



## FLEAM DYKE

Fleam Dyke ('The Ditch' or 'The Great Ditch') is one of a series of four defensive dykes - Brent, Bran, Fleam and Devil's - built by the Anglo Saxons during the 5th - 7th centuries AD. Fleam Dyke is the oldest and Devil's Dyke the largest.

Fleam Dyke runs from Shardelows Well (Fulbourn) to north of Balsham - it's a Scheduled Monument, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and of national importance for archaeology and nature conservation.

**Parking:** Limited parking at Fulbourn or Balsham. The dyke crosses the A11 at the half-way point where there is limited parking on the southbound carriageway lay-by.

**Distance:** Up to 5km on designated footpath, with ladder steps and sloping paths. Stout shoes recommended, not suitable for wheelchairs.

### 1 Shardelows Well

With Fulbourn Nature Reserve woodland behind, Fleam Dyke stands out as an earthwork barrier. The bank ends here, but the original route probably continued north towards Wilbraham Fen.

*Proceed along the top of the dyke towards the southeast.*

### 2 Fleam Dyke pumping station

Built between 1912 and 1921, redundant in 1976, but machinery preserved.

'Fleam' comes from Old English *Fliem*, which means *flight* or *flee*. This might link to the dyke's original purpose to defend East Anglia.

### 3 Disused railway line

Originally connecting Great Chesterford to Newmarket, the railway was opened in 1848 and enabled MPs to attend the Newmarket races. However, the perk was short-lived and the line closed in 1851. Fifty years ago the area was regularly grazed. Grazing was re-introduced in 2003 using hardy traditional Norfolk Horn sheep.

*Proceed along dyke over the disused railway line, through trees where the dyke 'disappears', to a circular mound of earth....Mutlow Hill Bronze Age Barrow.*

### 4 Mutlow Hill

Mutlow Hill is a Bronze Age (2000-700BC) burial mound. Excavation in 1852 revealed eight cremations in collared urns; a bronze pin and beads; remains of a chalk block structure and Roman bracelets, brooches and coins. The finds suggest the Romans re-used Mutlow Hill as a shrine or sacred place.

Mutlow Hill continued to be used as a 'meeting place' in the medieval period, from where its name derives - Old English Moot-Law or meeting hill. On a clear day (crops permitting), track marks run into Mutlow Hill from all directions.

### 5 A11 road & footbridge

*Return back along the dyke to Fulbourn and explore the other half of the dyke from the Balsham end OR proceed along the footpath to A11 and cross the footbridge.*

From the south east the bank and ditch are clearly visible, thanks to clearance work by the Cambridge Green Belt Project. It shows what the dyke originally looked like.

*Continue along the dyke to the Juniper Trees.*

### 6 Juniper trees

The last nine, wild, Juniper trees in the whole of East Anglia.

*Proceed along footpath to the Bedford Gap*

### 7 Bedford Gap

Named after the Duke of Bedford who rode his horses through this point - although it's not certain if he cut the gap for this purpose!

*From the Bedford Gap walk east along the dyke, into wooded land*

### 8 Dungate Farm (suggested end of walk)

Shields and spears from Anglo-Saxon burials were found in the ditch between Balsham and Mutlow during the early 1860s. These graves may have been for the bodies of battle warriors. Dungate Farm is one of two possible ends to the walk. Beyond here Fleam Dyke rises 55m up to the Balsham plateau, 100m above sea level. It then runs as a shallower hedgerow and bank towards West Wrating, on what is called the Harcamlow Way, to Oxcroft Farm.

### 9 Ambush (end of walk) – a local name with no historic reason!

From the crest you can overlook the 'vale of Cambridgeshire'.

Fleam Dyke is maintained by Cambridge Green Belt Project and The Friends of the Roman Road & Fleam Dyke, supported by Cambridgeshire County Council, South Cambs, English Nature and English Heritage.

Please keep dogs on a lead and follow the Countryside Code. It is an offence to metal-detect on the site.

**For further information about Fleam Dyke or sites of archaeological interest contact the Cambridgeshire Historic Environment Record on (01223) 717312, email CAO@Cambridgeshire.gov.uk**