Walking the Saxon Shore Way Through Medway

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The complete walk

This map shows the route of the Saxon Shore Way through Medway. The dots indicate the starting points for each of the seven walks contained within this booklet.

For those wishing to use Ordnance Survey maps, the following cover the Medway area: Landranger Map 178 and Explorer Maps 148 and 163.



Walking the Saxon Shore Way Through Medway

The Countryside Access Charter (a summary)

Your rights of way are:

- Public footpaths on foot only. These are waymarked in yellow.
- Bridleways on foot, horseback and pedal cycle. These are waymarked in blue
- Byways all traffic. These are waymarked in red.
- RUPPs –roads used as public paths are currently undergoing reclassification.

On rights of way you can:

- Take a pram, pushchair or wheelchair if practicable.
- Take a dog (on a lead or under close control).
- Take a short diversion around an illegal obstruction or remove it sufficiently to get past.

For your information:

Medway Council has a duty to protect, maintain and record rights of way and any problems encountered on them should be reported to: Medway Council, Development and Environment Department, Front Line Task Force, Compass Centre, Pembroke, Chatham Maritime, Chatham, Kent ME4 4YH. Tel: 01634 333333 Email: customer.services@medway.gov.uk

And, wherever you go, please follow: The Countryside Code:

- Be safe plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Introduction

The long distance path known as The Saxon Shore Way stretches from Gravesend to Hastings, some 160 miles from start to finish. Originally opened in 1980, it has since been in parts re-routed and extended. Where possible it uses existing Public Rights of Way and allows the walker to follow roughly the coastline as it was around 1500 years ago. The way takes its name from the line of fortifications built along the southern and eastern coasts by the Romans in the third century AD. Originally believed to have been built to protect Britain from marauding tribes such as the Saxons, new research has concluded that they were more than likely fortified ports. South East Britain had traded with Europe since at least the late Bronze Age and it would have been only natural for this to have continued throughout the Roman period.

The 26 miles of the route passing through Medway have been divided into seven sections. Six of the sections are 5 miles or less in length. Each section can provide for an enjoyable day out and offers the walker something different. From the desolate marshland between Cliffe and High Halstow, the busy streets of Rochester and Chatham to the peaceful riverside of lower Gillingham.



WALK

Cliffe to Cooling

DISTANCE: 6.3 miles (10.1km) LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Easy MINIMUM TIME: 2.5 hours (approx)

For the purposes of this book, the Saxon Shore Way starts at the local authority boundary of Gravesham and Medway. Access to here is from nearby Salt Lane* (see map). Follow this road back to the first junction on your right (left from Cliffe Village) and continue along the public footpath to the mineral railway crossing, where you turn right again. The path then passes between the gravel works and onwards to the river's edge. Here, the mudflats exposed at low tide offer a vast bird table for the hundreds of thousands of wetland birds that use the Greater Thames Estuary. This section of shoreline provides an opportunity to see the important industrial activity which has changed the landscape. The clay quarries to your right were dug to support the cement industry, resulting in flooded lagoons into which dredged mud from the River Thames is disposed. These artificial lagoons provide valuable habitat plants, insect and birds. Continuing onwards, you pass the wreck of the



* Parking available here or Cliffe Village see map on page 7.

Illustration: Marshland near Courtsole Farm

Cliffe to Cooling

'Hans Egede (1) and soon arrive at Cliffe Fort (2), built in 1800 as part of the defence system guarding the Thames. Now without use or function, the building is home to roosting birds and a variety of plants.

Continue past the conveyor that is used to transport imported sand and gravel from the ships to the Brett's site.

The path now turns inland following the line of the Cliffe Creek. It is always worth peering over the sea wall to see the bird life. At low tide, birds such as redshank, dunlin, grey plover and ringed plover can been seen feeding on the exposed mud, an extremely rich source of food for wetland birds, containing numerous insects. Each square metre of mud supports over 50,000 small snails and is thought to be more productive than a tropical rainforest.

To your left are Cliffe Pits and Pools (**3**), once neglected but now owned and managed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds as a nature reserve. These lagoons, salty by nature, support many important breeding and wintering birds. The track below the chalk cliff and to the right of you is called Salt Lane – no doubt a reference to the historic manufacturing of salt in the area.

Continue along Pickle's Way, which offers far reaching views across the North Kent Marshes. Here the ditches, which are so characteristic of the marshland landscape, can



be seen. As well as providing an important habitat for plants, dragonflies and water voles. North Kent is one of the country's most important strongholds for water voles – a species that has experienced a 95% drop in population numbers , they are used for drainage and as wet fences to control cattle movements.

After passing through Cliffe with its impressive church of St Helen's (4), pubs and village shop, the Saxon Shore Way crosses slightly higher arable land. Here red legged and the less common grey partridge can be found along with hares. The latter cross the open landscape at tremendous speed (up to 70km per hour) and are considerably larger than rabbits. Look for their taller, more erect ears, and their running rather than hopping movement.

Heading on towards Cooling the path takes walkers from arable land and on to grazed grassland. Shortly before Cooling Castle is a good example of a 'wet pasture' – a grassy, wet field that is grazed cattle or sheep. Here the ditches here are lined with tall crack willow, which as their name suggests, tend to collapse upon maturity. The collapsing is a means of spreading, and any part of the willow touching the ground will create new roots and growth.





WALK

Cooling to High Halstow (Fenn Corner)

Cooling Castle (5) is a manor house fortified by John de Cobham in 1380. At this time in history, marauding French and Spanish soldiers were burning and pillaging coastal towns and villages. Remnants of the moat can be seen to the west and north of the Castle. Its geographical context in 1380 would have been very different from today – to the north would have been extensive salt marsh and wetlands. The castle, which is sited on the higher lands, reflects the historic Saxon Shoreline.

Cooling Church **(6)** dates mainly from the 13th century and has an interesting vestry covered in shells. Its churchyard is the unassuming location of the 13 lozenged-shaped body stones made famous by Dickens in Great Expectations, although in the book there are only five. The graves







Illustration: Barn at Bromhey Farm

are of children who probably died of marsh fever or Ague, now known as malaria, as carried by the marsh mosquito.

Beyond Cooling the walk enters orchard country. The siting of the orchards maps drier lands and offer blossom in late April and colourful fruit in September. The orchard trees are cathedral like with pillars supporting a canopy roof. Bromhey Farm (7), owned by the RSPB, provides unsurpassed views across the marshes and Northward Hill. Excavations in 1920s and 30s found evidence of Iron Age and Roman pottery kilns, providing an insight into the marshes distant industry.

The steep walk up the hill to the woods of Northwood Hill offers superb views across to Essex and central London. It is easy to forget that, with its feeling of isolation, this area is so close to London and Medway. Northward Hill **(8)** is as the name suggests – on the northward side of High Halstow. Here, old oaks provide suitable conditions for nesting and roosting Grey Herons – the heronry is the largest in England. Roosting alongside the herons is the once rare, white egret. These can be seen in increasing numbers throughout the year. Less than ten years ago walkers would have been lucky to have see just one egret, but now up to seventy can be seen at any one time. While in the wood, also listen out for the familiar drumming sound of woodpeckers. Northward Hill is the largest and oldest RSPB nature reserve, established in 1955. It is only one of two woodlands along the route through Medway, the other being at Upnor. From there you would have to walk all the way to Hastings before you found another.



Cooling to High Halstow (Fenn Corner)

The path continues across arable fields to Clinchstreet Farm. Here for the first time on the walk, you can see across the peninsula to the chimney of the Grain Power Station. This stands to the south of the village of Grain on the edge of the Medway Estuary, whose water is used for cooling. The water intake catches fish, providing a useful record of the type and number using the estuary. In the late 1960s, local people were concerned about the effects of the smoke. A helicopter dangled a pair of tights above the chimney to assess damage. No one remembers the result – but not hanging from helicopters above chimneys is probably good advice. At the footpath crossroads, turn right into Bessie's Lane, named after Elizabeth I. This ancient green lane is believed to be the route she used on her journey from London to Chatham Dockyard. Her boat would have moored off the coast at Egypt Bay, a remote spot, popular with smugglers in the 18th century.







WALK

High Halstow to Hoo

The path crosses the main A228 at Fenn Street. Fenn is a term used to describe a wet marshy woodland. Then pass down the side of the garage and a complicated area of back gardens and paddocks. The path now joins Roper's Green Lane – an old term for an unmade road. Fringed with trees and shrubs, the lane provides dense shade on the hottest day and a contrast to the familiar open aspect of the walk. Walkers along the Lane may spot the speckle wood butterfly and hear the song of dunnock and wren.

Nearing the train line the path opens at the railway known as the mineral line and was used to serve the sand and gravel pits close to Grain. The large arable fields contain flower rich verges and offer views across Medway from the Isle of Sheppey to the Kent Downs. The landmarks around the Medway estuary can seem to appear in different positions as you walk the path.

DISTANCE: 4.2 miles (6.7km) - or 3.3 miles (5.3km)* LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Moderate MINIMUM TIME: 2 hours (approx) - 1.5 hours*





High Halstow to Hoo

Continue onwards past Roper's Farm, Tile Barn Farm and then down to the Stoke Road, which must be crossed with care. The path follows quiet tracks past numerous farm houses, most of which no longer have links to the ownership or management of the surrounding land. They are reminder of when farms were small and worked by many local hands. Just before Abbots Court Rd the path divides into two. This allows you to either follow the shoreline at low tide or continue over higher ground through Hoo and on towards Beacon Hill.

Should you choose the higher route, you will find the village is still relatively small and provides parking, refreshments and toilets. Mentioned in the Domesday book its full name since 1968 is Hoo St Werburgh. A devoutly religious Saxon princess, Werburgh was born sometime between 640 and 650AD and has a feast day celebrated on 3rd February. In 1513 a Chester monk called Henry Bradshaw included a local legend in his book about her life. The legend began 'Another miracle was done in Kent in the village of Hoo'. The church (10), standing on the site of its Saxon predecessor dates mainly from the 14th century, though Roman tiles and bricks have been reused throughout. In the churchyard stand five yew trees. Four were planted in 1836, the fifth is said to be between six hundred to a thousand years old with a girth of over 25ft. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries Hoo was a hive of industrial activity. Using the surrounding agricultural land for raw materials, bricks



and pottery were produced and gravel extracted. By the 1930s these industries were in decline and once again Hoo became a quiet backwater.

To continue along the lower route, head towards the sea wall where the path turns eastwards. Here, along the mud banks the derelict hulks of disused barges are slowly dismantled by time and tide. Strangely romantic, they are a cross between an archaeological site and a graveyard. Birds breed and roost on them, crustaceans live on them and seaweeds anchor to their timbers. Across the water stands Hoo Island, owned by Medway Ports and used to dispose of river dredgings. In the distance can be seen Hoo Fort **(9)** built in 1871, with its round and solid wall braced against the weather. Hoo Marina is a real hive of river related activity and there is always something of interest going on.





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Hoo to Upnor

DISTANCE: 2.21 miles (3.5km) / 1.85 miles (2.9km)* LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Easy / Moderate* MINIMUM TIME: 1 hour (approx) both routes

Beyond Hoo Marina, the path soon becomes a narrow pebble beach tucked between the continuously encroaching river and its erosion scarred bank, heavy with trees. Emerging from the woodland stand the mellow red bricked remains of Cockham Wood fort **(11)**. Built in 1669 by Sir Bernard de Gomme as direct result of the Dutch raid on Chatham Dockyard in 1667. Never having seen action, it was considered redundant by 1778 and all 48 of its guns were removed, allowing it to fall into quiet disrepair. Scattered along the beach are the remains of clay pipes, earthenware jars, old glass bottles and larger remains of dead trees. In amongst all this, a Second World War pillbox lies stranded, its foundations long since washed away. As the beach opens out, Upnor Castle can be seen in the distance and the walker will see a similar viewpoint to that used by JMW Turner (1775-1851).



Hoo to Upnor

A frequent visitor to Medway, his painting of the castle, completed in about 1831 is now on display in The Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester. Upon reaching Lower Upnor, the path climbs up onto the river front and past the Arethusa Venture Centre. Named after a four masted barque which used to be moored here and is now on display in a New York museum. Here two obelisks known as the London stones can also be seen. These are a reminder of the time when the City of London's Fishermen were given the rights to fish on the northern side of the river, from here to Yantlet creek, where the smaller of the stones, dated 1204, is thought to have come from. They were also the scene of festivities, during the Lord Mayor's annual visit, at which it soon become customary to create a Mayor and Mayoress of Upnor.

All along the length of Lower Upnor, the waters of the Medway lap against row upon row of sailing boats, a sign of the increased leisure use of the river. However 150 years ago in their place would have been the infamous prison hulks, used initially to hold French prisoners of war, many of whom were buried on nearby St Mary's Island. It was also from one of these that Magwitch made his escape in Charles Dickens novel Great Expectations. However for the purposes of the novel it had been relocated to the Thames. From the village the path continues along higher ground, shaded mainly by mature sycamore trees until it turns into the picturesque cobbled high street of Upper Upnor. Here it is flanked by tall slim brick and weatherboarded houses, leading back down towards the waters edge. Once a thriving riverside resort up until the 1930s, when the Admiralty closed its beach for the duration of World War II, it owes its existence to the castle(12). Built between 1560 and 1564 and standing virtually complete, it was designed to defend Chatham Dockyard from attack. Unfortunately, it proved ineffective, when in 1667 the Dutch fleet under the command of Admiral De Ruyter, sailed up the river and destroyed much of the anchored British fleet. Capturing the 100 gun Royal Charles, which had originally been brought back from the Netherlands by Charles II, upon his

restoration in 1660. The diarist Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), then employed by the naval board, writing in the days following the raid, noted of the castle's gunners that "they themselves shot until they had hardly a gun left". From the castle, the path follows the river's edge before continuing back inland, sandwiched between Tower Hill and an MOD compound, then on towards Frindsbury across Anthonys Way.







WALK

Upnor to Strood

From Anthonys Way, a short climb leads you into Parsonage Lane, where to your right stands Manor Farm, with its late Georgian farmhouse and early mediaeval Tithe Barn **(13).** A truly impressive structure standing at 64 metres in length, it is believed to be the longest barn of its type in England. Continuing towards Strood, you pass Frindsbury's parish church of All Saints **(14)**, which although much altered through the centuries is Norman in origin, dating from 1127. An interesting feature of the church is the southern side of the surrounding wall. Here between the vaults of Moore and Shepherd and also to the west of the Baker vault, carved into the brickwork can be found details of notable local and national events throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From the church, the path descends steeply down Donkey hill, stranded between two enormous former chalk quarry pits, into Strood.



DISTANCE: 1.9 miles (3km) LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Easy MINIMUM TIME: 50 mins (approx)



Upnor to Strood

Once a small fishing settlement and part of the parish of Frindsbury, it is named after the marshy area upon which it stands. Its townsmen also had the dubious honour of being cursed by Thomas Becket (c.1120 – 1170) the Archbishop of Canterbury, for cutting the tail off his horse.

From the bottom of the hill, a long narrow path leads you into Canal Road, named after the Thames and Medway canal **(15)**, which was opened in 1824 to provide a short cut between the two rivers. Unfortunately, it was not a financial success and was sold to the South Eastern Railway in 1846 and incorporated it into the railway line. Today only a very small section remains and can be seen as you enter the road from the path adjacent to Wingrove Drive. Towards the end of the 19th century, much of the riverside along Canal Road was lined with warehouses and its pier was used by the paddle steamers. From here, it was possible to travel to Southend, Sheerness, Herne Bay and Upnor. Today the only journeys from here are in the mind and the pier offers fine views across the water towards Rochester and Chatham. Continuing towards the railway bridge, watermill House is a reminder that a Watermill once stood here, with a millpond filled by the river's rising tide.

The existing bridge was opened on May 14th 1914 in response to the increasing amount of road and river traffic. It is the last of at least four that have stood between Strood and Rochester. The earliest for which evidence an be found dates back to the Roman period. One of its wooden piers was discovered by workmen in 1851. This was then replaced by a wooden bridge around 960AD. This bridge included a tiny stone bridge chapel (16), which stood on the Strood side of the river and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. A tale from the time recounts how a troubadour, blown into the river whilst still playing his harp, was saved after his calls to the virgin for help were answered. By 1391 the bridge had been rebuilt in stone and with Rochester a major part of the well trodden Pilgrims route, a new bridge chapel (15), dedicated once again to the Virgin Mary was also built on the corner of what is now the esplanade. It

can still be seen today. After remaining in situ for nearly 500 years, the medieval bridge was finally replaced in 1856 by a bridge designed by Sir William Cubitt, which was rebuilt less than 60 years later. An additional road bridge for Rochester-bound traffic was opened in 1970.







Rochester (via Chatham) to Gillingham

Across the bridge the path turns right into the esplanade past the Bridge Chapel and on towards the castle **(18)**. Begun in 1087 by Bishop Gundulf, who used what remained of the original Roman structure, it is one of the earliest stone castles built in England. The imposing keep was added by William De Corbeil, who was granted custody of the castle by Henry 1 in 1127. Turn up into Bakers Walk, where on your right you will come across Satis House. Though much altered, this was once the home of DISTANCE: 5 miles (8km) LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Easy MINIMUM TIME: 2 hours (approx)

Richard Watts who built The Poor Travellers House **(19)** in the High St. Elizabeth I stayed here in 1573 and is said to have expressed her gratitude with the latin word 'Satis' (enough).

Turning back towards Rochester High St, England's second oldest cathedral (**20**) stands ahead. Founded in 604 by Bishop Justus, the present building was started in 1080 by Bishop Gundulf and consecrated on Ascension Day 1130. It was here also in 1540 that Henry VIII first met Anne of Cleves.





Rochester (via Chatham) to Gillingham

Retaining an atmosphere of real peace, it contains several fine medieval wall paintings as well as many wonderful sculptures and carvings including the mysterious 'Rude Man' above the main entrance door. Minor Canon Row is a terrace of early 18th century clergy houses. Number 2 was the early home of the actress Dame Sybil Thorndike and her brother Russell, who wrote the 'Dr Syn' smuggling novels. The street also appears in Charles Dickens last unfinished novel 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood'.

The path then proceeds through the Vines, once the site of the Cathedral monks' vineyard. Facing the park on your left stands Restoration House (**21**) *see previous map*. This is an impressive Elizabethan Mansion where Charles II stayed on the eve of his restoration in 1660. Beautifully restored, it is occasionally open to the



public during the summer. The area to the south of here is known as Troy Town and is believed by some to have once been the site of an ancient turf maze. Continuing up to Star Hill the path then crosses Jacksons playing field where it climbs up towards Fort Pitt Hill. Standing on the hill on your right, is Fort Pitt Grammar School for Girls. This was originally built between 1805 and 1819 as part of the extension eastwards of the Dockyard defences known as the Chatham Lines. By 1828 it had become a hospital and in 1860 Florence Nightingale started the first Army Medical School here. The adjacent Victoria Park offers superb views across the Medway as you descend into New Road, built in 1772. This was an alternative route between Rochester and Chatham and used by Vincent Van Gogh in 1876 on his journey from Ramsgate to London.

A small detour from the bottom of Hammond Hill will take you to St Bartholomews chapel **(22)**. Now redundant, it was built in 1078 as part of Bishop Gundulf's hospital which moved to its current location in New Road in 1863. Opposite the chapel stands the Sir John Hawkins hospital founded in 1594 and rebuilt in 1789. Originally for poor mariners, their wives and widows, the building still provides sheltered accommodation. The walk along the High Street may seem rather unimpressive, but look above the shop fronts and a wide range of late Georgian and Victorian buildings are revealed, many awaiting sympathetic restoration. As you turn into Medway Street follow the sign to Sun Pier. This was built in 1885 replacing an earlier structure on the same site. With excellent views across the river, it was here that artist Richard Dadd, born in Chatham in 1817, painted one of his earliest pictures of Medway still in existence. Although many of his later paintings, completed whilst incarcerated in Broadmoor and Bethlem hospital for the murder of his father, incorporated many of his memories of local scenes and buildings.

From the pier, continue towards Chatham to Globe Lane and the tree lined area called the paddock. This was once used for grazing sheep. It stands in front of the old Town Hall which is now used as The Brook Theatre **(23)**. Opened by Lord Roseberry in January 1900, the old Town Hall stands on the corner of The Brook. As its name implies, this was once a waterway, now buried deep beneath the existing road. The area next to the river originally formed part of the Dockyard and was known as Gun Wharf.



Rochester (via Chatham) to Gillingham

For many years it was omitted from Ordnance Survey maps and surrounded by a high brick wall. A short detour from here to the river brings you to the Command House (24), originally the residence of the Officer in charge of ordnance facilities in Chatham and now an ideally situated public house. Behind it and back on the path, stand St Mary's Church and Fort Amherst. St Mary's (25) was originally the parish church for the medieval village of Chatham. Having been extensively rebuilt over the years, it bears little resemblance to its original Norman design.

Fort Amherst **(26)** was built as a result of the devastating raid by the Dutch in 1667. However work didn't actually begin until nearly 100 years later and by 1820 the fort was defensively obsolete. Purchased from the MOD in 1980 by The Fort Amherst & Lines Trust, about half of the 20 acre site is currently open to the public.

Continuing towards Brompton, look out on your right for the original colonnading which was part of the entrance to the Soldiers Institute and Garrison Club, completed in 1861. This raised section of the route also offers views across the river, glimpsed above and between the buildings that line its frontage. Ahead to your left stands the Historic Dockyard's (27) main gate, with its royal coat of arms for George I. The closure of the dockyard in 1984 ended nearly 400 hundred years of continuous use of the site as an active naval base. Whilst much of the site has now been redeveloped, the area beyond the main gate remains virtually untouched. With a wealth of original 18th and 19th century buildings amongst its attractions it offers a fascinating insight into the dockyard's history. Turning right up the steps, the path leads you into Brompton, built mainly in the eighteenth century to house the troops protecting the dockyard. Its streets contain a wealth of Georgian properties and public houses. Proceeding onwards, the path soon reaches the vast area of chalk grassland known as the Great Lines (28). Until the 18th century, a sea of burial mounds and levelled graves occupied the area, destroyed during building works for the surrounding fortifications.



Fortunately, before their destruction they had been excavated and recorded by Captain James Douglas, who published his findings in 1793. From here the path follows Marlborough Rd down into the bustling shopping area of the High Street. This part of Gillingham was once known as New Brompton, with many of its streets built for those who worked in the Dockyard. At the end of the High Street stands the railway station. The line between Chatham and Faversham was opened on 25 January 1858 followed two months later by its continuation over the river to Strood. Continue down Railway Street where a row of grand 19th century houses peer over the station wall, between a small avenue of trees. Many Victorian streets contain similar rows of trees, which are not only attractive but also absorb pollution and are known to have a calming effect on people. From Kingswood Road the path heads north towards the river and crosses over the disused railway line that once served the dockyard. From Parr Avenue continue along Church Path, an ancient route between Brompton and St Mary's Church. The path was once known as Twelve Stile Path on account of the number of stiles encountered when crossing what were then fields.





WALK

Gillingham to Upchurch

DISTANCE: 5.3 miles (8.5km) LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Easy MINIMUM TIME: 2 hours (approx)

Gillingham began life has a small fishing village and is first mentioned in the Domesday book in 1086 as Gelingeham. It's origins lie in the area around St Mary's Church (29), which is dedicated to St Mary Magedelene. In the Middle Ages, a figure of 'Our Lady of Gillingham' was believed to work miracles, but it is likely that this was an elaborate tale for the benefit of pilgrims on the way to the tomb of St Thomas Beckett in Canterbury. It was also here that Will Adams, possibly Gillingham's most famous inhabitant, was baptised in 1564. His exploits in Japan formed the basis of James Clavell's historical novel 'Shogun', which was also made into a popular TV series. From the church the path descends down towards the river and into the outdoor leisure area known as The Strand, first opened in 1896. From here, turn right and continue alongside the river, where barges dominate the foreground of the Medway Cruising Club. In the distance stand the forts of Hoo (30) and Darnet (31).



Illustration: St Mary's Church, Gillingham



Gillingham to Upchurch

The historical industries of this area included cement and brick making. The clay was dug from the estuary by workers know as 'muddies' and transported along the estuary by barge.

Along Waterside Lane are a few remaining houses from the area's days as a fishing community and to the south is Gads Hill, possibly derived from the old English Godes Hill, meaning a pagan place of worship. Continue towards Owens Way, where you pass between several factories

before returning to the waters edge and on to Copperhouse marshes. The name is derived from area's 19th century copperas works. A form of iron sulphate, it was used both in the woollens and dye industries as well as being a key ingredient in the production of nitric and sulphuric acid. Continue towards the Riverside Country Park, passing the area to your right known as Eastcourt Meadows, a haven for butterflies and wildflowers and until the 1950s the site of a municipal rubbish tip. To your left, is the peninsula known as Horrid Hill (**32**), which provides excellent panoramic



views of the estuary and is a very accessible viewpoint for watching birds. Once an island, it was later joined to the mainland by a causeway, to allow a horse drawn railway to reach the cement works that stood here. It is believed that its name refers to the 19th century prison hulks once moored here and whose occupants were buried in the surrounding marshes. Common seals have also been spotted here at high tide. Once across the car park, take a moment to visit Sharps Green Pond (33), a great area in the summer for wildlife such as dragonflies and frogs. Continue along the path where Kingsnorth Power Station dominates the estuary landscape and where you will shortly come across the Country Park's visitor centre (34). This is an ideal opportunity to relax, obtain refreshments and learn more about the area.

Gillingham to Upchurch

The path from here continues towards Bloors Wharf, Once a breakers yard for ships, it was last used as a scrapyard, before its incorporation in the country park. Turning left just before the road the path continues towards Motney Hill, a sandy rise projecting out into the river. Just beyond the path, to rear of the row of houses are the Motney reed beds. One of only 92 in the UK and covering over 2 hectares, they provide a valuable springtime breeding ground for birds. Evidence of Neolithic occupation, has also been found in the surrounding area. The path then skirts the edge of the works before continuing back inland alongside the Creek towards Otterham Quay, our final destination.





Local information

Medway Council Highway Network Management Service

Provides information on all aspects of Public Rights of Way within Medway		
Compass Centre, Pembroke, Chatham Maritime CHATHAM Kent ME4 4YH	(01634) 333333	www.medway.gov.uk
Medway Visitor Information Centre		
Provides information on local attractions (including opening hours), events and accomm	odation.	
Opening Hours:- Mon – Sat 10am – 5pm, Sunday 10.30am – 5pm		
95 High Street, ROCHESTER, Kent ME1 1LX	(01634) 843666	www.medway.gov.uk
National Rail		
Provides information on rail timetables and fares across the UK. No ticket sales.	(08457) 48 49 50	www.nationalrail.co.uk
National Express Ltd.		
Provides information on bus timetables and ticket sales across the UK.		
Ensign Court, 4 Vicarage Road, Edgbaston, BIRMINGHAM B15 3ES	(08705) 80 80 80	www.nationalexpress.com
Traveline		
For public transport route and timetable information.	(0870) 608 2 608	www.traveline.org.uk
	(0870) 608 2 608	www.traveline.org.uk
Useful organisations		
CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England)		

A registered charity that campaigns to protect and enhance the countryside for the benefit of all. CPRE, Kent Office, 24 Evegate Park Barn, Evegate, Smeeth, ASHFORD, Kent TN25 6SX (01303) 815180 www.cprekent.org.uk

English Heritage

The Governments Statutory advisor on the historic environment ensuring that it is		
properly maintained and cared for.		
Customer Services Department, PO Box 569 SWINDON, SN2 2YP	(0870) 333 1181	www.english-heritage.org.uk

The Environment Agency

The public body responsible for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. Customer Enquiry Line (0870

(08708) 506506 www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Medway & Swale Estuary Partnership

The partnership was formed to address issues affecting the economic, environmental		
and social well being of the estuary.		
First Floor, The Alexander Centre, 15-17 Preston Street, FAVERSHAM, Kent ME13 8NY	(01795) 590112	www.medway-swale.org.uk

The Open Spaces Society

Britain's oldest conservation society dedicated to protecting common land and		
Public Rights of Way.		
25A Bell Street, HENLEY-ON-THAMES, Oxfordshire RG9 2BA	(01491) 573535	www.oss.org.uk

Plantlife

A UK charity dedicated to conserving all forms of plant life in its natural habitat.14 Rollestone Street, SALISBURY, Wiltshire SP1 1DX(01722) 342730www.plantlife.org.uk

The Ramblers

Britain's biggest organisation working for walkers and their continued enjoyment of the countryside. Main Office, 2nd Floor, Camelford House, 87-90 Albert Embankment, LONDON, SE1 7TW (0207) 3398500 www.ramblers.org.uk

RSPB

A UK charity working to secure a healthy environment for birds and wildlife. The Lodge, SANDY, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL

(01767) 680551 www.rspb.org.uk



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