

Bow Brickhill to Leighton Buzzard walk

The Greensand Ridge, River Ouzel and Grand Union Canal



The Greensand Ridge & River Ouzel

Length 14.7km (9.1 miles), 4 hours. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8 hours.

Toughness 2 out of 10 (4 out of 10 in winter when muddy and fields are waterlogged).

OS Maps Explorer 192 or Landranger 165. Bow Brickhill, map reference SP 896 347, is in **Buckinghamshire**, 9km north of Leighton Buzzard, which is in **Bedfordshire**.

Features This is a short and straightforward walk. After Back Wood and its sequoia trees, this walk heads south through Duncombe Wood to a pub for lunch in Great Brickhill. After lunch the route joins the Greensand Ridge Walk, with fine views out over the River Ouzel, and on to a pub for tea on the Grand Union Canal. You then continue along the towpath beside the canal into Leighton Buzzard.

In the autumn of 2016 the paths through Back Wood, 1 km into the walk, were badly churned up by tracked vehicles working on some extensive tree felling in the woods, rendering some paths impassable. Come 2019 the paths had almost fully recovered and since Spring 2020 they are back in good order - just muddy in winter !.

We recommend you leave Euston at least 10 mins earlier than the train timetable suggests, as trains on the Bedford branch line are hourly, and so it is a long wait if you miss the connection at Bletchley, which happens when the London train runs late, which it has an unfortunate tendency to do. If you do miss the connection, and do not wish to wait for the next Bedford train, we suggest you 'phone for taxis - the cost is affordable when shared. We do not recommend starting your walk from Bletchley station, as there are no pleasant routes to connect with the main directions.

Walk Options

There are infrequent buses - about three times a day - from the lunchtime pub in Great Brickhill to Leighton Buzzard or Bletchley. You could call a taxi from Great Brickhill or from the teatime pub near Leighton Buzzard. An alternative route to join the Grand Union Canal late in the walk is provided for winter if the meadows on the main route below the canal are waterlogged or flooded.

History

Lower Greensand is very different from the surrounding claylands and consists of marine sands with few fossils - a terrain that supports a tree population dominated by pine.

Great Brickhill was a centre of the curious coprolite industry: the mining of phosphatic nodules used to manufacture super-phosphatic fertiliser.

The Globe Inn, the suggested teatime stop, was first licensed in 1830 as a beer shop to serve passing trade on the Grand Union Canal.

Travel

Take the train nearest to **9.30am** from **Euston** Station to **Bow Brickhill**, changing at Bletchley on to the Bedford branch line. Journey time about 1 hour. Trains back from Leighton Buzzard to Euston run about three times an hour. Journey time 35-50 minutes. Buy a day return to Bow Brickhill. Note that there is currently no train service on the Bletchley-Bedford branch line on Sundays.

Lunch

The suggested lunch stop is the **Old Red Lion** pub (tel 01525 261715) in Great Brickhill. Post Covid, 2021, lunch (good classic pub grub plus specials) is served on Wednesday to Saturday (closed Monday and Tuesday) from 11 am to 3.15 pm, and all afternoon on Sundays. The pub has a beer garden (part covered) at the back from which you can enjoy lovely views over a valley to the west.

An alternative to the Old Red Lion, and some 2.5 km further into the walk, is **Tree Tops Cafe** in Rushmere Country Park. This pleasant cafe in a nice setting is open from 10 am until 4 pm in winter and until 5 pm in summer and on bank holidays. On offer are sandwiches, baguettes, baked spuds, salads, burgers and hot dishes of the day.

Tea The suggested tea place is the **Globe Inn** (tel 01525 373338) on the Grand Union Canal, about half an hour before walk-end in Leighton Buzzard. The pub serves drinks daily until late and food all afternoon on most days of the week.

There are slim pickings for tea in the centre of Leighton Buzzard, although you pass the Buckingham Arms pub on your way to, and just before you reach, the railway station.

Updates Treetops cafe added as a lunch option, March 2020. This edition following Book check and walk update November 2021.

Help Us! After the walk, we would love to get your [feedback](#)

You can upload photos to the [SWC Group on Flickr](#) (upload your photos) and [videos to Youtube](#). This walk's tags are:



By Car **Start** MK17 9JN **Finish** LU7 2LY

Help National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Travelline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

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Walk Directions

- [1]** Coming off the platform of **Bow Brickhill railway station** *turn left* southwards, back over the railway level crossing, on the road V10 Brickhill Street.
- In 70 metres you come to a mini-roundabout. Ignore the turn left towards Bow Brickhill, cross over and keep ahead along the grass verge on the left-hand side of the busy Brickhill Road.

3. In 65 metres take the signposted footpath to **[!]** *the left* over a stile, turning right then immediately left, to continue ahead, due east, on a car-wide grassy way, with the field edge on your right-hand side and a post and wire fence on your left-hand side. In 345 metres cross a farm track to continue straight on through a wooden kissing gate, on a path between fences and houses.
4. In 40 metres this path comes out on to an estate road and you keep straight on up this road, gently uphill, ignoring a turn-off to the left. In 170 metres you come to a T-junction where you *go right*, your direction 150°. In 45 metres pick up a signposted path to continue in your previous direction (105°).
5. In 25 metres go through a wooden kissing gate, swing right, then left, to continue in the same direction as before, ignoring the grassy path to your right, across a field of mounds (a remnant of the old ridge-and-furrow field system). In 55 metres, at a path junction, keep ahead, with the field edge on your left-hand side, your direction 120°.
6. In 80 metres go over a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate (or pass through the fieldgate when open) and keep straight on between timber fences. The path soon starts to go uphill.
7. In 260 metres, by a three-armed footpath sign on your left (obscured by bushes in summer), **[2]** follow a bridleway sign to *the right*, upwards on an earth car road, your direction 160°. In 30 metres ignore forks off to the left (the routes for Walk 17 – Bow Brickhill to Woburn Sands) and *bear right (almost straight ahead)* on the earth car road, with a view to the right over Bletchley and with **Back Wood** on your left-hand side.
8. In 290 metres ignore an avenue off to the left and go straight on, with woods (some cleared) on both sides. In 2016 this earth car road was badly churned up during tree felling operations: fortunately come summer 2019 the way has fully recovered and it is passable once again. Continue ahead, gently uphill and in 270 metres ignore a footpath on the left, steeply uphill, marked by a yellow arrow. The track now starts to go downhill and in a further 60 metres ignore an unmarked earth road turning on the left uphill and instead **[!]** *swing right* on what is now a grassy track, downhill, your initial direction 230°.
9. In 220 metres, as you go downhill through a potentially muddy stretch, ignore a possible way off to the left (by a corner fencepost) to follow the blue arrow straight on, downhill, your direction 170°.
10. In 80 metres, at what seems like a T-junction, near the bottom and 5 metres before you reach a fieldgate and stile which exit the wood, **[!]** you *turn left* on a bridleway going gently uphill, marked by a yellow arrow on a post, your direction due east.
11. In 200 metres **[3]** at a cross paths **[!]** *turn sharp right* (almost turning back on yourself) on a car-wide, grassy bridleway, your direction 200°. In 12 metres the bridleway path swings to the right, and you keep ahead.

- L2. In 475 metres, with ponds on your right-hand side, cross a footpath (ignoring a footbridge away to your right-hand side) to keep straight on, eastwards. In 185 metres keep straight on, ignoring ways off uphill to the left, with sequoia trees now visible ahead on your right-hand side.
- L3. **[*]** Book 1 Walks 17 and 41 join here. In 60 metres ignore a footpath uphill on the left, marked by a yellow arrow and *go right*, continuing on the bridleway, over a stream (dried up in summer) and keep ahead, uphill, your direction 120°.
- L4. In 150 metres you can touch the soft and furry bark of the sequoia trees on the right-hand side of the path. Keep ahead, ignoring all ways off, and in 200 metres you come out into an open area. Ignore a footpath stairway up to the left and keep ahead, uphill.
- L5. In 225 metres go through a metal swing gate, with a metal fieldgate to its left, to come out on to a main road, where you *turn left*, your direction 125°. Ignore a road to the left which is signposted Woburn Golf Club.
- L6. Continue on the main road and in 50 metres *go right* on a signposted footpath over a stile, your direction 200°, and ahead through a pine wood. In 210 metres you cross a grassy path to keep straight on. In a further 130 metres cross a stile with a wooden fieldgate to its left to leave the wood.
- L7. Continue straight ahead on along the right-hand edge of an open field, in 55 metres passing a pond and a stile to the right-hand side, which you ignore. The field edge bends to the right and left and in a further 250 metres (the field edge having continued parallel to the A5 road for some 100 metres) *turn right* to go through a six metre wide gap in the hedge marking the field boundary.
- L8. Keep the hedge on your right-hand side for 40 metres until you reach a track beside the A5 road. *Turn left* parallel to the road, your direction 155°. In 65 metres you pass a footpath sign on your right-hand side and in a further 150 metres the track passes through a field boundary.
- L9. In 50 metres you reach a part-hidden stile on your right-hand side. **[!]** Cross over the stile and cross in turn the two carriageways of the busy A5 road *with extreme care*.
- L10. On the far side of the A5, beside an interesting milestone, go straight on across a stile to cross a minor road. Continue ahead through a gateway to cross a house drive (Wood Lodge), your direction 230°.
- L11. Go through a wooden swing gate, with a hedge arch over, into **Duncombe Wood** (as marked on the OS map) to go straight ahead on a broad, grassy track, following a yellow arrow (the Duncombes used to be the most important family in the area). In 280 metres go to the right-hand side of a fenced-in pond and keep straight on, ignoring a minor fork to the right.
- L12. In 165 metres you ignore a fork to the right to bear slightly left with the main path, following a yellow arrow, your direction 195°. In 175 metres **[4]** go through the frame

- of a wooden kissing gate (gate missing November 2021) on to an earth car road where you go straight on, your direction 205°.
23. In 400 metres you pass the entrance to a farm on your left-hand side. In 225 metres you enter the outskirts of **Great Brickhill**. In 30 metres, by a public footpath sign, and 20 metres before the main road T-junction, *turn left* on a residential road, your direction 210°.
24. In 210 metres, at the end of the road, take the concrete pathway with railings down to the right. Continue straight on uphill, on the more main road, your direction 215°.
25. In 40 metres **[5]** ignore a footpath to the left and Rotten Row to the right, to go over the brow of the hill and down Pound Hill to the **Old Red Lion** pub, the suggested lunch stop, visible 270 metres ahead at the bottom of the hill on the right-hand side of the road.
26. Coming out of the pub after lunch, cross straight over the main road to continue on Heath Road, signposted to Heath and Reach and to Leighton Buzzard. In 55 metres *fork right*, downhill on Cuff Lane, your direction 140°. In 110 metres the lane narrows to become a track and in 70 metres ignore a footpath sign and stile to the right to keep straight on, your direction 155°.
27. In 100 metres you pass the entrance to a sewage treatment plant on your left-hand side. The track is now a footpath and in 55 metres go over a stream on a plank bridge. In 15 metres **[6]** go straight on through a wooden swing gate, your direction 195°, on a way marked CW into woods, ignoring a fork uphill to the left. On your right is a "Welcome to Rushmere Country Park" sign.
28. In 200 metres ignore a path heading downhill on your right (marked with a Mountain Bike Trail disc). Keep ahead uphill and in a further 100 metres, at a path junction, **[!]** *take the fork slightly to the right* (almost straight on), to follow a Millennium Walk arrow. In 150 metres you cross a path to go straight on downhill. The path drops steeply and after 115 metres, at a four-armed footpath sign, follow the yellow arrow ahead for the Bucks Circular walk or Greensand Ridge Walk (GRW) sign; the common markings for the Greensand Ridge Walk are either the letters GRW or the muntjac deer symbol.
29. In 160 metres you pass a pond on your left-hand side to go over a stream. Note the decorative log carving and seat on your right-hand side. Ignore a fork left to go *straight on, uphill*, following a CR arrow. In 15 metres go through a wooden kissing gate and keep ahead, uphill, along the right-hand edge of the wood, with open fields over to your right behind the fenceline. In a further 170 metres, by marker posts, ignore a fork to the left which heads up to a car park - and keep ahead, following GRW and CW arrows straight on, still along the right-hand edge of the wood, now through an avenue of oak trees. In 160 metres you ignore a metal kissing gate on the right and a path up to the left, and pass another Rushmere Country Park sign. In a further 150 metres you come out of the woods for a time, to continue ahead.

30. In 200 metres, you come to a major path junction, with the Park's main car park visible over to your left. If you wish to take a late lunch at **Tree Tops Cafe** in the Park, turn left towards the car park and to the cafe. After lunch, return to this path junction. [!] At this junction of paths, you have a solitary unmarked footpath post ahead of you. [!] Ignore the first and second turnings on your right, which head downhill, and instead *take the third path on the right (almost straight on)*, some 15 metres ahead of you, passing to the left of the solitary unmarked footpath post, your direction 145 degrees.
31. In 200 metres ignore a turning to the left and keep ahead, downhill, your direction now 120°. In a further 150 metres, by a two-armed footpath sign [7], *turn right* onto an initially indistinct path into woods, your direction 175°. (Note: if you miss this turn, in 100 metres you will come down to a tarmac lane, where you can turn right, to connect up with the woodland path on your right just before the Park lodge building ahead of you). The path through the woods becomes clearer as it winds and undulates and in 300 metres you have a wooden post and rail fence on your left, with Sequoia trees and a lake also on your left-hand side. In a further 140 metres you come out through a kissing gate onto a tarmac road and follow the CW arrows and deer signs *left*, your direction 135°, walking on Bragenham Lane. In 25 metres you come to the main road, with the gateway to Rushmere Park on your left-hand side.
32. At the main road, *turn right*, then in 15 metres, *go left*, opposite Rushmere House, to pick up the Greensand Ridge Walk signpost, up wooden steps past a barrier, into the beech woods. You then follow the path *right*, your direction 235°, parallel to the road below on your right-hand side.
33. Follow deer signs along this woodland path and in 340 metres exit the woods and follow the deer signs *left*, uphill, on a grassy way, your direction 135°, with the edge of the wood on your left-hand side. In 145 metres ignore a turning left, back into the woods, and pass a bench seat on your left. In a further 30 metres, at the end of the field, bend left, with your main path, up into the wood, your direction 85°. In 25 metres, at a cross paths, with a post on your left-hand side, *turn right* on the path going steeply downhill towards the river, your direction 150°.
34. In 70 metres [8] you come down to within 50 metres of the River Ouzel, to reach a clear, broad and level path where you *turn left*, your direction 110°. Stay on this path and in 500 metres go past a barrier to come out on to an earthen driveway and go uphill, your direction 160°.
35. In 150 metres you come to Corbetts Hill Farm.
36. Here you have a choice, the main route, or a wet weather diversion. In winter, the field just before the canal is often waterlogged or flooded and is impassable for those not wearing wellington boots. The alternative route from Corbetts Hill farm is dry under foot and joins up with the main route at Leighton Lock on the Grand Union Canal

37. **To follow the wet weather diversion.** Instead of turning right over the cattle grid, *keep ahead*, your direction 140°. Follow this path, through a wooded area, soon downhill with close boarded or metal fences enclosing the path. In 480 metres, the path comes out into a residential cul-de-sac (Firs Path). Keep ahead and in 60 metres at the junction with the main road (Plantation Road) *turn right*, gently uphill. In 225 metres you pass Badgers Brook road on your right. In a further 35 metres follow the signpost *on your right-hand side* "Riverside Walk" on a surfaced path which winds down to a wooden footbridge, over the River Ouzel, which you cross. Keep ahead through a metal kissing gate and *turn right*, your initial bearing 350°, to cross a field on a clear path. In 220 metres, on the far side of the field, pass through a wooden kissing gate to join the tarmac towpath to the Grand Union Canal with Leighton Lock on your right-hand side (point 9 below). Turn right, 600 metres along the towpath, for tea at the Globe Inn, or to continue on the main walk, turn left.
38. **To follow the main route:** *turn right* over a cattle grid (or go through the metal kissing gate next to it) onto a tarmac lane signposted Greensand Ridge Walk, downhill. Continue down the tarmac lane. In 100 metres ignore a short cut path straight on across the grassy field along the line of telegraph poles, and keep ahead, down the lane. In a further 160 metres, with a stile in the boundary and deer signs on your left **[9]** *fork right* off the path, across the grassy field, your direction 310°, aiming for a footbridge, with Linlade Church visible in the distance ahead.
39. In 190 metres you cross the **River Ouzel** on the bridge, on the other side *turning left* along its banks, your direction 240°. In 50 metres you cross a stream-bed on a plank bridge to carry on with the river on your left-hand side.
40. In 220 metres you come to a marker post marked with a yellow top **[!]** where you *keep ahead* (slightly right) across a field, often waterlogged in winter, aiming for a wooden plank bridge in the field boundary ahead, your direction 200°. In 150 metres *turn left* to cross the wood plank bridge, 60 metres in length, with a handrail on its left-hand side and at its far side follow the path ahead, with a field hedge on your right-hand side, your direction due east.
41. In 80 metres, go up a bank to exit the field through a metal kissing gate on your right-hand side onto a tarmac lane. *Turn left*, along the tarmac towpath to the **Grand Union Canal** coming in 80 metres to the suggested tea place, the **Globe Inn**.
42. After tea, *turn left*, and continue along the towpath, with the canal on your right-hand side.
43. In 600 metres, you pass **Leighton Lock [10]**. The wet weather diversion rejoins here, from your left.
44. After 1 km, at the first bridge, with a Tesco car park on your left-hand side, take the ramp up to the road bridge and *turn right* to cross the canal.

15. Beyond the mini-roundabout at a nearby fork, you see a traffic sign for the railway station and Soulbury (which is a little confusing as it appears the sign is for Soulbury station when in fact it is for Leighton Buzzard railway station and the village of Soulbury). Follow this sign uphill along Old Road.
16. At the Buckingham Arms pub, *fork left* to stay on Old Road, while the main road turns slightly to the right. In 80 metres, at the next mini-roundabout, make a ninety-degree turn left past where once stood the old Railway Hotel, on your left. Follow the road for 100 metres to **Leighton Buzzard railway station**.

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