

Introduction

With wide, open stretches and belts of leaning pines, ancient trackways and charming flint cottages, pockets of woodland and expansive heathlands, the area of the Brecks south of Mildenhall is a truly distinctive landscape.

Take to the leafy lanes and time-honoured paths which criss-cross some of Suffolk's most striking and beautiful countryside. Discover mighty flint churches, mills and manor houses, pretty estate cottages and paddocks full of horses as well as the unique collection of flora and fauna which has made its home in the sandy and chalky Breckland soils and the damp fenlands of the River Lark.

The Mildenhall Rides offer a variety of routes from the full 27 mile (44kms) horseshoe shaped return journey, to shorter circuits around Barton Mills and Red Lodge.

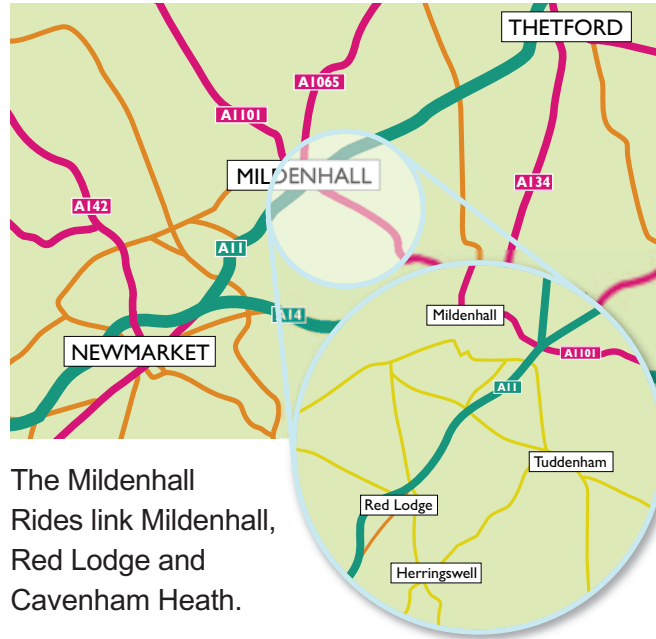
The Rides follow off-road tracks, quiet lanes and on-road sections. The very busy dual carriageway A11 is crossed safely at Red Lodge where there is a pedestrian bridge and bridleway underpass.



Did you know..?

The Brecks landscape is a very unusual mix of sand, chalk and flint. In spite of its wild and natural appearance, it is an 'unnatural' habitat. Neolithic settlers cleared woodland areas and created open pastureland which subsequently became heathland where the soil was dry and sandy. The iconic pine shelter-belts and hedges of today's landscape were only introduced some two hundred years ago to help stabilise the soil.

Location Map



The Mildenhall Rides link Mildenhall, Red Lodge and Cavenham Heath.

Public Transport

A train station at Kennett, between Newmarket and Bury St Edmunds, provides access to the Rides near Kennett Hall (1 mile/2kms). Visit www.suffolkonboard.com for bus timetables or www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk (0871 200 22 33) to plan your journey.

Use O.S. Explorer Map 226 Ely & Newmarket to enjoy this route.

Suffolk Rides

Suffolk Rides are a series of routes for cycling, horse riding and walking in rural Suffolk. Discover more in the series and many more great days out in the countryside at www.discoverysuffolk.org.uk

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The Mildenhall Rides

A horse-shoe shaped ride to enjoy on bike, horseback or on foot between Mildenhall, Red Lodge and Cavenham Heath.



Mildenhall to Red Lodge

Watermills to Warrens

Start: Jubilee Fields, Mildenhall

Park: Jubilee Fields car park

Distance: 7 miles (11kms)

Duration: approx 1 hour

The River Lark ❶ is a chalk stream which flows 30 miles from its source south of Bury St Edmunds before converging with the Great Ouse near Prickwillow in the Fens. In its 18th century heyday, it was an important trade route linking Bury with the sea at King's Lynn, but was superseded by the railway during Victoria's reign. These days the river is a favourite for anglers, supporting over 20 species of fish and a haven for wildlife, including otters.

The medieval market town of Mildenhall full of colourful houses and 15th century Market Cross has three great trails to reveal its ancient and modern history:

The Town Trail, with tales of Romano-British silver; the fascinating Old Cemetery Trail around the old chalk pit area; and the Mildenhall Manor Trail, with its insight into the trials and tribulations of Victorian life.

Wind through town to cross the River Lark by the old watermill ❷. Turn left into the picturesque village of Barton Mills.

From Mill Bridge, eight information panels guide you from mill to mill through the life and times of this once bustling 'corn farm by the mill'.

Barton Mills, formerly known as Little Barton or Barton Parva, owes its name to the great mill marked on 18th century maps at Turnpike Road. The village sign depicts watermills and mobile post mills which played a significant part in this thriving community.

Look out for Hassall's Corner and the Hanbury-Kelk water-meadows, fine St Mary's, the old Reading Room and historic Street Farm. And don't miss Lord Mayor's Cottage, an eye-catching pink, thatched confection and one-time sweet shop on the way to the 500 year old coach house, the Olde Bull Inn.



The once bustling Barton Mills leads a more sedate existence today, but still retains its strong sense of community, celebrating its rural roots with a biannual scarecrow festival in June.

Walking Circuit

(2.2 miles/3.5kms)

From Jubilee Fields cross the footbridge over the River Lark into Barton Mills. At the Olde Bull Inn ❸, turn left to the converted mill and River Lark at Turnpike Bridge. Here you can follow the riverside Lark Valley Path back to Jubilee Fields.

Past the Olde Bull Inn ❸, bear right and right again onto the Newmarket Road. This leads to Golf Links Road, a lovely route through the famed Royal Worlington & Newmarket Golf Course.

At the end of Golf Links Road, cross straight over to enter a track ❹ - a straight run for 1.5 miles (2.4 kms). You'll know you're nearing the end when kennels come either into sight or earshot. Turn left into Elms Road and follow the ancient Icknield Way path – your travelling companion from this point all the way to Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve.

The Path is probably the oldest road in Britain, running for over 100 miles along a chalk ridge from Suffolk to Buckinghamshire.

As you approach Redlodge Warren, turn right into Bridge End Road ❺ and a safe crossing of the A11 near Heath Farm. You can follow the bridleway under the A11 dual carriageway.

Emerging on the other side, the modern village of Red Lodge makes a welcome stop before heading on to Herringwell. Choose from the appropriately named Red Lodge Inn or the great value Red Lodge Café ❻, a truck stop on the former A11.

The Mildenhall Rides

A horse-shoe shaped ride to enjoy on bike, horseback or on foot between Mildenhall, Red Lodge and Cavenham Heath.



KEY TO MAP

- Mildenhall to Red Lodge
Watermills to Warrens
- - - Walking Circuit
- Red Lodge to Cavenham Heath
A Colourful Path to Historic Heathlands
- Red Lodge to Herringswell
The Red Herring Loop

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SCALE



Red Lodge to Cavenham Heath

A Colourful Path to Historic Heathlands

Start: Red Lodge

Park: Along Turnpike Road (B1085) or enquire at Red Lodge Café (01638 750 529) about using their customer car park – the café makes for an excellent start or end of your journey.

Distance: 5 miles (8kms)

Duration: approx 30-45 minutes

Leaving the striking red hues of the Red Lodge Inn, pick up the byway on your left. At the fork 7, keep left to follow the aptly named Green Lane out of Red Lodge village. At the crossing with Warren Road 8 continue straight on following the Icknield Way to meet the minor road lined with paddocks and pines leading towards Herringswell. At the junction marked by the war memorial 9, carry on to Tuddenham.

With the woodlands of Herringswell Manor on the left, the quiet road to Tuddenham opens out through wide fields and pine belts as you pass Fen Farm and head towards the old mill stream. Here, drained fens and farmlands flank the historic village.

Turn right into Tuddenham past the massive old mill building, now Tuddenham Mill 10. The present mill dates from 1775 and where once a steam engine drove grindstones, visitors now dine in an award winning restaurant. Venture along the High Street to discover the fortress-like St Mary's Church with its vast bright walls of Victorian patterned tiles and hunt out the fascinating little roadside Strake House, a few yards down the Higham Road. Made of clunch, tile and brick, this recently restored Strake or small forge was once used to heat iron strips for wooden cartwheel rims and is all that remains of a nearby wheelwright's.

Return to the village green and follow the Icknield Way down a long, gently undulating, wide sandy track to Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve. At Temple Bridge 11 you can explore the River Lark along the long distance footpath, the Lark Valley Path.

Cavenham Heath National Nature Reserve is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is a prime example of ancient Brecks heath with areas of birch woodland, lichen and heather and is truly wonderful in late August when the heather bloom creates a magnificent sweep of purple.

The reserve contains woodland, heathland and wetland and visitors can enjoy 3 waymarked trails with fine views to experience this rich mosaic of habitats. Please be aware that some areas of the heath have restricted access between March and November to protect ground nesting birds.

Link to the King's Forest Rides

At Temple Bridge 11, the Lark Valley Path leads east to Icklingham where you can join the King's Forest Rides, another leaflet in the Rides series.

Red Lodge to Herringswell

The Red Herring Loop

Start: Red Lodge

Park: Along Turnpike Road (B1085) or enquire at Red Lodge Café (01638 750 529) about using their customer car park – the café makes for an excellent start or end of your journey.

Distance: 5.5 miles (9kms)

Duration: approx 45 minutes – 1 hour

This loop offers more off-road excitement along ancient Breckland tracks through some lovely landscape.

At Herringswell, turn at the war memorial 9 to St Ethelbert's church, with its square tower and impressive flying buttresses, nestled alongside farm buildings and quaint cottages. Head inside to discover amazing historic and contemporary stained glass and an unusual double piscina in the chancel. Outside, study the village sign – a real red herring! The village name has nothing to do with fish, but most likely derives from the Anglo-Saxon Hyringa tribe of early Britons who made these lands their home: modern day name, Herringswell, is believed to have evolved from Hyrningcwyllle, 'spring of the Hyringas'.

For most of its history, Herringswell has been part of an estate. In the 11th century the manor belonged to the Abbot of Bury St Edmunds. In the 19th century it was famously inhabited by Edward, Prince of Wales, a regular visitor to the local estate, having installed his mistress, Lilly Langtree at nearby Kentford Hall.

Just after a red phone box 12, turn right onto the byway, signed the Icknield Way. This is a 3.5 mile (5.6kms) route through woodlands and plantations and alongside fields past tumuli near Warrenhill Farm.

As the landscape opens up at Kentford Heath, turn right at the orange byway post 13 and follow the track to join Herringswell Road. At Kennett Cottages 14, carry straight on, cross another road by the woodlands of Kennett Hall, and join the byway known as The Carrops, which runs parallel with the River Kennett, back to Red Lodge.

Link to the Newmarket Rides

At Kentford Heath 13, stay on the Icknield Way to pass under the A14 to Barrow. Here you join The Newmarket Rides, another leaflet in the Rides series.