



Have yourself a Greensand Country cycling adventure

Greensand Country Cycleways: **Forest Way**

This route begins on the Greensand Ridge and descends the steep north facing scarp slope on to the flat terrain of the Bedford plain joining the river terraces of the River Great Ouse, before climbing again to ridge. The ride passes through countryside typical of Bedfordshire including the landscapes which are a legacy of the former brick making industry, and the major valley of the Ouse which has an active sand and gravel extraction industry. The latter part of the route returns to the well wooded and peaceful countryside of the Greensand Country.

Before departing from the car park at Ampthill Great Park it is worth a short walk to the top of the Greensand Ridge to take in the view across the Bedfordshire countryside. The Park has a long history which includes the site of a former castle where Henry VIII imprisoned Catherine of Aragon during a prolonged divorce proceeding, and many landscape features from the parkland designs of Capability Brown. The Greensand Ridge Way, a long-distance walking route crosses the Park making use of the high ground of the ridge summit.

Key facts:

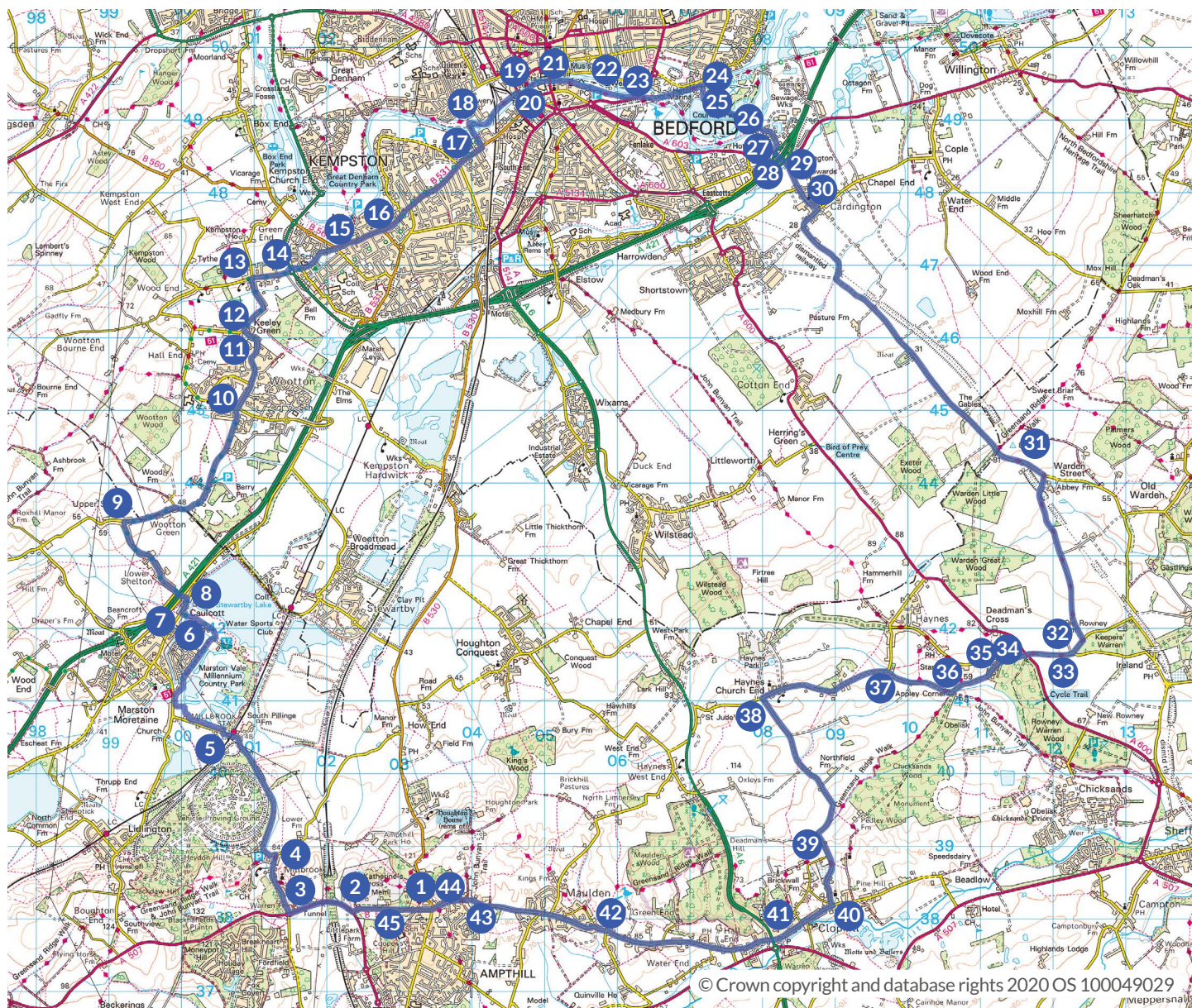
Route marker:

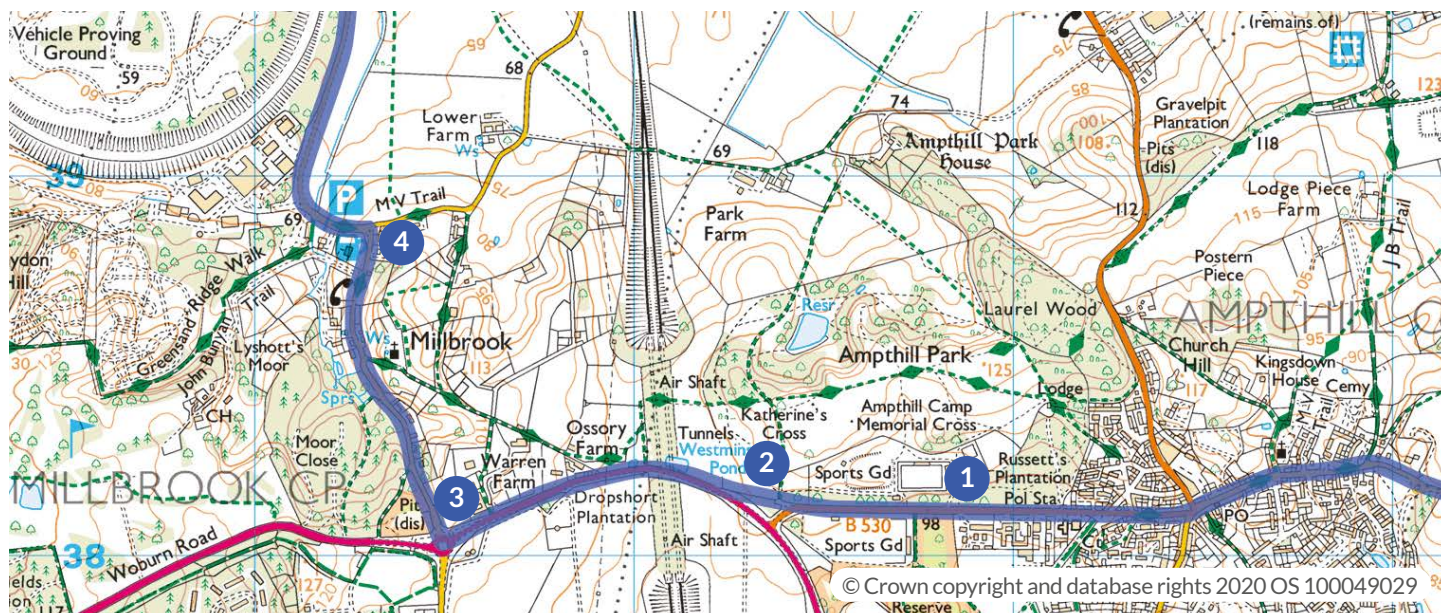


Length:	28 miles (46km)
Route type:	On road
Options:	None. Can use links to other routes
Links to other routes:	Greensand Cycleway, Stone Way, Abbey Way, Vale Way, Thatcher's Way, Ampthill-Flitwick Leisure, National Cycle Route 51
Terrain:	Up & down. Four steep hills going up and one going down if ridden clockwise
Sites:	Cardington airship sheds
Car park:	Ampthill Park, MK45 2GU Priory Country Park, Bedford. MK41 9DJ
Train station:	Millbook station, Marston Vale Line
OS Explorer maps: (Orange 1:25,000)	193 & 208



Route map





- 1 Start the ride from the eastern car park in Ampthill Park and turn right onto the shared cycle path alongside the B530 Ampthill Road.
- 2 Keep right and stay on this path and cycle alongside the A507.

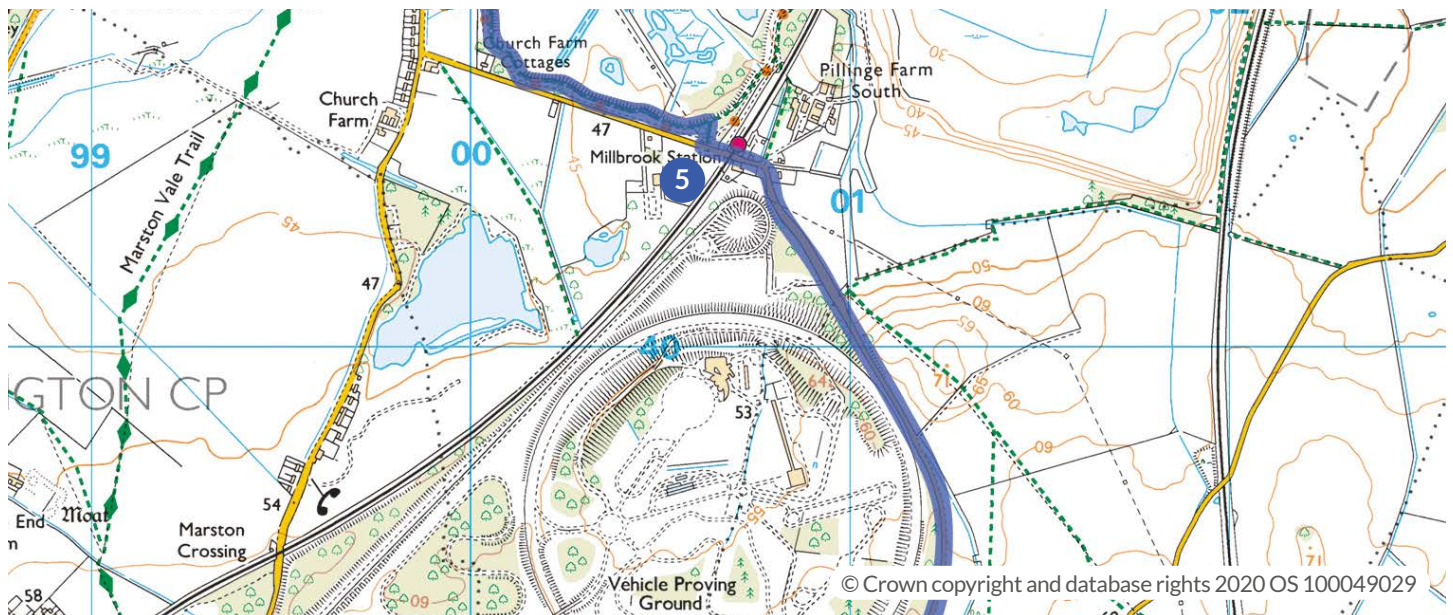
Millbrook

The right turn to Millbrook leads to steep descent through the village. This steep hill is a landscape feature, which was familiar to John Bunyan who used many of these topographic markers in his 17th c book, *The Pilgrims Progress*. This hill clearly made an impact on Bunyan who described this area using the biblical reference as, the Valley of Death.

- 3 At the Millbrook roundabout turn right and down the hill into the attractive village of Millbrook (be aware of the speed humps all the way through the village). Cycle past St Michael & All Angels church on your right and then past the Chequers PH, also on your right.
- 4 Turn left at the T-junction and head down the short, steep hill, around the right-hand bend and past the entrance to Millbrook Technology Park. Follow the road around several bends and straights and carefully cross over the level crossing (when safe to do so) at Millbrook Station.

Millbrook Vehicle Testing Track

At the bottom of this steep hill, on the left, is the Millbrook Vehicle Testing Track which makes use of the undulating and steep land of the ridge scarp face to engineer both a fast speed circuit for road cars and a challenging off road route for all terrain vehicles. The cycle route has now left the higher land of the sandstone ridge and winds through the flat and much.



- 5 Then follow NCR51 through The Forest Centre, part of the Marston Vale Millennium Country Park.



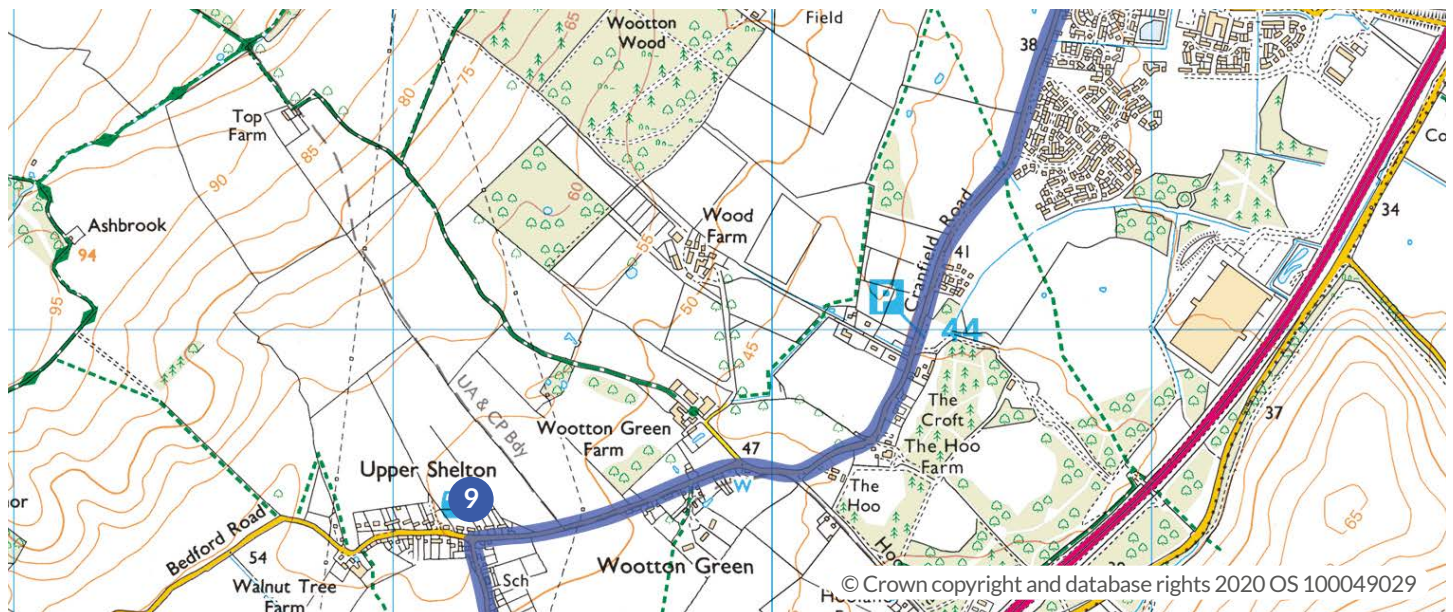
Marston Vale Country Park

Marston Vale Country Park is an amenity which is enjoyed by many visitors throughout Bedfordshire. The Country Park is one element of an ambitious plan to reforest much of the area scarred by extraction of brick making clay during the 20th century leaving large water filled pits and a post-industrial landscape. The Millennium Forest is slowly taking shape across this wet clay land and also expanding to plant new trees on the surrounding slopes, and manage existing older woods.





- 6 Follow the cyclepath/subway until it leaves the park
- 7 Turn right
- 8 Turn left and go under the A421 to Lower Shelton. Continue through Lower Shelton then into Upper Shelton then past Shelton Lower Shelton School.



- 9 Turn right at the T-junction and onto Upper Shelton Road. Continue along this road and into the hamlet of Wootton Green. Continue past Hoo Farm, on the right. The road then becomes Cranfield Road and enters the village of Wootton.

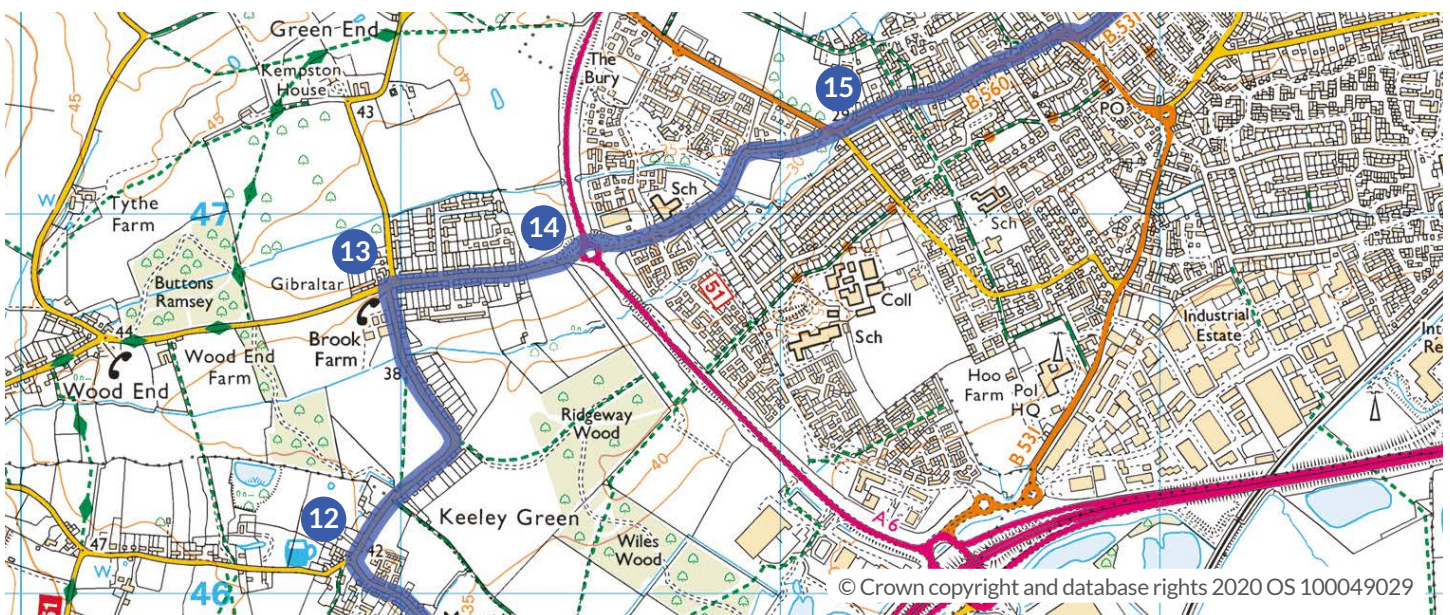
Bricks

As the route approaches the village of Wootton there is an opportunity to take in the transformation of the former brick-making landscape. Land on the right is being re-wooded as part of the Millennium Forest, and the Vale is now dominated by the Covanta recycling facility with the tall red chimney which is a striking counterpoint to the surviving four brick chimneys which are reminders of the former brick making plant, at Stewartby.



10 Continue north through the village where the road becomes Bedford Road

11 Leave the village, round a sharp left-hand bend.



12 Bear right just past Brook Farm.

13 Turn right at the crossroads in Gibraltar.

- 14 At the roundabout on the A428 Bedford by-pass use the underpass to continue straight ahead. Follow Ridge Road and NCR51 into Kempston.
- 15 At the junction with Hill Rise turn right following NCR51.



Kempston

Kempston, now a satellite community for Bedford, has a long history both as a Roman and Saxon settlement. The presence of the Great Ouse, a large and navigable river, would have always made this an settlement attractive location. The modern Saxon shopping centre in the town is named after an archaeological site excavated in the 19c, which yielded Saxon pottery and remarkable glass vessels together with brooches, pins and buckles all of which are displayed in the Higgins Museum Bedford and a 5th century pottery urn which is in the British Museum collection. The estimate is that the site has hundreds of Saxon burials and cremations.

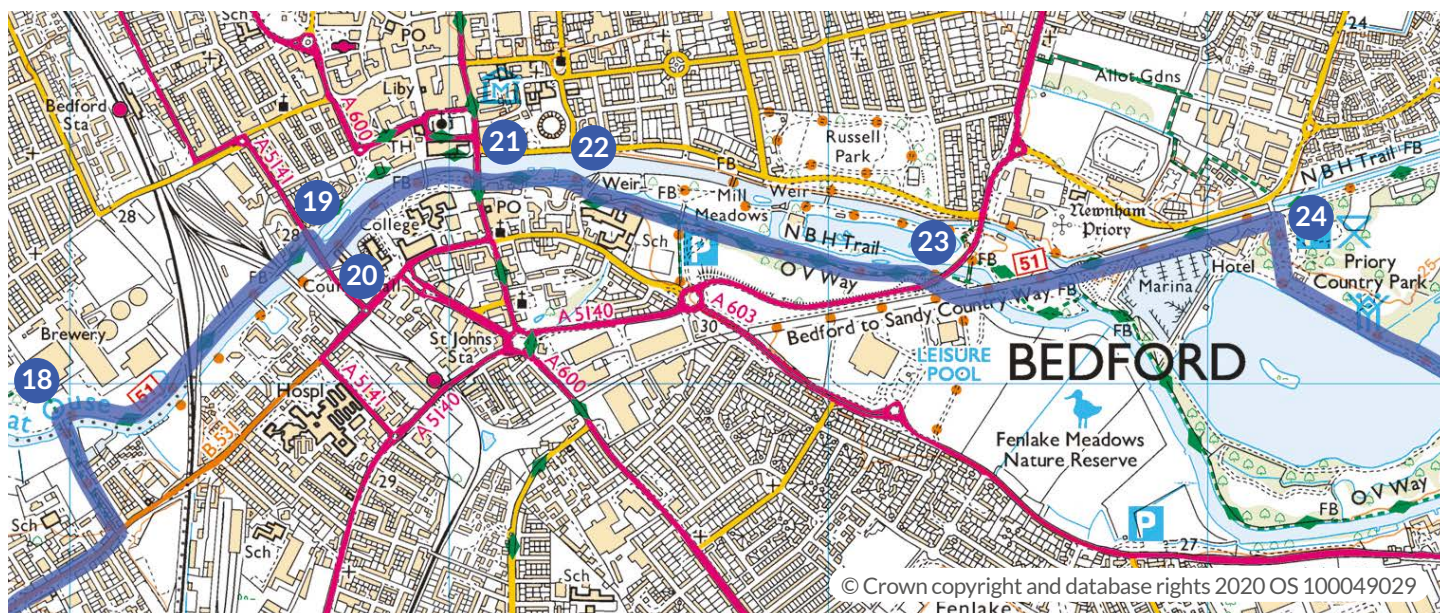


- 16 At the end of Hill Rise turn left and follow NCR51 until it rejoins Bedford Road by the supermarket.
- 17 Turn left off the road and onto the NCN cycle path (NCR51). Follow the path under trees and grassy areas and cross the Great Ouse river on the bridge. Immediately on the other side turn sharp right back on yourself (towards the river).



River Ouse

This crossing of the river near Kempston is a reminder of the importance of this location as bridging point. There has always been speculation on a ford and access to the river for the shipment of grain downstream as early as Roman times. What is clear is that the river was navigable to this point.



- 18 Then left on the cycle path following the river towards Bedford. Continue under the railway bridges then under the road bridge (Prebend Street).
- 19 Immediately after the bridge turn left and up the ramp to the road above. Then bear right and cross the river using the bridge.
- 20 Once over the river bear left down the ramp and onto the other bank, alongside Borough Hall. Go across the corner of the car park and get onto the cycle path and follow the river heading past Bedford College and its surrounding trees and parkland.
- 21 Continue under the bridge carrying St. Mary's Street overhead (look out for the low height of the arch and be aware that this cyclepath often floods during heavy rain) and past Bedford Rowing Club on your right. Now follow this lovely stretch of cycle path along the Great Ouse, its Embankment, mature trees and gardens.



Embankment & bridges

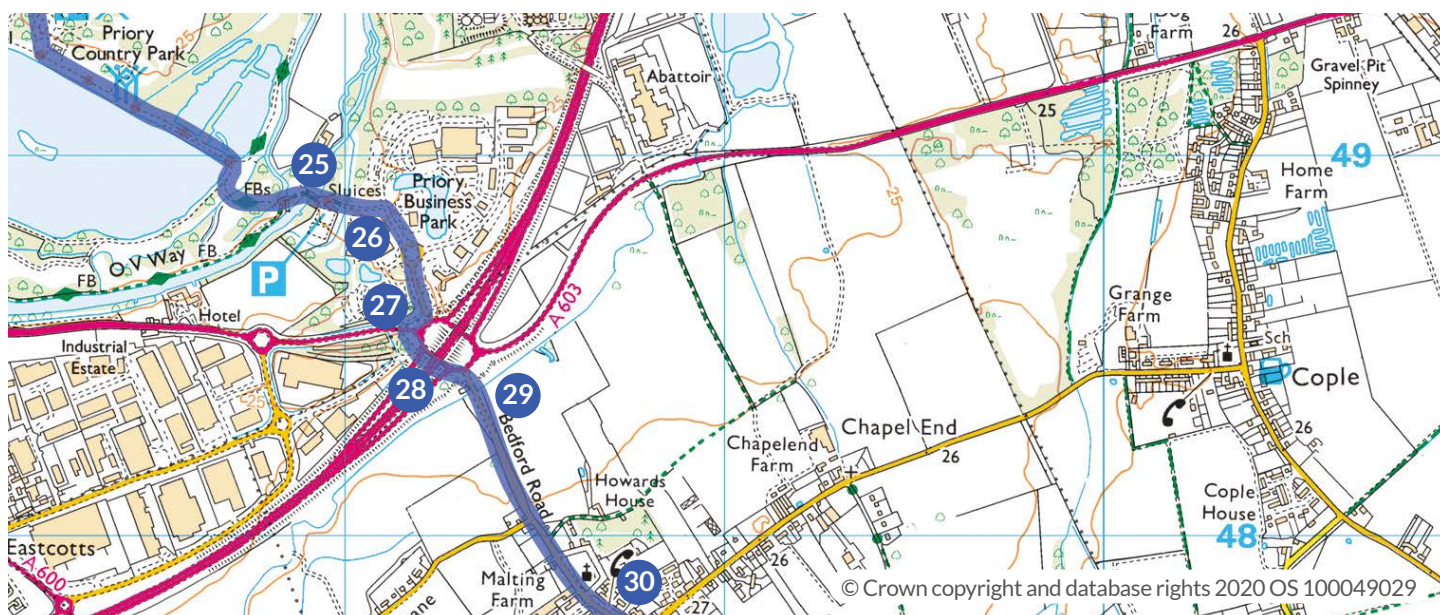
The ride now follows the south bank of Bedford Embankment linked to the north bank by a series of elegant pedestrian bridges. The latest, the Butterfly bridge, was opened in 1997 and the design has earned recognition in architectural and engineering circles.

- 22 Cross a weir using the bridge and continue through parkland. Over another bridge then past Bedford School Rowing Club, on your right. Go past the 'Butterfly Bridge' (on your left) and continue on the cycle path.
- 23 At the end of the boating lake turn right and under Longholme Way.
- 24 Bear right and over the narrow bridge over the river. At the entrance to the marina turn right. Follow the signs for Bedford Cycle Network route 17 and Green wheel to the side of the marina, turn left and follow the path to the river lock.



Priory Country Park

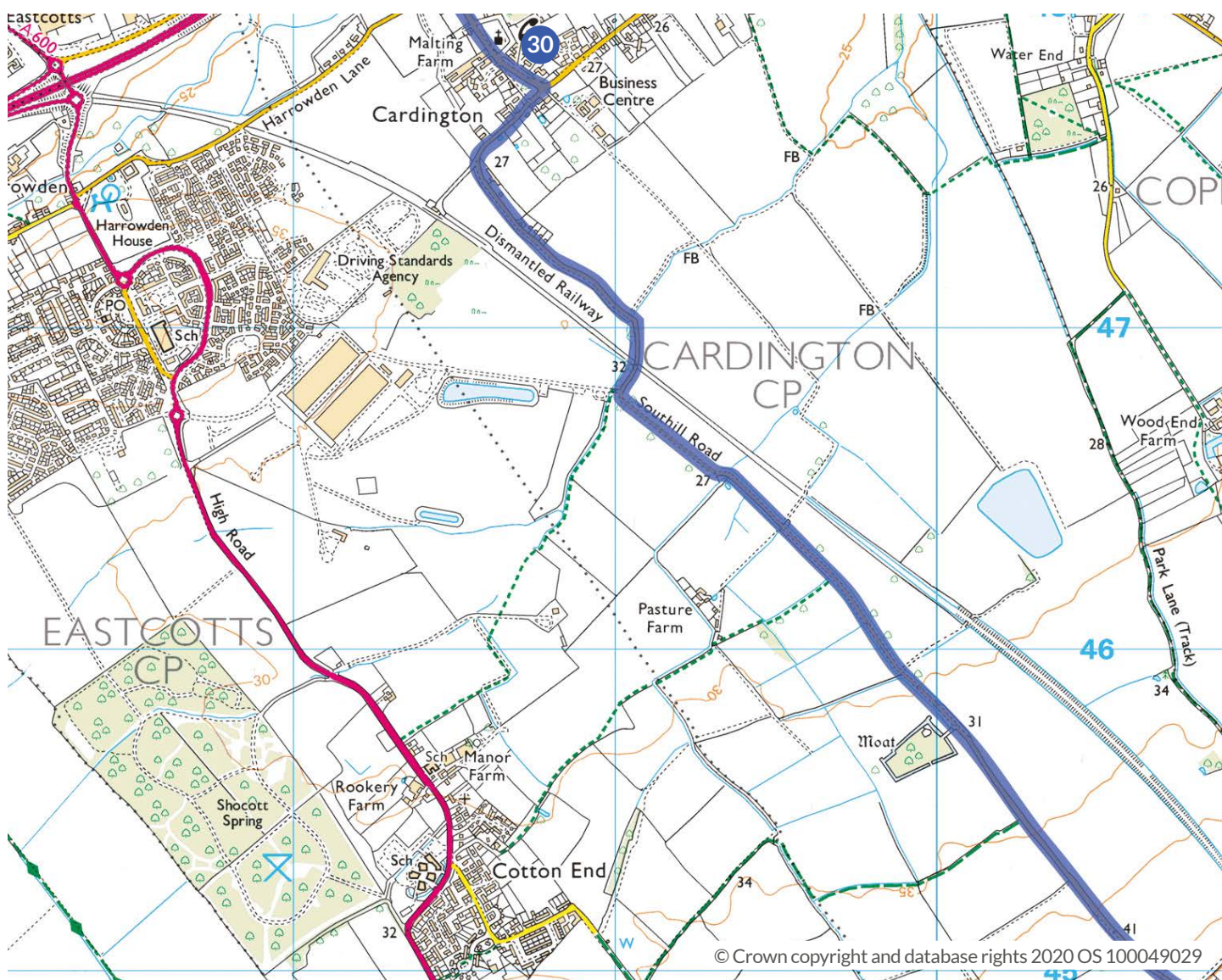
Priory Lake is another of Bedfordshire's Country Parks and has at its heart the large lake and marina, which has been created from former sand and gravel workings. The name is derived from the former Augustinian Newham Priory which existed adjacent to this site. The priory was founded in 1164 by Simon de Beuchamp and became rich thanks to significant land holdings and control over 14 local churches. A remnant of an enclosing wall of the priory is still standing along the western margin of the park.

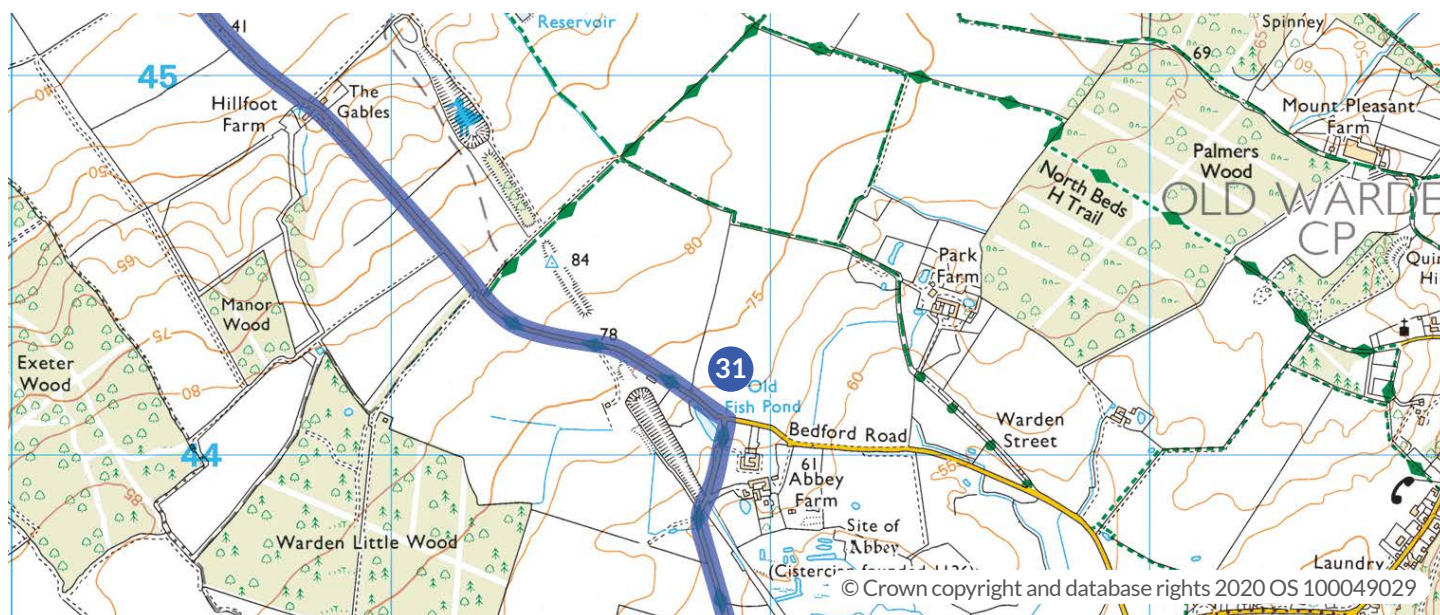


- 25 Keep on the cycle path and bear round to the right and over a small bridge on the river then onto a tarmaced road.
- 26 Bear right onto the cycle path just before Stannard Way. Follow the path along the verge and around the small roundabout and stay parallel to Stannard Way.
- 27 Bear right and use the controlled crossing to cross the busy A603 Cardington Road.
- 28 Keep left and cross (with care) the slip road coming off the A421. Stay on the cycle path/verge and cycle under the flyover bridge then cross carefully the other A421 slip road.
- 29 Head straight across the verge to cycle on the cycle path alongside Cardington Road and into the small village of Cardington, the home of airships and the famous airship sheds. Cycle past Cardington church and the Green.
- 30 At the T-junction turn right onto Southill Road. Continue through the village, past the charming clubhouse of the Bedfordshire Road Cycling Club (BRCC), round the left hand bend and past the unmistakable bulk of Cardington Airship Sheds on the right. Follow the road over a narrow steep bridge (crossing the old disused railway) and around several bends before a straight section then past Hillfoot Farm. Climb the steep hill and at the top the road becomes Bedford Road.

Airships

Exiting the village of Cardington, the route begins to leave the landscape of the River Ouse terraces and the steep scarp slope of the Greensand Ridge is directly in front. The flat land of the river terraces was ideal for airfields and the vast hangers close to the village of Shortstown on the right are one of the most recognisable in Bedfordshire. Built in 1915 by Short Brothers, the sheds or hangers were the base for the booming enterprise of constructing airships before the crash of the R101 in 1930 and the decision to dismantled the R100 in shed #2. The hangers have been the site of many recent interesting enterprises and are now partly used as sound stages and for film production.



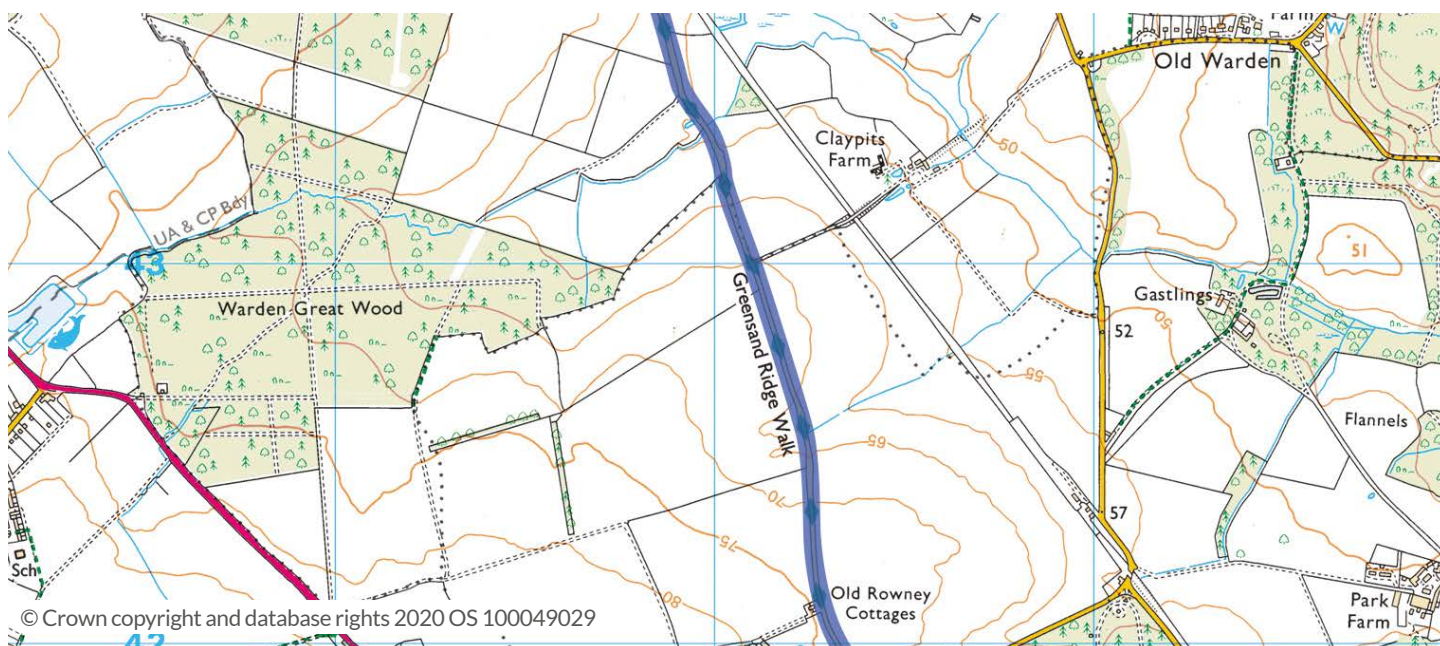


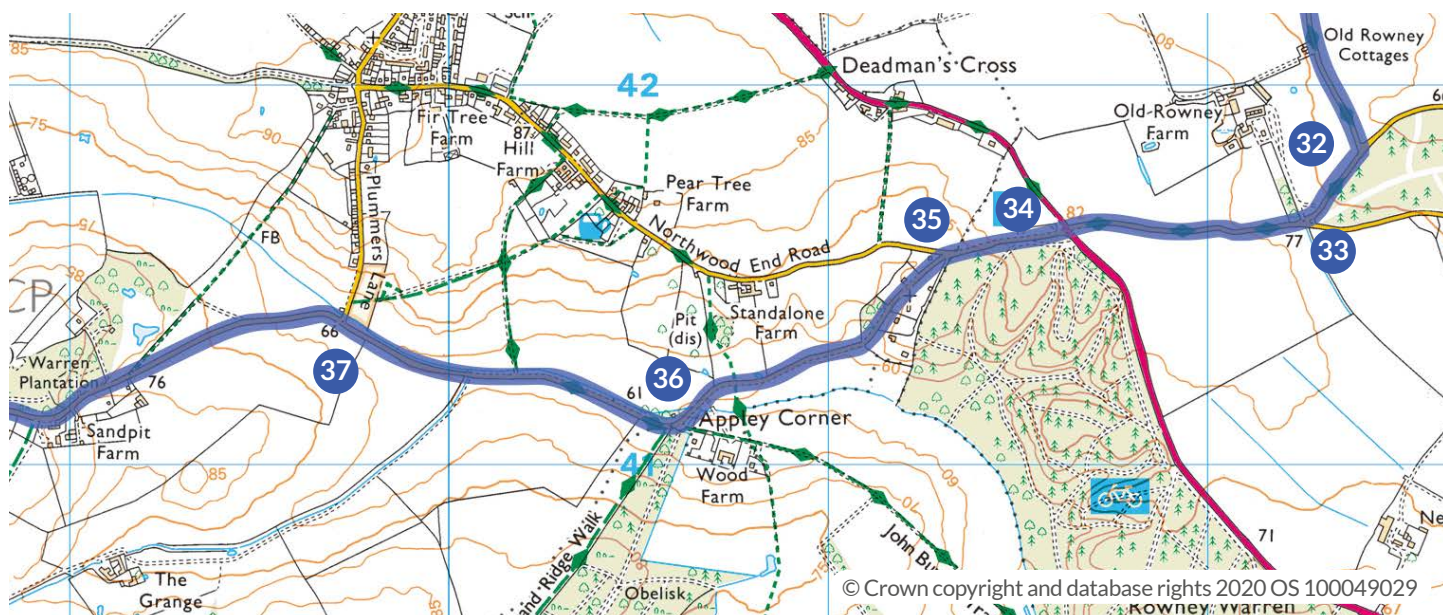
- 31** Just past the farm cottages (on the right) turn right down an unclassified lane (signposted to Haynes) and past the entrance to Abbey Farm. Continue along this quiet and narrow lane.



Warden Abbey

Hillfoot Farm marks the sharp transition from the Bedfordshire Plain to the Ridge and crosses the Greensand Ridge Way footpath. The route rises from 40 m above sea level to 80 in about one kilometre. Reaching Abbey Farm at a road junction offers a view of the site of the former Warden Abbey. The only remaining building is a Tudor fragment of a larger house built by John Gostwick who was gifted the land of the abbey after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s. The Cistercian Abbey was a substantial complex of buildings and traces of the former fish ponds, an important part of the medieval diet, can still be seen in the fields. Adjacent to the road junction is a small reservoir which is thought to be a relic of the header tank which fed these fish ponds.





- 32 At to the T-junction at the end where you turn right opposite the woodland of Keepers' Warren. Cycle along the road past the entrance to Old Rowney Farm.
- 33 Then bear right onto Standalone Warren. Continue on until you reach the cross roads and stop here.
- 34 Go straight across the A600 very carefully as this is a fast and busy road with bends. Once over the road cycle past Rowney Warren wood (with its popular off-road cycling courses).
- 35 Turn left along the lane and down through the wood with large scattered houses on either side.
- 36 Continue round a right hand bend and through Appley Corner; a small car park and the start of Chicksands Wood are on the left. Carry along the road (still called Standalone Warren).



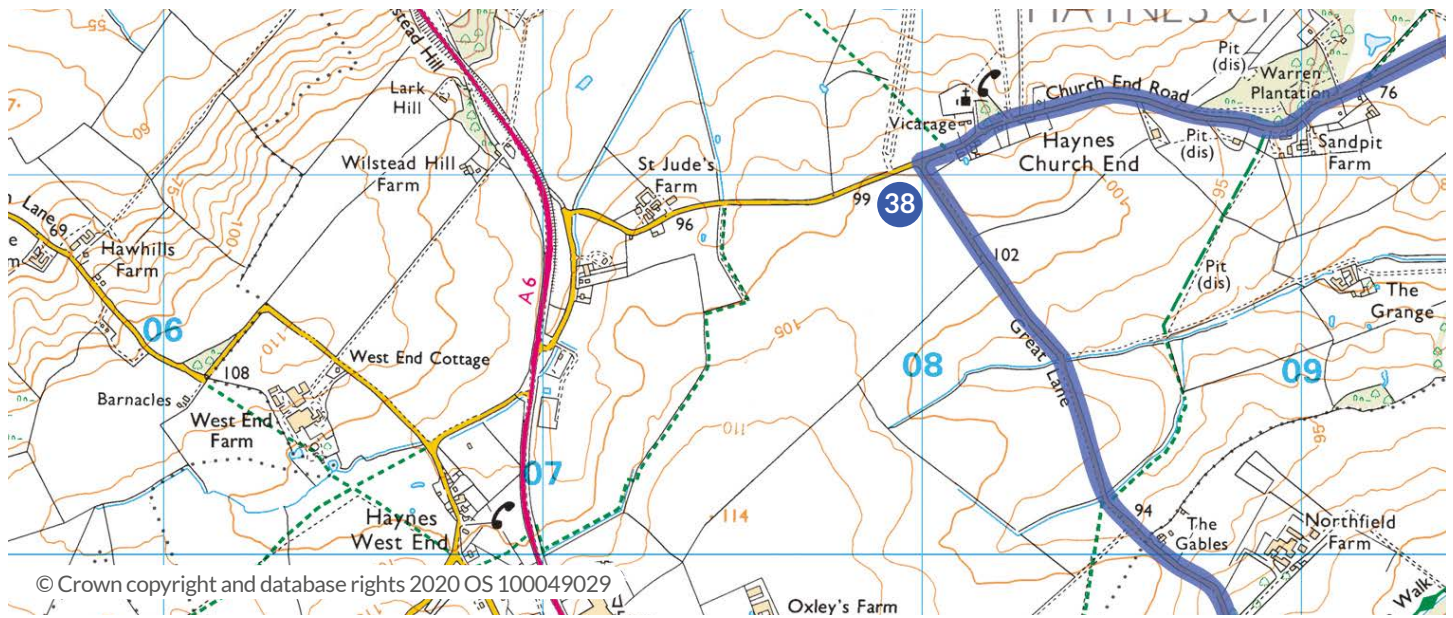
Rabbits & trees

Riding south the route crosses and re-crosses the dismantled rail way and runs beside the Keepers Warren until Appley Corner. At this point the Greensand Ridge footpath crosses the Bunyan Way, another of Bedfordshire long distance walking routes. This point is also the access to Chicksands Wood, one of the many areas of woodland which contains fragment of ancient forest. Sadly much of this wood was replanted with conifers in the 1950s. However, the woodland is still rich in butterflies. Formerly owned by the abbey at Chicksands now a MoD site, the wood supplied timber to reconstruct the lantern tower at Ely cathedral after the collapse of the Norman Tower in 1322. Logs were hauled to the River Ivel, floated to the Great Ouse and on to Ely.

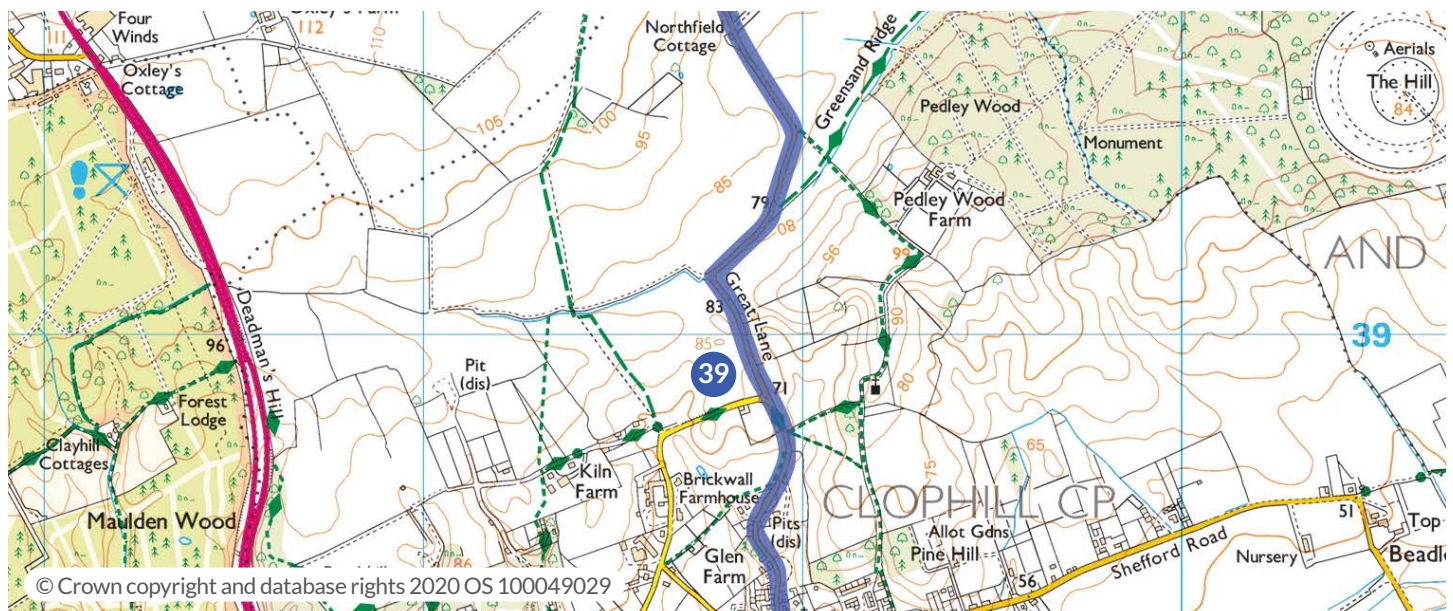
- 37 Go past Plummers Lane on your right. The road now becomes Church End Road and takes you through the small hamlet, or 'End' known as Haynes Church End. The church is St Mary the Virgin. Cycle past several attractive cottages and then after a while you cycle past the impressive landscape of Haynes Park with its attendant house on the right.

Haynes Park

Haynes Park on the right is one of the grand houses of Bedfordshire, surrounded by a landscape designed in the 18c. The mansion was built in 1720 and became a school from 1929 to 1992 when it was purchased by a religious organisation.



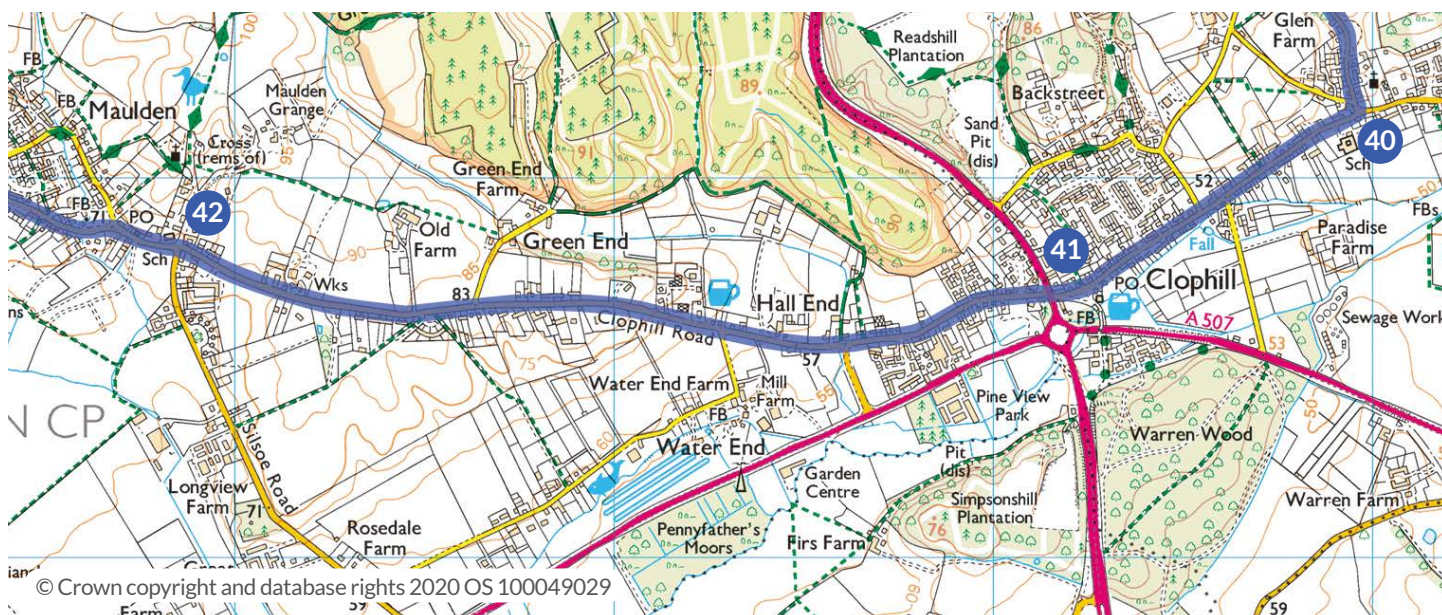
- 38** Once you are opposite the house take the left turn down Great Lane (signposted to Clophill) and cycle along the lane.



- 39** The lane is very attractive and gently winds its way past farms and houses and slowly descends. As you enter Clophill the land becomes steeper and then drops down a valley into the village.

Clophill

Clophill is an attractive long street village which is at the heart of the Greensand Country. There were sandstone quarries surrounding this village and many of the older cottages, and the local and interesting pub on Back Street called the Stone Jug use this local building material, which gives the village a special character.

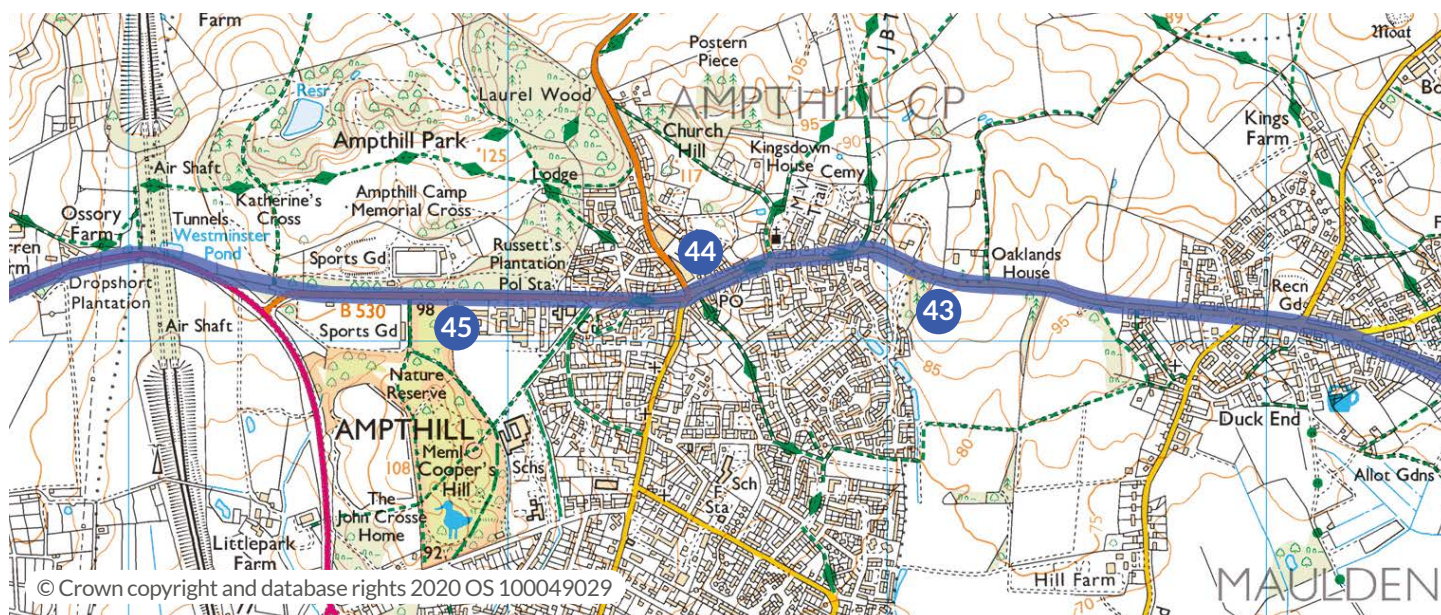


- 40** At the T-junction, with St Mary's Church on your left, turn right onto the High Street which may follow the route of a Roman road. Cycle through Clophill village. As you enter the small village 'green' look out for the parish lockup and pound, Then go past the Green Man PH on your right, carry on up to the Flying Horse PH (on your left).
- 41** Just past the row of small cottages on your right carefully cross the road and use the marked cycle path to carefully cross the A6, using the island in the centre of the road. From here carry straight ahead over the road and down Clophill Road to enter the village of Maulden.

Flit valley

The village of Clophill is at a junction where the major A6 road crosses the valley of the River Flit. This now small river has cut a significant gorge through the sandstone ridge at this point. Following the Maulden Road eastwards, the Flit Valley widens with smooth slopes to the river which were once important for market gardens. Maulden was a centre for this industry until the 1950 with regular shipments to the Covent Garden market. The flat valley bottom becomes increasingly wet and at one time was the site for peat extraction leaving many ponds which are now an important Nature Reserves at both Flitton and Flitwick.

- 42** Cycle along Clophill Road to the T-junction where you turn right onto the continuation of Clophill Road and up the hill past open areas of grass and meadows. Continue past Maulden Lower School, on your right, and then past the attractive village green with its thatched cottages. Continue past the Co-op village stores and the White Hart PH (both on the left) and up the hill.



- 43** Leave the village and carry straight over a roundabout and enter the small attractive Georgian market town of Ampthill via Church Street. Cycle up the hill, past St Andrews Church on your right and then drop down the hill to the town centre.

Ampthill

The ride enters Ampthill with the church on the right. St Andrews, the parish church of Ampthill, one of an attractive group of buildings which include Dynevor House and the Feoffee Alms houses. The church is typical of the many medieval churches across the Greensand County, built in the 12th c with local sandstone with a squat bell tower added in 1506. Ampthill has pubs to suit all tastes and the route toward the crossroads at the town centre passes, the White Hart a Grade II listed Coaching Inn which is likely to date from the 16th century. On the right is a small market square and adjacent is a large car park where cycles may be left (locked).

- 44** Bear left at the first mini-roundabout then turn right at the second mini-roundabout and into Woburn Street then head up the steep hill. Continue past the Queen's Head PH and the attractive row of brick and timber thatched cottages.
- 45** From here it is a short ride back along the leafy tree-lined road to the entrance to Ampthill Park car park from where the ride started (on the right).

Refreshments

Details of refreshment outlets can be found on the Greensand Country website



www.greensandcountry.com/experience

Remember when cycling

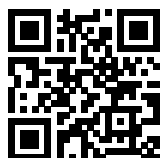
- If possible start your ride from your front door
- If you do drive to the start point then please park with consideration
- Please DO NOT cycle on footpaths.
- Always keep to the waymarked routes and do not enter private land.
- Always ride in single file when roads are narrow and never ride more than two abreast.
- Make sure you are visible to others.
- Always use lights after dark or in poor visibility.
- Plan your route according to the weather and daylight hours.
- Be aware of animals, other cyclists, pedestrians, horse riders and car drivers when cycling.
- Keep your speed down and give way to walkers and other path users.
- Be polite and considerate towards landowners and farmers.
- Keep away from farm machinery or farm/forestry operations.

More information



What 3 Words: Download this app to your smartphone to help you find locations and to tell others where you are. Each 3m square in the world has been assigned a unique 3 word address that will never change.

The route passes a number of churches. More information on them including services, facilities and what else they have to offer can be found online.



www.achurchnearyou.com



www.explorechurches.org

This website may also tell you what is special about the buildings and makes them worth visiting.

Churches are attractive and worthwhile stopping places steeped in community history. They usually have benches to rest on and a porch in which you can shelter from the elements.

Signage for promoted routes throughout Greensand Country has been part-funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.