

Harlington to Flitwick			Harlington Circular		
1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check	1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check
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Harlington to Flitwick

Start: Harlington Station

Finish: Flitwick Station

Harlington station, map reference TL 034 303, is 56 km North northwest of Charing Cross, 11 km north of Luton and 95m above sea level. Flitwick station, map reference TL 034 349, is 5 km north of Harlington and 78m above sea level. Both are in **Central Bedfordshire**.

Length: 24.6 km (15.2 mi), of which 6.4 km (4.0 mi) on tarmac or concrete.

Cumulative ascent/descent: 264/281m. For a shorter walk, see below **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 5 out of 10

Time: 5 hours minutes walking time.

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

Transport: Harlington and Flitwick stations are on the Thameslink line to Bedford. There are four trains per hour and journey times from St. Pancras to Harlington are 44 or 45 minutes Mon-Sat and from 49 mins on Sundays. Flitwick is one stop further along the line and journey times are 49 or 50 minutes Mon-Sat and from 52 minutes Sundays. Buy a return ticket to Flitwick.

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

OS Explorer Map: 193 (Luton & Stevenage)

OS Landranger Map: 153 (Bedford & Huntingdon) and 166 (Luton & Hertford)

Walk Notes:

The central attraction of this North Chiltern walk in Central Bedfordshire are the Sundon Hills, steep rolling downlands affording fantastic views over the surrounding plain, out north to the Greensand Ridge, and east to the classic steep chalk escarpment of Sharpenhoe Clappers, which is passed through as well.

At Sharpenhoe, one of the largest Neolithic hill fort sites in the South East is walked through, with good views east to Barton Hills, followed by a steep descent into the plain below. Further fine views of Pegsdon Hills further east along the Chilterns follow from the route through rolling grassy fields to the quiet hill top lunch destination of Pulloxhill.

The afternoon route is less energetic, but not without interest, leading as it does through pastures and woods in the gently rolling plain and lastly through the ancient Flitwick Wood with its large areas of bluebells and wild garlic in season, then into the centre of Flitwick.

Walk Options:

Two Shortcuts are possible, the one pre-lunch cuts 3.1 km and 58m of ascent/descent, the one post-lunch cuts 2.2 km and 25m of ascent/descent. Using Shortcut II or both of them reduces the rating to **3/10**.

An **Alternate Ending** at Harlington saves 7.3 km (4.5 mi) and 46m/59m of ascent/descent respectively and makes for a circular walk of 17.3 km (10.7 mi) length, again with a **3/10** rating.

Bus 200 (Biggleswade – Flitwick) stops at **Pulloxhill**, opposite the lunch pub (Mon-Sat, 6 buses per day).

Bus 42 (Bedford – Dunstable) stops at **Westoning**, next to The Chequers pub, and connects to Flitwick or Harlington stations (Mon-Sat, 9 buses per day).

Lunch (details last updated 19/04/2024)

The Cross Keys 13 High Street, *Pulloxhill, Bedfordshire, MK45 5HB* (01525 712 442, <http://www.thecrosskeys.co.uk/>). The Cross Keys is located 12.2 km (7.6 mi) into the full walk and is a traditional family-friendly pub-restaurant in a 15th century building set in 6 acres of ground, with a garden at the back. Open 12.00-15.00 and 17.00-22.00 Mon-Thu, 12.00-23.00 Fri-Sat and 12.00-22.00 Sun. Food served 12.00-14.00 and 17.30-20.30 Mon-Sat and 12.00-20.00 Sun.

The Chequers Park Road, *Westoning, Bedfordshire, MK45 5LA* (01525 712 967, <http://thechequerswestoning.co.uk/>). The Chequers is located 16.5 km (10.2 mi) into the full walk and 13.4 km into it if taking Shortcut I. Open all day every day. Food served 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-21.00 Mon-Fri, 12.00-14.30 and 17.00-21.00 Sat and 12.00-18.00 Sun.

The Bell Greenfield Road, *Westoning, Bedfordshire, MK45 5JH* (01525 630 233, <https://www.thebellwestoning.co.uk/>). The Bell is located 16.7 km (10.3 mi) into the main walk and 13.6 km into it if taking Shortcut I, and it serves 'a mix of Turkish and English food'. Open 16.00-23.00 Mon-Thu, 11.00-24.00 Fri-Sat and 11.00-22.00 Sun.

Tea – Flitwick (details last updated 19/04/2024)

The French Horn Church End, *Steppingley, Bedfordshire, MK45 5AU* (01525 721 225, <https://www.thefrenchhornsteppingley.co.uk/>). The French Horn is located 3.6 km (2.3 mi) from the end of the full walk. Open 12.00-23.00 Wed-Sun. Food served 12.00-15.00 and 17.30-21.00 Wed-Fri, 12.00-21.00 Sat and 12.00-18.00 Sun.

The Lounge Coffee Shop 2 Coniston Road, *Flitwick, Bedfordshire, MK45 1LX* (01525 716 177). Open to 17.00 Mon-Sat and to 16.00 Sun.

The Bumble Bee Coniston Road, *Flitwick, Bedfordshire, MK45 1QY* (01525 717 212, <https://www.greeneking.co.uk/pubs/bedfordshire/bumble-bee>). A Greene King pub. Open all day every day. Food served all day every day.

The Swan at Flitwick 1 Dunstable Road, *Flitwick, Bedfordshire, MK45 1HP* (01525 754 777, <http://www.swaninnflitwick.co.uk/>). A village local & commuter pub, located next to the railway station. Open all day every day.

Costa Coffee, The Café Latte, Bollywood Lounge, The Pearl of Bengal, China Inn

The Crown Station Road, *Flitwick, Bedfordshire, MK45 1LA* (01525 713 737, <http://www.crownflitwick.co.uk/>) Open 12.00-14.00 and 17.00-23.00 Mon-Thu (not Tue lunch), 12.00-24.00 Fri-Sat and 12.00-21.00 Sun. Food served 12.00-14.30 (not Tue) and 17.00-20.00 Mon-Sat and 12.00-15.30 Sun.

Tea – Harlington (details last updated 09/12/2021)

The Carpenters Arms 12-14 Sundon Road, *Harlington, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU5 6LS* (01525 872 384). Open 16.00-22.00 Mon-Thu, 12.00-22.00 Fri-Sat and 12.00-19.30 Sun. Food served 17.30-20.30 Tue-Thu, 12.00-15.00 and 17.00-20.30 Fri-Sat and 12.00-15.30 Sun. The Carpenters Arms is a low beamed traditional village pub first licensed in 1790. The Grade II listed building, a former Coaching Inn, has the original mounting stone outside the entrance to the bar. It also has a Blue Plaque outside, paying homage to the First English Grand National Steeplechase which commenced opposite the pub on 8th March 1830.

The Old Sun 34 Sundon Road, *Harlington, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU5 6LS* (01525 877 330). Open all day every day.

Notes:

Sundon Hills

Situated at one of the highest points in Bedfordshire, the Sundon Hills offer fantastic views towards Sharpenhoe Clappers and over the surrounding countryside. The ancient Icknield Way runs across the Sundon Hills and the site is important for many species of plants and animals. Sundon Hills are believed to be the inspiration for 'The Delectable Mountains' in John Bunyan's 'The Pilgrim's Progress'.

The Icknield Way Path and Trail

Said to be one of the oldest roads in Britain, the Icknield Way is one of the few long-distance track-ways to have existed before the Romans occupied the country. The name is Celto-British in derivation, and may be named after the Iceni tribe, who may have established this route to permit trade with other parts of the country from their base in East Anglia. It has also been suggested that the road has even older prehistoric origins. It stretched from the Dorset Coast to the Wash, crossing the River Thames near Wallingford. It was later one of the "Four Highways" of medieval England (the others being Ermine Street, Fosse Way and Watling Street). Today the Ridgeway National Trail follows parts of the ancient Icknield Way for 139 km (87mi) from Overton Hill to Ivinghoe Beacon in the Chilterns. The modern day Icknield Way Long-Distance Path then runs for 177 km from Ivinghoe Beacon to Knettishall Heath in Norfolk. The IW Trail has been introduced for horse riders and bikers and largely runs concurrent with the IW Path.

The Chiltern Way

A circular way-marked Long-Distance Footpath of around 214 km (134 mi), taking in some of the finest scenery in the country. There are now two optional extensions and an additional Berkshire loop taking the total to 352 km (220 mi).

The Chiltern Way passes through some of the most attractive parts of the Chilterns, including the Bovingdon Plateau, the Chess valley, the Misbourne valley, Penn Country, the Hambleden valley, Stonor Park, Bix Bottom, Ewelme, the Ridgeway, Swyncombe Down, Bledlow Ridge, Hampden Country, Bulbourne valley, the Dunstable Downs and Sharpenhoe Clappers.

John Bunyan Trail

The John Bunyan Trail is a way-marked 124 km (77 mi) circular Long-Distance Footpath. It starts and finishes at the Sundon Hills Country Park just north of Luton and is almost entirely in Bedfordshire, while briefly passing through Hertfordshire near Hexton. The route visits many sites associated with John Bunyan, the seventeenth century Puritan evangelist and writer. He lived in Elstow, just south of Bedford, and travelled this area extensively, first through his trade as a tinker and later as a non-conformist preacher. He was arrested and tried at Harlington for preaching illegally and imprisoned at Bedford, which is where he wrote his best-known work 'Pilgrim's Progress'.

The Flit River

The River Flit flows through Flitwick, then past Greenfield and Flitton, then through Clophill, Chicksands, and Shefford, before meeting the River Ivel at Langford. Its name is not ancient, but rather a back formation from Flitton.

Greensand Ridge

The ridge of Greensand is a distinctive feature that rises markedly from its surrounding clay vales through Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire. It is an area of gently rolling hills and small valleys, heavily wooded in parts. In many places it has been planted with conifers, but there are still areas of important habitats such as heathland, acid grassland and ancient woodland remaining. The valleys of the rivers Flit and Ouzel cut through the area.

Sharpenhoe Clappers

The National Trust-owned Sharpenhoe group of properties comprises four adjacent countryside areas to the north of Luton, combining ancient woodlands and chalk escarpments with fantastic views. These are (from west to east) Sundon Hills, Moleskin and Markham Hills, Sharpenhoe Clappers and Smithcombe Hills. Reputedly haunted, Sharpenhoe Clappers is a classic chalk escarpment and part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is crowned with traces of an Iron Age hill-fort and an impressive beech wood. 'Clappers' is thought to derive from the medieval Latin term 'claperius', one of its meanings being 'rabbit hole'. Excavation works indeed revealed the remains of a medieval rabbit warren built over the Iron Age palisade trench. Rabbits provided a consistent supply of meat and skins at the time. The suffix '-hoe' means promontory, an obvious reference to the shape of the Clappers at the very edge of the Chilterns.

Sharpenhoe Hill Fort

It's easy to see why the early Iron Age people chose this dominating site to build a defensive position of banks and ditches topped by wooden walls and a huge wooden gateway: this is a promontory fort with steep drops on three sides, located at the edge of the ice sheet formed during the last Ice Age, therefore the view is over a flattened plain. The hill fort site is now within trees, but very clear to see from Harlington and many other points in the plain.

Pulloxhill

Pulloxhill is one of the oldest villages in Bedfordshire being well over 1,000 years old. It is the original home of the Bunyan family and near where John Bunyan was arrested. In 1680 Gold was discovered in the village and a mine was established, this was however abandoned as it was not possible to make the extraction economically viable. It is possible that the Silver mine of Demas referred to in Bunyan's book 'Pilgrims Progress' was inspired by the Gold mine in Pulloxhill.

Flitwick

Flitwick, pronounced /'flɪtɪk/, is a small town and civil parish in Central Bedfordshire, England. It is mentioned in the Domesday Book as "a hamlet on the River Flitt". Flitwick is famous for its Flitwick Manor House, currently used as a hotel. There is also physical evidence of a Norman era motte-and-bailey castle site, locally known as "The Mount".

Flitwick Wood

Flitwick Wood covers an area of 25 hectare (60 acres) on the western edge of Flitwick. It is ancient semi-natural woodland, i.e.: an area that has had continuous tree cover since the Middle Ages, and a remnant of a much larger area of forest. Clearance probably began in mid-Saxon times and much of the wood was removed in the 12th and 13th centuries to make way for cultivation. By late medieval times the shape and size were similar to that of the modern wood. The wood is divided by a ditch and bank running northwest to southeast. This is all that remains of the boundary of Steppingley Park, a medieval deer park which once existed to the south of the wood. The ownership of the woodland was also divided along this ditch line. The land to the south was sold to the Duke of Bedford in 1736 whose family still own the area today. In 1970 the land to the north of the ditch was purchased by Bedfordshire County Council to prevent felling of the mature trees. This part of the wood is open to the public. In 2002 the wood was declared a Local Nature Reserve.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Note: Since spring 2023, a multi-year footpath closure and diversion has been in place while a new housing estate ('Pilgrims Chase') is built on the fields originally crossed at the start of the walk after leaving the houses of Harlington behind. This text describes the diversion route. The text for the original route is 'parked' at the end of the main text on page 10, and will be revised and reinstated when the works have finished.

Alight from the train in **Harlington Station** on platform 2 or 4 and leave through the station building into the car park. *Turn right* and up **Station Approach** and in 70m *turn right* along **Station Road** to cross the railway tracks on a bridge. On the other side of the bridge, cross **Paxton Approach** residential drive and **[!]** *turn right* along a tarmac path with a fence on the left and some houses on the right. In 100m continue in the same direction with a footpath marker post along a gravel path with trees on the left and more of the houses on the right. In 170m *veer left* with the gravel path and then continue along the pavement of a residential cul-de-sac. In 30m you pass a metal two-way footpath signpost where a track turns right and under an arched railway bridge.

[The original route turns left here.]

In 60m *turn left* with the road (**Pilgrims Close**), ignoring a continuation towards a padlocked metal field gate 40m away. In 100m, at a garden fence corner, *turn right* across a small grassy area with a metal footpath signpost and in 30m *turn right* in the grassy corner and in 5m go through a metal kissing gate into a pasture by a notice informing of the path closures in the area and also of the temporary right-of-way along the field boundary. *Turn right* along the grassy field boundary. In 80m you pass the metal field gate seen earlier from the other side and in 30m *turn left* in the field corner with the building site fence on the left, now walking along the railway line. In 250m the site fence discontinues in the field corner and you squeeze through a narrow gap to the right of a bramble hedge into the next (arable) field.

In 100m go over a plank bridge across a ditch and continue through **Harlington Spinney** (wood) and in 130m go over another one. In 15m continue with an arable field on the left. In 110m ignore a left turning field boundary and in 10m you reach a T-junction with a bridleway by a subway under the railway embankment on the right. The **Icknield Way Trail** runs along the bridleway. *Turn left* along it. In 20m you enter a narrow wooded strip and continue through it, with the **Sundon Rubbish Dump** landfill away to the right behind a fence. In 250m pass a single-plank bench on the right and continue through the trees, and in 150m pass a yellow-topped bridleway marker post and emerge in a large arable field.

[The original route joins from the left.]

Turn right along the field boundary. In 10m *turn right* with the field boundary. In 75m *turn left* with the boundary and in 150m continue ahead at an unmarked three-way bridleway junction, where the Icknield Way Trail turns left along a field boundary. In 150m *turn left* with a marker post at the field corner, now with a wood on the right (the prominent water tower visible on the left is in **Pulloxhill**, the lunch destination on the main walk), and in 110m *turn right* through a gap in the growth on the right with a bridleway marker post and a hand-written footpath-sign up along a car wide forest track at the edge of the wood. In 420m you pass a marker post and emerge from the trees into a pasture. **[!]** Ignore the bridleway veering right and up across the pasture and *turn left* on a dog leg through a gap in a tree line into a large grassy hill side. Another arm of the Icknield Way Trail has joined.

Turn up to the right with markers on a young tree to the top-right corner of the slope and in 100m *turn left* along the rim with a **Chiltern Way** (CW) and **Icknield Way** (IW) marker post (35°), with a hedge on the right and with splendid views down to the left into the plain back to Harlington. In 470m in the far-right field corner walk through a gap and in 15m *turn right* along a road' raised grassy boundary with an IW and CW signpost (away on the left). In 40m *turn left* with a marker post to cross the road and walk with an **IW** signpost through a metal kissing gate into a grassy area. *Turn left* through a metal kissing gate into the grassy **Sundon Hills** and *turn right and right again* along the fence to the top-right field corner and *turn left* in the corner to walk along the top field boundary, with CW, IW and **Bunyan Trail** (BT) markers (70°).

The views to the left from this part of the **Chiltern Hills** are of Harlington and Pulloxhill (with its prominent water tower) on their hill tops across the plain out to the **Flit Valley** and the **Greensand Ridge** behind it. In 700m in the far-right corner of this undulating sloping field *turn right* through a wooden kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate along a farm track with a field on the right. In 50m *turn left* with the track and up along a grassy area and in 75m *turn right* through a gap between bushes into the corner of another pasture on the left. **[!]** Ignore the pasture and *turn right* with a marker post through a metal kissing gate and up along a grassy field boundary of an arable field on the right, and with trees on the left (140°). In 350m in the top-left field corner *turn left* with a marker post into the adjacent field and continue along its right-hand boundary, with a wood on the right (some bluebells in season). In 200m follow the boundary around to the left along a farm track and in 100m *turn right* along a signposted footpath ('Sharpenhoe Clappers CP 1 mile'), again with a wood on the right (bluebells in season).

In 330m in the field corner *turn left* with the boundary and in 65m **[!]** *turn right* into the wood through a gap in the trees with the usual markers plus a **green butterfly marker** on a green-ringed pole, ignoring the footpath ahead along the field boundary. In the wood ignore an indistinct path turning right immediately and fork left in 5m. **[!]** In 20m *turn right* with a footpath marker post with CW and IW markers (while later also passing a **BT** marker) **to initially stay level within the woods** (due E), i.e.: *ignoring* the stepped path leading down into the valley that is visible beyond the steeply sloping forest. In 300m *ignore* the **BT** turning away to the right along a narrow grassy track between fences and continue along the fringe of the wood, on a fenced in path with the wood on the left and a pasture and the houses of **Streatley** behind it on the right. In 250m at the end of the fence on the right ignore a footpath turning right and follow markers through a metal kissing gate to the left of a wooden field gate into a pasture. Continue in the same direction (355°) and in 230m leave the field on the right-hand side through a metal kissing gate and down a few steps.

Cross a road and walk under a height restriction barrier into the car park of the NT-owned **Sharpenhoe Clappers** and in 15m go through a gap to the left of a metal field gate to continue along a tarmac path through trees. In 40m continue along the tarmac path at a cross paths with the **IW Trail** through a narrow gap to the left of a metal gate. In 80m ignore the CW and BT turning left along a grassy path into trees, to continue with the **IW Walkers Route**, which in 20m continues as a fenced-in grassy path. In 110m ignore a fenced-in grassy path on the right, but in another 40m *turn right* with an **IW Walkers Route** marker along a fenced-in grassy path towards the crest of the field on the right (60°), where the footpath continues ahead and soon into trees. In 100m *turn left* through a metal kissing gate into a pasture (**Access Land**), with only the modern-day forestation of the **Sharpenhoe Hill Fort** site preventing 360°-views from this spur of the chalk escarpment. On the right are **Barton-Le-Clay village** and the **Barton Hills** (SWC Walk Legrave to Harlington), and in the distance the **Greensand Ridge** is looming (SWC Walk Flitwick Circular).

Cross the grassy area (330°) and in 310m exit through a metal kissing gate at the base of the hill fort site on the fringe of a beech wood. The descent from the hill is from the far-left opposite corner down an easy-to-find stepped path. To get there,

- either take the CW (Permissive Path)-route: *turn right* for 50m and then *turn left* and up a slope full of tree roots and past a marker post 20m away to follow a **forest path around the right-hand side** of the site at the higher level;
- or *turn left* and walk across to the left-hand side of the fort, find a **lower running footpath** there on the fringe of the trees and *turn right* along it around the left-hand side of the site with a fence and fantastic views into the plain;
- or just amble **through the site, finding your own route**.

In 300m on the northerly end of the hill fort site descend a steep stepped path with footpath and CW markers on a low wooden post, in the general direction of the **Water Tower in Pulloxhill** (due N initially). At the bottom of the steps a marked footpath joins from the left. Continue along a left-hand side field boundary. In 150m walk through a hedge gap onto a road and *turn left* along its pavement into **Sharpenhoe**. In 130m *turn right* to cross **Harlington Road** and follow Bridleway and CW Extension signposts along a tarmac lane between hedges to **Bury Farm**. In 150m walk into the farm through a metal gate to the right of a metal car gate. In 50m pass a brideway marker post and continue in the same direction through the farm yard to the left of a large corrugated iron barn. In 90m continue along a gravel track with a brook and a hedge on the left and a large field on the right.

In 350m you reach a corner of a wood on the left (**Sharpenhoe Grove** on the OS map). In 50m at the other end of the wood ignore a brideway turning left across a two-railed bridge and in 25m ignore a footpath turning right along a field boundary ditch. Continue in the same direction on the gravel brideway with a brook on the left until in 600m you pass the far-left corner of the field on the right and walk through a gap in the hedge into another field. *Ignore* the footpath turning right along the field boundary and in 80m *turn left* with a marker post over a raised two-railed wooden plank bridge, ignoring a footpath ahead. On the far side, the footpath forks by a marker post.

Here you have a choice:

For a Shortcut – cutting out the lunch destination of **Pulloxhill** – *fork left* and pick up further directions at the end of this text under **Shortcut I**.

For the main walk, *fork right* to stay to the right of a wooded area and in 25m curve to the left with the path (325°) and in 20m **[!]** *turn left* with it through a gap in the boundary trees and in 30m walk through a metal kissing gate into a large pasture. *Turn right* in the field towards **Portobello Farm** (on the OS map, 320°). In 440m walk through a metal kissing gate in a fence and head for the right-hand corner of the next grassy field (295°). In 110m walk through a metal kissing gate and *turn right* along the fence in the adjacent grassy field. In 75m continue in the same direction where the fence turns right, in 175m walk through a metal kissing gate set between two metal field gates. *Turn right* and follow the right-hand side of four consecutive fields, with metal kissing gates between them.

In 340m continue in the same direction along an earth path between hedges. On the right, when there is a gap in the hedge, you can see the **Pegsdon Hills** (SWC Walk Hitchin Circular). In 300m the hedge on the right-hand side ends and you walk along a field boundary. In 140m a farm track joins from the right and you *veer left* and up with the farm track. In 160m walk through a gap to the side of a metal field gate and reach the first houses in **Pulloxhill**. In 30m **[!]** *turn right* with a footpath signpost and in 10m walk along a narrow grassy path between a hedge on the left and a forecourt on the right and then through a grassy strip. In 35m go with a footpath marker through a

metal kissing gate and continue through three grassy fields sloping off to the right, separated by metal kissing gates. In 150m – in another pasture – *veer up to the left*, past a clump of thorny bushes, to the top-right corner of this field (335°).

In 50m *turn right* through a metal kissing gate to a footpath crosspaths (50°) and continue ahead through another pasture, with a church up to the left behind trees (passed on the other side after lunch). In 70m pass a rather large house with brilliant views on the left. At the end of the garden fence on the left cross an un-railed concrete bridge over a muddy patch and *turn left* in a pasture. In 60m leave the field through a metal kissing gate and continue along a tarmac path into **Pulloxhill**. In 65m emerge in a cul-de-sac and *turn right* along **Orchard Road**. In 65m *fork right* upon reaching the small village green and in 60m continue in the same direction along **High Street** to the lunch pub **The Cross Keys**. After lunch *turn right* along the road, re-tracing the first 50m of the morning route, but at the village green continue along the road. In 130m continue in the same direction along **Church Road**, where High Street turns right. In 150m pass **St. James the Apostle Church, Pulloxhill** on the left. In 250m, by the water tower on the right, **Blackhill Lane** turns left.

Here you have a choice:

For an Alternative Ending, *veer left* into a large arable field between the two tarmac lanes with a footpath signpost and cross it along a usually well-cleared path (215°). Pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Alternative Ending in Harlington**.

For the main walk, continue in the same direction and follow **Higham Bury Lane** between hedges along the ridge of this whaleback shaped rise, with views to the right out to **Flitwick** – the final destination – and **Amptill** and – much later – on the left to the **Sharpenhoe Clappers** and **Barton** and **Pegsdon Hills**. In 1.0 km *turn right* with the lane in front of the entrance gate to **Higham Bury**. In 210m at the end of the tarmac lane, you reach **The White House** (on the OS map) at a footpath/bridleway T-junction. *Turn left* along the bridleway, a narrow grassy path initially between the grounds of the two houses, soon though with a ditch and a field on the right. Walk through a couple of metal gates and in 530m emerge at a field boundary, where you *turn left* downhill with a **BT** marker along the grassy margin. In 430m in the far field corner continue in the same direction along a grassy track between hedges with a BT marker post. In 190m you emerge from the green lane and *veer left* along a track with a BT marker post. In 55m *turn right* at a T-junction with a lane (**Sampshill Road**). In 410m a footpath joins from the left across a wooden plank bridge. This is Shortcut I.

***)** In 40m you *turn right* along a lane at a four-way junction. In 350m the lane starts descending into the **Flit Valley**. In 200m it leads under the railway line, and in another 300m it reaches the main road through **Westoning**, opposite **The Chequers** pub, with **The Bell** some 200m to the right. Cross the road and continue along **Church Road**. In 600m pass **St. Mary Magdalene Church, Westoning**. In 50m ignore a left turn into a Private Estate. In 45m *turn left* at a footpath T-junction along a lane on concrete slabs at a signpost on the right ('The Manor ½'). In 70m *fork right* along a gravel lane through a wooden kissing gate left of a wooden field gate. In 100m keep right along a fenced-in grassy path parallel to the gravel lane. In 160m walk through a wooden kissing gate into a grassy field and *turn right* along the right-hand fence, ignoring the footpath continuing in the same direction. In 185m enter a wood across a stile and follow a clear path. In 40m walk across a two-railed wooden plank bridge over **The Flit River**. *Turn left* along the left-hand field boundary, with the river on your left. In 100m continue in the same direction through a metal kissing gate by a confluence of two streams with the **Flit**. In 235m leave the field through a metal kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate and continue along a farm track through **Priestley Farm**.

In 200m at a footpath crosspaths **you have a choice:**

For a Shortcut, *turn right* along a narrow grassy path between hedges (50°), or - if that is too overgrown - parallel to the left along a car wide sandy farm track, and pick up further directions at the end of this text under **Shortcut II**.

For the main walk, continue in the same direction. In 320m walk through a metal kissing gate, cross a road and climb a stile to the left of a metal field gate to continue along a grassy field, gently uphill. In 470m in the far-left field corner climb a stile to the left of a double metal field gate at a footpath cross paths and *veer left* with a **BT** marker over a stile into an adjacent grassy field. Cross this field to its far-left top corner in the general direction of a large solitary tree left of a dead tree trunk (320°). In 400m climb a stile to the left of a metal field gate into the adjacent arable field and follow a bridgeway around *two sides of its left-hand boundary* to the far-left corner. From the corner continue in the same direction with a fence on the right. In 100m continue with a garden fence on the right. In 120m *turn right* along a gravel lane at the corner of the garden fence of **Park Farm** at a three-way bridgeway/footpath junction. In 60m *turn left* along the tarmac farm drive. In 450m the lane turns right, in 35m it veers left where another lane joins from the right. In 50m **[!]** *turn left* up some steps, through a wooden kissing gate and through a grassy area along a Permissive Path towards another wooden kissing gate 90m away in the far-right corner (340°).

Exit through a small car park onto **Eversholt Road** and *turn right* along the opposite pavement into **Steppingley**. In 75m cross **Rectory Road** and pass **The French Horn** pub on the left. Continue in the same direction along **Church End** and in 70m pass **St. Lawrence Church, Steppingley** on the left (usually open). In 140m enter into a field in a corner and follow its right-hand boundary, with gardens on the right and with **Amphill** village and the **Greensand Ridge** half left ahead. In 350m leave the field through a hedge gap in the corner and *turn right* along the opposite grassy verge of a road. In 140m *turn left* with a bridgeway signpost along an initially concrete, then gravelly/sandy track past a pumping station (155°). In 310m ignore the **BT** turning left along a farm track. In 400m enter a small wooded area with a pond on the left along an engineered gravel path. In 60m *turn left before* a metal gate at a three-way bridgeway/permissive bridgeway junction with the wide gravel path and in 30m leave the wooded area. Continue along the right-hand side of the same large field as before (40°) with a hedge on the right. In 220m a bridgeway joins from the right through a metal gate in a hedge gap at the corner of a wood. This is Shortcut II.

****)** Continue in the same direction with **Flitwick Wood** on the right (a veritable riot of bluebells in season). In 160m ignore a first metal kissing gate into the wood on the right. There is a new wooden fence on the right and wild garlic absolutely dominates here (in season), while there are still many bluebells about. In a further 130m **[!]** *turn right* through a metal kissing gate into the wood and in 10m continue in the same direction at a cross paths (140°). Wild garlic is still plentiful here on the right-hand side and in 120m you continue in the same direction where a forest track joins from the left. In 130m *turn left* at a T-junction of forest tracks and in 40m ignore a track turning right towards some houses. In 180m pass an **information board** on the left and in 25m leave the wood through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate. *Turn right* along **Tennyson Road** and in 50m *turn right* at a road T-junction. In 60m cross a main road at a T-junction and continue a little to the left along **Campion Way**.

In 50m **[!]** *turn left* along an easy-to-miss narrow tarmac path between garden fences. In 50m cross a road and continue along **Rosebay Close**. In 70m *turn right* at a crosspaths with **Bluebell Close** through a grassy area. In 150m continue along a narrow, paved path between a hedge and a fence. In 70m emerge in a cul-de-sac by **Windmill Pre-School** on the left and **Woodlands Middle-School** on the right.

In 80m walk through a metal gate to the right of a double metal car gate and in 35m at a T-junction with **Malham Road** continue along a narrow tarmac path opposite, with garden fencing on the left and a green on the right. In 100m emerge into the large car park of a superstore and continue along the shop front to the far end of the building.

In 50m, the direct route to the station turns left as a tarmac path through the car park: At the far end of it, cross a main road a little to the right at a set of lights and walk down the **Station Approach** to **Flitwick Station**. London bound trains depart from the far platform 1.

For any tea stops though, continue along the shop front:

You find **The Lounge Coffee Shop** on the right, *turn left* along **Coniston Road** for **The Bumble Bee** pub to reach a large roundabout with **The Swan at Flitwick** pub immediately to the right. Continue in the same direction across the road and to a roundabout on the far side of the tracks and either...

- *turn left* along **High Street** and in the next 100m you have a **Costa Coffee**, **The Café Latte** and the **Bollywood Lounge** in 100m;
- cross the roundabout and find **The Pearl of Bengal** 20m along **The Avenue**;
- or *turn right* along **Station Road** for 580m to **The Crown**.

In all these cases, return along the main road to the Station Approach mentioned above.

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Original Route out of Harlington, reinstated when building works have finished:

[*Turn left* and cross the road to continue along a tarmac path through a grassy area between houses, with a hedge on the left and a fence on the right (100°). In 70m *turn right* at a road T-junction and in 20m *turn left* with the road (**Park Leys**). In 150m *turn right* at a T-junction with **Sundon Road**. In 50m, at the end of the houses on the right, *turn right* with a footpath signpost along a narrow path which in 10m turns left towards a pasture. In 15m walk through a metal kissing gate and in 100m through another one (150°). Cross another pasture in the same direction and in 60m walk through a set of metal kissing gates in the boundary trees. Continue along a grassy path with a fence on the left and in 60m *turn right* through a metal kissing gate to emerge into a field. *Turn left* along the grassy field boundary (155°). In 35m at the end of the hedge on the left the scenery opens up with views of **Sundon Hills**, your first destination (and a large landfill site to the right of it: **Sundon Rubbish Dump**, which had been receiving London's rubbish by train since the late 19th century). In a further 75m in the left corner of the field walk through a metal kissing gate with a footpath marker on a pole into another large field and *turn right* along its car wide grassy boundary (220°). Follow the boundary for 610m and *turn left* with a marker post in the far-right corner. Continue along the grassy boundary, now with a ditch and trees on the right (135°). In view now is not only **Sundon Hills**, but also – to the left of Sundon Hills – the prominent **hill top fort** site in **Sharpenhoe**, at the end of the **Sharpenhoe Clappers** line of chalk escarpments, i.e.: most of the morning route. Also looking back to the left, you can see the village of **Harlington** around the church spire in its hillock top location. In 240m an arm of the **Icknield Way Trail**, which has been running parallel behind the trees for a while, joins from the right through the boundary trees.]

**Shortcut I (cut 3.1 km, 58m ascent/descent and 1.9 km tarmac before lunch)
Cut out Pulloxhill, a pleasant hill top village. Lunch is in Westoning.**

In 65m you emerge in a large arable field by a marker post and follow the direction of the arrow: *bear left* along the field boundary and then *turn right* with the boundary along a brook on the left (the OS map shows the right of way cutting straight across the field though). In 780m *turn right* with the brook and the boundary. In 270m leave the field through a bike barrier at a T-junction with a farm track. *Turn right* along a byway. Continue along the grassy path between bushes, with the large field on the right. In 100m **[!]** *continue in the same direction* with the byway at a three-way junction, *ignoring* a bridleway turning left. Follow this green lane zig-zagging its way up a slope for 820m to **Upper Sampshill Farm**. At the farm, walk through a gap to the left of a metal field gate and follow a tarmac farm lane around to the left.

In 20m ignore footpaths turning right (through the farm buildings) and left (into a pasture). In 430m, just after passing **Samshill Farm**, *turn left* off the lane through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and veer right in the direction of a footpath signpost through a grassy field (250°). In 60m you walk through a metal gate and veer right in another grassy field (265°). In 200m walk through another metal gate and cross a railed wooden plank bridge into an arable field and cross it on a usually well-cleared path in the same direction. In 310m leave the field through a hedge gap and over an un-railed wooden plank bridge onto a road. This is the main walk route.

Turn left along it and pick up directions in the main text at the asterisk *).

**Shortcut II (cut 2.2 km, 25m ascent/descent and 0.4 km tarmac after lunch)
Cut an ambling stretch of rolling fields, quiet country lanes and Steppingley.**

In 180m the terrain levels out where a farm track joins from the right. Continue in the same direction along the farm track between fields for 550m. Where the farm track turns left towards a house, continue in the same direction along a raised grassy margin between fields. In 160m at the opposite field boundary briefly *turn left* and in 10m *turn right* over a stile into an adjacent field. Veer left across it (10°) towards a left-hand protruding field boundary and then along the boundary to leave the field in 140m through a hedge gap onto a road. *Turn left* along the road and in 140m *turn right* along a tarmac farm lane with a bridleway signpost, ignoring the footpath turning left into a grassy field. Cross a couple of cattle grids, pass a house on the right and in 540m reach the entrance gate to **Wood Farm**. Follow a bridleway marker on a fence post on the right around the right-hand side of a large yellow-brick barn and in 75m enter a grassy field through a metal gate, with **Flitwick Wood** on the right. Walk towards the far-right hand corner of the field and in 300m leave the field through a metal gate onto an earthen track. This is the main walk route.

Turn right along it and pick up directions in the main text at the double asterisk **).

Alternative Ending in Harlington (cut 7.3 km, 46/59m ascent/descent and 3.3 km tarmac after lunch; from Pulloxhill through fields-with-views to Harlington.

In 350m walk through a hedge gap and continue in the same direction in the adjacent arable field. In 130m pass a marker post and go through a metal kissing gate and follow a fenced path between pastures and in 70m go through another metal kissing gate and *bear right* along a pasture's right-hand boundary. Continue in the same direction

through a handful of fields separated by kissing gates. In 500m reach **Portobello Farm** and continue along a farm lane to the right of its buildings. In 20m walk through a usually open double metal field gate and in 10m **[!]** *fork left* through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate and walk along a gravel track to the right of a chicken coop. In 30m continue in the same direction along a grassy strip where the farm track turns left and in another 30m walk through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate and continue along a left-hand field boundary. In 120m in the far corner enter the adjacent field through a metal kissing gate and continue in the same direction, in 85m joining up with the right-hand field boundary, and in a further 75m leaving the field through a metal kissing gate. Walk through a grassy strip and then cross an arable field on a usually well-cleared path towards a protruding corner of the opposite field boundary. In 105m continue along that boundary and in 60m leave the field through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate into a pasture to continue in the same direction, uphill towards the buildings of **Upper Sampshill Farm**.

Walk through a metal kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate about 20m left of the far-right field corner and continue through the farm buildings. In 50m cross a lane at a four-way footpath/byway-junction (with a two-way footpath signpost) and enter a pasture with a **BT** marker through a metal field gate. Head for the bottom-left corner and in 170m exit from the field through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate and cross a plank over the outflow of a pond on the right. In 15m go through a metal kissing gate and continue in the same direction through a plantation. In 100m you emerge in a large arable field and cross it on a clear path. In 300m at the opposite field boundary cross a bridleway along the boundary and leave the field through a metal gate and in 5m enter a large field through a metal kissing gate to follow its left-hand boundary downhill towards **Harlington** up on a hill in the near distance. In 220m cross a two-railed wooden plank bridge over a stream and go through a metal kissing gate to continue in the same direction through a plantation towards the far-left corner. In 170m walk through a metal kissing gate left of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction up the grassy hillside (the solitary old oak tree away on the right is marked on the OS map as '**Bunyan's Oak**', a place where **John Bunyan**, the 17th century Puritan Evangelist and writer, is reputed to have preached regularly).

Walk about 50m to the left of a fenced-in clump of trees and then head uphill, aiming for the right-hand edge of a row of trees on the brow of the rise (215°). In 320m follow a barbed wire fence around right. *Turn left* at the fence corner through a metal kissing gate with a **BT** marker through a lightly wooded area. In 50m you emerge on a road and *turn right* along it (**Barton Road**) – initially without a pavement – into **Harlington**. Ignore a couple of footpaths down to the left. The hill range on the left is the **Sundon Hills**, walked along at the beginning of the walk. In 650m – where the road turns right – **[!]** *turn left* across the road and continue along a narrow tarmac path with a brick wall on the left and with trees on the right. In 20m emerge on the **Village Green** (Bury Orchard) and continue towards **St. Mary the Virgin** church. Pass the sunken **Bacchus Pond** off to the right (where gravel used to be extracted in the 19th century) and leave the green at its far corner through a gap in the boundary wall onto a road at a bend. *Turn left* along **Church Road** and in 100m reach a four-way road junction with **Westoning Road**, **Sundon Road** and **Station Road**.

Now either:

- *Turn left* and in 40m reach the entrance to the recommended pub **The Carpenters Arms** on the right or in another 135m **The Old Sun** on the right;
- Or cross the junction, follow **Station Road** downhill, in 230m *turn left* down **Station Approach** and in 90m reach **Harlington Station**. London bound trains depart from the far platform.