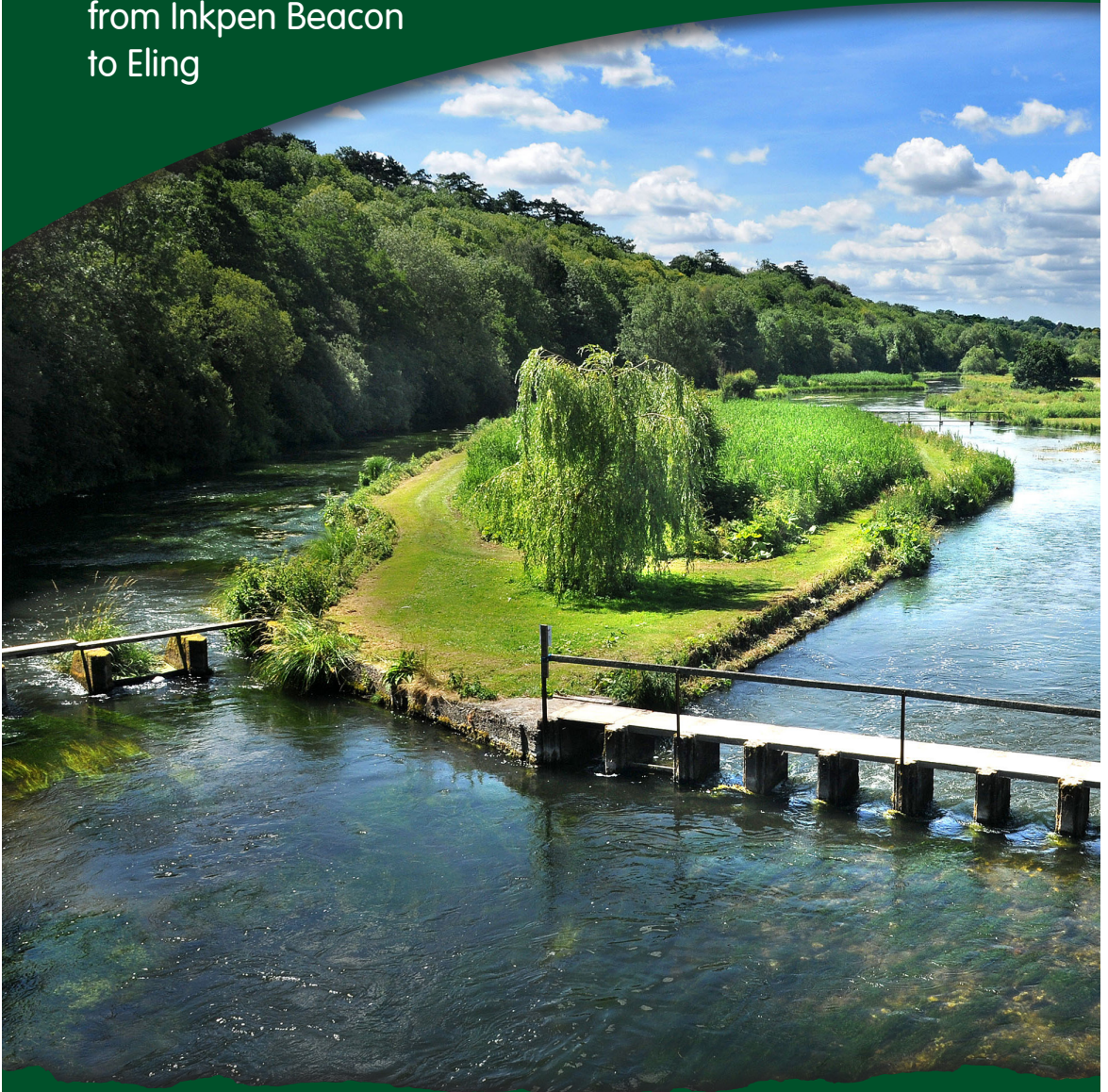


# Walking the Test Way

Test Valley  
Borough Council 









A 44 mile long-distance walk  
from Inkpen Beacon  
to Eling



Visitor Information Centre, Romsey Tel: 01794 512987

# Route Overview

## Introduction

<b>Part One</b>	8 miles	<b>Inkpen to Hurstbourne Tarrant</b>	
<b>Part Two</b>	3 miles	<b>Hurstbourne Tarrant to St Mary Bourne</b>	
<b>Part Three</b>	5.5 miles	<b>St Mary Bourne to Longparish</b>	
<b>Part Four</b>	5 miles	<b>Longparish to West Down, Chilbolton</b>	
<b>Part Five</b>	3 miles	<b>West Down, Chilbolton to Stockbridge</b>	
<b>Part Six</b>	5 miles	<b>Stockbridge to Mottisfont</b>	
<b>Part Seven</b>	5 miles	<b>Mottisfont to Romsey</b>	
<b>Part Eight</b>	9 miles	<b>Romsey to Eling</b>	

## Please ensure you follow the Countryside Code.

*This leaflet does not provide navigation details.*

*The route is shown on the following Ordnance Survey maps:*

### **Explorer maps at 1:25,000 scale:**

158 Newbury & Hungerford (required for part 1)

131 Romsey, Andover & Test Valley (required for parts 1-7)

OL22 New Forest (required for parts 7-8)

*The route on the OS maps has a green diamond to indicate that it is a national trail, it is also named the 'Test Way' on the maps. In addition there are green arrow markers along the route.*

The Test Way is a 44-mile long distance walking route that will take you from its dramatic start, high on the chalk downs at Inkpen, to follow much of the course of the River Test to Eling where its tidal waters flow into Southampton Water. Without doubt, the Test is one of Hampshire's finest chalk streams, world famous for its superb trout fishing. The Test Way has been divided into eight sections, each providing a really good day out. Choose between water meadows or tidal marshes, riverbank picnics or cosy pubs, steep hills with exhilarating views or a cool peaceful woodland.

The route passes through some of the most picturesque villages in Hampshire, strewn with listed buildings, historic churches and houses. There are many places such as Romsey, Stockbridge and Totton where you can stop along the way for refreshments, visit antiques shops, sample local crafts and foods or even to stay for a night or two. Listed in this guide is a selection of accommodation, places for refreshments and attractions worth a visit along the way.

The crystal-clear waters of the little streams, or bournes, are ideal for watercress growers, and the numerous water meadows and tidal marshes are thick with wildlife, flora and fauna. As the route criss-crosses backwards and forwards over the river, you may spot some of the many rare birds and plants that can be found here, such as kingfishers, marsh harriers and little grebe, green-winged orchids and butterbur.



## Part One

# INKPEN TO HURSTBOURNE TARRANT



Distance:  
**8 miles**

Approx Time:  
**3 - 4 hours**

**Refreshments:** This part of the route is very remote, there are no refreshments available until Hurstbourne Tarrant, where there is the George and Dragon Inn. The Crown Inn is approximately a 1km detour as it passes Upton.

**Accommodation:** The George and Dragon Inn, Hurstbourne Tarrant  
[www.georgeanddragon.com](http://www.georgeanddragon.com)

**Public Transport:** Taxi to Combe Gibbet from Newbury 10 miles, Hungerford 5.5 miles, Andover 12 miles. Hurstbourne Tarrant is on a regular bus route to Newbury and Andover.

**Parking:** Combe Gibbet SU370620/Hurstbourne Tarrant playing fields SU350530

**The Test Way** begins high on a dramatic chalk escarpment at Inkpen. This section of the Test Way you can walk or cycle the route.

**Combe Gibbet** is built on top of a Neolithic long barrow known as the Inkpen long barrow. The long barrow is 60 m long and 22 m wide. The story behind the gibbet is that it was erected in 1676 for the purpose of gibbeting the bodies of George Broomham and Dorothy Newman and has only ever been used for them. It is said that they were having an affair, in 1676, adultery was a crime that could be prosecuted under English common law. They were witnessed by 'Mad Thomas' murdering Broomham's wife and son up near where the Gibbet stands. The double gibbet was placed in the location near the crime and as a warning, to deter others from committing crimes. The current gibbet is a replica and it has been replaced many times over the years.

From up the top of the hill by the Gibbet the views are gorgeous you can see the bleak downs to the north and the lush plain to the south. On a fine day you may even glimpse the soaring landmark of Salisbury Cathedral's spire.

As you head along and round the hill ridge the trail drops sharply into a valley and rises up to the small picturesque village of Linkenholt.

**Linkenholt** is a village of only 22 houses, including the manor house. Its heart is the cricket club, whose pavilion was built as the village reading room. The village is one of the few villages left that is a privately owned estate and has been for over 1000 years, the current small quaint church was built in 1871.

The path then follows alongside the bed of a winterbourne (a seasonally rising stream) into the village of Hurstbourne Tarrant – a favourite of William Cobbett, author of 'Rural Rides'.





## Part Two

# HURSTBOURNE TARRANT TO ST MARY BOURNE



Distance:

**3 miles**

Approx Time:

**1 - 2 hours**

**Refreshments:** George Inn or slightly further up the lane Bourne Valley Inn, St Mary Bourne.

**Accommodation:** George Inn, St Mary Bourne [www.georgeinnstmarybourne.co.uk](http://www.georgeinnstmarybourne.co.uk)  
Bourne Valley Inn, St Mary Bourne [www.bournevalleyinn.com](http://www.bournevalleyinn.com)

**Public Transport:** Hurstbourne Tarrant is on a regular bus route to Newbury and Andover. St Mary Bourne has a regular bus route to Andover.

**Parking:** Hurstbourne Tarrant playing fields OS Explorer Map 131: SU350530  
St Mary Bourne playing fields OS Explorer Map 131: SU420505



In **Hurstbourne Tarrant** the path runs through the village, past St Peter's a 12th century church, and crosses the valley heading steeply uphill to the copses of Wallop Hill Down, where you can look back for a picture postcard view of the village nestling below.



Gently descend past Stoke Hill Farm to **St Mary Bourne** which straggles alongside the course of the Bourne Rivulet where the 12th Century St Peter's Church (the daughter chapel to St Peter's in Hurstbourne Tarrant) contains several treasures, including a marble font, which was almost certainly the gift of Bishop Henri de Blois, the very well-connected Bishop of Winchester 1129-71. He was a grandson of William the Conqueror, and a brother of King Stephen. He is also known to have had a special devotion to St Mary and it is thought that the St Mary Bourne Chapel deliberate choice for the installation of a rare Baptismal Font honouring St Mary with the spring fed – pure water from the River Bourne.



Look downstream for the huge nine-arch viaduct on the edge of the village which was constructed in mid 19th century as the main rail line between Salisbury and London. This is not a principal route any longer. On the other side of the viaduct are numerous water-cross beds managed by Vitacress.



## Part Three

# ST MARY BOURNE TO LONGPARISH



Distance:

**5.5 miles**

Approx Time:

**2 - 3 hours**

**Refreshments:** The Cricketers Inn, Longparish [www.thecricketersinnlongparish.com](http://www.thecricketersinnlongparish.com)

The Plough Inn, Longparish [www.ploughinn.org](http://www.ploughinn.org)

**Accommodation:** Yew Tree Cottage, Longparish [www.yewcottagelongparish.com](http://www.yewcottagelongparish.com)

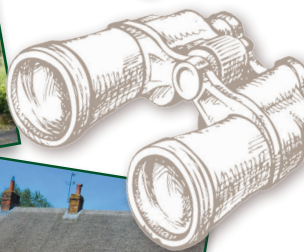
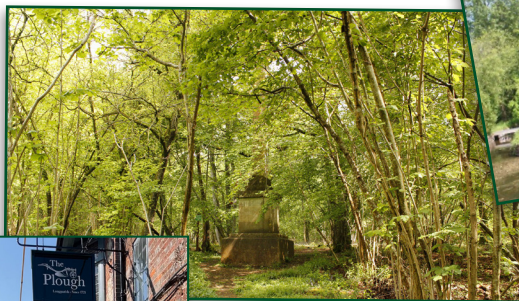
**Public Transport:** St Mary Bourne is on a bus route from Andover.

Longparish is on a bus route from Andover.

**Parking:** St Mary Bourne playing fields OS Explorer Map 131: SU420505  
Longparish village

Over the river, you walk the farm tracks crossing one of the great old roads, the Harrow Way dated by archaeological finds to 600-450 BC, which became a pilgrimage from Seaton, Devon to Canterbury, Kent.

Pass through more farmland and around the beautiful eastern edge of Harewood Forest, a remnant of ancient coppiced woodland, which was a Saxon royal hunting forest and after the Norman Conquest was part of the Royal Forest of Chute. The forest was strictly regulated and all rights of the chase were reserved to the King, so no felling or hunting.



You will then come to Longparish which is situated on the northwest bank of the river Test, the village is about 3 miles long and made up of several small settlements. Forton off the main road with some of the older cottages, Middleton which includes, Middleton Manor, the school and church and East Aston where you will find Longparish House and Upper Mill. It has many beautiful listed buildings, including the early 13th century church of St Nicholas. It is an old farming village where up to the 1940s

most of the people living in the village were employed by the village either on the farms or in the larger houses.

*The Plough reopened in September 2021 and is right on the Test Way Path.*





## Part Four

# LONGPARISH TO WEST DOWN, CHILBOLTON



Distance:  
**5 miles**

Approx Time:  
**2 hours**

**Refreshments:** The Mayfly a lovely pub on the River Test, West Down, Chilbolton  
[www.mayflyfullerton.co.uk](http://www.mayflyfullerton.co.uk)

The White Lion in Wherwell [www.thewhitelionwherwell.co.uk](http://www.thewhitelionwherwell.co.uk)

**Accommodation:** The Peat Spade, Longstock – 2.4 miles away  
[www.peatspadeinn.co.uk](http://www.peatspadeinn.co.uk)

**Public Transport:** Longparish is on a bus route from Andover.  
West Down, Chilbolton is on a bus route from Andover.

**Parking:** Longparish village  
At West Down car park OS Explorer map SU390383



Walk through the pretty hamlet of Forton on the banks of the Test. You then re-enter the lovely Harewood Forest on second World War concrete tracks used to conceal vehicles from snooping enemy aircraft.

Leave the woods and walk along pleasant old farm lanes back into the valley to Wherwell. The route runs behind the village, but much more scenic is a walk down the main street. In Wherwell there are tales of the Wherwell Cockatrice which is described as a creature that was hatched by a toad from a duck egg and turned into a dragon like creature, which grew enormous and had a huge appetite.

On the main street you will pass Wherwell Priory which is built on the site of Wherwell Abbey, founded by Queen Elfrida in 986, demolished by King Henry VIII in 1649 and traded to Lord De La Warr in exchange for five Manors in Sussex. The oldest building on the Estate is the stable block which is constructed of banded flint and brick with some chalk blocks, it is believed to have been the mid C13th Abbey Infirmary. In the grounds there is a plaque dated AD 1649 which records "here was the monastery of Wherwell demolished by the seale or avarice of King Henry VIII".

This was a busy village 100 years ago, with three general stores, a forge, cobblers, two pubs, a tea shop, post office, school and coal merchants, with more shops over the years.

There is also a war memorial which records of those who served in World War I and II.

The pub in Wherwell is called the White Lion which dates back to 1612.

Cross the different branches of the river via footbridges, past Chilbolton Common with its vast variety of flora and fauna. Skirting Chilbolton and its Observatory you will reach West Down and there are excellent views across the valley of the River Test.

As you cross the road you will see the The Mayfly Inn, a beautiful riverside pub, which makes for a lovely stopping point for food and drink.

If you plan to do a detour and visit Danebury Ring hill fort in the next part of the walk, you may want to walk the first part of the dismantled railway line to the Peat Spade in Longstock for overnight accommodation.



## Part Five

# WEST DOWN, CHILBOLTON TO STOCKBRIDGE



Distance:

**3 miles**

Approx Time:

**1 - 2 hours**

**Refreshments:** Lots of pubs and cafes to choose from along Stockbridge High Street.

**Accommodation:** The White Hart Stockbridge, is right on the Test Way

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

The Grosvenor Hotel [www.thegrosvenorstockbridge.com](http://www.thegrosvenorstockbridge.com)

The Three Cups Inn [www.the3cups.co.uk](http://www.the3cups.co.uk)

The Greyhound on the Test [www.thegreyhoundonthetest.co.uk](http://www.thegreyhoundonthetest.co.uk)

**Public Transport:** West Down is on the bus route from Andover.

Stockbridge has bus services to Andover, Romsey, Winchester and Salisbury.

Check the local timetables to plan your journey.

**Parking:** At West Down car park OS Explorer map SU390383

Stockbridge High Street

This part of the route uses an old dismantled railway line to lead you down to Stockbridge. The river is always beside you, peeping through the trees, passing the village of Leckford and it is worth taking a detour to the bridge as you pass Longstock which is really pretty.

You could consider adding an additional 4 miles (and a bit more if you walk round the ramparts) from Longstock to walk up to Danebury Ring which is a 2.5 mile walk (additional 5 miles out and back).

Danebury Ring is a large Iron Age Hill Fort and evidence found suggests that the fort was built 2500 years ago and occupied for nearly 500 years (700BC to AD43). Large beech trees around the perimeter of the earth works make the site prominent in the surrounding landscape.

In the hill fort you can see the 'ring' of ramparts and the once hidden gateway. The earth works around the entrance give a feel for the success of the Danebury defences. You may notice that the ground slopes to a high spot in the centre of the ring. This area was a focal point for religious gatherings and important meetings. The subtle dips in the ground are where the grain stores used to be. These dips are the only visible evidence of past excavations.

Life was short and harsh in the Iron Age. Danebury was predominantly a farming community, the people kept sheep and cattle, wove woollen cloth and made leather goods. As Danebury had few natural resources it relied on trade with other areas to get iron, tin, copper, salt, shale and stone. It is likely that woollen products and grain were traded in exchange for these.

A community of 300 to 400 people lived here for more than 400 years. There is evidence of 73 roundhouses, 500 rectangular buildings and thousands of deep storage pits. During this time one of the main tasks may have been to protect livestock and grain from attack by raiding parties. Men, women and children may all have had to fight off invaders by hurling sling stones. Warriors fought with swords and sometimes used horse drawn chariots.\*

If you have taken the detour to Danebury Ring, you will head back down to join the Test Way again at Longstock and complete the last mile of the disused railway which takes you to the top of Stockbridge High Street.

Stockbridge was first referred to in 1141. The main street is particularly wide, reflecting its earlier role as part of a drovers' road. It developed as a market town in the 13th Century, and is still thriving today. The wide main street rests on a chalk causeway built over the seven streams that make up the River Test. The water criss-crosses the high street, where you can take a break from your route to feed the huge trout or explore the many antiques and crafts shops, galleries, pubs and cafes.

\*Danebury Hill Fort archaeological information source Hampshire County Council website.





## Part Six

# STOCKBRIDGE TO MOTTISFONT



Distance:  
**5 miles**

Approx Time:  
**2 hours**

**Refreshments:** John O'Gaunt Pub, Horsebridge [www.johnofgaunt.co.uk](http://www.johnofgaunt.co.uk)

**Accommodation:** Mill Arms, Dunbridge (1 mile walk from Mottisfont)  
[www.millarmsdunbridge.co.uk](http://www.millarmsdunbridge.co.uk)

**Public Transport:** Stockbridge has bus services to Andover, Romsey, Winchester and Salisbury. Check the local timetables to plan your journey.

Mottisfont and Dunbridge train station with direct trains from London Waterloo, Salisbury, Romsey and Southampton.

**Parking:** Stockbridge High Street & Mottisfont

Heading out along the old railway line, the path passes through Stockbridge Common – a quiet world of reed beds and waterfowl. Here, beside the water, the Clarendon Way (which stretches from Winchester to Salisbury) crosses the valley just before you reach the ancient crossing point of Horsebridge. You can choose to take a short detour and visit Houghton Lodge Gardens which are beautiful riverside gardens sitting above the Test, overlooked by Houghton Lodge an 18th Century listed Gothic Cottage Orne, there is also a tea room. Check the website to book a visit on route. [www.houghtonlodge.co.uk](http://www.houghtonlodge.co.uk)



Just north of Horsebridge is a disused canal lock from the Southampton to Andover canal. In 1857, the Andover Canal Railway Company utilised much of the route for a railway locally called the 'Sprat and Winkle line' (closed in the 1960s), which was literally built over the top of the canal. Along the path, white gashes can be seen in the cliffs where it is said the chalk was excavated to fill in the old waterway.



Pass the John of Gaunt pub before continuing past one of the few remaining old railway stations (now privately owned).

On to Lower Brook, cross the meadows and finish this section on grass tracks leading to the famous Mottisfont Abbey.



When the Domesday Book was compiled in 1086, the ancient manor house at Mottisfont belonged to William the Conqueror. The priory was founded by the Austin Cannons in 1201 until it was dissolved by Oliver Cromwell in 1536. It became a private house until given to the National Trust in 1957, and is now famous for its superb walled rose garden. Mottisfont is described as a romantic house and gallery set in beautiful riverside gardens, there are ancient trees and bubbling brooks together with rolling lawns with the 18th Century house and medieval priory at its heart.

To find out more about Mottisfont Abbey and book a visit [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mottisfont](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mottisfont)





## Part Seven

# MOTTISFONT TO ROMSEY



Distance:

**5 miles**

Approx Time:

**2 hours**

**Refreshments:** Lots of cafes and pubs in the market town of Romsey.

**Accommodation:** The Palmerston Rooms, Palmerston St, Romsey  
[www.thepalmerstonrooms.com](http://www.thepalmerstonrooms.com)

The Cromwell Arms, Mainstone, Romsey [www.thecromwellarms.com](http://www.thecromwellarms.com)

**Public Transport:** Mottisfont and Dunbridge train station with direct trains from London Waterloo, Salisbury, Romsey and Southampton.

Romsey train station goes direct to Southampton and Bath.

Romsey regular bus routes to Winchester, Andover and Southampton.

The Test Way now passes the church of St Andrew and crosses the River Dun just before it joins the Test. Lanes and tracks skirt around the village of Awbridge before entering Squabb Wood, reminiscent of the New Forest.

Emerge from the wood and see the 10th Century Romsey Abbey across the marshland. Then go past Sadlers Mill and its leaping salmon and down to the thriving medieval market town of Romsey.

The beautiful abbey at Romsey was founded by Edward the Elder in the 10th Century. It was a Benedictine monastery for nuns that in its early years had strong royal connections and attracted ladies from some of the wealthiest families in the land. In its latter years the monastery declined, and its nuns were often rebuked for 'scandals' such as staying out all night! It survived the Dissolution and became the parish church.

If you have time when in Romsey take a guided tour of King John's House and discover the story of the medieval house and the people who have lived and worked there over nearly 800 years. Built by King John in circa 1230 as a Hunting Lodge with the New Forest nearby. It was later used as a guest house for the Abbey, and then the parish workhouse. There is also Miss Moody's Tudor Tea Room open for breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea.



Romsey is also home to the Visitor Information Centre for Test Valley.





## Part Eight ROMSEY TO ELING



Distance:

**9 miles**

Approx Time:

**3 - 4 hours**

### Refreshments:

Salmon Leap, Totton [www.thesalmonleap-totton.foodndrink.uk](http://www.thesalmonleap-totton.foodndrink.uk)

Anchor Inn, Totton [www.anchorintotton.co.uk](http://www.anchorintotton.co.uk)

**Accommodation:** There are a selection of hotels in the Southampton area.

### Public Transport:

Romsey train station goes direct to Southampton and Bath.

Romsey regular bus routes to Winchester, Andover and Southampton.

Regular buses and trains from Southampton to Totton daily.

**Parking:** Romsey Rapids Sports Complex, Long stay pay and display car park, Southampton Road  
Eling Car Park



Just south of Romsey, the route passes the grand Pal-ladian mansion of Broadlands – home of the late Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last serving Viceroy of India, and once the home of the prime minister, Lord Palmerston.

The Broadlands estate pre-pandemic was open for guided tours at certain times of the year and they also host events in the grounds. It is also where the HRH Queen Elizabeth II and HRH Prince Philip spent the first three days of their honeymoon in 1947.

The path now hugs the western edge of the valley with its waves of wooded terraces beside you, before crossing the river and taking you through a wonderful nature reserve of reed beds and saltmarshes that are alive with rare birds and plants. Be aware that this area can be waterlogged at any time of the year. Cross the river for the last time before finishing the Way at Eling Wharf.

Totton and Eling have a history traceable back to the Bronze Age – a dagger from this period was discovered at Testwood Lakes. As the first point at which Southampton Water could be forded, a settlement has thrived here for thousands of years.

You could visit the Eling Tide Mill which has been standing for centuries harnessing the power of the tides in Eling Creek to grind wheat into flour. Today the Grade II listed tide mill (c. 1785), has beautiful riverside walks and a visitor centre and café.

### More information: [www.elingexperience.co.uk](http://www.elingexperience.co.uk)

This is the last point on the Test Way long distance walking route, you would have covered approximately 44 miles or more with detours to visit places of interest along the way.





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Borough Council

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