

A wide-angle photograph of a coastal scene. In the foreground, there's a grassy field with a large, rusted metal shipwreck. To the left, a small wooden structure is partially submerged in the water. The middle ground shows a calm body of water with a distant city skyline on the horizon. The sky is filled with a large flock of birds flying in a V-formation. A semi-transparent grey box with a white border is centered in the upper half of the image, containing the title text.

Walking the Saxon Shore Way through Medway

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Key to maps



Gradient down



Gradient up



Tourist information centre



Car parking



Viewpoint



Toilet



Refreshments



Railway station



Point of interest (open to the public)



Point of interest



Pub



Caution



Disabled route

The complete walk

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

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.
- Restricted byways – unless stated, on foot, horseback, pedal cycle and non-mechanically propelled vehicles.

On rights of way you can:

- Take a pram, pushchair or wheelchair if practical.
- 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, Public Rights of Way Team, Frontline Services, Regeneration, Community and Culture, Annex B, Civic Centre, Strood, Kent ME2 4AU

Phone: 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 1,500 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, so 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 five miles or less in length. Each section offers the walker something different - from the atmospheric marshland between Cliffe and High Halstow, the busy streets of Rochester and Chatham to the stunning estuary views along the riverside path from lower Gillingham ■





Cliffe to Cooling

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

For the purpose of this guide, the Saxon Shore Way starts at the local authority boundary of Gravesham and Medway. Access to here is from the nearby RSPB car park in Salt Lane* (see map). Follow the road back to the first junction on your right (left from Cliffe village,) continuing along the public footpath to the mineral railway crossing, before turning right again. From here the path passes between the gravel works and onwards to the river's edge. 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 also 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 lagoons provide a valuable habitat for plants, insects and birds.



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

Cliffe to Cooling

Continuing onwards, you pass the wreck of the Hans Egede **(1)** and arrive at Cliffe Fort **(2)**, built in 1860. The fort is one of three built to defend the Thames. To your left are the remains of the Brennan torpedo rails used to launch the world's first guided missile. Continue past the fort and then underneath the conveyor that is used to transport imported sand and gravel from the ships to the nearby works in Salt Lane.

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 and ringed plover can be 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)**, long neglected but now owned and managed by the RSPB as a nature reserve. Salty by nature, the lagoons support large numbers of important breeding and wintering birds. The track below the chalk cliff and to the right of you is 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, the ditches act as wet fences.

After passing through Cliffe with its impressive church of St Helen's (4) built around 1260, 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 by cattle or sheep. The ditches here are lined with tall crack willows, 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 ■





Cooling to High Halstow (Fenn Corner)

DISTANCE: 3.6 miles (5.7km) • LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: **Moderate** • MINIMUM TIME: 1.5 hours (approx)

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 this historic 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 Charles Dickens in *Great Expectations*,



Cooling to High Halstow (Fenn Corner)



although in the book there are only five. The graves 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 offers 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 the 1920s and 1930s 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 Northward 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, little egret. These can be seen in increasing numbers throughout the year. Less than 10 years ago walkers would have been lucky to have seen just one, but now up to 70 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.

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, a reference to Elizabeth I, sometimes referred to as Good Queen Bess. This ancient green lane is traditionally believed to be the route used on her journey from London to Chatham Dockyard in 1573. Her boat would have moored off the coast at Egypt Bay, a remote spot, popular with smugglers in the 18th century ■





High Halstow to Hoo

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

Take care as the path crosses the main A228 at Fenn Street. Fenn is a term used to describe a wet marshy woodland. Pass down the side of the garage through a maze of back gardens and paddocks. At the last garden the path turns right along the drive into Roper's Green Lane. Fringed with trees and shrubs, it provides dense shade on the hottest day and a contrast to the familiar open aspect of the walk. Along the way you may spot the speckle wood butterfly or hear the song of dunnock and wren.

Nearing the train line the path opens at the railway known as the mineral line, originally 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.



* See higher route on page 14

High Halstow to Hoo

Continue onwards past Roper's Farm, Tile Barn Farm and then down to 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 a reminder of when farms were small and worked by many local hands. Just before Abbots Court Road 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. St Werburgh was a devoutly

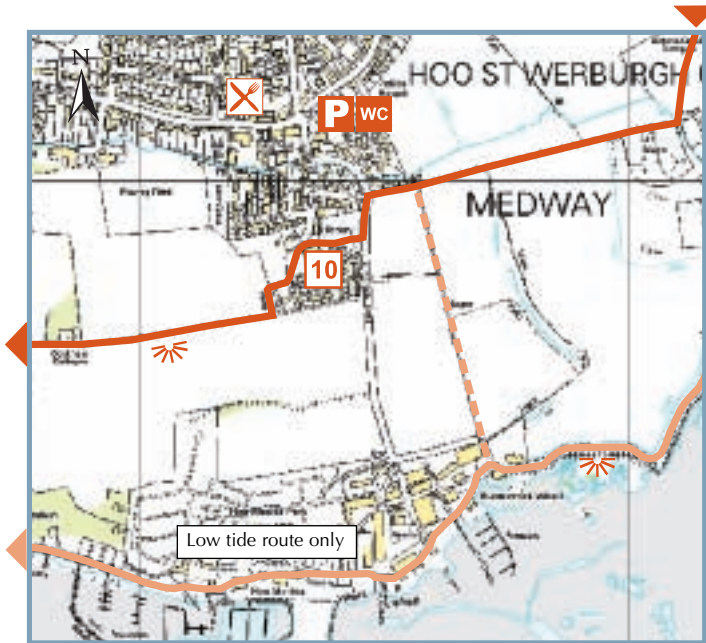
religious princess believed to have been responsible for an unrecorded miracle in the village in the seventh century.

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. There are five yew trees in the churchyard, of which one is believed to be more than 1,000-years-old. The artist William Hogarth visited the church



in 1793 during his walking tour of the peninsula and the Isle of Sheppey. 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, with Hoo once again becoming a quiet backwater.

To continue along the lower route, head towards the sea wall where the path turns eastwards. Along the mud banks the derelict hulks of disused barges are slowly dismantled by time and tide. Strangely romantic, they are a mixture between an archaeological site, graveyard and wildlife habitat. Across the water stands Hoo Island, owned by Medway Ports and used to dispose of river dredgings. On its eastern edge stands 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 ■



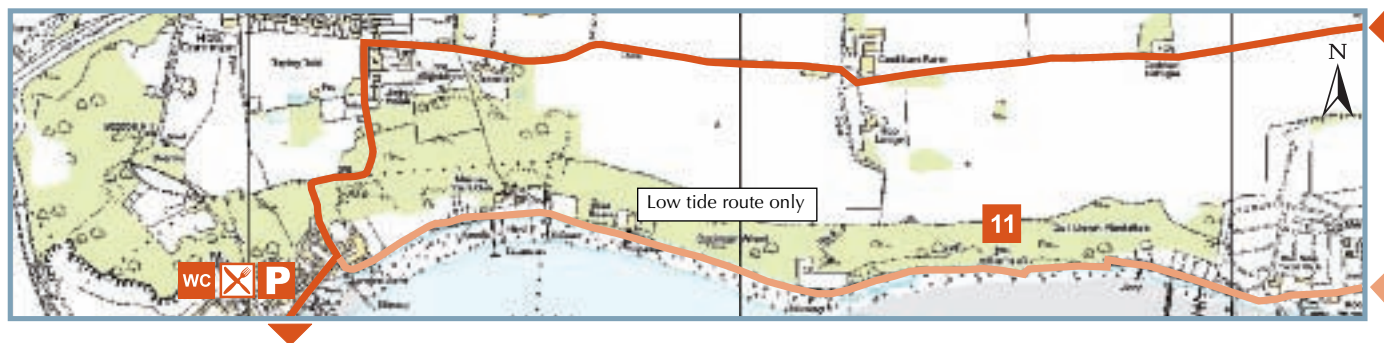


Hoo to Upnor

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 a 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 the larger remains of dead trees. Among 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).



* Lower route



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 on to the river front and past the Arethusa Venture Centre. It is named after a four-masted barque originally moored here and now on display in a New York museum. Two obelisks, known as the London stones, can also be seen here. 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 became 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 who 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*. Although for the purposes of the novel it was relocated in 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 water's edge. Once a thriving riverside resort up until the Admiralty closed its beach for the duration of the Second World War, 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 a Ministry of Defence compound, then on towards Frindsbury across Anthony's Way ■





Upnor to Strood

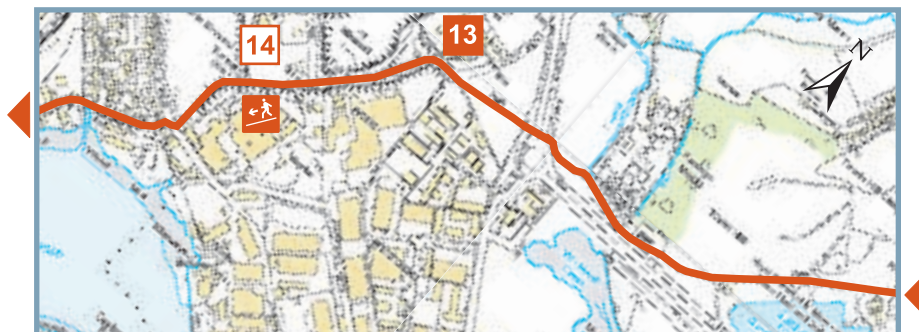
DISTANCE: **1.9 miles (3km)** • LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: **Easy** • MINIMUM TIME: **50 mins (approx)**

From Anthony's Way, a short climb leads you into Parsonage Lane, where to your right stands Manor Farm, with its late Georgian farmhouse and early medieval tithe barn **(13)**. A truly impressive structure 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.

Originally 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



Upnor to Strood

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 next 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 opened on 14 May 1914 in response to the increasing amount of both road and river traffic. It is the last of at least four that have stood between Strood and



Rochester. The earliest for which evidence can 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 Mary 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 (17), 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 opened in 1970 ■





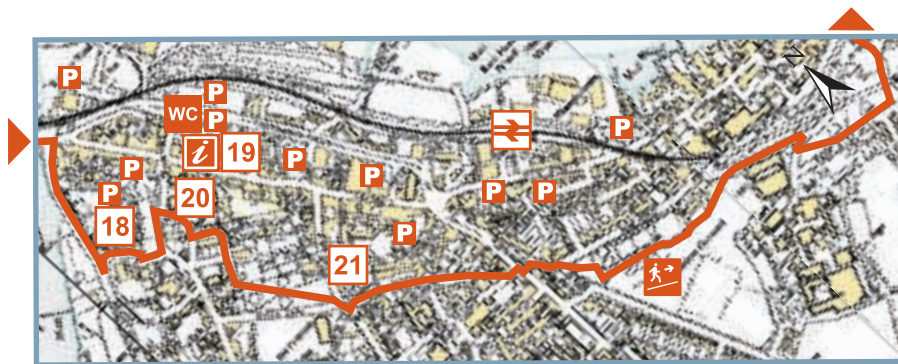
Rochester (via Chatham) to Gillingham

DISTANCE: 4.6 miles (7.4km) • LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Easy • MINIMUM TIME: 2 hours (approx)

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

Turning back towards Rochester High Street, 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.

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 two was the early home of the actress Dame Sybil Thorndike and her



Rochester to Gillingham

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 continues 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



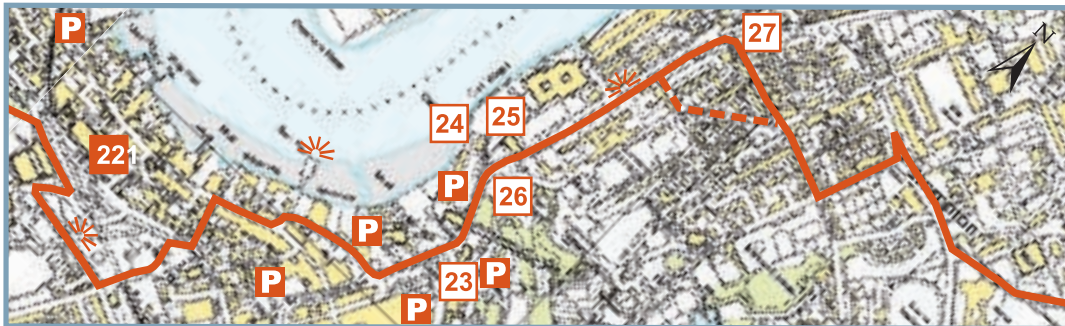
between 1805 and 1819 as part of the extension eastwards of the dockyard defences known as the Chatham Lines. By 1828 it had become a hospital and in 1860 Florence Nightingale started the first Army Medical School here. Victoria Park next door offers superb views across the Medway as you descend into 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 Bartholomew's 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 while incarcerated in Broadmoor and Bethlem Hospital for the murder of his father, incorporated his memories of local scenes and buildings.

From the pier, continue towards Chatham to Globe Lane and the tree lined area known as 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, it stands on the corner of The Brook. As the 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. For many years it was omitted from Ordnance Survey maps and surrounded by a high brick wall.

A short detour from here using the path next to St Mary's church, brings you to the Command House (24), originally the residence of the officer in charge of ordnance facilities,



Rochester to Gillingham

but now a riverside public house. St Mary's (25) was originally the parish church for the medieval village of Chatham. Extensively rebuilt over the years, today it bears little resemblance to its original design.

Across the road stands Fort Amherst (26), built as a result of the devastating Dutch raid in 1667, though construction work didn't actually begin until 100 years later. Unlike many forts of the period, it remained unaltered during the 19th century and is one of the best remaining examples of Georgian military architecture. From the fort continue past the statue of Lord Kitchener, who

spent part of his training as a royal engineer in Chatham. Between 1921 and 1958 the statue stood in Khartoum, before being re-erected here in 1960. As you head towards Brompton and just beyond the barracks that bear Lord Kitchener's name, look out on your right for the 19th century colonading, originally part of the entrance to the Soldiers' Institute and Garrison Club. This raised section of path also offers fleeting views across the river towards Rochester.

Before turning right up the steps to Brompton, ahead of you across the road, stands The Historic Dockyard's (27) main





entrance. Above the entrance is the royal coat of arms for George I. The closure of the dockyard in 1984 ended nearly 400 years of continuous use as an active naval base. Much of the site has now been re-developed, but the area beyond the main gate remains virtually untouched, with a wealth of 18th and 19th century buildings among its attractions.

Proceed up the steps into Brompton, built mainly in the 18th century to house troops protecting the dockyard. A number of the area's original Georgian properties remain, including The King George V public house, known originally as The Prince of Orange. Continue along Garden Street, until you reach the crossroads. Turn left and go down Mansion Row, where upon reaching Wood Street you turn left again, before using the pedestrian crossing to reach the other side. Turn right and head towards the traffic lights, where the path turns down into Prince Arthur Road. To your left and throughly recommended

stands The Royal Engineers Museum, which traces the history of military engineering as far back as 1066. Just beyond the museum is the new MidKent College, opened in 2009.

Upon reaching the next pedestrian crossing, continue across then uphill along Mill Road until you reach Saunders Street. Turn left here and continue along what originally formed part of Church Path (also once known as Twelve Stile path), an ancient route between Brompton and St Mary's Church. On reaching Victoria Street, turn left and head down to its junction with Burnt Oak Terrace. From here, turn right and cross over the disused railway line that once served the dockyard, then into Parr Avenue. Once again the route becomes part of Church Path until it reaches Ingram Road. Crossover and turn left along Church Street, before turning right into Gillingham Green, where ahead of you stands St Mary's Church ■



Gillingham to Upchurch

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

Gillingham began life as a small fishing village and is first mentioned in the Domesday book in 1086 as Gelinge ham. Its origins lie in the area around St Mary's Church (28), which is dedicated to St Mary Magdalene. 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*,



Gillingham to Upchurch



later made into a popular TV series. From the church, the path descends down into Grange Road. Turn left here through the graveyard gates and follow the path down to its junction with Layfield Road. Turn right and continue along the road until its junction with Court Lodge Road. Turn left here heading towards the railings, where you turn right along the path running next to Gads Hill, derived from the old English Godes Hill, meaning a pagan place of worship. Use the pedestrian crossing to reach Waterside Lane, almost directly opposite of you. Continue straight ahead down the lane, through the modern housing development until you reach the foreshore. In the distance beyond the hulks of disused barges, stand the island forts of Hoo **(29)** and further east, Darnet **(30)**. Between the forts and dominating the skyline is Kingsnorth power station.

To your left a short detour along the path, will lead you past the Medway Cruising Club to the Strand, an outdoor leisure area first opened in 1896. Should you decide to make the detour, look out for the two remaining houses from the area's days as a small fishing community.

Turning right, continue along the path to Owen's Way passing between several factories, before returning through the trees to the water's edge and Copperhouse marshes. The name is a

reference to the area's 19th century copperas works. A form of iron sulphate, it was used both in the woollens and dyes industries, as well as being a key ingredient in the production of nitric and sulphuric acid. Continue along the path towards Riverside Country Park, passing the area to your right known as Eastcourt Meadows (31). A haven for butterflies and wildflowers, it was until the 1950s the site of a municipal rubbish tip.

Once across the car park at Sharps Green Bay, take a moment to visit the pond (32) to your right, a great area to spot wildlife such as dragonflies, frogs and even kingfishers. Back on the path, follow the waymarked route through the park until it once again hugs the shoreline.

To your left in the distance, is the peninsula known (from the late 19th century onwards) as Horrid Hill (33), which provides excellent panoramic views of the estuary and is an ideal location for birdwatching. It is also on occasions, possible to spot common seals here at high tide. Originally an island it was later connected to the mainland by a causeway, to allow a horse drawn railway to reach the cement works, which once stood there.





To your right and almost hidden behind grassy mound, is the park's visitor centre (34). This provides an ideal opportunity to relax, buy refreshments and learn more about the area.

The path continues alongside the estuary to Bloors Wharf, once a breakers yard for boats and now part of the country park. Stay on the path until you reach a small car park where it turns left. From here the path heads towards Motney Hill, a sandy rise projecting out into the river. To your right are the Motney reed beds (35), which provide a valuable springtime breeding ground for birds such as moorhen, coot and reed warbler.

Upon reaching the gates of the sewerage works, cross over the road and follow the path around the edge of Otterham Creek. Towards the path's end it runs next to a small orchard before finishing just outside of the local authority boundary at Otterham Quay ■



Further information

Medway Council Rights of Way	01634 333333	www.medway.gov.uk
Medway Visitor Information Centre	01634 338141	www.medway.gov.uk
Medway and Swale Estuary Partnership	01634 338891	www.msep.org.uk
Explore Kent	08458 247 600	www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent
Natural England	0845 600 3078	www.naturalengland.org.uk
RSPB	01767 680 551	www.rspb.org.uk
The Ramblers Association	020 7339 8500	www.ramblers.org.uk
National Rail	08457 48 49 50	www.nationalrail.co.uk
Traveline	0870 608 2 608	www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk



Suggested further reading

The Saxon Shore Way - Alan Sillitoe and Fay Godwin - Hutchinson 1983

The Saxon Shore Way (Recreational Path Guide) - Bea Cowan - Aurum Press 1996

Circular Walks along the Saxon Shore Way - Kent County Council 2006

The Gillingham Chronicles: A History of Gillingham - Ronald Baldwin - Baggins Book Bazaar 1998

Chatham Past - Philip MacDougall - Phillimore and Co Ltd 1999

Great Expectations - Charles Dickens - Originally published in serial form between 1860 and 1861

Waterlog - Roger Deakin - Vintage 2000



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