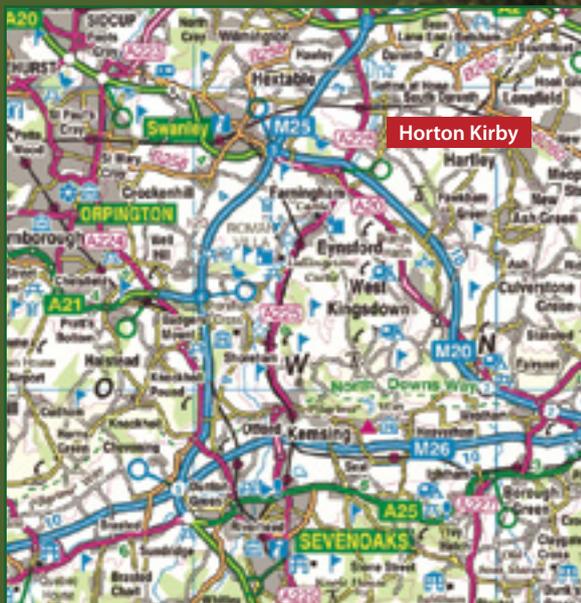


mills and meadows

Follow the fast flowing Darent to discover the fine architecture of Farningham.





Location: Horton Kirby

Distance: 3.2 miles (5.1km)

Time: allow 1 hour 30 minutes

Explorer Map: 162

Terrain: riverside paths

Parking: sports field in Horton Kirby

Refreshments and facilities: toilets at Horton Kirby car park; public houses in Farningham and Horton Kirby

Public transport: for information about local bus and train services in Kent, contact Traveline tel: 0870 6082608, www.traveline.org.uk

Step count: approx 6,400

 **Dog friendly**

This is a pleasant and relaxing walk along one of the most picturesque stretches of the River Darent following the banks of the river through fields and copses. Easy walking with gentle slopes makes this an ideal route for all the family.



Leave the car park and go through the gate to follow the waymarked route to the river swirling over the weirs. Follow along the tree-lined banks until you reach the road. Turn left and cross over the road to join the path running alongside the well-kept village cricket field and past Franks Hall – an impressive red-brick Tudor mansion set in substantial grounds.

Cars and lorries are clearly visible on the skyline. This section of the Darent Valley has always been an important transport corridor taking advantage of the widening valley where the Downs begin to level out.

Ponies graze in the open fields and sheep can be seen on the hillsides before you rejoin the river and pass under the M20 and then the A20 to head towards Farningham. Here the Lion Hotel, a popular haunt with generations of keen anglers including the writer Charles Dickens, overlooks the river.

The village flourished in the 18th century when it was an important overnight stop on the coach road from London to the coast and its fine inns are still popular destinations with both visitors and local residents.

Across the road from the Lion Hotel stands one of the finest mills in the valley while a glance up the winding main street of Farningham reveals picture-book village shops and traditional Kentish weather-board and flint-faced cottages.

Cross over the town bridge and past the site of a former castle and medieval fairs – now Market Meadow, a village open space. Continue up the main street with its well-preserved stately Georgian houses and turn left just after Farningham House, opposite the Pied Bull public house, to follow the path back across the fields and along to the banks of the river.

The yellow breasts of grey wagtails are regularly seen along this stretch of the river and numerous holes in the banks are clearly the homes for small creatures including water voles. Meanwhile, wrens can be spotted foraging around the base of the many trees that line the river and tree creepers circle up the ivy-clad trunks.

Cross straight over the road to return to Horton Kirby on the eastern side of the river following the path over the bridge across the weir to the car park.



Farningham village sign featuring the Norman knight Wadard

look out for...

- Sheep and ponies
- Wildlife, particularly birds, along the riverside
- Franks Hall
- A historic brick screen crossing the Darent alongside the bridge at Farningham
- The Mill and Mill House opposite the Lion Hotel

did you know?

Queen Elizabeth I may have stayed at Franks Hall.

Farningham had four manors in Domesday Book. One belonged to a Norman knight, Wadard, who fought at the Battle of Hastings. He is depicted, on his horse, in the Bayeux Tapestry.

Farningham hosted a large weekly market and was the site of four-day annual fairs in the 14th century.

Corn grinding stopped at the white weather-boarded mill in the centre of Farningham in 1900. Residents at the Mill House have included Captain Bligh who served on The Bounty.

Nearby Farningham Wood is a nature reserve rich in wildlife and wildflowers in ancient woodland with an excellent network of footpaths.

The White House on Horton Kirby's main street was believed to have been the centre of a thriving smuggling business handling spirits and silks at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries.

Fertile fields have long attracted settlers to Horton Kirby. Archaeologists have identified a large Roman granary, Anglo-Saxon cemeteries and a 13th century castle.



Leave your car at home and catch the train

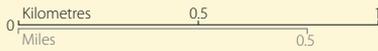
Start/Finish

Farningham Wood

Franks Hall

Farningham

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- ◆--- Darent Valley Path
- d Nature reserve
- p Parking
- English Heritage
- H Golf Course
- " Public House
- Gate