



Wolverton to Northampton walk

Three rivers, a medieval hunting forest, a War of the Roses battlefield and Britain's newest university campus

Length 30.2 kilometres/18.9 miles

OS Maps OS Explorer 207 neatly covers the whole route. Grid reference for Northampton station is SP747605. Wolverton station, grid reference SP821415, is located in Buckinghamshire.

Toughness 5 out of 10.

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Features This very long but gentle walk follows the River Great Ouse on tarmac cycle paths under Wolverton Viaduct, then turns North-West across fields and meadows to join the River Tove, passing just West of Castlethorpe. You continue North on a concrete lane then across fields to cross back under the railway line and then head North-East to Hartwell and the Rose and Crown (but see the lunch notes below - it is uncertain if this pub serves lunch). There are further lunch options later in Salcey Forest, with its network of marked paths, and at the Spread Eagle in Piddington. You then head North-West across more fields to the tiny settlement of Preston Deanery. The adjoining villages of Wootton and Hardingstone mark the beginning of the approach to Northampton and offer further refreshment (and bus) possibilities. You continue North across the lovely Delapre Park, with the option of visiting Delapre Abbey, then pass through the new Waterside Campus of the University of Northampton. The final approach to Northampton station takes you West along the River Nene and a tributary through Food Meadow.

The path surfaces are generally good except when fields are ploughed. You are unlikely to encounter serious nettles in summer or mud in winter.

See the notes below on shortening the walk, either by catching a bus from Milton Keynes or Wolverton to Hartwell, or by taking a bus in to Northampton, or by an alternative ending at the Queen Eleanor Cross on the outskirts of Northampton.

Walk options The alternative ending at the Queen Eleanor Cross reduces the distance to 27.8 kms (17.4 miles). For this option, follow the directions to paragraph

23 then refer to paragraph 45. There are frequent buses from opposite the Cross in to Northampton.

In view of the length of this walk, you may want to catch a bus either from the start or to the end (the two stations are too far apart for the walk to be significantly modified by taking a more direct line).

Red Rose Travel bus no 33 runs approximately hourly Monday to Saturday between Milton Keynes and Northampton via Wolverton, Hartwell, Wootton and Hardingstone. You could use this bus to enable a later start to the walk, e.g. (in 2019) buses departed Milton Keynes station at 01 minute past the hour, stopping at Wolverton station at 17 and Hartwell at 39 minutes. Note that it is better to catch the bus from Milton Keynes - which is served by fast trains from London Euston - than from Wolverton. In 2019 there were regular non-stop trains from Euston taking only 30 minutes to reach Milton Keynes, e.g. it was possible to catch the 9.20 train, connect with the 10.01 bus and start the walk from Hartwell at 10.39 (not on Sundays). *Starting at Hartwell reduces the distance by 13.7 kms.*

Note that there is no bus service from Piddington. Stagecoach bus 3 ceased in 2019.

Stagecoach bus 12/12A is a circular route to Northampton which stops on the walk route in Wootton at Lady Hollows Drive or (on the alternative ending) at Curtlee Hill (either direction will do). In total there are four buses an hour Monday to Saturday.

Stagecoach bus 11/11A runs approximately every half hour Monday to Saturday between Wootton High Street (on the alternative route), Hardingstone (Sun Inn) and Northampton, but only alternate buses go via Hardingstone. There is an hourly service on Sunday, with all buses stopping at Hardingstone.

On the alternative ending only, Stagecoach bus 7 runs from Wootton High Street to Northampton half hourly until about 7.30 pm (on Sundays hourly until 5.38 pm). Ending at Wootton High Street reduces the distance to the Queen Eleanor Cross by 2.7 kms, ending at Hardingstone reduces the distance by 1.2 kms.

Bus 18 runs from the Waterside Campus to Northampton station, but not at weekends.

All other buses stop either in the Drapery or North Gate bus station, ten minutes walk from Northampton rail station. Go back down the Drapery (the road leading to the bus station) then turn right (opposite All Saints' Church) in to Gold Street and take the third of the four options for finishing

the walk set out in the final paragraph below (you will soon see Jenny's Cafe on the right).

Unless you want refreshments, a better idea to avoid the crowds would be to get off the bus at the Old Towcester Road stop, just before the river. You can then follow the last 1.4 kms of the walk, from Bridge Street and the Carlsberg brewery.

Travel

Wolverton and Northampton are both in the network railcard area. Trains from Euston take 45-60 minutes to Wolverton and 60-75 minutes to Northampton. Buy a day return to Northampton. From South London it is usually cheaper (but not quicker) to travel via Clapham Junction and Kensington Olympia, changing at Watford Junction.

Points of interest

Wolverton Viaduct

Built in 1837 at a cost of £30,000, with six arches. It is 198 metres wide and 17 metres high.

Hartwell

The name is derived from hart's spring. It is thought to be unique in having two war memorials; one in the churchyard and the other further East on Forest Road.

Salcey Forest

The surviving woodland is a remnant of a medieval royal hunting forest. It has many miles of ancient wood banks, building remains and ancient trees – this walk only touches the North-Western corner. The 'druids', or veteran oaks in Salcey (some of them 600 or even 1000 years old, depending on which source you believe) are rare and excellent wildlife habitats. What tales they could tell. In 1727-28 there were timber stealing riots and in 1830 a prize fight in the forest resulted in a fatal collapse in the 47th round.

Church of St Peter and St Paul, Preston Deanery

This simple aisleless church features interesting animal carvings on each side of the chancel arch. It was partly demolished in the sixteenth century and restored in 1620. Normally open every day from 11 am to 4pm.

Delapre Park

The 500 acres of open parkland includes a water garden, walled garden, woods, lakes and a golf course. Delapre Abbey was founded in 1145 as one of only three Cluniac nunneries in England. The Battle of Northampton was fought in the grounds and both sides of the river in 1460 (one of the Wars

of the Roses). Why the Lancastrians chose this spot to make their stand is something of a mystery as it has no natural advantages, though the Yorkist victory and capture of Henry VI had more to do with internal treachery.

Queen Eleanor Cross

This was raised in memory of Eleanor of Castile, wife of Edward I, following her sudden death in 1290. A cross was erected wherever the funeral cortege stopped for the night, but the only others which survive are those at Geddington (near Kettering) and Waltham Cross. Northampton's cross has required regular restoration and it is worth checking in advance if the cross is covered by scaffolding or canvas.

River Nene

The Nene rises near Badby and flows 110 miles to the Wash. It has been navigable from Northampton since 1761. In 1815 it was connected with the main Grand Union via the Northampton Arm (the junction is passed late in this walk). The Nene Way runs through Northamptonshire for 67 miles from Badby to the Cambridgeshire boundary, then continues to Sutton Bridge.

St Peter's Church, Marefair

This again is managed by the Churches Conservation Trust and described by them as "the most outstanding Norman church in the country". It is certainly a fine example of Norman architecture and the interior is also rich in carving and decoration. It was completed in 1160, but built on the buried remains of a Saxon palace. The keys can be obtained from the Ibis hotel opposite.

Lunch

Rose and Crown, 3 Park Road, Hartwell. Tel: (01604) 863663. A possible early lunch option (13.7 kms in to the walk). According to a blackboard outside the pub in late 2020, it opened at 12 on Sundays and at 5 from Wednesday to Saturday (only). It re-opened in 2022 under new management but sadly it had to close in November 2022 following criminal damage and the future is very uncertain.

Salcey Forest Café opens from 9am to 5pm (4pm in winter). The light (non-alcoholic) lunch option (16.3 kms in to the walk). Hot dishes include vegetarian hot pot and chilli con carne. Tel: (01604) 861234.

<http://www.salceyforestcafe.com/index.html>

Spread Eagle, Forest Road, Piddington. Tel: (01604) 871008. The late lunch option (reached after 20.2 kms, or 6.5 kms if starting at Hartwell).

Tea

You can opt for further pub refreshments in the villages of Wootton or Hardingstone, sit outside in the grand surroundings of Delapre Abbey, or in the new (2018) Waterside campus, or else find a town centre cafe at the end of the walk.

Yeoman of England, 31 High Street, Wootton. Tel: (01604) 762317 (25.1 kms in to the walk on the alternative ending only, or 11.4 kms if starting at Hartwell)

Crown Inn, 57 High Street, Hardingstone. Tel: (01604) 876677 (26.6 kms in to the walk on the alternative ending only, or 12.9 kms if starting at Hartwell)

The Sun Inn, 9 High Street, Hardingstone. Tel: [01604 700007](tel:01604700007) (25.3 kms in to the walk, or 11.6 kms if starting at Hartwell)
<https://www.thesuninnhardingstone.co.uk>

The Orangery, Delapre Abbey (27 kms in to the walk, or 13.3 kms if starting at Hartwell), offers afternoon tea in a fabulous setting. They are open until 5pm. <https://delapreabbey.org/cafe/>

Waterside Campus, University of Northampton: Engine Shed (27.9 kms in to the walk, or 14.2 kms if starting at Hartwell), Sunley Hotel, Learning Hub, Coffee Social, Waterside Cafe. Other than Sunley Hotel you may find these facilities closed at weekends or during vacations. For the Engine Shed see <https://suengineshed.com/> . Allow 25-30 minutes to complete the walk. For the opening times of all campus facilities see <https://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/services-and-facilities/retail-and-catering/where-to-eat/>

The following are off the main route, but alternative directions are provided which take you closer to Northampton town centre (all are within 400 metres of the end of the walk):

Café Coco, Gold Street, Northampton, opens 9-5 (10-4 on Sundays)

The Sandwich Bar, 5 Gold Street, Northampton. Open until 3pm Monday to Saturday, closed on Sundays.

Naicha Coffee, 36 Gold Street, Northampton.

Jenny's Café and Restaurant, Gold Street, Northampton, opens 8.30-6 (10-4 on Sundays)

All Saints Church coffee shop, George Row, Northampton

Coconut Grove Cafe, 9-10 Gold Street Mews, Northampton. This cafe opened in 2018, specialising in Jamaican cuisine. Open Tuesday to Saturday, 9-6.30.

Creative Cupcake Company, Gold Street Mews, Northampton. Open from

9.30 to 2.45 on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and to 4pm on Saturday. Ondrej's Breakfast Cafe, 21 Marefair, Northampton. Open to 4.30, seven days a week.

Ibis Northampton Centre, Sol Central, Marefair, Northampton. Open at all times.

Piccolos, Northampton station.

Help Us! After the walk, please leave a [comment](#), it really helps. Thanks!

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

By Car **Start** MK12 5LJ **Finish** NN1 1SP

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

Version May-24 [Mike Powell](#)

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Walk Directions

Wolverton to Station Road, Castlethorpe (5.6 kms)

1. From the station building turn half left and leave the car park in 30 metres by the British Rail sign. Cross Stratford Road and turn left, then in 10 metres right on to Newport Road. In 80 metres, before Stonebridge roundabout, stay on the tarmac, which drops to the right, signed for V6 and city centre then in 100 metres turn left under a subway. In 40 metres turn left, now following National Cycle Path 6 (NCP6). Cross Newport Road again in 70 metres and turn right. Turn left in 80 metres, still on NCP6 and signposted to Castlethorpe and Ouse Valley Park. Fork right on a cycle path (not on the 'riverside path') in 20 metres.
2. Pass a car park on the left and in 160 metres take the left fork, with allotments on your left, then picnic tables on your right. In 80 metres cross a footbridge by an Ouse Valley Way sign. The path veers left in 60 metres by a seat, now with the River Great Ouse on the right and quarry ponds on your left. In 600 metres cross a footbridge over a dry brook and follow the path further round to the left. In 300 metres ignore the wooden walkway on your left and in 40 metres go under Haversham Road (mind your head) and continue with a grass lawn and picnic tables to your left. In 260 metres go under the impressive Wolverton Viaduct, where there

is no need to mind your head. In 180 metres take a wooden footbridge on your right, by a sign for the Ouse Valley Park Riverside Walk, and continue with the river and railway line on your right and quarry works on your left. In 340 metres the path turns to the right, opposite a gate and information board. In 200 metres turn right to go through a gate, by a sign for the Iron Trunk Aqueduct Trail (ITAT) and Castlethorpe (2.4 kms) and on to a long footbridge on your right, crossing the Great Ouse in 30 metres. In 420 metres you have railings on your right with the railway line above you.

3. In 420 metres, opposite a bridge under the railway line, go through a wooden gate on the left with an ITAT logo, finally leaving the tarmac and take the clear straight path across a field (260°), heading just to the left of the nearest telegraph pole ahead, with a water tower visible well to your right. In 380 metres go under the telegraph wires and in 20 metres the path turns to the right (290°) and goes over a minimalist footbridge over a ditch, with one plank and one railing. In 120 metres cross a wide track by an ITAT sign and veer very slightly to the right again. In the next large field Castlethorpe comes in to view on the right and the path starts to drop down to the left. In 480 metres in the corner of the field take a stile hidden in a hedge with an ITAT logo and continue ahead downhill across a small field on uneven grass. In 140 metres turn half right at an ITAT sign and go over a stile and a footbridge. In 2021 there was a barrier here and the stile was loose; the gate to the left is not the right of way, but you may find it easier. Continue North-West on a clear path across the middle of a rough field to go over a stile with a gate to the left and an ITAT sign in 160 metres. Veer slightly left (290 degrees) on grass to follow the River Tove, behind a barbed wire fence on your left. In 220 metres you pass a grand iron memorial seat for a Mr Tipple - an excellent spot for a short break. In 60 metres go through a kissing gate next to a field gate and continue slightly to the right (300°), still by the river. In 120 metres go under telegraph wires. In 90 metres the field narrows and you have the barbed wire fence and river again on your left and a well-maintained hedge on your right. In 180 metres at the end of the hedge go through a metal gate, by a field gate. In 80 metres go through a kissing gate by a metal gate on to Station Road.

Station Road, Castlethorpe to New Farm (Pindon End) (4.3 kms)

4. Turn right on the road and (!) in 40 metres go over a slightly hidden stile on the left (there was a new green footpath sign here in 2021). Bear left over the grass, to the left of a slight rise, to reach the river again by a footpath post in 120 metres. Your predominant direction is North-North-West all the way to New Farm, with the railway line parallel to the right, often just a field away.
5. (!) In 280 metres the river turns to the left. The right of way continues ahead for another 180 metres, then through a metal field gate and to the right on concrete, through three farm gates and in 150 metres turns left over a cattle grid on a tarmac drive. For an easier route, just after the next footpath post cut half right (due North)

- across the grass to a green footpath signpost visible in the corner of the field, which you reach in 250 metres. The signpost has four arms, none of them pointing back in your direction! Turn left, crossing the cattle grid in 30 metres on to the tarmac road.
6. In 90 metres ignore a drive on the left leading to Castlethorpe Mill, with its colourful sign. In 320 metres you pass Milford Leys Farm on the left. In 150 metres ignore a path on the right immediately after Milford Leys Cottage. The views to the right are dominated by the distinctive church spire at Hanslope on an otherwise largely featureless horizon. (!) In 850 metres take the signed bridleway on grass, which leaves the drive to the left before the entrance pillars of Lincoln Lodge. There is no change of direction here, you just need to stay off the private drive. In 150 metres continue past a pylon with a public bridleway sign, ignoring a path to the right. In 80 metres you pass a pond on your right and resume your former direction (330°) on concrete and then on gravel.
 7. (!) In 150 metres the drive turns right but you continue on a bridleway, which in 2021 was clearly marked by one of several signs featuring vertical lettering on a white background; if you find the field ploughed with no clear path, you should maintain the same direction (330°) straight across the field, parallel with both edges. In 500 metres go over a ditch and through a gap in a hedge, then through the gate ahead in 40 metres with a 'circular ride' sign (not the gates to your left or right). Follow a grassy enclosed path with a barbed wire fence on your left and a hedge on your right. In 280 metres go through a gap and continue across the field ahead (still 330°) following another 'circular ride' sign on a post (possibly hidden by a hedge on the right). If you find the field ploughed with no clear path, aim for the right end of the hedge ahead, to the left of a lone tree. In 200 metres at another 'Circular Ride' sign on a wooden post, continue ahead in the next large field. In 260 metres keep to the right of a stile and bushes at a path junction and go through a gap in the hedge, then continue ahead (due North) on a wide grass path between fields, with a hedge on your left. In 380 metres keep to the left of buildings as per a footpath sign. In 60 metres turn left on gravel opposite New Farm House. In 30 metres continue ahead on a road at a bend.

New Farm (Pindon End) to Hartwell (3.8 kms)

8. In 100 metres, just after The Barn, go through or over a field gate into the field on your right. In 2021 the green public footpath sign here was on the ground. Follow the indented grass path along the middle of the long narrow field with a ditch to your right, heading towards a railway tunnel. In 550 metres go through a gate (part of the railway security fence). In 20 metres go through the tunnel and under the railway. In 20 metres go through another security gate and immediately turn left along the edge of a field. In 40 metres go through a gap on the left, over a ditch and in to the next field. There are no signs here, but it is unnecessary to continue to the corner of the small field, as indicated on the OS map. Continue parallel with the railway line. In 150 metres go over a stile and footbridge in to the next field. In 550

metres at the corner of the field turn right then left in 20 metres to cross a plank bridge over a ditch and continue ahead in to the next field. In 120 metres ignore a bridge under the railway line and veer right (30°), away from the rail line, but keep the field edge on your left all the way to the outskirts of Hartwell, which is now visible ahead. In 250 metres, at the end of the field on your right, go through a gap in to the next field and continue with a hedge on your left. In 200 metres at the corner of the field cross a stream by a footbridge and continue up the left hand edge of the next field.

9. At a cross paths in 450 metres (which may not be obvious on the ground) continue ahead with a hedge on your left. In 100 metres, at the corner of the large field, you continue ahead on a sunken path with sections of paving, trees and bushes on both sides and farm buildings visible ahead. In 100 metres you reach the end of Folly Lane and continue ahead past The Folly on your left. In 50 metres take the signposted path to your right, up steps and through a wooden kissing gate. The path leads half left (East) across a field. In 120 metres go through another wooden kissing gate and continue along the left edge of the next small field. In 60 metres go over a wooden stile on your left and cross the next field, heading to the right of the houses ahead. In 120 metres take a stile to the right of a metal gate and continue past the houses. In 50 metres turn right on Park Road.
10. In 20 metres take the signposted public footpath to the left, initially on gravel then continuing on grass at the lower (right) side of a field. (!) This is the last field before Hartwell, but it contains an intricate network of paths and needs careful concentration. Head North-East (40°) at first, with a ditch to your right, along the twisting field boundary towards houses visible in the distance, ignoring the houses closer to your left. You pass to the right of a clump of trees, concealing a pond and in 220 metres, turn right (East) with the field boundary. The field becomes wider after passing the houses which protrude to the left. (!) In 60 metres there is an unmarked path to the left, opposite a marked path to the right (over a footbridge). Turn left here, due North (the map indicates yet another path from here, which passes closer to the pond), aiming well to the right of a prominent white house. In 2021 this grassy and muddy path was clear on the ground but this is not always the case. In 180 metres, **for Hartwell or the Rose and Crown**, take a path branching left, directly towards the white house (the more direct route, **not visiting Hartwell**, is to stay on the path to the corner of the field). In 50 metres continue ahead at the top of the field (note that the pub garden is behind the low wooden fence which is just to your right and you need to retrace your steps to here after lunch). Go through a wooden kissing gate in 15 metres and in 45 metres turn right on the road. In 40 metres you reach the Rose and Crown on your right (there is a bus stop to the left, on the junction with Ashton Road).

Note that if you forego the pub at Hartwell, this reduces the distance by 0.4 kms.

Hartwell to Salcey Forest (2.6 kms)

11. After lunch you may be able to ask permission of the pub manager to step over the low fence from the garden and resume the walk by turning left. Otherwise, retrace your steps back to the wooden gate and turn left, passing the low fence in 30 metres. Go through the gap at the field corner in 40 metres, passing to the left of a wooden barrier (the direct option above re-joins you here). In 30 metres you pass a wooden gate in to paddocks on your right and continue on a narrow enclosed path with residential fences shortly on the left. In 20 metres the path turns to the right and in 25 metres back to the left at another gate to the paddocks. In 60 metres go through a wooden kissing gate. In 55 metres you continue on Malting Way (though some signs say Hillside). In 80 metres turn right past the school on School Lane (note however that the rest of this complex paragraph is designed to keep you off the main road; it would be simpler and shorter to turn left and right on Forest Road). In 60 metres turn left on Grafton Close. In 120 metres take the cycle path at the end of the road and in 60 metres continue ahead on a road. In 40 metres turn right on Salcey Avenue then in 10 metres left on Salcey Close. Where the road turns right in 80 metres, go through a gap ahead and in 15 metres take the tarmac cycle path to the left by a street light (before the houses of Hazel Close), with a wooden fence to your right. In 70 metres the path turns to the right and you continue on Oak Close. In 50 metres turn left on Stoneway. Turn right on Forest Road in 120 metres (or left for bus stops from where you could catch a number 33 to Northampton or back to Wolverton or Milton Keynes). Take the bridge over the M1 in 180 metres.
12. (!) In 150 metres – before the wooden Salcey Forest sign – turn left passing a green barrier in 10 metres and on to a surfaced path. In 150 metres you pass a post which has a Horse Trail arrow on a brown logo on its reverse (the trails in Salcey Forest are marked by arrows on a coloured background). Veer right (North at first) away from the M1 on a straight, stony section of path. In 750 metres cross the busy Wootton Road carefully and in 25 metres go through a green barrier and continue on tarmac. In 35 metres turn right through wooden barriers and continue with a car park on your right (this is part of the Family Cycle Trail, which has a grey logo). In 100 metres cut through to the left just after a Pay and Display machine. This area gets very busy at weekends and it is easy to become disorientated. Keep to the left of all buildings. In 120 metres you pass immediately left of the cafe.

Salcey Forest to Piddington (3.7 kms)

13. With the cafe to your right, continue past a play area on your left in 25 metres, then veer left to reach the start of the walking trails. In 50 metres go straight on (30 degrees) at a post indicating that you are following the Elephant Walk (purple logos) and the Church Path Walk, while the Woodpecker Trail lies to the right. In 50 metres go over a footbridge and in 15 metres continue on the Elephant Walk logos on a wide surfaced path, where the Church Path Walk goes to the right.
14. In 120 metres you pass a seat and in 250 metres the path turns left by another seat. In 120 metres you pass Elephant Pond on your right (elephants were imported

to extract timber and used to chill off here), by another seat. In 45 metres turn right, back on the surfaced Family Cycle Trail (ignoring the Tree Top Way, which is more sharply to the right). In 130 metres you pass another seat and in 220 metres turn left at a cross-roads, back on the Church Path Walk, with seats on your left and the remains of Church Path Oak to your right (this famous old oak fell in 1995). Fork right on an unmarked muddy section of path in 140 metres (ignoring signs for the Church Path Walk to the left) and turn right in 200 metres on Woodpecker Trail (pink logo) and Horse Trail. After a section of long straight path, in 700 metres at a right hand bend with a wooden barrier directly ahead, turn left following the Northampton Round, to leave Salcey Forest in 50 metres.

15. Continue North on a gravel byway, ignoring a path to the left in 15 metres, level at first then gently uphill between fields. In 650 metres ignore a path to the right (and pass Grange Pond on the right, though it is not visible from the path). Pass under a line of low pylons in 40 metres. Go over an old railway bridge in 120 metres. In 45 metres ignore a bridleway to your right. In 35 metres you come out on Forest Road, opposite New Farm (named on the map as Church Farm). Ignore the bridleway through the farmyard and continue along the road. The conspicuous leaning spire of Piddington church is visible to the left ahead. In 280 metres take the signed footpath to the left just before Martin's Road (Leaving the Northampton Round). In 120 metres the fence on your right ends and you continue along the left edge of a field. In 50 metres turn right across the middle of the field, heading just to the right of the church spire. In 160 metres continue along the right hand edge of the field. In 120 metres ignore the path to your right (this leads to the Spread Eagle pub - for the pub go through a wooden barrier in 5 metres, in 100 metres pass to the left of a wooden gate and continue with a hedge on your left and a fence on the right, in 70 metres turn right on the road to reach the pub in 25 metres). *Note that if you visit the pub at Piddington, this increases the distance by 0.4 kms.*

Piddington to Preston Deanery (2.0 kms)

16. Veer left with the path and in 60 metres go through a metal gate on to a road (Old End), ignoring the path which is immediately to the left here. In 150 metres turn left on Church End. In 100 metres ignore the path directly ahead and enter the church yard on your right, passing to the left of the church. In 70 metres leave the church yard and enter the cemetery, which is managed by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Note the black metal seat on your left with military images. In 20 metres go through a metal gate and follow the wide path half left across a field. The clear well-maintained path continues North-West almost to Preston Deanery. In 250 metres cross a ditch at an unmarked path junction. In 280 metres cross a stream by a wooden footbridge. In 160 metres you have a hedge on your right. In 40 metres cross a tarmac path and continue with a barbed wire fence and sewage works on your right. In 50 metres the fence ends and you continue across a field. In 80 metres go over a wooden footbridge. In 350 metres the clear path ends abruptly at a garden. Go over a stile to the right of the garden gate and continue on an

indistinct path through rough grass (330°). Go under telegraph wires and aim for the corner of the field to the right of black barns on the other side of the road ahead, keeping well to the left of the buildings in the field. In 150 metres go over a stile on to Preston Deanery Road and turn right. In 200 metres you pass the Church of St Peter and St Paul (no longer used regularly but managed by the Churches Conservation Trust) on the left, with a seat outside.

Preston Deanery to Hardingstone (3.3 kms)

17. In 100 metres you pass Preston Deanery Hall and continue on a bridge over a stream in 70 metres. In 60 metres go over a stile on the left at a footpath sign across a field (in 2021 there was an overhanging arch of trees above the stile). Make sure that you are the correct side of the field boundary, which should be to your left. The line was previously unclear on the ground, but in 2021 there was a clear path heading North-West (310°), passing between trees, muddy at first but becoming more distinct as you emerge from a small dip. Make sure that the line of overhead wires is to your right and head towards Grange Farm (not The Grange, which is the building further up the road). The map shows a second path branching to the right, but this is not obvious on the ground. In 350 metres go over a stile by a wooden gate, keeping to the left of the farm buildings, then turn left and right to continue to the left of a line of trees in the unenclosed garden, with the line of wires now directly overhead.
18. In 120 metres a low footpath arrow indicates a path to the right and another ahead (note that this junction is further East than indicated on the map). Here you have a choice; you can either turn right for the main route, or continue ahead for an alternative ending at the Queen Eleanor Cross on London Road (with refreshment options in either Wootton or Hardingstone) and catch a regular bus in to Northampton. These alternative directions are given at the end of the main route description.
19. Cross the field (North-West) to reach the far corner in 140 metres and turn right. In 30 metres turn left to cross the next field. In 2021 there was a narrow cleared strip to follow, gradually moving away from the field boundary to the left (320 degrees) and heading towards a hedgerow. In 400 metres go over a stile in to the next field, continuing on muddy grass. Head well to the right of a row of modern houses. In 200 metres go over a stile by a green signpost and turn left on the busy Newport Pagnell Road.
20. You now have two options. The first option given below is 'safe', in that it follows rights of way, but it begins with a section of busy main road, initially without a pavement and it then takes a 'path' which in 2021 was surrounded on both sides by high security fences. There is a large scale building development planned here – it is thoroughly unpleasant and it is likely to get very much worse over the next few years! Of course, it is easy to navigate.

21. The second 'adventurous' option starts inauspiciously but it is altogether more appealing; however it is possible that it may become unusable as the development proceeds. Initially it takes a rough path parallel with the main road (note that you can revert to the main road later on if you wish). It then follows alongside a security fence at the edge of the development site (in 2021), before cutting through the very pleasant Brackmills Woods. This option adds about 300 metres to the distance.
22. Safe, rights of way option
23. In 60 metres there is a sign welcoming you to Wootton. In 100 metres the pavement begins. In 150 metres a sign welcomes you to Northampton. In 20 metres there is a minor road opposite, The Green. You can revert to the Brackmills Woods alternative here (or vice versa). In 20 metres another sign welcomes you to Wootton again (as though you ever left it). In 70 metres you pass Lady Hollows Drive (with a bus stop for number 12, which would be worth considering) to the left. You pass another bus stop then a metal gate in 50 metres, both on the other side of the road. If you go through the gate, this is your last chance to follow the Brackmills Woods option, which runs alongside a security fence at first.
24. In 190 metres cross the road to Pagnell Court opposite. Take the path immediately to the left of Pagnell Court, indicated by a finger post indicating 'Public footpath to Hardingstone', initially to the left of a wooden fence. In 25 metres go through a gap on your left and then turn right at the edge of a rough field. In 180 metres the hedge on your right ends and you continue in the same direction. In 140 metres go left through a wooden gate and in 15 metres cross Landimore Road. Turn right on a tarmac path (parallel with the road), then in 45 metres turn left through another gate, in the direction indicated by a green footpath finger post. The path now veers slightly to the right, towards the right end of a row of houses and well to the right of a prominent water tower. This unappealing path leads over rough ground and in 2020/21 there was construction work in its very early stages on the left and high metal barriers to either side. Sadly it is hard to see this section improving any time soon.
25. In 160 metres you pass an old stile on the right. In 300 metres ignore a cycle path to the right (with a grossly inaccurate map of Brackmills Woods). The Brackmills Woods option joins you here. In 65 metres pass to the left of a barn and past the end of Hermitage Farm Close (on your right) in 45 metres. Turn right on The Green in 55 metres and fork left on High Street, Hardingstone before the war memorial in 100 metres. In 75 metres you pass the Sun Inn (with a bus stop for number 11 outside).
26. Adventurous, Brackmills Woods option
27. For the 'adventurous' Brackmills Wood option, cross the road and turn left then in 20 metres (!) go through a gap on your right, which may require you to step over an old metal barrier (if you reach signs welcoming you to Wootton, you have gone too far on the road). Immediately turn left to continue parallel with the road - this rough

but clear path is not a right of way and it is prone to littering in places, but it avoids a busy section of main road with no pavement. You can however pick up the path further along the road if you prefer; either take the first minor road on the right (The Green) and very soon turn left over a ditch as noted below (the ditch may be hard to spot; it is after a metal post on the right but before a small parking area on the left) OR continue to Lady Hollow's Drive on the right, then cross the main road, pass a bus stop and go through a metal gate in 50 metres. This takes you to the end of the following paragraph.

28. In 2021 the security fences surrounding a large building development were visible ahead – this is where you are heading. Continue downhill with a large field on your right. In 320 metres you cross a minor road (The Green) and a (probably dry) ditch – if you are lucky someone may have left a plank for you! You pass under wires and in 150 metres reach the start of the security fence, with a metal gate and the main road to your left.
29. Turn half right to follow the fence, away from the road and parallel with the wires at first (330 degrees), with open ground on your right. In 250 metres, just before the corner of the field, go through a gap on your left and turn right. In 40 metres turn right again (50 degrees), in to the next field by a telegraph pole. You could be forgiven for thinking that you have stepped through a magic doorway, such is the instant transformation in your surroundings. Goodbye steel girders, hello leafy woodland! Welcome to Brackmills Woods.
30. Veer left and slightly downhill on a wide grassy path with trees lining both sides. In 90 metres, at a break in the trees on your left, turn left (330 degrees again), on grass with woods on both sides. In 35 metres bear left on a clearer grassy path. In 25 metres, turn right and steeply downhill with views of an industrial estate ahead. In 140 metres veer left through a gap in the hedge to enter woods in 20 metres. In 50 metres go through a gate and cross Landimore Road, then through a second gate in 25 metres.
31. Continue ahead, with the industrial estate visible to your right. The path turns to the left and in 70 metres you turn right on a wider path. In 150 metres you reach a surfaced path at a bend. Turn left and uphill here and either follow the path through two more wide sweeping bends or take a more direct route on the grass. In 150 metres continue ahead at a junction with another surfaced path, by a pylon (now 250 degrees). In 250 metres turn right, by an information board (with an outdated and inaccurate map), rejoining the 'safe' option above.

Hardingstone to Delapre Park (1.6 kms)

32. In 65 metres ignore Bouverie Road to the left. In 50 metres cross the road and turn down Back Lane. In 35 metres take a dirt path to the left, as indicated by a green finger post, steeply downhill through woods passing allotments on your left, towards the sound of traffic.

33. In 260 metres you emerge in the open with factories ahead. The path levels out and you continue ahead at a cross-paths. In 70 metres ignore a cycle path to the right and continue ahead on tarmac, signed to Delapre Park and Gardens. In 150 metres you go through a subway under the A45 (Nene Valley Way). In 60 metres continue ahead with a car park on your right (part of Delapre Golf Centre) and woods to the left. In 180 metres cross the drive at a bend to continue on a tree-lined path which runs to the right of the drive. In 250 metres you walk on grass with a hedge to your right. Cross the drive again at another bend in 180 metres. Continue North on a rough path to the left of a red bin, marked by a warning about golf balls (not the tarmac path by yellow concrete bollards to its right). The Lancastrian encampment was hereabouts in the Battle of Northampton. Stay on this path, with horse paddocks further to the right, until you reach the end of the golf course and a path to the left in 250 metres.

Delapre Park to Northampton (3.3 kms)

34. **Here you have a choice:**

For refreshments in the lovely surroundings of Delapre Abbey, in 15 metres, after a buried cattle grid and a red dog waste bin, turn left in to woods. The wide dirt path runs just inside the woods, with the golf course to your left behind trees and bushes. In 180 metres, after another red bin, fork right by a tree with a yellow arrow (pointing left). On emerging from the trees, follow the path round to the right and shortly you will see the back of Delapre Abbey ahead. Cut across grass to the middle part of the building, which is coloured white. In 120 metres you reach the Orangery Cafe. Leaving the cafe, turn left following the wall, passing the walled garden (which is worth a look). In 40 metres, at the corner of the wall, continue ahead. In 40 metres you reach a circular pond with stone walls. Take the muddy path to the left here and continue across a lawn to pass through a wooden gate in 100 metres between a wall on the left and an information board on the right. Cross the wide path and take the narrower path ahead, which veers sharply to the right. You are now back on the main route at paragraph 35 below.

For the main route, continue ahead ignoring all crossing paths until your path ends in 160 metres at a junction with a wide path (with a wall and seat to the left). Cross the path and cut across the grass ahead to join a narrow path leading sharply to the right (60 degrees). The Delapre Abbey diversion joins you here.

Note that the detour to Delapre Abbey increases the distance by 0.3 kms.

35. **Both routes continue** Soon campus buildings are visible to your left, beyond metal railings. In 220 metres the path turns further to the right to continue round a lake, but you step up through a gap on the left. Cross the end of a road (Ransome Road) to the left. Go through a black barrier in 15 metres and take the path ahead, as marked by a white arrow to the left on concrete, with a metal fence on the left.

36. In 220 metres go round a wooden barrier to enter the Waterside Campus of Northampton University, which opened in 2018, transforming a previously derelict

area. In 10 metres go through another gap in a wooden barrier to your left (to the right here is an information board on the Battle of Northampton, 1460). Continue West on a path, keeping to the left of all buildings. In 70 metres you pass a horse sculpture. In 120 metres the path ends by the Engine Shed and an information board. The cafe here is an excellent project which has given a new life to a neglected and vandalised old building, so do support it.

37. From the Engine Shed turn right (North West) on Locomotive Walk. Cross Park Avenue in 70 metres (there are bus stops to the right here). To the left here is Sunley Hotel, which includes a lounge bar – probably the only facility on campus which is open at weekends. Continue on Delapre Walk (there is a cafe on your right, in the Learning Hub building). In 160 metres you reach Waterside Place. On the left there are shops and the Creative Hub, including a cafe, the Coffee Social (there is also the Waterside cafe on your right). Follow the path round to the left when you reach the River Nene. In 120 metres you cross the river by the winding Becket's Bridge, with views of Northampton Marina to your right, then enter Becket's Park in 140 metres. Turn left back towards the river and turn right in 45 metres by Northampton Lock (Walk 378, Wellingborough to Northampton, joins you here).
38. You pass the end of an islet, then continue past a pedestrian bridge on a paved riverside path with flats on your right. In 400 metres cross Bridge Street by the traffic lights to the huge Carlsberg brewery, which was opened in 1974 by Princess Benedicte, modelled on a Viking longboat and has won architectural awards. Take the tarmac riverside path to the left of the brewery (signposted 'Nene Way Riverside Walk'). In 120 metres you pass the point where the river (which is fully navigable) converges with the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal (note the British Waterways sign). In 80 metres the path turns to the right, away from the river but with a tributary to your left and beery smells and some mournful weeping willows on your right. In 80 metres take a pedestrian bridge on your left and turn right on tarmac, signed to the town centre and railway station.
39. In 150 metres you reach a high metal gate on your left, slightly set back with an equally ugly modern stone arch overhead (no need to duck your head here).
40. **You now have four options to complete the walk**, depending on whether the gate (and a subsequent arcade) is open and on your refreshment needs (note that the writer has never known the gate to be locked):
- If you find the gate open AND you wish to proceed directly to Northampton station** (note that there is a Piccolos on the station), go through this formidable looking gate in to a retail park. Cut across the car park, keeping just to the left of Lidl supermarket and cross Towcester Road (A5123) at the traffic lights in 250 metres. Directly ahead on the horizon there is a curious tower structure, formerly used by the world-leading Express Lifts company for the purpose of testing lifts. Turn right on the road, leave the retail park behind, cross a branch of the Nene and at the next break in the metal fence to your left in 150 metres, take the unmarked tarmac path⁺, with branches of the Nene on both sides and a retail park

to your left. This is Food Meadow (probably a corruption of 'flood'). In 280 metres go under a very low bridge carrying the railway line. When the path divides in 60 metres, take the left fork to reach Black Lion Hill (A428) in 70 metres. Turn right and cross the road at the lights in 160 metres opposite the University Innovation Centre (this has a cafe, but again do not expect it to be open at weekends) for Northampton station.

If the gate is locked, continue with a high metal fence on your left, crossing back over the stream in 15 metres, then between security fences. In 80 metres the blue security fence on the left ends and you continue on the approach drive to Carlsberg (Western Wharf). In 50 metres turn left on the very busy St Peter's Way. Ignore the first traffic lights to your right in 50 metres and cross the Towcester Road to your left at another set of traffic lights in 50 metres. Turn left, then in 150 metres at a break in the metal fence on the right take the unmarked tarmac path and follow the directions in the previous paragraph from⁺.

For tea/coffee shops, proceed as immediately above to St Peter's Way. Cross the road with great care then head half right up the large car park, aiming just to the right of Argos. In 120 metres, if it is open, continue up the arcade, St Peter's Walk (if it is closed, refer to the directions immediately below). You reach Café Coco in 50 metres. Continue up the arcade, emerging in 50 metres on Gold Street, directly opposite Naicha Coffee Bar 36++ (note that Jenny's Café and Restaurant is to your right on the opposite side of the road - which you need to cross anyway at some point - and The Sandwich Bar is further to the right on the same side; beyond you can just see All Saints Church on Northampton's central square - the church has a coffee shop and there are many other refreshment options around here). To continue the walk turn left. Coconut Grove Cafe and the Creative Cupcake Company are tucked away down Gold Street Mews on your left in 25 metres. At the traffic lights in 45 metres you cross the A508 (Horseshoe Street/Horsemarket). Continue ahead on Marefair passing Ondrej's Breakfast Cafe in 50 metres (Ibis Hotel opposite does refreshments in a ground floor bar), then Hazelrigg House (c1580) which survived the fire of Northampton (1675) in 30 metres, to reach St Peter's Church in 70 metres and a second set of traffic lights in 60 metres, just after the site of Northampton Castle opposite (if you have a few minutes to spare you can visit the site by turning up Chalk Lane). You need to cross the road at these lights (if you have not already done so), as the station is on your right in 80 metres.

If you arrive outside business hours and St Peter's Walk is closed, turn right and go under the arch in the corner of the car park (immediately to the right of a gym). Continue on Woolmonger Street, which turns to the left. Turn left on Kingsmill Street to come out on Gold Street by Yorkshire Bank. Turn left to pass opposite Jenny's Café and Restaurant then resume the directions immediately above from⁺⁺.

Alternative ending at Queen Eleanor Cross

Preston Deanery to Wootton (3.1 kms)

41. From the point noted in paragraph 23, ignore the path to the right (the main route) and continue across the middle of a field, now heading West. In 100 metres continue across the next field, still with the pylons on your right. After the pylons end, go through a wooden gate in 480 metres. In 50 metres go under another row of wires. In 200 metres go through a wooden kissing gate in to the next field, with concrete drinking troughs before and after. Cut off the corner of the field and in 140 metres pass under more pylons and continue with a hedge and the pylons parallel to your right. In 180 metres go through a wooden kissing gate and down the next rough field to reach a footbridge in 220 metres. The path continues ahead but it is easier to turn left here, right on an industrial drive (opposite a school) in 50 metres and cross the busy Wooldale Road to the left of a roundabout in 80 metres.
42. Turn right back towards the roundabout then in 50 metres turn left on tarmac. Fork right to follow the line of street lights on a tarmac path, or cut across the grass, heading for the right edge of a group of houses ahead, which you pass in 250 metres (your direction is West once you reach the tarmac path). In 120 metres cross Curtlee Hill by the zebra crossing (bus 12/12A stops to the right; it is a circular route so catch the first bus in either direction). In 150 metres turn left and right, still on a tarmac path to the left of a community centre and then a cemetery. In 50 metres go through barriers and in 60 metres turn left on Farmclose Road. In 50 metres turn right on High Street (Wootton) opposite St George the Martyr's Church. Cross the road and in 50 metres you pass the former Red Lion pub on the left, and in 10 metres a bus shelter (7 and 33 stop here and there is an indicator of when buses are due). In 70 metres you pass the Yeoman of England pub, on the corner of Sunnyside.

Wootton to Queen Eleanor Cross via Hardingstone (2.7 kms)

43. After passing a Methodist church in 70 metres, cross back over the road before a raised section of pavement. In 80 metres take the steps to your right at a public footpath sign. Continue on a tarmac path between residential fences. In 200 metres the path continues beside a narrow strip of woodland (it may be easier to walk on the grass to the left). In 180 metres go round a metal barrier and ignore New Road to your right. In 250 metres fork right up steps to cross Newport Pagnell Road. Turn right and in 30 metres take Gardeners View on the left (which is signed as a public footpath). In 200 metres turn left at the end of the road and in 20 metres turn right to take a tarmac path (to the right of number 35). In 75 metres, cross St Martin's Lane and continue on a tarmac path. In 60 metres you have Hardingstone Recreation Ground on your right. In 200 metres continue on gravel, with St Edmund's Church to your right. In 80 metres turn left on High Street (Hardingstone). In 50 metres you pass the Crown Inn and a bus stop for number 7.
44. In 40 metres, pass Glebe Avenue on your left. In 45 metres ignore Coldstream Lane on your right. In 50 metres take a signed public footpath to the right between residential walls. In 35 metres go through a kissing gate and half left across grass

(following the direction of the public footpath arrow, North-West, and the indented line in the grass) to metal barriers in 300 metres.

45. Cross the dual carriageway (A45 Nene Valley Way) by a footbridge to enter Delapre Wood in 60 metres. Continue ahead on a path marked as a Northamptonshire County Council leafleted walk, which divides in 30 metres.
46. Take the path to the left and downhill. Ignore a path forking steeply downhill to the right in 50 metres (marked by an arrow on a post). In 100 metres cross a ditch by some wooden planks (less than a bridge), then climb gently. Ignore paths to the left. In 300 metres, with traffic visible ahead, follow the main path round to the right, with a hollow and a pond on your left. In 100 metres turn sharp left and go through a green wooden barrier in 40 metres (this area is known as Wood Yard as it was used for timber collection and it is due for restoration). Turn right on the pavement (London Road, A508) and turn right to see the Queen Eleanor's Cross in 40 metres. From the cross, catch a 3, 7, X4 or X7 bus to Northampton (the nearest bus stop is on the opposite side of the road and to the left).

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