Reserve** immediately downstream of this crossing. This is a splendid riverside biodiversity site which has recently been created from what was previously a fairly nondescript grassy recreation ground. A centrepiece of the reserve is a tidal inlet which is periodically wet and dry, providing additional wildlife habitat and (when wet) a refuge for fish.

Holding back the tide

The tidal gates operate automatically so at a set trigger level on a rising tide the gates close. When the tide recedes below that level, the gates open again. If the River Crane rises to a higher level than the Thames when the gates are closed, the gates are partly opened. The gates are similar to lock gates in terms of their construction and are made of wood which is prone to rotting so they need to be replaced every 25-30 years. At the time of writing the first edition of this guide (Autumn 2026) the Environment Agency was gearing up to replace the gates.

The river frontage at Percy Road offers some reasonable vistas. The St Margarets Road (A3004) bridge is the last river crossing before the confluence with the Thames. Just downstream of this bridge a set of tidal gates operated by the Environment Agency prevent too much tidal water from the Thames flowing up the Crane. In so doing, they provide vital tidal flood protection for a stretch of the Crane river corridor that extends as far upstream as Moormead Park.

Beyond the tidal gates the Crane flows out into the Thames at a point opposite the southern end of Isleworth Ait, an island on which there is a London Wildlife Trust nature reserve.



The point where the River Crane flows out into the Thames, with Isleworth Ait in the background. This image was captured around low tide

Some people who live along the Tidal Crane have boats, canoes or paddle boards that they use to gain access to and from the Thames at times when the tidal gates are

open and there is sufficient draft available to avoid grounding. According to the Tidal Crane Association website, the river is '*navigable for about 1-1.5 hours either side of high tide depending on the size of the tide and how close you are to the river Thames*'. But the website notes in relation to the size of vessels that *'to get out onto the Thames you need to be able to pass under two bridges (Talbot Rd and St Margarets Rd) at high, or nearly high, tide when the space between the river and the underneath of the bridge is greatly reduced.'*

Duke of Northumberland's River

The Duke of Northumberland's River (or DNR or 'The Dukes River' for short) consists of two separate sections of artificial waterway, constructed during the reign of King Henry VIII to increase the flow of the Crane in order to supply more power to existing watermills on the river, and to provide an area for new mills to be built. The river provided a source of revenue to the Duke of Northumberland's estate. The upper section flows from the River Colne to the River Crane in Hounslow. The Lower section flows from the River Crane in Twickenham to the River Thames at Isleworth.

The Upper Duke of Northumberland's River (UDNR) is 9.3km in length and diverts water from the River Colne near Harmondsworth Moor, West Drayton, to the Crane at



The Twin Rivers in the section alongside Heathrow's Southern Perimeter Road. The UDNR is the channel on the left in this image

Donkey Wood, Hounslow. The UDNR provides much needed additional water to the main river and helps maintain flows. The UDNR skirts the western and southern perimeter of Heathrow Airport, running alongside its twin river, the Longford River, which also flows from the Colne. The rivers were diverted along their current course

in 2002 as part of the Twin Rivers Diversion Scheme associated with the construction of Terminal 5. The scheme saw parts of the rivers that were once culverted under the airport's runways, reopened to wildlife. However, these sections of river are still lined with concrete panels and pass through heavily industrialised areas. And where they are close to flightpaths they are covered with netting to discourage birds and thus reduce the the risk of 'bird strike'.

The two rivers diverge in Bedfont, southeast of Terminal 4. From here the UDNR flows past **Hatton Fields**, meets the Crane at **Donkey Wood**, North Feltham, and then flows as the Crane until it splits off at Mereway Road Weir in Kneller Gardens, Twickenham.

The lower section of the river (the Lower Duke of Northumberland's River or LDNR) takes a noticeable amount of flow from the Crane. The LDNR flows through Twickenham, past the Harlequins rugby stadium at Twickenham Stoop, past the Allianz Stadium (home of the Rugby Football Union), and then flows through Mogden



The LDNR in the vicinity of the Allianz Stadium

Sewage Treatment Works before a little way downstream taking a distinct dogleg that indicates the route of the old Hounslow Brook. The LDNR (via an offtake) supplies the ponds of Syon Park with their water. Syon House is the London residence of the Duke of Northumberland.

Just before the river eventually meets the Thames near the northern end of Isleworth Ait, the man-made structure of Kidd's Mill Sluice presents a major barrier to fish migration. The LDNR is accessible/visible for much of its length and **The Duke's River Walk** closely follows the route of the watercourse from Kneller Gardens to the Thames.

Longford River

The Longford River is a 12 mile long artificial waterbody built by King Charles I in 1639 to supply water to Bushy Park and Hampton Court Palace. The river carries water from the Colne, and flows from Longford, near Colnbrook, to the River Thames on the south side of Hampton Court Palace. The river is owned and managed by The Royal Parks. It flows through the south western Crane Valley and is completely autonomous from the Crane river system.

Flowing south from its source, the river's first major point of call is Heathrow Airport where it runs in parallel with the UDNR along the western and (much of) the southern perimeter. The river's course has been diverted on a number of occasions due to airport expansion, most recently due to the Twin Rivers Diversion Scheme, as mentioned previously.

After splitting away from the UDNR at 'Two Bridges' on the Hatton Road, the Longford River flows south east through Bedfont and then on to central Feltham passing through the Feltham Arenas area en route. The river flows underneath Feltham station and can be seen from there heading off towards the Feltham High Street bridge. The river remains in open channel until it goes into underground culvert in the Browells



A view of the Longford River corridor from inside Feltham Station

Lane area, emerging again (with the help of a syphon system) on the north western side of **Hanworth Air Park**. Here the river flows overground close to historic Hanworth Park House and then into an almost 400 metre long underground culvert that dates from the First World War when the park was adapted for use as an

aerodrome. On re-emerging and leaving Hanworth Air Park the river then flows through the stretch between **Hounslow Road and the A316** which is accessible via footpath.



Longford river immediately downstream of the bridge over Hounslow Road

Beyond the A316 it continues on its journey south east through mainly residential areas, flowing past the Arundel Road Wildlife Site (a 0.2 ha community orchard and meadow area), past the Holly Road Recreation Ground and then through an aqueduct running over the Shepperton railway branch. Downstream at **Bushy Park** the river is



The bridge in the foreground is the aquaduct carrying the Longford River over the Shepperton railway branch

diverted in a number of directions to feed several ponds. Various strands of the river are also culverted away from the park to feed water features, ponds and waterways in

Home Park and Hampton Court Palace Gardens. The river is forced underground again before entering the Thames at two points on the south side of Hampton Court Palace, adjacent to the River Mole and at Raven's Ait in Surbiton.

So what about the Portlane Brook?

The Portlane Brook river system (*comprising the Portlane Brook and its tributaries the Lower Feltham Brook and the almost permanently dry Feltham Hill Brook)* discharges directly to the River Thames in the Sunbury area - so technically speaking it isn't in the Crane river catchment. But because of its very close proximity to the Crane Valley it has now been 'adopted' by the Crane Valley Partnership (CVP) and sits within CVP's operational portfolio. The approximate extent of the Portlane Brook's catchment area is demarked by a dotted line on the map on page 43.



A waterscape at Bedfont Lakes Country Park

Heathrow's Princes Lakes nature reserve and LB Hounslow's Bedfont Lakes Country Park are located close together in the north western part of the Portlane Brook sub-catchment. As the name suggests Bedfont Lakes Country Park is a publicly accessible open space area. This 72.5 ha (former landfill) site is notable for its rural character, relative tranquility and picturesque waterscapes and is maintained through an annual endowment fund and council funding. There is a visitor centre and toilets but no cafe on site.

Towards the downstream end of the river system the Portlane Brook flows past Thames Water's Kempton Nature Reserve, a (decommissioned reservoir) wetland area that has Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status. Access to the reserve is restricted primarily to members of a friends' scheme, although there are occasional public open days.

Catchment issues (in a nutshell)

Here is a very quick run through of some key matters to be aware of:

There are no municipal sewage works discharging anywhere along the Crane river system. Mogden Sewage Treatment Works - the third largest in the UK - is actually located within the Crane Valley at Isleworth, but discharges its treated effluent directly to the River Thames. However sewage pollution is nevertheless an issue in the Crane catchment, caused through household misconnections and sewer overflows. Road-run off after heavy rainfall also adversely affects water quality.

Who or what is 'Citizen Crane'?

Citizen science volunteers routinely help to monitor water quality through monthly **sampling of invertebrates** at multiple sites along the Crane river system as part of the Citizen Crane initiative. Currently there are 16 active 'riverfly' sampling sites in the monitoring network. This long running initiative also assists with the identification of polluting outfalls through periodic **outfall safari** exercises. The Crane Valley actually holds the distinction of being the birthplace of the Outfall Safari - thanks to Citizen Crane.

Littering, fly-tipping and/or other forms of anti-social behaviour can be problematic in some of the more neglected parts of the river system, and more generally there is noise pollution from traffic, low flying aircraft and building works to contend with too. There is evidently also quite a lot of rough sleeping happening in sheltered areas alongside the river.

Certain roads create a significant obstacle to people walking or cycling along the river corridors. Arguably the A30 in the Hatton area is the most challenging in this



A30 Great South West Road where it crosses the Crane river corridor

regard with the nearest pelican crossings located some distance away (about 1 km to the east and 1.5 km to the west!). Fortunately the M4 motorway and A40 Western Avenue can both be safely crossed by underpass at or close to the river corridor.

River engineering works (widening, straightening, dredging, culverting and bank reinforcement) over many years have significantly altered the natural form of many sections of river channel reducing habitat quality and opportunities for water to overspill onto the natural floodplain. [Historically these works were often driven by flood defence considerations, the river being primarily viewed as a big drain rather than as a biodiversity and amenity asset.] Such modifications, combined with a preponderance of hardstanding areas in the heavily urbanised setting, render the watercourses characteristically 'flashy'; river levels rise and fall rapidly following rainfall events. These days attitudes have changed and the river system is now undergoing a renaissance thanks to enhancement works and the routine care and attention of community groups engaged in environmental stewardship activity. If you want to find out where these groups operate, check out this interactive map provided by Lets Go Outside and Learn CIC.

Despite the many challenges, the River Crane is now close to meeting the gold standard of 'Good Ecological Status' (GES) under the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Reaching that status would be a remarkable achievement, particularly given the urban setting. The only relevant factor holding things back is the elevated level of phosphate in the river. So a lot of focus going forward will be on identifying, quantifying and reducing phosphate inputs.

For a more detailed commentary on catchment issues please see CVP's State of the Crane Environment Report 2025.

Nature reserves and cattle grazing

There are quite a few open spaces along the rivers of the Crane Valley that are formally designated as a Statutory Local Nature Reserve and/or recognised as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or Other Site of Nature Importance (OSNI). Many other sites along the river corridors have the look and feel of a nature reserve to the casual observer, because they are quite wild (and/or remote) in character but are not formally recognised as such; these sites also have a lot to offer in terms of habitat and biodiversity. It is worth bearing in mind too that the Crane river corridor is itself designated as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (SMINC). This is the highest tier of non-statutory nature conservation designation in London, meaning it contains some of the highest-quality wildlife habitats and rarest ecological assemblages across the capital.

London Wildlife Trust manages no fewer than five nature reserves on behalf of local authority landowners - **Ickenham Marsh, Gutteridge Wood**, **Ten Acre Wood**,

Yeading Brook Meadows (the Hillingdon section) and **Crane Park Island**. It also owns one itself very close to Heathrow - **Huckerby's Meadows**. Other significant reserves include Hounslow Heath, Cranebank and Pevensey Road Nature Reserve. There's a 'Nature Hub' at Elephant Park and a 'Nature Park' at Mereway. A notable new additional to the Crane Valley portfolio is **Northcote Nature Reserve**, formerly 'Pit Park', which is unique because it is located on the tidal section of the Crane.

Heathrow Airport Limited is a significant landowner with several nature reserves in the Crane Valley including: Two Bridges Farm, Cains Lane, Camp 4, Causeway Nature Reserve and Twin Diverted Rivers. Of these, Two Bridges Farm and Cains Lane are open access sites. Heathrow hosts seasonal guided tours at Causeway Nature Reserve.

Princes Lakes and Clock House Lane Pit (also Heathrow-owned), Bedfont Lakes Country Park (LB Hounslow) and Kempton Nature Reserve (Thames Water) are nature reserve sites located in the Portlane Book catchment. The Kempton Nature Reserve has Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status.

At several open space sites in the Crane Valley it is possible to routinely see small herds of cattle. The cattle are utilised for conservation grazing purposes. Sites where cattle can usually be spotted are Ickenham Marsh, Cranford Park and Huckerby's Meadows. Conservation grazing was also utilised at the constructed wetland at Headstone Manor Park in 2024, albeit on a trial basis. The **Huckerby's Meadows** video (from 2021) includes some footage of a small herd of cattle at that site, located alongside the Crane and right on Heathrow Airport's doorstep. The cattle here seem completely unfazed by the aircraft that thunder low overhead but walkers need to be wary of spooking them if they are grazing close to the footpaths.



Cattle grazing at Cranford Park in June 2026

A historical perspective

[Editor's note: Much of the following information was sourced from a piece by Chris Hern and Rob Gray that was originally published on the History page of the previous CVP website. The narrative has been augmented with additional material provided by Frances Bennett and the editor.]

Early History

There is little known about the earliest human history of the river corridor. There is however some archaeological evidence for pre-historic and Roman use of the river corridor, probably as a water supply and fishery. Archaeological excavation at Cranford Park in 2023 revealed postholes and pieces of pottery indicating that this was the site of a late Iron Age or early Romano-British farmstead. The position of some of the postholes suggested that a roundhouse was located here. Roundhouses were a standard form of domestic dwelling in the Iron Age.



Postholes and markers (indicating the position of pottery finds) in an excavation area at Cranford Park

Isleworth was first recorded in 695 AD as Gislheresuuyrth. The first known mention of the town of Twickenham is in a Charter of 704 AD, referred to as "Tuican hom". This may possibly be translated as "the village between two rivers", those rivers being the Crane and the Thames, both subject to flooding – although there are several other possible meanings. Going upstream, there was no settlement at the Staines Rd crossing, and the main part of the village of Cranford is set back to the east of the Bath Rd crossing, relating more to Cranford House and Park. Apart from the extensive expanse of Hounslow Heath this is the only park within the Crane Valley area.

In 1227, Henry III seized Isleworth Manor and other property of the Saint Valeri family and gave the manor to his brother, Richard, 1st Earl of Cornwall. He built a new moated manor house, which is described in the Black Book of the Exchequer as having a tiled roof, chimney, two bedchambers and an inner courtyard. Beyond the moat was an outer courtyard with a number of buildings for servants and supplies, and a short distance away was a watermill. The exact location is unknown, but a report long ago of 'Moated Place' puts the likely place between the Northumberland Arms and Twickenham Road, with the watermill being near Railshead on the Crane. The manor house didn't last long - it was burned down during the Second Barons' War in 1264.

There is little evidence of much productive development of the Crane corridor as a whole up until the 16th Century. For example there are no records of Crane Valley mills or fish catches in the Domesday Book (1086). A large part of the wider catchment of the lower Crane comprised Hounslow Heath, then the King's hunting land and much more extensive than at present, whilst the river valley appears to have been marshy and un-cultivated.

Further upstream, where the River Crane flows as the Yeading Brook, only the hamlet of Yeading within Hayes parish is close to the stream; the other villages including Ruislip, Eastcote and Pinner developed to the north on lighter soils at crossing points over the River Pinn. The two arms of the Yeading Brook flowed sluggishly through a clay vale, wooded and waterlogged in part. Much of this land became open fields for the various parishes with just two north/south linking tracks. Down Barns Manor - a medieval moated site - is situated on gently sloping low-lying ground, a short distance east of the Yeading Brook and Ten Acre Wood.

Impact of the Duke's River

A major change came with the construction of two artificial feeder channels, now known collectively as the Duke of Northumberland's River (or DNR), in 1544. The upper DNR channel transfers water from the River Colne into the middle Crane at Donkey Wood, and the lower DNR channel bifurcates from the River Crane at Kneller Gardens going north and then turning east to join the course of the Bourne stream and then joining the Thames at Isleworth. These major water channels were constructed using "80 of the best ditchers from Essex" to power rebuilt water mills in Isleworth, which had fallen into decay because of low flow on the Bourne, and which had become the King's possessions following the suppression of Syon Abbey in 1539. [Interestingly they initially didn't get the engineering correct and the water flowed the wrong way!] Local residents were given the task of clearing out the Bourne channel. In the 18th century a branch of the channel was extended into lakes within the estate for the Earl of Northumberland.

In 1635, Moses Glover produced his famous map for the then Earl of Northumberland,

which features both the Crane and the DNR. This map (titled *'Isleworth hundred being the mannor of Sion and one of the seaven hundreds in Comita Middlesex'*) was essentially a visualisation of the Syon Estate to display the status and importance of the Earl, and it would also have been used to quantify asset value and calculate potential incomes to the Earl.



A reproduction of Glover's 1635 map on the wall of a cabin used by staff and volunteers at Hounslow Heath

There are four water mills shown on the Glover map; A sword mill on the upper DNR and a paper mill at its junction with the Crane, both taking advantage of the water power available from a 2 metre drop down to the River Crane level. A further two mills on the lower DNR in Isleworth were a flour mill close to the outlet to the Thames and a copper mill further upstream, which had been a paper mill in 1607 and in the early 18th century became a facility for grinding brazil wood for dye. The sword mill converted to a gunpowder mill in 1655, sword making transferring to a site on the Crane below Baber Bridge, those premises also later converting to gunpowder manufacture. Other later mills related to calico (Worton), Linseed oil (Fulwell), flax, and in the 19th century cartridge manufacture below Baber bridge.

The River Crane is a major feature of the Glover map, winding around the border of the map, and probably marking a boundary to the Earl's land ownership. Much of the catchment is shown as undeveloped, consisting largely of heath and wet woodland, with small areas of managed pasture and meadow. Cranford House is the only significant riverside property on the map and this is located near the Bath Road crossing of the river. Other features of note include managed rabbit warrens along the lower Crane, and the Cole Brewery on the Crane at Twickenham.

The lower DNR is shown as the main channel of the Crane whereas the natural channel, marked as the 'Old River', is a narrow offshoot. This may indicate the relative values of the two rivers at the time, certainly as perceived by the Earl. The original map is kept at Syon House.

Expansion of gunpowder production in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The demand for gunpowder in the seven years war against France led to the establishment of a gunpowder manufacturing in 1757 along the north bank of the Crane to the east of the Hounslow/Hanworth Rd. Although in Twickenham parish, it became known as Hounslow Powder Mills because of the location on Hounslow Heath and the easier access to Hounslow - notables resident in Twickenham were also reluctant for the town to be associated with the industry. An extensive system of leats and millstreams was created around a central large mill head pond; water flowing down channels from the higher level pond and leats into the River Crane turned water wheels powering the working of the various processes in the flanking mills.

In 1820 the firm of Curtis's and Harvey became owner of the mills and carried out a programme of improvement and expansion, including the construction of the Mill Head tower in 1828, probably built as a windmill powering a scoop water wheel used

to replenish the higher level leat in the lower part of the works, and in 1833 the acquisition of the Bedfont mills at Baber bridge. The two mills together employed 300-400 people in the second half of the 19th century, by far the most significant local employer.

Apart from some housing for workers, the immediate surrounding land was sparsely populated and this may be one of the reasons this dangerous industry was able to expand. The villages of Whitton and Hanworth were a mile away and Hounslow and Twickenham two miles. The many explosions at the works claimed the lives of over 100 workers, causing alarm over a wide area, and anxiety for those with relatives working in these mills. The damage to property extended to Twickenham and Hounslow leading to demands for greater control and closure. Other developments requiring comparative isolation, such as the Twickenham Fever Hospital, were



A plaque on a millstone at the tower in Crane Park

also located on the lower Crane at this time.

The military connection

Hounslow Heath has a long history of military encampment. It was used by barons in the 13th century to position forces close to London. During the Cornish Rebellion of 1497, royal forces under Lord Daubeney camped on Hounslow Heath to intercept Cornish rebels marching toward London. Oliver Cromwell and later James II also marshalled armies here in the 17th Century.

The use of the Heath by the military, and the presence of Cavalry Barracks in Hounslow (built in 1793), helped to shape the Crane Valley: it explains the gunpowder mills, Brazil Mills and also the calico weaving mills (at Mogden where Weavers close is today). Interestingly all the big houses in High Street, Cranford, were once described as being suitable for families of military men as they were less than a mile from the barracks. The barracks closed in 2021 after 228 years of continuous military use.

'Cavalry Tunnel' consists of two long (c.685m) enclosed culverts running under the former Feltham Marshalling Yards site. One culvert carries the River Crane and the other serves as an overflow channel for when the river floods. The overflow channel is of course normally dry and despite the fact that much of it is very dark indeed there's an urban myth that its intended purpose was to act as a passageway that would allow cavalry troops from the nearby barracks to ride underneath the London and South Western Railway. Hence the name 'Cavalry Tunnel' - although the structure is also sometimes referred to as '40-Acre Tunnel'.

In 1784 General William Roy and a squad of 10 soldiers from Windsor Castle surveyed a five-mile Baseline on Hounslow Heath, commencing the Anglo-French trigonometrical survey of South East England and northern France in order to establish an accurate relationship between the Royal Observatories at Greenwich and Paris. This baseline became the first measurement in the Ordnance Survey's mapping of Great Britain and Ireland. It stretched from King's Arbour (now part of Heathrow Airport) to Hampton Poor House (now Roy Grove in Hampton). Hounslow Heath was chosen because it was a vast, remarkably flat expanse of undeveloped scrubland at the time. To prevent errors caused by the expansion and contraction of materials in changing weather, Roy ultimately used specially manufactured glass rods. The original measurement was accurate to within 3 inches over its entire length. Both ends of this historical 5-mile baseline were permanently marked by burying contemporary military cannons upright in the ground, with their barrels exposed.

[Note: the Crane Valley also has strong links to military aviation - see the aviation history section on page 40.]

What's the story with Baber Bridge?

Baber Bridge has been a strategic crossing since Roman times. Late 13th century records show that a wooden structure called "Beaver Bridge" (later corrupted to Baber or Barber Bridge) originally stood at this site.

Historically, the maintenance and repair of Baber Bridge was legally tied to the Lord of the Manor, who also had a series of manorial fishponds at the site. These were a focus of rioting in the Peasants' Revolt 1381. During the revolt (driven by widespread popular disaffection with the feudal system) rebel groups marched on London from the west and southwest using major routes to the capital that



Grade II listed Baber Bridge viewed from the upstream end of Brazil Mill Wood

included the road that passed over Baber Bridge. [Hounslow Heath became a major staging ground and campsite for the rebels.] Locals from nearby Heston and Twickenham joined the revolt, destroying manorial tax records, the fishponds and ransacking properties. The rebellion was ultimately ruthlessly suppressed in London by King Richard II and Mayor William Walworth and historical records show that some dead rebels were brought west and buried anonymously on Hounslow Heath.

The bridge was later rebuilt in brick and stone by the County of Middlesex in 1798 because the wooden structure was deemed unsafe. During World War 2 the strategic importance of the Baber Bridge river crossing merited the construction nearby of a concrete pillbox - which is still present in the landscape today.

Agriculture and other industries

The river has been used in farming. Both the Moses Glover map (1635) and the Roque map of 1754 indicate the establishment of water meadows to provide for early spring grazing, particularly on the eastern bank of the river in Heston parish. JMW Turner's only known drawing of the Crane, from the early 1800's, shows women collecting watercress from Railshead near the junction of the Crane with the Thames in Isleworth. Other watercress beds are marked on maps of this time in the Pevensey area of the middle Crane.

As early as 1800, the area of the lower Crane at least was developed for market gardening, with a large part of it covered in orchards. On Thomas Milne's land use map of 1800, there is a clear western boundary along the Isleworth section of the DNR. Around Hounslow the need to feed the 2,000 horses based there to service the coaching trade, predominated until 1840. The open fields around the upper Crane were enclosed in 1804 and 1814, becoming grassland, with no settlement apart from a few new farms, and perhaps becoming less productive and more marginal.

The example of Northcote Nature Reserve is interesting: this land adjacent to the tidal Crane, known previously as 'Pit Park' by local people, was described on Glover's map as Fielde with arable sandy loam. In the early 19th century, the enclosures map for Hounslow shows that the land was worth £13 1d and held copyhold by James Clitherow Esq who also held adjacent plots. By 1894 the whole area, including the site of the current nature reserve, was laid out as market gardens. The market gardens grew vegetables, apples, pears, plums, currents, gooseberries, rhubarb and flowers for Covent Garden and Brentford markets. In the early 20th century Northcote Recreation Ground was built to serve the Worple Estate. The land for the estate was purchased by the Urban District Council in 1919 and developed in the 1920's as housing for "war heroes". The playground included swings, a slide and other playground amenities.

The Minet family was a prominent French Huguenot merchant and banking family (descending from Stephen/Isaac Minet who fled Calais to England around 1686) that held extensive land and property in Hayes as well as Camberwell, and Lambeth. William Minet purchased Hayes Court Farm in 1766, and the family's estate in Hayes grew substantially over the following years (reaching over 500 acres). The family owned a massive share of the agricultural and clay-rich acreage in eastern Hayes where industrial brick making (facilitated by the building of the Grand Junction Canal in 1796) exploited the clay, loam, and gravel terrain during the 19th and 20th Century. Hayes Court, a historic farmhouse south-west of the local church, featured an 18th-century octagonal dovecote. They retained ownership of Hayes Court Farm from 1766 until 1967. The properties were eventually passed down to Susan Minet (1884–1976), daughter of the philanthropist William Minet. Parts of the family's historic estate were preserved including Minet Country Park.

The growth of the local railway network, and the beginnings of suburbia, had a profound effect on the landscape surrounding the Crane Valley. Housing started to spread across the catchment from the late 1800's and this process accelerated in the early 20th century. Industrial development lined the railway in the Hayes area.

Planning initiatives in early 20th Century

The first recorded acknowledgement of the importance of the Crane river corridor as a feature in an urban landscape came in the Ruislip and Northwood Town Planning Scheme of 1914, which recognised and protected the green corridor along the Yeading Brook (or Upper Crane). The plan clearly intended the open space to continue into adjoining areas and thus may be the first recognition of the value of a river corridor in any town plan in the country. The plan was innovative in other ways. It introduced controls over design and advertisements, and crucially required an express approval for any development, rather than just the submission of a plan.

In 1924 Middlesex County Council published its West Middlesex Plan, incorporating 'The West London Green Chain'. This chain identified much of the River Crane and Yeading Brook corridors as valuable linear green spaces. Middlesex County Council also introduced an edict around this time, which forbade development within 50 yards of the river, and this had a lasting beneficial effect in preserving the open nature of the corridor.

The mills and associated industries that had grown up on the river were closing down during this period and, in the years that followed, a number of parks, such as Crane Park and Moormead Park, were set up along the corridor by local councils as civic green spaces.

Late 20th Century decline and recovery in the 21st Century

In the last seventy years, urban populations have continued to grow and, with the demise of Middlesex County Council in the 1960's, there was no longer an overarching body to help recognise the overall value of the Crane corridor. The catchment was divided into five local authority areas; Harrow, Ealing, Hillingdon, Hounslow and Richmond-upon-Thames and there was no longer a focus on the overall value of the corridor. Nevertheless some work proceeded - Hounslow and Richmond Councils joined with Thames Water to waymark and promote the River Crane Walk from Richmond Lock to Bulls Bridge. Hillingdon Council had a network of walks which included the upper Crane alley. The open spaces, however, came under threat, local councils having their own priorities for housing and schools. The overall value of the river corridor was diminished, and it was resident groups in the various boroughs who argued for the importance of open space along the Crane corridor at subsequent Planning Inquiries.

Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE) was set up in the summer of 2003 in



Middlesex's coat of arms on Cranford Bridge

response to Richmond Council proposals to remove Metropolitan Open Land status from around half a dozen pieces of riverside open space as a precursor to development. These spaces were run down and some were abandoned. FORCE put forward a case for the environmental and social value of these open spaces (both in their own right and also as a part of the wider West London Green Chain), successfully countering the proposals which went to Public Inquiry. [FORCE was not alone in making these arguments - as mentioned above other community groups across the Crane Valley had expressed similar viewpoints at various times in response to local development proposals.] Following the Inquiry FORCE has supported the long-term improvement and management of these open spaces as environmental and community assets.

CVP's logo

Two years later in 2005, the Crane Valley Partnership (CVP) was founded. This catchment partnership seeks to '*restore one of London's most natural river systems, conserve surrounding habitats and improve public access so that nearby communities can enjoy contact with the natural world.*' Today there are 13 core partners (including the five local authorities) and many other organisations with working links to the partnership. It is the key forum for managing and improving the integrity of the river corridor. Since 2021 CVP has been hosted by the Crane Valley Community Interest Company (CVCIC) *[Company Number:13302764]* which was set up expressly for this purpose. The Crane Valley is currently the urban pilot area for the Smarter Water Catchments (SWC) initiative. Building on CVP's previous success, this Thames Water sponsored initiative has supercharged partnership working in the Crane Valley with multi-million pound funding support.

Crane Valley - an aviation history

The Crane Valley has a close historical association with the aviation industry and aviation activity in general. During the First World War Hanworth Park was acquired for use by the Whitehead Aircraft Company and became an airfield. The Longford River was partly culverted through the park so that aircraft could taxi over it and this culvert remains in place to this day.

An area to the north east of the park became an aircraft production facility. Soon after the war the company went bankrupt and flying activity ceased. Then in the late 1920s



Longford River emerging from the underground culvert at Hanworth Air Park

National Flying Services (NFS) took over the site, renamed it London Air Park and built some hangars on site. Hanworth House was utilised as a country club and the NFS headquarters. The site became a focus for garden party fly-ins, air races (including the 1930 King's Cup Air Race, the first to be won by a woman - Winifred Brown)) and aerial pageants. Ownership of the aerodrome plus the nearby industrial site transferred to General Aircraft Limited in 1934 and this company went on to produce aircraft including gliders during the Second World War. Today there is a William Peers propeller sculpture standing alongside the roundabout where Air Park Road, Browell's Lane and Forest Road meet, commemorating '*the former use of this site for the manufacture and repair of aircraft in association with Hanworth Air Park*'.



The propeller sculpture

In the run-up to the war, the airfield featured in a George Formby movie called 'It's in the Air.' After the war Heathrow came to prominence and by the mid 1950s, when Hanworth Air Park was purchased by the local authority, it had effectively ceased to be an airfield. However, since 1970 the park has been the home of Hanworth Airpark Model Flying Club and there is a designated model flying zone. On the topic of model aircraft flying, Cranford Park is another Crane Valley site that is utilised as an airfield - by Hayes & District Model Aero Club (operating at the park with Heathrow Air Traffic Control permission).



Model aircraft flying at Hanworth Air Park

The Fairey Aviation Company began aircraft manufacturing at a site on North Hyde Road, Hayes in 1915, not far from the River Crane. In 1926 they built the elegant art deco Mercury House at the factory to serve as the main office block. Amongst other aircraft, the Hayes factory produced Fairy Swordfish biplanes which were utilised extensively by the Fleet Air Arm as a torpedo bomber in the Second World War. In the inter-war period Fairey purchased some farmland in the hamlet of Heathrow and turned it into an airfield for testing their aircraft. Known as the Great West Aerodrome it was requisitioned by the Air Ministry in 1944 and concrete runways were added. Then in 1946 it became London Airport, later (1966) to be renamed Heathrow Airport. Aircraft production continued at the Hayes factory site until the early 1970s. Mercury House remained as a local landmark until 2006 when it was demolished, ultimately making way for a Premier Inn.

There was once an airfield on Hounslow Heath, on land that had previously been used by the army for training purposes. The first hangar appeared at 'Hounslow Airfield' in 1910, the year after the first recorded landing at the site. During the First World War the airfield was used by the military as a base for home defence fighters (primarily engaging Zeppelin raiders) and for training purposes. Briefly after the war the airfield was a pioneering location for commercial aviation, hosting Britain's first scheduled international flights. However in 1920 Croydon Airport replaced it as London's airport and the airfield was then repossessed and repurposed by the army. Today, close to the Staines Road car park, there is a granite memorial stone erected in the airfield's honour by the Airfields of Britain Conservation Trust.

A little way to the east of Cranford Park is the Heston M4 motorway services area which was built on the southern section of the former Heston Aerodrome. This aerodrome operated between 1929 and 1947. It was the airfield that Neville Chamberlain used in September 1938 when flying to and from Germany for talks with

Adolf Hitler during the Munich Crisis, and where - following his third trip - he waved that now infamous piece of paper to a joyous crowd which contained a resolution to resolve differences through peaceful means. His speech at Heston can be seen on YouTube here.

RAF Northolt in Hillingdon is geographically cradled by the two branches of the Yeading Brook which join together on farmland just to the south. Built for the Royal Flying Corps in 1915, it has been in continuous use longer than any other RAF airfield. In 1938, No 111 Squadron based at RAF Northolt became the first squadron in the RAF to take delivery of the legendary Hawker Hurricane fighter. Fighter units based at the air station played an active role in the defence of London during the Battle of Britain in 1940. One of those units - no. 303 Squadron - was made up of polish airmen and is credited with shooting down more enemy aircraft than any other during the battle. Today the Grade II* listed Polish Air Force Memorial located close to the A40 just beyond the south eastern corner of the airfield pays tribute to Polish Air Force personnel killed during the war.

The Yeading Brook East was evidently diverted from its original course when the deep underpass carrying the A40 was constructed in the early 1980s and now flows underground close to the memorial, emerging into an open culvert on the western edge of the memorial site. Today RAF Northolt is used by civilian as well as military aircraft, and in its guise as 'London VIP Airport' it offers '*the perfect solution for those seeking quick, discreet and secure departure and entry into the UK*'.

In Moor Lane, Harmondsworth, less than 100 metres from the Upper Duke of Northumberland's River is a memorial dedicated to Sir Barnes Wallis, the inventor of the bouncing bomb (famously used in the Second World War Dambuster Raids). Wallis used model dams at the Road Research Laboratories formerly at this location to test the water-skimming bouncing bomb principle.

Exploring the Crane Valley

The Crane Valley is a great place to explore – whether you live locally or are travelling to the area from further afield. The river corridors provide open space for recreation and relaxation, with a wide range of parks, nature reserves, trail routes and heritage features to enjoy. Although not always conspicuous, the rivers of the Crane Valley pass through, or close to, many residential areas, bringing nature and amenity within walking distance of local communities. The Crane Valley is well served by public transport links and footpaths – many key recreational sites along the river corridors are close to a mainline rail or London Underground station or on a bus route.
For a short virtual tour, see this **video**.

Recreational Routes

Parts of the River Crane and Yeading Brook are on well established recreational routes. The London Loop, Dog Rose Ramble and Hillingdon Trail all have sections that lie within the Crane Valley and they provide a great way to explore the river system on foot. These routes are clearly marked on 1:25 000 OS Explorer maps of the area. Click here for Information on London Loop Section 9 (Kingston Bridge to Hatton Cross) and London Loop Section 10 (Hatton Cross to Hayes and Harlington). The Willow Tree Wander route follows the western branch of the Yeading Brook between North Harrow and Ickenham Marsh.

Some informal walking routes have been devised and mapped by the Friends of the River Crane Environment (FORCE). These include:

- The Three River Walk
- The Feltham Loop Walk
- Crane Park to Hounslow Heath
- Donkey Wood & Brazil Mill
- Dragonfly Trail
- Lower Crane Valley
- The Duke's River Walk
- The Feltham Loop Walk
- The Three River Walk

All of these maps can be downloaded for free from the FORCE website here.

As well as providing local recreational opportunities, the footpaths and cycle paths along the river corridors of the Crane Valley collectively provide a wider active transport connection – helping to link the River Thames in south west London with the Colne Valley Regional Park and the Chilterns National Landscape.

A new trail for the Crane Valley

The Crane Valley Partnership is developing a walking and cycling route along the Yeading Brook West and River Crane, passing through all five of the Boroughs. As far as possible this route will be at the riverside, only detouring through nearby streets where development prevents access to the river. The new trail would in effect directly connect the area close to the source of the river in Harrow with the River Thames at Iselworth, providing a new strategic recreational route and also local active transport opportunities. It would make use of (but not replace) the following existing trails:

- Willow Tree Wander - between North Harrow and Ickenham Marsh
- Hillingdon Trail - between Ickenham Marsh and Cranford Park
- London Loop (Section 10) - between Cranford Park and Hatton Cross
- London Loop (Section 9) - between Hatton Cross between Hounslow Heath
- River Crane Walk - between Hounslow Heath and Isleworth
- The Duke's River Walk - between Kneller Gardens and Isleworth *[as alternative to route along the Lower Crane]*.

Initially conceived and promoted as 'The Crane Valley Trail', once operational it will be called the Crane Valley River Path (CVRP - not to be confused with the Colne Valley Regional Park!), hopefully a less daunting name for people who would prefer a gentle stroll rather than a trek!

Other Open Space Destinations

In addition to parks and nature reserves, the Crane Valley has several other noteworthy riverside green spaces that are well worth visiting on foot or by bike. Donkey Wood and Brazil Mill Wood are large wet woodland sites in the North Feltham area and both have been subject to recent riverside path upgrade works providing an improved visitor experience. There is a footbridge directly connecting Brazil Mill Wood with Hounslow Heath which is a large Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation (SMINC). As well as having rare heathland, grassland and wetland habitats, the heath is home to a nationally significant population of adders [If you spot one, enjoy looking at it but please don't disturb it]. All three of these sites are on the London Loop.

If you are looking for a walk through more open countryside, the section along the western arm of the Yeading Brook between Ruislip Gardens and the A40 may fit the bill, with its fields, hedgerows and grazing livestock. The route fringes RAF Northolt so there will be some aircraft noise from time to time, but this is in no way as incessant as the aircraft noise experienced in the river corridor close to Heathrow. The southern section of this stretch (between Ickenham Marsh and the A40) is on the Hillingdon Trail.

The Crane by train

Station	Line	Zone	(Relatively) nearby locations	Watercourse(s)
Ruislip Gardens	Central Line	5	Spider Park, Stafford Road Open Space, Ickenham Marsh	Yeading Brook West
South Ruislip	Central Line	5	Stonefield Park	Yeading Brook East
Hayes and Harlington	Elizabeth Line/ GWR mainline	5	Minet Country Park, Grand Union Canal (Bulls Bridge area), Cranford Park (northern section)	Yeading Brook, GUC, River Crane
Isleworth	Hounslow Loop line	4	Silverhall Park	LDNR
Feltham	Hounslow Loop Line / Windsor, Staines and South Western Railway route	6	Blenheim Park, The Glebelands, Longford River Grove, Hanworth Air Park	Longford River (flows under station!)
Whitton	Hounslow Loop Line and Waterloo - Reading mainline	5	Crane Park, Kneller Gardens, Mereway Nature Park	River Crane, LDNR
Twickenham	Kingston and Hounslow Loop lines	5	Craneford Way Playing Fields, Twickenham Junction Rough, Moormead Park	River Crane
Headstone Lane	Lioness Line	5	Headstone Manor Park	Yeading Brook West
North Harrow	Metropolitan Line	5	Headstone Manor Park, Yeading Walk	Yeadign Brook West
Hatton Cross	Piccadilly Line	5 & 6	Huckerby's Meadows, Cranebank Nature Reserve, Donkey Wood, Hatton Fields	River Crane, UDNR
Rayners Lane	Metropolitan Line and Piccadilly Line	5	Newton Farm Ecology Park, Newton Park West, Roxbourne Park	Yeading Brook East Yeading Brook West

Station	Line	Zone	(Relatively) nearby locations	Watercourse(s)
Eastote	Metropolitan Line and Piccadilly Line	5	Streamside Open Space, Roxbourne Park, Field End Recreation Ground	Yeading Brook West
Ickenham	Metropolitan Line and Piccadilly Line	6	Ickenham Marsh	Ickenham Stream Yeading Brook West
Hillingdon	Metropolitan Line and Piccadilly Line	6	Ickenham Marsh, Elephant Park, Gutteridge Wood, Ten Acre Wood	Yeading Brook West Yeading Brook
St Margarets	Reading - Waterloo mainline	4	Northcote Nature Reserve	Tidal Crane

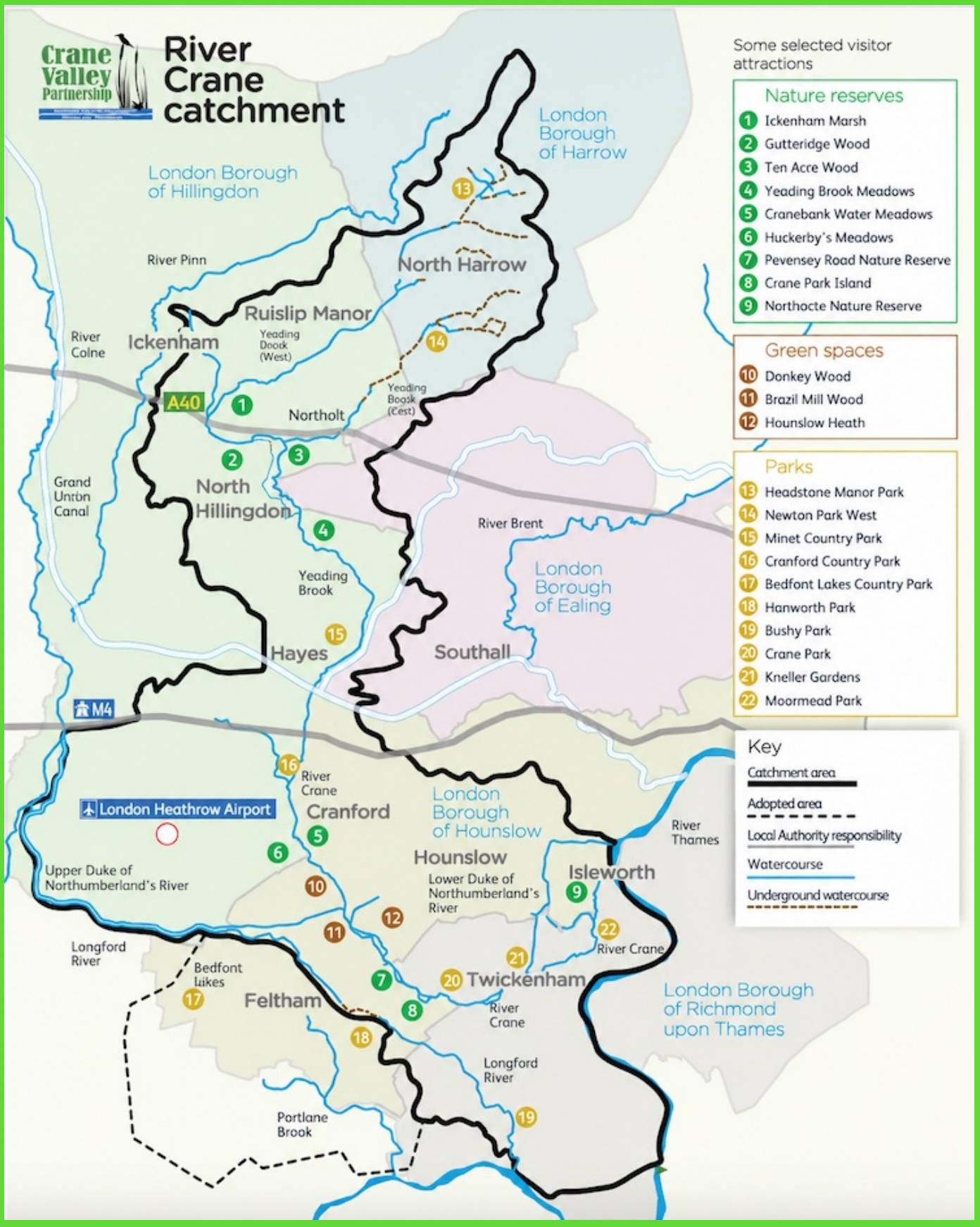
Need a coffee or the loo?!

A general shortage of cafe and toilet facilities along the Crane Valley's river corridors may have the unfortunate impact of discouraging people from exploring some sections of the river and/or participating in local volunteering activities - which is a shame. Downstream of Headstone Manor Park there are no such facilities conveniently located along or near the river corridor until you reach the Hayes area. Here is the current list of sites with facilities:

- **Headstone Manor Park** - the Moat Cafe and nearby public toilets. Winter opening hours: Thursday to Sunday 11am-4pm, rest of year: Tuesday to Sunday 10am- 4pm.
- **Bulls Bridge area, Hayes** - the Tesco Extra in Glencoe Road has a large cafe and customer toilets
- **Cranford Park** - a new cafe and toilets have recently been built here but are yet to open to the public
- **Crane Park** - there is a cafe trailer at the tower open 9am - 5pm (not Monday) and the toilets inside the tower are available to use when the trailer is trading. There is also a water fountain at the tower.
- **Kneller Gardens** - cafe (Monday-Sunday 9.30 am-5.30pm) and toilets

Note also that central Twickenham has many coffee shops and pubs with toilets. There are also customer toilets at Hayes and Harlington Station (platforms 4 & 5), Twickenham Station (all platforms) and Feltham Station (Platform 1) if you are travelling by train. Whitton Station has an accessible toilet requiring a RADAR key for entry, which is available when the ticket office is open.

Parks and open spaces listing



Yeading Brook West

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Headstone Manor Park	Harrow	**Cafe** **Toilets** Free car park Play area Outdoor gym Picnic tables Tennis courts Sports pitches	Medieval manor house (now a free museum), historic moat, enhanced brook constructed wetland and flood basins community orchard Citizen Crane monitoring site
Yeading Walk *aka Yeading Brook Open Space*	Harrow	Picnic table	Formal planting schemes, community orchard and streamside promenade walk Citizen Crane monitoring site
Streamside Open Space	Harrow	None	Citizen Crane monitoring site
Roxbourne Park	Harrow/ Hillingdon	Play area Outdoor gym	Roxbourne Railway , community orchard, recently enhanced (2026) river corridor Citizen Crane monitoring site
Queens Walk East	Hillingdon	Play area	River enhancements in 2026
Queens Walk West	Hillingdon		
Spider Park	Hillingdon	Play areas Outdoor gym Sports pitches Close to Ruislip Gardens tube station	Recently enhanced (2025) stretch of brook, wetland area 2 Citizen Crane monitoring sites
Stafford Road Open Space	Hillingdon		Stream enhanced in 2018 (reconnected former meanders and created a backwater)
Ickenham Marsh	Hillingdon		Nature reserve (managed by LWT). Cattle grazing. Close to RAF Northolt Citizen Crane monitoring site
Elephant Park	Hillingdon	Play area Outdoor gym	Nature Hub with pond Daylighted surface water drainage channel with wildlife pond
Gutteridge Wood	Hillingdon		Nature reserve (managed by LWT). Boardwalk section towards eastern end

Yeading Brook East

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Newton Farm Ecology Park	Harrow		Managed by Harrow Nature Conservation Forum. Offers first glimpse of Yeading Brook East.
Newton Park West	Harrow	Play area Outdoor gym	Wetland area (constructed 2018) Citizen Crane monitoring site
Stonefield Park	Hillingdon	Play area Outdoor gym Basket ball hoop	Citizen Crane monitoring site
Lord Halsbury's Memorial Playing Field	Ealing	Sports pitches	Floodlit 3G artificial grass pitch, grass pitches, and changing rooms Home of Larkspur Rovers FC
Islip Manor Meadows	Ealing		Local Nature Reserve Historically part of the Manor of Northall (or Islipps Manor) and farmed for hay into the late 19th century,

Yeading Brook

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Ten Acre Wood	Hillingdon		Managed as a nature reserve by LWT
Yeading Brook Meadows (Ealing section)	Ealing		Managed as nature reserve by LB Ealing
Michael Frost Park	Hillingdon	Sports pitches	
Grange Park	Hillingdon	Sports pitches	
Yeading Brook Meadows (Hillingdon section)	Hillingdon	Play area Outdoor gym Basketball court (at Belmore Playing Field)	Site managed as a nature reserve by LWT Citizen Crane monitoring site
Brookside	Hillingdon	Play area car park	Large grassland area where brook is mainly hidden from view behind a line of trees/shrubs. Access to Grand Union Canal at southern end.
Minet Country Park	Hillingdon	Free car park Play area Outdoor gym Picnic tables Public cycle track	Flood relief channel on western side, large pond area, inflow point from Grand Union Canal Citizen Crane monitoring site

River Crane

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Cranford Park *(aka Cranford Country Park)*	Hillingdon	**Cafe (coming soon)** **Toilets (coming soon)** Car park Wildlife pond Benches	Northern and southern sections of park split by M4, but linked by two underpasses. Northern section (mainly woodland) is wilder. Southern section (mainly grassland but with some woodland areas) includes: former site of Cranford House (demolished c. 1945). 9 grade II listed buildings in southern section inc stables, cellars, Ha-ha (longest in Greater London), Cranford Park Bridge and St Dunstan's Church. Avenue Ice house area Cattle grazing Frogs Ditch flows along western and southern perimeter Citizen Crane monitoring site (not operational currently)
Avenue Park	Hounslow	Play areas Outdoor gym Sports pitches Orchard	Large, mainly grassland recreational area. At northern end there is bridge access from Cranford Park. Three riverside view points have recently been provided.
Berkeley Meadows	Hillingdon	Play area	Detention basin here takes overflow from Crane
Waye Avenue Open Space	Hounslow	Play area Community growing space	Directly accessible from A4 Bath Road via new riverside path Low flying aircraft due to proximity of Heathrow's northern runway
Cranebank Nature Reserve	Hounslow	Benches Southern entrance not far from Hatton Cross tube station	Managed as a nature reserve by LB Hounslow. Crane is quite sinuous here. Boardwalk at southern end
Huckerby's Meadows	Hillingdon		Nature reserve owned by LWT. Cattle grazing. Crane is quite sinuous here. Low flying aircraft due to proximity of Heathrow's southern runway. Southern entrance to site not far from Hatton Cross tube station
Causeway Water Meadows	Hounslow	Benches	

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Donkey Wood	Hounslow	Picnic tables	Boardwalk in northern section, view of Green Lane Water Meadow (opposite bank) from boardwalk, outflows to Crane from Heathrow Airport Eastern Balancing Reservoir. Low flying aircraft due to proximity of Heathrow's southern runway. Remains of Bedfont Powder Mills (closed 1926) - blast mounds, mill leats, millstones and brickwork. UDNR joins Crane towards southern end of wood 2 Citizen Crane monitoring sites (UDNR and River Crane)
Green Lane Water Meadow *[aka Green Lane Wetland]*	Hounslow	Access restricted to the public due to site sensitivity	Historic relatively undisturbed flood meadow area (marked on John Rocques's 1754 map). Inundated with water for much of year. MSINC status. Borough is aiming to designate site as a nature reserve.
Brazil Mill Wood	Hounslow		Remnants of historic mill remain in watercourse. New riverside path surface laid in 2026. Footbridge connection to Hounslow Heath. Riverside path upgrade works 2026/27 River enhancement works 2026/27
Hobbledown Heath	Hounslow	See: https://www.hobbledown.com/hounslow/	Privately run theme park/visitor attraction on former municipal golf course site (admission charges apply). WW2 pillbox sited close to A315 Staines Road
Hounslow Heath	Hounslow	Visitor Centre (for volunteers) Free car park	Large Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. As well as having rare heathland, grassland and wetland habitats, the heath is home to a nationally significant population of adders. Former site of Hounslow Airfield (1910-1920).
Feltham Marshalling Yards Nature Reserve	Hounslow		Cavalry Tunnel (*aka 40 Acres Tunnel)* runs for 686m under the former railway marshalling yard site. Urban myth - the tunnel was built so that cavalry troops from nearby Hounslow barracks could ride underneath the railway.

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Leitrim Park	Hounslow		Large open grassland area. 'Feltham Circles' - site of a disused sewage treatment works where remaining tank walls now serve as a canvass and public gallery for the work of graffiti artists.
Pevensey Road Nature Reserve	Hounslow	Community orchard	River enhancement works (deflectors)
Little Park	Richmond upon Thames		Historic ditch system (restored), River enhancement works (*deflectors)*
Crane Park (North)	Richmond upon Thames	**Cafe** (trailer) - at the tower **Toilets** - at the tower Benches Two dog dips	Historic site of Hounslow Gunpowder Works. Grade II listed brick tower (known as the 'Shot Tower') is now thought to have been a windmill for recirculating water to power the mills. Citizen Crane monitoring site
Crane Park (South)	Hounslow	Play	Community orchard
Crane Park Island Nature Reserve	Richmond upon Thames	Benches	Managed as a nature reserve by LWT. Water vole colony Citizen Crane monitoring site
Meadway Orchard	Richmond upon Tnames		Orchard Wildlife pond
Kneller Gardens	Richmond upon Thames	**Cafe** **Toilets** Play area Sports facilities Defribilator Benches Dog dip	LDNR spilts away from River Crane here (at Mereway Weir). Mereway Fish Pass provides a means for fish to migrate upstream from Lower Crane. The Duke's River Walk (along the LDNR) connects the park to the Thames at Isleworth. Park is a base for all ability cycling
Mereway Nature Park	Richmond upon Thames	Benches	Site of recent river enhancement works *(backwater area and in-river deflectors/ vegetative berms and gravel).* Orchard part of London Tree Ring
Craneford Way Playing Fields	Richmond upon Thames	Play area	Twickenham Rifle and Pistol Club on opposite bank is site of recent river enhancement works *(backwater area and in-river deflectors/vegetative berms and gravel).* EA gauging station at downstream end

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Twickenham Junction Rough	Richmond upon Thames	Benches	Old railway tracks in undergrowth
Moormead Park *(aka Moor Mead and Bandy Recreation Ground)*	Richmond upon Thames	Play area Outdoor gym Sports pitches Close to Twickenham Station	Accessible from Twickenham Station via new riverside path route Elegant Moor Mead bridge dates from 1902
Northcote Nature Reserve	Hounslow	Benches Viewing platform	Former recreation ground recently transformed into a riverside nature reserve featuring a tidal inlet. There are plans to establish an Ecology Centre nearby.

Upper Duke of Northumberland's River

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Two Bridges Farm	Hounslow		Heathrow Airport Limited Biodiversity Site
Riverside path (northbank) A30 - Hatton Road	Hounslow		
Riverside Path (southbank) Hatton Road - Peninsula Close	Hounslow		
Hatton Fields	Hounslow		Large grassland site, UDNR runs along southern edge mostly hidden behind trees/shrubs
Northern bank u/s River Gardens	Hounslow		EA weir/guaging station Site of sword mill (1630-c.1655), then gunpowder manufacture ('Upper mills').
Donkey Wood	Hounslow		UDNR flows into River Crane at Donkey Wood Weir

Longford River

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Blenheim Park	Hounslow		Part of Feltham Arenas Parkland
The Glebelands	Hounslow		Part of Feltham Arenas Parkland
Longford River Grove	Hounslow	Close to Feltham station	Riverside promenade area
Bridge House Pond	Hounslow	Close to Feltham station Playground Table tennis table Pond dipping area Two 'garden' areas **Cafe** [Emily Cafe]	Originally a Victorian 'borrow pit' - the soil was used to build an embankment linking to a road over the railway.
Hanworth Air Park	Hounslow	Leisure centre complex with **cafe and toilets** Car parks Benches Sports pitches	Site of Historic Hanworth House and former site of London Air Park. A (c. 400 metre long) section of the Longford River at the park flows through a underground culvert. Home of Hanworth Air Park Model Flying Club
Riverside path between Hounslow Road and A316 Great Chertsey/ Twickenham Road			
Arundel Close Wildlife Site	Richmond upon Thames		Community orchard Meadow Wildlife Walk
Holly Road Recreation Ground	Richmond upon Thames		Play equipment for children under 13 including a wheelchair accessible roundabout, basket swing and interactive play panels Outdoor gym 7-a-side football pitch (winter) 100 metre grass running track (summer)
Pantile Bridge Open Space	Richmond upon Thames		

Bushy Park	Richmond upon Thames	https://www.royalparks.org.uk/visit/parks/bushy-park **Cafe and toilets**	Owned/managed by The Royal Parks
Hampton Court Palace and Gardens	Richmond upon Thames	https://www.hrp.org.uk/hampton-court-palace/ **Cafes and toilets**	Major heritage attraction owned/ managed by Historic Royal Palaces. Pay for entry.

Lower Duke of Northumberland's River (LDNR)

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Kneller Gardens	Richmond upon Thames	See River Crane section	Upstream end of UDNR which splits away from River Crane here The Duke's River Walk
Riverside public footpath through Mogden Sewage Treatment Works	Hounslow		Mogden STW was built in the 1930s. Now owned/operated by Thames Water, it serves approximately 2 million people across North and West London. Discharges treated effluent to the River Thames, not the LDNR.
Epic Park	Hounslow	Play area	Small park
Silverhall Park	Hounslow	Play area	Par of the former Silverhall estate

Portlane Brook (not Crane Valley)

Site	Borough	Amenities	Things to see, do or note
Bedfont Lakes Country Park	Hounslow	**Toilets** Visitor centre Free car parking Playgrounds Walking and fitness trails Bird hides Dog exercise zone	Lakes Animal rescue/encounter area Nature reserve area
Kempton Nature Reserve	Hounslow	Bird hides	A (decommissioned reservoir) wetland area that has Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status. Access to the reserve is restricted primarily to members of a friends' scheme, although there are occasional public open days.

Hatherop Park *(aka Hatherop Recreation Ground)*	Richmond upon Thames	Playground Playing fields Pavilion Wildlife pond Woodland walk	Links to the Linear Green Lane that runs to Oak Avenue NR and network of bridle paths. There is also a walk that links with Hanworth Park. https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/find_a_park/linear_walk

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CRANE VALLEY COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY

Host of the Crane Valley Partnership