

Upminster Walk 4 : Pot Kilns & Great Tomkyn

A varied walk on footpaths and roads, passing the hamlet of Pot Kilns and the historic Great Tomkyns.

The walk includes two stiles and two short sections of narrow path where it may be necessary to retrace steps to allow others to pass. The lanes are quiet and the busier Hall Lane has a pavement. Take great care crossing the A127.

Starting Points:

Moor Lane (north end)	: 4 miles
Front Lane	: 2¾ miles
Severn Drive	: 2¾ miles

From Moor Lane (north end)

1. From the end of Moor Lane (by Moor Lane Church) walk north along the long closed section of road towards the A127.
2. After 200 yards take a signed footpath on the left into woods. Note that this is just before the A127 and not the first (unsigned) path close to start of the walk.
3. Follow the path through the wood and scrub for 300 yards, when it emerges behind Roseberry Gardens. Continue on the path (signed) at the back of houses for ¼ mile until emerging onto Front Lane.
4. Turn right on Front Lane, then take a signed footpath on the left after 125 yards (before reaching St Peter's Mass Centre). The path is initially narrow running between fences and it may be necessary to wait for walkers coming the other way, or to walk back to the road to allow someone to pass.
5. The path then enters Pot Kiln Wood.

Purchased by the Woodland Trust in 1999, this 17 acre site consists of native broadleaf trees, scrub, grassland and hedgerows which are believed to be ancient. It was once divided into four small fields, three of which are thought to have been ploughed in WW2. It is part of Thames Chase and the management plan is to develop broad-leafed woodland, whilst maintaining 20% of the area as open land in glades.

6. Follow the path through Pot Kiln Wood, then cross a stile leading to a large field. The footpath is signed and shown on maps as crossing the field but it has been ploughed and sown, so it is necessary to walk around the edge.
7. Turn right, following the edge of the field, which borders the A127. Just after the corner where the path bends sharp left away from the A127 there is a gap in the hedge leading to Bird Lane.
8. Go through the gap and turn right on the lane, soon reaching the A127 Southend Arterial Road, which has to be crossed. There are offset gaps in the central crash barriers allowing pedestrians to cross, but do so with great care. Cars travel very quickly here.
9. Walk up Tomkyns Lane opposite (this was once part of Bird Lane but was renamed, presumably when it was severed by the A127).
10. The lane bends left after which are a line of cottages.

Most of the cottages were built in the early 1800s for workers from local farms and as late as the 1970s some did not have running water, just a tap by the gate.

11. The lane climbs gently towards to the top the hill, bending right and passing some very impressive properties. The last of these is Great Tomkyns.

The Grade II Listed timber-framed house dates from the 15th or 16th century. Timber analysis in 1997 was unable to provide an accurate date but ownership can be traced back to 1612 when Robert Frith succeeded his father Thomas. It has a thatched barn which is thought to date from the 15th century.

12. Just past Tomkyns house take a (signed) footpath on the left. The path is initially narrow running between fences and although it is little-used it may be necessary to wait for walkers coming the other way, or to walk back to the road to allow someone to pass.
13. Cross a stile, emerging into a field and follow the narrow grassy path diagonally left then through a wide gap in the hedge to the next field. Turn right, following the path at the edge of the field until it ends at Hall Lane.
14. Turn left onto Hall Lane, walking on the pavement towards Upminster and across the flyover. Just after the Strawberry Farm turn left into Bird Lane.

The farm, previously known as Pot Kilns Farm, is now a private house. In the 1970s & 80s the fields either side of Hall Lane and one the other side of the A127 were planted with strawberries and very popular with the people of Upminster who would 'pick your own' fruit.

15. Follow the lane as it runs between fields, soon passing cottages on the right. This area is of historical interest for the Pot Kilns works.

A part of Upminster, but also considered to be one of the smallest hamlets in Great London, Pot Kilns was once a hive of industry. Tiles and a variety of pots were made here, with the first brick kiln being built in 1774. The main dome shaped kiln was 70 feet high. The kilns were run by the Branfill family until the late 1850s and later the Upminster Brick Company. Brickmaking continued until 1933 when the Essex Brick and Tile Company went into liquidation. It was one of the largest employers in the areas, providing work for over 20 men in the 1890s and the cottages on Bird Lane were built to house workers.

For many years rails from a tramway could be seen in the road at a gateway between Hall lane and the cottages; two rails in the 1960s, then just one in the 1970s, before they were either removed or another resurfacing covered any trace of the track. This was a relic of the Pot Kilns Tramway, which ran from a siding on the north side of Upminster station.

16. Take a footpath on the right just beyond the cottages, then turn right along the edge of the field. (This is the field on which you walked the opposite side on the outward route.)
17. A path leaves to the right 100 yards after the first corner (by an electricity pylon). This is the path to Severn Drive, so ignore it if returning to Front Lane.
18. Turn left at the second corner of the field, reaching the stile back to Pot Kiln Wood after 200 yards.
19. Follow the path back through Pot Kiln Wood, retracing your outward route to Front Lane or Moor Lane.

From Front Lane

Start the walk at (4) following the path to Pot Kiln Wood.

From Severn Drive

Walk through the green space between Severn Drive, Fleet Close and Dee Close and take a path between trees in the corner, which soon reaches the large field bordering Bird Lane and the A127.

Turn right, following the edge of the field and passing the stile from Pot Kiln Wood. Follow the route from (7) to (17).

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