Eastern Historic Parkland Walk

10km (6.25miles)

Greensand Country

Explore Greensand Country on foot

Walking Routes in Greensand Country

An area of distinct, beautiful and loved countryside

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.

Historic Parkland Walks:

Greensand Country has the highest proportion of historic parkland of any of the country's National Character Areas. Historic parklands are a hugely significant part of our landscape, contributing greatly to our sense of place. These two circular walks have been created to help you explore two parts of Greensand Country where historic parkland is particularly prominent, and learn more about their history and how they have helped shape the landscape we know and love. One in the east of the area, between Everton and Gamlingay and taking in the Woodbury and Tetworth Estates, the other in the west around Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley, taking in Aspley Park and Crawley Park.

- Please park carefully and considerately.
- Always take care when crossing roads.
- Please keep to the waymarked route on public rights of way.
- Please keep dogs on a lead when livestock are present.
- Please respect people's privacy, especially when the route passes close to houses and through/past gardens.
- Please follow the Countryside Code: **www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code**

Points of interest around the Eastern Historic Parkland Walk

Woodbury Hall and Park

Woodbury Hall and Park lie to the north-east of the village of Everton. The present building, built between 1803 and 1806, supersedes the original hall, a renovated medieval farmhouse on the ridge-top to the west, which had been built by Sir John Jacob of Bromley, Middlesex, around 1635. The old house, which became known as 'Old Woodbury', had grounds laid out by Nathaniel Richmond in the 1760s for the landowner, the Earl of Macclesfield who had married Woodbury heiress Mary Lane.

In 1838 the house and part of the estate was bought by Mr. (later Sir) William Booth, thought to be of the Booth's Gin family. Booth then sold the house and estate by public auction in 1858. Four hundred acres were bought by John Foster of Sandy, and the remainder, with the mansion, was bought by the Astell family of Everton House.

In World War II the house was requisitioned for military use, occupied initially by evacuees from the bombing of the cities, then troops from Dunkirk and finally by various units of the RAF, Artillery and Engineers.

Woodbury Hall and Park

Tetworth Hall

Tetworth Hall

Sir Nicholas Pedley built Tetworth Hall in 1710 for his son John, who was MP for Huntingdonshire between 1706 and 1708. The Hall is a two-storey red brick mansion in the Queen Anne style, with Corinthian columns framing the doorway. In 1726 it was purchased by Edward Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford, and by 1740 the estate was owned by 1st Earl Hardwicke and Lord Chancellor.

A service wing was added to the house in the late 18th century, along with a cottage and stables. This is also when the park, formal gardens and woodland walk were laid out.

During World War II the hall was requisitioned by the British Army, and German and Italian prisoners-of-war were held in the grounds. There may also have been a link with the secret operations going on at nearby Tempsford Airfield, though this is not confirmed.

The estate was again sold in 2008 and today the estate is a mixture of let farms and in-hand land, combined with extensive woodland, totalling an area of just over 1,800 acres and including three farmhouses, 13 cottages, and an established pheasant shoot.

Tempsford Airfield

Tempsford Airfield

Tempsford Airfield was built in 1941 over what had been a large area of marsh. This was one of the most secret airfields of the Second World War, used by the SOE, whose agents were equipped and flown from here into enemy occupied Europe to assist the various resistance movements.

The station was home to 138 and 161 (Special Duty) Squadrons flying Whitley, Hudson, and Halifax bombers as well as the smaller Lysanders. From 1942 to 1945 these aircraft successfully delivered 29,000 containers, 10,000 parcels and 995 agents into enemy territory, as well as picking up personnel from these locations though over this period, seventy aircraft were lost, with most of their crews killed.

The field barn beside the bridleway was once part of Gibraltar Farm and was the final collection point for agents to collect their equipment and supplies before boarding the planes. The barn remains as a memorial to those agents and aircrew who took part in those operations.

The airfield was closed to the RAF in 1947 and is now a private farm, though much of the runway system is still intact. Contact the Estate Secretary on 01767 650251 for permission to visit the Barn.

St Mary's Church, Everton

St Mary's Church, a Grade I listed building in Everton, has been described as late Norman and unusually complete. The south doorway arch has early English features, dating it to about 1175, but the arcades inside the nave of the church are thought to be earlier.

The tower dates to the 14th Century and once had three stages, but the top stage collapsed in 1974 following a lightning strike. The second stage now has a modern parapet and corner pinnacles topped with weather vanes. The perpendicular features in the church, which include the south porch, windows in the chancel, the chancel arch to the nave, and corbels supporting the nave roof, are all dated to the 15th Century.

The church and rectory were sold to Clare College Cambridge by Henry VIII on 23rd June 1544.

In the nave by the chancel arch and above the pulpit is an impressive alabaster and coloured marble monument to Sir Humphrey Winch (1555-1625). Sir Humphrey was a respected judge in the reign of James I rising to the title of Lord Chief Justice of Ireland.

The parish's most famous rector was John Berridge, an early Methodist leader who preached here between 1755 and 1793.

St Mary's Church, Everton

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Eastern Historic Parkland Walk

Woodbury and Tetworth Estates - 10km (6.25miles)

1. The walk starts in Church End, Everton at the small parking area by St Mary's Church. Head across the road past a metal Public Footpath fingerpost next to a lamp post and follow the short section of road to where the footpath veers off to the right.
2. Head downhill along a curving earth track, formerly known as Walnut Tree Lane, and turn sharp left at the bottom of the slope. This section can become muddy in winter.
3. Follow the straight track to a Roman road, known as Hassells Hedge. Turn right along the roadway and head past the site of the former Tempsford Airfield and the Memorial Barn that commemorates the crews and special operatives who flew from here. Contact the Estate Secretary on 01767 650251 for permission to visit the Barn.
4. After some distance, bear slightly to the right and later turn right by a small woodland.
5. Turn left at the end of the woodland and follow the woodland edge to the corner of the field.
6. Turn right again and follow the path past a larger block of woodland which is on the right hand side of the track.
7. At the end of the wood turn left for a short while and then right, along the field edges.
8. Bear left and climb up the Ridge to another pocket of woodland.
9. Follow the track between hedges, past a footpath on the right, and turn left a short distance further on.
10. Follow the route through the Tetworth Estate, passing the Hall across the parkland to the left.
11. Cross the metalled road and continue on through the parkland and past the estate cottages.
12. At the road turn right along a short stretch of Tetworth Hill and cross Drove Road into The Cinques.
13. Walk past the Cinques Nature Reserve car park and turn right where the main road bears left. Follow this road around to the right, and cross to a track between houses.
14. Walk along the track between gardens and past the paddocks, turning to the right at a T junction, and follow the edge of the large field.
15. Follow the field edge, passing the brick remains of the 18th century Moon Gate which are partially hidden among the trees.
16. At the corner of the field bear right through a small woodland area and on to Drove Road.
17. Turn left, cross the road and continue along it, using the verge where practical. Take care crossing the road and walking on Drove Road.
18. At the estate cottages on your right turn right along the bridleway.
19. Follow this past the footpath on the right – an earlier part of the route - and shortly afterwards turn left and cross a field.
20. Beyond the field edge walk across the grass of the Woodbury parkland for a short distance and join the estate road. Cattle grazing area - please keep dogs on leads.
21. Follow the estate road, passing an avenue of mature sweet chestnut trees.
22. Continue past Storey Farm and along the estate road until you reach a cattle grid and the church.

General:

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More Information

Look out for these signs as you walk the route:

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.

The Historic Parkland Walks were developed by the Greensand Trust and the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, with grateful thanks to our volunteers, Sheila Meekums and Dorothy Jamieson for their support, and to the Diocese of St Albans for information about the historic churches.

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

Photos provided by John Robertson and Mike Fayers