

• Distance 7.5km/4.5 miles • Time 2.5hrs • Type Open marshland

1 NAVIGATION LEVEL 1 **2** FITNESS LEVEL 2



Plan your walk



WHERE: Circular walk from Higham Station via Church Street and Higham Marshes.
START/END: Higham railway station (TQ716728). Limited parking adjacent to St Mary's church (TQ706742).
TERRAIN: Some road, unsurfaced footpaths, stiles and gates.
MAPS: OS Explorer 163; OS Landranger 178.
GETTING THERE: 417 bus (Gravesend - Higham - Cliffe). Trains connecting Higham to London, Gravesend and Strood run every 30 minutes (© 0871 2002233, www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk).
EATING & DRINKING: The Railway Tavern (© 01474 822610) and The Knowle Country House (© 01474 822262, www.knowlecountryhouse.co.uk) in Higham.
SLEEPING: Field View B&B, Rochester (© 01474 822330).
VISITOR INFORMATION: Gravesham TIC (© 01474 337600, www.towncentric.co.uk).
GUIDEBOOKS: *The Saxon Shore Way* by Bea Cowan (£10.99, ▶)



The atmospheric marshland adjacent to the Thames Estuary formed the backdrop to Charles Dickens' novel *Great Expectations*. This walk takes in the landscape that inspired the great Victorian author, and is rich in both history and wildlife. Along the way is a Bronze Age barrow, the remains of a 19th-century fort, and the pretty church of St Mary's. In spring and summer, listen out for the rapturous song of the skylark. Look out, also, for native plants such as coltsfoot, whose yellow flowers can be seen in February and March. It's still used today by herbalists to cure respiratory complaints.

1. START From Higham Station (TQ716728) turn R and proceed uphill to School Lane. Turn R, then R again across the bridge into Chequers Street. Cross over the road and proceed past the Railway Tavern and Canal Road into Church Street. Continue along Church Street for about 1km, until you reach the crossroads near to

St Mary's Church. Follow the road as it bears L through the pretty hamlet of Church Street.

2. Proceed through Sun Farm and pass through the waymarked gap to the side of the field gate. Continue along the well-worn path until you reach the junction with another well-worn path. Take the path on your L, and upon reaching the next waymarker, turn L again. Stay on this path until you reach a small wooden bridge. Cross over the bridge and follow the waymarked path to the railway line.

3. Cross over the stile, walk across the railway line and cross over the second stile into an open field and continue ahead. At the field's edge, cross over the stile and continue on to the next stile a short distance away. Cross over the stile on to a bridge and then cross over another stile. From here, follow the farmer's track down to the sea wall. To your right, under the pylons can be seen Barrow Hill (TQ710747), also once ▶

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Aurum Press, ISBN 1854 10 392 X). *Naughty nuns and nightingales and Soldiers, sailors and skylarks* are two free walking leaflets produced by the RSPB (© 01634 222480 for copies).
LOCAL RAMBLERS AREA/ GROUP: Dartford and Gravesham Ramblers (© 020 8310 2453, www.kentramblers.org.uk).

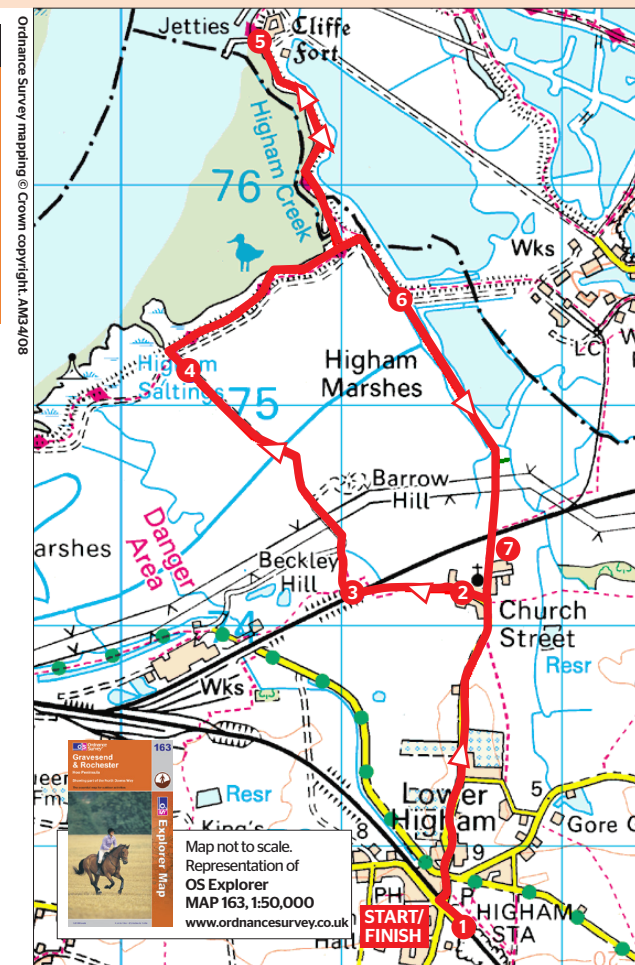
known as the 'Giant's Grave'.

4. Shortly before the sea wall, climb over the stile before continuing ahead up onto the grassed embankment. Turn R and follow the wall for about 1km. Prior to the wall turning back inland, look out for the concrete structure a short distance away to your left. Head towards this and follow the footpath, sandwiched between the River Thames and a large pool used for watersports, to Cliffe Fort (TQ707767). Built in the 1860s, it was constructed in response to a perceived threat to the country from France. An information panel adjacent to the fort provides further information on its heritage. Close by are the remains of the *Hans Egede* (TQ706766), a Danish vessel built in 1922.

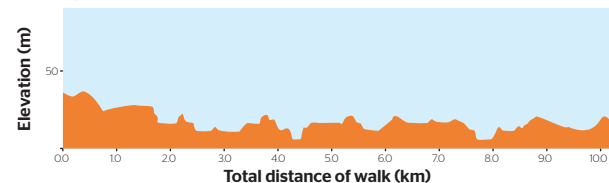
5 From the fort, retrace your steps back to the sea wall and continue straight ahead. As the wall turns L towards the nearby gravel works, look out for the yellow waymarker down to your R among the bushes.

6. Follow the waymarked path to the left of the ditch heading back inland until you reach a field gate. Cross over the adjacent stile and at the field's end, go over the stile and head to the railway line and over the level-crossing.

7. Follow the track up to the final



Steepness of walk



field gate and over the adjacent stile. The church to your right is St Mary's (TQ706742) and is open daily. It was here that Charles Dickens' daughter, Katey, married Wilkie Collins' brother in 1860.

Dating mainly from the 12th century, among its many notable features is a beautifully carved mediaeval door. Continue back up along Church Street to Higham. *Route devised by Mark Loos.*



Route and gradient profile created using Anquet Maps v06. Download more maps from www.Anquet.co.uk