

Teas, buns, pints and pies:

Flamstead: The Three Blackbirds and The Spotted Dog Public Houses, plus Post Office store.

Markyate: The Plume of Feathers Public House.

Trowley Bottom: The Rose and Crown Public House.

How to get there:

By road: Flamstead is approx 5 miles south of Dunstable, off the A5183/ Watling Street. Leave Junction 9 of the M1 and follow the A5183 north. Flamstead can best be reached along Chequers Lane, the first left turn after the hotel. There is a public car park in Friendless Lane, leading off Hollybush Lane.

By public transport: Flamstead 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

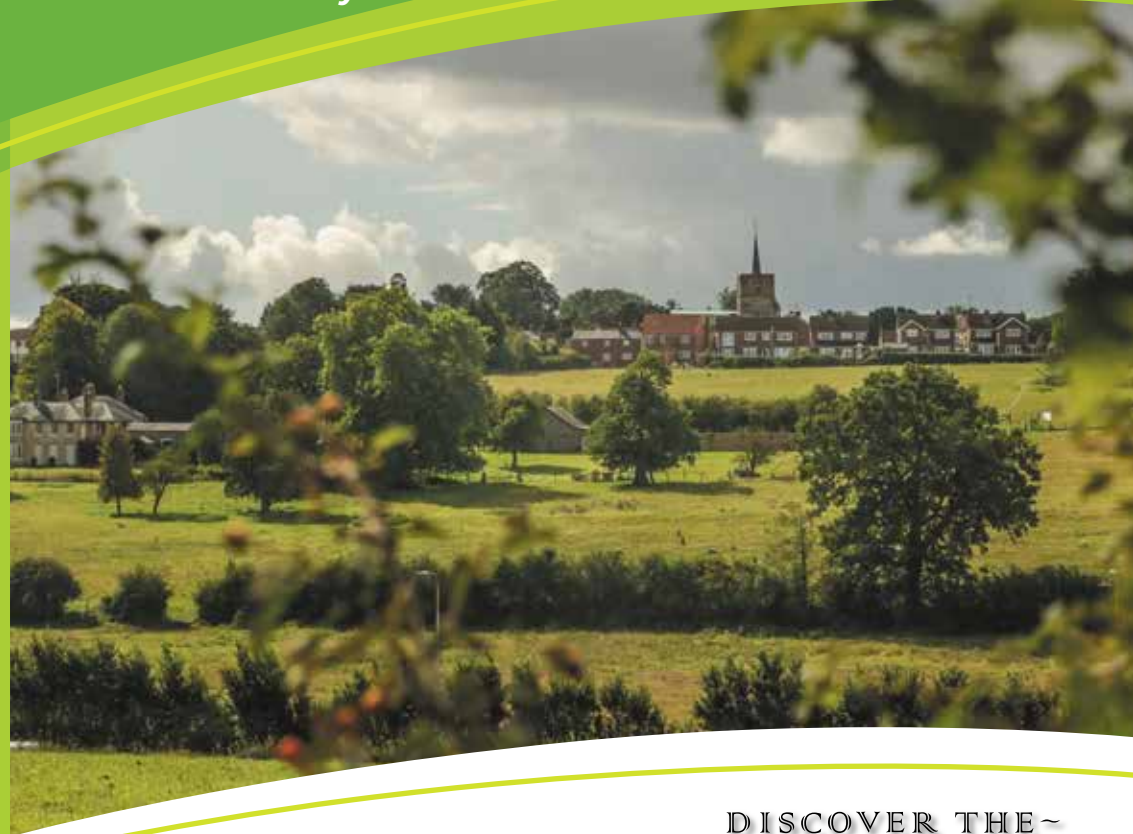
Front cover photo: St Leonard's Church in the distance.

Photos: Melanie Woods, Flamstead Heritage and Eric Edwards/Flamstead Society (Watercress beds). © 2021 Ver Valley Society, except mapping. All rights reserved.

VER VALLEY WALK 2

The Upper Ver Valley

Explore the beautiful rolling countryside of this river valley



Start and finish: Flamstead High Street
Full circular walk: 6 miles (9.7 km) –
About 3 hours
Short circular walk: 4 miles (6.5 km) –
About 2 hours



www.riverver.co.uk



FLAMSTEAD AND MARKYATE

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.

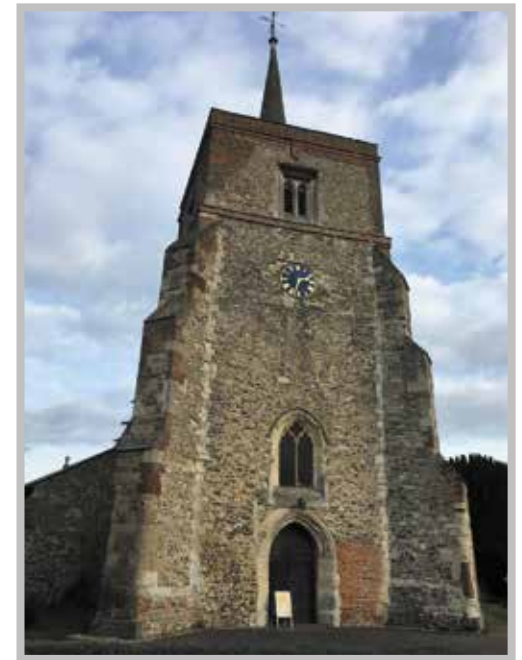
Watling Street has close association with the River Ver for its entire 17m/28km course. The river twists and turns through the valley on its way downstream. The Roman road follows a generally straight route, ascending and descending hills and escarpments, fording the river in six places – important crossing places even today. One of Britannia's most important military and commercial overland routes, Watling Street linked London with the Kent coast at Richborough, via Canterbury and Rochester, and with the Midlands and Chester via Verulamium.

Watling is Anglo-Saxon in origin. Bede, writing in the early 8th century wrote that Verulamium is called Verlamchester or Waeclingachester, after Wacol's people who lived there. Waeclingas were his followers, hence Watling Street.



10 Flamstead, church and village

St Leonard's church tower is topped by a short spire, known as a Hertfordshire Spike. The rivalry between Flamstead and Redbourn folk goes back to medieval times; even into the 20th century, groups of village boys frequently clashed.



10 Medieval artwork

St Leonard's church contains a number of fabulous medieval wall paintings and graffiti. The paintings lay undiscovered until the 1930s, having been whitewashed over during the Reformation. A major project of conservation-led repair and restoration began in 2020 to protect 900 years of heritage.

2 Watercress beds, Flamstead

Small-scale watercress production was undertaken on the River Ver at several points near Flamstead, like this at River Hill. Any suitable scrapes, hollows or ditches might be utilised. Further downstream the industry was on a more formal and larger scale.

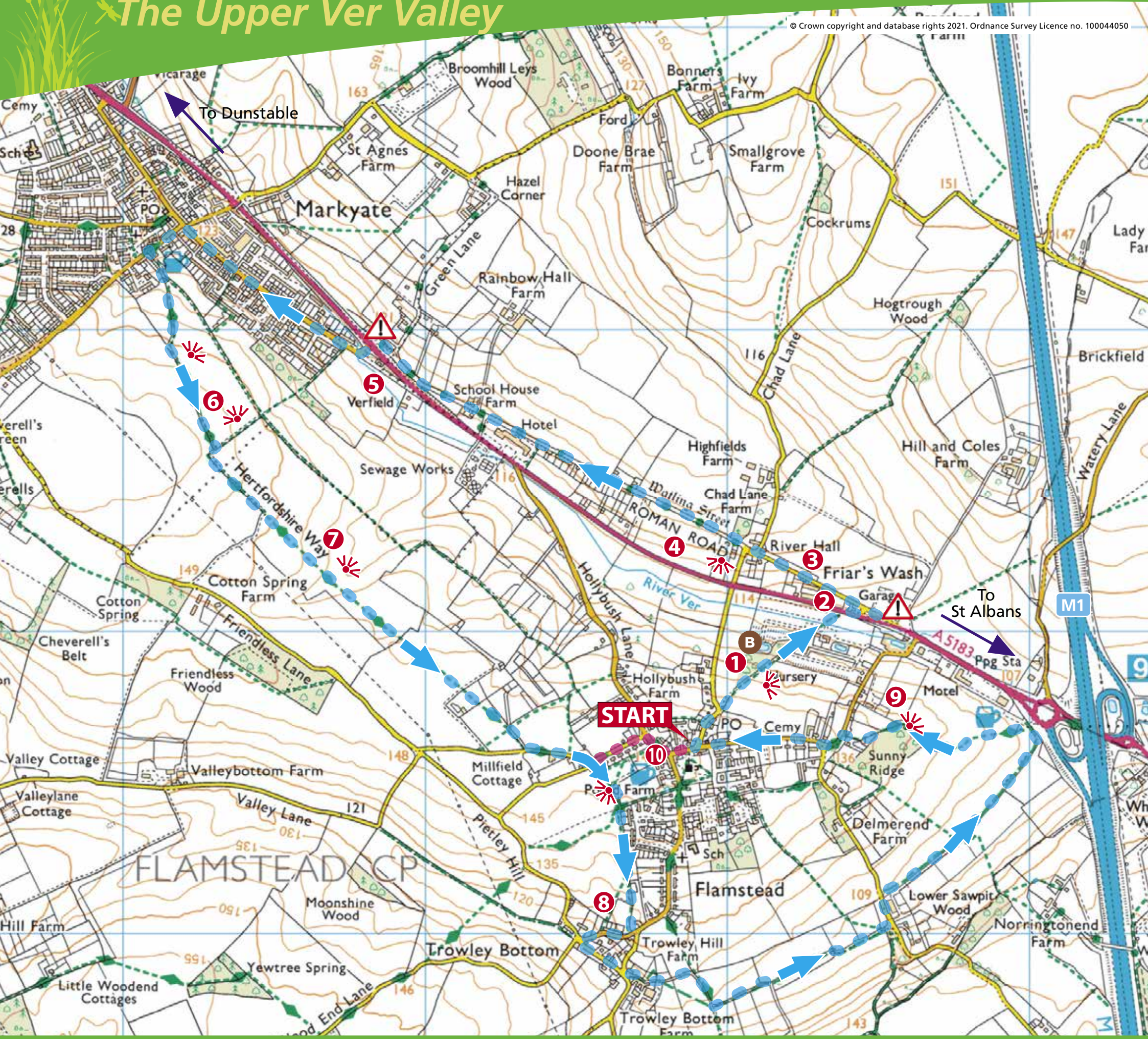


8 Trowley Bottom

Trowley (rhymes with holy) Bottom is a distinct, if not now separate, part of Flamstead. The little hamlet lies in a hollow, part of a 'dry' valley that meets the Ver at Friars Wash.

VER VALLEY WALK 2

The Upper Ver Valley



FLAMSTEAD AND MARKYATE

Start from River Hill (a turning off the main street opposite the pubs). Walk down River Hill; where the road bends left, bear right through a kissing-gate. From this meadow there are fine views east to River Hall ①. Pass into Ettimore Copse and down the slope of the valley.

Take care to keep to the footpath through Majestic Trees nursery site by following the waymarked path across a footbridge over the Ver ② and along a line of trees to steps up to a gate in a hedge alongside the A5183 (Watling Street).

Cross the main road ⚠ and, passing to the right of the petrol station, join Old Watling Street to follow the line of the original Roman road ③. There are fine views of Flamstead church across the valley ④.

Recross the 'new' road (A5183) ⚠ to enter Markyate via London Road and High Street. See the River Ver on the west side of the road as it exits its culvert ⑤.

Leave Markyate via Pickford Road, take the footpath left, back to Flamstead. Keep right at a fork, up the slope passing allotments. There are fine views north and east – including to Kensworth Lynch, the source of the Ver ⑥; crossing a rolling arable field further on, there are views east, across the valley, to Rainbow Hall Farm ⑦.

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

When the path meets the lane, turn left and head towards Flamstead. At the junction of Friendless Lane and Mill Lane, turn either left along Friendless Lane to take the short walk back to the start, or cross the overflow car park to follow the path south, behind the gardens, down the slope towards Trowley Bottom ⑧.

Follow the lane, right, down Trowley Hill, then left to Trowley Bottom Farm. Take the footpath between the farm and cottages.

Where the path meets the bottom of the valley, turn left into the bridleway; it will come out in Delmerend Lane. This bridleway can be very muddy at times.

At Friar's Wash, beside the M1 junction complex, bear left at the gate to ascend the slope to a wood. At the top there are fine views over the valley, east and north across Friar's Wash ⑨. Turn right and follow the edge of the wood until, passing between two gardens, you emerge at the top of Chequers Hill. Turn left and return to the village centre ⑩ along Singlets Lane.

KEY

- Ver Valley Walk 2 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**

