

Teas, buns, pints and pies:

Markyate High Street: There are public houses, a takeaway, sandwich shop, general stores and bakery.

Watling Street: The Packhorse Inn Public House.

Kensworth: Village stores and the Farmers Boy Public House.

How to get there:

By road: Markyate High Street can be found off the A5183 /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 visit 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 other walks in the series visit www.riverver.co.uk

The Ver Valley Society exists to protect and promote all aspects of the River Ver and its valley. We have over 300 members and are always pleased to welcome new ones. These walks were originally developed by the Ver Valley Society working with the Countryside Management Service in 2011. The walk leaflets were revised and updated and waymarking refreshed by members and friends of the VVS in 2021. We hope you enjoy them.

For lots more walk routes, photos, memories, information on membership and working parties visit the VVS website: www.riverver.co.uk

Front cover photo: The Source at Corner Farm, The Lynch, Kensworth.

Photos: Melanie Woods and Isabel Crozier.

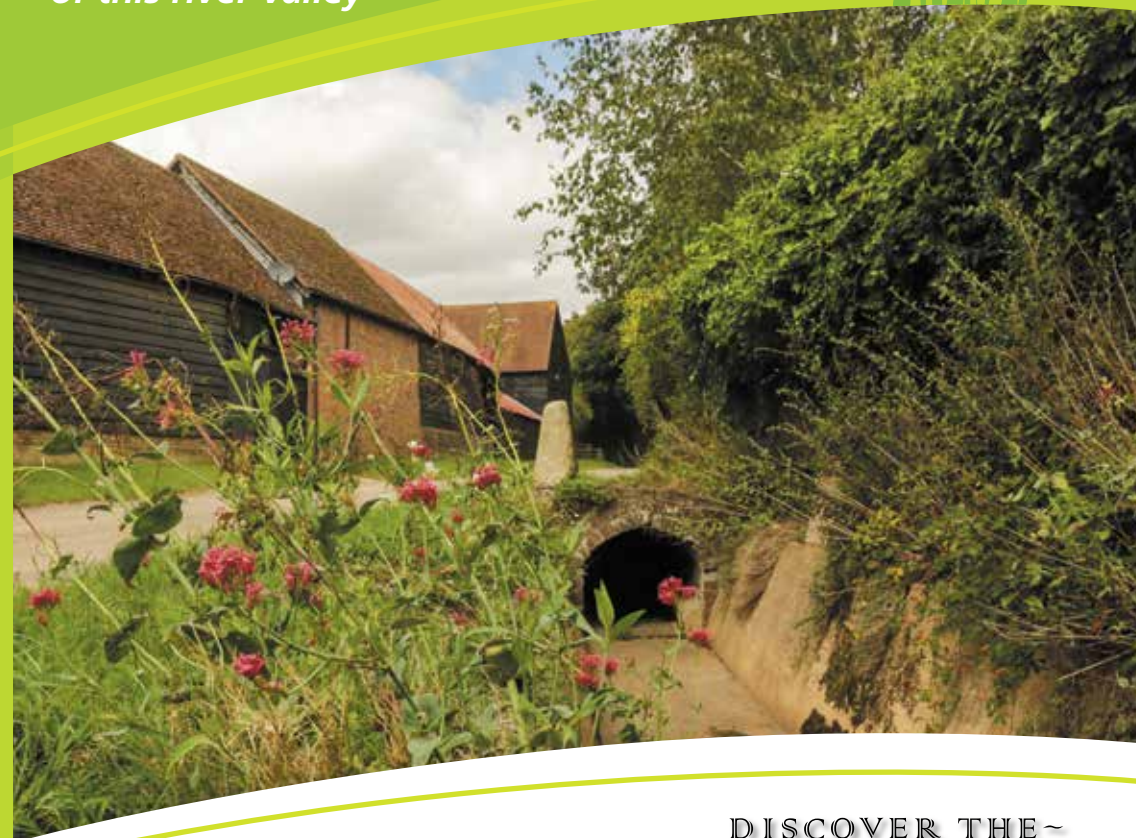
© 2021 Ver Valley Society, except mapping. All rights reserved.



VER VALLEY WALK 1

The Source Walk

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



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 as much as half 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

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

The upper Ver is a winterbourne, flowing only after a wet winter of 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.



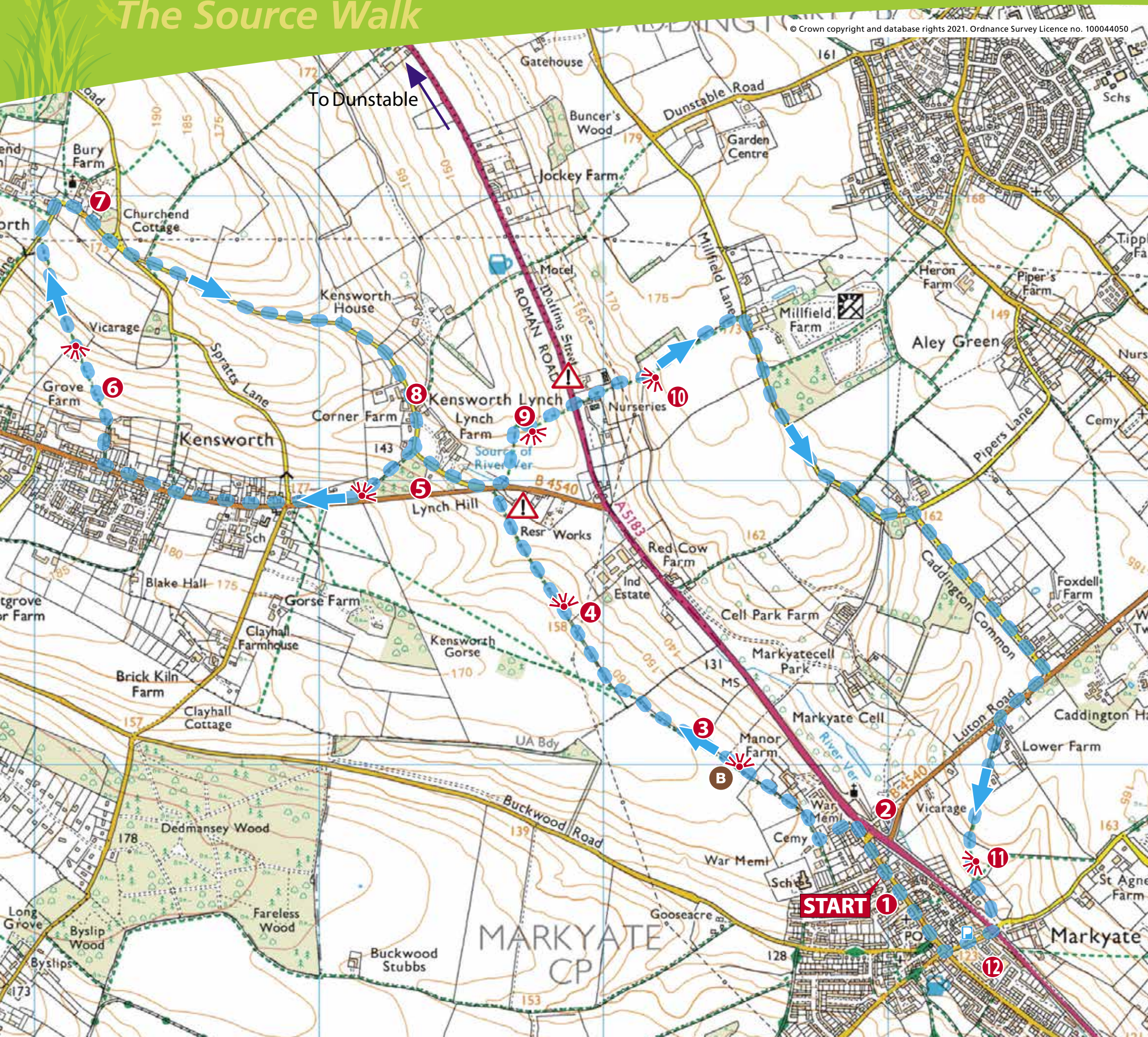
7 St Mary’s Church
St Mary’s Church and ‘old’ Kensworth lie tucked away in the cosy folds of their discrete landscape along the line of the ‘top-waters’ of the River Ver.



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

The Source Walk



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. Turn right then leave the cemetery, turning right onto a playing field and continue onto a footpath leading 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 **5** turn left and then take the right hand fork. At the footpath at the corner of a small wood, turn left to the top of Lynch Hill **6**. For the shorter walk, cross the road and turn right, then follow the instructions from paragraph 6 below.

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. (Enjoy the views as you cross this dry valley above the source of the Ver.) **7**

Turn right, past St Mary's Church **8**. Follow Hollick's Lane, becoming The Lynch, to Corner Farm where the embryonic Ver begins, a flow of water down the road during rain showers **9**.

Short walk continues here: 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 **10**. (Lynch is derived from the Olde English pre 7th Century word 'hlinc', meaning hill.)

Cross Watling Street **11** and take the path up the slope beside the nursery **12**. Follow this through the small wood, past the latest phase of the solar farm and onto Millfield Lane. Turn right, then right again into Caddington Common.

Turn right at Luton Road **13**. At the footpath turn left down the slope of the valley **14** to Markyate.

Cross the footbridge over the A5 and into Hicks Road, back to Markyate High Street. The River Ver runs in a culvert in front of the newly built houses here **15**.

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-sized 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**
- Position of a Ver Valley Bench**

