



Brooklands Lakes were formed in the 1920s-30s by quarrying for gravel and sand. During World War II, the lakes were camouflaged with netting to prevent them being used as a navigation aid by German aircraft to the nearby Vickers munitions works on Dartford Marshes. The lakes are home to various wildfowl such as mallards, Canada geese, coots, grey herons and great crested grebes.

6 After walking through the small car park, take a left onto Powder Mill Lane and cross over the bridge. Straight after the bridge take a right onto the Darent Valley Path. Approximately 150 metres down the path you will see a small green footbridge. Turn right and cross over the bridge, from here you will be able to explore the remains of the gunpowder mills.

The Gunpowder Mills operated from 1732 to the early 20th century, powered by the adjacent River Darent. The powder mills at Dartford became the most

extensive in the country. Some 38 mills are considered to have operated along the River Darent and its tributaries and included mills for paper, corn, flour, gunpowder, iron slitting, brass, cotton and breweries.

7 After exploring, cross back over the bridge and turn right to continue following the Darent Valley Path. Follow the path until you come to a fork, take the right-hand fork to continue following the river. Approximately 600 metres along the path you will reach a grey footbridge. At this point do not cross over the bridge but return back along the path, following it until you come back to Powder Mill Lane.

8 Turn left back over the bridge and then take a right to re-enter Brooklands Lakes. Now back on the path, turn left to continue along the edge of the lakes, which should now be on your right. The path will fork and take the path on the right and cross over the narrow footbridge. Continue to walk along this path through the middle of the lakes. The path will end in the three-way junction from earlier in

the walk. From here take the left-hand path before then taking a right to go back through the Princes Tunnel.

- 9 Once on the other side of the tunnel, continue to follow the path, turning right at the Mick Jagger statue. Follow it around keeping the river on your right. The path will come to a fork, turn left to walk parallel to the Dartford running track then follow the path around back into Central Park. When the path begins to split, turn left to walk towards the bandstand.
- 10 At the crossroads continue straight following the path which will start to curve to the left. At a fork in the path, turn right following the sign for the town centre. Continue along this path passing through the formal garden area again. Retrace your steps in reverse from earlier in the walk to take you back to Dartford station.



The Darent Valley Rail Trails have been created by the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme. DVLPS is led by the Kent Downs AONB, working throughout the Darent Valley to conserve the area's rich heritage landscapes and encourage people to enjoy, explore and connect to them www.darent-valley.org.uk

A selection of the Rail Trails are available to use on the Darent Valley Trails app, available free of charge on the App Store and Google Play. With special thanks to the North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWKCP) for devising this walk.



EUROPEAN UNION



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Lakes and Gunpowder

A 3.8 mile circular walk along the Darent Valley Path, discovering the ruins of Dartford's Gunpowder Mills, wetland wildlife at Brooklands Lakes and a tribute to one of the town's most famous people.



Start / end point: Dartford station

Length: 3.8 miles / 6.1km

Terrain: Flat occasionally uneven ground, mainly hard surfaces

Accessibility: Mobility aid accessible

Toilets / refreshments: Refreshments available in Dartford town centre, toilets available in Central Park, Orchard shopping centre and Dartford station

What3Words: ///flags.fairly.fancy

OS Explorer map: 162

On The Way

- Enjoy Central Park with its iconic bandstand and statue to one of the town's most famous people
- Discover wildlife that thrives in the wetland habitat of Brooklands Lakes
- Discover the rich heritage of Dartford's Gunpowder Mills

1 As you exit Dartford Station, head straight on the path and over the footbridge. At the bottom of the steps / ramp turn right, passing the Orchard Theatre and Clocktower on your left. Follow the pavement alongside Home Gardens heading in the direction of Prospect Place. Cross over Suffolk Road to continue along the road. Turn left onto Hythe Street and follow it until you reach the High Street. Where the road begins to curve to the right, turn left onto the High Street, passing the Royal Victoria and Bull Hotel.

Look to your right down Lowfield Street and you will see a large mural on One Bell Corner. The mural was commissioned by Dartford Borough Council as part of its millennium celebrations. Titled 'One town that changed the world', it shows the important contribution Dartford played in the area's industrial heritage.



2 Continue along the High Street going past the Orchard Shopping Centre on your left. Take the next right and follow the street onto Market Place. Cross the pedestrianised area and enter Central Park. You should pass Dartford Museum on the left, next to the library and Sir Peter Blake Gallery.

Dartford Museum is a small free museum which has various displays, information and objects relating to the history of Dartford.

3 As you enter Central Park, walk straight ahead until you reach the bandstand. Take the path on the left and follow it. Next take a right turn at the end of the path and then the next left, passing the Café In The Park on your left-hand side. Continue to follow this path as it slightly curves to the right.

This is the second bandstand built in Central Park, the original one in 1905 and the current Henry Wellcome Bandstand in 2010. Bandstands became popular during the 18th and 19th centuries as a way to celebrate and enjoy music outdoors. Open-air music concerts are still held here during the summer months.

4 Just before you approach the Ellenor Lions footbridge, take the path on the right which follows the River Darent. Take the path that forks to the left

onto the Darent Valley Path and through the trees, you might be able to glimpse the outdoor theatre which is used for productions and events. Keep following this path to the left (you will see a sign for Brooklands Lakes and the Darent Valley Path). Turn left past the metal statues continuing to follow the River Darent on your left.

The statues depict Mick Jagger and a jukebox with a Dartford Warbler on it, a small bird which takes its name from the town. Mick Jagger and Keith Richards were both born in Dartford in 1943. After attending Wentworth Primary School together, they parted ways until they met up again by chance at Dartford Station in 1961, where they discovered their mutual passion for music. They went on to form one of the world's greatest rock bands; The Rolling Stones.

5 This path will pass through The Princes Tunnel and come out into Brooklands Lakes. The tunnel is designed to flood and so may be unpassable during heavy rains or periods of flooding. At the three-way junction, take the second path on the left and then take the next right. When you reach the next path divergence (top of the lake), instead of following the path to the right, go straight and head out of Brooklands Lakes following the sign for the Darent Valley Path.

