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LAND OF THE FANNS

# Teacher Briefing

Davy Down Riverside Park

*From, Land of the Fanns Online Resource*

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## **Davy Down Riverside Park**

Back Lane (off Pilgrims Lane),

North Stifford, RM16 5UL

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/davy-down-riverside-park/overview>

<https://thelandtrust.org.uk/space/davy-down/>

## **Summary**

- 13 hectares (32 acres).
- Ponds, wetland, river Mardyke
- Kingfishers, water voles, marsh frog
- Includes a Victorian railway viaduct and historic water pumping station buildings.
- Variety of natural habitats where nature can thrive.

## **History**

- Before opening as a park, Davy Down had a history of farming, dating back to at least 1730. Farmed by the Davy family, the surrounding hills have been historically classified as 'downland' (open chalk hills), hence it was named Davy Down. More recently the area was used for market gardening but this was abandoned when the new A13 road was built, splitting the land in half.
- The park includes buildings for Stifford Pumping Station
- Stifford Pumping Station is an impressive building with beautiful arched windows. It was built by the Essex and Suffolk Water Company in the 1920s to extract water, which lies in an underground store. Known as an aquifer, this lies approximately 40 metres below the ground. Originally diesel engines (still housed in the pumping station) were used to pump over 3 million gallons of water a day. These have been replaced by an electric pump which still provides over 1 million gallons of water a day to surrounding households. The lower building, next to Back Lane is the Filter House. The pumping station is open to the public when the warden is on site and during Discover Davy Down open days.
- The park includes the arches of a railway viaduct from 1892. Known locally as the Fourteen Arches, the viaduct carries trains between Ockendon and Chafford Hundred.

## **Landscapes & Habitats**

- Ponds
- Wetland
- River Mardyke

## **Wildlife & Insects**

- Kingfishers: can be seen around the pond and the river. The best way to spot them is to settle by the river bank or stand on a bridge crossing the river and wait for one to zoom past as they travel up and down the river.
- Water voles: look like a small brown rat, but with a blunt nose, small ears and furry tail. Water voles live in rivers and streams but are increasingly threatened by habitat loss.
- Marsh frog: the largest European frog, growing to nearly five inches. They live in the water all year round and hibernate at the bottom of ponds in the winter. They make a loud chuckling and quacking noise.