



# GREEN CHAIN

## Section 11a of 15 Dulwich Park to Sydenham Hill Wood



|                     |                                         |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Section start:      | Dulwich Park, College Road              |
| Travel to start:    | West Dulwich (Rail) or bus – see page 6 |
| Section finish:     | Sydenham Hill Wood                      |
| Travel from finish: | Sydenham Hill (Rail) or bus – page 7    |
| Section distance:   | 1.3 miles                               |

### Introduction

Section 11a links the beautiful Dulwich Park and the Dulwich Picture Gallery with the rest of the *Green Chain* network. From Dulwich Park, after a short roadside stretch, the route enters the dense woodland of the Sydenham Hill Wood Nature Reserve, where it joins section 11. All but a quarter mile of the route runs through attractive parkland and woodland.

The section is surfaced throughout but at present the only way to leave the section is to take an unsurfaced route which can be muddy. There are no significant uphill gradients. Note that on our maps the chevrons (black arrow heads) show where the route is steep. The chevrons point uphill.

There is a café and there are toilets in Dulwich Park.

**Updates:** before setting off on this walk, please check with the *Green Chain Walk* news page on the [Inner London Ramblers web site](#) to make sure that there are no obstacles that might affect your ability to complete the section as described. If you come across a problem on the walk, [please let us know by email](#).

## Overview map of section 11a



## Green Chain connections

You can download an [introduction to the whole Green Chain network](#) from the Inner London Ramblers web site complete with a map showing the sections.

Section 11a combined with section 11 north of Sydenham Hill Wood gives a linear walk from Dulwich to Nunhead. The length of the walk is 5.4 miles via One Tree Hill or 5.1 miles via Brenchley Gardens. The note on page 7 explains how to connect the two sections while the bridge in Sydenham Hill Wood is closed.

Another possibility is to walk from Dulwich to Crystal Palace Park by combining 11a with section 11 south of Sydenham Hill Wood. This is 3.5 miles via the railway branch or 3.4 miles via the Sydenham Wells Park branch.

## **Points of interest in the walk guidance**

### **Dulwich Park (page 4)**

Dulwich Park was donated to the public by the Dulwich Estate in 1885, it opened in 1890. It covers 76 acres and was laid out by the London County Council's parks designer, Lt Col John James Sexby. The park remains very much as he designed it. Extensive renovations were lottery funded in the mid 2000s.

### **Dulwich Picture Gallery (page 4)**

The Dulwich Picture Gallery was designed by Sir John Soane and opened in 1815. It was the first art gallery to make use of overhead illumination by skylights and its design remains highly influential. The collection is of national significance and includes many world famous paintings. Both Turner and Van Gogh studied there.

### **The American Garden (page 4)**

The American Garden in Dulwich Park was designed and laid out in 1890 by Lt Col J J Sexby, Chief Officer for Parks of the London County Council. It features many hundreds of azaleas and rhododendrons and is a gloriously colourful sight. The best time to visit is in April and May, May being the better month to see the plants in full bloom. Many of Sexby's original specimens are still flourishing.

### **Sydenham Hill Wood Nature Reserve (page 5)**

Sydenham Hill Wood Nature Reserve is a prize possession of the London Wildlife Trust; it became the first reserve of the Trust in 1982. Whilst parts are remnants of the ancient Great North Wood, most of the reserve is of surprisingly recent origin, including an abandoned railway and the now wooded rear gardens of many large houses that once lined Sydenham Hill. Careful management by the Trust has resulted in an exquisitely attractive area with a vast diversity of flora and fauna.

## Walking directions

The section begins at the College Road gates of **Dulwich Park** close to the entrance to **Dulwich Picture Gallery**.

Go through the park gates and forward along the right hand side of the wide entrance drive. On your left, you come to a shrub covered 'island' in the drive as it swings to the right. Immediately after passing the island, turn left to cross the drive and enter the trees on a narrow but surfaced path.

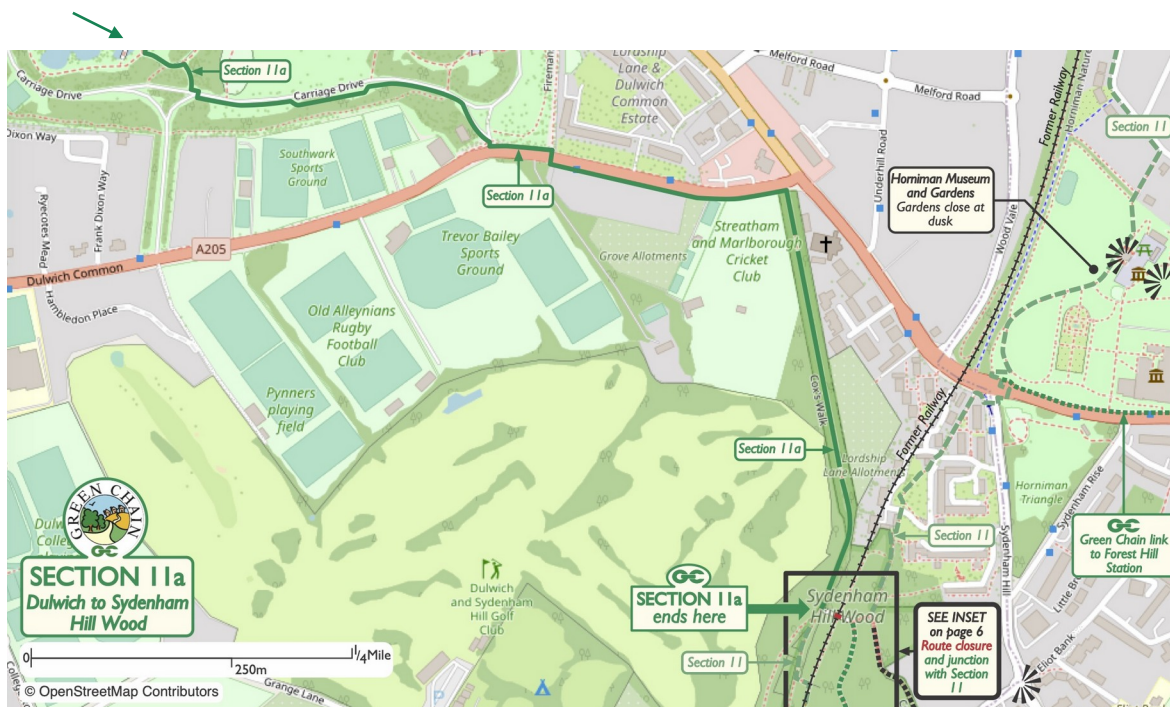
After a few yards, turn left onto a broader path that then curves right to follow the side of the lake. Continue to the fork at the end of the lake and turn right. You pass a boardwalk to the right. The waymarked route curves right and at the first junction after the boardwalk bear left, do not turn sharp left.

(Walking along the boardwalk makes for a pleasant, short diversion. If you do so, turn sharp left at the end and then take the first right to rejoin the main route.)

As the path swings to the left, take the second right, and then turn left into the main 'carriage drive'. Continue along the drive to take the first right to the gates out to the road (Dulwich Common) that is part of the South Circular road.

(Just before arriving at the gates it is worth taking a look at the **American Garden** to the left, as indicated on the map. This 130 year old collection of acid loving plants is a riot of colour in Spring, particularly in May.)





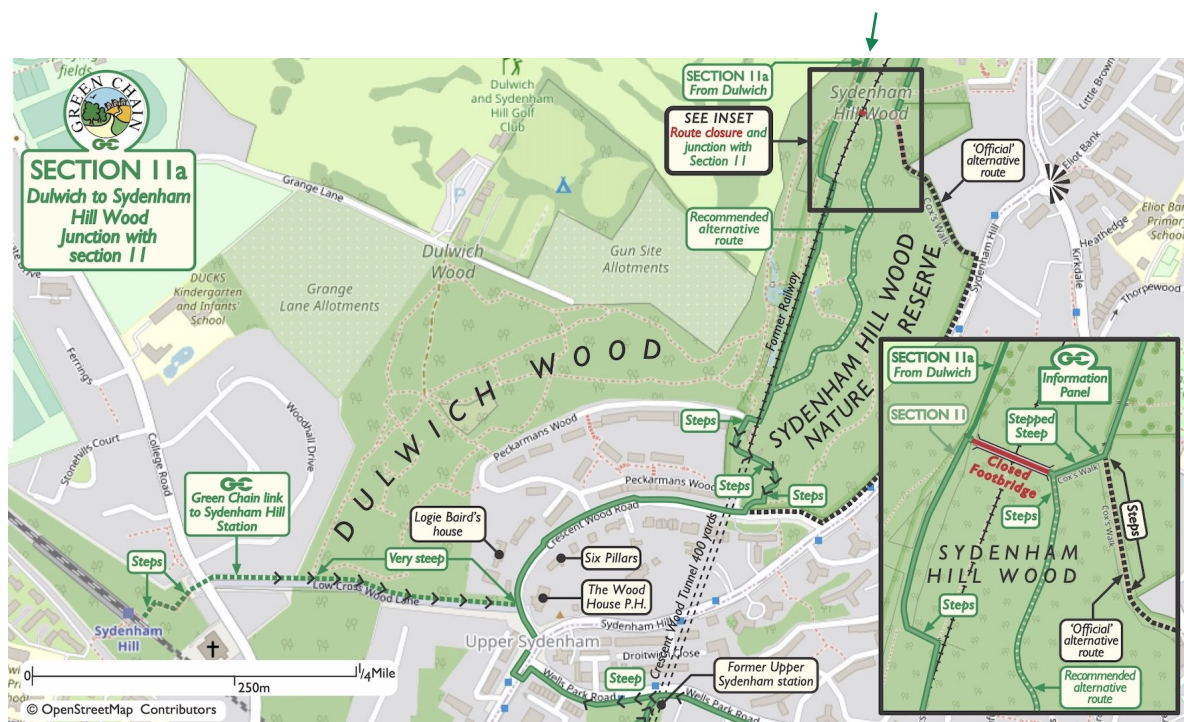
Turn left along Dulwich Common and continue to the end of the boundary of the park. Cross the road via the pedestrian refuge and turn left. Continue along Dulwich Common to the first major junction. Just before that junction is a gate to the right. Pass through the gate and walk ahead along the straight and tree lined Cox's Walk.

At the end of Cox's Walk there is another gate, a *Green Chain* main signpost and a blocked off footbridge to the left. Section 11a ends here, joining section 11 (grid reference TQ 34443 72813).

The closure of the footbridge for structural repairs means that section 11 coming from Nunhead is currently diverted along alternative routes as shown on the map on page 6.

Following the original route of section 11 from the closed footbridge through **Sydenham Hill Wood Nature Reserve** is now the only way to continue from section 11a without turning back.

From the gate and *Green Chain* sign go straight ahead on what can be muddy terrain for about 110 yards then turn left down some steps. At the bottom of the steps turn right and continue ahead until you approach the shipping containers of the London Wildlife Trust.



Just before the shipping containers (grid reference TQ 34362 72471), turn right and climb the path that curves to the left up steep steps. The path turns to the right to take more steep steps upwards. At the top, turn right and shortly you come to a kissing gate out of the nature reserve on your left. Leave through the gate into Crescent Wood Road.

## Travel to and from section 11a

### Travel options to the start of the section

By train: the nearest station is West Dulwich (mainline). There is a fully waymarked link route that is three quarters of a mile long. Leave the station, turn right under the railway bridge, and cross the road at the pedestrian crossing. Once over the road, turn left and, after a few paces, turn right into an alley by the side of tennis courts to enter Belair Park.

Turn right at the end of the tennis courts and then take the first left towards a large *Green Chain* signpost. At the signpost, turn left and walk towards a playground. Follow the path by the side of the playground. The path is now besides a pleasantly wooded lake to the right. The lake is a dammed stretch of the River Effra which is almost entirely culverted elsewhere. Take the first right, over the dam, and keep ahead to leave the park. Cross the road, turn right, and a few paces later, left onto a tree lined path. At the end of the path, turn left into College Road and continue to the park gates where section 11a begins.

By bus: the P4 bus passes the beginning of section 11a. This bus runs between Lewisham station (DLR and mainline) and Brixton station (Victoria line and main line). It passes Honor Oak Park station (Overground and mainline)

### **Travel options from the end of the section**

By train: for Sydenham Hill station turn right outside the gate of the nature reserve into Crescent Wood Road and continue to the side of the Wood House public house. To your right is a low, white fence. Pass through the gap in the fence to go down the very steep path which leads to Sydenham Hill station (mainline).

By bus: turn left into Crescent Wood Road as you come out of the gate from the nature reserve. Walk to the junction of Sydenham Hill which is served by the 356 and 363 bus routes. The 356 is a local service which passes Forest Hill station. The 363 goes to Crystal Palace and Elephant and Castle.

### ***Note on the junction between sections 11a and 11***

While the bridge in Sydenham Hill Wood is closed, a diversion is necessary if you want to walk to Nunhead along section 11 from section 11a.

Follow the directions on pages 5 and 6 from the end of section 11a towards the shipping containers. Fifty yards before you reach them you come to a path that filters in from the left. Turn very sharp left to take that path and follow it through the trees avoiding all turnings. You are now on the recommended alternative route shown on the map on page 6.

After a quarter of a mile of dense woodland you come to some steep downwards steps which lead to a kissing gate and the other end of the closed footbridge. Here you can join section 11.

