

ISE VALLEY VAGABONDS

Bedford Country Park & Town Trail BWF App No PT211

START & FINISH: Priory Country Park, Barkers Lane, Bedford MK41 9SH

OS map 153 Grid Ref TL072493 Distance 10km

Fee £1.00

Route last updated on 1 January 2016

This route description is valid from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017

This walk has been established by members of the Ise Valley Vagabonds Walking Club (BWF Club No 70) and is a qualifying event in the IVV award scheme. It can be walked at any time.

There are a number of hard paths on this route. Please feel free to walk on the grass, which edges these. Bedford Borough Council staff mows paths across many of the riverside water meadows. These will help you to go in the right direction.

PLEASE BE AWARE – AS THE ROUTE PASSES OVER WATER MEADOWS AND GOES CLOSE TO THE RIVER OUSE AND LAKES, IT CAN BE FLOODED AT TIMES, ESPECIALLY AFTER PROLONGED AND/OR HEAVY RAIN.

Walk to the end of the car park and opposite the pub entrance, turn left into tarmac path through the hedge toward the lake. At lakeside path turn left. Pass the visitor centre on your left. *(Toilets can be found to the left of the building)*. Straight on until you have woodland on your left. At the entrance to 'Finger Lakes', turn left down a few steps into woodland path. Follow this past a picnic bench on the lakeside on your right and, at the marker post with a red and a green arrow, turn right. Follow this path with 'Fingers' lake occasionally on right. Follow this path with 'Fingers Lake' occasionally on the right. Keep straight on into an open meadow with trees and fence on your right. At the marker post turn right following the green arrow, with the fence still on your right. Follow this as it bears right, now with the river on your left and 'Finger Lake' on your right. Continue straight on until you see the main path around Priory Lake ahead and to your right. Go straight on across the grass past the end of the lake and turn left on the footpath (red arrow) and cross the wooden footbridge over the lower end of the Canoe Slalom. *(During the holidays, and sometimes at weekends, large blocks are placed in the course to create a slalom and the sluice at the upper end, which you will cross later, is opened to create a white water torrent. Maintained by the Borough Council, this is used mainly by school canoe clubs from Bedford)*.

Bear left along path into the trees, cross a second bridge (Jetty Bridge) and follow the path to the river and Cardington Lock. *(Downstream from here the River Great Ouse is navigable to the sea at Kings Lynn)*. Turn right *(signed Riverside Walk)* along the river bank and walk straight on with the river on your left. Cross the bridge over the Slalom Course sluice. Walk straight on to cross a bridge over a small weir and, in a few metres, straight on at the fork along riverside path, with the Bedford Boat Club Marina on the opposite bank. Ignore all paths off to the right and continue along the riverside path. After about 1km follow the path slightly away from the river to cross the water access to Priory Marina over the Fish Ponds Bridge. *(You have now walked 3.3km)*. At the fork bear left and in 130m turn left to cross a wooden footbridge.

QUESTION 1. WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE FOOTBRIDGE?

Turn right along the meadow towards the steel bridge ahead of you. *(This bridge once carried part of the L & NER railway line from Bletchley to Cambridge across the River Great Ouse. The Pyramid on the opposite bank of the river is the Oasis Indoor Swimming Pool)*.

Walk ahead until you reach the riverbank. Follow this and bear right on a narrow path close to the river under the old bridge. In about 30m you meet another path. Turn left on this path towards the end of a metal footbridge. Pass the footbridge on your left and walk straight on across the grass to go under the road bridge (*King's Bridge*). Bear left to leave the tarmac path and continue straight on staying on the gravel path between the river on your left and Longholm Boating Lake on your right. Bear right around the end of the lake, and walk past an open-air café on your left. Turn right and then turn left to cross the Butterfly Bridge. (*Look left upriver at this point toward the town to see the spire of St Paul's Church rising over the roofs of the town*). Turn left again and walk along the Embankment with the river on your left. (*Bedford Embankment Park and Gardens were created in the 19th century. Financed by wealthy citizens and industrialists of the town, they were opened in 1888*). At the Suspension Bridge, there is a green plaque on the left.

QUESTION 2. WHEN WAS THE BRIDGE REOPENED?

Continue past the Suspension Bridge on your left. At the end of the Embankment Gardens, turn right to cross the road just before the mini-roundabout, then turn left to cross Newnham Road. Walk straight on passing the Castle Mound and the Swan Hotel on your right to the junction with the High Street. Turn right along High Street and in about 75 meters, turn right into Castle Lane. Walk towards 'Spaghetti John's' and then bear right to pass the reconstructed foundations of the Castle Great Hall. Pass these and bear right towards the Castle Mound. Walk around the front of the mound, keeping on your left. Half way round, turn right on a path to a gap in the stone wall, to reach Newnham Road. Turn left to reach a T-junction (St Cuthberts Church in front of you). Bear left past the John Bunyan Museum. In a few metres at the next junction cross the road with care and turn right along Mill Street and then turn left into St Cuthbert's Street. Follow St Cuthbert's Street to the traffic lights at St Peter's Street. At the traffic lights, cross St Peter's Street and turn left. After about 100m, follow the path along the right hand side of a small park. Walk to the far end and next to St Peter de Merton Church, turn left towards the statue of one of Bedford's famous citizens, John Bunyan, next to the road junction. With the statue behind you, cross the road at the pedestrian crossing and walk along High Street. In 70m turn right to cross the road at the Pelican Crossing and then turn left to continue along High Street, to reach Debenhams. Turn right. (*The sculpture of the two faces is thought, by some, to be the inspiration behind the Pink Floyd album cover for 'The Division Bell'*). Behind the sculpture is a small bust of Trevor Huddleston on a plinth.

QUESTION 3. WHEN DID NELSON MANDELA COME TO BEDFORD?

Go past the bust / plinth and, at the next street junction, turn right. After a few meters, turn left into an arcade, 'Church Arcade'. Walk through this to reach Church Square (known locally as Pigeon Square) and its 'water feature' in the centre. Cross the Square to the other side. This road is Allhallows. Turn left along Allhallows and at the end, at H Samuel Jewellers turn left along Midland Road. Pass Boots the Chemist on your right and take the next turn right along Harpur Street. (*Bedford has become a town of Markets and these take place in Harpur Street and St Paul's Square on Wednesday and Saturday, the 'General Market', Thursdays 'Gourmet Market' and on Friday the 'Flower Market'*). Walk past the Harpur Centre shopping complex in the right. (*The façade, erected in 1833, is that of the original Bedford Modern School, which was reconstructed in 1976 to house the shopping centre. The Harpur Trust, set up by Bedford-born Sir William Harpur, Lord Mayor of London in 1561, runs four independent schools in Bedford*). At the end of the pedestrian precinct, turn left along St Paul's Square. Pass The Corn Exchange, which is now Bedford's main theatre. (*See the dedication to the bandleader Glenn Miller on the front of the Corn Exchange. The Glenn Miller Orchestra held concerts here for the many US and other*

Servicemen based in the area, as well as making live broadcasts from here on the BBC during 1944. There are public toilets on your left close to the bus stops). On the plaque

QUESTION 4. WHEN WAS THE GLENN MILLER 50th ANNIVERSARY FESTIVAL?

Continue to the top of St Paul's Square and turn right to cross the road at the pedestrian crossing to the church side of the Square. Walk ahead with the church on your right, past the statue of John Howard who was the High Sheriff of Bedford from 1773 and a renowned prison reformer. He travelled Europe encouraging prison reform there, and died of fever in the Ukraine in 1790. Continue ahead, using the pedestrian crossings, and cross Town Bridge. *(Half way over is a plaque giving the history of the bridge and the fact that in the 13th century a bridge was constructed using the stones from the demolition rubble of the Bedford Castle).* At the far end of the bridge turn right on the path to the riverbank. Turn right to pass under Town Bridge. Pass the Bedford Rowing Club and cross a footbridge and in a short distance the Rink Island Bridge. *(You are now on Rink Islands. To your right is the luxury town-house development of Duckmill Crescent).* Continue ahead to cross Abbey Bridge. At the next junction, turn left and left again to cross over Duckmill Weir Bridge with green railings. *(At this point the river follows its old course to the right and the rowing course is to your left).* Immediately after crossing Duckmill Weir Bridge, there is an information notice on your right, near the water

QUESTION 5. WHOSE WHITE WATER AREA?

Follow the path through the park straight on over the Bedford Lock. *(This was refurbished by British Waterways to make The River Great Ouse Navigable for another 3 miles upstream as far as Kempston).*

Walk straight on past the bandstand, on the left hand side. Continue past the Suspension Bridge and then cross over Boatslide Weir Bridge and Boatslide Bridge. Walk straight on past the Harpur Schools Rowing Club, and Café on your right, Butterfly Bridge on your left. *(Crossing your outbound route).* Continue to the end of the Park with the river on the left and before you reach the white Newnham Bridge, turn right to follow the path under the road bridge. At the cross paths, turn right to cross over the metal girder footbridge. At the next path junction turn left *(signed Priory Park & Willington).* You are now on the old railway bed of the Bletchley to Cambridge railway. *(You passed under this bridge on the outbound part of the walk).* Continue ahead for 800m to arrive back where you started at the Priory Country Park car park.

We hope you have enjoyed the walk!

The Ise Valley Vagabonds have established other Permanent Trails at Bedford (2), Daventry, Kempston, Kettering, Kings Lynn, Leicester, London (2), Marston Moretaine (3), Oxford, Rugby, Rushden, Stamford, Stratford upon Avon, Warwick, Wellingborough and Woodstock.

They are all qualifying events towards the IVV award scheme. Further information about these walks, the IVV, the club and all its activities can be found by visiting our Web Site www.vagabonds.org.uk

THE ORGANISERS ARE NOT LIABLE FOR ACCIDENTS, THEFT, AND/OR DAMAGE TO PROPERTY. EVERY EFFORT WILL BE MADE BY THE ORGANISERS TO MAKE THIS A SAFE, ENJOYABLE AND MEMORABLE EVENT.

**ISE VALLEY VAGABONDS
PERMANENT TRAIL REGISTRATION FORM**

TRAIL	Bedford Country Park & Town Trail	2017/1
ROUTE UPDATED	01 January 2016	
DATE WALKED		
NAME		
ADDRESS		
TEL		
EMAIL		
ADDITIONAL WALKERS		
ENTRY FEE	___ Walkers @ £1.00 (€2,00) each	Total £
TOTAL FEES ENCLOSED		£
Please put my IVV stamps on a new set of Insert cards Yes/No		
ANSWERS		
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
Comments		
<p>If you have a problem with this trail, please try and resolve it with the organiser. If you are unable to resolve the problem, then please contact the BWF Trail Officer.</p>		
<p>Please enclose a STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE (at least C6 (114 x 162mm) or DL (110 x 220mm)) with this form and send it to</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Carol Jones 138 Rushden Road Wymington Rushden Northants NN10 9LE</p>		