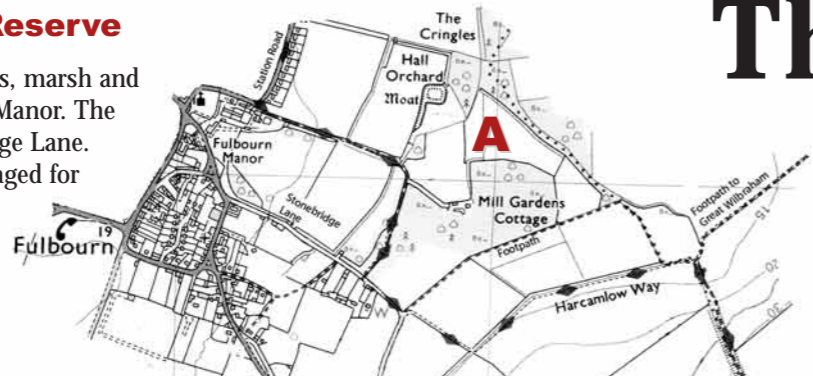


A Fulbourn Nature Reserve

A large area of flower-rich meadows, marsh and woodland, belonging to Fulbourn Manor. The entrance is at the end of Stonebridge Lane. These beautiful meadows are managed for the Townley family by the Wildlife Trust.



clustered bellflower

B Scrub areas

Large sections of the Fleam Dyke had become covered with **hawthorn**, **blackthorn**, **buckthorn** and some **spindle** (a chalk-loving, hardwood species used to make spinning wheels for the spinning of wool). Recent clearance has greatly benefited flowers, especially the **clustered bellflower**.



spindle

C Disused railway

In 1848 the Newmarket and Chesterford line opened as the first part of a rail link from London to Norwich. However, after only three years the line closed due to financial difficulties. Eastern Counties Railway took over and drove an alternative route from Cambridge to Newmarket via Six Mile Bottom. Walkers now cross the cutting on an embankment which was constructed in the late 1930s in order to provide shooting butts for rifle practice in preparation for the coming war.

E Chalk grassland

Chalk grassland is particularly rich with colourful flowers of chalk downland: in early spring, **violets** and **cowslips**, then in May, **rock-rose**, **horseshoe vetch** and **milkwort** followed by **wild thyme**, **squinancywort**, **lady's bedstraw**, **dropwort**, **small scabious**, **field scabious**, **common knapweed** and **greater knapweed**. Between Fulbourn and the disused railway the path is now bordered by **harebell**, **clustered bellflower** and **greater knapweed**. **Rockrose** and **lady's bedstraw** are also spreading along the path. Autumn brings red **hawthorn** berries, purple **sloes** and the black berries of **privet**, **purging buckthorn** and the trailing, feathery white garlands of 'old man's beard', or **wild clematis**.



D Mutlow Hill

The Fleam Dyke probably follows a Neolithic boundary path to Mutlow Hill ancient vantage point and meeting place. The earth mound (or barrow) at its centre was built 4000 years ago (Bronze Age) for the burial of cremated remains. The stones of a small Roman temple, and rare third-century BC coins have been found nearby, but everything else was looted long ago.

The Fleam Dyke



female

male

chalkhill blue on greater knapweed

green hairstreak on hawthorn

redwing

skylark

fieldfare

juniper

common lizard

F Junipers

The nine junipers on the Fleam Dyke are the only examples of the native juniper which remain in East Anglia. Scrub clearance may have helped them to set seed, and there are now four small seedlings in protective guards. Near the A11 entrance there are two plantations of juniper bushes, grown from cuttings.



G Beech and silver birch woodland

Beyond the Bedford Gap which, legend says, was cut for the Duke of Bedford's race horses, the slopes of the Dyke are covered with a mix of native and non-native trees, such as **holm oak**. Listen for the **long-tailed tits**, **wrens** and other small birds.

H The Icknield Way

The Fleam Dyke ends at the high ground (90m) known as The Ambush, which would have been thickly wooded in early Saxon times. A footpath leads to the Icknield Way, which has been used since Neolithic times. It linked the Norfolk coast to Ivinghoe, Buckinghamshire. Look for the waymark of a Neolithic axe. The Harcamlow Way is a modern long-distance walk linking Harlow and Cambridge.

bird's foot trefoil with red and white clover

red admiral

seen circling over Mutlow Hill, uttering their eerie cries. a **sparrow hawk** "zooming" or a **kestrel** hovering along the dyke. **Buzzards** have returned to the area and can be seen circling over Mutlow Hill, uttering their eerie cries.



buzzard

dyke. **Stoats** and **weasels** can be seen crossing the path and, if you move quietly, you may see a **common lizard** basking on bare soil or on the cross-bar of a fence. There are harmless **grass snakes** near the Pumping Station. Many birds can be seen or heard: **skylark**, **yellow hammer**, **blackbird**, **robin** and **wren**. **Fieldfares** and **tits** forage through the hedges in winter, and summer visitors such as **whitethroat** and **blackcap** sing in the hedges. You may see



bloody-nosed beetle

Mammals, reptiles and birds

Rabbits are common and **hares** can be seen in the surrounding fields. **Muntjac**, **foxes** and **badgers** live on or near the



ringlet

dyke. **Stoats** and **weasels** forms a background to the mauve, purple and blue of **common knapweed**, **small scabious**, **clustered bellflower** and **harebells**. Near Mutlow Hill the white flowers and dark bronze leaves of **eyebright** mark the path in August, and if you look carefully you may see autumn **gentians**.



small heath on yellow

contrasts with large patches of **white squinancywort**. Look out for the starry white flowers of **dropwort**, and the small white umbels of **burnet saxifrage**. **Milkwort** has a long flowering season and comes in a choice of colours: pink, white and blue! As the summer progresses, **lady's bedstraw** forms a background to the mauve, purple and blue of **common knapweed**, **small scabious**, **clustered bellflower** and **harebells**. Near Mutlow Hill the white flowers and dark bronze leaves of **eyebright** mark the path in August, and if you look carefully you may see autumn **gentians**.



orange tip

Butterflies and other insects
Chalk grassland species, such as the **grizzled skipper**, **grayling** and **chalkhill blue**, disappeared as the dyke became covered with scrub. Scrub-clearance has led to an increase in the growth of **horseshoe vetch** and the return of **chalkhill blues**.

Conservation
The flowers of chalk grassland are maintained either by grazing or by cutting and raking off. Some areas are left uncut each year in order to provide a good habitat for invertebrates such as **butterflies**. Since 1990 there has been systematic clearance of invasive scrub and these areas are now full of flowers from May until September. **Bumble bees**, **hoverflies**, **solitary wasps** and other winged insects are abundant, and butterfly numbers have increased steadily along the Dyke. Other, less easily visible insects such as **spiders**, **weevils** and **beetles**, benefit from the wide variety of plant species. All these provide food for small mammals and birds.

General work has been done by

- the Mid-Week Conservation Volunteers run by The Wildlife Trust
- work parties run by the Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke
- contractors, paid for by a Lottery grant

More extensive work has been paid for by Natural England (English Nature), and by the Cambridgeshire County Council Archaeology Department.



Common knapweed (purple), clustered bellflower (blue), burnet saxifrage (white) and hawkweed ox tongue (yellow), on Fleam Dyke, near Mutlow Hill (Photo: Jack Harrison).

Illustrations

Richard Lewington: Green hairstreak and chalkhill blue.

Graham Easy: Clustered bellflower, juniper, buzzard.

Tina Bone: Red admirals, wren, violets, tortoiseshell, spindle, hawthorn (and leaflet design & typesetting).

Shelley Signs: other flowers and birds.

(November 2008)



dropwort

horseshoe vetch

quaking grass

salad burnet



harebell

dwarf thistle

Come and see the flowers!

Violets are the first flowers on the Fleam Dyke in April.

Cowslips have multiplied since the overgrown banks near Fulbourn were cleared.

From May onwards there is a succession of the beautiful low-growing plants typical of chalk grassland. The area near Mutlow Hill becomes golden with **horseshoe vetch** and **rock-roses**, and here, and east of the A11, **wild thyme** contrasts with large patches of **white squinancywort**. Look out for the starry white flowers of **dropwort**, and the small white umbels of **burnet saxifrage**. **Milkwort** has a long flowering season and comes in a choice of colours: pink, white and blue! As the summer progresses, **lady's bedstraw** forms a background to the mauve, purple and blue of **common knapweed**, **small scabious**, **clustered bellflower** and **harebells**. Near Mutlow Hill the white flowers and dark bronze leaves of **eyebright** mark the path in August, and if you look carefully you may see autumn **gentians**.

How to get there

By Road:

- The Fleam Dyke can be reached from the village of Fulbourn. Go past the church and Fulbourn Manor, turn left down Stonebridge Lane. Limited parking space at TL526557.
- From the end of Fox Road, Balsham, TL580514. Follow the Icknield Way symbol, turning left at Harcamlow Way. Limited parking space.
- The A11 cuts through the Fleam Dyke at TL550542. There is a lay-by on the southbound side.

By Bus:

- There is a regular bus service on week days from Cambridge Drummer Street Station to Fulbourn: buses 16, 17 and Citi 1.
- Bus 16a goes to Haverhill via Balsham.
- For details phone 0871 200 2233 or consult www.stagecoachbus.com/cambridge and www.cambridge.gov.uk

Please note:

- No cycling. The weight of cycle and cyclist damages the surface.
- Dog owners. Kindly clean up after your dog.

Who looks after the Fleam Dyke?

- To report problems, call the Cambridgeshire County Council Countryside Services Team on 01223 715558.
- The Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke help by fund-raising, running work parties and also monitoring flora and fauna. We have also produced a leaflet about the Roman Road (available from the Tourist Office, Cambridge). We have installed information boards and dog bins on the Roman Road. To join us, and to receive our newsletter, please contact the Wildlife Trust (subscription £5-£10).
- The Wildlife Trust runs regular mid-week work parties on the Fleam Dyke. For more information, please contact: The Wildlife Trust, The Manor House, Great Cambourne, Cambridge CB23 6DH. Tel: 01954 713530 greenbelt@wildlifebcnp.org • www.wildlifebcnp.org
- The Friends wish to thank South Cambridgeshire District Council for funding this leaflet.



Fleam Dyke near the disused railway. Photo: Julia Hepler



The Fleam Dyke Scheduled Monument and Site of Special Scientific Interest

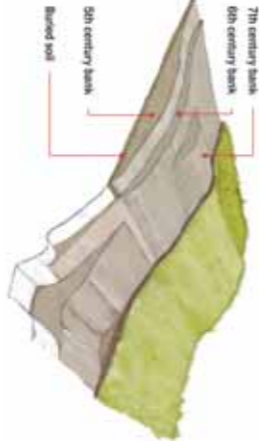
A guide to a 5km (3 mile) walk along this famous early Saxon earthwork



Natural history
The flora and fauna of chalk grassland have developed over several thousand years, since early man cleared the trees and began to graze sheep. When sheep farming declined during the 19th and early 20th centuries, the spread of scrub was limited by grazing rabbits. However, myxomatosis killed most of the rabbit population in the 1950s, which allowed seedlings of many shrubs to grow. Large areas of short turf, once rich in flowers and butterflies, became covered in scrub.



The Saxon defence barriers



The widening of the A11 (in 1991) was an opportunity to excavate using modern methods to help with analysis. The results show that the Fleam Dyke was built in three distinct phases, from the early 5th to the early 7th centuries. The remains of snail shells and a Roman coin found beneath the bank show that the Dyke is post-Roman.

Historically, the Fleam Dyke marks ancient settlement boundaries, and is still a parish boundary. The highest point at Mutlow Hill is crowned by a Bronze Age barrow, long since looted, which was used for meetings (moots) from Neolithic times onwards.

butterflies, became covered in scrub.