

Hops & Locks

Beltring

A 4 mile / 6.5km walk from Beltring train station to Yalding train station through countryside, orchards and wetland.

Distance: 4 miles / 6.5km.

Time: 2 hours approximately.

Terrain: Some walking on main roads is required as well as an unprotected rail crossing. The paths may become muddy. The route is reasonably flat. Four stiles in Yalding Fen.

Start point: Beltring train station.

End point: Yalding train station.

OS Explorer Map: 136 & 148.

7 Go left then turn right and go through the middle of the orchard between the trees. Follow the path round to the right of the pond then continue straight ahead until you reach the stile at the railway crossing. Carefully cross the tracks and the stile on the other side then turn right.

This is another small wooded stretch with shallow ponds to your left. Continue straight along this path keeping the railway to your right until you reach Hampstead Lane. Turn right and Yalding train station is on your left.

For an extension to this walk, why not follow the **Hills & Hoppers** rail trail from Yalding train station.



Twyford Bridge, Yalding (MVCP)



Valley of Visions and the Kent Community Rail Partnership gratefully acknowledge funding or other assistance received for this project from the Heritage Lottery Fund, ACORP, Network Rail, Department for Transport, Interreg Iva, Kent County Council Members Local Engagement and Highways fund grants, the Halling Association, Southeastern, Explore Kent and the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership.

This walk is endorsed by Explore Kent.

*Photo credits cover: Pond at Yalding Fen (Medway Valley Countryside Partnership – MVCP)
Ladybird, Dragonfly and Teasel (Andy Vidler www.andyvidler.co.uk)*



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A riverside walk through stunning countryside, orchards and wetland areas with reminders of a thriving river-based industrial past dotted along the route.

- 1 Turn right out of Beltring train station onto Gravelly Ways.

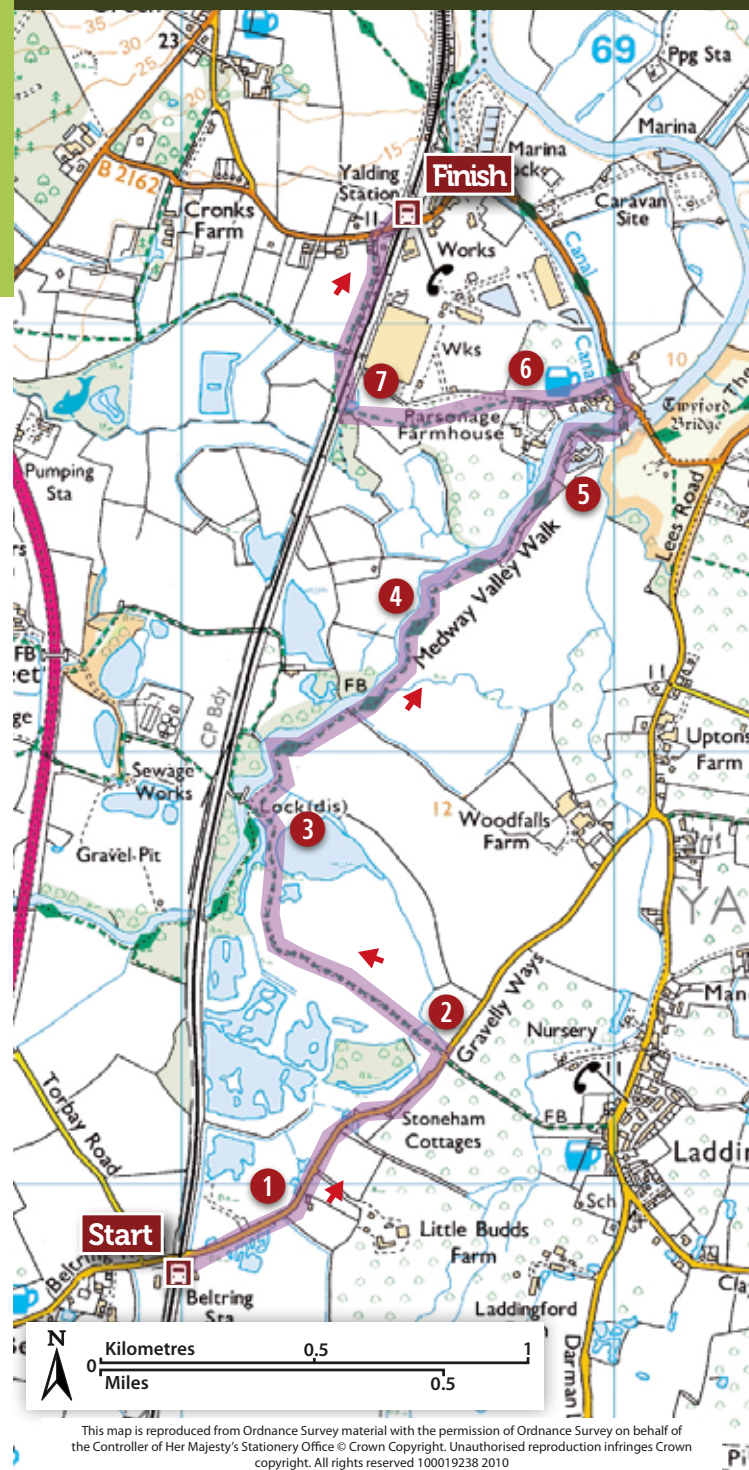
Beltring station was originally opened in 1909 then named Beltring and Banbridges Halt. It was used to transport hops from the nearby Hop Farm to the breweries in London.

- 2 Walk about 800m along the road; there are no footpaths so take care walking along the edge of the road. Turn left at the footpath sign taking you into the local wildlife site.

Nature has reclaimed this site from industry and plants like teasel, greater mullein and cranesbills abound. In summer this field is full of insect life and many small birds can be heard calling from the bramble, hawthorn and rose thickets. The path will lead you through a birch wood where there are also some shallow ponds which are good breeding habitats for insects and amphibians.

- 3 Arrive at the disused Stoneham lock on the River Medway and turn downstream to your right.

The lock to your left was once part of the river navigation that enabled boats with goods such as timber, cotton and hops to travel along the Medway. The river was busy back then with horse-drawn barges and coal burning canal boats. This system of locks fell into decline after the opening of Beltring station in 1909 when the railway took over transporting goods. Now flocks of long-tailed tits and other songbirds can be found feeding along the peaceful banks.



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Kingfisher (Andy Vidler)

Hebridean Sheep (VOV)

Orchard at Yalding Fen (MVC/P)

- 4 Keeping the river on your left continue along this path for about 2.3km, part of the Medway Valley Walk.

Keep an eye out for kingfishers and dragonflies and there are also lovely views of the Downs across the fields. Some of the paths along the river bank are narrow and the banks are steep.

Another part of the River Medway's history can be seen on the opposite bank just before the weir where in the gardens of an old oasthouse, a World War II pill box stands as testament to the fear of invasion.

- 5 Cross the Medway at the weir. Teapot Island is on your right and straight ahead is Twyford Bridge.

This bridge has been standing where the Teise and the Medway merge since at least 1325 although it did partially collapse in 1939.

- 6 Continue past the semi-thatched pub. Turn left across the small bridge and follow the road straight down past the houses. Cross the stile on the right into Yalding Fen Nature Reserve. Please put your dogs on a lead while on this site; Hebridean sheep and cattle graze here depending on the season.

This old orchard and its system of connected ponds and waterways is an important habitat for many of the UK's reptiles, amphibians and birds. The old fruit trees provide homes for wild honey bees.