

Katherine's Walk

8 ½ miles. Location: Ampthill, Flitwick, Steppingley



Explore Greensand Country on Foot

Greensand Country

An area of distinct, beautiful and loved countryside

Katherine's Walk

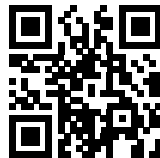
This new 8 ½ mile route aims to help local residents, including those new to the area, to explore the landscape on their doorstep. The route forms a loop to the west of Ampthill and Flitwick. It can be walked in either direction and is linked directly from residential areas on the west side of Ampthill and Flitwick; however, if necessary, the most appropriate place for those travelling by car is at the west car park in Ampthill Park. The route passes through Cooper's Hill, an 18 hectare Site of Special Scientific Interest on the western fringe of Ampthill. It accesses open farmland near Steppingley village, and an extensive conifer woodland section near to the Centre Parcs holiday village. Last but not least, at Ampthill Park there are excellent views to the north over Marston Moretaine and onto Bedford.

Please observe the Countryside Code. The full Countryside Code provides advice for the general public and land managers. Please visit

www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code for details.

Find out more and explore walking, cycling and horse-riding routes in Greensand Country

www.greensandcountry.com

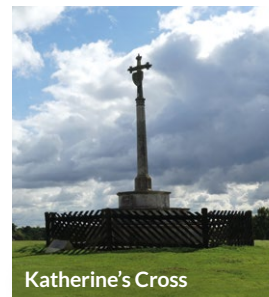


Points of interest around Katherine's Walk

Ampthill Great Park was first established in the 1420s by Sir John Cornwall when he built a castle where Katherine's Cross now stands. In the 16th century Henry VIII used the park for hunting deer. The park was extensively remodelled by Capability Brown in the 1770s for the 2nd Earl of Upper Ossary who carried out extensive work to Park House to turn it into what you see today.



This walk is named after Katherine of Aragon, who was imprisoned on the Ampthill Estate during the annulment of her marriage to King Henry VIII in the early 16th Century. Katherine's Cross (Listed Building: Grade II), is a significant feature within Ampthill Great Park and was erected in 1773 as a garden feature in Capability Brown's new landscape. Find out more about these important historical events on the inscription at the cross dedicated to Katherine.



Did you know that Ampthill historically had a railway station? The line of the Midland Railway between Bedford and London St Pancras was opened in 1868 to replace an earlier link into London King's Cross via Hitchin. The station's long platform was designed to enable the simultaneous disembarkation of troops who would then march to their training camp in Ampthill Great Park. The station closed in 1959.

Long ago, the landowner at Cooper's Hill, the Duke of Bedford, planted Scots Pine trees. Some pines remain but other plants, dominated by heather and gorse, also survive to this day. These tolerate the sandy soil, which is a feature of much of Greensand Country. Many local people know this area as 'The Firs'.

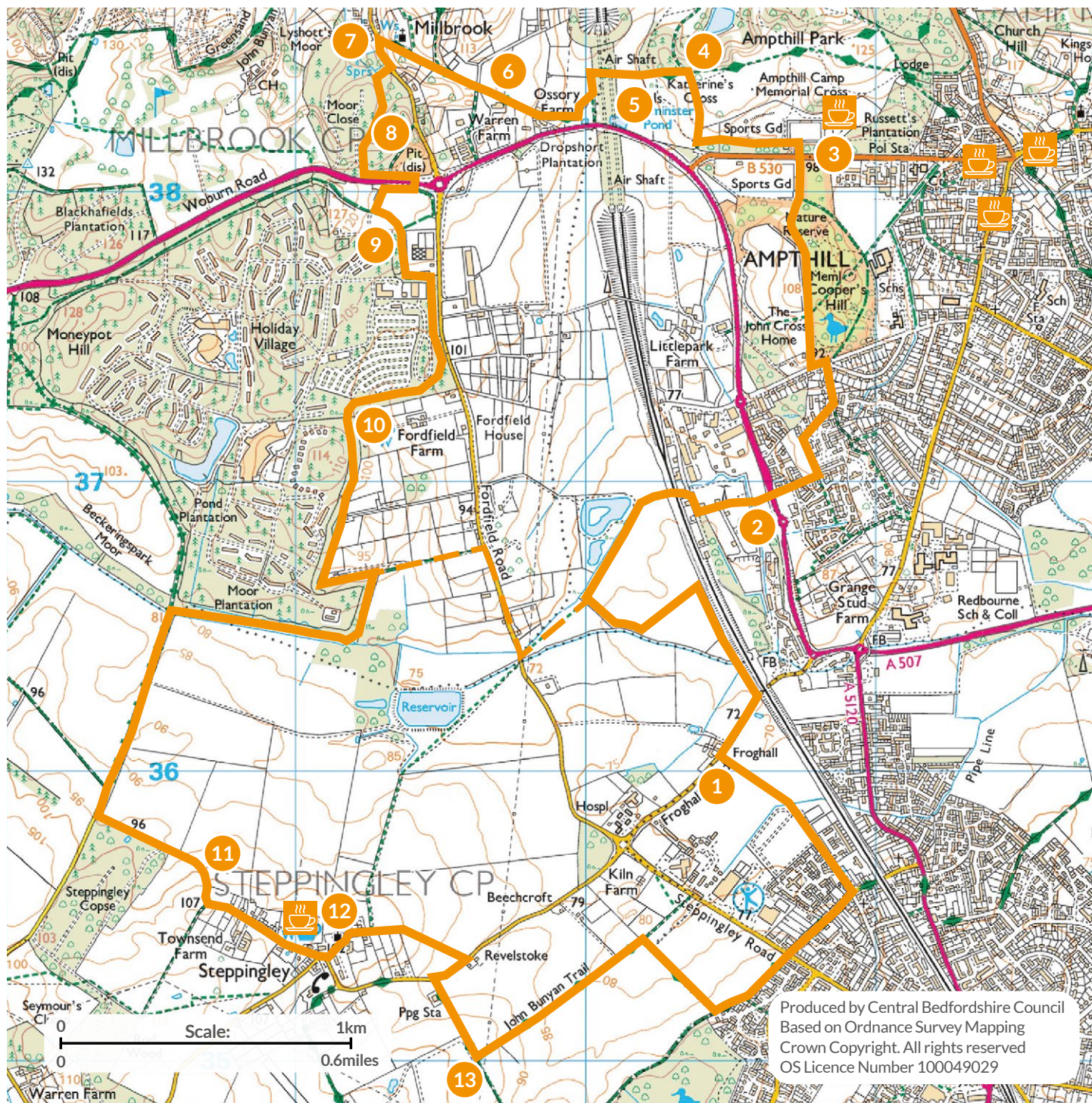


Millbrook church stands 360ft (110m) above sea level, one of the highest in the county. The stone in the church appears in many shapes but was sorted for size by the builders so it could be laid in courses. Greensand formed as layers of sandy sediment that currents deposited in a tropical sea channel that crossed Bedfordshire about 115 million years ago.



Get involved: greensandcountry.com





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- 1 Your walk starts on the corner of Churchill Way and Froghall Road. This area was fields before the houses were built. Other parts of this varied route pass through heathland, woods, parkland, horse paddocks and farmland, with attractive scenery and views across the Bedfordshire countryside.
- 2 Carefully cross the A507 before climbing over Cooper's Hill, an important nature reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is a small but rare example of heathland in Bedfordshire.
- 3 Cross Woburn Street, to Ampthill Great Park, where the route climbs again towards the site of Sir John Cornwall's 15th century 'castle' a fortified home that Henry VIII acquired as part of a hunting estate.
- 4 Reaching the summit of the sandy Greensand Ridge, beyond Katherine's Cross, this location offers superb views over the countryside of Central Bedfordshire. The plain below is underlain by Oxford Clay which was suitable for making bricks and quarried from large pits.
- 5 As you descend the Greensand Ridge to leave the park towards Millbrook, you will see Westminster Pond on your left. The walk climbs over a linear mound of spoil excavated when tunnels were made for the railway to pass beneath the ridge of Greensand.
- 6 The route passes Warren Farm. Rabbits are not native to Britain and were brought here after 1066. They were kept in warrens and farmed for meat and fur before escaping into the wild.
- 7 Millbrook Church is a good stopping point to examine the use of Greensand as a building stone.
- 8 On the left of the steep slope leaving Millbrook, is a former pond, overgrown with sedges. As you climb away from this, you may spot the ruins of a Methodist chapel to the right.
- 9 You are now on the edge of the Centre Parcs Woburn holiday village, opened in 2014 with over 600 family lodges, a swimming pool and other facilities, and cleverly hidden amongst the pine trees to retain some of the existing character of the area and its value to walkers. The site is ideal for leisure activities as the well-drained soil does not get muddy after rain.
- 10 The walk is sheltered by trees and follows the boundary of the site. Grazing land used mainly for horses becomes visible on the left. Near a corner of the path is the Pet Piggies premises where you can encounter micro pigs that have starred in TV programmes, films and advertisements.
- 11 The landscape changes to cropped farmland on the way to the village of Steppingley, where a magnificent oak tree welcomes you. Cottages bear plaques with the crown and 'B' motif of the 7th Duke of Bedford from Woburn Abbey who had most of the village rebuilt in the mid 1800s.
- 12 Like Millbrook, Steppingley also has a Greensand church, but the stones were all carefully squared and laid like bricks in the Duke's rebuild of 1858-60. The building stone for these churches was always local as transport in an era of carts was expensive. Sandstone quarries were common in Greensand Country, but are now difficult to locate as most have been filled in or are hidden in woodland.
- 13 As you leave the village, the strange building called the Folly was the village school from 1878 until its closure in 1984. To the right, Flitwick Wood is a remnant of ancient woodland where the trees were carefully managed in the past to provide a sustainable supply of timber for constructing buildings and other purposes.

Walking Routes in Greensand Country

Greensand Country is a beautiful and loved landscape. It is defined by the Greensand Ridge, a band of higher ground stretching from Leighton Buzzard to Gamlingay, which rises out of the surrounding vales to create a locally unique environment. Greensand Country contains all of Bedfordshire's remaining heathland, more than half of its woodland and, as a proportion of the area, is made up of more historic parkland than any other place in England.

Walking is an ideal way to get to know Greensand Country and experience what it has to offer. When on foot you are closer to nature and able to take in the views, soak up the landscape and enjoy the physical health and mental wellbeing benefits associated with exploring the great outdoors. Many routes have been created by the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership to help you explore the history, heritage and rich culture of Greensand Country. Other routes include the Ouzel Valley Meander and Weneslawe Walk.



What's On?

Places to Stay and Food and Drink in Greensand Country

Plan a great day out in Greensand Country. There's something for everybody with idyllic villages to explore, home cooked food to eat, adventures to be had, unique handmade crafts to buy and history to discover.

There are many stunning views in Greensand Country. The ridge itself is a prominent feature in the landscape and provides a dramatic backdrop to the views from the lower lying countryside. The ridge is accessible from many of the surrounding villages and towns. Woodlands often frame views on lower ground, whilst landmark churches and other historic buildings provide focal points in the landscape.

Whether you're looking for somewhere to stop for tea and cake or lunch during your walk, or thinking about things to do, places to visit or somewhere for friends and family to stay locally, the Greensand Country website has everything you need to plan your next exciting outdoor adventure.

Support local businesses, enjoy great experiences and discover unique products in Greensand Country. Stop off at a pub or tearoom after a day of walking to enjoy locally sourced, home cooked food. Or shop for antiques and unique handmade crafts in one of Greensand Country's picturesque villages.

With walking, cycling and riding routes available to view and download on our interactive map, you can search for facilities, including toilets, points of interest, car parking and much more on your chosen route.

Simply click on the QR Code and start exploring today.



Central
Bedfordshire

Get involved: greensandcountry.com

