

BRAEBURN PARK NATURE RESERVE

LONDON WILDLIFE TRUST ABOUT BRAEBURN PARK NATURE RESERVE

Braeburn Park Nature Reserve is owned by The Land Trust and surrounded by Braeburn Park housing estate. The reserve is located in the London Borough Of Bexley on the Dartford Borough Council boundary.

Braeburn Park Nature Reserve is an important brownfield site where former sand quarries have been reclaimed by nature, providing a sanctuary for natural habitats and wildlife species; the reserve forms part of London Wildlife Trust's 'London's Living Landscapes' vision of landscape level conservation at Crayford Marsh, Dartford Marsh and Erith Marsh where the remains of a submerged forest are found. Historically the reserve has been used for sand extraction, gravel works, landfill and hosting an orchard. Robert Churchill the famous London gunsmith and forensic ballistics pioneer used the reserve as the Churchill Gun Club Shooting Grounds. The remains of Old Orchard Farm are found on the reserve where the Churchill family lived and used as a base for Air Raid Precautions during World War Two. A Russian Cold War military map of the reserve and surrounding area that includes the military and aviation manufacturer Vickers, would have been used for invasion; the map would also have benefitted navigation showing transport hubs being close to Crayford Station and the River Thames.

London Wildlife Trust manages the reserve carrying out habitat improvements for wildlife species using a detailed management plan, while working closely with the local community by leading practical conservation volunteer workdays and corporate 'wild' workdays. The site comprises of oak and hazel woodland, sand cliffs, acid grassland slopes and large areas of scrub, each of these habitats supporting a wide range of wildlife species. Access improvements are ongoing to help residents and visitors enjoy a welcome escape from the hectic turmoil of their urban environment, while providing an outdoor classroom for local schoolchildren to explore.

The reserve is also home to the archaeologically important Wansunt Pit, named after the River Wansunt, a tributary of the River Cray. Excavations have discovered stone tools made by Homo Heidelbergensis who later evolved into Neanderthals; other finds include Bronze Age axes and Iron Age gold armlets. Wansunt Pit is geologically important with areas of exposed Dartford Heath Gravel and an earlier course of the River Thames. Wansunt Pit is a Site of Special Scientific Interest SSSI.

The River Cray flows on the opposite side of the railway adjacent to Braeburn Park Nature Reserve in Crayford Rough. William Morris the Victorian British Arts & Crafts Movement textile designer named his design Cray after this beautiful, meandering river which flows near his former home Red House in nearby Bexleyheath and is a tributary of the River Thames.



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