

Upminster Walk 2 : The Brickfields & Franks Wood

A circular walk across fields and through a wood notable for its displays of bluebells.

Most of the paths have adequate room to pass with social distancing. Walkers may have to wait for people to pass on the path across the field after Franks Wood.

If starting from St Mary's Lane there are two stiles to cross each way and take great care crossing the railway line.

Please do not trample the bluebells.

Starting Points:

Limerick Gardens	: 1 mile
Kerry Drive	: 1 mile
Heron Way	: 1¼ miles
St Mary's Lane (Thatched House)	: 1¾ miles

From Limerick Gardens

1. Enter The Brickfields from the end of Limerick Gardens / Sunnycroft Gardens. Follow the hard path which runs slightly downhill (south) towards trees.

Cranham Brickfields was used for excavating clay for making bricks, the local clay being particularly suited to this purpose. It was cultivated for food during World War Two and kept as a recreation area for local people. It is now a Local Nature Reserve and denoted as a Grade 1 Site of Borough Importance for Nature Conservation. Access has been improved and the area managed to balance the needs of nature and recreation.

2. When this divides after a short distance take the left fork, running past the end of Kerry Drive then between trees.
3. 100 yards from the start of the trees there is a short path on the left which leads to a pond.

A wooden platform at the edge of the pond makes a good spot to watch for wildlife. Herons can be seen and moorhens sometimes breed here. Great crested newts live in the pond and grass snakes can occasionally be spotted. There is an interesting wooden sculpture on the platform.

4. Return to the main path and continue straight on, ignoring a path to the left.

The land to the right would have been lost to houses and flats had the recent planning application succeeded. We must be grateful to the hundreds of residents who submitted objections that helped to save this area of unmanaged wood, grass and scrubland, which provides home to wildlife and enjoyment to local people.

5. 175 yards from the pond the path reaches a field and bends left. Until fairly recently the field was regularly cut but it is now mostly left for wildlife.
6. Leave the hard path soon after it bends left and take a wide grassy path which crosses the field, then narrows as it runs between trees, before entering Franks Wood.

Franks Wood consists mostly of hornbeam which is coppiced, providing timber and allowing light to penetrate and stimulate growth. It is owned by Essex County Council and designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The name is believed to originate from a Frank Scotland who owned land here in the 13th century. Wild flowers flourish in and around the wood, notably a superb display of bluebells in spring.

7. A path runs both ways round the wood and either can be followed to the opposite corner - anticlockwise by going straight on beside the railway then left at the end of the wood, or clockwise by turning left. The latter is the best route to see bluebells.
8. Exit the wood in the opposite corner to which you entered and take a narrow path left which runs across the field. On reaching the hedge at the corner of the field after 125 yards, turn left beside the hedge.
9. Shortly before the end of the field is a gateway on the right. Pass through this, entering the field in which the walk started.
10. Continue straight on, walking by trees at the right edge of the field, then turn left at the top, soon returning to your starting point.

From Kerry Drive

Pass through the gap at the end of the road and turn right onto the footpath running between trees. Follow the route from (2) to (10) then (1) to (2).

From Heron Way

Take the footpath which starts opposite Nightingale Avenue. Note this can be muddy. After 225 yards this passes through a gap in the hedge to a large field with a grassy path towards Franks Wood. Follow the route from (6) to (10) then (1) to (5).

From St Mary's Lane (Thatched House / Pike Lane)

Take the footpath which starts from a gate opposite the end of Pike Lane (just east of the Thatched House). Follow the path at the right edge of the field, then to the railway line. Note that horses are kept in the field. Cross the railway with great care. Note there are stiles either side and you may need to touch the hand rails. Once over the railway turn right across the field towards Franks Wood, following the route from (6) to (10) then (1) to (5).

