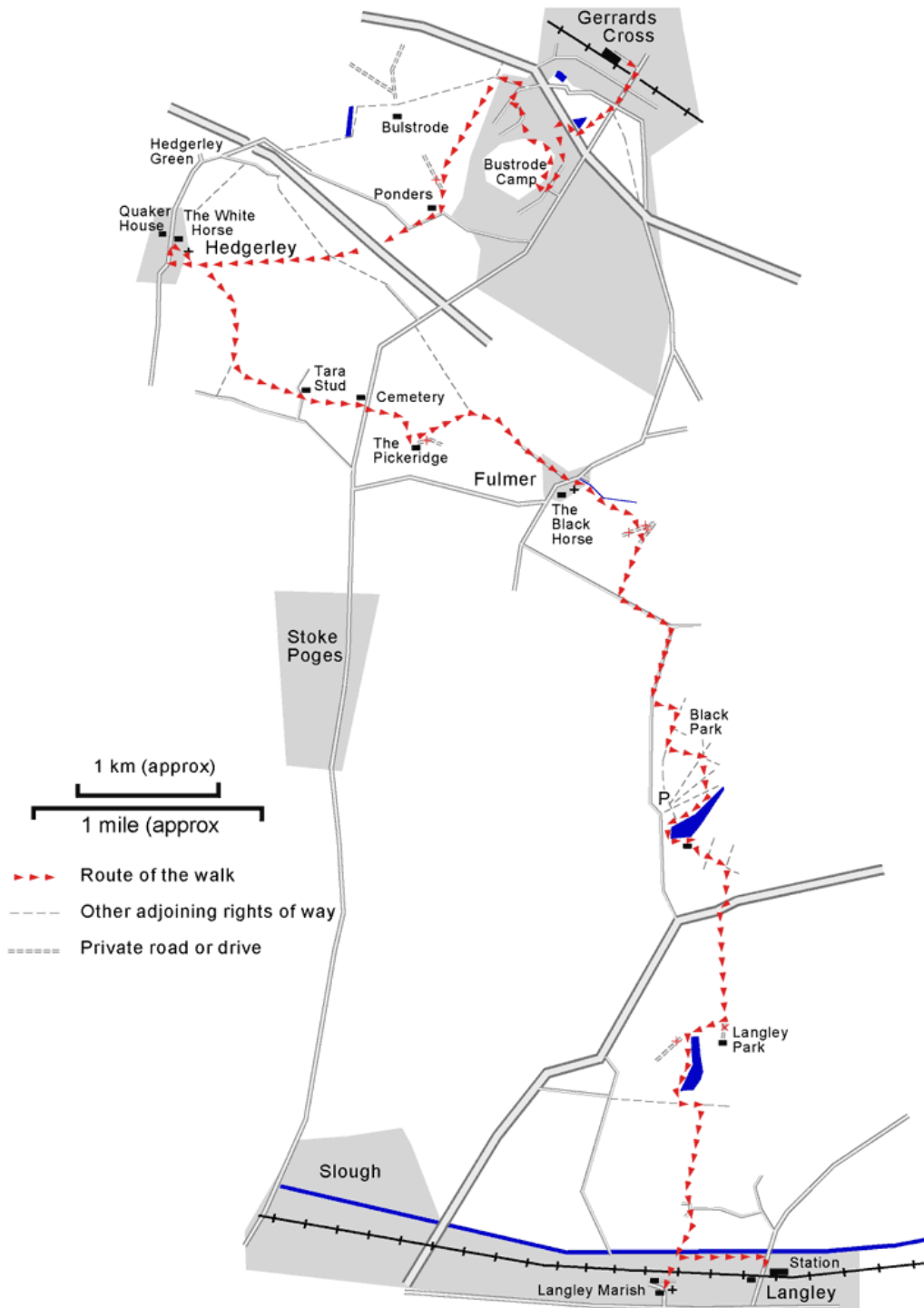


GERRARDS CROSS – FULMER - LANGLEY

This walk strings together some of the best walking near to West London – an ancient hillfort, old villages, churches, pubs, woodland, a nature reserve, country parks, several lakes and a canal. In fact, something for everyone!

Checked 2007



Distances

Gerrards Cross to Fulmer	5.5 miles (9 km)
Fulmer to Langley station	5 miles (8 km)
Total	10.5 miles (17 km)
Two hills, neither much more than 100 feet (30 metres).	

Travel

Those not wishing to do the whole walk can start or finish at Fulmer, using the 335 bus between Gerrards Cross and Slough (but there are only about six journeys each way, and none on Sundays. If all else fails, the direct route by road from Fulmer to Gerrards Cross has a footway all the way, and is only a little over two miles (3 km).)

The 353 route (Berkhamsted, Amersham, Gerrards Cross, Slough) has slightly more frequent buses (though still none on Sundays) and has stops at the cemetery (north of Stoke Poges), which our route passes between Hedgerley and Fulmer.

Gerrards Cross is on the Chiltern Line between Marylebone and High Wycombe, with a frequent service.

Langley is also well served by trains on the Paddington, Slough and Reading line.

Buses:

305 Uxbridge to Gerrards Cross (not Sundays).

58 Langley to Uxbridge and Slough (not Sundays).

74 connecting Slough, Beaconsfield and High Wycombe (2-hourly on Sundays).

Travel information for Buckinghamshire is available on www.buckscc.gov.uk/travelinfo or by telephoning 0871 200 22 33.

Refreshments

Pubs: The White Horse at Hedgerley, the Black Horse at Fulmer (walker- and dog-friendly), the Red Lion and the Chestnut at Langley Marish. At Langley the Willow Tree is close to the station.

There is a café in Black Park.

Please always be considerate about muddy boots in pubs etc; either take them off, or cover them up. Never eat or drink your own provisions on pub premises (including the garden, if there is one).

Ordnance Survey Map

Except for a few hundred yards at the end, the whole of this walk is on O.S. Explorer Map 172, *Chiltern Hills East*.

Dogs

On this route there are a number of notices asking for dogs to be kept on leads. Please observe them.

Route

Gerrards Cross is named after the crossroads on the old road from London to Oxford. It was an insignificant hamlet until Victorian times when it was described as a “highly respectable place with many genteel residences” (not that many, in fact, until the opening of the joint Great Western and Great Central Railway station in 1906). A brochure published in 1917 praised its advantages for

commuters: “The inadequate, congested and unpunctual service which marks so many of the suburban lines is here unknown”. Gerrards Cross grew rapidly from then on, but has always maintained its affluent air, with a large number of substantial villas.

John Betjeman (1906-1984) became a teacher at Thorpe House School, Gerrards Cross, before working as a private secretary. The former Poet Laureate enthused much about Beechy Bucks, and with John Piper edited Murray's Buckinghamshire Architectural Guide in 1948.

The walk starts from Gerrards Cross Station. On leaving the station, turn right and go up Station Approach to the main shopping street (Packhorse Road).

Turn right for 350 yards (passing on your left the scene of the tunnel collapse which left the railway line blocked for several weeks in the summer of 2005) to the Common.

Bear very slightly right across the Common to the leftmost of several paths going into the woodland ahead.

Go through the wood, ignoring a cross path and glimpsing a pond on your right, to the main road (A40).

Cross with care (after looking at the pond if you wish!) and turn right.

500 yards in the other direction along this road (i.e. now behind you) is St James's Church, an unlikely building in the Byzantine style built in 1859 by Sir William Tite, the architect of the Royal Exchange. The church is staffed on Monday to Friday: to view the interior ring the office bell in the east wall.

Unless you want to turn back to look at the church, go ahead for less than 100 yards to a path on your left (just after the bus stop on the other side of the road).

Go along the enclosed path to a road.

Continue ahead along the road 250 yards to just past a road junction, to a path on your right.

Go along the path to enter Bulstrode Camp.

Bulstrode Camp is the largest Iron Age hillfort in Buckinghamshire. It is now surrounded by houses. It was purchased by Gerrards Cross Parish Council “for preservation as an Ancient monument and a Public Open Space for the rest and recreation of Parishioners” in 1951.

Walk 100 yards to the right to a seat, and then continue along the edge of the open space as it curves to the left for a further 200 yards, looking for a clear path through the trees leading to a steep descent with a handrail. (There is at least one indistinct path before you get to it).

Go down the path into the ditch and ahead up to a road (Valley Way).

Follow the road to the right, to a T junction (Top Park).

Follow the road to the right, to Main Drive on your left (just before the A40).

Turn left to go down Main Drive to a kissing gate at the bottom. (There is a “Private Road” notice at the entrance to Main Drive, but we do not believe there should be any difficulty about access on foot. However, there is the option of continuing along the A40 for 200 yards to a footpath on your left, which takes you to the bottom of Main Drive.)

Enter Bulstrode Park and follow the path to the left along the bottom of the valley.

The history of the Bulstrode Estate goes back to Saxon times.

At one time it was owned by the notorious Judge Jeffreys who presided over the Bloody Assize of 1685, followed by the first Earl of Portland. The house reached its zenith in the mid 18th century, when the then Duchess of Portland made it an artistic centre. Among its treasures at the time was the famous Portland Vase, now in the British Museum.

The present house, which was built in 1862, can be glimpsed over to the right among the trees. It is now the headquarters of WEC, Worldwide Evangelization for Christ.

Permission to view the gardens, with their lovely trees and shrubs, landscaped walks and ponds, can be obtained by asking at reception in the main house and signing the visitors' book.

The path continues over a stile, and eventually joins a track from the right and goes through a kissing gate by a gateway.

Here go straight ahead along a wider stony track, past a new house on your left, and bear right along Hedgerley Lane with the entrance to Ponders on your right.

At the first bend in the road go straight ahead on a footpath which goes over a stile by a gate, under the M40 and on through a kissing gate and along a field edge to a stile in the corner of the field. Cross this and continue (initially along the line of telephone wires) through the next three fields, keeping just to the left of Church Wood when you reach it.

Church Wood nature reserve is a long-established one, owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It is freely open to the public. Just before the end of the third field there is a kissing gate on the right into the reserve.

(In the third field there is an option to turn left and walk uphill to the wood, bypassing Hedgerley, but the short detour into the village is recommended). To go into Hedgerley village continue ahead, through a kissing gate, along an enclosed track to the road and turn right. Go past the pond to the White Horse pub and the Old Quaker House.

The village used to be famous for its bricks, and this is reflected in many of the attractive buildings. There used to be a pub called the Bricklayer's Arms, now closed (but the White Horse remains open).

The Old Quaker House, a private house on the left just up the road from the White Horse, was the scene of a famous, then illegal, meeting in 1666 of Quakers, which was broken up by the authorities.

Just down the road from the White Horse, go up the path and into the churchyard. There is a kissing gate in the far right-hand corner of the churchyard, from which a permissive path leads back down to the track by which we entered the village.

The church is by Benjamin Ferrey, who designed the present Bulstrode House. It contains a fragment of velvet said to be a piece of Charles I's cloak, which he left as a covering for the altar when calling at the church while on a hunting expedition. A 17th century painting of the ten commandments is also worth seeing. The church is open from Easter to the end of September on Sunday

On leaving Hedgerley retrace your steps along the enclosed track to the kissing gate at the end and go diagonally right across a large field to a stile on the edge of a wood (joining the route of the shortcut mentioned above).

Follow the path up through the wood (this may be muddy in winter) and ahead along the edge of a field to a copse.

Go over a footbridge and on leaving the copse turn left.

Follow the fenced track along the edge of the field, then go slightly right across the next field to another stile at the left-hand corner of a large group of farm buildings.

Cross the stile, go straight ahead (with the farmyard on your right) and bear right to a stile by an enormous redwood tree.

Cross the next field slightly right down to a further stile with a small footbridge, then still in the same direction up to a stile in the hedge.

Climb this and drop down to a lane. Cross the lane and go up a stony track to Tara Stud and take the path on the right of the entrance gate, to a stile.

Continue ahead between a hedge and a fence to cross yet another stile and emerge on to the B416 Windsor Road next to the South Bucks District Cemetery. (The bus stop to your right on this side of the road is for Gerrards Cross, on the other side for Slough.)

Cross the road, with care, to a gap in the hedge a few yards to the right.

Once through this follow the path ahead through an area which has been worked for sand and gravel for years, but has now been replanted.

The path eventually bends right (it may be flooded here in wet weather), passing a large oak tree, towards a group of old buildings – The Pickeridge.

Cross a wide concrete road (former access to quarry plant).

By making a short detour to the right, you can see among the farm buildings a fine old granary on toadstool legs (protection against rats).

Bear left to walk along a gravel track (signposted “Fulmer Village”).

Follow it downhill, between the replanted quarry and The Pickeridge, to the bottom of the hill.

Go through a kissing gate, and keep right to another kissing gate in a thicket.

Pass through this and continue on, with views to the left of water meadows and lakes (and, unfortunately, the M40) to a kissing gate into Hay Lane.

Follow this ahead, passing the imposing Fulmer Hall on the right, to reach Fulmer, with the Black Horse pub to your right.

Fulmer, which means lake of birds, takes its name from a large marshy area, the remnants of which you passed a quarter of a mile back. Cress was grown there in the 19th century.

The village itself is modest, but its situation in pleasant countryside so near to London led to the building of a number of imposing country houses on its periphery in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The church was rebuilt in 1610 by Sir Marmaduke Dayrell, Master of the King’s Household, whose impressive monument is inside, together with the story of his life.

From Hay Lane, cross Windmill Road and follow the churchyard wall to the left.

Just before Alderbourne Lane, turn right along the drive to Muschamp Stud and Church Farm (joining the Beeches Way, which you follow to a little beyond the café in Black Park).

When the drive bears right, continue ahead alongside the Alderbourne to a kissing gate.

Go through, and head slightly right to a stile at the far end of the field, by a white gate and a large oak tree.

Bear very slightly right to a kissing gate in the hedge on the right.

Go through the kissing gate and up the next field, at first parallel with the hedge on the right, to another kissing gate and a signpost (some distance to the right of the house).

Continue along the enclosed path, which joins a drive and shortly crosses a private road.

In another 50 yards turn right along another private road to reach Fulmer Common Road in a quarter of a mile (0.4 km).

Cross with care, and follow this road to the left for 100 yards, then turn right down Black Park Road.

In a quarter of a mile (0.4 km) at a slight right-hand bend, go left at a stile by a metal barrier, to enter Black Park (signposted 'Beeches Way').

Black Park was originally the northern portion of Langley Park, and was planted with firs in the second part of the 18th century by the then Duke of Marlborough. It's now a country park with a nature reserve, picnic site and a variety of walks and trails.

Follow the path 200 yards through trees to a wide cross track. (This track is a bridleway for horses, so keep dogs under close control.)

Turn right along the track for nearly 300 yards, to the second track junction, almost at the far end of a field on your right.

Turn left for 200 yards to a six-way junction.

Follow the Beeches Way half right to a junction, where the main track bears away to the right and there is an asphalt path ahead beside a fence. Follow this to the edge of the lake.

Turn right, along the edge of the lake, and go round the end of the lake to the visitor centre, toilets and café.

Immediately after the centre, with the lake on your left, turn right, and after 50 yards bear half left to join a partly asphalted track.

At the second "crossroads", with a dog loo and a woodland sculpture, turn right (here leaving the Beeches Way), soon passing estate houses to reach the extremely busy –and fast – A412.

To cross, go to the right, to where you can see round the bend, then cross this dual carriageway, very carefully.

Opposite is the main entrance to Langley Park. Follow the drive as far as the wrought iron gates which mark the entrance to Langley Park House.

The house was built by the 3rd Duke of Marlborough in 1755/58 as a hunting lodge, and includes a range of interesting outbuildings.

The park is owned by the County Council and is freely open all the year round. It includes a lovely lake, an arboretum, an area of azaleas and rhododendrons, and extensive open space and woodland.

Turn right here and follow the track (alongside the haha, a steep-sided ditch to keep stock out without impeding the view from the house) to a gate near one end of the lake.

Go through into George Green Field and walk along near the shore of the lake, with splendid views now of the house.

At the far end of the lake go ahead to a path along a raised bank.

Turn left, and in 100 yards go through a kissing gate, cross a small bridge over a stream, and continue 80 yards to a signpost. (This part may be under water in very wet conditions; we believe

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local people make their way round to the left, but we cannot vouch for the legal status of this detour.)

Turn right through a gap in the hedge and follow the path across a field to a belt of trees.

Go through these and over a stile.

The imposing house you can see through the trees on the right is St Paul's House. It was bought by Geri Halliwell while she was still with the Spice Girls in 1998 and has been completely refurbished as a luxury private home. It is a former monastery set in 18 acres of grounds in Middle Green. It belonged to an order of Roman Catholic brothers and is situated next door to the Daughters of St Paul convent. We understand the house was sold in 2002.

Go across the field to another stile.

Cross this and follow a short path to Pickford Drive, in what is now Orchards Residential Park (part of Trenches Farm Estate).

Go ahead to Blenheim Close, continue ahead and along a path between nos.14 and 15.

Go across a children's play area, over a footbridge (noting the right-angle in the stream on the right, which may denote the site of the medieval fish ponds or the moat shown on the Ordnance Survey map).

Continue along a path to the canal, and cross the canal bridge.

The Slough arm of the Grand Union Canal was opened in 1883, and was thus one of the last stretches of canal to be built in Britain.

Originally built to carry bricks from the Langley brickfields, it's now used for leisure boating, and provides a 5 mile (8 km) lock-free route almost in a straight line from Cowley to the centre of Slough. It also makes for a pleasant 5 mile walk or cycle ride.

From here there is an option to go down to the canal and make directly for Langley Station (see the last dozen lines of this route description), but the short detour into Langley Marish is recommended. To go into Langley Marish. after crossing the canal, continue over the railway and on down to a road (Minster Way).

Go across a small green and ahead along a narrow fenced path to arrive near the almshouses, a church and two pubs.

Surrounded by a large housing estate is the church of St Mary the Virgin. It includes a range of architectural styles, and many features of interest. The greatest is the Kederminster Library, which dates from 1623, said to have been used by John Milton while living nearby. It still houses many ancient and valuable books, but the room itself and its decoration is pretty amazing.

The church and the library are unfortunately only open on Saturday mornings, and on the afternoon of the first Sunday in June, July, August and September.

The smaller group of almshouses was founded in 1617 by Sir John Kederminster, the Lord of the Manor before the Duke of Marlborough, in 1617.

The other almshouses date from 1679.

Langley Marish used to be part of Buckinghamshire, but is now swallowed up by Slough and assigned to Berkshire.

The name "Marish" is nothing to do with a marsh but is manorial in origin, the manor having been held by the family of Mareys or, in Latinised form, Marisco.

If you are returning to Slough, buses go from the stop at the end of the road, on the other side of Langley Road.

Otherwise, to finish the walk, retrace your steps to the canal, go down to the towpath and turn right – away from the bridge – and follow the canal for half a mile (0.8 km) to the next bridge.

To avoid crossing the road to get to the station, which is to the right, go under the canal bridge and then immediately up a slope, into Langley Park Road. The station is on the left in a short distance.

The bus stop for Uxbridge is under the railway bridge and on the right past the Willow Tree pub.

For buses to Slough continue for a further 100 yards to the next road junction. The bus stop is in Langley Road to the right.