

Western Historic Parkland Walk

Approximately 6km/3.7miles



Explore Greensand Country on foot



Walking Routes in Greensand Country

An area of distinct, beautiful
and loved countryside

Greensand Country is a beautiful and loved landscape. It is defined by the Greensand Ridge, a band of higher ground stretching from Leighton Buzzard to Gamlingay, which rises out of the surrounding vales to create a locally unique environment. Greensand Country contains all of Bedfordshire's remaining heathland, more than half of its woodland and, as a proportion of the area, is made up of more historic parkland than any other place in England.

Walking is an ideal way to get to know Greensand Country and experience what it has to offer. When on foot you are closer to nature and able to take in the views, soak up the landscape and enjoy the physical health and mental wellbeing benefits associated with exploring the great outdoors. Many routes have been created by the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership to help you explore the history, heritage and rich culture of Greensand Country. Other routes include the Ouzel Valley Meander and Weneslawe Walk.

Historic Parkland Walks:

Greensand Country has the highest proportion of historic parkland of any of the country's National Character Areas. Historic parklands are a hugely significant part of our landscape, contributing greatly to our sense of place. These two circular walks have been created to help you explore two parts of Greensand Country where historic parkland is particularly prominent, and learn more about their history and how they have helped shape the landscape we know and love. One in the east of the area, between Everton and Gamlingay and taking in the Woodbury and Tetworth Estates, the other in the west around Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley, taking in Aspley Park and Crawley Park.

- Please park carefully and considerately.
- Always take care when crossing roads.
- Please keep to the waymarked route on public rights of way.
- Please keep dogs on a lead when livestock are present.
- Please respect people's privacy, especially when the route passes close to houses and through/past gardens.
- Please follow the Countryside Code:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code



Points of interest around the Western Historic Parkland Walk

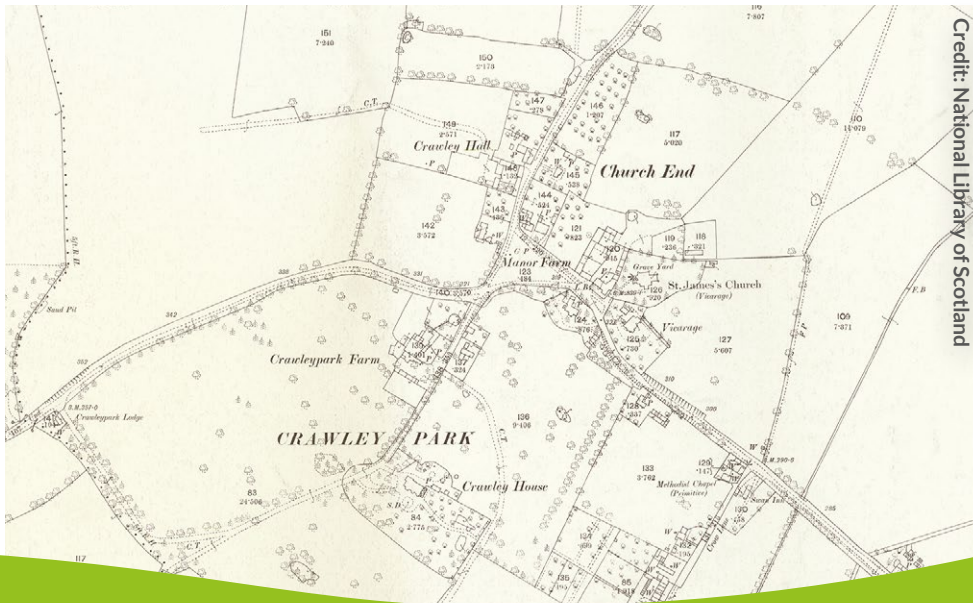
The Moore Place Hotel, Aspley Guise



The Moore Place Hotel was formerly known as "The Holt", and was an 18th century manor house in an imposing position overlooking the Square. It was one of many buildings requisitioned during the Second World War, evacuees were billeted in many of the large houses while others were the setting for secret activities which may have shortened the war. The Moore Place Hotel was used to house staff working at the Government Code and

Cypher School based at Bletchley Park, home of the famous Enigma machine, and was also used to house prisoners of war. From 1946-48 up to 40 girls from the Bedfordshire Women's Land Army lived in the Hotel and worked on local farms.

Crawley House and Park



Crawley House is listed as Grade II* (of special interest and particularly important within its class). It was built in 1777-8 and reworked in 1806. Built of red brick with a clay tiled 'mansard' roof – two parallel roofs over the main part of the building. It was built for Reverend Daniel Shipton, though it is likely that a large legacy left to his wife, Temperance, paid for it. Their daughter and heir, Charlotte, married Robert Charles Orlebar in 1807, and the house came thus into the possession of the Orlebar family.

The 1807 marriage settlement of Charlotte and Robert Charles Orlebar listed Charlotte's property as being: Crawley House; The Thatch Cottage in Crawley Park; Crawley Park Farm totalling 109 acres; 32 acres and the adjoining the Weathercock public house in Aspley Guise and 30 acres in Wavendon.

With its formal gardens it is set in extensive parkland, which was created by Reverend Shipton on the common field arable land that existed there at the time of purchase.

An Ordnance Survey First Edition map of 1883 (left) shows an entrance lodge and an approach drive from the Bedford Road through an avenue of lime trees which this walk will lead you through.



St James' Church

St James' Church, Husborne Crawley

The medieval tower of St James' church can be seen at various times during this walk. A prominent landmark, this church includes Upper Greensand sandstone (which is poorly exposed in Bedfordshire, compared to the Lower Greensand, also known as the Woburn Sands Formation). The thin sandstone beds of the Upper Greensand contain glauconite, a green mineral which has retained its characteristic colour (weathering and exposure to oxygen usually cause the rock to turn brown).

Wensden or Wednesden Hill

A pre-inclosure map of 1745 shows a windmill at the top of this hill – it may somewhat over-emphasise the height of the hill, but note that the lack of trees is likely to be accurate (and a requirement for siting a windmill). It seems the flour was used in a bakehouse in Aspley Guise as they were both owned by Samuel Browne until his death in 1710.

Fifteen years later the mill in Husborne Crawley and the bakehouse in Aspley Guise was leased by Lord of the Manor Edmond Williamson to Thomas Monk of Southwark, Surrey. The bakehouse was occupied by Richard Bumpstead and the mill is described as being on Wednesden Hill.

It is known that the windmill had gone by 1761, and by the 1800s there were sandpits in this area.

The map shows the majority of the hill was common land, but note the clearly designed planting of the adjacent Aspley Park in the foreground.



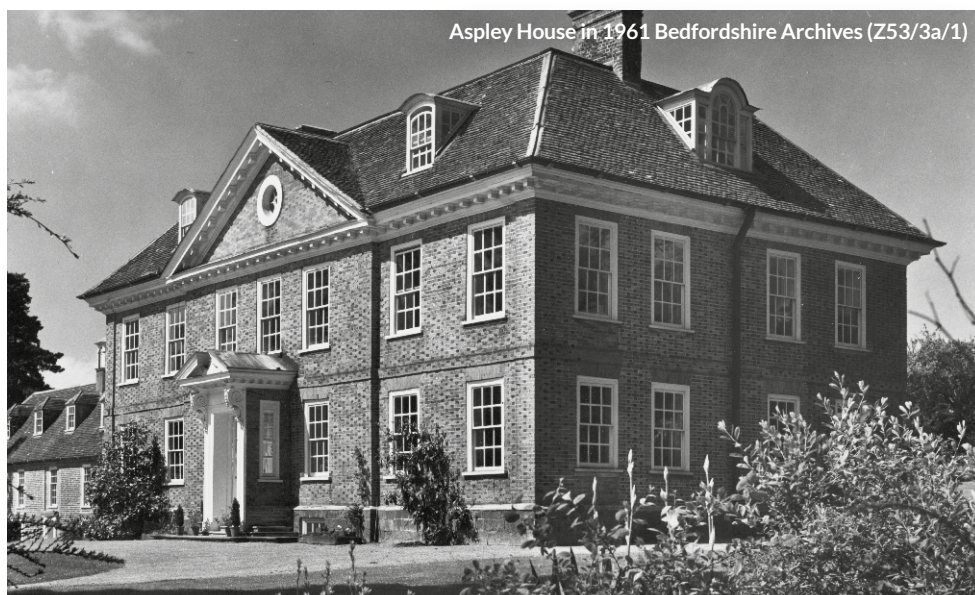
Wensden or Wednesden Hill

Aspley House and Park

Aspley House is Listed as Grade II* and was built c.1690 as a small country house for William Norcliffe, on the site of an earlier structure. The clay used to make the bricks is thought to have been dug and made into bricks on site. It is next door to Old House/Red House, built c1575, which by 1745 was owned by Richard How. A map from this date shows the parkland now associated with Aspley House (including fishponds) was at the time part of Old House/Red House. It was reworked in the 1740s, sold at some point to James Reynolds of Clerkenwell, and then in 1749 a Walter Scott bought the property, but it is not clear when the parkland became part of Aspley House. Scott did pay a lot of attention to the grounds, including the purchase and subsequent demolition of cottages to improve views!

In 1784 the Chernock Smiths of Hulcot bought the house. They were large landowners and related to many great country families. They acquired more land in Aspley Guise when the owner of the nearby Old House, Aspley Guise had to sell it. The family left some legacies from their time in the village. They were responsible for the erection of the first gas lamp in the Square and when they lost two sons in the First World War they erected the Memorial on Bedford Road.

More recently the house was sold by auction in March 1939 and was used for a while during the Second World War as a school until reverting to use as a private home by 1951.



Aspley House in 1961 Bedfordshire Archives (Z53/3a/1)



St Botolph's Church, Aspley Guise

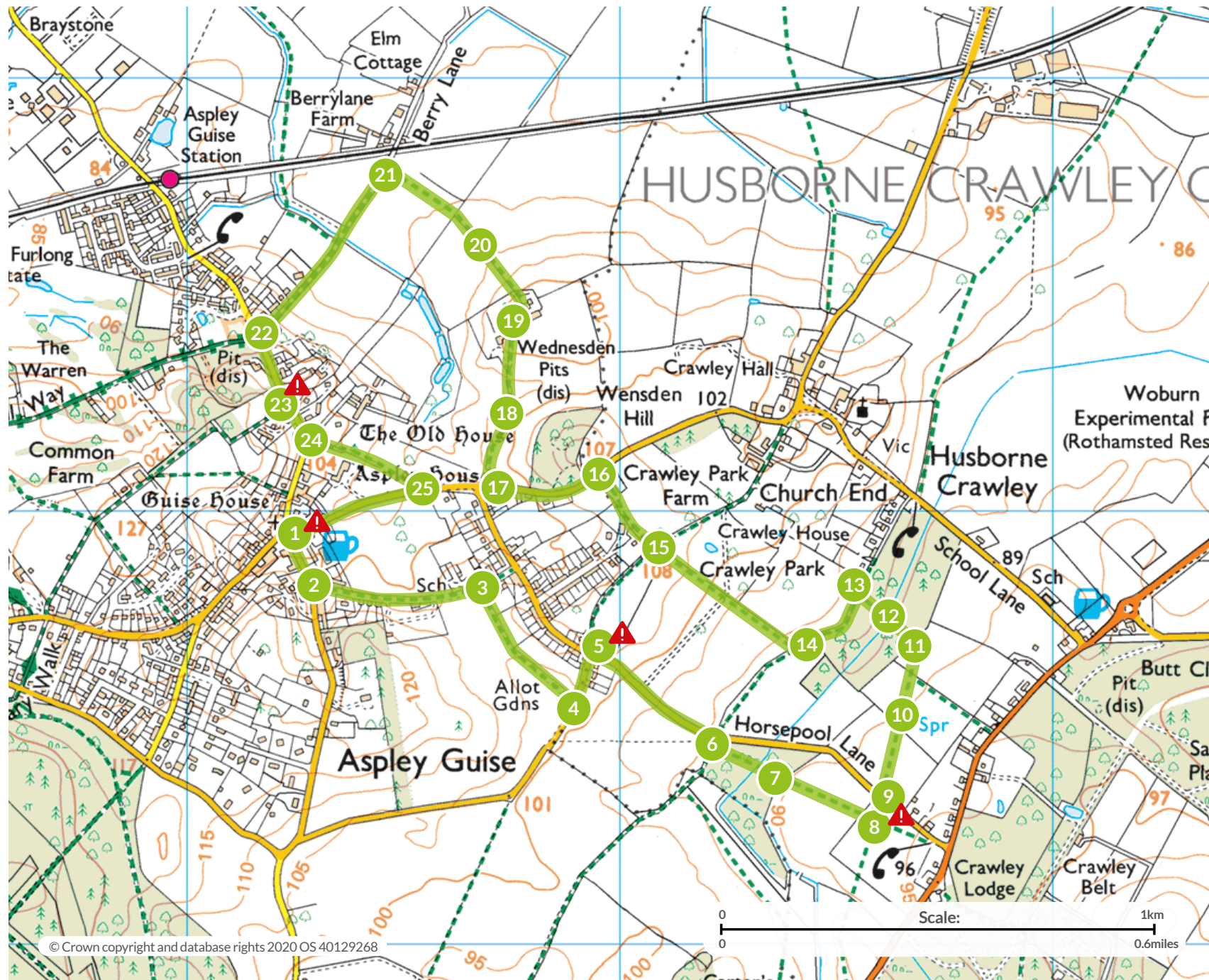
St Botolph's Church, Aspley Guise

There was a church on this site by 1223 and parts of this building date from the 1400s but it was restored and rebuilt with its Perpendicular tower in the 1800s. (see St Botolph's Church website).

The four-square tower of St Botolph's stands tall and proud on Church Street. Behind is the main part of the church built of the brown sandstone of the Greensand Country. By contrast the tower is a patchwork of local and other stone. Battlements cap the walls.

St Botolph's was rebuilt by the Victorians but the sweeping Gothic arches inside and other traces of the medieval church remain. Look out for the fine historic houses near the church.

Opposite the Church is The Rookery where propaganda was devised during WWII by members of the Political War Executive.



⚠ Take care - road crossings

Western Historic Parkland Walk

The Square in Aspley Guise is an ideal place to start this walk. Please park considerately.

- 1 Cross the road carefully; pass the hotel on your right and walk along Woburn Lane
- 2 Turn left onto Spinney Lane. Continue along the lane and admire the views to your left of parkland with beautiful mature trees and Aspley House in the distance.
- 3 After passing Aspley Guise Lower School on your left, turn right onto a public footpath along a field edge. There are lovely views across the field to "The Clump", a group of Scots Pine trees atop a small but prominent hill, and to Woburn beyond.
- 4 When the footpath meets Gypsy Lane turn left. Take care when walking on Gypsy Lane. Woburn Abbey Deer Park is in the distance and you may glimpse the spire of All Saints' Church Ridgmont on the horizon in its prominent position on the Greensand Ridge.
- 5 At the junction with Horsepool Lane turn right. Take care. Walk along the verge for about 400 metres. To the left are views of Crawley Park and St James's Church, Husborne Crawley.
- 6 Where a public footpath crosses the lane, turn right off the lane, then left almost immediately and head diagonally towards the woodland.
- 7 Follow the path through the woodland, emerging into a field. Continue across the field, heading uphill to a 'crossroads' in the footpaths. Pause to admire the 360 degree panoramic views. The nine-mile brick wall encloses Woburn Park which has an Arboretum in addition its Deer Park and Safari Park.
- 8 Ignoring the field edge path on your left, take the turning towards the telegraph pole a few metres later on the left. Walk towards a gap in the hedge.
- 9 Emerging back onto Horsepool Lane, take care as you cross the lane. Head through a gap in the hedge on the opposite side.
- 10 Follow the footpath through the fields. Please keep dogs on leads if livestock are present.

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- 11 Follow the path through the kissing gate on the edge of the plantation woodland. Please keep to the right of way through the woodland, not taking any paths to either side.
- 12 Cross the stream using the footbridge, and follow the path until you reach a 'T-junction'.
- 13 Turn left and follow the path which leads out of the woods via a kissing gate near a large oak. (For those wishing to see Husborne Crawley Church turn right at this point and follow the path until it emerges onto School Lane, turn left and cross at a safe point to visit the church a little further on the right).
- 14 After a short distance turn right taking the public footpath heading up the hill. There are views to the left of the woodlands on the Greensand Ridge and of "The Clump". To the right there are views through gaps in the hedge towards Crawley House across Crawley Park.
- 15 Go through a gate near the top of the hill; turn left at the path junction, then turn right almost immediately through a kissing gate onto a path that runs beside the one remaining row of the lime avenue (part of the original entrance to Crawley Park). In the distance to the right you can see the tower of St James's Church, Husborne Crawley. Continue on this path until you meet the road. Please be respectful of home owners and their property.
- 16 Turn left and walk on the pavement Aspley Guise. You will pass Wensden Hill Wood on the other side of the road.
- 17 After approximately 300m carefully cross the road just before the bus shelter on the opposite side. Head along the lane, signed for Wednesden House and New Barn Farm.
- 18 Take a moment to admire the views across Aspley Park to the left, and also Wensden Hill to the right.
- 19 At the end of the lane just past Wednesden House keep following the footpath to the left of the gate, with the farm to your right. After a short distance you will emerge from the trees to spectacular panoramic views across the Marston Vale and beyond. There are views of Milton Keynes with the unique X-scape building; woodlands on the clay ridge; a wind farm near Olney and the single wind turbine at the Millennium Country Park.

Western Historic Parkland Walk continued...

- 20 Head down the hill on the footpath which runs to the left of the hedgerow. You are coming down off the Greensand and on to a layer of clay so this field can be wet and sticky.
- 21 At the bottom of the slope pass through a kissing gate and turn left onto Berry Lane.
- 22 After 500 metres Berry Lane meets Salford Road. Turn left and walk along the pavement up the hill. These houses were once farm buildings, as the names might suggest.
- 23 At the top of the hill is St Botolph's Church. Take care on the narrow section of pavement.
- 24 After just over 100m you will reach a footpath called Pickering Way running alongside a high brick wall. Turn left here and follow the path alongside the wall beside the beautifully manicured gardens of Aspley House.
- 25 Turn right when you reach the road, walking along the pavement alongside a holly hedge. Look through the gates for views of the front of Aspley House. Continue along this pavement into the centre of Aspley Guise.

More Information



Look out for this sign as you walk the route.

For more information about the streets and buildings of Aspley Guise please see Nina Montgomery's 'Walking Tour' of the village: www.livingarchive.org.uk/content/local-history/topics/churches/behind-closed-doors-in-aspley-guise-nina-montgomery-2

What3words: Download this app to your smartphone to help you find locations and to tell others (vets, emergency services, friends) where you are. Each 3m square in the world has been assigned a unique 3 word address that will never change.

The Historic Parkland Walks were developed by the Greensand Trust and the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity, with grateful thanks to our volunteers, Sheila Meekums and Dorothy Jamieson for their support, to the Diocese of St Albans for information about the historic churches, and to Bedfordshire Archives for their assistance with sourcing images.

Signage for promoted routes throughout Greensand Country has been part-funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

