

Linear Walk - Davy Down to West Horndon
There are 2 alternative start points for this walk.

A Starting from Stifford Bridge.
To get to this start take the 370 bus from Romford to Lakeside alighting at Davy Down bus stop. Then walk back (north) along Pilgrim Lane towards the road bridge over the Mardyke.
Alternatively by car there is a car park in the Davy Down. From the car park walk the short distance north along Pilgrim Lane. As the start is on the eastern side of Pilgrim Lane take care crossing this road which can be quite busy at times.
The walk follows Bridleway 219 which is joined at the south east side of Stifford Bridge.

B Starting from North Stifford village.
If getting to the start by car then North Stifford is well worth considering. This village has a beautiful 12th century church and a few attractive thatched cottages. There is also a pub, the Dog and Partridge and a general store.
At the time of writing there are no parking restrictions in the village. Start from FP 131 which is behind the bus stop between St Mary's Church and Belhus Cricket Club. Follow the footpath downhill through the Field of Peace, Mardyke Meadows enjoying the great views across the Mardyke valley.

1 The walk follows the bridleway with the Mardyke on your left for just over 4 miles.
To your left (north) you will see the Mardyke Valley golf course on the far side of the Mardyke and to your right paddocks.

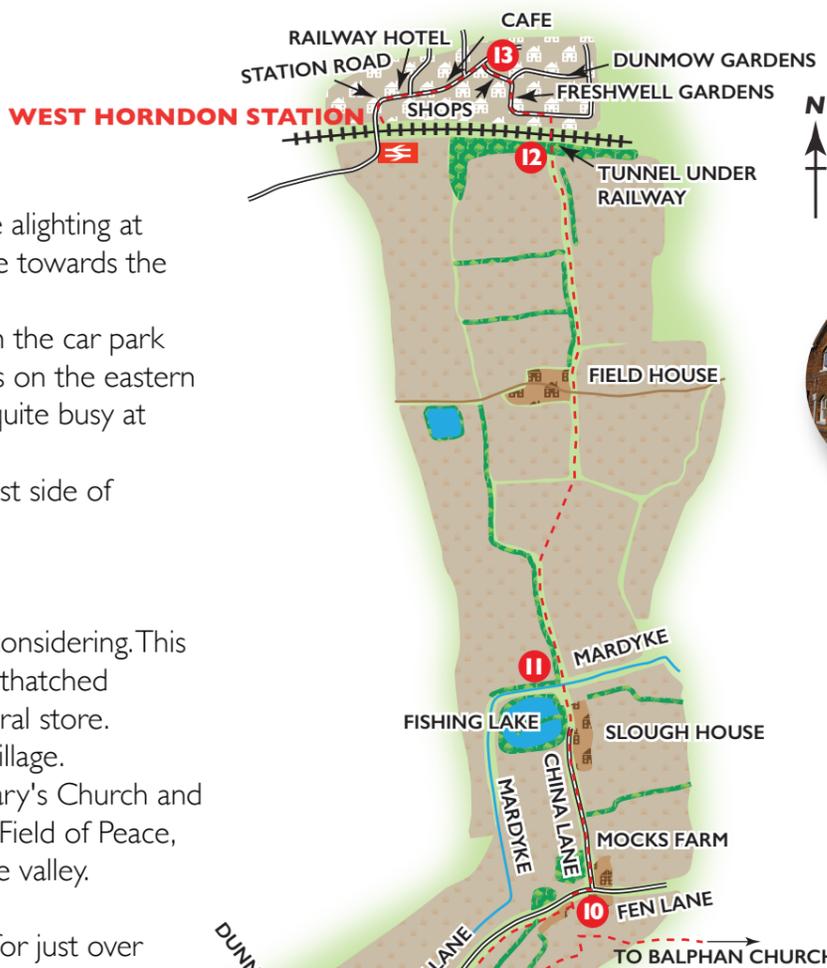
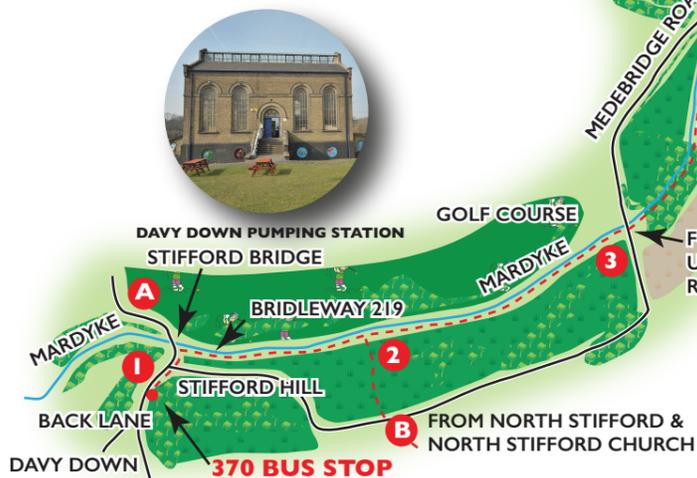
2 After around 500 metres FP 131 crosses the bridleway over a foot bridge across the Mardyke.
If you started the walk at North Stifford this is where you join the walk.

3 After a further 300 metres the bridleway passes under Mederbridge Road high overhead.
Keep following bridleway for another 2.5 miles as it bends to a northerly direction with the Mardyke on your left and arable fields on your right.

4 Cross the large wooden bridge over a stream joining the Mardyke and after around half a mile a sturdy footbridge on your left crosses the Mardyke.

5 You can cross the bridge for a circular route back to Stifford by following FP 136, FP 132 and then FP 131.
However for West Horndon Station continue walking north for around 250 metres then turn sharp right and after around another 250 metres the footpath meets Harrow Road.

6 The original footpath 160 passed the burnt out Fen Restaurant which has been closed by high wooden fencing. However turn right on Harrow road and the new footpath on your left is a few yards away. Cross the stile and follow the path



anticlockwise around the paddocks with Judd's Farm on the right, until you approach Stone Hall farm.



7 The footpath turns right as you approach the metal farm gate of Stone Hall farm. Walk in the direction of Bulphan Church and after crossing the 4th stile turn left at FP 159.

8 Walk north towards Fen Lane crossing two stiles then the footpath turns right then left and after a short distance there is another stile to cross on your right.

9 Almost immediately cross the footbridge over a stream and then turn right and continue walking parallel to Fen Lane. After a short distance the footpath meets Fen Lane.

10 Carefully cross Fen Lane and then follow FP 7/China Lane in a northerly direction. Pass Slough House to your right and FP 142 to your left. Continue walking north pass the fishing lake on your left and a small car park for fishing club members on your right. This short section can get a bit overgrown as you pass through the hedgerow and over the wooden bridge across the Mardyke.

11 Continue north with arable fields to your right and stream to your left. Where the stream bears left the footpath cuts north across the arable field to the eastern side of Field House. The footpath continues north for a further few hundred metres to a tunnel under the C2C Fenchurch St/Southend railway line.

12 Pass through the tunnel and then turn left into Freshwell Gardens, right into Witham Gardens and left into Chafford Gardens which has a few shops and a Post Office.

13 From Chafford Gardens turn left into Station Road and follow this to West Horndon Station. Station Road has a café, restaurant and Pub/Hotel.

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| | HOUSES & BUILDINGS |
| | FARM BUILDINGS |
| | TREES/HEDGES |
| | FARMLAND |
| | GRASSLAND |
| | SHRUB |
| | GOLF COURSE |
| | ROUTE |
| | RAILWAY |

Thames Chase Walk D2

Destination walk from: Davy Down to West Horndon Station
7 miles (approx)
3-4 hours (approx)

Big Green Destinations App for Android and iPhone

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Thames Chase

THAMES CHASE WALK

Thames Chase Trust

CHINA LANE, MAR DYKE, HING LAKE, SLOUGH

Thames Chase - Community Forest

Environmental improvements within the borders of Thames Chase Community Forest are all around you in the many green spaces that are enjoyed through its 40 sq miles of countryside. This landscape regeneration project is now being managed by the Thames Chase Trust.

The Forest Centre provides information about the Community Forest and a focus for community activities. There is a wide range of events to interest all ages - pick up a leaflet at the Forest Centre.

Opening Hours
Visitor Centre: Late March to October;
10am - 5pm every day;
November to Late March;
10am - 4pm each day;
Site: Daily; 8.30am - to dusk.

Car parking
A fixed daily donation to Thames Chase Trust payable at the ticket machine.

Thames Chase Walks are sponsored by Veolia North Thames Trust

For more information and to make bookings please ring 01708 642970 or call at The Thames Chase Forest Centre, Pike Lane, Uppminster RM14 3NS
E-mail: enquiries@thameschase.org.uk
Web site: www.thameschase.org.uk
Charity no. 1115627. Company No. 5687558

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Mardyke River Valley

The Mardyke River starts in the Brentwood Hills and runs southwards into the River Thames at Purfleet. It takes its name from the manor of Mardyke that, in the 14th century, lay south of Dagenham close to where the river now flows into the Thames. It is thought that the river originally joined the Thames farther east than today. As the sea receded, the River Thames lowered its level and moved its course south of the chalk belt. The Mardyke was not able to cut through the chalk ridge that ran east/west and so moved west through softer deposits and entered the Thames further upstream. It is thought that when the flow of the Mardyke first came in contact with the chalk outcrop it initially formed a lake. This expanded until it found an outlet along the northern edge of the chalk ridge at Stifford. Over time the lake waters drained leaving the flat fen areas of Orsett and Bulphan and the fen slowly covered with wet woodland. The Mardyke and its changing course has greatly influenced the development of land use through the fens and the settlements of Aveley, North and South Stifford, Orsett, North and South Ockendon and Bulphan. Following the draining of the lake, the wet woodland was gradually cleared to be used extensively for agriculture. It is also thought that the Mardyke was navigable as far as Bulphan as late as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries facilitating transportation of crops and grain to the Thames. Some records also indicate that drainage channels were dug to drain the land for grazing pastures.

The Mardyke has and still is subject to flooding and was said to be tidal up to and beyond Stifford Bridge as late as 1760. The name 'Stifford' is Anglo Saxon for ford (path that crosses a stream) and other place names such as Ford Place, Ship Lane, Stifford Clays, Fen Lane, Puddle Dock Farm, Fen Farm, etc. give clues to the nature of the landscape of the Mardyke Valley.

St. Mary's Church North Sifford

Building and repair works in the tower in 2005 uncovered the remains of an Anglo Saxon building. As the Domesday Survey of 1085 refers to 30 acres of Glebe land in Stifford it was believed that a church existed here before that date. For the whole millennium, Christians have worshipped in Stifford, but the first recorded rector is Ralph De Stifford of 1180. The name Stifford comes from Anglo Saxon. One source suggests stigford - a ford where a path crosses a stream, another suggests estinford - eastern ford. This would make sense as the Mardyke was then known as the Flete River. In Roman times it was navigable as far as Bulphan and ancient artefacts have been found in the river bed.

It is believed that St Mary's formed part of the Pilgrims' Way for the Canterbury Pilgrimages. Pilgrims travelled down Pilgrim's Lane to St Clement's Church in West Thurrock before crossing the Thames.

St Mary's is constructed of local sandstone from quarries at West Thurrock and Northfleet in Kent; flints, of which there is a local abundance, and lime mortar. The Church Tower is surmounted by an oak-shingled, broach spire.

The newly restored clock was originally made in 1885, but installed in St. Mary's in 1955 and converted to electrical winding in 1960's. The clock strikes the little bell housed on the outside of the steeple. Formerly, this was the Angelus bell, struck to let workers in the fields know when the bread and wine were consecrated for Holy Communion inside the Church. They would pause in their work, to pray, before continuing with the harvest.

The Fields of Peace

Ancient Stifford stands on a shelf overlooking a shallow valley carved out by the Mardyke river. On the south side of the Mardyke Bridge lies 'The Field of Peace' which is located between North Stifford Village and the Mardyke River. Sir Fielding Clarke and Lady Mary Milward Clarke once lived at Coppid Hall in North Stifford. Sir Fielding died in 1928, and his widow later donated the land to the elderly of the village on 19th June, 1933. The name derives from her wish that the field should be a place to 'sit in peace.' Davy Down and the Field of Peace form part of the Bridleway which runs from Ship Lane, Aveley, to Fen Lane Bulphan; a distance of 4.2 miles.

Coppid Hall

A large Queen Ann house built in 1756. A plaque set in the facade of the house says 'This house has been anciently called Coppid Hall'.

Ford Place

Ford Place, stands north of the Mardyke on Stifford Hill. The core of the building dates to around 1590 comprising a brick house,

originally half "H" plan, altered and extended in approximately 1655 in the Artisan Mannerist style with a Georgian west front constructed in 1747 by Mr John Archer Sish, a trustee of William Palmer's School in 1757. In or before 1689 the manor of Stifford, including Ford Place was, acquired by James Silverlocke whose family had been prominent in the parish since the 1630s. There followed a succession of tenants until after the Second World War when Mr Humphrey John Vellacott bought a long lease and divided the house into flats and developed part of the grounds for light industry.

Bulphan Fen

The Saxon word 'fan' or 'fann' has changed over the years to 'fen', meaning low, marshy land or a low-lying district. Bulphan has retained the sound 'phan' although it is sometimes spelt Bulvan. At the time of the Domesday survey it was called Bulgen meaning marshland in a fortified place. The land at Bulphan belonged to the Abbey of Barking. In the past, all the local farmers kept their own small boats on the flooded ditches of the fen in order to get about and continue working during the frequent times of flood, well into the 20th century. A local family history story is recounted of bargemen using the fen ditches to bring in supplies and return with farm produce in times of flood, during the early part of that century.

St Mary the Virgin, Bulphan

The present church was built in the 15th century. Christopher Harold in his book 'Exploring Thurrock' describes the church as follows: 'built of flint and rubble stone; there was major restoration in 1874/5. The south porch has some fine wood carving of Tudor roses and evangelistic symbols. Inside the door there is a panel depicting the Royal arms of the first Hanoverian period (1714-1801). The fine oak screen was not designed for its present position but its 15th century origin is unknown. There is modern glass in the north-east window of the nave in memory of Rev. Theodore Alphonse Teitelbaum, Rector 1903-1946. At the west end stands the impressive belfry constructed entirely of heavy timber.'

Bulphan Hall

The hall stood east of the church and further east the Manor House known as the Wick where lived Edward Bury, gentleman of the Kings Bedchamber and Justice of the Peace. In 1540 under Henry VIII Bulphan's fertile grassland was transferred to him. Along Fen Lane is Brandon Hall, the former Rectory, in Victorian Gothic red brick. Bulphan is rich in moated houses. On Ingrave Road are Garlesters and Appletons Farm (15th century) (now Ye Olde Plough House Motel) and Spring Farm on the Orsett Road which is moated on 3 sides.

Windmills

There are records of windmills throughout the Mardyke Valley from the late 1200s many with water mills. A windmill at Bumpstead manor in the 1700s was drowned when long pond was created at Belhus. Stifford was said to have had two ancient windmills and there were others recorded at Purfleet, Aveley and South Ockendon. The South Ockendon windmill was recorded in 1800 standing on a dam with a small water mill and a smock mill was still in place until the 1950s when it was blown down in a storm.

Davy Down

Before opening as a riverside park, Davy Down had a history of farming dating back to at least 1730. Farmed by the Davy family the surrounding hills have been historically classified as downland, hence, Davy Down. More recently the area was used for market gardening but this was abandoned when the new A13 road was built, splitting the land in half. This area now acts as a floodplain and stores water that might otherwise flow into the River Thames and contribute to flooding in other areas where the effects may be damaging. The floodplain lies at the bottom of a relatively steep sided valley that is covered by ancient woodland.

Davy Down Cottage

This thatched cottage at the bottom of Pilgrims Lane was formally the Swan Inn and next to it stood the smithy before it was moved to the opposite side of the road.

Stifford Pumping Station

Stifford Pumping Station is an impressive building with beautiful arched windows. It was built by the Essex and Suffolk Water Company in the 1920s to extract water, which lies in an underground store. Known as an aquifer, this lies approximately 40 meters below the ground. Originally diesel engines (still housed in the pumping station) were used to pump over 3 million gallons of water a day. These have been replaced by an electric pump which still provides over 1 million gallons of water a day to surrounding households. The lower building, next to Back Lane is the Filter House. The pumping station is open to the public when the warden is on site and during Discover Davy Down open days.

Viaduct

The arches of the railway viaduct frame the valley and date from 1892. Known locally as the Fourteen Arches, the viaduct carries trains between Ockendon and Chafford Hundred.

West Horndon Station

The station was opened in 1886 as East Horndon on a new direct route from Barking to Pitsea, and the original station structure survives. It was renamed West Horndon in 1949.