

# The John Bunyan Trail in Bedfordshire

*Following the travels of John Bunyan, the author of “The Pilgrim’s Progress”, and exploring the historical sites along the John Bunyan Trail*

## Bedfordshire Ramblers



## CONTENTS

Foreword by Terry Waite

Introduction to the John Bunyan Trail

Note by Bedfordshire Ramblers

The walks:

Page	
1.	Bedford via Bunyan's Birthplace to Elstow 4.9 miles 7.9 km
2.	Elstow to Shefford 8.0 miles 12.9 km
3.	Shefford to Barton-le-Clay 8.7 miles 14.1 km
4.	Barton-le-Clay to Streatley 9.2 miles 14.7 km
5.	Streatley to Harlington 10.0 miles 16.1 km
6.	Harlington to Ampthill 8.5 miles 13.8 km
7.	Ampthill to Ridgmont 6.8 miles 11.0 km
8.	Ridgmont to Cranfield 5.6 miles 9.0 km
9.	Cranfield to Bromham 8.9 miles 14.2 km
10.	Bromham to Bedford 10.8 miles 17.4 km
	<i>Total distance 81.4 miles 131.1 km</i>

John Bunyan's Death

Timeline

Bibliography

About the National Ramblers

The Countryside Code



## FOREWORD BY TERRY WAITE

Not too long ago I went to spend the day with a friend of mine who, although he had travelled widely had lived in the same small town for years. We met at his home and he asked me if I would like to take a stroll to a small restaurant where we would have lunch together. Although I had visited the town many times previously, on this occasion we walked along streets that I had never previously visited. As we walked he pointed out places of historical interest and suddenly the whole area took on a new meaning for me.

In the United Kingdom we are fortunate to be surrounded by our history, recorded in landscapes and buildings. Not all of us are so fortunate as to have the services of an informed guide to accompany us on our travels and this is where this book comes into its own.

John Bunyan will always be associated in the public mind with the town of Bedford. There is little doubt

that he was a radical religious firebrand and displayed his passions in both his writings and preaching. His religious convictions will not appeal to all but he remains a figure of considerable historical, religious and literary importance and Bedford together with the surrounding area is the one place in England where his life and times may be traced in some detail. .

This excellent book, in a series of short walks, takes the reader through Bedford and beyond and is the next best thing to being accompanied by a professional guide on a fascinating journey. Those who follow it will not only improve their physical health by walking but will also deepen their understanding of one of the many historical figures who have become household names across the generations.

Terry Waite CBE  
September 2015

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE JOHN BUNYAN TRAIL**

This walking guide pays homage to John Bunyan (1628-1688), the legendary Puritan Evangelist and world-famous author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It identifies and illustrates many of the locations associated with him; and for the first time gives a full description of the 81-mile John Bunyan Trail, broken into ten segments to enable people to enjoy particular sections of it. As Bunyan himself prophesied with regard to "The Pilgrim's Progress", Bedfordshire Ramblers hope that "this book will make a traveller of thee".

The Trail was devised by the late Gordon Edwards, as one of the events marking the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ramblers' Association (now the Ramblers). It is essentially a walk through Bunyan's Bedfordshire, only about half-a-mile of the route near Hexton and the section of 2-3 miles near Lilley being in Hertfordshire. Details are given in the guide of how to get to the various walk starts on the Trail, where to park, and the places of interest that may be visited en route. As the walks are linear, it is often convenient to use public transport in one direction; and contact numbers are therefore given for bus and train operators.

In a car it is possible to pass through Bedfordshire on one of its major roads without a second thought. But to disregard the county as not being a worthwhile walking area is to miss a precious gem. Although it is one of the smallest counties in England, Bedfordshire has within its borders a beautiful and varied landscape.

Beginning with the south of the county, we find outstanding chalk escarpments such as the Sundon Hills, the Sharpenhoe Clappers, the Barton Hills and the famous Dunstable Downs – rising to heights of 800 ft – that offer stunning views across Bedfordshire and were probably the inspiration for Bunyan's "Delectable Mountains". Another fine feature, stretching for forty miles across the county, is the Greensand Ridge offering splendid high-level walking from Leighton Buzzard to Gamlingay. As the name "Greensand" implies, there are extensive sandy deposits, slightly greenish when wet, especially surrounding Woburn and Leighton Buzzard. The county is also rich in areas of bucolic beauty such as the delightful North Bedfordshire Wolds.

The attractive and interesting county town of Bedford derives its name from the Anglo Saxon *Bedas Ford*; and grew around the crossing point of the River Ouse, Bedfordshire's major river, which wends its way through the county. To the east of Bedford there is the Great Ouse plain; a clay-rich area ideal for the growing of arable crops, especially wheat. In all likelihood this was the inspiration for the Plain of Ease in *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

Bedfordshire is a truly rural county with many well maintained footpaths which will delight the walker; and the Bunyan Trail provides a very good introduction. The Trail passes through a number of attractive villages and scenic countryside, taking in many places of historic interest connected with Bunyan. There are links with the Greensand Ridge Walk, the Icknield Way path, the Chiltern Way (the Chilterns being Bunyan's 'Delectable Mountains') and the North Bedfordshire Heritage Trail. The waymarked Clay Trail, which follows the West Bedfordshire Clay Ridge, overlaps the John Bunyan Trail at Cranfield.

In this respect, ease of access is much better than in the 1950s, when Vera Brittain recorded that to visit John Bunyan's birthplace at Harrowden, she had to plunge through a field of waist-high Brussels sprouts; elsewhere, she had to disregard "the severe warning to trespassers put up by the Bedfordshire County

Council”, was impeded by the “heavy clay soil not conducive to rapid movement” and faced “forbidden meadows where occasional concentrations of bulls glared menacingly at the unexpected intruder.”

Many natural or man-made geographical features from *The Pilgrim's Progress* can be associated with real features - places and structures that John Bunyan regularly would have seen as a child and later in his travels on foot or horseback. The entire journey from The City of Destruction to The Celestial City may have been based on Bunyan's own customary journey from Bedford, on the main road that runs less than a mile behind his Elstow cottage, through Amphill, Dunstable and St Albans to London.

What was Bunyan himself like? “The Continuation of John Bunyan’s Life” by an anonymous biographer described him thus: “As for his person he was tall of stature, strong boned, though not corpulent, somewhat of a Ruddy Face, with sparkling eyes, wearing his hair on his upper lip after the old British fashion, his hair reddish, but his latter days time had sprinkled it with grey, his nose well set, but not reclining or bending and his mouth moderately large, his forehead somewhat large and his habit always plain and modest.”

In his early years Bunyan lived in Elstow, near Bedford, and travelled widely in the local area, first as an itinerant tinker and later as a non-conformist preacher. He was arrested at Harlington for preaching without a licence in 1660 and was imprisoned for nearly 12 years in Bedford Goal, where he began to write his masterpiece, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In 1676 he was imprisoned again, this time for six months. After that the authorities left him alone.

*The Pilgrim's Progress* has become widely regarded as the ultimate classic novel and has truly had an amazing influence. After the Bible it is the most published book in the English language; and it has been continuously in print since 1678, an extraordinary 1,300 editions having been printed by 1938, some 250 years after Bunyan’s death. It has influenced writers as diverse as William Thackeray, Charlotte Bronte, Mark Twain, C S Lewis, John Steinbeck and even Enid Blyton.

The novel has been translated into over 200 languages and dialects. There are collections of old foreign language versions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* at both Elstow’s Moot Hall Museum and at the John Bunyan Museum in Mill Street, Bedford. Three years after its publication in 1681, it was reprinted and widely read in colonial America; and it had a strong influence on the development of the emerging States. Little did the missionaries who distributed *The Pilgrim's Progress* in many other countries know that “foreigners” would appropriate and adapt the story to make sense of their own experiences. Bunyan’s concepts are universal: for example, in South Africa under apartheid the injustices which took place in that country were reformulated in an adapted version of the book.

Bunyan’s allegorical stories stands out above earlier works because of his simple and effective prose style, steeped in Biblical texts and cadences. As he wasn’t a licensed preacher he wasn’t allowed to preach within the Established Church but his sermons were so powerful that they drew people into the middle of the countryside to isolated farmsteads to hear what he had to say. He believed strongly in congregational singing as a means of reinforcing his values; and another element of his legacy is that words from *The Pilgrim's Progress* were later adapted by Percy Dearmer, a nineteenth century clergyman, for the hymn He Who Would Valiant Be. Another musical tribute to Bunyan is that in 1921 Ralph Vaughan Williams composed a one-act pastorella entitled “The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains” for altos, sopranos, trumpets, harp, bells, cellos and double basses.

Because of the widespread and long-time popularity of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Christian's hazards, whether originally from Bunyan or borrowed by him from the Bible, for example the "Slough of Despond", the "Hill Difficulty", the "Valley of the Shadow of Death", "Doubting Castle", “Vanity Fair” and the "Enchanted Ground” have become commonly used proverbial phrases in English. In addition Bunyan’s book contains a cast of unforgettable characters, from Mr Worldly Wiseman of the town of Carnal Policy (possibly Newport Pagnell, a nod towards Bunyan’s Parliamentary army service there) to Lord Hategood of Vanity Fair, and Apollyon, the foul monster of the Valley of Humiliation. As an allegory of state repression, it has been described by the historian E P Thompson as one of the “foundation texts of the English working-class movement”.

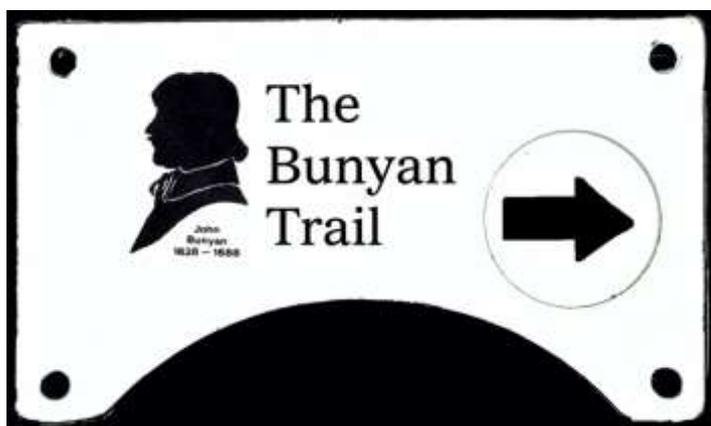
A recent example of a major figure influenced by Bunyan is Terry Waite, the former Church of England peace envoy, who was taken hostage and held in the Lebanon from 1987 to 1991 for a total of 1,763 days. Whilst he was in solitary confinement he received a postcard from Mrs Joy Brodier, a young mother from Brickhill in Bedfordshire, showing one of the stained glass windows at Bunyan Meeting Church, one element of which showed Bunyan in Bedford Gaol. This image, said Waite, gave him much hope and inspiration. When, after almost five years, he was finally released, he visited Bunyan's old home and the parish church at Elstow near Bedford.

Through *The Pilgrim's Progress*, literacy and ideas of universal suffrage were not only promoted in England but also around the world. No matter where they were, people found and continue to find hope in a better world to come through the concepts set out in the novel. The John Bunyan Trail described in this guide commemorates the life and enduring influence of this outstanding world figure.

The guide is also our contribution to Bedfordshire Day, which is held on 28 November each year, the anniversary of the birth of John Bunyan, when the Friends of Bedfordshire Society organise a series of events to commemorate the history and culture of Bedfordshire.

Happy walking to all who use this guide!

Bedfordshire Ramblers  
2016



## **NOTE BY BEDFORDSHIRE RAMBLERS**

Bedfordshire Ramblers have taken great care in preparing these walk notes to ensure their accuracy at the time of publication. However, circumstances inevitably change: permissions can be withdrawn, diversion

orders can be made and the character of walks can be altered by urban or rural developments. We cannot be held responsible for such changes, or for anything happening as a result of the changes, but we are anxious that details affecting the John Bunyan Trail should be kept up to date and would therefore very much welcome relevant information from readers so that we can issue information, possibly in the form of supplements, as required.

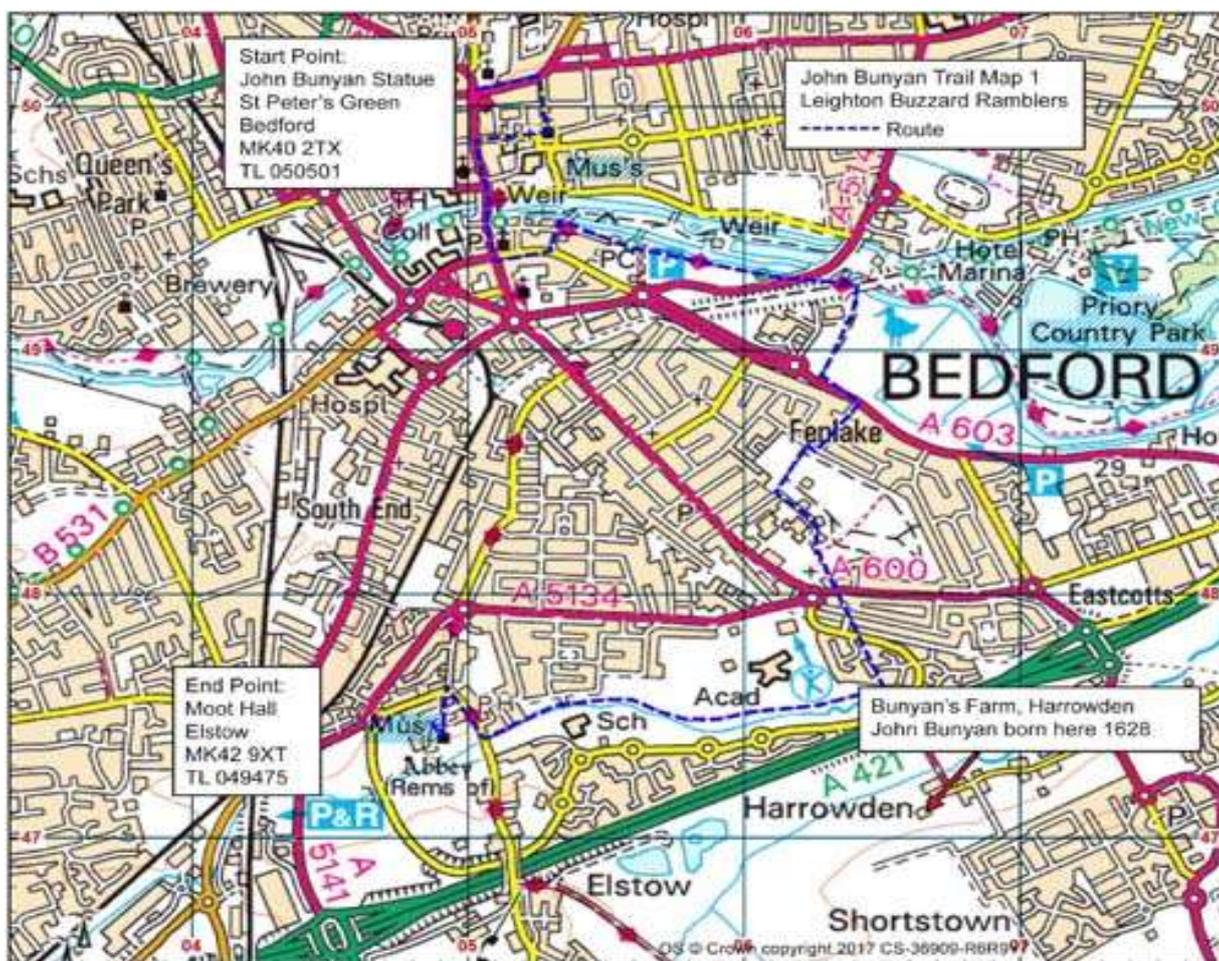
If it is planned to use public transport on a walk – and this is often appropriate given the linear nature of the sections making up the John Bunyan trail - it is advisable to check routes and times in advance with the operators mentioned in this guide. For the buses, see [www.centrebus.info](http://www.centrebus.info) (telephone 0844 357 6520), [www.stagecoachbus.com](http://www.stagecoachbus.com), [www.grantpalmer.com](http://www.grantpalmer.com) (01525 719719), and [www.arrivabus.co.uk](http://www.arrivabus.co.uk) (0871 200 2233). For the trains, websites [www.eastmidlandstrains.co.uk](http://www.eastmidlandstrains.co.uk), [www.londonmidland.com](http://www.londonmidland.com) and [www.thameslinkrailway.com](http://www.thameslinkrailway.com) (telephone 0345 021 4700) are useful. The London Midland line from Bletchley to Bedford runs hourly and stops at Ridgmont, Lidlington and Millbrook near the Trail. Not all the above operators give telephone numbers for timetable enquiries: they rely more on the websites for providing information,

The sketch maps accompanying each walk description are based on the Ordnance Survey Landranger maps 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon) and 166 (Luton & Hertford) at 1:50,000 scale (1¼ miles to the inch). These are sufficient for the purpose of following the routes. The mapping data is licensed from the Ordnance Survey. For those who like to delve into more detail or want the reassurance of a larger scale map, we recommend the larger-scale Outdoor Leisure or Explorer series, particularly 192 (Buckingham & Milton Keynes), 193 (Luton & Stevenage) and 208 (Bedford & St Neots) at 1:25,000 (2½ miles to the inch). The various sections of the trail are all signposted with distinctive waymarks.



The guide has been prepared by a working party of five people – John Hartley, Edwin Herbert and Michael Shephard of Leighton Buzzard Ramblers and Barry Ingram and Tony Sheward of Ivel Valley Ramblers. On behalf of the Ramblers' national organisation, the team wishes to thank all those who helped by providing information or by trying out the walk notes, particularly Bob Tarron, Wendy Ley and Andrea Deeley. A special commendation is due to the Public Rights of Way teams at both Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council, who maintain over 830 miles (1,340 km) and 610 miles (980 km) respectively of public paths, including the John Bunyan Trail, manage the Definitive Map and Statement in paper and electronic formats, and organise Local Access Forums of interested local residents. The RIPPLE initiative of Bedfordshire Ramblers assists the Councils in path clearance.

# Map 1



## Walk One: Bedford via John Bunyan's Birthplace to Elstow

### Start point/parking/public transport

The walk starts at the John Bunyan statue on St Peter's Green at the junction of the High Street and St Peter's Street in the county town of Bedford. There are numerous cafés, restaurants and pubs in Bedford for a coffee or meal stop. There is 24/7 parking in Lurke Street multi-storey car park.

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR TL 050501, MK40 2TX; OS Explorer map 208 (Bedford & St Neots); and Landranger map 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon – note the photo of the John Bunyan statue on the cover.)

**Length of walk:** 4.9 miles (7.9 km)

**Ascent/descent:** minimal

**Walking time:** 2 - 2.5 hours, plus stops

### Places of interest along the route

1. **The John Bunyan Statue:** Bunyan lived in Bedford from 1655. Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm, a favourite of Queen Victoria's, sculpted the bronze statue dedicated to him which stands at the north end of the High Street, at the corner of St Peter's Green. It was a gift to the Borough from the ninth Duke of Bedford and was unveiled in June 1874; made from a cannon captured in China, it weighs over three tons and stands nine feet high. Around the pedestal are three bronze panels illustrating three scenes from "The Pilgrim's

*Progress*”: Christian battling with Apollyon, Christian at the Wicket Gate and Christian laying down his burden. As well as local dignitaries and representatives from the United States and British dominions and colonies, all Sunday School children in the area were invited to the opening ceremony and 3,380 of them consumed a ton and a quarter of cake.

2. **The Site of Bunyan’s Home:** At 17 St Cuthbert’s Street there is a plaque on the wall showing where John Bunyan and his family lived after their move from Elstow in 1655. It was a simple building with two living rooms on either side of the front door and a single gable window above the door. The room to the right of the door became known as “Bunyan’s parlour” and over the fireplace the initials “JB” were inscribed. About the time of the move, his first wife died, leaving John Bunyan with four motherless children, Mary, Elizabeth, John and Thomas. He married for the second time shortly afterwards - to Elizabeth, 13 years younger than he was, with whom he had two more children, Sarah and Joseph. The cottage was demolished in 1838.

3. **The Bunyan Meeting and Museum:** After several years’ service in the Parliamentary army in Newport Pagnell, Bunyan joined the newly formed Bedford Meeting in 1653, worshipping in St John’s Church. In 1672, after Bunyan’s release from prison, the congregation bought a barn and an orchard in Mill Street, where the Church remains to this day, eventually taking on the name of Bunyan Meeting. It was also in 1672 that Bunyan began his work as a minister of this Church. The present building was built in 1850 and inside can be seen part of the communication table used in Bunyan’s day and some wonderful stained glass windows, one of which shows Evangelist and Christian, the face of the latter being John Bunyan himself. The bronze entrance doors, sculpted by Frederick Thrupp, were donated in 1876 and are based on “Gates of Paradise” by Lorenzo Ghiberti in the Battistero di San Giovanni in Florence. Ten scenes from “The Pilgrim’s Progress” are depicted in beautiful detail. Today the church is an active centre of worship and community with a café and Fair Trade shop. Sunday services are at 11.00 am and 6.30 pm. The Church is open 10.15 am to 2.30 pm Monday to Friday and 10.15 am to 1.00 pm on Saturday. Outside in the garden is a sundial adorned with a Bunyan memorial plaque.

The adjoining Bunyan museum was opened in 1998 and is an essential visit for anyone interested in Bunyan’s life. There are displays of artefacts associated with him, including his brazier’s anvil, his wooden flute, which doubled up as a chair leg, his metal violin and a collection of various editions of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in 200 languages. Appointments for group visits or study in the library can be made by emailing the [curator@bunyanmeeting.co.uk](mailto:curator@bunyanmeeting.co.uk), by accessing the museum’s website at [www.bunyanmeeting.co.uk/museum/visit](http://www.bunyanmeeting.co.uk/museum/visit) or by telephoning 01234 270303. The Museum is open from 11.00 am to 4.00 pm on Tuesdays to Saturdays from February half-term to October half-term inclusive (closed Good Friday). One of the oak doors from the old County Goal can be seen at the Museum. Entry is free.

4. **The Site of the County Gaol:** After his arrest at Harlington in 1660, Bunyan was sentenced to remain in prison until he conformed. On the bench were five local landowners sympathetic to the Royalist cause, headed by Sir John Kelynge of Southill, who had himself been in prison throughout the Commonwealth and thus had a reason for hostility against Dissenters, and including Sir Henry Chester of Lidlington, who was the uncle of Francis Wingate of Harlington. Bunyan later satirised Kelynge in “*The Pilgrim’s Progress*” as Lord Hategood of *Vanity Fair*. A plaque in the pavement on the corner of High Street and Silver Street marks the spot where the county gaol stood in the seventeenth century. Bunyan was imprisoned here, not more than ten minutes from his home, between 1660 and 1672 and for six months in 1677. It is believed that the goal was a two-storey building. It must have been very cold in winter as there were no fireplaces. The prisoners slept on straw (if they were lucky), the food was meagre, and the sanitation was abysmal. Immediately after the Midsummer Assize in 1661, when Bunyan’s sentence was confirmed, Bunyan’s wife, Elizabeth, appealed in the Swan Inn to the two Assize judges, Sir Thomas Twisden and Matthew Hale, to release her husband but they refused to intervene in what they considered was a lawful conviction.

5. **Town Bridge:** The present bridge was opened in 1835: it replaced a stone bridge originally dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century but rebuilt on several occasions. A building in the centre of the old bridge has been suggested as the prison where Bunyan was held during the 1680s; but as this was very small it is much more likely he was held at the county gaol. On the north side of the eastern parapet of the bridge is a plaque relat-

ing to Bunyan and his writings. Inside the Swan Hotel at the town centre end of the bridge is the fine staircase that came from Houghton House.

6. **St John the Baptist's Church and Rectory (the House of the Interpreter):** St John's Rectory was the home of Pastor John Gifford, ironically a former major in the Royalist army, who influenced Bunyan's religious development (in Bunyan's own words: "At this time I sat under the ministry of holy Mr Gifford, whose doctrine, by God's grace, was much for my stability.") The Church stands prominently on the east side of St John's Street and at that time there would have been a clear view across open fields to Elstow. It was at St John's Church that dissenters in the Bedford area met for worship from 1650 until they were evicted in 1660. Today the rectory serves as the Bedfordshire headquarters of St John Ambulance. It has one room depicting Bunyan's time, open to the public by appointment (telephone: 01234 216200). There are Tudor paintings on the ceiling beams and some of the original stonework has survived. John Gifford (the Interpreter) died in 1655 and was buried in the churchyard at St John's. The exact location of his grave is not known. In "The Pilgrim's Progress", the words of the Interpreter strengthened Christian's faith as he set out on his journey to find the cross of redemption.

7. **Bunyan's Baptism site:** Tradition maintains that about 1653 Bunyan was baptised by John Gifford in a backwater of the River Ouse near Bedford Bridge at a spot then called "The Ducking Place". The road that leads to it is still named "Duck Mill Lane." In contrast to his baptism as a child, this second baptism would have been by total immersion. There is a plaque on the wall of the inlet commemorating this event. adapted from the original John Bunyan Trail to bring in Bunyan's birthplace and include some pleasant walking near Elstow Brook.

## THE WALK

Face the statue of John Bunyan and turn right. Continue along St Peter's Street to the traffic lights. Turn right, cross the road into St Cuthbert's Street and continue ahead to St Cuthbert's Church. Turn right into Mill Street, passing the Bunyan Meeting Free Church and the Bunyan Museum on the left, to the junction with the High Street. Turn left and continue ahead to cross the Great Ouse via the Town Bridge. At St Mary's Church on the left, cross Cauldwell Street/Cardington Road, and continue ahead to St John's Church and Rectory. Retrace your steps to Cardington Road and turn right. Turn left into Chethams and continue to the river just before Abbey Bridge to see the place where Bunyan was baptised. Retrace your steps a few yards and turn left along a path with the river on the left and the school on the right.

Continue on this path over King's Ditch Bridge, passing another footbridge at a junction on the left, then, keeping to the river, go under the road bridge to another junction of paths. Take the path on the right passing immediately to the left of the moated Pyramid building called "The Oasis Pool". Continue through trees to a pedestrian crossing. Cross the road, turn left and then right into Mareth Road. Continue ahead into Jubilee Park. Go past the Skateboard Park and shortly after the end of the hedge turn left and continue ahead. Where the path forks, keep right and after passing the house on the right bear right towards a fence. On reaching the path

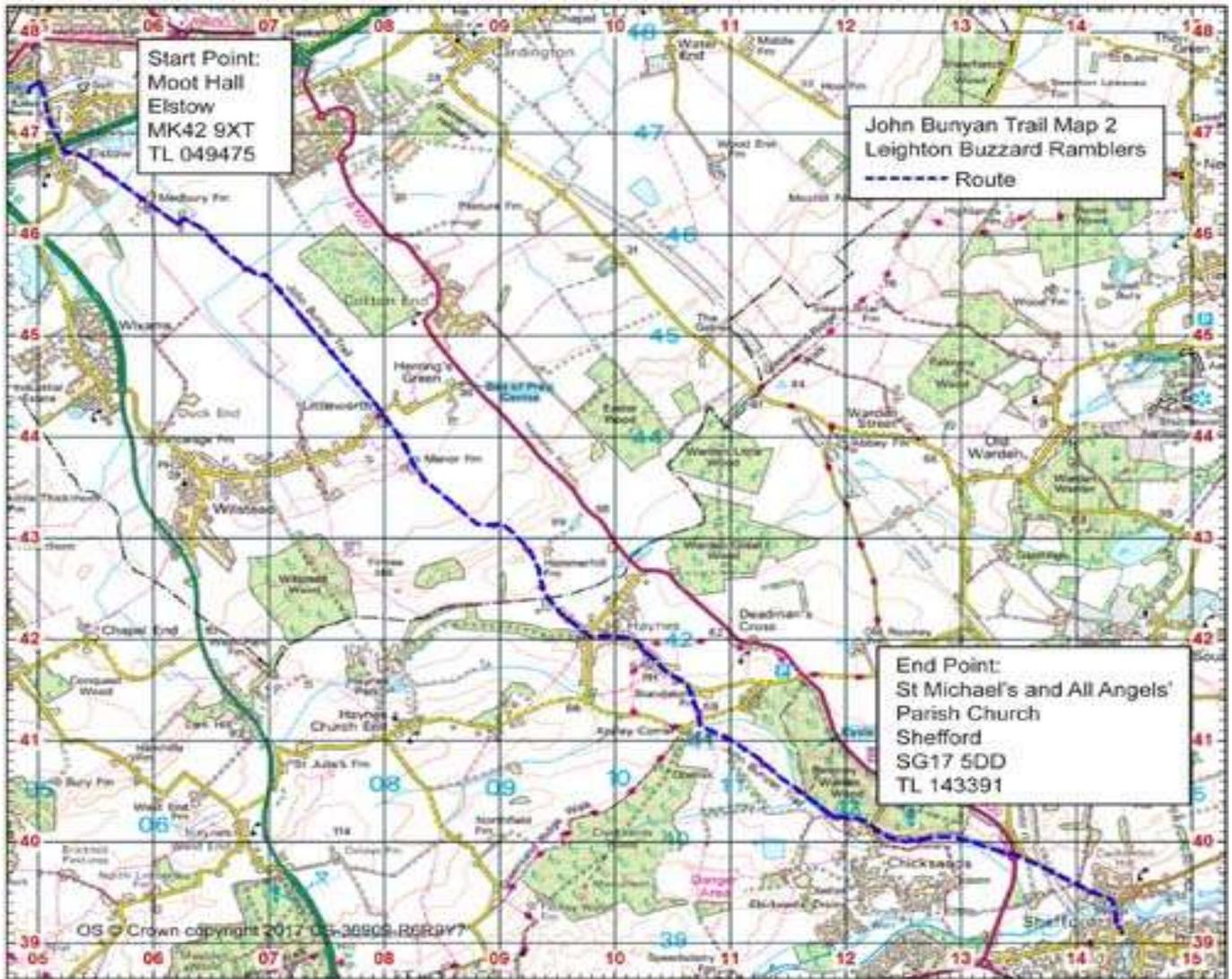
just before the fence go left and continue a short distance to where the path enters a narrow lane leading to Harrowden Road and a lights-controlled crossing. Cross the road into Harrowden Lane and continue ahead past a fish and chip shop on the left to cross Meadowsweet Drive and continue ahead on a track to the left of Foxglove Way and between the houses to reach Abbeyfields Road .

At the road turn right to cross the bridge over Elstow Brook and immediately bear left to go under the bypass and along the lane (Harrowden Lane, locally known as Bumpy Lane). Before reaching the end of the lane, look out for a sign on the right indicating a permissive path to Bunyan's Birthplace. Turn right and continue for approximately 400 yards (360 m) on a field-edge path with a stream on the left to reach the small monument there. After viewing this site, retrace your steps to the lane and head back towards and under the bypass to the bridge. Turn right at the bridge over Elstow Brook and after crossing turn left. Bear left by a sign saying "The Moor" and keeping Elstow brook on the left cross the field and cross two wooden bridges before the grassy track gives way to a surfaced path which leads into Elstow. The path reaches the road with the bridge on the left. Turn right to visit the Abbey Church of St Mary's & St Helena's, along with the Moot Hall and the site of Bunyan's House.

8. Bunyan's Birthplace: John Bunyan was born in 1628 in a cottage at Harrowden; and a plaque on a stone erected in 1951, at the time of the Festival of Britain, half-a-mile to the west of Harrowden, in the corner of a cornfield, marks the site of his birth-place. The Bunyan family had lived in Harrowden for generations and at one stage had been significant landowners. The village was at one time known as "Bonyon's End". The "very miry Slough of Despond" in "The Pilgrim's Progress" may well have been inspired by the marshy ground near the path from his home to Elstow Church.

Terrain notes: Easy walking, mostly on surfaced roads or tracks. This walk has been adapted from the original John Bunyan Trail to bring in Bunyan's birthplace and include some pleasant walking near Elstow Brook.

## Map 2



### Walk Two: Elstow to Shefford

#### Start point/parking/public transport

*The start point is the Moot Hall at Elstow. There is limited parking in the vicinity of the Moot House and the Church. Stagecoach run frequent bus services to and from Bedford: the bus stop is in Mile Road. Refreshments are available at the Red Lion or Elstow Tea Garden (Joyce and Bill Willis) at the back of the Church, serving beverages, lunches and snacks from Friday to Monday, 10.00 am to 4.00 pm.*

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR TL 049475, MK42 9XT, OS Explorer map 208 (Bedford & St Neots); and Landranger map 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon)

**Length of walk:** 8.0 miles (12.9 km)

**Ascent/descent:** Total ascent 280 feet (85 m); total descent 230 feet (70 m).

#### Intermediate distances:

*Elstow to Haynes: 4.5 miles (7.2 km)*

*Haynes to Shefford: 3.5 miles (5.7 km)*

**Total walking time:** about 3 hours 15 minutes

## Places of interest on the route

### *Elstow (the name is derived from “Helen’s place”)*

*Bunyan was christened at the Elstow Abbey Church of St Mary’s and St Helena’s on 30 November 1628 and attended services there when he was young, along with everyone else in the village. The church is the successor to a large monastic church founded in 1078: the belfry tower has six bells: tradition holds that Bunyan rang the fifth bell and this is still known as the “Bunyan Bell” today. Inside the church can be seen two stained glass windows connected with Bunyan: one depicts scenes from “The Pilgrim’s Progress” and the other from “The Holy War”. There are also a communion table used when Bunyan attended the church and the font where he was christened in 1628. John Bunyan’s mother, step-mother, father and sister are buried in the graveyard, although church records of 1885 state: “The graves cannot be identified”.*

*As a youth, Bunyan’s life in Elstow spiralled downwards: it is hardly surprising that sites in the village remained so vividly in his mind when he was writing “The Pilgrim’s Progress”: it is clearly the City of Destruction from which Christian flees; and the Church, its separate Bell Tower, the Green and the Stump all feature in his book.*

*One Sunday in 1639, after hearing a “fire and brimstone” sermon by the vicar of Elstow Church, the Revd Christopher Hall, on the evil of breaking the Sabbath, Bunyan was playing tip-cat on Elstow Village Green when he heard a voice asking “Wilt thou leave thy sins, and go to heaven? Or have thy sins and go to hell?” From that moment on, John Bunyan’s life changed and he became increasingly devout. He gave up bell-ringing for fear he might be injured if a bell should fall, he gave up dancing, a pastime of which he had been very fond, and he began a period of soul-searching.*

*The Wicket Gate in “The Pilgrim’s Progress” could be the wooden gate at the entrance to Elstow Church or the wicket gate (small door) in the northern wooden entrance door at the west end of the Church. The castle, from which arrows were shot at those who would enter the Wicket Gate, could be the stand-alone bell tower referred to above.*

*Near Elstow church is the site of the cottage where Bunyan lived from 1649 with his first wife. Her Christian name is not known for certain but it may have been “Mary”. A wooden plaque in the gardens of St Helena Restaurant marks the site of “Bunyan’s Cottage”. The Elstow Bunyan Christian Fellowship building at 170 High Street has some beautiful stained glass windows relating to Bunyan.*

*Moot Hall (or Green House as it was called in the 17<sup>th</sup> century) on Elstow Village Green is open from 1.00 pm to 4.00 pm on Saturdays and Bank Holiday Mondays from Easter to the end of September. The building dates from about 1500 and was originally a market house used during the fairs. It was later used as the meeting place for Elstow Manor Court and then for non-conformist worship; and is now a museum of seventeenth century rural life. In the middle of the village green is the stump of an old market cross, all that remains after it was vandalised in the Reformation. Country fairs were common in Bunyan’s time and it is likely that this location was the inspiration for Vanity Fair in “The Pilgrim’s Progress”. Misdemeanours were common at Elstow Fair: in 1645 there were disturbances between soldiers and civilians; in the same year a Cardington blacksmith accused three women of being pickpockets as they had changed their disguise three times at the Fair and had hidden money under a girl’s petticoat; and in 1678 one of Bunyan’s close friends from the Bedford Meeting, John Fenn, had some hats stolen from his family’s stall. Clearly Bunyan did not have a high opinion of such fairs: in “The Pilgrim’s Progress” Faithful is arrested because of his unfamiliar style of clothes and different way of speaking, locked in a cage, falsely convicted by Judge Lord Hategood, stoned and burnt, before being carried off by a chariot to Heaven.*

*The area beside Elstow Brook may also have been an early inspiration for the Slough of Despond - on the north side of this brook, either side of the path to Elstow was (and still is) boggy and Bunyan would have known to avoid straying off the main path.*

*It is difficult to imagine these days but in the 17<sup>th</sup> century either side of the road from Elstow to St John's Church on the outskirts of Bedford would have consisted of fields with a few farmhouses.*

### **Haynes: Mission House**

*The Bedford Baptists met in secret at Haynes; and Bunyan preached there.*

**Terrain notes:** *an all-weather route, mostly on surfaced roads or tracks.*

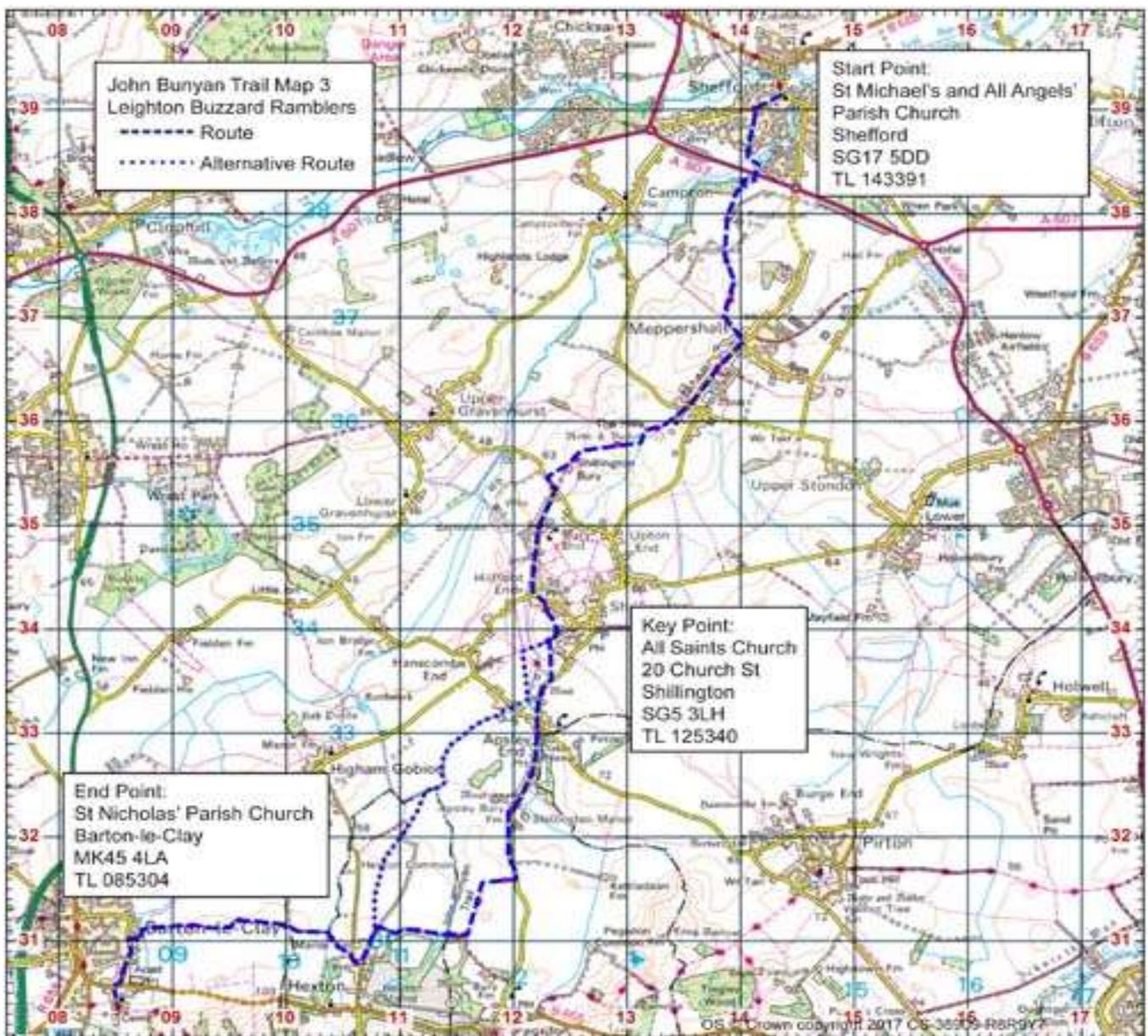
### **THE WALK**

*After leaving the Moot Hall at Elstow, turn right and continue along the road for approximately 800 yards (730 m). After crossing the bridge over the bypass, turn left into Medbury Lane and continue ahead to Medbury Farm. On reaching Medbury Farm, go through the gate and continue along the path, which bears left, before the next house, and then bears right to a gate and cattle grid at the far end of the field. Go through the gate and ahead on a wide track ignoring any signs to the right or left for approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 km) to a barrier then the road. At the road turn right and take the first turning left leading to Manor Farm. At Manor Farm continue ahead with a hedge to the left for approximately 1.25 miles (2.0 km) to reach a surfaced road at Northwood End Farm. Continue ahead, passing some interestingly named cottages on the way to the end of the road. Cross the road, turn right and after a few yards turn left into Northwood End Road. Continue along the road passing "The Mission", playing fields, Greensand Ridge Path signs, on the left then on the right, and the Greyhound Pub in Haynes.*

*Descend the hill and almost at the bottom cross the road and take the path on the right into a field. Continue to a gate by a road and cross the road on to a cross-field path towards a gate and a white house. At the gate and farm track, turn left and then continue on this track for nearly a mile (1.4 km). The track changes to a concrete road with a wood as a boundary on the left before reaching farm buildings and a road. Cross the road and continue with the farm buildings to the right. At the end of the buildings the path narrows and continues with a metal fence on the right. Continue on this path for approximately 0.8 mile (1.3 km) to reach a gate leading down to a roundabout. (At the end of the farm buildings where the path narrows it is possible to use a more attractive route through the wood by bearing left into the wood then right to walk parallel with the path. Rejoin the path almost at the end of the wood.)*

At the roundabout continue ahead towards the remains of the railway bridge. The actual line of the footpath from the gate is as follows: Keep right for a short distance then cross the road to the left. Pass the remains of the railway bridge and continue to the houses and a mini roundabout. Keep right and cross the River Flit and either continue along the road to the traffic lights and turn right into Shefford High Street or turn right onto a footpath on the far side of the bridge and after a short distance go left through a gate into a field. Continue ahead to arrive at Shefford High Street via Duck Lane opposite the parish church of St Michael's and All Angels.

Map 3



## Walk Three: Shefford to Barton-le-Clay

### Start point/parking/public transport

*The start point is St Michael's & All Angels Parish Church in Shefford. There is a free car park just behind the High Street on Old Station Road. Shops, pubs and banking facilities are available. Stagecoach, Centrebus and Grant Palmer run bus services through Shefford.*

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR TL 143391, SG17 5DD, OS Explorer maps 193 (Luton & Stevenage); 208 (Bedford & St Neots); and Landranger maps 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon) and 166 (Luton & Hertford)

**Length of walk:** 8.7 miles (14.1 km) or 8.4 miles (13.6 km) using the alternative route

### Intermediate Distances

*Shefford to Meppershall Church 2.2 miles (3.6 km)*

*Meppershall Church to Shillington Church 1.9 miles (3.0 km)*

*Shillington Church to Hexton (The Raven pub) 2.8 miles (4.5 km) or 2.5 miles (4.0 km) using the alternative route.*

*Hexton to Barton-le-Clay Church 1.9 miles (3.0 km)*

**Ascent/descent:** total ascent 230 feet (70 m); total descent 115 feet (35 m)

**Total walking time:** about 3 hours 30 minutes

### Shefford

*If you've done a compass navigation course, or even if you haven't, Hoo Hill Maze in Shefford is worth a visit. Set in a pleasant orchard, the maze is no longer open generally to the public but it can be visited only by prior arrangement. To visit the Maze, even at short notice, call 07752 736 889 to check availability.*

### Shillington

*The first recorded name of the village in 1060 was Scytlingedune, a literal translation being 'hill of the people of Scytte' ("Scytte" meaning a Saxon). This name gradually evolved into an unfortunate "Shytlington" in official returns and letters of the 17th and 18th centuries; but has now fortunately evolved into the modern form.*

**Terrain notes:** *Most of the route is on good quality tracks or roads, although there are a few cross field paths, which can be muddy. The alternative route from Shillington has more cross-field paths.*

## THE WALK

*Set sail along Shefford High Street with the Parish Church and the Catholic Church of St Francis on the left. On reaching New Street, turn left and, at the end of the road, continue ahead through the estate to a gap between the houses. At the end of this pathway, turn left by the fence. Follow the path along the edge of the field and turn left over the wooden bridge and turn right towards the A507 Shefford Bypass. Go under the bypass and turn right on a path following the line of the stream. After a short distance and, on reaching the trees, turn left away from the stream and keeping the trees on the right continue ahead. At the end of the wood bear left on to a track and to a gate leading to a cross field path which goes uphill to a gate and waymark post. Go through the gate and continue uphill on a field edge track with*

the hedge on the right. At the top of the hill the path continues with the hedge and then a fence on the left. There are excellent views from this ridge and ahead on a clear day; Sharpenhoe Clappers can be seen. At the waymark post at a path T junction, turn left on a wide track with a hedge on the right passing the playing field and Village Hall to arrive at Meppershall High Street.

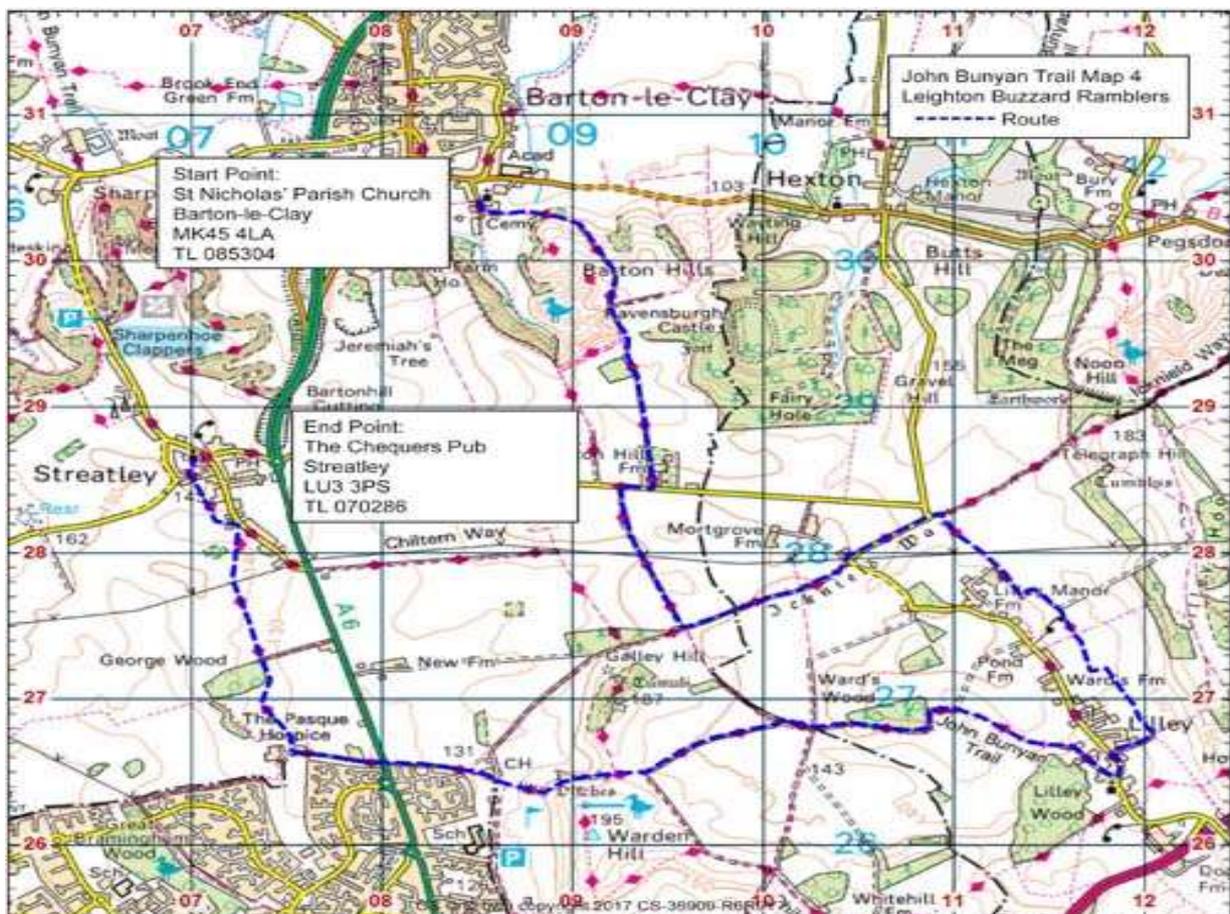
Turn right and continue for approximately ½ mile (600 m) to a road junction at the end of High Street. Continuing in the same direction, cross the road to a kissing gate on the corner of Church Road and Campton Road and go through into the field. (Those wishing to visit the Church of St Mary the Virgin should continue up the road and rejoin the path via a footpath on the right just past the gates into the Church. This path rejoins the trail at the corner of the boundary). Cross the field towards the boundary of the property and continue through the gate with the fence and hedge on the left. At the next waymark post turn right and in approximately 100 yds (90 m) turn left through the hedge and continue to the end of the field with the hedge on the right. The path links two fields. Bear right then turn right and continue on a field edge path with the hedge on the right. At the end of the hedge the path continues through open fields to reach a hedge on the left and gradually descends to reach a road. At the road, turn left and, at the junction, right into Bury Road. Continue towards Shillington for approximately 850 yards (750 m).

Where the main road bears left uphill and just before the Noah's Ark Pub on the left, cross the road and take the road on the right, Hillside Road, which climbs past the bungalows on the left and then on to a narrow path to All Saints' Church. Take the path through the churchyard to the right of the Church and through a gate into a lane. Turn right down hill and cross a stream to a footpath junction and then left through a gate into a field. Cross this and a further field to a gate leading into Shillington High Road. Turn right and on reaching the crossroads go straight on towards Pegsdon along Apsley End Road, passing the Musgrave Arms Pub on the right. After the last house the footpath ends, continue walking along the road for approx 850 yards (750 m) to reach a bridleway (sign missing) on the right. Turn right on a wide track which turns left alongside a hedge to reach a track at the end of the field. Turn right and continue past The Mill into Mill Lane and on past the sewage works. Follow the surfaced road into Hexton.

*An alternative path avoiding road walking can be taken shortly after leaving the Church. As above, turn right down hill and over the stream to the footpath junction and then left through a gate into a field. Cross the first field and bear right to continue with a stream on the left. This field edge path soon leaves the stream and continues through a paddock and between houses to the road. Cross the road and continue ahead. At the end of the track the path turns sharp left, then right and continues ahead gradually bending to the left. Just after a footpath junction on the left bear right and after a short distance take the cross field path over a ditch to the left. On reaching the farm track keep left. Where the farm track turns left continue ahead across the field to emerge at the surfaced road in Hexton.*

Just before the Raven Pub turn right and continue along the road past the cricket ground to a footpath sign on the left. Cross the field, over the bridge and continue along a good track first with the hedge on the left and later the hedge on the right until reaching a stream where the path turns left to a bridge and after crossing the bridge along a narrow path to reach Manor Road. Turn left and continue along Manor Road to where it meets the B655 Barton to Hitchin road, Hexton Road. Turn right and first left into Church Road. St Nicholas' Parish Church is on the left.

## Map 4



## Walk Four: Barton-le-Clay to Streatley

### Start point/parking/public transport

*The start point is St Nicholas' Parish Church in Barton-le-Clay ("Barley Farm in the Clay Land"), six miles north of Bedford on the old A6 route from London to Bedford (there is now a bypass). Street parking is available in the town or near the recreation ground (TL083304). Stagecoach and Centrebus run bus services through Barton-le-Clay. To reach the Trail, head in the direction of Luton and turn left into the B655 Hexton Road. Church Road is the third on the right after 650 yards (600 m).*

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR TL 085304, MK45 4LA, OS Explorer map 193 (Luton & Stevenage); and Landranger map 166 (Luton & Hertford)

**Length of walk:** 9.2 miles (14.7 km)

**Ascent/descent:** Total ascent 575 feet (175 m); total descent 310 feet (95 m)

### Intermediate distances:

*Barton to Lilley 4.9 miles (7.8 km)*

*Lilley to Streatley 4.3 miles (6.9 km)*

**Total walking time:** about 3 hours 45 minutes

### Places of interest on the route

#### **Barton-le-Clay**

*Barton-le-Clay lies at the foot of the Barton Hills Nature Reserve, a northeastern extension of the Chilterns, commonly supposed to have been the inspiration for Bunyan's "Delectable Mountains" in "The Pilgrim's Progress". The Reserve is an area of outstanding natural beauty. The Barton Hills are also famous for their springs: "At a great distance (Christian) saw a most pleasant mountainous country... with springs and fountains".*

#### **Lilley**

*Bunyan undoubtedly used the Icknield Way on his travels, as he often visited Hitchin and several other villages in the vicinity. Meetings usually took place in the evening, or after dark, and would be held occasionally in a farm house or barn, but mostly in the open. At Lilley several houses registered for Dissenters were used; one of these had a cellar where he could hide to preach in secret.*

**Terrain notes:** *All the off-road paths are on chalk downland. While many stretches have firm surfaces, some have exposed chalk and mud, which can be slippery when wet.*

### THE WALK

*Turn left beyond St Nicholas' Church, pass the Rectory and again turn left on the path at the end of the hedge. Continue along the field-edge path with the hedge on the left until the path turns slightly right. Before reaching the gate turn left (no sign) along a broad track which climbs steadily round the western side of the hills and continues in a southerly direction to a metal gate. To the right of the gate a narrow path continues in the same direction to the road. Turn right and a short distance later turn left along a field-edge track keeping the hedge on the left. Continue for approximately two-thirds of a mile (1.5 km) to a path crossroads (this is the Ick-*

*nield Way, said to be the oldest road system in the country). Turn left and ignoring any footpath signs continue to reach a road.*

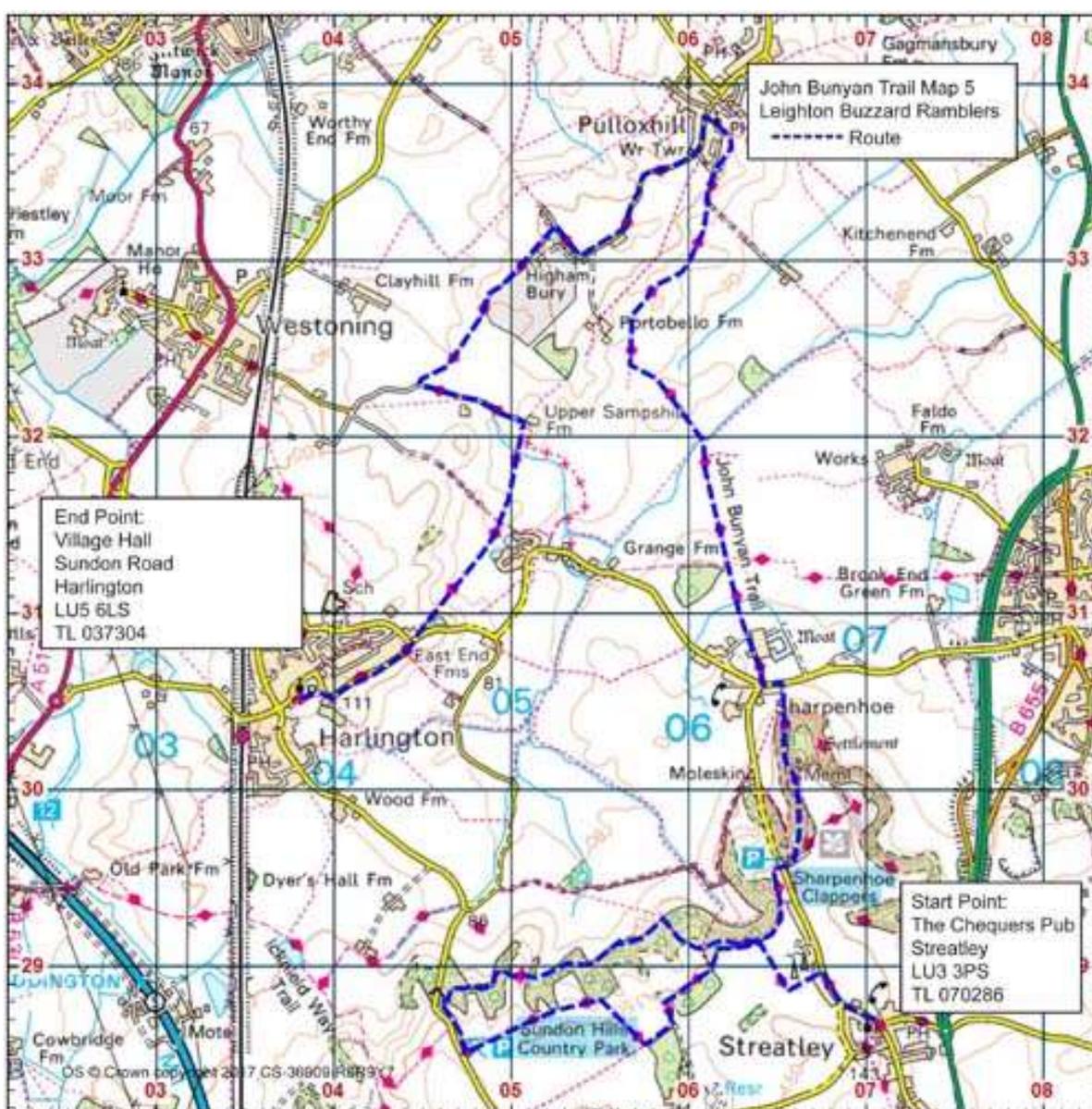
*At the road, keep to the grass verge on the left and continue ahead to a sharp left-hand bend. Cross with care and continue through a disused car park; then turn right on a farm track (no sign), keeping the hedge line on the right. At the end of the trees on the right, take a sharp left turn and soon afterwards a right turn to reach a field junction and a sign indicating a permissive path to the left. (At this junction the OS Map shows the Bunyan Trail turning right to reach the road through the village and then left along the road to East Street. The new route avoids walking down the road). Continue ahead on a bridleway and follow path skirting fields and through three gates another footpath junction is reached. Turn right and up a tree-lined path and on to a surfaced road to reach the junction of The Baulk with East Street in Lilley. Turn left and continue along the road to the junction with West Street. Turn right into West Street and the Lilley Arms Pub is 100 yards (90 m) on the left (an ideal place for refreshments).*

*Passing the Lilley Arms, continue along the road, ignoring a turning to the right. The road descends and at the bottom becomes a farm track. Continue along the track, which gradually narrows then widens out, as it turns left and climbs past the wood, then even wider as it turns right. Continue along this broad track and shortly after passing a row of silver birch trees ignore a footpath on the left and continue a little further to turn left at the next sign. The path, with a hedge on the left, climbs gradually and, where the hedge turns left (no marker post), go straight ahead across the open fields. Soon the path begins its descent and continues with a fence either side until reaching the Golf Course. Bear slightly left and follow the obvious track over the Golf Course to a signposted junction, then in the same direction to reach the Club House on the right and the Car Park on the left. Don't go straight on: instead take the path a few yards to the right (no marker post) and continue down to the road (A6).*

*Cross over the A6 and, instead of walking along the road opposite, go slightly left into the green space between the houses on the left and road on the right. Continue ahead to the right hand corner of the open space near the car park for the Keech (Pasque) Hospice. Go through the gate, cross the road and through the overspill car park to join a footpath. Continue across the field to a waymark. Continue with the*

hedge on the right and at another waymark (post knocked down) go through the hedge. Turn left and continue along the edge of several fields keeping the hedge to the left (passing under the pylons and one further field) until reaching a gate into an open field. Bear right across the field to a gate and then down to the entrance to Streatley Village Pond. Keep left and follow the line of the fence and through a gate leading into the road. Immediately turn left and just after a cottage on the left through a gate to a waymark on the right. Turn right and continue uphill, keeping the hedge on the right to a gate leading into a narrow path between the houses. Continue to a gate leading into the churchyard of St Margaret's Church (TLO70286) and go through the gate past the church to The Chequers Pub by the main gates.

## Map 5



## Walk Five: Streatley to Harlington

### The start point

*The Chequers Pub in Streatley, located next door to St Margaret's Church, four miles north of Luton off the A6. There is restricted street parking and a small car park by the roundabout on the A6. Stagecoach and Centrebus run weekday bus services through Streatley.*

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR TL 070286, LU3 3PS, OS Explorer map 193 (Luton & Stevenage; and Landranger map 166 (Luton & Hertford)

**Length of walk via Sundon Hills:** 10.0 miles (16.1 km)

### Intermediate distances:

*Streatley to Sharpenhoe Clappers via Sundon Hills 3.9 miles (6.2 km)*

*Sharpenhoe Clappers to Pulloxhill Water Tower 3.0 miles (4.9 km)*

*Pulloxhill Water Tower to Harlington 3.1 miles (5.0 km).*

**Ascent/descent:** total ascent 310 feet (95 m); total descent 410 feet (125 m)

**Total Walking Time:** about 4 hours

### Places of interest along the route

#### **Bunyan's Oak Tree**

*This part of the Trail passes the famous "Bunyan's Oak Tree", where Bunyan is reputed to have preached. The dead tree is on private land but it can be seen from the public footpath (Harlington FP14) on the part of the Trail leading from Upper Samshill Farm to Harlington, as indicated in the walk description. A commemorative sapling was planted nearby by the botanist Dr David Bellamy in 1988 to mark the tercentenary of Bunyan's death. In November 1660, Bunyan was warned on his arrival at a moated farm (Lower Samshill), half a mile from Bunyan's Oak and near the present College Farm, that a warrant had been issued for his arrest. His host wanted to cancel the meeting but Bunyan said, 'No, by no means, I will not stir, neither will I have the meeting dismissed for this. Come, be of good cheer; let us not be daunted; our cause is good, we need not be ashamed of it; to preach God's word...even if we suffer for it.' At the start of the meeting a village constable and a magistrate's assistant burst into the room and arrested Bunyan.*

#### **Sharpenhoe Clappers**

*Reputedly haunted, Sharpenhoe Clappers is a prominent spur on a classic chalk escarpment forming part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is crowned with traces of an Iron Age hill-fort and an impressive beech wood. The term "Clappers" is derived from the Latin word claperius meaning "rabbit hole" since mediaeval monks from Woburn Abbey tended one end of the iron-age earthworks as a rabbit warren, yielding meat, fur and leather. According to some sources, it may have been behind Bunyan's idea of "Mount Pleasant". However, the artist Edward Callam portrays Sharpenhoe in his "County Celestial" series, which can be viewed at Wardour Park Museum in Luton, as "Mount Caution" beyond the "Delectable Mountains".*

#### **Pulloxhill**

*Pulloxhill, a Quaker stronghold in Bunyan's time, may have inspired "The Hill Lucre" (greedy profit in the sense of filthy lucre) from "The Pilgrim's Progress". Bunyan relates the tale of how "the gentleman-like" Demas, the son of Judas, tempted By Ends and other pilgrims to investigate a silver mine in the hill. However, some pilgrims drew too near to the edge of the shaft, and because of the treacherous nature of the ground which broke under their feet, they were destroyed. The possible historical derivation is that in 1680 it was thought that gold had been discovered in Pulloxhill and a mine was established; this was however*

*abandoned shortly afterwards, as what was actually discovered were apparently flakes of mica in quartz, giving the appearance of gold. As Demas appears in the first part of "The Pilgrim's Progress", published in 1678, the dates don't tally unless Bunyan had some earlier knowledge of the mine at Pulloxhill. In Wardour Park Museum in Luton there is a painting in oils by Edward Callam entitled "The Hill Called Lucre", part of the "Celestial County" series. There are still two interesting field names in Pulloxhill – Gold Close and Bunions Hill.*

### **Sundon**

*Sundon's thirteenth-century church of St Mary's was the setting for the wedding of the establishment couple, William Foster, one of Bunyan's persecutors, and Anne Wingate, the sister of the magistrate who ordered Bunyan's arrest. There are stone seats around the interior walls of the church for the infirm to sit down, before the general introduction of pews – hence the phrase "The weak shall go to the wall".*

### **Terrain notes**

*On the chalk downland from Streatley to the bottom of Sharpenhoe Clappers the route generally has good paths, although there are places where the exposed chalk and mud can be slippery, particularly on the descent from the Clappers. On the rest of the route, there is a mixture of paths and roads with good surfaces and field paths, which can be muddy, particularly in the low ground below Harlington.*

### **THE WALK**

*From The Chequers Pub, turn left along Sharpenhoe Road and continue uphill on the footpath with the road to the right, crossing at some stage before reaching a road junction. Continue on the same side past the junction and when safe cross to the footpath in front of the houses. At the first footpath sign turn left down some steps, and continue ahead keeping the hedge to the right. Turn right and ahead past a sign reading "Markham and Moleskin Hills" to a footpath junction just inside the trees. Turn left and continue on a tree lined path to the edge of the wood and where the path divides. Bear left up a short incline to the wood edge then turn left and continue ahead on the field edge path with the hedge on the left as it bears right, then left then right again to reach a footpath junction. At the junction turn right and with the hedge on the right continue to a gate. Go through the gate and left downhill, then round to the right to a gate and turn left. Continue ahead with the hedge on the left to reach the Sundon Hills Country Park car park.*

*On reaching the Sundon Hills Country Park car park, turn right. After leaving the car park head slightly left towards a gate by the road. At the gate do not cross the road, but turn right heading downhill to a gate into a wood. Go through the gate and follow the obvious path downhill and through the trees. Ignoring any paths from the side, eventually reach a flight of steps leading to small disused chalk quarry. At the waymark, turn left and, after a short distance, bear slightly right to a fence and turn right. Turn left along the tree line and follow the path downhill and gradual ascend to reach a footpath crossing. Turn right up the steps and follow the footpath*

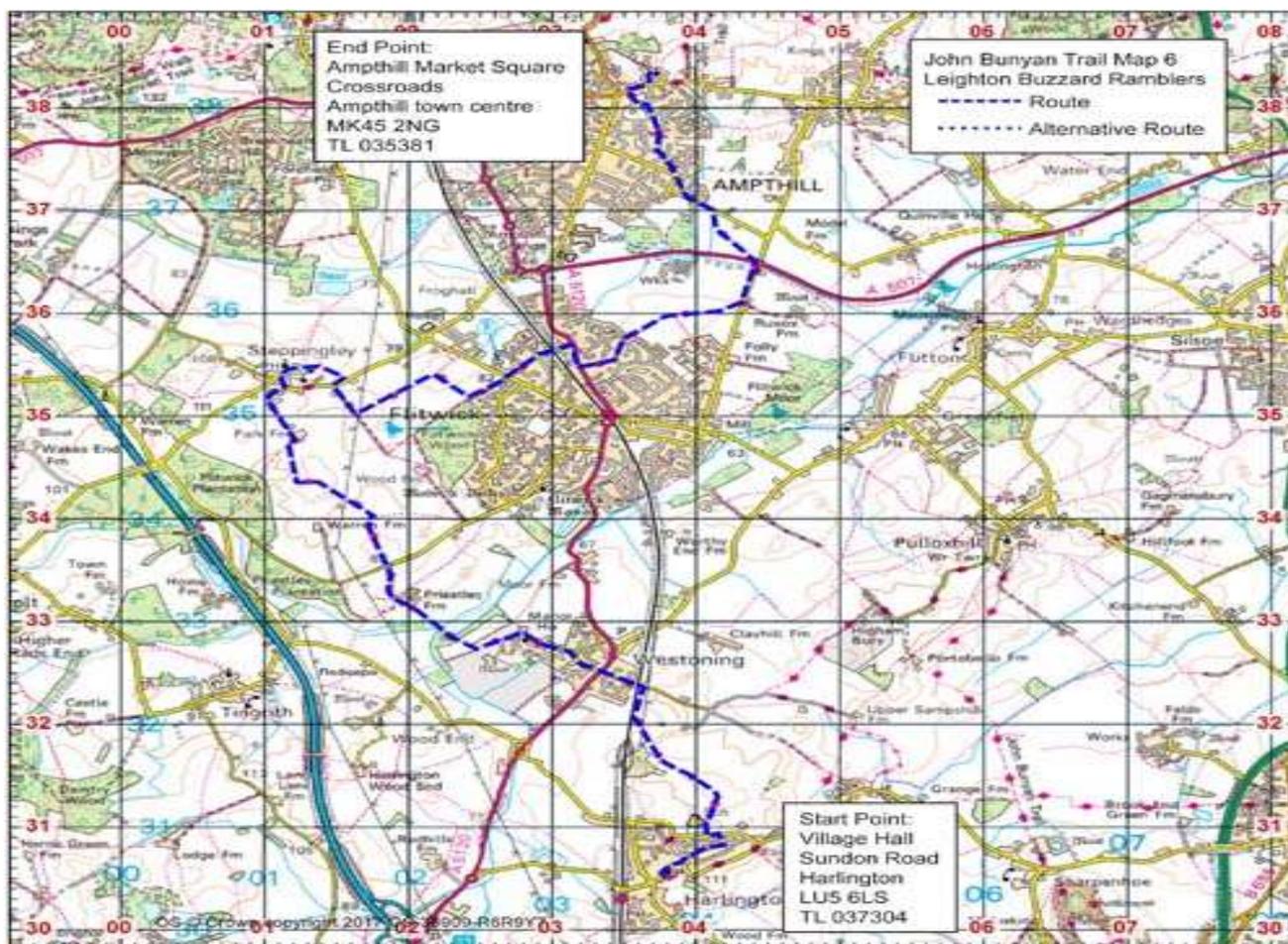
markers to a gate. Go through the gate into a field and cross the field towards the trees. At the junction with the trees bear slightly left downhill towards a wide path and then bear right onto the wide path and continue ahead. Ignoring two paths on the right go through a kissing gate and cross the field to reach the car park at Sharpenhoe Clappers.

Take the surfaced path through the gate (note the Gordon Edwards memorial seat on the left) and continue ahead ignoring the path on the left going downhill. At the next waymark post, turn left and continue through the trees and along the side of the hill to climb steps leading to an open space. Keep left and on reaching "The Clappers" keep left, contouring the edge of the hill to the end of "The Clappers". Turn left and after a steep descent on steps the path comes out into a field. Continue ahead to the road. Turn left and keep on the left side of the road for a short distance to a bridleway sign on the right. Cross the road and follow the bridleway along a hedge lined drive, first to a gate and then through the farm yard, before continuing ahead for approximately 1,200 yards (1.1 km), ignoring all paths to the left and right.

Where the farm track turns left, go straight on and after approximately 110 yards (100 m) turn left over a wooden bridge then slightly to the right and follow the left hedge for a short distance. Turn left through trees to a gate leading to an open field. Go through the gate and turn right initially following the line of the hedge on the right, but as the hedge moves to the right continue straight ahead across the field to a small metal gate to the right of a larger farm gate. Go through the gate and ahead to another gate by a hedge. Go through the gate (on the hill is Portabello Farm) turn right and continue across field to a gate ahead to the left. Go through gate then climb uphill through two gates, then along a fenced path through two gates to a wooded path and, at the end of the wooded track, continue ahead with the hedge on the left to reach a farm track leading to Blackhill Lane. Follow the track uphill and continue past the houses to reach the road junction with the Pulloxhill Water Tower immediately ahead. Turn left along Higham Bury Lane for approximately 1,200 yards (1.1 km) and, at the end of the surfaced road, with The White House ahead, turn left and continue ahead passing a high wall to the left to reach a gate and a sign saying "Please keep to the path". Go through the gate and at the other end of a small field go through the gate turn left and, keeping the hedge to the left, follow the field edge to a narrow lane and along the narrow lane to a road.

At the road, turn left and then left again at the road junction. Go along the road for approximately 750 yards (650 m) to the farm buildings of Upper Sampshill Farm at the top of the hill. Turn right at a footpath sign through the gate and walk down the hill through two gates and across a field to a footpath junction at the field edge. Continue ahead through two fields planted with trees to reach a large tree with gates to its right. (After going through the gate look right and you will see a large dead tree. This is Bunyan's Oak.) Continue ahead on the path climbing to the trees and a fence at the top of the hill. Continue along the fence to where the path takes a left turn to reach the road. At the road turn right, taking care as there is no pavement. Continue along the roadside (Barton Road) for approx 660 yards (600 m), with houses and bungalows on the right. A few yards after the road turns sharply right, cross to the left at the end of a house wall, and take the narrow path leading to the village playing field. The church of St Mary The Virgin is ahead on the right and at the end of the playing fields is Harlington Village Hall and The Carpenters Arms Pub.

## Map 6



## Walk Six: Harlington to Ampthill

### Start point /parking/refreshments

*The start point for this section of the Trail is the Village Hall on Sundon Road, Harlington, opposite The Carpenter's Arms and near St Mary the Virgin Church. Harlington is just off the A5120 to the south of Ampthill and is located about 1.5 miles (2.4 km) from Junction 12 of the M1. There is free parking at the Village Hall during the day for up to six hours. Parking is also available at Harlington Station, five minutes' walk from the Village Hall. The Sugar and Spice Café in the row of shops on Lincoln Way, off Church Road/Barton Road, serves an all-day breakfast. The Old Sun pub is a short distance down Sundon Road from the Village Hall, on the right. Like The Carpenter's Arms, it welcomes walking parties. Centrebus and Grant Palmer run bus services through Harlington; and first Capital Connect Trains have a frequent service to Bedford. The Harlington Parish Paths partnership (P3 for short) publishes several footpath guides: no 2 covers "The Tinker's Trail", a circular walk of 4 miles (6.4 km) passing "Bunyan's Oak".*

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR TL 037304, LU5 6LS, OS Explorer map 193 (Luton & Stevenage), and, Landranger maps 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon) and 166 (Luton & Hertford)

**Length of walk:** 8.5 miles (13.8 km)

### Intermediate distances

*Harlington to Westoning Church: 2.0 miles (3.2 km)*

*Westoning Church to Flitwick: 3.7 miles (6.0 km)*

*Flitwick to Ampthill Town Centre: 2.8 miles (4.6 km)*

**Ascent/descent:** Total ascent 215 feet (65 m); total descent 280 feet (85 m)

**Total walking time:** about 3 hours 30 minutes

### Place of interest

#### Hartlington

*The manor house at Harlington where Bunyan was interrogated after his arrest for illegal preaching in November 1660 (see Walk Five), shortly after the Restoration of the Monarchy led to restricted religious rights, can be seen opposite the War Memorial and the Church of St Mary the Virgin. The house dates back to 1396 and both Charles I and Charles II reputedly spent a night there. The local magistrate, Francis Wingate JP, at the behest of his brother-in-law, William Foster, a lawyer who was afterwards commissary in the Bedford archdeaconry, sent Bunyan under escort 12 miles north to Bedford Jail, to await a hearing at the County Quarter Session. Foster was the prototype for "Mr Worldly Wiseman". On the Station Road wall of the manor house there is a blue plaque commemorating Bunyan: it is currently the only occupied residential house connected with him.*

**Terrain notes:** *For the most part, the paths have good surfaces, but there are some stretches, which can be muddy, particularly approaching the railway at Westoning and near the River Flit.*

### THE WALK

*From the Village Hall at Harlington, head towards the church of St Mary the Virgin. At the entrance to the church cross the road to the left, so that the road and church are now on the right, and continue to follow the road past the church to reach a footpath sign at the road called Churchills. Turn left. After a short distance, the path becomes fenced and then an alleyway between the houses. Continue ahead along the alleyway, cross the first road and at the second road turn right and follow Wingate*

Road towards Harlington Upper School. At the road junction, turn right and continue to a footpath sign visible on the left just past the School.

Cross the road and take the footpath which climbs uphill between the School and playing fields on the left and open fields on the right. At the end of the School playing fields go through a gate and turn left. Follow the line of the hedge, ignoring an obvious field edge farm path to the right at the end of the first field, and turn where the path bears right across a field. Follow the cross-field path through a gap and into the next field and descend to cross a ditch by trees near the railway line. Go through the trees, turn left and, by the railway fence, turn right and continue with the railway on the left to Sampshill Road. Turn left, go under the railway bridge and continue into the village of Westoning, coming out by The Chequers Pub and a convenience shop almost opposite on the right.

Cross the road and continue along Church Road past St Mary Magdalene church and turn left at the T junction. Keep right at the gates and continue along a fenced track to a gate. Go through the gate, turn right and follow the line of the fence on the right to a stile into a wood. Take the obvious track to a metal bridge and cross the River Flit. Bear left following the riverbank to a gate and follow the edge of the field to a gate leading into Priestley Farm. Continue ahead along the farm track to reach a road. Cross the road and enter the field opposite. Continue along the edge of the field with the fence on the left to reach a gate and hedge. On the other side of the gate and slightly to the left, cross the stile and walk diagonally across the field to a stile in the corner near an oak tree. Cross the stile and follow a hedge on the left around the field to another farm track. Turn right along the track and at the end turn right and continue a short distance towards Park Farm. Then turn left along the road past farm cottages on the right and open fields on the left to reach some houses. Continue to follow the road as it winds its way to the junction of Peakes End and the main road.

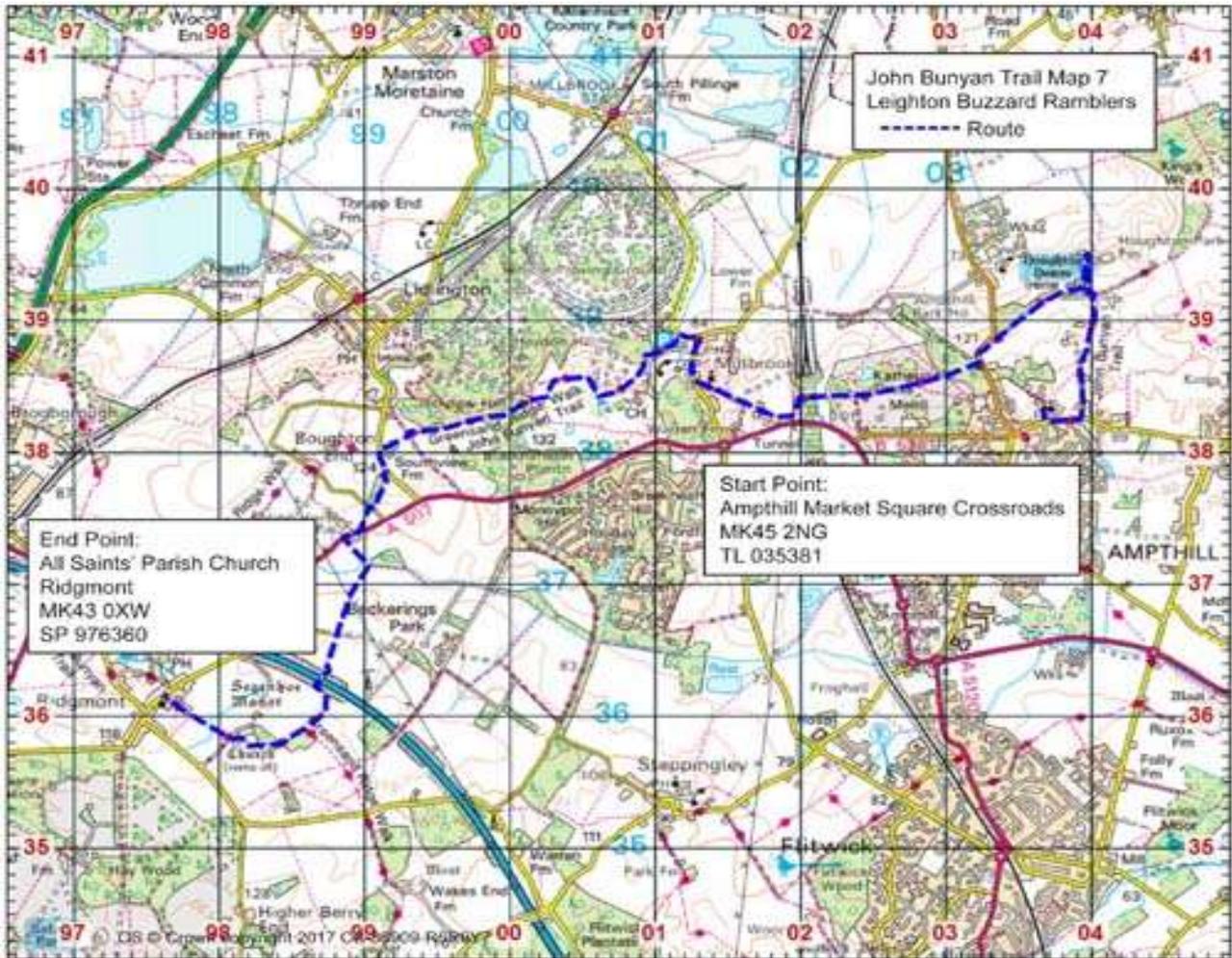
At this junction there is an option to turn right along this road without any footpath for approximately 440 yards (400 m) to a bridleway sign or to turn left along the road for approximately 165 yds (150 m) to The French Horn Pub for refreshment or to the visit St Lawrence Church. With the church on your left, walk past some interesting houses continue ahead into a field to take in some good views and a gradual descent along a field edge to the road. Cross the road, turn right and walk along a

*grassy roadside verge to the bridleway sign. In either case, at the bridleway sign take the sandy track with the hedge on the right which gradually ascends to the top of the first ridge, and turn left on to a wide field edge path, which gradually descends then levels to a waymark with a grassy track ahead and to the right. Turn right and continue on a gradual ascent to a hedge and trees. Go through the hedge and turn left on a wide track which ends at the junction of Steppingley Road and Windmill Road (opposite).*

*Flitwick Leisure Centre is 220 yards (200 m) to the left and the Railway Station/Town Centre is 880 yards (800 m) to the right.*

*Cross Steppingley Road into Windmill Road and continue the length of the road and under the railway bridge to reach High Street. Turn right and continue past the Blackbirds Pub and turn left into road opposite the Indian Lodge (this is the Ridge-way but there is no road sign). Continue ahead and where Catherine Road turns right keep left onto an unmade road. At the end of the unmade road continue on a path leading into fields. Further along the path, keep straight ahead at the yellow waymark post, to eventually reach Maulden Road near Ruxox House and the lane to Ruxox Farm opposite. Turn left and continue to the roundabout some 500 yards (450 m). Cross the A507 to the left of the roundabout and go through a gate into a field. The path follows a rough track for approximately 220 yards (200 m) and at a derelict hut bears right across the field first to a waymark post. Keep straight ahead to reach the sports ground. Turn right and after crossing a bridge bear left to follow the edge of the sports ground to the gate and Abbey Lane (see terrain notes below). Turn left, continue along the road to a small crossroads and then bear right along Oliver Street for approximately 550 yards (500 m) to where the road takes a sharp left-hand turn. Turn right, follow the left-hand part of Willow Way and then walk up Duke Street. Turn right into Cornwall Road and turn left at the end. Cross the road (Saunders Piece) and go on to a footpath on your right, Kings Arms Path. This takes you to Ampthill Market Square in the centre of the town.*

## Map 7



### Walk Seven: Ampthill to Ridgmont

#### Start point/parking/public transport

The start point is the crossroads at Ampthill town centre, seven miles south of Bedford on the A507. Parking is available at the Town Centre Car Park off Bedford Street (the B530) or Ampthill Park (free) off Woburn Street opposite the Rugby Club Ground and near the A507 junction on the west side of Ampthill (TL 024382). Grant Palmer and Stagecoach run bus services through Ampthill.

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR TL 035381, MK45 2NG, OS Explorer maps 192 (Buckingham & Milton Keynes); 193 (Luton & Stevenage); and Landranger map 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon)

**Length of walk:** 6.8 miles (11.0 km)

The mileage has been taken to the Village Centre in Ridgmont. It is approximately 1.5 miles (2.4 km) to Ridgmont Station, which is only a few hundred yards from the Trail.

#### Intermediate distances:

Ampthill Town Centre to Millbrook Church: 2.7 miles (4.4 km)

Millbrook Church to Ridgmont: 4.1 miles (6.4 km)

**Ascent/descent:** Total ascent 330 feet (100 m); total descent 230 feet (70 m)

**Total walking time:** about 3 hours

## Places of interest on the route

### **Amphill**

*The Georgian market town of Amphill has associations with Henry VIII, who visited the area to take part in country sports, staying at the 15<sup>th</sup> century castle that then stood in Amphill Park. A cross erected in 1770, known as Katherine's Cross, marks the site of the castle, which has been suggested as the site of Doubting Castle. Henry, corpulent and dour, may have been the model for Giant Despair. No pictures of the castle have survived but a written description said it had stone towers, as indicated below. The castle was dismantled soon after 1660: Bunyan could have seen its towers in the 1650s and known of the empty castle plateau in the 1670s. Giant Despair was killed and Doubting Castle destroyed in the second part of "The Pilgrim's Progress.*

*The nearby Houghton House, built about 1615 and situated on a hill, has the entry "paid the brazier" in its account books; and was probably the inspiration for House Beautiful in "The Pilgrim's Progress" - it was from a west-facing bedroom window in the house that John Bunyan reputedly first saw his "Delectable Mountains" - the Chilterns - with vineyards, fountains, gardens and orchards, where the pilgrims Christian and Hopeful drank and washed and ate freely. The House Beautiful may possibly represent the established church in that the pilgrim Faithful bypasses it - or perhaps this was simply because he arrived in daytime and didn't need overnight accommodation! Houghton House was built over the period 1615-1621 for Mary Sidney Herbert, Dowager Countess of Pembroke. It became a ruin after the removal of its roof in 1794. Its fine staircase was removed, however, and can now be seen in the Swan Hotel in Bedford.*

### **Millbrook**

*The Trail passes the Church of St Michael & All Angels in this small village to the west of Amphill. Millbrook Gorge is reputed to be "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" in "The Pilgrim's Progress". Bunyan would have travelled through this gorge on his journeys south of Bedford and would have found the pathway narrow and gloomy due to the overhanging trees. Vera Brittain describes Millbrook Gorge as immediately north of the church, concealed by the tops of firs and oaks. Based on our reading of the surrounding terrain, Millbrook Gorge either has to be the hill leading down to the entrance of the Millbrook Proving Ground or the steep wooded area on the road from the A507 to the Church.*

*In her book "John Bunyan: His Life and Times", Vivienne Evans points out that the Church of St Michael & All Angels overlooks the remains of a 17<sup>th</sup> century brickworks using the local clay. She puts forward the very interesting theory that the smoke and flames escaping from the kilns and the sack-clothed bare-footed workers may well have inspired some of Christian's hellish encounters. Bunyan certainly would not have felt welcome in Millbrook or Marston, as the church ministers and many of their congregations had High Church and Royalist sympathies.*

### **Lidlington and the Hill of Difficulty**

*On the other side of Heydon Hill from Millbrook stands the village of Lidlington. The hill out of Lidlington towards Ridgmont is reputed to be the Hill of Difficulty and it is easy to see why. Standing on the corner of Church Street and High Street and looking right, the road becomes steeper after it passes The Green Man Pub" and continues upwards to disappear eventually over the brow of the hill. "Ascending the Hill, Christian was forced to go on his knees because of the steepness". Although this exaggerates the effect of the one-in-ten gradient, imagine how a tinker on foot with a heavy load, or even when driving a horse and cart, would have found this steep, rutted track - difficult in summer and almost impassable in winter.*

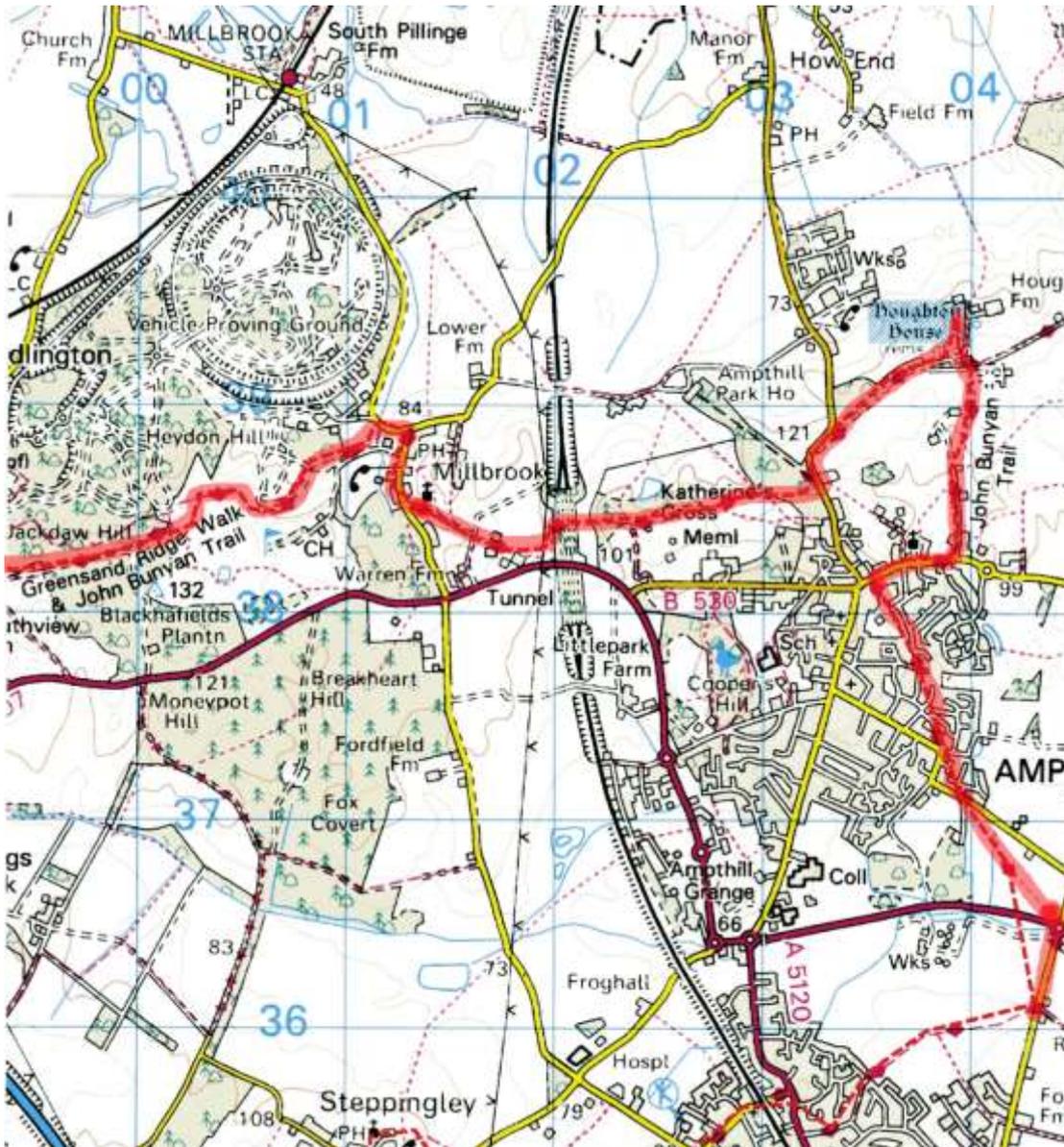
*An alternative suggestion is Amphill Hill, on the main Bedford Road, the steepest hill in the county. The sandy range of hills crossing the terrain here is characterised by dark, dense and dismal woods reminiscent of the byways Danger and Destruction, the alternatives to the way up the hill. The pleasant arbour on the way up Hill Difficulty could be the place now occupied by a small lay-by on the east side. A photo taken in 1908 shows a cyclist resting there. The "very narrow passage "to the Palace Beautiful could then be an entrance cut into the high bank by the roadside to the east at the top of Amphill Hill.*

### **Ridgmont**

Ridgmont, on the high road from Amptill to Woburn, was the home of the Bedford Meeting's patron, Colonel John Okey; and John Bunyan must have felt welcome here when he preached in the now ruined and roofless Segenhoe Church. A 1774 note in the records of the Baptist Chapel in Ridgmont states that that "Mr. Bunyan" was believed to be instrumental in the founding of the church. It is possible that this did indeed mean John Bunyan and that the church held itself to be the direct descendent of the Congregationalist church registered in 1672, the year in which Bunyan was released from his imprisonment in Bedford.

**Terrain notes:** Most of the walk is on the Greensand Ridge, where drainage is good and there are only a few muddy patches, particularly near the stream after Flying Horse Farm and after crossing the M1.

## THE WALK



From the crossroads in the centre of Amptill take Church Street and continue past St Andrew's Church on the left to Gas House Lane. Turn left and continue to a cattle grid and gate. Go through and after approximately 110 yards (100 m) bear right across the field to a gate at the end of a hedge. Go through the gate and follow the path initially with the hedge on the left then with the boundary fence on the right. On reaching a waymark post with a hedge ahead, turn left then and a few metres

later turn right through a gate into a farm yard. Turn left and follow the track to a junction. *Houghton House is ahead to the right. (To visit turn right and follow the signs. After the visit retrace steps to this junction).* At the junction, turn left and continue on the path for approximately 880 yards (800 m) to reach the road. Cross the road WITH CARE, turn left and, on the right, take the first entrance into Ampthill Park marked by a Greensand Ridge finger post. Go through the gate and continue along the obvious path between the trees. Ignore the first left turn and take the second turn left which leads to a gate into the open space of the Park. Turn right and keep on the path which stays on top of the ridge passing to the right of the War Memorial (set back) and then Katherine's Cross. Just after Katherine's Cross keep right along the edge of ridge to a yellow waymark post. Ignore the path to right and go ahead, descending to another post and then a waymarked gate in a hedge leading into an open field. Cross the field to a gate and continue along the path through the small wood then go left along a fenced path. Keep right at the fork and continue along a narrow path with a hedge on the right and fence on the left. Where the path widens continue ahead past a footpath sign on the left and further on a footpath sign on the right. Just before the entrance to the St Michaels & All Angels Church in Millbrook bear left down the hill to the road (Sandhill Close).

Turn right and cross the road with care where the footpath starts and continue ahead past The Chequers Free House to the road junction. Turn left and, at the bottom of the hill, left again and into a small car park. Continue through it and ahead as the path gradually climbs. After the path turns sharp right, a short steep climb is followed by a left turn and another climb to an area with seating on the right. *(There are fine views over the Vehicle Proving Ground and Marston Vale.)* The path continues ahead and after a short descent turns left. Keep left with the Golf Course on the left and after approximately 220 yards (200m) the path turns sharply right. Take the next left and continue ahead through the trees to reach a gate leading into the driveway of Jackdaw Hill House. Go through the gate and along the drive. *(The owner prefers you to walk on the drive not on the grass).* Where the drive turns sharp right continue ahead on a bridleway which heads towards the farm buildings of Southview Farm and the road. On reaching the road at South View Farm, turn left and take the second footpath sign on the right. Cross the field towards the wood and continue down to a road with the wood on the right. At the road turn right and almost immediately left through the hedge and cross the field to reach the road

(A507) at Flying Horse Farm. Turn right and, as this road is very busy, stay on the same side to reach a footpath sign opposite.

Cross the road with care and continue on the path which runs between the trees and the fence to the end of the fence. Turn right across to a wooden bridge. Cross the bridge and turn right. Continue along the field edge with the hedge on the right to reach a farm road. Continue ahead with the field edge boundary to the left and reach a bridge crossing the M1 Motorway. Cross the bridge and continue ahead with the fence to the right. Follow the path through the wooded area and go through the gate into a narrow path between the hedge and the field. Go through the next gate and continue ahead with a fence on the right. At a gate at the end of the fence go through and bear slightly right on an obvious path through the private garden to a gate leading into a field and towards the ruins of Segenhoe Church. Go through a gate into the church grounds and keeping the church on the right follow the path to the gate and a road. Cross the road and follow the path towards the village. The path becomes a track and then a road before reaching the main road (High Street, Ridgmont). Cross the road and turn right for the village facilities (ahead is the Village Shop/Café/Firs Guest House and the Rose & Crown Pub). The parish church of All Saints is to the left

Cont.

## Map 8



## **Walk Eight: Ridgmont to Cranfield**

### **Start point/parking/public transport**

*The start point is All Saints' Parish Church in Ridgmont. There is street parking on the main road in the village near the Rose & Crown Pub, which serves traditional English food; and car parking at Ridgmont railway station where there is a café and the Heritage visitor centre. Centrebus runs three buses a day Monday to Friday to Leighton Buzzard. The A507 bypass opened in 2008 has returned Ridgmont to a quiet rural haven for residents and walkers.*

**Grid reference and postal code:** *GR SP 976360, MK43 0XW, OS Explorer map 192 (Buckingham & Milton Keynes); and Landranger map 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon)*

**Length of walk:** *5.6 miles (9.0 km)*

**Ascent/descent:** *total ascent 130 feet (40 m), total descent 165 feet (50 m)*

**Total walking time:** *about 2 hours 15 minutes*

**Terrain notes:** *The Clay Way is situated on the clay soil of the West Bedfordshire Ridge and can be very boggy in the winter.*

### **THE WALK**

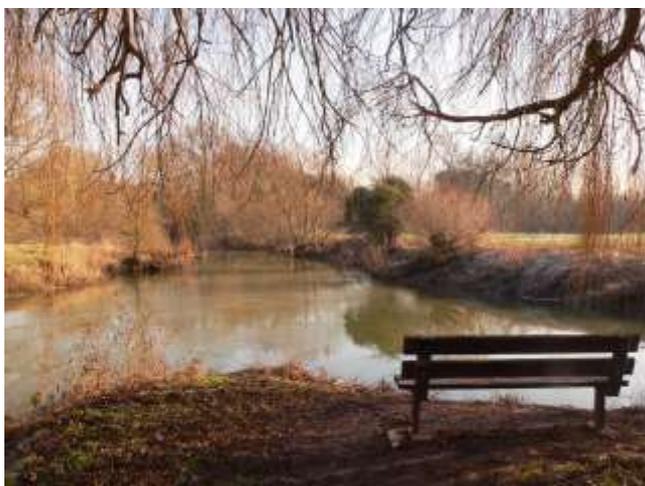
*Turn right from All Saints Church along High Street and, before reaching the village shop, turn left at a footpath sign go down the steps into a lane and continue downhill past the Greensand Ridge Walk sign on the right and past cottages to a road junction. At the junction, turn right along Station Road for approximately 700 m 820 yds, keeping right at the road junction and go under the M1 Motorway bridge. A few metres past the bridge turn right between wooden fencing to cross the wooden bridge over the A507. Immediately after crossing the bridge turn right and at the bottom of the slope turn left to a wooden gate and continue ahead. (This is also the route of the Clay Way, a 12 mile (19 km) linear walk from Ridgmont to Bromham.) For those wanting to go to Ridgmont Station or Cafe, after crossing the bridge, continue ahead and on reaching the road, follow the paved footpath to the left for 200 yards (180 m).*

*Cross the field to a hedge and continue ahead with the hedge on the right across two more fields. On reaching a hedge on the far side of the field, with the farm buildings of Brogborough Middle Farm behind it, turn left and continue past the farm entrance, along the farm track, and cross a green bridge over the railway. After crossing the bridge turn right into a grassy area and bear left towards large concrete blocks. Go between the blocks and bear left along a grassy track with telegraph poles alongside to ruined buildings ahead at the top of a gradual climb. After passing the ruins, the path bears left then turns right. At the point where the track turns right, keep left through the trees descending to a field then along the field edge, gradually*

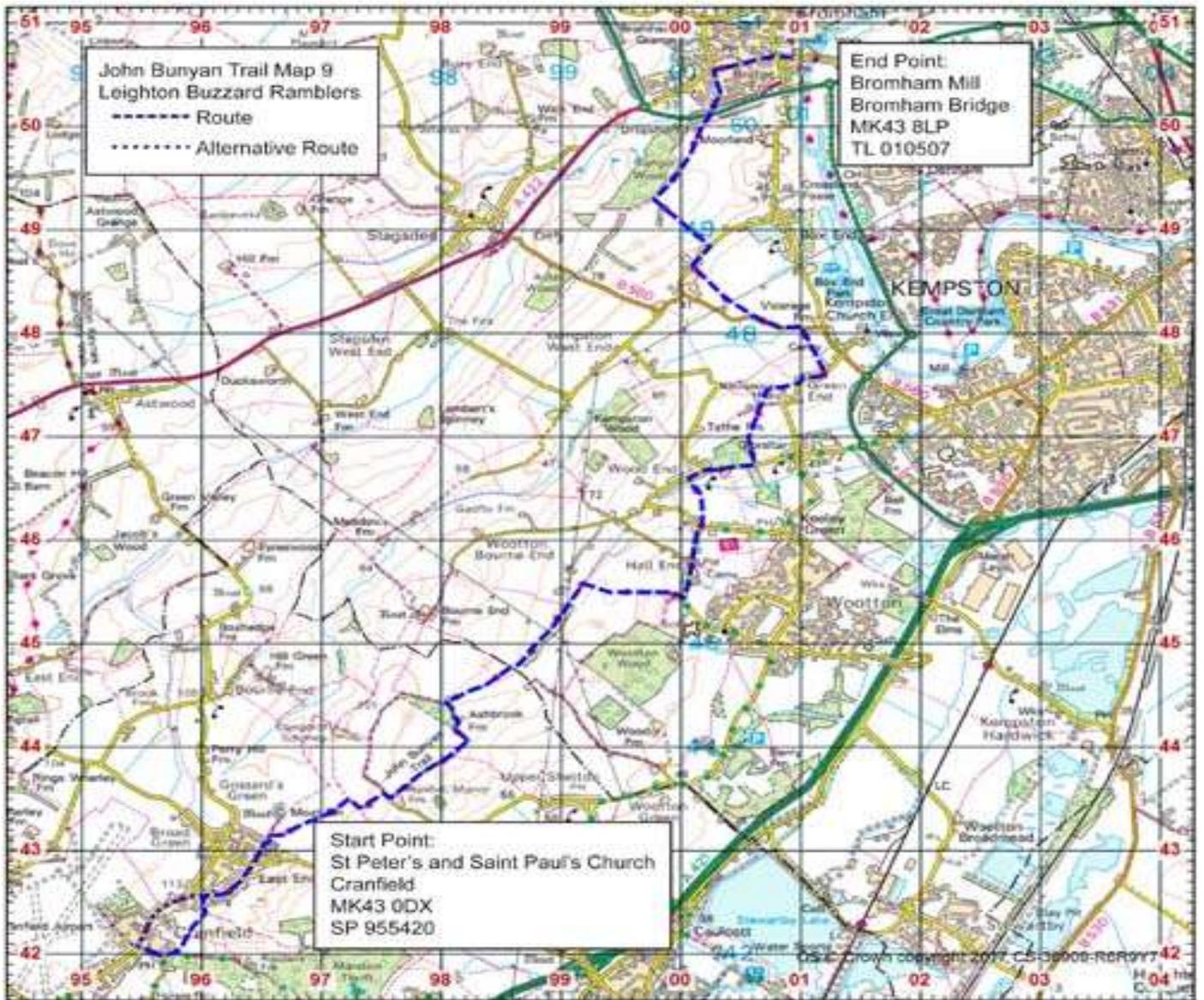
climbing to a crossing path at the corner of the field. On reaching the crossing path continue almost straight ahead to cross a metal bridge and continue ahead to reach Bedford Road, Brogborough, the old A421.

Cross the road, turn left then right to cross a bridge over the new A421 and continue ahead passing white buildings on the right. At a sharp right bend in the road continue straight ahead on to a farm track with both Brogborough Manor and Gardens and a hedge on the right. After a gradual climb and at the end of the field, turn right then left at the corner of the wood keeping, the hedge and trees on the right. Ignore the gate into Rectory Wood and continue up the hill to an old and well hidden waymark post.

After a couple of metres past the waymark post, turn right through the hedge and continue straight ahead past a wooden bench. At a fork in the path, take the left fork alongside a wire fence and leave a shrubby/wooded area to emerge through a gate into a field with a hedge on the right. Follow this path along the field edge, then take a right turn through the right hand hedge to cross the field to Wood End Farm. On reaching the track continue ahead to a gate on the left. Go through the gate and ahead along the lane which leads to West End Road and houses on the right. At the junction with Court Road and Lodge Road continue ahead to arrive at St Peter's Church, Cranfield, on the left. Continue past the Cranfield Church of England Academy School and a small green space on the right to Cranfield High Street, where there is a bus stop. The Swan Pub and shop are near the junction, with further facilities further along the High Street.



## Map 9



### Walk Nine: Cranfield to Bromham

#### Start point/parking/public transport

The start point is St Peter & St Paul's Church in Cranfield. There is street parking near the Church in Court Road. Refreshments are available from pubs and shops along the High Street. Grant Palmer, Stagecoach and Uno run bus services to and from Milton Keynes and Bedford.

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR SP 955420, MK43 0DX, OS Explorer map 208 (Bedford & St Neots); and Landranger map 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon)

**Length of walk:** 8.9 miles (14.2 km)

#### Intermediate distances

Cranfield, St Peter and St Paul's Church to Wootton Hall End 4.6 miles (7.3 km)

Wootton Hall End to Kempston Green End 1.5 miles (2.4 km)

Kempston Green End to Bromham Mill 2.8 miles (4.5 km)

**Total walking time:** about 3 hours 45 minutes.

**Ascents/descents:** total ascent 115 feet (35 m); total descent 360 feet (110 m)

## Places of interest on the route

### **Cranfield**

*Bunyan's life is paralleled by that of William Wheeler, "pastor" at the Church of St Peter & St Paul in Cranfield, who left his post because of a conflict of principles. He became a dissenter and then the first minister of the Baptist church in 1660. In late 1664 or early 1665 he was sent to the county goal at the same time that Bunyan was there and for the same reason.*

### **Wootton**

*At the right of the main gate of St Mary's Church stood "the parish cage". It was a small square brick building used as a lock-up. Food and drink were passed through a grating in the door to the prisoner inside. It is said that John Bunyan was imprisoned there at one time. The building was demolished in 1971 and the door is now used as a gate to a nearby house.*

**Terrain notes:** *The underlying soil for the whole walk is clay and there are some cross-field paths and stretches near streams, which can get very muddy.*

## THE WALK

Turn left from St Peter and St Paul's Church and continue past the Cranfield Church of England Academy School and a small green space on the right to Cranfield High Street. (Bus stop, The Swan pub and shop near junction with further facilities further along the High Street) Turn right and continue for 800 yards (725 m) to a road junction with the Cooperative Stores on the left cross the road and continue to the junction of High Street and Crane Way. (The road sign is on the left hand side and not visible on approaching the junction.) If you do not need refreshments or supplies after visiting the church or having sandwiches on the green, you may wish to take the pleasanter alternative route which is also way marked. Retrace your steps past the church and turn left into Rectory Lane. Where the road bears right turn left on to a track and continue ahead. The path goes along the edge of a field and then on to a surfaced track which continues to Hollywell Road. At the High Street turn right and continue to Crane Way. (The road sign is on the left hand side and not visible on approaching the junction.) Bear left then right on to a path between the houses. Cross the road go through the gate and bear right across the field to a gate in the corner to the right of a small brick building. Continue through the gate and along a field edge with the boundary and hedge on the right to a gate leading into a field of crops. Go through the gate and turn right on to a grassy path with the hedge on the right to a farm track and turn left. Continue ahead with the hedge on the left to a junction with trees and farm buildings ahead. Turn right towards Roxhill Manor Farm and after a short distance turn left between the farm buildings and through to a lane ahead.

Continue along the lane with hedges on both sides, eventually first turning left then curving right, to reach the isolated building of Ashbrook Farm. Continue along the lane past the farm on the right and through the trees to open fields. Turn right and continue ahead with the ditch and hedge on the right for approximately 1 mile (1.5 km) to a kissing gate. Go through the kissing gate and continue with the hedge on the right, then just before the trees turn right over a bridge crossing the ditch and through the hedge. Ascend then descend the field keeping the hedge on the left. Go through the kissing gate in the left corner of the field and continue ahead across the field to a farm track. Continue on the farm track to the road, Hall End Road. (Turn right here for Wootton village centre.) Turn left and continue ahead for approximately 800 yards (725 m), passing The Chequers Inn on the right, to the junction of Hall End Road and Keeley Lane.

At the junction go ahead over the stile, bear right and follow fenced-in path to a gate. Go through the gate and bear right to follow the field edge round to another gate. Go through the gate and bear left along a surfaced road to a gate leading into a road (Wood End Road). Turn right and at the road junction cross to The Cross Keys Pub and Italian Restaurant. Turn right, proceed along the road for 300 yards (275 m), turn left into the country park and continue to a footbridge with the hedge on the right. (As an alternative route, at The Cross Keys Inn, instead of continuing down the road, turn left into the country park and follow the paths keeping right to arrive at a bridge by a hedge). Cross the footbridge and after a short distance turn right through a gate in the hedge and cross the field to a gate between two oak trees. Go through the gate cross the road and through the gate immediately to the right of the five-barred gate opposite. Continue ahead with the hedge on the right to reach a gate leading into a road (Green End Road).

At the road, turn left and continue towards the houses of Green End. Ignore the first footpath sign on the left, where the road bends to the right, and approximately 275 yards (250 m) further after the left hand bend take the footpath on the left along a concrete drive.

For those wishing to leave the Trail and go to Kempston, continue along the road past the Cemetery and cross Cemetery Road into Church Road to reach All Saints Church. At the entrance to the church keep right and at the end of the road continue ahead on a tree lined avenue, Lady Gray's Walk, until it goes through a gate into

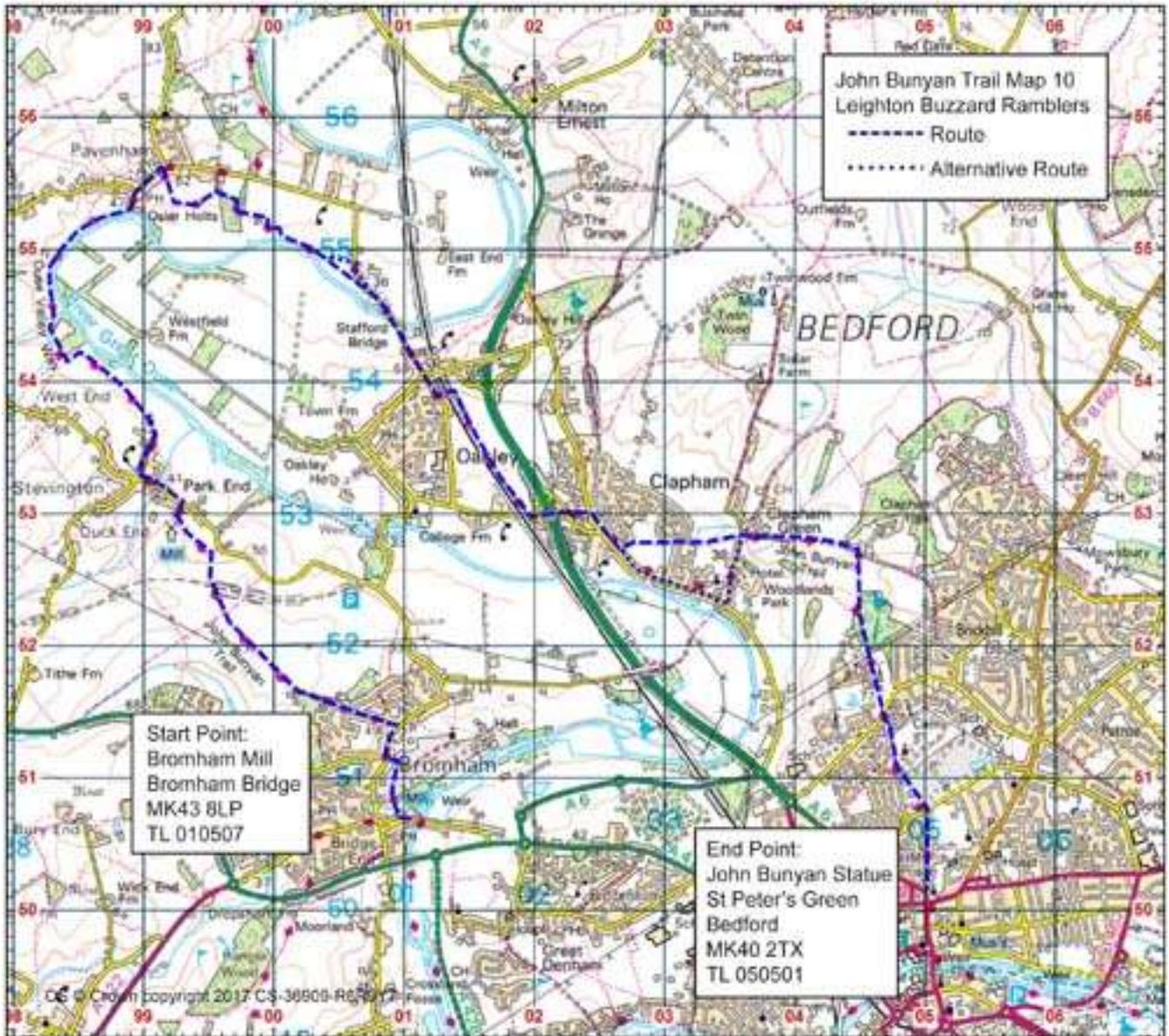
*Church Walk. After a short distance, bear right into Water Lane and follow it through to the High Street. The approximate distance to Kempston is one mile (1.5 km).*

*At the end of the drive, the path goes between the houses, through a gap into a narrow passage with a hedge on the left and the Cemetery on the right. Where the path emerges into a field, follow the obvious path across to the road. At the road, turn left and continue for approximately 550 yards (500 m) to a footpath sign on the right. Take the footpath and, immediately after entering the field, bear left to follow the hedge line and continue to a kissing gate at the end of the field. Go through the gate and bear right to a stile then go diagonally left across a field to a gate in the right-hand corner between a hedge and a fence. Proceed to the road opposite the entrance to Top Farm and turn right. At the end of the cottages on the left, take the footpath on the left. Go up the hill first to a hedge then across the field to the corner where the path continues between the hedge and a field fence.*

*With the hedge on the left continue to a T junction of paths and turn right. Continue ahead following the obvious path, first with woodland on the left then fields, to reach a gate and the A428 Bromham bypass. Cross the road with care, as it can get very busy, and follow the obvious path, ignoring any junctions, to come out by a road junction with Budgens Supermarket opposite. Turn right and continue with the main road (Stagsden Road) to the left and shortly after passing the junction with Village Road, on the left, another road junction is reached. (At this junction, for those needing refreshment The Swan Pub is just a few yards along the road on the right). Cross the side road to a triangular shaped green then turn left and cross to the other side of the main road. With the main road now on the right continue down the hill to Millfield and turn left to reach a bridge over a stream and kissing gate into Bromham Park.*

*(To reach Bromham Mill, do not turn into Millfield, but continue approximately 110 yards (100 m) and entrance is on the left just before the Bridge). To continue on the Trail after visiting the Mill go through the car park and gate into a field. Turn left and keeping the hedge to the left continue to a gate leading into Millfield. Turn right and down the path to a bridge over a stream and kissing gate at the entrance to Bromham Park.*

## Map 10



### Walk Ten: Bromham to Bedford

#### Start point/parking/public transport

*Bromham Mill lies two miles west of Bedford at the west end of Bromham Bridge, signposted from the A428 Bedford to Northampton road. Free parking and toilets are available at the Mill between 10.00 am and 5.00 pm every day. There is also a public car park opposite the Baptist Church. Light lunches, drinks and cakes are available at the Mill on Sundays and restricted other times during the summer months. The Swan Inn (an oak-beamed pub with open fireplaces), garage and supermarket are a few hundred yards back towards the village along Stagsden Road. There are shops en route to Stevington. Stagecoach runs bus services to Milton Keynes and Northampton.*

**Length of walk:** 10.8 miles (17.4 km)

**Grid reference and postal code:** GR TL 010507, MK43 8LP, OS Explorer map 208 (Bedford & St Neots); and Landranger map 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon)

**Intermediate distances:**

*Bromham Mill to Stevington Cross 2.4 miles (3.8 km)*  
*Stevington Cross to Pavenham Main Street 2.0 miles (3.2 km)*  
*Pavenham Main Street to Oakley Memorial 1.9 miles (3.1 km)*  
*Oakley Memorial to Clapham Church 1.7 miles (2.8 km)*  
*Clapham Church to Bunyan's Statue in Bedford 2.8 miles (4.5 km)*  
*(The alternative route through Clapham is slightly shorter than using the main road).*

**Ascents/descents:** *total ascent 345 feet (105 m); total descent 360 feet (110 m)*

**Total walking time:** *about 4 hours 45 minutes*

## **Places of interest on the route**

### ***Bromham Mill***

*In its early years, the mill provided the foundation for a self-sufficient community. The river not only powered the machinery but was also full of fish and eels. There was a blacksmith's shop next door to the mill; and pigs were reared on apples from the orchard and sweepings of grain and flour from the floor. Traditionally, the millers made gear teeth out of apple wood, which was always available from the orchard. Today, after restoration in 1980, the Mill once again grinds flour; and it has become a centre of activity where local artists and crafts people can teach new skills to a new generation.*

### ***Stevington***

*Stevington was a centre of non-conformist preaching in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries: Baptist activities were allowed within five miles of Bedford and the village fell just inside the limit. There is a Baptist Chapel at the west end of the village. The Gothic column of grey stone known as Stevington Cross, at the crossroads in the centre of Stevington, dates from mediaeval times and may have been in Bunyan's mind when he was writing about Christian's burden falling from his back and rolling down into the holy sepulchre. The independent church in Stevington may well have adopted this association during the years of persecution they suffered.*

*The village church of St Mary the Virgin lies down Church Road from the cross. Here Bunyan is said to have rested in a straight-backed mediaeval chair of solid oak after his five-mile walk from Bedford. To the right of the church gate, a track bears off to the left after about 55 yards (50 m) and leads after another 55 yards (50 m) to a man-made arch on the left which covers an open spring known as "The Holy Well" (possibly Bunyan's sepulchre). The water bubbles up from beneath the church grounds and is said never to freeze or to dry up. During the summer, this area is covered with large rhubarb-like plants called Butterbur as their leaves were once used to wrap butter. In 2013 the ancient tradition of well dressing was revived: long may this tradition continue and as in the past bring pilgrims to the well.*

*Beyond the spring, the footpath continues across the meadows to the Great Ouse, less than two-thirds of a mile (1 km) away. It was here, in the security of a secluded spot protected by trees and brambles and known as "The Holmes Wood", that John Bunyan would sometimes preach and where the early Baptists from Stevington independent church, founded in 1655, would baptise their converts. A farm nearby is still called Meeting Farm.*

**Terrain notes:** *On clay soil and following the River Great Ouse for part of the way, the route can be muddy in places, and between Stevington and Pavenham subject to flooding.*

## **THE WALK: JOURNEY'S END**

*Leave Bromham Mill by going across the Car Park and through a gap into a field. Turn left and continue to a gate leading into Millfield and turn right. Continue over Bromham Brook through another gate into Bromham Park. Follow the path straight ahead aiming for a thatched cottage with a prominent black cross on its white wall.*

The cottage now known as Beauty Cottage is by the vehicular entrance for St Owen Church users. Go through the gate and turn right along Village Road, passing the Old School, Baptist Church and Village Hall to reach Molliver's Lane. Turn left along Molliver's Lane and continue ahead, first to where the road ends, then on a broad path along a field edge to a junction of paths. At the junction, continue ahead with the path bearing slightly to the right, as it crosses the field, and drops down to cross the disused railway track. Cross the railway track and continue down the slope to a footpath sign. Turn left and follow the obvious track in the direction of Stevington Windmill. Where the track to the windmill joins from the left, turn right towards the road. At the road, turn left and continue into the village until reaching Stevington Cross.

At the Cross turn right down Church Road passing Stevington Manor and Manor Farm before reaching St Mary's Church. Follow the path down the slope bearing left at the fork and keeping close to the church wall. (The path passes "The Holy Well", see above). Go through a kissing gate and continue ahead through several kissing gates, with the hedge on the left and fields down to the river on the right, finally turning left when the wood is almost reached. Follow the path and turn right through a kissing gate along the edge of the wood and through another kissing gate into a field. Turn right and continue downhill and through a gate and follow the obvious track to a gate into a field. Bear left across the field following the waymarks to reach a bridge. Cross the bridge and follow the river (after negotiating this usually wet section). After a short distance, as the waymark indicates, climb to the top of the bank and continue along the hedge. Continue to follow the direction of the river, crossing a stile before reaching a gate into woodland and then uphill to a gate leading into Mill Lane. Continue along Mill Lane into the village of Pavenham and when it joins the High Street turn right.

Proceed to the Old School and turn right by the footpath sign. At the end of the path, turn left and follow the field edge in a clockwise direction (left) until reaching a kissing gate. Through the gate, turn left and follow the edge of the field to a stile. After crossing the stile bear left aiming for the corner of the field and cattle pens to the right of the main farm path. Pass through the gate and follow the obvious path to another gate and then on a track between the trees eventually giving way to open fields. Continue with the hedge boundary on the right eventually reaching an open space with a footpath sign indicating a right turn on to open access land. (Current

footpath sign on ground broken, so look for the bridge). (The Bunyan Trail shown on the map continues ahead to the road where it turns right and follows the road to Oakley. The open access land is fairly recent and saves a potentially nasty stretch of road walking, rejoining the original trail on the road by the bridge over the river, Stafford Bridge). Turn right and cross into the field using the bridge. Turn left and continue in an almost straight line across the field to a gate then up to the road by Stafford Bridge over the River Great Ouse. Follow the road up the hill to the cross-roads. The Memorial is on the left.

At the crossroads, with the Memorial on the left, cross the High Street and continue ahead along Station Road. At some convenient place cross Station Road and continue (now with the road on the right) to a bridleway sign on the left. Turn left and cross the bridge over the railway and through a gate into the field. Turn right and continue along this path, with the hedge and railway on the right, through a kissing gate to reach a gate near a roundabout. Continue through the gate, turn right to cross the road then turn left towards the bridge over the A6 Clapham Bypass. Cross the bridge and at the roundabout keep ahead across the road to a gate. Go through the gate down the path which contours the houses on the right onto a green and keeping the fencing to the right cross the green and on to a path leading to a pedestrian crossing over Milton Road. Cross then turn right and continue along the path past the car sales showroom to a road named Mount Pleasant. At the road there are two options Option 1: (Shown on the OS map). Continue along the High Street past the shopping parade and the Ursula Taylor Lower School on the left. Turn left just past the school along a path leading to St Thomas a Beckett Church. At the church turn right towards the gate and along the tree lined drive to the road, then turn left and continue on an uphill path to a junction of four roads and turn right along the private road Carriage Drive. (Option 2: Bear left cross Mount Pleasant onto a narrow path and continue ahead ignoring any roads on to reach a path between the allotments and further on, with the dog exercise field then the playing field on the right, to reach a road. Continue ahead towards what appears to be a dead end and, at the hedge, turn left then right into a field. Continue along the field edge path gradually climbing to a gate and a junction of four roads. Continuing slightly right cross two roads and left along the private road Carriage Drive.)

Continue ahead and, after passing the gate house to the former convent, Clapham Park, where the tarmac road bears left, keep right towards the trees and turn right

at a path junction into Clapham Park. Continue ahead across a field to a gate and, after descending through the trees, then start to ascend with industrial units to the right, and further on allotments to the left, to reach an open space and the road (Brickhill Drive). Cross the road and continue along a path and down Cemetery Hill. At the bottom bear left into Bedford Park and right along the park path passing the Sports Pavilion on the left and Swimming Pool on the right to reach the Park Gates. Turn right, cross the road into De Parys Avenue and continue to the end. St Peter's Church and St Peter's Green are on the left and the statue of John Bunyan on the corner by the traffic lights.

## JOHN BUNYAN'S DEATH

*John Bunyan died in London ("The Celestial City") on 31 August 1688, aged 60, after catching a fever when riding from Reading to London in heavy rain and violent winds. He arrived at the home of his friend and fellow Dissenter, John Strudwick, on Snow Hill, Holborn, drenched to the skin and feeling unwell. Despite his continuing weakness, he insisted on preaching the following Sunday in Petticoat Lane; and he died a few days later. He was interred in the Strudwick family vault in the Dissenters' burial ground at Bunfield Fields in City Road, London. When Bunyan's Bedford congregation heard the news, they were grief stricken and spent Wednesday 4 September 1688 and the following Wednesday in "prayer and humiliation". The passage of three centuries of time has shown that Bunyan's influence, whether conscious or not, still helps us in the journey of life that we all have to undertake.*

## TIMELINE

- 1625 Accession of King Charles I
- 1628 Birth of John Bunyan at Elstow
- 1642 Outbreak of (First) English Civil War
- 1644 Bunyan joins the Parliamentary army garrison at Newport Pagnell
- 1647 Bunyan returns to Elstow
- 1648 First marriage (to Mary?)
- 1649 Charles I executed. Commonwealth proclaimed
- 1650 Birth of Bunyan's blind daughter, Mary
- 1653 Bunyan joins the Independent congregation at St John's Church, Bedford
- 1653 Oliver Cromwell becomes Lord Protector
- 1655 Bunyan family living in St Cuthbert's Street, Bedford
- 1658 Death of Bunyan's first wife
- 1658 Death of Oliver Cromwell
- 1659 Bunyan's second marriage, to Elizabeth
- 1660 Restoration of Charles II. Bunyan arrested near Harlington.
- 1660 Charles II becomes patron of the Royal Society, the motto of the society being "take no one's word for it".
- 1661 Bunyan imprisoned in county gaol, Bedford (from age 32 to age 44)
- 1665 Great Plague at its height
- 1666 Great Fire of London
- 1667 Milton's *Paradise Lost* published
- 1670 Charles II grants the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Bedford a private charter to establish a fruit and vegetable market in Covent Garden
- 1672 Bunyan released from gaol, following the Declaration of Indulgence issued by Charles II
- 1677 Bunyan imprisoned for a further six months
- 1678 Publication of *The Pilgrim's Progress, part I, price 18d (7.5p)*

- 1685 Publication of *The Pilgrim's Progress, part II*.
- 1685 Accession of James II
- 1688 Bunyan dies in London and is buried in Bunhill Fields, City Road.
- 1689 William and Mary are enthroned after the "Glorious Revolution"
- 1689 The Toleration Act gives legal status to non-conformist meeting places

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Various on-line sources describe parts of the Trail but none are comprehensive.

## **ABOUT THE NATIONAL RAMBLERS**

The Ramblers (formerly The Ramblers' Association) is Britain's biggest charity promoting walking. It aims to improve enjoyment of the countryside by all walkers in terms of accessibility, attractiveness, ease of use and safety. With 108,000 members in England, Scotland and Wales, the organisation has been working for ramblers for 80 years and is determined to make Britain a place where people can enjoy walking in the countryside, whether it be on gentle paths or challenging hillsides. Members receive quarterly national and regional magazines and are assigned to a local group of Ramblers organising walks in their area.

The Ramblers organisation believes that one very important aspect of walking is that it contributes to health and well-being; and it promotes walking for health and leisure for all ages, backgrounds and abilities, in both rural and urban areas. It also campaigns for good local transport links to enable ramblers to reach start points.

Local footpath officers appointed by the local Ramblers' groups comment on planning proposals and attend public consultations and inquiries to present the views of walkers. New rights of access to the countryside are the result of a long and hard-fought campaign by Ramblers, ever since the mass trespass on Kinder Scout in the thirties. While such measures are not necessary today, it is important to remember that if proposals to divert or extinguish paths are not subject to scrutiny by organisations such as Ramblers, they go by default and once a path is lost, it's usually lost for good.

Ramblers also work to secure new national parks and coastal walks, to protect wild land, to promote public transport and in general to protect the beauty of the countryside and encourage an environmentally and sustainable way of life.



## **COUNTRYSIDE CODE**

### **Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs**

Even when going out locally, it is best to get the latest information about where and when you can go; for example, your rights to go onto some areas of open land may be restricted while work is carried out, for safety reasons, or during the breeding season. Follow advice and local signs, and be prepared for the unexpected.

Leave gates and property as you find them

Please respect the working life of the countryside, as our actions can affect people's livelihoods, our heritage, and the safety and welfare of animals and ourselves.

### **Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home**

We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure that you don't harm animals, birds, plants or trees.

### **Keep dogs under close control**

The countryside is a great place to exercise dogs, but it is every owner's duty to make sure their dog is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, wildlife and other people.

### **Consider other people**

Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone - at home, at work and at leisure.

## **SAFETY WHEN WALKING**

### **A few simple rules to ensure your safety**

Always park in a safe place; do not leave valuables on display in your car.

If you walk alone, let someone know your plan.

Wear sensible clothing for the conditions, ie stout shoes or boots with a good grip and waterproof clothing in wet conditions. In hot weather wear a hat, use sun cream and take plenty to drink.

Some of the walks involve short distances on roads; take extra care to look and listen for traffic, even on the quietest lane.