

The  
British  
Horse  
Society

# Warren Ride

4½ miles from Steppingley/Millbrook

(option to shorten to 3½ or to extend to 12 miles)



Explore Greensand Country on horseback



# Greensand Country

## An area of distinct, beautiful and loved countryside

### Warren Ride

A short circuit around the woods of Millbrook Warren, now home to a Center Parcs holiday village – the route essentially follows the perimeter of this recent development. All off road though with one zebra crossing at the entrance to Center Parcs. Can be extended to 12 miles by also riding the Bluebell ride.

There is a small parking area at the bottom of the byway in Steppingley (point 1 on the map) – please park well to the side and do not obstruct farm access. (w3w:///plantings.demoted.intruders). This is not suitable for lorries.

Parking is also available by arrangement for a small fee at Woburn Forest Park & Ride, MK45 2HZ (across Fordfield Road from point 7) which will be more suitable for larger vehicles. (w3w:///flattery.reclaimed.starlight) Call Steph on 07775 663399 or book via Facebook. There is a short section of road to ride to access the route.



### Points of interest around the Warren Ride

There is mention of Millbrook Warren dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A Warren was an enclosed piece of land set aside to manage rabbits for the lord of the manor, usually by a Warrener who was to ensure a regular supply for the lord's table. Sometimes pillow mounds were constructed for the rabbits to burrow in but this was unnecessary on the naturally hummocky greensand heathland.

Warrens were generally open land, but in 1803 Millbrook Warren was enclosed and divided up. Several individual portions, about half the area, were then planted up with conifers by the Bedford Estate before 1812. The remaining areas between were turned over to coniferous plantation between 1900 and 1924 to create dense continuous coverage.



Credit: Mark Anderson



As you turn off the byway, on your right is the intriguingly named "Moneyplot Hill" – the origins of this name are now not known but it's fun to imagine ...

The byway marks the curving former boundary of the Beckerings Park medieval deer park, a sizable tract of land enclosed within a park pale which can trace its origins back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and which was utilised for the breeding and hunting of deer.

Along the northern part of the route, the bridleway passes the WWI Bedfordshire Training Depot practice trenches, laid out in a zig-zag format. Recruits dug the trench complex which was used to help prepare soldiers for the Front. More information about this can be found at [www.tommysfootprints.com](http://www.tommysfootprints.com)



Tommys Footprints

In the woods you will see many grey squirrels. Introduced from the USA around the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the grey squirrel is now widespread in most of the British Isles and still spreading. Grey squirrels are primarily animals of deciduous woodland, and are dependent upon the large seeds of such trees as oak, beech, hazel, sweet chestnut and walnut.



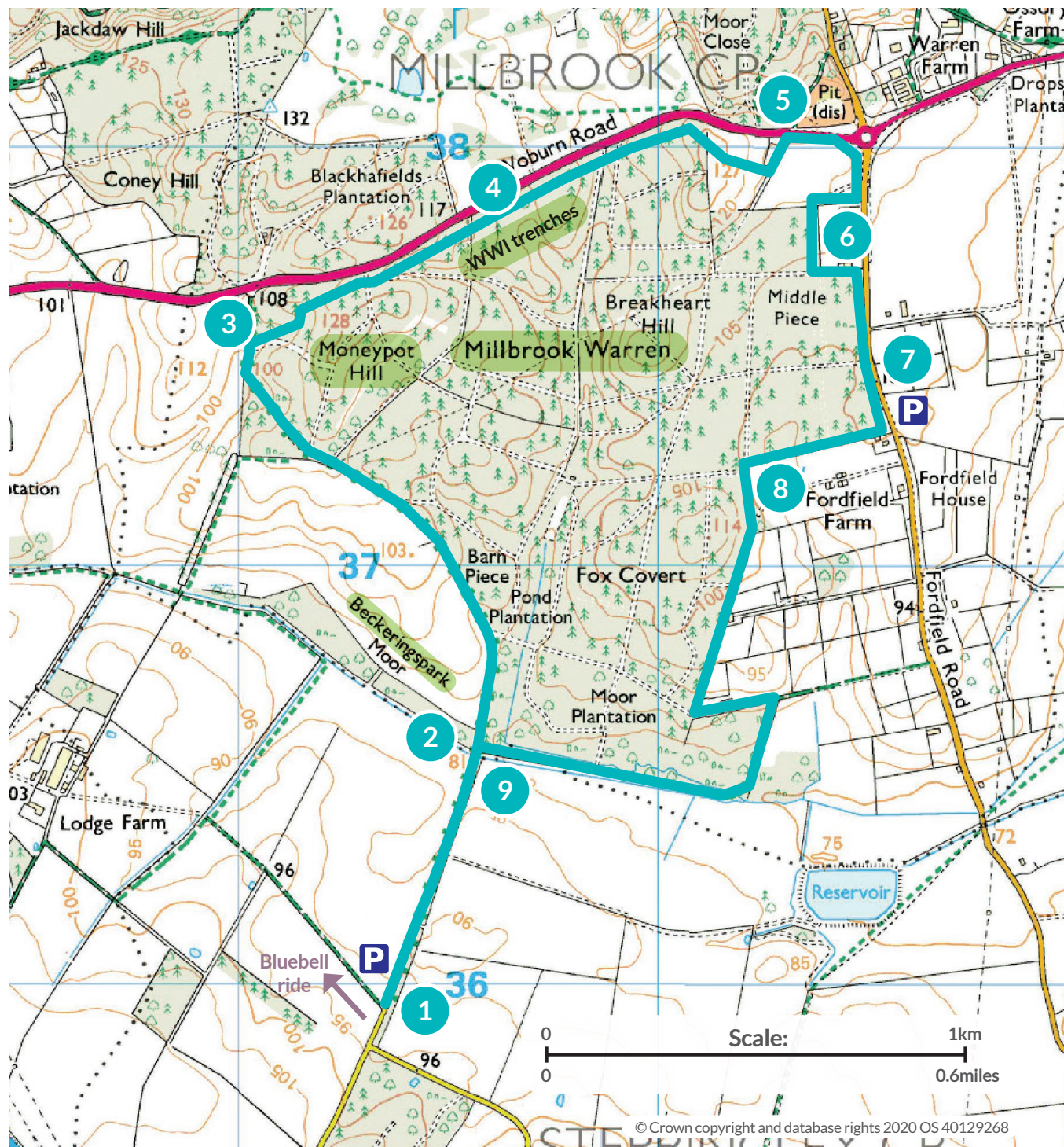
This invasive non-native species has contributed to the decline of the native red squirrel and is regarded by many as a pest. But they are fun to watch as they scamper across the woodland floor and

up tree trunks, disappearing into dreys or jumping from branch to branch. The grey squirrel has a silver-grey coat, with a brownish face and feet, and pale underside. It has a characteristically bushy tail.

There is also a possibility that you might see a black squirrel, which are found in a ribbon across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. The debate as to whether these are mutant grey squirrels or a further import for the USA continues.

### Off-road cyclists

This route is also suitable for off-road cyclists but please remember that cyclists should give way to walkers and horses. Please pass other users slowly and with consideration. Be nice, say hi!



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*The route is popular with walkers and cyclists as well as horse riders, please make sure you ride with consideration for other users and adapt your speed to the conditions and the distance you can see along the route. Also note that the section between points 1 and 3 is a byway open to all traffic so you may encounter motor vehicles and motor bikes.*

- 1 From the parking area in the byway head north up the track away from road.
- 2 After about half a mile you will see a metal dropped horse 'hop' gate on your right. Continue straight ahead on the byway.
- 3 After another three quarters of a mile, turn right on to bridleway, over another 'hop' gate. You are following the Center Parcs perimeter bridleway in a clockwise direction.
- 4 Follow this track through the woods, parallel to the A507 for another three quarters of a mile. You will pass the remains of the WWI trenches on this section.
- 5 After you emerge from the woods, turn left at a crossroad junction and follow the track around to the right, past a pegasus crossing over the A507. Keep following this track.
- 6 The route goes around three sides of a commercial business, by turning right and then left twice and then right.
- 7 Take care as you cross the zebra crossing at the entrance to Center Parcs – visitors are not always horse aware.

- 8 Turn left and keep following the track around Fordfield Farm. You may well encounter pigs as the track turns right at the bottom of the hill, on the other side of the farm fence. Shortly after, take the righthand track continuing down the hill and over a bridge - keep following the track until you reach the 'hop' gate at 2.

- 9 Turn left here and return to the parking area.

## Extending or shortening your ride

*From point 1, you can join the Bluebell Ride (7 ½ miles) by turning right towards Lodge Farm. [www.greensandcountry.com/explore/horse-riding](http://www.greensandcountry.com/explore/horse-riding) either as an extension to this ride or on another day!*

*If you have parked at Woburn Forest Park & Ride, cross Fordfield Road with great care, and turn left onto the bridleway, following directions from 7. At 9, turn right and follow the directions from 3. As you will not be riding the section from the southern parking spot to the hop gate and back, the ride distance is reduced to about 3 ½ miles (unless of course you turn left at 9 and ride the Bluebell route as well, increasing the ride distance to 12 miles).*

# Horse Riding Routes in Greensand Country

The dry, sandy soil of Greensand Country is ideal for horses and hacking and the landscape is covered with grassy paddocks and riding stables. There's a good network of bridleways many of which, especially on the top of the ridge, are dry and mud-free even in the middle of winter.

## More Information

We have also prepared an overview leaflet about the Horse riding routes in Greensand Country which includes

- Information about the other routes
- Tips to help you keep yourself and your horse safe and to make the most of your ride
- Places for you and your horse to stay in Greensand Country

This information, together with the other route leaflets and .gpx files of the routes, can be downloaded from the website [www.greensandcountry.com/explore/horse-riding](http://www.greensandcountry.com/explore/horse-riding)



Look out for these signs as you ride the route – the route is marked only in the direction described and not in the reverse direction.

**What3words:** Download this app to your smartphone to help you find locations and to tell others (vets, emergency services, friends) where you are. Each 3m square in the world has been assigned a unique 3 word address that will never change.

### Emergency Vet contacts:

Please note that out of hours you may be directed to call another number

Buckingham Equine Vets, Maulden **01525 861995** (6 miles from start)

Meadowbrook Equine Clinic, Luton Hoo **0845 296 6675** (15 miles)

Chiltern Equine, Bury Farm, Slapton **01525 222099** (16 miles)

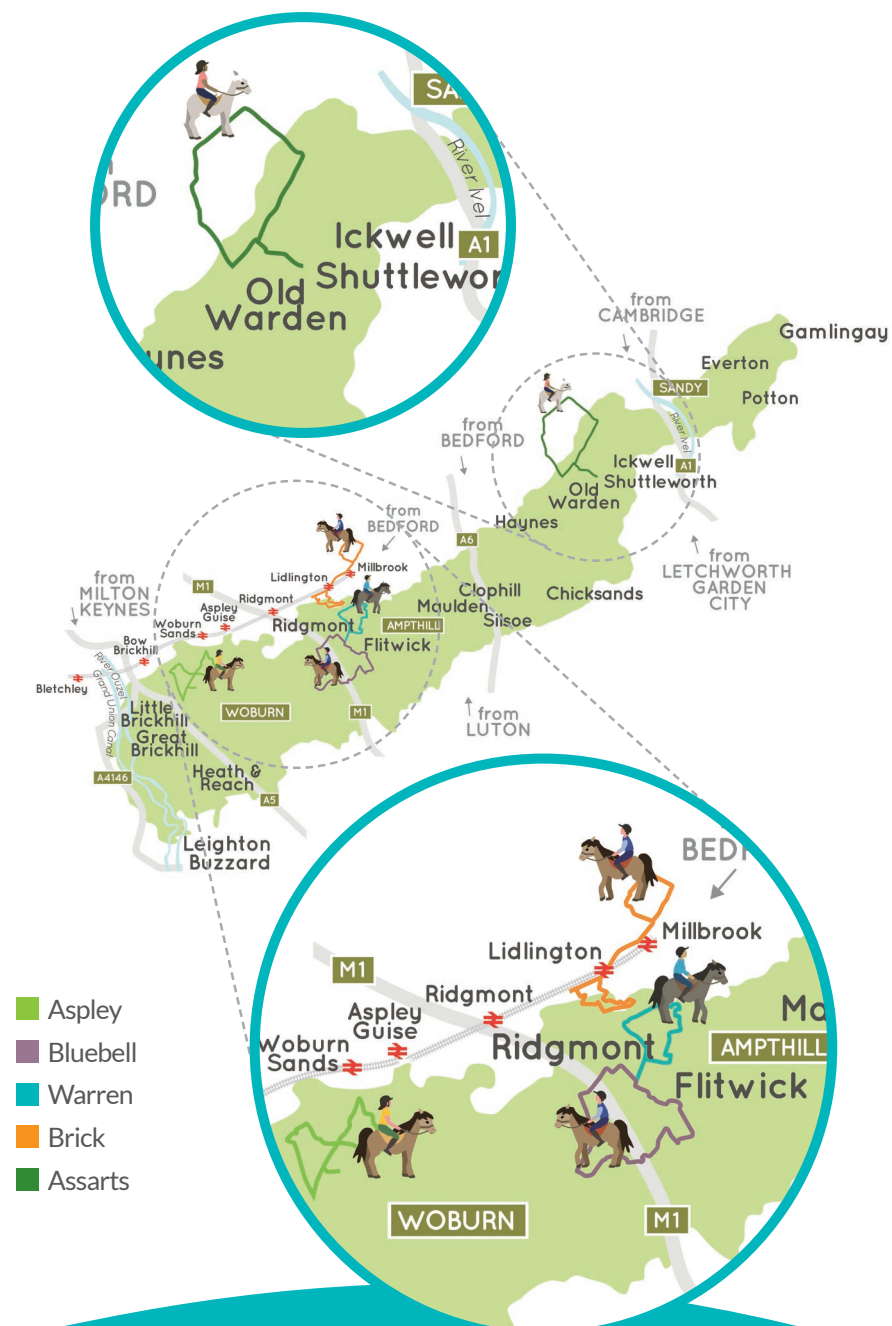


Charity number :  
210504



All distances are approximate  
Cover photo: PJB Photography

Version 1



Get involved: [greensandcountry.com](http://greensandcountry.com)

