

# VER VALLEY WALK 1

## *The Source Walk*

### Teas, buns, pints and pies:

**Markyate High Street:** The Red Lion, The Swan and The Sun Public Houses, plus a café, sandwich take-away, general stores and bakers.

**Watling Street:** The Packhorse Inn Public House.

**Kensworth:** Village stores.

### How to get there:

**By road:** Markyate High Street can be found off the A5/Watling Street. There is a public car park in Hicks Road. Markyate is approximately 3 miles south of Dunstable or 5 miles north of Hemel Hempstead.

**By public transport:** Markyate High Street is served regularly by buses from St Albans and Dunstable. For details contact Intalink Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit [www.intalink.org.uk](http://www.intalink.org.uk)

 Parts of this walk can be muddy or wet underfoot.



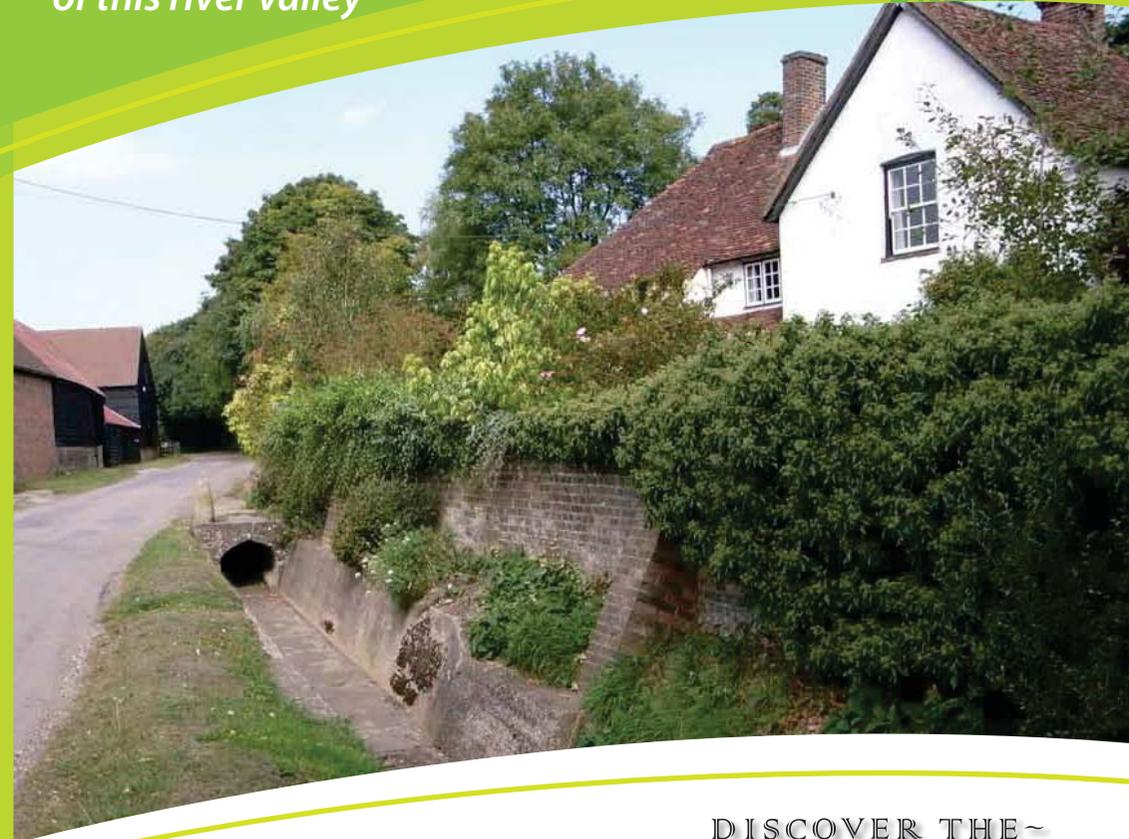
This is one of a series of 8 circular walks on the River Ver and part of the 17 mile long linear, River Ver Trail. You can also use the OS Explorer Map 182 to find your way around the Valley. For lots more photos, memories, information and copies of the other walks go to [www.riverver.co.uk](http://www.riverver.co.uk)

The Countryside Management Service works with communities in Hertfordshire to help them care for and enjoy the environment. For information on further opportunities to enjoy Hertfordshire countryside, including Health Walks, visit [www.hertslink.org/cms](http://www.hertslink.org/cms)

**If you would like this leaflet produced in large print, please contact the Countryside Management Service on [southwest.cms@hertscc.gov.uk](mailto:southwest.cms@hertscc.gov.uk) Tel: 01462 459395**

Front cover photo: The Source at Corner Farm, The Lynch, Kensworth.  
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*Explore the beautiful rolling countryside of this river valley*



**Start and finish:** Markyate High Street

**Full circular walk:** 6.7 miles (10.8 km) - About 3.5 hours

**Short circular walk:** 4 miles (6.4 km) - About 2 hours

DISCOVER THE ~  
**RIVER  
VER**

[www.riverver.co.uk](http://www.riverver.co.uk)



**MARKYATE AND KENSWORTH**

# Discover the River Ver

The River Ver is special; it is a **chalk stream**, one of only about 200 on the planet and its pure alkaline water supports a very particular mix of **flora** and **fauna**. For 450,000 years, since the Anglian Ice Age, it has flowed (almost) uninterrupted along its valley, south from its source at Kensworth Lynch in the Chiltern Hills, through Markyate, Flamstead, Redbourn, St Albans and Park Street to where it joins with the River Colne near Bricket Wood – ultimately to empty into the River Thames near Windsor.

Man has used the river for navigation, for milling, for mineral extraction and for food production – these processes mean the river is much changed from its 'natural' state. Today we utilise the Ver in two other ways. Firstly, deep boreholes into the chalk strata (or aquifer) abstract over half of all the water that falls as rain

in the area. Secondly, we use the river and its attractive surroundings for simple leisure and pleasure, by walking through its valley or along its banks, as you might do today by following this route.

Like a good book, the River Ver has a beginning, middle and end, and associated with its twists and turns many characters come and go; through these walks you will follow the story in eight chapters, from source to confluence. We aim to set the Ver in its local landscape and cultural context. For further information about the Ver and the people who lived near it, past and present, visit our website: [www.riverver.co.uk](http://www.riverver.co.uk)

The River Ver links us to the past, present and future. It is...

## liquid history

*The upper Ver is a winterbourne, flowing only after heavy rainfall. It is one of the few rivers to have its source marked on maps and when it flowed there, at Kensworth Lynch, it was viewed as a warning of calamity or disease – a woe-water.*

*Kensworth Pumping Station was opened in 1945 and is licensed to abstract groundwater to supply the surrounding area with fresh drinking water. Adjacent as it is to the 'source' area of the river, it has had a dramatic effect on the flow of the Ver here; nowadays, it flows only during heavy*

*rain and thawing snow – "every 7 years in the past or every 25 years now according to local tradition".*



### 1 Markyate High Street

Markyate means 'gate at the boundary' and the High Street used to be the county boundary between Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.



### 3 View of Markyate Cell

Lady Katherine Ferrers, the notorious female highwayman known as The Wicked Lady, lived in Markyate Cell. There remain stories of the sighting of Lady Katherine's ghost riding on her horse, in and around the Cell, and of her ill-gotten gains being buried in the grounds.



### 6 Witch-haunted path

A witch and a headless milkmaid are said to haunt the footpath across the dry valley from Kensworth village, over Bury Hill towards the church.



### 7 St Mary's Church

St Mary's Church and 'old' Kensworth lie tucked away in the cosy folds of their discrete landscape along the line of the 'top-waters' of the River Ver.



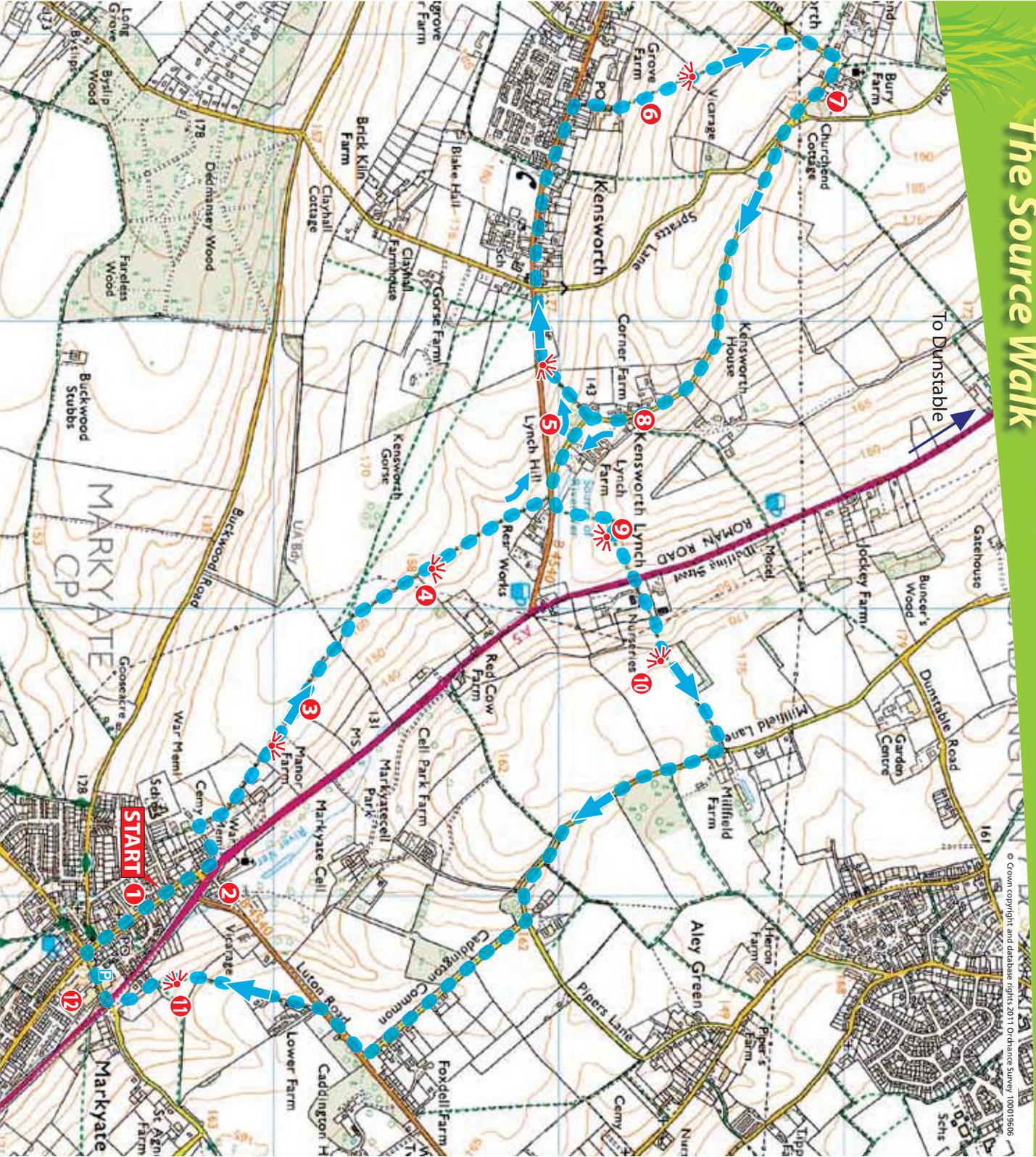
### 8 Source area at Corner Farm

The embryonic River Ver has its origins in the dramatic tucks and folds of the high landscape west of Kensworth Lynch. It begins at the point where two valleys merge, occupied on the surface by Lynch House and Corner Farm.

# VER VALLEY WALK 1

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## MARKYATE AND KENSWORTH

Walk to the north end of High Street **1** (To see the River Ver exiting Markyate Cell **2** detour right, under the bypass). Turn left after the War Memorial, up the track to the small village cemetery. There, turn right, left, then right again onto the footpath towards Kensworth. Take in the view to Markyate Cell **3** and the views of the Lynch and source area **4** on this stretch.

 Keep an eye out for Red Kites and Buzzards soaring above as they use the valley thermals as uplift to gain height.

 At Lynch Hill, cross the road to The Lynch, or for the shorter walk, turn right here and skip to 9. At the footpath at the corner of a small wood, turn left to the top of Lynch Hill **5**.

Walk along Common Road for half a mile. Once in Kensworth, take the second footpath on the right, about 50 yards past the Methodist Church. Head down the wooded track, then across the arable fields to Hollicks Lane and Church End. (Which and headless milkmaid haunted footpath **6**.)

Turn right, past St Mary's Church **7**. Follow the course of the River Ver down the lane towards Kensworth Lynch and the source area **8**.

Back at Lynch Hill follow the path left, through the hedge and over the Infant River Ver. Walk up and over the top of the Lynch **9**.

Cross Watling Street **10** and take the path up the slope beside the nursery **10**. Follow this through the small wood and on to Millfield Lane. Turn right, then right again into Caddington Common.

Turn right at Luton Road **11**. At the footpath turn left down the slope of the valley **11** to Markyate and The Ridings.

Cross the footbridge over the A5 and into Hicks Road, back to Markyate High Street (see the open culvert/River Ver here) **12**.

### KEY

 Ver Valley Walk 1 uses rights of way to link to the River Ver Trail to enable you to explore the river valley in bite size sections.

 Waymarking  
Follow these waymarks on your way around the route.

 Ver Valley View

 Public Footpath

 Public Bridleway

 Take care when crossing main roads

 Nature notes

