

Aylesbury Vale Parkway to Aylesbury (Full Walk)			Aylesbury Vale Parkway to Aylesbury (Short Walk)		
1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check	1 <sup>st</sup> walk check	2 <sup>nd</sup> walk check	3 <sup>rd</sup> walk check
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## Aylesbury Vale Parkway to Aylesbury

**Start:** Aylesbury Vale Parkway Station

**Finish:** Aylesbury Station

Aylesbury Vale Parkway station, map reference SP 786 153, is 3.6 km northwest of Aylesbury and 75m above sea level. Aylesbury Station, map reference SP 817 134, is 76m above sea level. Both are in **Buckinghamshire**.

**Length:** 25.9 km (16.1 mi).

**Cumulative ascent/descent:** 263/262m. For a shorter walk, see below **Walk Options**.

**Toughness:** 5 out of 10

**Time:** 5 ½ hours walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8 ¼ hours.

**Transport:** Aylesbury and Aylesbury Vale Parkway (AVP) stations are on the London Marylebone to Aylesbury line (via Amersham). Journey times are 66 minutes to AVP (hourly service) and from 60 minutes returning from Aylesbury (half-hourly service). Buy a day return to Aylesbury Vale Parkway.

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** Take the train closest to 9.30 hours.

**OS Landranger Map:** 165 (Aylesbury & Leighton Buzzard)

**OS Explorer Map:** 181 (Chiltern Hills North) and 192 (Buckingham & Milton Keynes)

### Walk Notes:

This walk links up a few quiet hilltop villages north of Aylesbury in the rolling landscape of East Buckinghamshire, providing for good views into the Aylesbury Vale and back to the Chiltern Range. After an inauspicious start along the pavement of an A-road the walk leads along the River Thames and some of its tributaries, past the site of the deserted medieval village of Quarrendon and on to the picturesque villages of Weedon and Hardwick. After ascending to and skirting around the site of the medieval Bolebec castle mound in Whitchurch, the route leads eastwards to Aston Abbots with views across to the Chilterns, and then south back down into the Thames Valley, mostly along pastures. You pass St. Osyth's Well in Bierton and negotiate a quiet route through one of the many new villages that have sprung up around Aylesbury, to finish with an extended stretch along a branch of the Grand Union Canal and crossing over into Aylesbury's historic centre for tea.

Note:

Long stretches through pastures and hay meadows make this a tougher walk in high summer.

## Walk Options:

**Shortcuts:** It is possible to shorten the walk in two ways. Shortcuts I and II are mutually exclusive though: Shortcut I from Weedon to Rowsham cuts out 6.2 km length and 84m ascent/descent (lunch in Weedon); Shortcut II from Hardwick to Aston Abbots cuts out 2.8 km length and 51m descent/re-ascent (lunch in Hardwick or Aston Abbots).

**Several useful bus stops are passed en route** (check the route map for their exact location):

- Lines 60 (Buckingham-Aylesbury) and X60 (Milton Keynes-Aylesbury) travel along the A413 through Hardwick (an early lunch stop) and Whitchurch (a later lunch stop). Between them, they provide an at least hourly service Mondays to Saturdays and some buses on Sundays/Bank Holidays;
- Line 165 (Leighton Buzzard-Aylesbury) travels through Aston Abbots (the late lunch stop), Rowsham (8 km from the end of the walk) and Bierton (5 km from the end). It runs two afternoon services Mondays to Saturdays;
- Lines 100, 101 and 150 (Milton Keynes-Leighton Buzzard-Aylesbury) run along the A418, with stops at Rowsham (8 km from the end of the walk) and Bierton (5 km from the end). Between them, they provide a frequent service Mondays to Saturdays, and a two-hourly one on Sundays/Bank Holidays.

**Lunch** (details last updated 09/07/2021)

**The Five Elms** Stockaway, Weedon, Buckinghamshire, HP22 4NL (01296 641 439, <http://fiveelmsweedon.com/>). Open Mon-Tue 18.00-21.00, Wed-Sat 12.00-14.30 & 18.00-23.00 and Sun 12.00-16.00. Food served Tue 18.00-19.45, Wed-Sat 12.00-14.00 and 18.00-21.00, Sun 12.00-14.30. Last food orders 15 minutes before close of service.

The Five Elms is located 5.3 km (3.3 mi) into the walk. It is a 400-years old thatched freehouse.

**The Bell at Hardwick** Lower Road, Hardwick Buckinghamshire, HP22 4DZ (01296 640 005, <http://www.thebellathardwick.co.uk/>). The Bell is located 7.0 km (4.4 mi) into the walk. Open all day every day. Food served 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-21.00 Mon-Fri, 12.00-21.00 Sat and 12.00-16.00 Sun. A 17<sup>th</sup> century pub completely restored, with log fires, a quiet front garden and a large courtyard at the back.

**The White Swan** 10 High Street, Whitchurch, Buckinghamshire, HP22 4JT (01296 641 228, <http://whiteswanwhitchurch.co.uk/>). Open all day Wed-Mon. Food served Wed-Sat 12.00-21.00 and Sun 12.00-16.00. The White Swan is located 9.6 km (6.0 mi) into the walk. It is a part-thatched Fuller's pub with a large garden at the back.

**Royal Oak Inn** Wingrave Road, Aston Abbots, Buckinghamshire, HP22 4LT (01296 681 262). The Royal Oak Inn is located 150m off route, 14.5 km (9.0 mi) into the walk and is a Grade II listed C16-C17 timber framed building.

**Tea** (details last updated 09/07/2021)

**Off route or currently closed:** **The Bell** and **The Red Lion** in **Bierton** and **The Dog House** in **Broughton Crossing**, on the outskirts of Aylesbury.

**A plethora of options in Aylesbury City Centre** (some of the options are mentioned in the Walk Directions pdf), **recommended are:**

**The King's Head** King's Head Passage, Market Square, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP20 2RW (01296 718 812, <http://www.kingsheadaylesbury.co.uk/>). Open all day Thu-Sun. Dinner served 17.00-20.00 Thu and 18.00-20.00 Fri-Sat.

**The Harrow** 4 Cambridge Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP20 1RS (01296 336 243, <https://theharrowaylesbury.co.uk/>). Open all day every day.

**Temple Street Wine Bar** Temple Street, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP20 2RN (01296 337 228, <https://www.templestreetwinebar.co.uk/>). Evening openings: from 17.00 Wed-Sat.

## Notes:

### Aylesbury Vale Parkway Station

Aylesbury Vale Parkway is a relatively new station on the former Metropolitan and Great Central Joint Railway, which formed part of the Great Central Main Line route linking London and Aylesbury with the East Midlands and North. Its build was co-funded in 2006 by the Government, Chiltern Railways and Bucks Council and opened late 2008. It not only serves new housing developments on Aylesbury's north western fringes, but will also be a stop on the new East West Rail spur, planned to extend passenger services northwards to Bletchley and Milton Keynes.

### Aylesbury

The town's name is of Old English origin, its first recorded name Æglesburgh is thought to mean "Fort of Aegel". Excavations in the town centre even found an Iron Age hill fort dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Aylesbury was one of the strongholds of the Celtic Britons, from whom it was only taken in the year 571 by Cutwulph, brother of the King of the West Saxons; and it had a fortress or castle of some importance. The Roman Akeman Street, linking Watling Street north of St. Albans with Cirencester, led through here (nowadays as the A41), providing the grounds for it becoming an important commercial centre in Anglo-Saxon times. It is also the burial place of St. Osgyth, a local noblewoman (from Quarrendon) martyred by Danish Vikings in 700, whose shrine at St. Mary's attracted pilgrims. Aylesbury was declared the county town of Buckinghamshire in 1529 by Henry VIII, presumably to gain favour with Anne Boleyn's father, whose many properties included Aylesbury Manor. The town played a large part in the English Civil War, when it became a stronghold for the Parliamentary forces, and in 1642 the Battle of Aylesbury was fought and won by the Parliamentarians. Nowadays the urban area has a population of 90,000, more than doubled since the 1960s due to new housing developments, and it is projected to rise to 100,000 in the next few years!

### River Thame

Nowadays seen as a 65 km (40 mi) long tributary of the longer Thames, there is a school of thought saying that the Thames upstream of Dorchester, where the Thame joins it, is called Isis, and that the Thames is only the confluence of Isis and Thame. What seems certain is that all three names go back to the Celtic "Tamesas/Tamesis" (probably meaning "dark"). The Thame's source is several small streams in the Vale of Aylesbury on the north side of the Chiltern Hills. These streams converge north-east of Aylesbury.

### St. Peter's Chapel/Quarrendon Village

Quarrendon is the name of a now deserted medieval village on the outskirts of Aylesbury, derived from the Old English Cweorndun meaning "hill where mill stones are obtained".

It is a scheduled ancient monument as a nationally outstanding example of an English village that was depopulated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by enclosure, depopulation, and the introduction of sheep and of the subsequent development of a Tudor manor, gardens and wider landscape incorporating much of the site of the village and its chapel. Garden and park formed a designed layout in a landscape setting with carefully planned vistas. Because the area has been maintained as grassland since, the form of these features has been clearly preserved.

Queen Elizabeth I was entertained at the Manor by Sir Henry Lee for two days in 1592.

The village and its manor survived until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the Lord of the Manor went bankrupt and lost all his lands. The only remaining building in the old village is the ruined church of St Peter. The moat fish ponds and ground works of the manor house also remain.

The modern housing estate of Quarrendon in Aylesbury is named after the ancient village.

### Weedon

Weedon, an old English word, means "pagan shrine on a hill". The pagan Anglo-Saxons settled in Buckinghamshire from the fifth century onwards, so the name possibly indicates a comparatively late survival of pagan practices.

Archaeological surveys have found Neolithic to Bronze Age flints and Roman remains in various parts of the parish suggesting the possibility of a much earlier settlement. Weedon has the distinction of having been the location of the first place in Buckinghamshire licensed for Methodist services, and John Wesley himself is said to have preached from a mound near the crossroads.

### Lilies

A Grade II listed country house with attached service wing and stables. Re-built 1870, by George Devey, probably for Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild of Waddesdon, or for Henry Cazenove, a stockbroker from London. It continued in private hands until 1939, when it was taken over by a firm of distillers. From 1946 it was used as a training centre for the Royal Bucks Hospital, but reverted to private ownership in 1969.

### The Aylesbury Ring

A circular 50 km (31 mi) way-marked Long-Distance Walk around Aylesbury, through Wendover, Waddesdon and Aston Clinton, in parts sharing its course with the North Bucks Way.

<https://www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk/the-aylesbury-ring>

### **Whitchurch**

The village name is Anglo Saxon in origin (wit chert) and means white earth.

### **Outer Aylesbury Ring**

An 85 km (53 mi) circular Long-Distance Walk along the higher ground around the outside of the original Aylesbury Ring to produce a walk with good views through pleasant countryside and passing through many delightful villages and towns. Launched in 2013 and created by Aylesbury & District Ramblers, who have also produced leaflets, detailing 14 sections plus separate linked circular walks.

<https://sites.google.com/view/outeraylesburyring/home>

### **Bolebec Castle**

The castle was the seat of the Buckinghamshire barony of Bolebec which commanded the main road from Aylesbury to Buckingham. The castle was built originally by Hugh de Bolebec in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. It was of the mount and bailey type, seen as earthworks today, although a road now runs through the centre. There is a moat surrounding the castle and the bailey lies to the north of the castle (but is badly mutilated). Little is known of the buildings of the castle, but it had a masonry keep. The ruins of the castle were taken down at the end of the Civil War, although the sites of the draw-bridges can still be traced. At the outer edge of the moat, in a field called the Lord's Garden, is a notable spring called 'Fair Alice,' flowing out from under the trunk of a large ash.

### **Aston Abbots**

Aston derives from Anglo-Saxon for Eastern Estate. The suffix 'Abbots' refers to the ancient abbey in the village, which was the country home of the abbots of St Albans in Hertfordshire. The Holy Church of Alban The Martyr had originally been given the land in the times of Edward the Confessor by a Danish chief called Tolf, as he wanted to be buried at the church.

### **The Abbey, Aston Abbots**

The Abbey, known as Aston House until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, is a small (8 bedroom) Grade II listed Georgian country house, which derives its name from being built on land confiscated from the Abbots of St. Albans by Henry VIII, despite it never having been an ecclesiastical building.

It belonged to the Dormer family from the Dissolution of the Monasteries until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and was altered in a piecemeal way as a result of being almost continuously tenanted. The Abbey has had some illustrious owners since, including the Duke of Buckingham and Sir James Clark Ross, the polar explorer who gave his name to the Ross Shelf, and who now rests in the grounds of Aston Abbots church. During WWII it was rented out to President Benes of the exiled Czechoslovakian government, while Wingrave Manor in nearby Wingrave was leased as a residence for the employees and families of the Private Office of the President. In 1944 he donated a bus shelter to the villages of Aston Abbots and Wingrave, this is on the A418 between the two villages (Wingrave Cross Roads). In 1998 President Václav Havel, the first post-communist President of the Czech Republic, visited Wingrave to mark its Czech connections.

### **Round Aylesbury Walk**

A circular 20 km (12 mi) way-marked walk leading around Aylesbury.

### **Grand Union Canal (Aylesbury Arm)**

The Aylesbury Arm was opened in 1814 linking Aylesbury with the Grand Union Canal at Startop's End near Marsworth. Originally planned to carry on to the Thames at Abingdon, the route west of Aylesbury was never built due to strong resistance from landowners. It is built with particularly narrow locks, as water was precious to the Canal Company. Coal prices in Aylesbury reportedly halved upon the canal opening. In the early years traffic was brisk, with agricultural produce and livestock going out, coal and building materials coming in. The canal survived as a commercial route until the 1960s despite severe competition from the now dismantled Cheddington to Aylesbury railway. Afterwards the canal became neglected and was threatened with closure, but the Aylesbury Canal Society and British Waterways have since worked together to ensure a steady future.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the train in **Aylesbury Vale Parkway Station** on the single platform and walk around to the station building to exit into a car park. *Turn left* and cross a few lanes at pedestrian crossings and continue to a T-junction with a road. *Turn left* along it towards a large roundabout and in 80m – just before the roundabout – cross the road using a median to continue on the right-hand side of it. In 70m cross the **A41** at pedestrian lights and *turn right* along a wide tarmac pavement. You follow the A41 for 900m, ignoring all ways off and crossing **Paradise Orchard** (road) at a set of lights, past new housing estates, part of Aylesbury's ambitious growth plans. 20m before a bridge over the **River Thame**, with a large 'Aylesbury'-sign on the far side, *turn left* with a footpath signpost (in the tree on the left) over a two-railed wooden plank bridge across a brook and through a gap in bushes into a large riverside meadow, with the meandering river away on the right.

The right-of-way follows the river and then a tributary all the way to the far-right corner of this field. A shortcut is to head straight down the middle on a well-trodden path (35°) to pass close to a bend in the river in 225m (also close to a tarmac footpath). From there continue towards the far-right corner of the field 270m away. Leave the field by *turning right* through a metal gate and across a two-railed plank bridge across a **tributary of the Thame** 15m before a metal field gate. *Turn left* in a pasture with a yellow marker on a fence post on the other side of the bridge and keep the stream on your left (355°). In 300m leave the field in the far-left corner through a metal kissing gate and across a wooden plank bridge onto a tarmac track at a T-junction and *turn right* along it (due E). In 150m, tarmac track turns right.

You can now:

- Either follow the tarmac track (easier walking) to the right and then curve to the left with it around the fenced-in remains of **St. Peter's Chapel**, then past a small wooded area and curve to the left to a metal gate;
- or you can follow the public footpath and in 20m walk through a metal field gate or the metal gate next to it with a footpath marker indicating a right turn. In 30m turn right across a two-railed wooden plank bridge and walk through a wooden kissing gate into a grassy area with small but picturesque ruins: the fenced-in remains of **St. Peter's Chapel**, and the remaining earthworks of the lost medieval village and Tudor manor of **Quarrendon**. *Turn left* on a grassy strip with a hedge on the left and the fence on your right and in 50m cross a stile to the right of a metal field gate. Follow the fenced-in grassy path for 140m, climbing over a few low metal field gates on the way (the area is still used for sheep farming related activities), all the way to a junction with a tarmac track by a metal gate on the left.

Go through the metal gate to the left of a metal field gate into a pasture, and *turn right* with the boundary. In 50m *turn right* with a marker on a fence corner across a two-railed wooden plank bridge and a wooden kissing gate into a pasture. *Turn left* (35°) with more earthworks of a **lost medieval village** on the right. In 220m *turn left* through a metal kissing gate left of a metal field gate and *turn right* in the next field towards its right-hand corner. In 120m cross the raised **Berryfields Western Link Road** with gates and short tarmac tracks either side of the road. In 50m cross a stile to the right of a metal field gate and continue along a farm track. In 870m go through a gap to the left of a metal field gate onto a road, cross it and *turn left* along a path in its grassy margin. In 220m *turn right* with a footpath signpost to continue along the left-hand grassy margin of a large arable field. In 350m ignore a footpath turning left (often overgrown) into the neighbouring field.

In 150m *turn left* with the field boundary, in 110m go through a set of metal kissing gates either side of an un-railed plank bridge over a ditch, ignoring the footpath turning off right. Follow the left-hand boundary of this pasture, with the village of **Weedon** ahead on a rise and in 450m continue ahead into the narrowing field corner. In 45m and in another 35m you go through metal gates in this grassy strip. In 15m continue along a tarmac lane into the village, past some houses and the village pond. In 175m you reach the very early lunch pub **The Five Elms** on the left at a T-junction with a road. Cross the road and continue along the winding **High Street**.

[!] In 340m – just as the road starts to descend more steeply and in a right bend of the road – *fork left* along a gravel lane at a high red brick garden wall corner, with a green metal footpath signpost (240°). In 40m continue through a metal car gate. In 50m *turn right* at an unmarked footpath T-junction through a metal kissing gate and follow a path between trees and then the high garden walls of **Lilies** manor house (but do walk on for 10m to a metal field gate for views ahead to the **Second Boer War Memorial** on Coombe Hill in **The Chilterns** and half-right to the wooded hill harbouring **Waddesden Manor** [SWC Walk Haddenham to Aylesbury (via Waddesdon)]). In 155m you emerge in a grassy area and *veer right* with a marker post past a couple of more marker posts and in 40m walk through a wooden gate and down some steps onto a road. *Turn left* along it and in 70m continue along a gravel track past the entrance to **Lilies**. In 50m *turn right* with a marker post through a metal kissing gate and downhill through a wooded area. In 100m you emerge through a wooden kissing gate onto a road.

### Here you have a choice:

**For a shortcut** to Rowsham, *turn right* here (for details see the end of the main walk directions under **Shortcut I**).

**For the main walk**, cross the road to continue through a wooden kissing gate with a two-way signpost (**The Aylesbury Ring** joins from the right) into a field and follow its left-hand boundary fence. In 250m *turn left* with an **Aylesbury Ring** marker through a wooden kissing gate and across a plank into dense boundary growth to then continue through a grassy area and in 50m go over a two-railed plank bridge across a stream (you have walked next to this same stream near **Quarrendon** medieval village) into a grassy field. Walk uphill to the top-left field corner with a church tower behind it, go through a metal kissing gate and follow a grassy path to in 55m walk up some steps into the churchyard of **St. Mary the Virgin, Hardwick with Weedon**. *Bear right* through the churchyard on a tarmac path with a fence on the right and in 45m *turn right* down some steps into a grassy area towards a road. Cross the road and a triangular green and continue along a gravel lane to **Moor House**. In 50m *veer left* past the house – now on a gravel path, in 80m *turn left* at a T-junction with a tarmac path and in 35m *turn right* into a car park and towards a road. In 40m *turn right* along the road and in 20m reach a T-junction opposite **Hardwick Old Chapel**.

### Here you have a choice:

**For a shortcut** to Aston Abbotts, *turn right* here (but be aware that your first lunch option is 40m to the left [the other lunch option is 4.8 km away]). For details see the end of the main walk directions under **Shortcut II**.

**For the main walk**, *turn left* along **Lower Road** and in 40m pass the early lunch stop **The Bell at Hardwick**. In 90m you reach the **A413** by a **bus stop for services to Aylesbury** (or Whitchurch) and *turn right* along the grassy pavement.

In 330m *turn left* and cross the road by a footpath signpost on the other side, and walk through a high gate in a wooden fence to the right of the metal car gate to **Millpeace Farm**, and then through a metal kissing gate into a pasture. *Turn half right* towards a metal gate in a fence (335°) and in 90m go through it and continue in the same direction to a metal gate in a hedge 20m to the left of a metal field gate in 210m. Cross a tarmac lane and go through a metal gate opposite into a pasture and *veer left* to just to the left of a **red brick sheep shack** (320°) and in 190m go through a set of metal gates in a hedge into a smaller pasture. Continue broadly in the same direction through a metal-and-wood kissing gate in 110m and then in 120m cross a set of stiles either side of an un-railed wooden plank bridge into the next field to follow its left-hand boundary. In 210m leave the field over a stile and an un-railed wooden plank bridge in the corner, ignore a footpath over a stile on the left and cross a stile ahead and continue along the left-hand boundary of the next pasture.

Up on the right, you can see some of the houses of **Whitchurch**. In 90m a footpath joins from the right down the hill. **[!]** *Turn left* over a set of stiles either side of a plank bridge into another grassy field with three footpath markers pointing across the field. Ignore the path straight ahead and the furthest right following the stream, *but head half right uphill* (340°) to the left of a fence corner and to the right of a house. In 180m continue ahead through a metal kissing gate along a narrow path and in 65m emerge on a lane. *Turn right* along the lane and in 20m *turn right* again at a three-way junction along another tarmac lane with an **Outer Aylesbury Ring** signpost on the left, now with what's left of the earthworks of the **Bolebec Castle** mound on the right (the historic site of the castle also extends on the left side of the road). In 110m pass a display panel for the castle and in 5m *turn right* through a wooden kissing gate with a footpath signpost. Continue downhill (150°), with the site of **Bolebec Castle** now on your right and gardens below on the left.

In 90m you cross an un-railed wooden plank bridge over a stream running from a spring up on the castle site. *Veer left* and in 35m go over a stile and a railed plank bridge over a stream and continue along a fenced-in grassy path (115°), with gardens on the left. In 60m, by a marker post, *fork right* and in 15m go down some steps towards an un-railed plank bridge over a stream and then back up and over a stile into a pasture to follow its left-hand boundary. In 50m cross a stile into horse paddocks and in 40m walk through a wooden gate *into a horse exercising area* to cross it towards the far-right corner. Leave through another wooden gate and in 10m go over a stile in some bushes into a field. In 60m leave it in the top-left corner through a metal kissing gate onto a gravel lane. *Turn left* up the lane (**Keinches Lane**). In 120m, at a T-junction with the main road through **Whitchurch**, *turn right* along the pavement. Pass a service station and a bus stop and in 85m cross the road opposite the possible lunch stop **The White Swan** (the **bus stop for services to Aylesbury** is further along the road).

Continue with a footpath signpost along a path to the left of the pub, soon with the pub garden on your right behind a wall. In 65m a path joins from the left, the fenced-in path swings to the right, and you cross a stile into a pasture and follow its right-hand boundary, with gardens on the right. In 110m go over a stile and continue with a high wooden fence on the left. In 90m *turn left* along a road pavement. Cross the road where the tarmac pavement ends in 150m. In 35m *turn right* with a footpath signpost along a car wide grassy track between hedges. Swing left with the path and cross a stile to the left of a wooden field gate into a large arable field to follow its left-hand grassy boundary (105°). For the next 1 kilometre, walk through four different fields, always along the left-hand grassy boundary, with **views** to the right **back** to **Hardwick** and **Weedon**, and eventually (from the third field) with the 1960s-built, Grade II-listed, high-rise, Brutalist Bucks Council County Hall near Aylesbury station behind trees near Weedon as well as to the **Chilterns Hills** in the distance.

In the bottom-left corner of the downwards sloping fourth field – just after passing a ruined red brick farm outbuilding on the left and about 50m before the field corner – the right-of-way leads through an overgrown area, but the field boundary skirts this so follow it, and then bear left to the field corner. Go over a stile and a plank bridge in the corner into the next field. (The area immediately in front of it can be very muddy, in which case you should use a gap in the boundary hedge 55m to the right of the field corner and *turn left* to the field corner). The right-of-way leads towards a hedge gap to the right of an electricity pole on the far side of the field (115°), but the farmer may have ploughed a path further ahead along the left-hand boundary. In 400m, follow a marker on the electricity pole through the gap and continue in the same direction (115°) through the next field on a usually well-cleared path. In 280m a footpath joins from the right behind across the field. This is Shortcut II.

**\*)** Cross a two-railed wooden plank bridge over a stream and *turn right* on a snaking path through dense growth. In 100m emerge on a field boundary and continue in the same direction along a usually well-cleared path. In 95m continue through a gap in the boundary into a larger field to continue in the same direction (80°) along a usually well-cleared path, towards a hedge gap and to the right of a line of electricity poles (or skirt it left along the grassy margin). In 590m leave the field across a wooden plank over a ditch to the left of the hedge gap into another field. *Veer left* uphill on a usually clear path (70°). In 200m go through a grassy strip and over a wooden plank bridge, then through a metal kissing gate, into a pasture and *veer right* uphill (75°) towards the left-hand end of a row of trees on the crest of this hill. In 160m walk through a wooden field gate and in 110m leave the field through a metal gate in the top far-right corner and then through a metal gate into some horse paddocks by **Norduck Farm**.

*Turn left* along a fence past the farm house and work your way through a few gates with yellow markers parallel to the farm buildings on your left, at long last into a wide grassy area with a gravel track 20m on the left. In 60m another footpath joins from left a set of metal gates. In 60m *turn right* through a boundary growth gap into a large arable field. Continue half left across the field on a usually well-cleared path (105°). In 300m leave the field through a wooden gate to cross a gravel track and continue through a metal kissing gate with a footpath marker through a wooded area and in 35m cross a stile into a large grassy area, with the village of **Aston Abbots** on the other side of it. Continue in the same direction, in 120m walk through a metal kissing gate, with a small mansion house (**The Abbey**) on the right and head to the right of a large red brick building. In 270m leave the field through a metal kissing gate onto a gravel drive and follow it to the village green, split into triangular pieces by an elaborate three-way road junction.

*Veer right* to cross a first road (signed 'Weedon 2 ½ (Gated Road)') and then *bear right* along **Wingrave Road**, signed 'Wingrave 1 ¼, Aylesbury 5 ½, Leighton Buzzard 6 ¼'. In 80m, you pass a **bus stop for services to Aylesbury (Line 165)** and in another 20m **The Green** (a road) turns right.

- **For the late lunch option, The Royal Oak Inn**, continue ahead to reach the pub in 150m on the left. After lunch return to this point.
- **For Bus Lines 100, 101 and 150 to Aylesbury**, continue past the pub for another kilometre to the junction with the **A418 (Wingrave Cross Roads)**.
- **To continue the walk, turn right along The Green.**

In 105m *turn left* into a cul-de-sac called **Brictock**, soon passing **Nashs Farm** (cul-de-sac). In 40m walk through a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate into a grassy recreation ground and *veer left* past a playground (155°) to leave the area through a hedge gap and through a metal kissing gate into a field. Follow its right-hand boundary and in 110m go through a metal kissing gate into a wooded area and continue along its right-hand edge. In 110m leave the wood through a fence gap in its far-right corner and



cross a field to a point 20m left of its far-right corner (150°). In 300m leave the field through a metal kissing gate and cross a few smaller grassy areas to the right of some farm buildings using a couple of stiles. Follow the left-hand grassy boundary of the next large field to its far-left corner and in 290m go through a wooden kissing gate to the right of two metal field gates and continue in the same direction in the next field.

Glimpse views through gaps in the hedge on the left to the **White Lion of Whipsnade Zoo**, cut into the chalk of the **Dunstable Downs** in 1933, about 3 km east of the end of the Ridgeway Long Distance Path at Ivinghoe Beacon and also to the hilltop village of **Wingrave**, and on the right along **The Chilterns** all the way to Aylesbury and the Boer War Memorial on Coombe Hill behind it. In 230m leave this field through a metal kissing gate left of a metal field gate and descend through the next field. In 200m leave it through a metal field gate and *veer left* to a stile in the garden fence of a house (160°). In 290m you cross the stile and then a wooden gate in the garden and follow a fence on the left. At the fence corner *veer left* towards the far-left corner of this field and exit it over a stile onto the **A418**. Cross the road and *turn right* along the pavement into **Rowsham**, in 110m passing a **bus stop for services to Aylesbury**. *Turn left* into **Bennetts Lane** where the A-road turns right. In 60m *turn left* with the lane, in 135m ignore a footpath ahead through a wooden kissing gate, **[!]** but *turn right* along a gravel driveway to **Seabrook Farm** (there are gates to the left of the automatic car gate). In 90m the **Aylesbury Ring** joins from the right through a hedge by a marker post. This is Shortcut I. *Turn left* through a metal gate into a paddock.

**\*\***) You cross the field towards a metal gate 30m away (170°). *Veer left* in the next pasture (155°) towards the left of a double metal field gate on the brow of the field. There, go through a metal gate and continue in the same direction to leave the next field over a set of metal gates either side of a wooden plank bridge in a narrow hedge gap. At the bottom of the next field are the upper reaches of the **River Thame**, which is flood prone here.

- If the **bridge** over the river or (more likely) already the path to the bridge itself are **impassable**: retrace your steps to **Rowsham** and take the bus to Aylesbury (or walk along the A418 into Aylesbury), as there is no sensible alternative crossing from here, and subsequent fields are likely to be equally flooded to make further walking unsafe.
- Else cross this field (including a couple of auxiliary overflow rivulets) *veering right* (due S) towards and over a two-railed plank bridge over the Thame.

Ignore a footpath straight ahead and *veer right* (210°) to cross another plank bridge over a ditch in 40m. *Veer right* (235°) and in 80m pass through a gap in a hedge and then pass a bend in the river and in 35m cross a stile in a hedge gap to continue in the same direction through the next pasture. In 170m leave this field in its far-left corner through a metal gate followed by a wooden plank bridge and go through thick greenery. In 15m emerge from the bushes into trees and **[!]** *turn right* immediately. In 45m leave the trees through a wooden field gate into a pasture by a yellow marker on a post. In 100m continue in the same direction through fence gap and initially follow a car wide gravel track to the right of a fence. You leave this long field in 170m in the far narrow corner through a metal kissing gate and cross a plank over a ditch into a grassy area.

Continue through a **nursery**, in 20m staying to the left of a wooden shed with a marker post and along a gravel path. In 20m continue between rows of potted trees (rows 'A7' and 'A8'). In 125m go through a wooden gate and over a plank bridge onto a tarmac lane and *turn right* along it (ignore the footpath ahead). In 150m cross the **A418** into another tarmac lane (**Cane End Lane**) and **[!]** *turn left* immediately to in 10m go over a two-railed wooden plank bridge and through a wooden gate into some grassy fields. Cross three grassy fields, with two metal gates and a double stile along the way (190°). In the far-right corner of the third field a footpath joins from the left. Cross into a larger

grassy field and follow a fenced path to its far-right corner (200°) and in 360m go over a stile onto a road. Cross the road a little to the left and go over a stile with a 'Circular Walk' signpost and follow a young hedge on the left along a grass path. You are now passing most of the village of **Bierton** to its right, away from the A418.

In 130m go over a two-railed plank bridge and through a metal gate and *veer right* in a pasture. In 75m go through a metal gate and follow a fenced path for 65m, going through two metal gates. *Veer to the left* through a pasture and in 125m go through a wooden gate in a garden fence. *Turn right* through a metal gate and continue with gardens to the left, in 50m going through a metal gate and 60m through another one. In 35m you pass a two-way signpost by a tarmac lane on the left (**Brick Kiln Lane**, leading to the A418, where you'd find **The Bell** pub 150m to the left). Continue with **Bierton Lakes** (fishing ponds) on the right behind trees. In 140m continue in the same direction, ignoring a right fork by a footpath marker post, and in 75m cross a tarmac lane to continue through a metal gate and along a fenced path. In 30m continue in the same direction along a residential road at a three-way junction and 55m go through a metal kissing gate by a signpost. Walk along a left-hand pasture boundary and in 55m through a metal field gate. In 40m continue to the right of a hedge at a corner and in 55m go over a stile to go along a fenced path to the left of allotments. In 110m *turn left* at a T-junction with **Great Lane**.

In 140m, by **The Red Lion** pub (currently closed) on the right, cross the **A418** at a T-junction and *turn right* along the opposite pavement, in 40m passing **St. James the Great, Bierton** church. In 55m, so 25m *before* a **bus stop for services to Aylesbury**, *turn left* along St. Osyth's Well (lane). The **Round Aylesbury Walk** has joined from along the road. In 35m you pass **St. Osyth's Well**, with an info panel and some benches, on the right and then go through a metal kissing gate to follow the left-hand boundary of a large pasture. In 250m go through a metal kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate and follow another left-hand field boundary. In 130m, go through a metal kissing gate (ignore a footpath to the right) onto **Burcott Lane** at a bend.

*Turn left* along the lane, initially without a pavement or verge. In 80m a couple of footpaths join from the left and you continue along the left-hand pavement. In 150m, *turn right* with a Round Aylesbury Walk signpost along a gravel path, between small industrial buildings on the right and a new school on the left. In 300m cross a tarmac lane (to the right, about 300m away, you find **The Dog House** pub), and continue in the same direction with a footpath signpost either side of a line of trees along a new residential road in the **Oakfield Village** part of Aylesbury's latest expansion into the countryside. In 200m continue through the gated **Central Square Playground** and in 30m cross a road and go through a small gated park. In 40m cross a road and continue between houses and in 50m cross a road and continue along **Puddle End** cul-de-sac. In 50m cross **Marsworth Drive** and in 15m you reach a gravel path at a T-junction by **Oakfield Lake**. A raised arched bridge is visible across the lake (foliage permitting).

*Turn left* along the gravel path along the lake and in 125m *turn hard right* through the grass, curving right with the path and along the lake, towards the arched bridge. Cross the bridge over the **Aylesbury Arm of the Grand Union Canal** and swing right with the path ignoring a gate leading into a pasture. You join the **canal towpath** and *turn left* along the towpath towards Aylesbury (due W, i.e.: with the water on the right). Follow the towpath for 2.5 km, passing under **five bridges** in the process, initially with green areas on both sides (some of them flood protection catchment areas for **Bear Brook** (another Thame tributary), which then joins on the left to flow parallel to the canal for a while, before flowing away to the right under the canal, into Aylesbury Centre and past the railway station) and finally through built-up areas.]

[!] 120m after passing under the fifth bridge (number 18), and 300m *before reaching the end of the canal* at Aylesbury basin, **walk up some steps onto a footbridge** (number 19: Highbridge) and *turn right* across it, with a sign for 'Town Centre' on a street light pole on the left. Pass houses on the right on **Willowbank Terrace** and continue along a paved path (**Highbridge Walk**). In 60m cross the **Bear Brook** on a two-railed wooden bridge. In 90m reach a T-junction with a main road (**Exchange Street**). *Turn left* past a bus stop and in 110m by the **Aylesbury Waterside Theatre** *turn right* to cross the road at a pedestrian crossing. Continue to the right of **The White Hart** (Wetherspoon) and in 80m *turn left* around a **Costa Coffee**. You pass several dining options on the left and right and in 70m *turn right* to in 50m walk through the arches of the **Corn Exchange** onto **Market Square**, with the **Crown Court** building on the left (host to trials of the Great Train Robbers and of Keith Richards).

**For other tea options:**

- you'll find chain pubs (**The Bell** [Wetherspoon] on the left and **The Green Man** on the right, but currently closed) and some cafés around the square and at the top of it, in a cobbled court yard, the recommended medieval coaching inn, **The King's Head**, NT-owned but managed by **Chiltern Brewery** as their taproom.
- for more options, leave the square in its top-right corner at a five-way road junction (with **The Harrow** 20m on the right), into **Kingsbury**, a quieter square with an elaborate Water Clock, as well as several cafés, pubs and restaurants out through the top-right corner of the square, or to the left, off the square), or go down left along **Temple Street** for the **Temple Street Wine Bar** in the rooms of the former **Aylesbury Literary Club**.

**For the railway station** *turn left*, and follow signs under Friars Square shopping mall, then past the Central Bus Station on the left and across a busy road junction to reach **Aylesbury Station** in another 120m.

## Shortcut I

(cut 6.2 km distance and 84m ascent; lunch is in Weedon)

**Not recommended for walkers averse to arable field crossings!**

Head uphill and in 120m pass an entrance sign for **Weedon**. Continue uphill and *turn right* with the road. In 140m *turn left* off the road at a corner of the red brick garden wall of **Lilies** manor with a footpath marker through a wooden gate into a car wide grassy path between hedges (80°). In 140m (and 30m before reaching a metal field gate) *turn right* through an easy-to-miss hedge gap and a wooden fence into a pasture. In 40m reach a corner with a garden on the right behind a metal field gate and allotments on the left and continue in the same direction with a hedge on the right. In 40m cross a stile into a small vineyard (**Manor Fields Vineyard**) and continue in the same direction. In 100m descend towards a stile and cross it into a fenced-in path. In 20m you go over stiles either side of a track into a garden and ascend towards its top right corner (170°). In 90m go over a stile into a fenced-in path and in 50m cross another stile into a large field.

Walk to a stile about half way along the right-hand boundary (100°). In 200m go over the stile into a fenced-in path and in 20m *turn left* along a grassy road verge. In 350m, 10m after passing the driveway to **Shepherds House** on the right, *turn right* over a stile in some bushy growth into a grassy field. *Veer left* downhill (120°), walk through a gate in a fence line, and in 290m cross a stile in a fence into an adjacent field and continue in the same direction on a usually well-cleared path. In 275m cross a stile by an oak tree and *veer left* in the next field (105°) towards the left of two medium height trees. In 220m leave the field through a hedge gap and continue through the next field in the same direction on a usually well-cleared path. In 560m leave this field through a metal gate and *veer left* with a bridleway marker through the next field (80°). In 320m leave through a hedge gap and *veer right* in the next field (100°) over the crest of the field and then towards a protruding corner. In 400m walk through a metal gate into a grassy field and follow its left-hand boundary.

In 200m walk through a metal gate into an arable field's corner and *veer left* towards a wooden field gate in a hedge gap opposite (75°). In 340m go through the gate and continue towards red brick farm buildings. Leave the field through remnants of a field gate and in 70m walk through a wooden gate into the farm yard. Follow a lane through the farm buildings and *turn right* along the lane. In 115m *turn left* along a road. In 50m you *turn right* to cross the road and climb over a stile into a grassy field to follow its left-hand boundary. In 90m, at a fence corner on the left, *veer left* with a footpath marker on an electricity pole towards the far right corner of this field (110°). In 140m you cross a stile in the boundary hedge and then an un-railed steel plank bridge over a ditch into a grassy strip. The main walk joins from the left along a gravel track. Continue through a metal kissing gate 10m away on the other side of the gravel track into a grassy field and join the main walk directions at the double asterisk \*\*).

## Shortcut II

(cut 2.8 km distance and 51m ascent; lunch is in Hardwick or Aston Abbotts)

Head along the road and in 175m continue in the same direction along a gravel track, where the road turns right. Follow this track for 1.5 km to a gap in a field boundary. *Veer left* across the field (70°) and in 330m reach a wooden bridge. The main walk joined from the left behind across the field.

Join the main walk directions at the asterisk \*).