

Walk Length: 1.6 miles Duration: circa 35 minutes Conditions: Mostly Flat Start Point Postcode: ME3 9RX

Stoke Muddies Heritage Walk

- 1 - St. Peter & St. Paul's Church.
- 2 - Parish Council children's play area.

LOWER STOKE - 520 yards walk from Middle Stoke. Shops, Petrol Station and The Nags Head Pub.

Malmaynes Hall Road

Grain Road



MIDDLE STOKE



Burrows Lane

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, gangs of men from local villages competed for the much sought after, though incredibly exhausting, job of digging clay or 'mud' from the marshes and saltings of the River Medway. The men were known as the 'muddies'.

The muddies had to load up to one hundred tonnes of clay, from sites including Stoke Saltings, onto barges for transportation up the river to one of the many cement works.

Digging clay was clearly a very tough job, and many Muddies suffered unimaginable health problems as a result. Reports describe men suffering from chronic rheumatism, arthritis, sprained wrists and strained backs. Many also suffered from 'scaffleman' - torn skin on parts of the back, as a result of continual lifting, turning and throwing. Calluses on hands, sometimes causing fingers to join together, were a common result of the constant use, and rubbing, of a spade.

Despite this, the men would only ever take a few days off work to repair serious damage to their bodies - no health and safety or 48 hour working week regulations around then!

The only consolation was that it was one of the best paid jobs around, paying much more than farm labourers earned. Muddies kept the work within a tight knit circle - with the work normally becoming a father and son tradition in many families.

At the height of this local industry, in the early 1900s, a barge load (100 tonnes) of clay would earn the men 35 shillings - shared out amongst a gang of about 10 muddies. They could often load two barges every low tide and, it is said, there would always be about 50 barges waiting to be loaded on the Stoke Marshes at any one time.

The income they earned was sufficient for many of the muddies to buy businesses, such as running pubs, once they had finally laid down their shovels.

END
START



1

2

The Street

Creek Lane (Track)

Microlite Airstrip

Freight Railway

Stoke Saltings



UPPER STOKE



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Stoke Creek

River Medway

