

THE BLACKWATER VALLEY

Welcome to the Blackwater Valley, located on the borders of Hampshire, Surrey and Berkshire running approximately 30km from the source of the river at Rowhill near Aldershot, northwards to Swallowfield.

The Valley has a surprisingly varied landscape rich in wildlife, and the shallow floodplain along the river, set amidst extensive heathlands and woodlands, contains many lakes and wet meadows created by years of gravel and sand extraction.

Blackwater Valley Path

Walk sections of the riverside path and discover the green spaces and recreational facilities en route.

GETTING HERE

By Rail: Great Western Railway operate the North Downs line from Gatwick to Guildford, then onto Reading.

Visit nationalrail.co.uk for details.

By bus: Visit traveline.info for details of services.

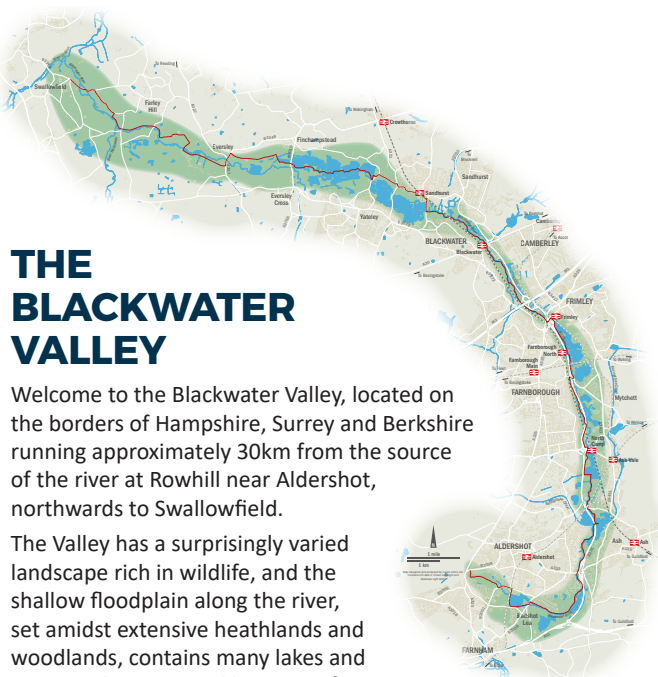
COUNTRYSIDE CODE RESPECT • PROTECT • ENJOY

For a safe and fun visit to the Blackwater Valley please remember to follow the Countryside Code.

Respect other people – Consider the local community and other people when enjoying the outdoors. Keep to designated paths and bridleways, leaving gates and property as you find them.

Protect the natural environment – Keep dogs on a lead around livestock and wildlife and remember to bag and bin dog poo. Take all litter home and don't have BBQs or fires.

Enjoy the outdoors – Plan ahead, follow advice and local signs.



Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust (BVCT)

BVCT are a registered charity, with dedicated Trustees using their wide range of backgrounds to help conserve and improve its natural environment. This includes managing its countryside, preserving its wildlife habitats and landscapes by making conservation projects happen.

We also organise events, including walks, talks and conservation activities, and encourage the public to take part in them, educating people about, and introducing them to, the Valley and its wildlife.

In short, we do anything we can to make the Blackwater Valley a better place to live and visit.

To find out more about how to join the Trust and what other initiatives we are involved with go to:

Website www.bvct.org.uk

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/BVCTrust>

Southeast Communities Rail Partnership

The Southeast Communities Rail Partnership CIC (SCRCP) covers 8 lines, working to connect communities to their railway across Berkshire, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey and Sussex. They work in partnership with GTR Southern, GWR, SWR, SER and Cross Country on those lines, joining up with community groups, local authorities and local businesses to help them achieve their objectives through the railway and are supported by the Community Rail Network (CRN). www.southeastcrp.org

Rail to Trail The Best of Both Worlds

If you are already a Trust member, you're concerned about the environment. You'd probably like to reduce your carbon footprint. That's why our latest initiative is on the right track.

We've got together with our local train service to show how easy it is to get more - more out of your Blackwater Valley by using the train, and more out of the train service by seeing the Valley. It's a win-win.

Rail to Trail ticks a lot of boxes. It:

- encourages use of the train rather than the car, reducing carbon footprints;
- helps residents and visitors who are walkers to enjoy parts of the Valley they might not have considered;
- makes train users think about walking in the Valley; and
- has a direct impact on health, fitness and wellbeing.

Because the North Downs rail line closely follows the course of the River Blackwater and the Valley Path, Rail to Trail shows how easy it is to use the stations to open up parts of our scenic Valley you would normally only reach by car.

Rail to Trail is a BVCT Make a Difference (MAD) initiative



Great Western Railway

RAIL TO TRAIL

a Blackwater Valley walk between Sandhurst and Blackwater stations



Photography by Margaret Flo McEwan unless otherwise stated

Swan Lake Park

Photo: BVCT



Swan Lake Park – a former mushroom farm known as Clark’s Farm, is a Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

Why not take a walk through the beautiful wildflower meadows where you may find the Great Burnet or spot a dragonfly or two.

Wander around the fishing lake that hosts a great variety of wildfowl or maybe spot one of the huge carp, explore the island on newly laid paths or even stroll along the Blackwater River where you might catch a glimpse of blue and orange from a kingfisher, travelling speedily over the water’s surface.

Yateley Common – Yateley Common is an extensive heathland complex with areas of open heather, gorse, birch and oak woodland. The common plays an important role in nature conservation and is protected under UK and EU law. Much of the common is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a part of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) because of its importance for wildlife. It is also a vital recreational resource for the local community and visitors to the area, with a dense network of bridleways and many smaller paths.

The wide variety of habitats on Yateley Common Country Park make it suitable for a range of wildlife. This includes many breeding birds of European importance, like nightjars, Dartford

warblers and stonechats. The heathland on the common is warm and sandy, which makes it an ideal home for insects and reptiles. The ponds and lakes are particularly important for many scarce dragonflies and damselflies.

To preserve the heathland habitat large areas of scrub and trees that would block out the valuable wildlife have to be removed. Bracken control is another important aspect of the heathland management work. As well as preserving the heathland, several habitats and vegetation structures are maintained. This includes woodland, scrub, scattered trees and grassland. It enables a wide diversity of wildlife to survive.

Yateley Common

Photo: Hampshire Countryside Service



Shepherd Meadows – contains 34 hectares of meadows, woodlands and hedgerows. Waymarkers guide visitors via surfaced paths, including the Blackwater Valley Path, a 23-mile/37km route following the River Blackwater.

The meadows are part of the Blackwater Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and are managed to maintain their high nature conservation value and help people get close to nature. In warmer months, carpets of wildflowers provide food for insects; during winter the site is visited by fieldfares and waterfowl.

Shepherd Meadows holds a Green Flag with Sandhurst Memorial Park. A green flag flying overhead is a sign that the spaces boast the highest environmental standards.

Shepherd Meadows



The Sandhurst Memorial Park – The Memorial Park in Sandhurst is a beautiful 69 acre site popular for recreation in Sandhurst. Along with Shepherd Meadows the Memorial Park has held a prestigious Green Flag Award since 2003.

The Park itself has many areas of natural habitat including a balancing pond which is home to a wide variety of wild birds, as well as a meadow habitat and a small piece of ancient woodland with SANG status.

There are 2 play areas for children to enjoy with excellent visitor facilities before continuing along the choice of footpaths and walkways that lead to the neighbouring Blackwater River and Shepherd Meadows beyond.

Sandhurst Memorial Park footbridge

