

The Flich Way



The Route

Where: Braintree to Little Dunmow

National Route: 16

Distance: 7.5 miles each way

Terrain: level and traffic-free railway path

Public transport: railway station at Braintree

Maps: Flich Way leaflet available from Essex County Council- 01245 437287

OS maps: Explorer 195, Landranger 167

Tourist information: Braintree TIC - 01376 550066

Places to search for on Sustrans website mapping: Braintree, Little Dunmow



The visitor centre at Rayne station.

Essex County Council

The ride begins at Braintree station, at an access point near the car park. Braintree is at the junction of Roman roads from Chelmsford and Colchester, and became a thriving industrial centre by the 19th century, partly thanks to the coming of the railway. The Braintree to Bishop's Stortford line, decommissioned in 1972, now enjoys a new lease of life as a country park full of railway cuttings rich in wildlife dotted with attractive Victorian stations. The first of these you come to is Rayne station, now a visitor centre with an exhibition about the old railway, and well worth a visit. Please take care crossing the A120 – there is an on-road option from Rayne station which crosses this busy road using a bridge and then returns to the railway path.

The story behind the name of the route has its roots in the village of Little Dunmow. In a rare example of a surviving folk custom, the Flich trial is held every four years and requires a married couple to stand before a mock court. If they can prove to the satisfaction of the judge and jury that they have, for a year and a day, 'not wished themselves unwed', then they

are awarded half a pig, known as a 'flich' of bacon. The custom originated in Little Dunmow, but the modern trial is held in Great Dunmow.

Dunmow Priory is also reputed to be the last resting place of Maid Marian. As the story goes, she went there to live with the nuns after the death of Robin Hood, and was killed by a poisoned bracelet sent by King John in an act of belated revenge. All that remains of the Priory now is its church at Little Dunmow.

Little Dunmow is the turnaround point of the ride, as the Flich Way ends just east of the village and there is currently no signed route through Great Dunmow. If you wish to extend the ride and your party is equal to busy main roads, you can make your way through the town and pick up the Flich Way again about a mile east of the town along the A120. From there it heads along the edge of Hatfield Forest to Tilekiln Green just west of Bishop's Stortford. There are plans to create a continuous route through Great Dunmow, and to connect the Flich Way to a new link to Stansted Airport.