

The Parks Trust Self-Guided Walks: The Ouzel Valley Park

Walk revised by Peter Burrett, Monday 19th August 2013

Start point

Close to the northern end of Newport Road, which links the H9 Groveway and the H8 Standing Way in Woughton Park, there is a free car park at Walton Lake.

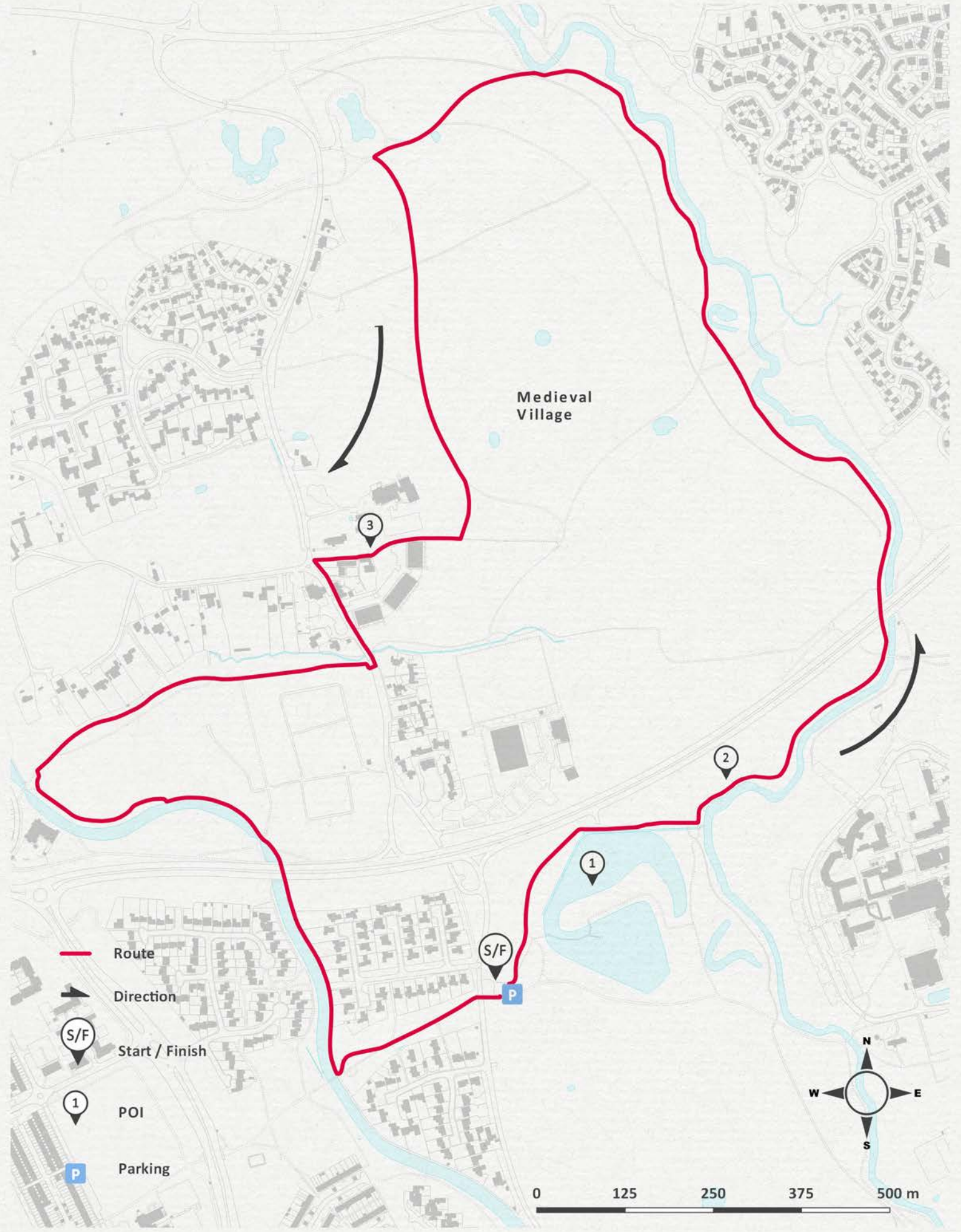
Walk overview

This is a circular walk, along footpaths, red ways and a canal towpath. The walking is easy and accessible year round. It is wheelchair friendly, although there is one incline at the beginning of the trail which could present problems for some manual wheelchair users.

Distances & times

Circular walk; Car park – Ouzel Valley Park – Woughton on the Green – Grand Union Canal – car park = 2.8 miles, 90 minutes. Allow additional time for refreshments at Ye Olde Swan, Woughton on the Green. Open all day from noon for food.





The circular walk

The start of the walk from Walton Lake car park follows the same route as Walk 3 (Walton Lake to Caldecotte Lake).

Take the footpath directly from the car park past three separate Parks Trust boards, one featuring a useful map of Walton Lake and its environs, another detailing a nature trail around the lake.

The path splits. Stick to the left hand trail, up an incline to a bench. From here there is a good view across Walton Lake. (Viewpoint symbol on map). This was constructed as an anti-flooding balancing lake for the River Ouzel, but since Willen and Caldecotte Lakes were created has been allowed to fill with reeds to create a distinct habitat for wildlife.



Continue along the footpath down the other side of the hill, with Walton Lake to your right. You will eventually see two wooden bridges on your right, quite close together. Here there is T-junction of footpaths. Turn left. The River Ouzel is on your right and you will see the buildings of the Open University beyond its opposite bank.



You will pass a notice board giving information about the impressive black poplar trees that stand in front of you. After about 250 metres you pass a wooden bridge over the Ouzel – carry straight on. Pass under Standing Way (H8). Woughton playing fields are on your left. Walk through a gate with cattle grid alongside into a Parks Trust grazing area. This is the Ouzel Valley Park.

After passing through another gate, to your right you will see a wooden bridge over the Ouzel towards Monkston Park, and a picnic area with several benches. Stick to the current footpath. To your left you will see the distant slope of the Xscape leisure building in Central Milton Keynes (subject to weather conditions!)

At a meeting of footpaths, turn right along the path signposted “Riverside Walk” and “Woolstone”. On your right is an oxbow lake, left behind when the Ouzel cut a straighter course. The path soon hugs the bank of the Ouzel again.

This whole area is one of open grazing land, leased out by the Parks Trust, and mature trees. There are usually herds of cows and flocks of sheep around, and at time of walk we saw a pair of swans and their four large cygnets.

Pass through two more gates / cattle grids and past another bridge over the river. When the footpath splits, take the left hand

spur, away from the course of the Ouzel. The path passes between a succession of mature horse chestnut trees.

Ignore a footpath joining from your left and proceed straight on to a small balancing lake on your right. This was empty at time of visit. Here there are several footpath options. Take the left hand path signposted “Woughton” and “Deserted Medieval Village” and go through a gate. Two juvenile green woodpeckers were seen here.

Pass through two more gates and cross a wide expanse of grassy pasture land to a wooden walkway over a curious linear depression in the landscape. A notice board here gives information about Woughton medieval village, and explains that the depression marks the line of what was once the main village street, “Meadows Lane”. The village was later moved to its current position further west, perhaps to avoid flooding.



Shortly beyond this point the footpath bifurcates. Take the right hand course. Proceed through a gate where you will see a football pitch in front of you, then turn sharp right along a path. This takes you past a development of modern terraced houses onto Newport Road in the heart of Woughton on the Green.

Woughton is one of the many historical villages that were subsumed by the development of Milton Keynes but kept their low density, rural appeal. At the centre of the village are the thirteenth century St Mary's church, and the delightful Ye Olde Swan pub, a sixteenth century timbered structure where highwayman Dick Turpin was known to have stayed on many occasions.

Turn left onto Newport Road, past Ye Olde Swan. After a short distance, take a footpath on your right, almost opposite a phone box. This leads through an apple orchard owned by the Parks Trust at the end of which, just before a stone bridge leading over the Grand Union Canal, you should turn left onto the canal towpath.



Follow the canal round a long bend, passing under a brick footbridge (Grand Union Canal bridge 90) then under Standing Way (H8). Just before metal footbridge 90b, turn left off the towpath and onto a red way that itself bends sharply left. The red way soon reaches Newport Road, and the car park where your walk started is directly opposite.

