

Ice & Water Trail sheet 1 of 3

Follow this short but pretty walk to discover how ice and water made the landscape of the Country Park you see today.

It starts in the **Main Car Park** next to the **Visitors' Centre** and goes in an anticlockwise direction around **Kingfisher Water**, and close to the **River Great Ouse**.



1 Main Car Park

You are standing in the valley of the River Great Ouse. This starts in Northamptonshire and flows across the Fens to enter the North Sea at the Wash. It was once a tributary of a north flowing Thames at the time when England was joined to Europe. The Ice Age was to change all that.



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2 Start of meadow

Leave the Car Park by the kissing gate (right-hand corner) and enter the meadow. Walk past the trees on the left into open ground. The land in front of you falls away gently. This is part of the flood plain of the River Ouse and it floods regularly after heavy rain. However, unless the flooding is severe, the land you are standing on stays dry. This is because it's a post glacial terrace made by the river carving deeper into the valley floor as it meandered back and forth.

Look up and across the river and you will see Chellington Church on a hill. It stands on a terrace on the south side of the valley. The terrace on the north side is occupied by the road from Harrold to Lavendon. In the river meadows alongside the River Ouse it is also possible to identify a lower and older terrace. This becomes more obvious when the meadows are flooded.

3 River Bank

Walk diagonally left to where the river bank is clear of trees. Notice that the bank is raised up above the level of the surrounding land. Rivers in flood carry sediment. When the water level rises above its banks, the speed of the water is reduced as it flows into the fields. As the speed falls so the river drops its load of sediment to create a bank or levee.

4 Kingfisher Water

The lake to your left is a product of quarrying and its current shape owes much to land reclamation. On the bank nearest to you it is possible to experience a nasty shock from time to time. Waste was dumped here from the Harrold dolls factory. Little heads, arms, legs and feet can come to the surface after periods of dry weather and can be mistaken for the real thing!

5 Sunken hollow connected to the river

Follow the river bank downstream until you come to what looks like a hollow joined to the river. In winter this is often full of water. How was it formed? It may have been a man-made fish-pond, the site of a boathouse or more likely, an earlier course of the river.

6 Flood Plain

Walk between the small coppice of trees and the river and into the meadow beyond. Over to your right, beyond the church, is the top of Pavenham Hill. We know from the materials deposited on the top of the hill that ice once passed over the top of it. This means that where you are standing was once covered by over 300 feet of ice!

7 River Bank

Continue to walk along the river bank. In places the bank has collapsed to expose cross-sections of the underlying material. Some of these exposures display a distinct horizontal line across them. This is the 'plough line' which represents the maximum depth to which the land was ploughed in earlier times. You can find distinctive shells in this band. Try to match them with ones you can find in the park.

8 Open meadowland

As you walk along the river bank look at the open meadow. Believe it or not, you are standing in a 'U' shaped valley carved out by ice. Notice that it's full of humps and hollows. These have been formed when the river has repeatedly flooded this land and deposited silt brought down from higher up the valley. This has been going on since the Ice Age. As a result the bottom of the valley has been covered with a deep layer of silt. To the left on the edge of the woodland you can just make out the lower of two terraces mentioned earlier.

Make your way through the woodland to your left via a kissing gate. Follow a narrow path through the Nature Reserve (which can be very wet in Winter) to join the main track. Turn left and follow this toward the café.

9 Grebe Lake

Grebe Lake is man-made and was created when the original sand & gravel quarry was allowed to flood. It covers some 40 acres and is 14 feet deep at the deepest point. Its 36,000 million gallons of water are slowly moving NE (away from the café) at about 1 nautical mile per hour. Below the water lie the remains of an Iron Age settlement. Heron Island is all that remains of the original landscape before quarrying started in the 1950's.

Sand and gravel were taken from the lake and were processed on the site before being sent for use in the construction of the then new city of Milton Keynes.

10 Open heathland

Walk to the Notice board at the edge of overflow car park. The dome shaped area of open land was originally the site of noisy industrial activity. Here sand and gravel from what is now Grebe Lake, were washed, sorted and stored before being loaded on to lorries. Water from the washing process flowed away to the east through the trees of what is now the Nature Reserve.

When quarrying ceased this area was left and was colonised by heath land plants and rabbits. Look at the notice board for detailed information on the flora & fauna of this unique area.

Follow the main track to the Visitors Centre and the end of this trail.