

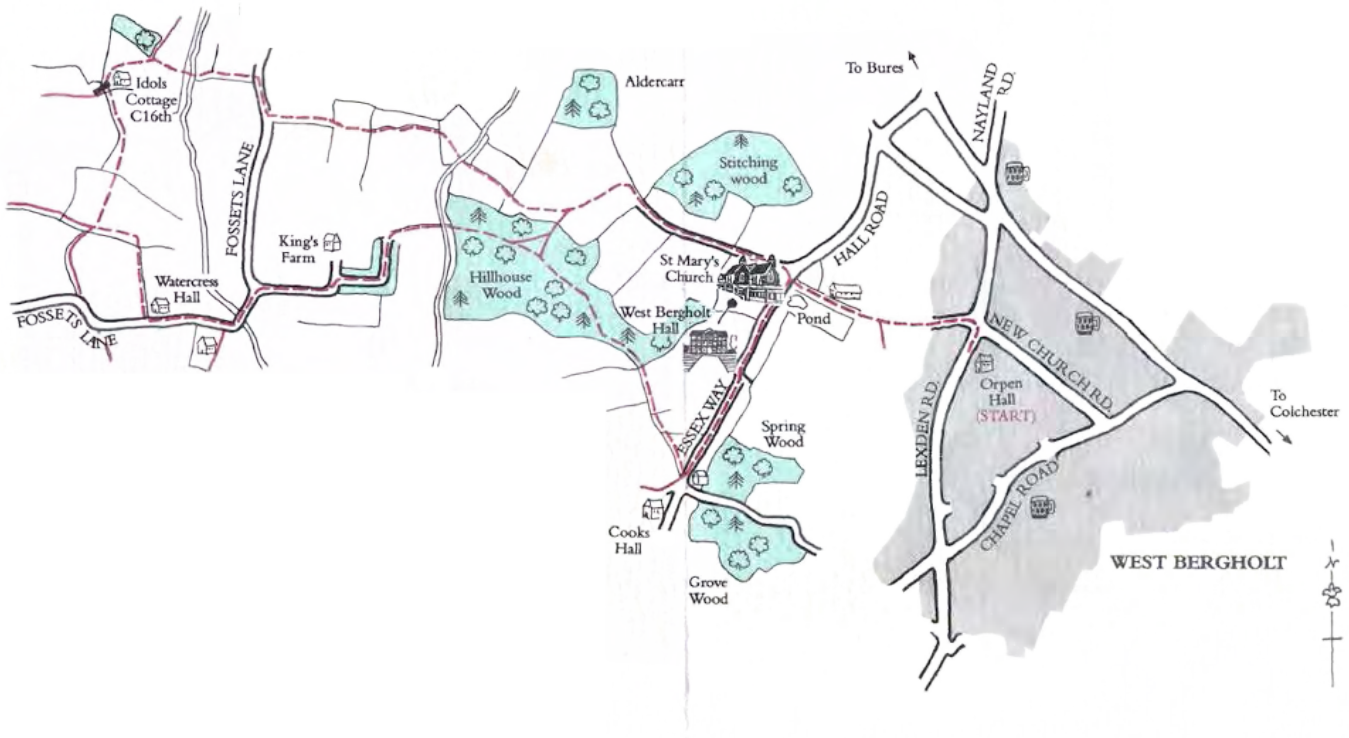
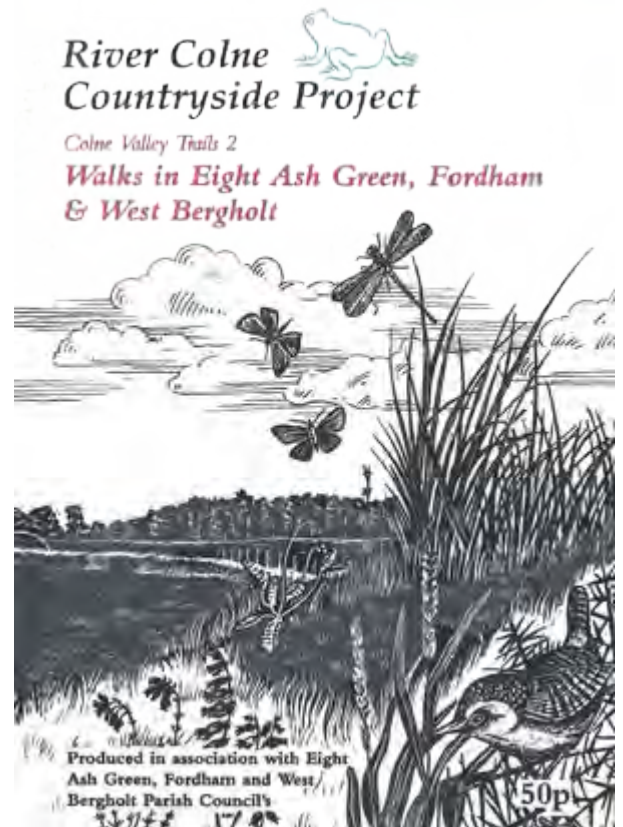
## The Joe Firmin Walk

This is one of 3 walks in the 2nd booklet produced by the River Colne Countryside Project. Produced in association with local people & groups, this self-guided walk was originally marked out with way markers like those to the right. The River Colne Countryside Project is a joint venture between Colchester Borough Council and Braintree District Council and is a partner in the Colchester Countryside Service.

### Introduction

(Please note that this was written before we lost Joe Firmin in 2013. We do not know the exact publication date)

Joe Firmin was born on a farm on Fordham Heath, and has lived all his life in Lexden and West Bergholt. A self-taught naturalist, Joe was a founder member of the Colchester Natural History Society. He is still a very active and much respected worker for Nature Conservation in North East Essex, and his support to many organisations is invaluable. This walk was named by West Bergholt Parish Council.



The walk starts from the Orpen Hall.

### The Text & Original Images to Accompany the Walk

Hill House Wood is an ancient semi- natural woodland; this means that it is at least 400 years old, and has been managed by people for much of this time. The Wood is owned by the Woodland Trust, who bought it with the help of some outstanding fundraising by the people of West Bergholt. It is now managed by the Friends of Hill House Wood, supported by the Trust and the River Colne Countryside Project.

In spring, it has an amazing display of bluebells. Other plants to be found here include small, white, wood anemones and early purple orchids. Breeding birds include all three British woodpeckers and a healthy population of nightingales. Management of the wood, such as coppicing and control of bramble, is aimed at increasing the diversity of woodland habitats and species to be found there, whilst other works promote public access.

The word "Bergholt" comes from a Saxon word meaning 'copse on a hill'; it is likely that it was this wood which gave the village its name!

West Bergholt Hall is a Grade II listed Georgian building. The present Hall occupies the site of the main mediaeval manor house of the parish, held from the early C12th to the late C17th by the Sackville family. From the C14th to 16th the village was known as Bergholt Sackville, after the lords of the manor.

St Mary's Church, the oldest building in West Bergholt, has its origins in a Saxon church on this site. Excavations have shown that the north wall of the nave dates from 1,000 AD, but the earliest written records of the Church's existence are from the late C12th. St Mary's has had many alterations and repairs since that time, but much of the present building dates from the late C13th and 14th. It is now redundant and only special services are held there. You are welcome to take a look inside .....

