

LANGDON HILLS

So you thought Essex was flat! Discover Langdon Hills with its expansive views of the Thames Estuary and beyond. Meander through meadows, wander through woodlands and explore Marks Hill Nature Reserve, a fascinating example of a pre-war housing estate gone wild.



Distance and time taken

2.4 miles – between 1 and 2 hours.

Going

Good but paths will be muddy after rain. Wear strong boots or Wellingtons.

Transport

For details of public transport for this walk contact the Travel Line on 0870 6082608.

Habitat types

Grassland, meadows, scrub, woodland, hedgerows and ponds.

Ordnance Survey Map

Explorer 175.

Parking

Langdon Hills Country Park. The car park at Westley Heights is open from 8am until dusk and there is no charge.

Refreshments

The Crown Inn – family room and play area.

Dogs

If you take your dog with you, please keep it under control, preferably on a lead.

More about Langdon Hills Country Park

Westley Heights forms part of the Langdon Hills Country Park. It is owned and managed by Essex County Council as both a nature reserve and an area of countryside open to the public. In the late 1920s plans had been drawn to build houses on this site but a public outcry led to these plans being dropped. The land was bought by Essex County Council in 1932 and it was designated as a Country Park in 1973.

At 385 feet this is one of the highest points in the area. Stop awhile and admire the fine hilltop views over the Thames and surrounding countryside.

Marks Hill Nature Reserve

The agricultural depression in the late 1900s meant that many local farmers sold off land to property developers. Their fields were then divided into 0.5 – 2 acre plots and sold mainly to Londoners whose dream of a house in the country could now become a reality. Makeshift bungalows were built and used as weekend homes despite the lack of services. During the Second World War these substandard plotland developments were cleared away by Basildon Development Corporation. They have now become derelict and used as areas for wildlife conservation and public recreation.

Marks Hill Nature Reserve

Marks Hill Nature Reserve has developed on the site of derelict plotlands. The plots are overgrown with oak and ash woodland and all that remains of Gladstone Road and Albemarle Crescent are the grassy tracks you are now walking along. The plotlands provide an important home to many plants and animals increasingly threatened by urban development.

Homefield

In 1968, the top soil was stripped from Homefield in anticipation of a new housing development. A Public Inquiry quashed these plans and vegetation once again re-established itself on the subsoil. Homefield is now managed as a wild flower meadow and provides a welcome splash of colour in spring and early summer. Butterflies love it!

Broomhill Wood

Unmanaged grassland will undergo natural succession to scrub and eventually woodland. Look out for oak, ash and hornbeam trees.

Hall Wood

Hall Wood is a rare example of an oak and native cherry woodland. There are views into East London from the northern boundaries of this wood and on a clear day it is possible to see the Canary Wharf tower.

Coombe Wood

This is an area of ancient hunting and scenic parkland resplendent with a covering of bluebells at springtime. The path crosses the remains of a medieval ditch and bank.

Long Wood

Long Wood has been managed as hornbeam coppice with oak standards for centuries. The resprouting hornbeam was cut frequently for firewood and then oak left for large building timbers. In spring there is an impressive display of wood anemones, primroses and bluebells.

Westley Hall

The absence of stone as a building material meant that houses in Essex were traditionally made from wood and brick. Westley Hall, built in the 18th century, is a good example of a timber framed and weather boarded house.

Kingston Ridge Pond

Kingston Ridge Pond once provided water for the plotland dwellers. It overlooks the large pond on Lee Chapel Lane, a popular spot for anglers.

