

## Planning your walk

Harrold-Odell Country Park is the suggested starting point. The walk is described in an anti-clockwise direction from the park. However you can begin at any point and walk in either direction.

## Refreshments, Parking and Toilets

The main car park is at Harrold-Odell Country Park situated to the north of the River Great Ouse, between Harrold and Odell on the Harrold to Carlton Road. There are toilet facilities and refreshments available at the country park during the opening times displayed. Harrold and Odell both have public houses that serve good food.

## Public Transport

A bus service operates between Bedford and Rushden via Odell and Harrold also Bedford to Odell via Harrold and Carlton, for information contact Traveline 0871 200 22 33 or [www.transportdirect.info](http://www.transportdirect.info). The closest train station is 9 miles away at Bedford

## Ordnance Survey Maps

The route is covered on Ordnance Survey Landranger Series map 153. It is also shown on Explorer map 208. Both are available from local bookshops and some petrol stations.

## Countryside Code

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

[www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)

## Tips for enjoying your walk

Parts of the walk can become muddy especially after heavy rain, so strong waterproof footwear is recommended. Take care where conditions are rough and do let someone know where you are going. Please be aware that parts of the walk are unsuitable for wheelchairs and difficult for pushchairs.

## Did you enjoy the walk ?

If you have any comments about the walk or encounter any problems please contact Bedford Borough Council, Parks and Countryside, Borough Hall, Bedford MK42 9AP or e-mail [row@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:row@bedford.gov.uk)

## Other walks

Find out about more of Bedfordshire's walking and riding routes as well as nature reserves and country parks by visiting

[www.lets-go.org.uk](http://www.lets-go.org.uk)

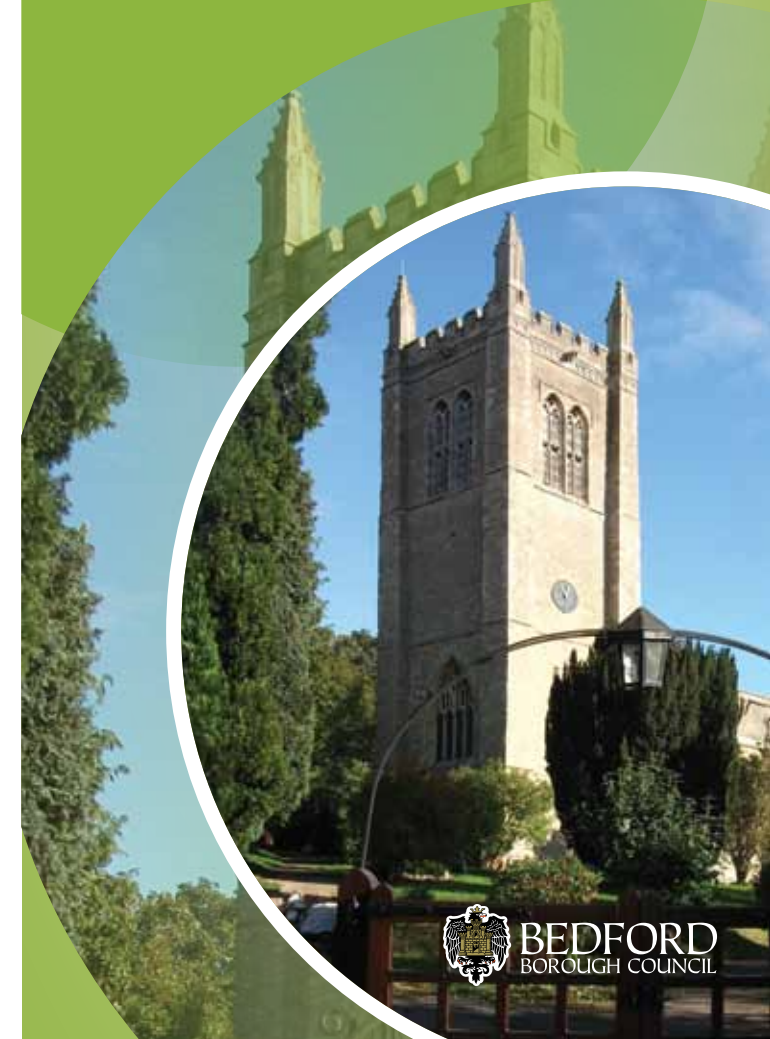


*Circular walks*

No. 1

# Harrold-Odell

Approx 6 Miles / 9.5 km Time: 3 hours



This walk takes in the picturesque villages of Harrold and Odell, it crosses the disused Podington airfield and two areas of ancient woodland.

### Harrold-Odell Country Park

The park is an ideal location from which to explore the local countryside. Tranquil lakes created from land used for sand and gravel extraction cover about half of the park's 144 acres. The picturesque riverbanks and water meadows that make up the rest of the park provide superb opportunities for a wide range of pursuits. Harrold Odell Country Park is owned and managed by Bedford Borough Council.

### Harrold

This is a very pleasant and attractive village, situated between the River Great Ouse and the woods. It has stone houses, thatched cottages, a village green, mature trees and a bridge with medieval origins. On the green there is a Lockup built in 1824 and used to house criminals until they could be dispatched to Bedford, it is one of only about three hundred surviving in the country.



The Butter Market is also situated on the green and was built between 1710-20 and is a reminder that Harrold had its own market charter. A horse fair was also held regularly, and on these market days villagers could sell beer without licence by displaying a green bough by their door, this custom known as 'tapping' was stopped in 1858.

### Odell

The village is one of the smallest of the Ouse Valley villages and situated in the north of Bedfordshire, close to the borders with Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The influences of these counties exist through Odell's old association with lace making and the leather industry. In Saxon days, the village was called Woadhull (or Woad Hill) because of the amount of woad grown in the area. A Saxon stronghold stood on the banks of the river and when this fell to the Normans, the land was granted to Walter the Fleming who promptly began to erect a motte and bailey castle. By Tudor times the estate was in ruins. William Alston purchased and restored the entire estate in 1633 and the Alston family were still in residence in 1931 when the property was gutted by fire.

### All Saints Church – Odell

A local legend attached to the bridleway and the 15th century church of All Saints concerns Sir Rowland Alston who supposedly sold his soul to the Devil but redeemed himself by claiming sanctuary in the church. The Devil shook the tower in anger at losing a soul and, it is said left an impression of his fingerprints in the stonework of the westdoor jamb. Recently an over zealous builder removed the offending marks during maintenance work. However, once in every century the ghost of Sir Rowland repeats his frantic ride to escape the Devil and gallops down the bridleway towards the church. His next gallop is due in 2044.

### Flora and Fauna

The wetland habitats of Harrold Country Park attract many birds including herons, swans, terns, grebe and kingfisher. Occasionally otters visit the park, one of Britain's rarest mammals they are now making a comeback following significant conservation work.

Odell Great Wood is one of Bedfordshire's largest blocks of ancient woodland in the area and is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. The wood is dominated by oak and ash trees with hazel coppice and provides a habitat for a wide variety of plants and animals.

Park Wood and the other woods in the area are the last surviving fragments of ancient woodland which once covered the clay ridge to the north west of the river valley. Although human activity has changed these areas significantly, they remain valuable sites for wildlife. In the spring, they are particularly attractive with carpets of bluebells, primroses and wood anemones and Park Wood has become heavily colonised by Muntjac deer.

### Podington Airfield

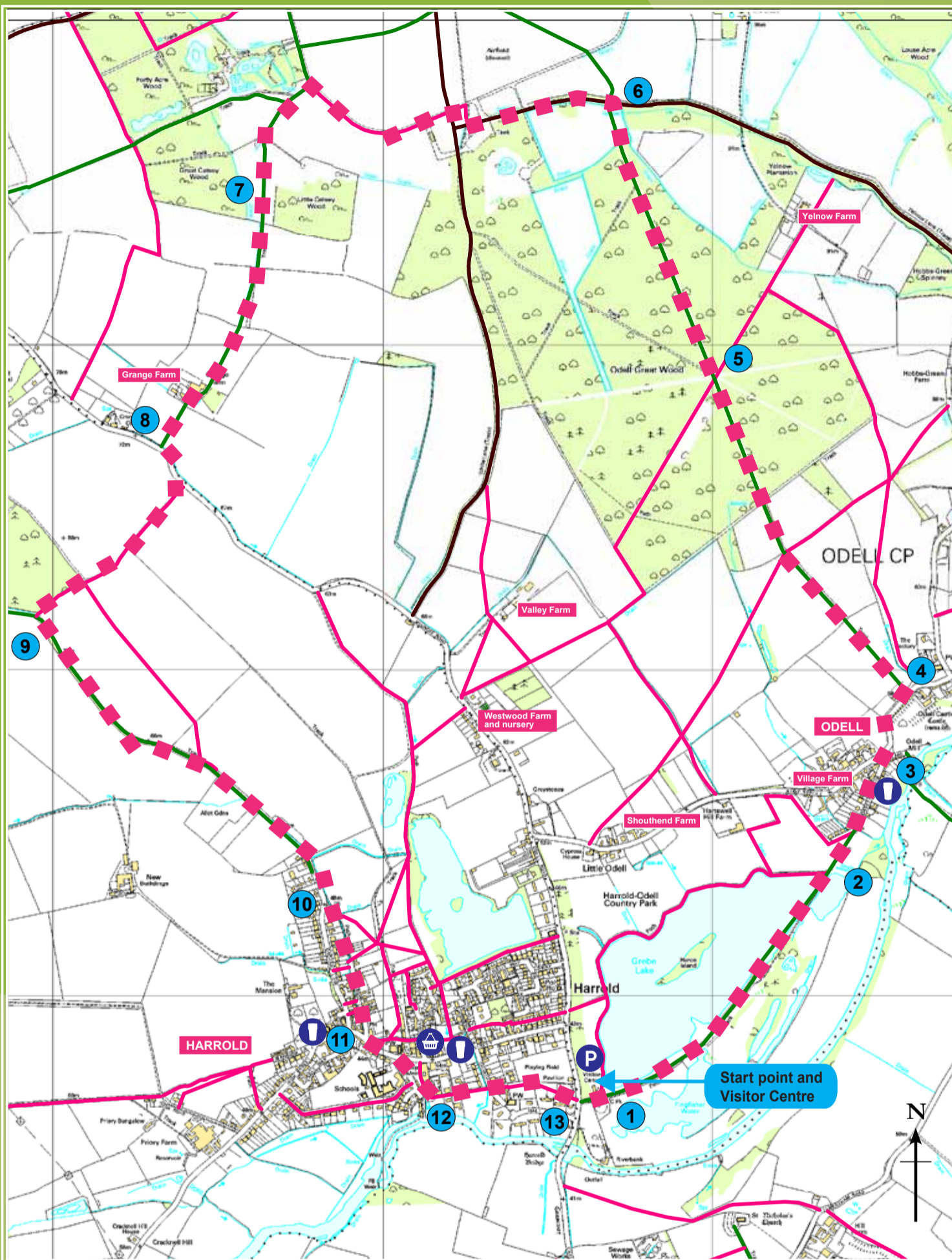
The airfield, built in 1941 was used by the American Army Air Force during World War II. From 1943 until the end of the war B-17 Flying Fortress aircraft flew from here on daylight bombing raids, and at Podington church there is a memorial to the many young Americans killed on operations from this airfield. The airfield was sold in 1961 and returned to agriculture but one of the T2 hangers is still standing.

# Circular walks



## Harrold-Odell

Approx 6 Miles / 9.5 km Time: 3 hours



- 1 Leave the country park via the bridleway which runs north east, between the visitor centre and the car park and along the lakeside, to the village of Odell.
- 2 Join Horsefair Lane and follow it until you reach The Bell public house.
- 3 Follow the main road straight ahead north towards the church until reaching a tree-lined bridleway on the left
- 4 Turn left along the bridleway All Saints Church is to the right.
- 5 Follow the bridleway across several fields and through Odell Great Wood. Cross another field to meet Yelnow Lane.
- 6 Turn left onto the lane and continue for approximately 450 yards, crossing two concrete tracks, to White Lane. Turn right and shortly afterwards onto the concrete perimeter track of the disused Podington airfield. Follow this track for approximately 550 yards before turning left onto another concrete track.
- 7 Follow the track passing between Great and Little Catsey Woods, and continue past Grange farm as far as the Hinwick to Harrold Road.
- 8 At the road turn left and then shortly afterwards turn right onto a footpath that leads to the edge of Park Wood.
- 9 Turn left at the corner of the wood onto a grassy bridleway, which leads to Wood Road in Harrold.
- 10 Follow Wood Road until a tarmac footpath forks off to the left, over a small footbridge. This path leads to Brook Lane, which has a stream running beside it.
- 11 At the end of Brook Lane, turn left along the High Street down to the village Green.
- 12 Turn right at the war memorial along the tarmac path between the market house and the lock-up. Follow the path towards the church, across Church Walk and into the churchyard.
- 13 Follow the footpath through the churchyard and out opposite the main entrance to the country park

### Key

	<b>The walk</b>		<b>Byway</b>		<b>Local shop</b>
	<b>Footpath</b>		<b>County Boundary</b>		<b>Public house</b>
	<b>Bridleway</b>		<b>Woodland</b>		<b>Parking</b>

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