

Burgess Park (Peckham Rye to Elephant & Castle)		
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Burgess Park (Peckham Rye to Elephant and Castle)

Start: Peckham Rye Mainline and Overground

Finish: Elephant & Castle Mainline and Underground

Length: 7.1 km/4.4 mi

Ascent/Descent: 10m up and down a bridge

Time: 1 ½ hours

Transport: Peckham Rye Station is located in Travelcard Zone 2 and served by the East London Line (Overground), Thameslink and Sutton & Mole Valley services; trains arrive from Dartford, London Bridge, Victoria, Highbury & Islington, Blackfriars, Sevenoaks, West Croydon, Beckenham Junction and Clapham Junction. Elephant & Castle Station is located in Travelcard Zones 1 and 2 and is served by Thameslink services along the Wimbledon Loop line and by trains to Sevenoaks via Catford. The Underground station is served by the Northern Line (Bank branch) as well as being the southerly terminus of the Bakerloo Line.

Walk Notes:

An urban route entirely in the London Borough of Southwark, leading through some gritty parts of inner southeast London but largely along green corridors or through parks. You walk through some quiet streets in North Peckham and along a linear park on the line of the Peckham Branch of the infilled Grand Surrey Canal to Burgess Park, created on land formerly filled by industry around the canal as well as dense housing but heavily bombed in WWII, and now with only a few listed remnants of its industrial and canal heritage, such as almshouses, a well-preserved limekiln and the 'Bridge to Nowhere'. You follow a meandering westerly route through Burgess Park to the Camberwell end and the splendid Addington Square, and walk back on a loop through the park and then on further through Walworth with its very large brutalist Aylesbury Estate. From there, the route links up a handful of small and not so small parks, leading eventually to Elephant Park, a new development on the site of the former brutalist Heygate Estate, and to Elephant & Castle Station on the boundary of Newington. The areas walked through are a mix not atypical of the Borough of Southwark: well-kept parks and open spaces, some old and worn council estates (often of brutalist architecture), plenty of reused or part-replaced former industrial buildings, some new and more enlightened council accommodation as well as some fully gentrified areas, culminating in the still not quite finished Elephant Park.

Terrain & Access: Almost only hard surfaces. The parks and open spaces on the main walk are open 24/7.

Shorter Walks: Bus stops are never far away.

Outbound and return route meet in two places in Burgess Park, enabling cutting off a part of the route.

Extension: A longer loop around Burgess Park's fishing lake is described (add 450m).

The walk can be combined with Short Walk 41 - Nunhead, Honor Oak & Peckham Rye (15.2 km/9.5 mi).

Refreshments (selected): [Motown Caffé](#), [Coal Rooms](#) restaurant, café and bar, [Persepolis](#) Persian restaurant, [The Kentish Drovers](#), [Fowlds Café](#), [Clubhouse Café](#), [Stomping Grounds Café](#), [Burgess Park Angling Club Café](#), [Amigos](#), [HEJ Coffee](#), [Diogenes and the Dog](#) wine bar, several recommended [places in Elephant Park](#) and in the railway arches, [Elephant and Castle](#) pub, [The Rockingham Arms](#).

Notes

Grand Surrey Canal

The Grand Surrey Canal (GSC) was a canal constructed during the early 19th century, with plans to link the Surrey Commercial Docks at Rotherhithe with Mitcham and later Portsmouth. It opened from Rotherhithe through Deptford and South Bermondsey to the Old Kent Road in 1807, on through Walworth to Camberwell in 1810, and the branch to Peckham in 1826. A short-lived Croydon Canal was built as a separate enterprise and linked to the GSC at New Cross. The GSC ran through flat terrain and needed no locks or inclines, while any development further south would have necessitated locks and therefore been much more expensive. It closed progressively from the 1940s, with all but the Greenland Dock closed in the 1970s. Much of the route is still traceable though, as it has been turned into roads and linear parks.

Burgess Park

At 56 hectares (140 acres), Burgess Park is Southwark's largest park and the only area in South London to have been de-urbanised. The park stretches from Camberwell and Walworth to Peckham and the Old Kent Road. It is named after Camberwell's first woman Mayor, Jessie Burgess. The park was built between the 1950s and 1980s and developed as a result of the Abercrombie Plan for open spaces made in 1943.

The area had originally been rich farmland and market gardens supplying London's growing population during the 18th century and attracted wealthy middle-classes trying to escape the stench of the city at the time. But after the building of the Grand Surrey Canal, it became home to factories and densely populated streets. Businesses included timber and lime-related enterprises, cloth and wool works, mineral water works, as well as a Bible Factory.

The area was badly bombed during WWII and the park slowly emerged from the space left by the demolished factories, churches and streets as well as from bomb damaged areas and the canal stretch from Camberwell to Peckham (which was only drained and in-filled in the 1970s). 2012 saw the park being re-landscaped by Southwark. Traces of the park's history can be found in the few buildings that remain, such as the listed Chumleigh Gardens, former almshouses now housing offices and a café. Other listed buildings: an early 19th century limekiln, St. George's Church, the Passmore Edwards library, baths and wash-houses.

<https://bridgetonowhere.friendsofburgesspark.org.uk/> <https://artinthepark.co.uk/park>

Aylesbury Estate

The Aylesbury Estate in Walworth in the London Borough of Southwark was designed in the brutalist style and built between 1963 and 1977 on an area of 28.5 hectares (70 acres).

The estate was an attempt by planners to house some of London's poorest families as part of a comprehensive slum clearance policy and it was the largest industrialised housing scheme ever undertaken by a London borough: the 2,758 dwellings were designed to house a population of more than 10,000 residents, also making it one of the largest public housing estates in Europe.

The estate's design embraced many ideas of modernist urban planning expressed by Le Corbusier in his 1935 vision of the *Ville Radieuse*, such as standardisation, free circulation of pedestrians and traffic and generous access to sunlight and natural ventilation.

It went through a period of decline from the 1980s onwards with frequent problems and later breakdowns of the communal heating systems, coupled with major problems with the physical state of the buildings and is now considered to be in the bottom category on a classification for inner city adversity, signifying an area of extremely high social disadvantage. It is now past its service life. Together with the poor image of council estates in the UK, this led to the Aylesbury being dubbed 'one of the most notorious estates'.

In 1997, Tony Blair chose to make his first set-piece speech ('No forgotten people') as Prime Minister here, in an effort to demonstrate that the incoming Labour government would care for the poorest within society. The estate is currently undergoing a controversial phased regeneration programme which started in 2010 and will last at least 20 years, after a decision was made to demolish and replace the dwellings with modern houses mostly controlled by housing associations rather than spending money trying to update the estate to modern living standards. The plan involves increasing the density of housing to more than 4,200 dwellings.

Heygate Estate/Elephant Park

The Heygate Estate in Walworth in the London Borough of Southwark was built between 1971 and 1974 between Walworth Road and New Kent Road. The estate had 1,214 dwellings, designed to house a population of more than 3,000 residents.

Its neo-brutalist architectural aesthetic was one of six tall, concrete blocks dwarfing smaller blocks and surrounding central communal gardens and it was initially a popular place to live, the flats being light and spacious. Later, the estate developed a reputation for crime, poverty and dilapidation due to a lack of maintenance and good management. It was demolished between 2011 and 2014 as part of the controversial regeneration of the Elephant & Castle area with the land (now dubbed 'Elephant Park') planned to provide 2,704 new homes, of which only 82 will be social rented.

Elephant & Castle

The Elephant and Castle was a coaching inn first mentioned in 1765, located at a major crossroads in the village of Newington in the manor of Walworth, where the old Roman road from London Bridge and other routes from Central London split into routes towards the Kent and Sussex coasts (now: New Kent Road and Newington Causeway – the A201 & A3). The name now refers to much of the surrounding area of Walworth and Newington, due to the proximity of the Underground station and traffic roundabout of the same name.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Leave the platforms at **Peckham Rye Station** down some steps into the booking hall, by the **Motown Caffé** on the right (open to 15.00 hours) and leave the station onto **Station Square**. There is a large info panel on the history of the building as well as one on the upcoming restoration and refurbishment of it, and you have the **Coal Rooms** restaurant, café and bar on the left. Paths are turning away through archways to the left and the right, as well as ahead towards **Rye Lane** some 40m away. [!] *Turn left* past the Coal Rooms and in 40m you pass the entrance to the **Hannah Barry Gallery** on the left (home to **Bold Tendencies**, who run the event spaces in the Peckham Levels Multi-Storey Car Park on the other side of Rye Lane, including Frank's Café). *Bear left* at a T-junction with a pedestrianised road and in 20m *turn left* along a tarmac path between rows of trees. The interesting covered **Rye Lane Market** is away to the right. In 60m you reach a path junction with a wider linear park (**Holly Grove Shrubbery**) ahead.

- **Either continue through the park**, in 150m curve to the left to **Holly Grove** and *turn right*. At a four-way road junction, *turn right* along **Bellenden Road**. In 20m pass a **Victorian Stink Pipe** on the right and in 120m a pocket park.
- **Or turn right and in 15m turn left along Elm Grove** and curve to the right with it. In 180m pass a pocket park on the right.

This is **William Brigg's Garden** and you can take a tarmac path through it for 40m. Cross **Highshore Road** and continue in the same direction along **Bellenden Road**, soon with Harris Academy at Peckham on the left and the **Pelican Estate** visible beyond it. In 110m *turn right* with the road and in 70m cross **Ophir Terrace** and *bear left* to a T-junction with the very busy **Peckham High Street** 80m away. **Persepolis** restaurant can be found 50m to the left. Cross the road at a set of lights and *turn right* along it. In 60m you pass **The Kentish Drivers** on the left (Wetherspoon's) and pass the junction with Rye Lane from the right, with the imposing listed Victorian **Jones & Higgins Department Store** on the corner (and desperately awaiting a renovation). In 40m *turn left* up some steps to go under the **Peckham Arch**, a 35m-span structure from 1994 built at the time as a symbol and catalyst for a bout of much-needed regeneration (notice the **Peckham Peace Wall** on the left) and go down a ramp onto **Peckham Square** 30m away. This is flanked by **Peckham Pulse** Leisure Centre on the left and the award-winning (Stirling Prize for Architecture 2000) **Peckham Library** (and information and media centre) as well as the **Mountview Drama School** on the right.

Follow a shared cycle and footpath across the square and then curve gently to the left with it. In 50m you pass a map of the linear park ahead and in 20m an info panel on the **Surrey Canal Walk**. The linear park runs along the course of the (infilled) **Peckham Branch of the Grand Surrey Canal** and the library was built on the site of the canal basin. *Turn right* with the shared cycle and footpath, ignoring a path ahead onto a road at a bend (Jocelyn Street). You have hedges on the left and a grassy area to the right, with the Mountview buildings behind on the site of the former **Eagle Wharf**. In 180m you pass some allotments on the right and in 100m ignore a left fork up to a road and in 30m go under the **Commercial Way Canal Bridge**. Above head height on the right in the brickwork is a Parish Boundary marker (St. Giles, Camberwell). On the far side, there is a small park on the left and in 100m the **Willowbrook Estate** (LCC, early 1960's, now Southwark). In 170m ignore paths up to a road and in 25m go under the **Willowbrook Road Canal Bridge**, which has some clear **tow-rope marks** on the left-hand side (as well as another Parish Boundary marker).

In 240m ignore a well-trampled left forking path down to a lower level and *veer right* with the broad tarmac path. You have a concrete buttress on the right (a like-for-like replacement section of canal bank, which marked the junction of the Camberwell branch with the Peckham branch of the Grand Surrey Canal, and the fenced **Glengall Wharf**

Community Garden (home of Burgess Park Food Project) on the site of the former Camberwell Council's refuse wharf. In 65m you pass a path on the right to the garden entrance and in 20m reach the main wide tarmac path through **Burgess Park** at a four-way junction by another **Surrey Canal Walk** info panel. You are now in **Camberwell**. There is some student accommodation being built to the right on Glengall Road (for the LSE), replacing warehouses. To the left of that site was the location of the actual **Glengall Wharf**. *Turn left* along the wide path on the line of the **Grand Surrey Canal**. In 60m pass a map of Burgess Park and cross **Trafalgar Avenue** at a set of lights.

[Away to the left you can see some above-ground infrastructure belonging to the new 32.5 km underground HV electricity cable tunnel linking Wimbledon with Crayford.]

You continue along the broad tarmac path on slightly raised ground (still a shared cycle and footpath) with some shrubs and trees on the left and right and fenced sports fields and the **New Peckham Mosque** as well as **Cobourg Road School** on the right. In 110m you pass a wooden plaque on the right ('The Foundry and other works stood near here') and in 100m a three-way signpost at a five-way path junction. You can see the **Bridge to Nowhere** ahead, but *bear left* along the second left path. In 50m *turn right* along a gravel crossing path, now with **St. George's Way** (a road) away to the left behind the park boundary fence. For the next 230m you can follow any of a plethora of criss-crossing paths broadly going in the same direction through the area bounded by the park boundary and road on the left and the main broad tarmac path to the right.

Eventually you cross a cobbled car wide lane and *turn right* to ascend the steps up the newly refurbished bridge. In 20m cross the **line of the Grand Surrey Canal** and on the far side of the bridge there are fine views of the high rises around **Elephant & Castle** on the left, the **Aylesbury Estate** (new and old parts) ahead and of **The City of London** on the half right. Go down some steps and in 40m *turn left* at a T-junction with a tarmac path, ignoring a sloping artificial hill on the right. In 150m, at a multi-path junction, you cross a first path but in 20m *bear left* along a path aiming for a church building ahead. In 70m *curve to the left* with the path by a cobbled rectangular square on the right with some semi-mature trees and *turn right* at a signposted T-junction with the main tarmac path through the park ('BMX-Track, Tennis Centre, Camberwell Road').

You have **St. George's Church** away on the left and in 30m pass a map on the left and then proceed through an underpass under **Wells Way** (road). There is an info panel on the left-hand wall in the underpass ('The barges of Burgess Park'). Re-ascend on the far side of the bridge and ignore a right turn where the path levels out. In another 50m *fork left* along a tarmac path with some high rises visible ahead (there are also several good gravel or earth alternative paths on the left, running more or less parallel). In 80m ignore a tarmac path from the right (which continues as a gravel path on the left) and in 160m one from the left. In another 30m cross a path with the busy New Church Road/Southampton Way away to the left as the **Camberwell end of Burgess Park** is nearby. In 50m cross a path and *veer left* past a fenced playground on the left.

In 70m *bear right* along a tarmac path. In 50m *bear right* at a four-way junction and in 30m leave the park onto **Kitson Road** and *turn right* along it (i.e.: not hard right into **Rust Square** cul-de-sac). In 30m you pass the **A.V. Fowlds & Sons Upholstery** building on the left and in 30m reach a four-way junction. There are some fine architectural details on the building to the left (a multi-storey dovecote etc.) and you have **Fowlds Café** in the former shopfront of the upholstery (open to 16.00). The traffic on **Camberwell Road** is roaring away to the left. *Turn right* along **Addington Square** (road) and in 50m – at the well-preserved Georgian and Regency garden square – follow the road to the right around three sides of the fenced garden to its far-left opposite corner. The Grade II-listed houses were completed over a period of 35 years, so that the square is not uniform in look and possibly more interesting for it.

[The engineer of the Grand Surrey Canal lived here and Robert Hunter, one of the founders of the National Trust, was born here, but a more sinister aspect of its history is that it was the base of the notorious **Richardson (Crime) Gang** in the 1960s.]

At the far end of the row of houses, with the **Clubhouse Café** to the left, you *turn right* with the tarmac lane along the last house with some tennis courts on the left. In 60m re-enter Burgess Park along a tarmac path. In 25m *turn left* at a T-junction and in 40m reach a T-junction with the main path through the park. The former site of the **Addington Wharf** at the **Camberwell Canal Basin** is away to the left by the road. *Turn right*. You have the already redeveloped parts of the **Aylesbury Estate** away on the left and in 180m *turn left* at a broad tarmac path crossing, for a little loop around the **listed Limekiln** away to the left behind a band of reed grass. In 30m *turn right* along a narrow tarmac path to the limekiln and walk around it, studying the four info slabs set into the ground at its four corners. Continue past the kiln and in 25m re-join the main path through the park a little further along, *bearing left* along it.

In 20m ignore a right fork (where another path joins from the right behind) and in 40m *fork left* (just before the main path descends to the underpass under Wells Way). Ignore an immediate left turn and head on towards the road and the listed **Passmore Edwards Public Baths, Wash House and Library** building. In 75m cross the road and *turn left* along its pavement. **Lynn Athletic Club**, Britain's oldest boxing club, has its gym in the building. On the left is **BMX Track London**, home to **Peckham BMX Club**, the home club of **Kye Whyte**, a silver medallist at the 2020 Olympics. At the far end of the building, *turn right* along a tarmac path, in 15m passing the former library entrance. In 120m *bear second left* at a multi-path junction and in 25m *bear left* again (on the **line of Chumleigh Street**) to in 60m pass the entrance to the **Chumleigh Gardens** former almshouses on the left. [**During daylight hours** it is permitted to walk through the lovely **World Gardens** on a circuitous route shown on the route map.]

Ahead, just before a four-way path junction at the far end of the complex, you pass a wooden plaque on the left ('Market Gardens stood near here') and at the junction, you have the **Stomping Grounds Café** on the left (open to 17.00) and some public toilets beyond it. *Turn right* at the four-way junction, with a fenced adventure playground on the left and views to the **Bridge to Nowhere** on the right. You are now following the **line of Cowan Street**. In 60m you have passed the playground and now have a sloping grassy mound on the left, with the older parts of the **Aylesbury Estate** beyond it and the park's fishing lake visible ahead. In 70m pass a map and cross a path and in 60m continue to the right of the lake.

In 140m by a wide boardwalk on the left you have a choice:

For an Extension, continue ahead along the lake, in 120m pass a toilet block and the **Burgess Park Angling Club Café** (open to 20.00) to follow the lakeside path around to the left in 60m at a T-junction. Ignore paths off to the right towards the **Old Kent Road** and **Albany Road** and follow the path around to the left. In 300m you reach the far end of the boardwalk. *Turn right* along a tarmac path towards Albany Road.

For the Main Walk, *turn left* to cross the lake on a broad two-railed boardwalk. At the far end of it, continue ahead along a tarmac path towards Albany Road.

In 70m cross Albany Road at a pedestrian crossing and continue a little to the right along **Bagshot Street**. A little up this road you cross the line of one of London's Lost Rivers: the **Earl's Sluice**, long ago put into a sewer along Albany Road. This is the boundary to **Walworth**. In 130m pass **Amigos** restaurant (Spanish and Colombian cuisine) and in 70m cross **Kinglake Street** a little to the left, passing between Southborough and Tenterden Houses. In 50m you enter **Surrey Square Park** by a map

and a **Green Flag Award** flagpole on the left and follow a tarmac path to its far-left corner 100m away, there going through the fenced **Peter Martin Memorial Garden**. The Aylesbury Estate's **District Heating System's** chimney looms above on the left. Continue up along **Alvey Street**, ignoring the right turn Surrey Square. In 60m you continue along a shared cycle and footpath between houses and in 60m along **Sedan Way** (road). In 60m reach a junction with the busy **East Street** (the birthplace of **Charlie Chaplin**) by a row of shops on the left.

Cross the road at a pedestrian crossing and *turn right* along its opposite pavement. In 80m *turn left* along **Beckway Street**. In 120m, where the road turns right into a car park area, you continue in the same direction along a paved path between houses (Ightham House on the right) and through several bike barriers. In 80m this continues as **Catesby Road's** pavement and in another 60m you continue in the same direction into **Salisbury Row Park** along a tarmac path. In 30m you pass the **Lee O'Callaghan Memorial** away on the left. [Private Lee O'Callaghan, killed on duty in Basra in August 2004, was raised on the nearby **Heygate Estate** (and an avid supporter of Millwall Football Club).] In 25m cross a path (**The Coffee Bar** is away on the left, open to 20.00 Mon-Fri and to 16.00 Sat) and *veer left* and in 40m by a **Green Flag Award** flagpole and a road at a bend on the left, *bear right* with a tarmac path, in 15m into a wider part of the park. The path curves gently to the left and in 60m you *turn left* along a fenced playground, parallel to a road away to the right.

In 50m continue in the same direction along the pavement of **Chatham Street**. In 160m, at a T-junction with **Balfour Street**, you have **HEJ Coffee** opposite (entrance to the left, open to 17.00) in the award-winning **Trafalgar Place** development, the first phase of the Heygate Estate's replacement. There's also **Diogenes and the Dog** wine bar away to the left on Rodney Road. *Turn right* along Balfour Street and in 90m you reach a four-way junction with the **Victory Community Park** across it on the left.

- **During daylight hours**, take the path through the park to its far-left exit and cross Rodney Place a little to the right.
- **At other times**, continue in the same direction along Balfour Street and in 60m *turn left* along **Munton Road**, with the **New Kent Road** away to the right beyond a row of new high rises. In 140m cross Rodney Place a little to the left.

Continue along an engineered gravel path to the right of the hoardings around one of the last development sites within **Elephant Park**. This path leads directly to **Elephant & Castle Station** 300m away. Ignore any right turns between houses to the New Kent Road but do explore the many paths away to the left through the landscaped **Elephant Springs** area within the development. Several recommended **refreshment options** are located in the houses on the right (**The Rosy Hue**, **Pizzeria Pappagone**) and more in the **Castle Square** complex right by the station (notice the **Elephant & Castle sculpture** on its roof), in the arches along the railway line (**Distriandina**, **Leños & Carbón** tapas) and in the new buildings to the left of the park (**Bobo Social**, **Koi Ramen**, **Miko's** (Ecuadorian/Spanish)).

For the **Underground Stations**, *turn right* along **Elephant Road** in front of the Mainline Station and in 80m *turn left* along **New Kent Road**. You pass **La Fogata** restaurant and in 100m reach a set of lights by the **Elephant and Castle** pub across the road and (out of sight from here) **The Rockingham Arms** (Wetherspoon's), also in the iconic **Metro Central Heights** building:

- For the **Northern Line**, continue ahead and in 30m *bear left* to the left of **The Faraday Memorial** and to the station entrance on **Elephant and Castle** (road).
- For the **Bakerloo Line**, continue ahead and in 30m *bear right* to the right of **The Faraday Memorial** and in 60m *turn right* across a set of lights to the station entrance on **London Road**.