

Old Warden Circular



Location: Car park alongside Parish Church, Church Lane , Old Warden. SG18 9HD

Distance: About 9 miles

Time Taken: A leisurely 3.5 hours. Allow extra if you decide to explore the nature reserve, visit pub etc

Great for: Views from the Greensand Ridge. Varied Terrain.

Good for kids: 7 years and up

Good for Dogs: Yes. Walk is mainly on field boundaries and woodland. There are short sections on road. Dogs on leads at those points please.

Admission/Parking Charges: No – there is a collection box asking for donations for use of the car park.

Café/Toilets: We used the facilities in the Crown at Northill.

Footwear/clothing: I suggest you wear clothing and footwear appropriate to the ground and weather conditions, both forecasted and being aware of the weather in the days prior to your walk.

The route

The Church is usually open. Feel free to explore.

As you leave the church on the western side of the car park (same side as the horse paddocks) is a gate with an obvious path beyond.

Follow the path, which rolls generally downhill into Old Warden. As you reach the main road, turn left, passing the Hare and Hounds pub on your right. About 100ms or so after the pub car park, tucked away in the shrubbery is a painted white metal gate where the path begins to climb into woodland. Continue uphill.

The path is wide and fenced on both sides limiting your ability to wander elsewhere.

After 10 mins or so you should come upon the info board for Queen Annes Summerhouse. There is a permissive path which is open on specified dates allowing access to the building.

<https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/queen-annes-summerhouse-13986#Overview>

Retrace your steps and continue along the path. There are currently forestry operations underway. It is well signed and was not an issue on the day I walked this route.

You will come upon another info board, this time for Keepers Cottage. Again a permissive path allows access.

<https://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/search-and-book/properties/keepers-cottage-8764#Overview>

If you visit the cottage retrace your steps back to the info board and then continue on the forestry track until you reach a road. Turn left.

Continue along the road for about 500 ms or so. You will come upon a public footpath sign on your left, with a board advising you to keep dogs on the lead on the footpaths within the Shuttleworth estate.

Continue ahead on the path that goes between two fields. You will reach a newly created road within the field. Cross it and continue ahead. Fields to your right and woodland to your left.

There is a way marked dog leg to the footpath before it continues with a hedgerow to your left and fenced paddocks to your right. You will then arrive at a tarmac road. Turn right and aim for the kissing gate on your left after about 50ms.

Go through the kissing gate and follow the footpath, passing the newly fenced fish ponds and a hedgerow which denotes the edge of the Shuttleworth Airfield. Follow the footpath until you reach a road.

A detour along the road to your left of about 800 ms will bring you to the Shuttleworth Collection and importantly for walkers, its café. A word of warning – the road is narrow and twisty. Hedgerows limit views of approaching traffic. If you decide to go to the Shuttleworth Collection, retrace your steps to this point.

Cross the road and pick up the footpath which will lead directly into Ickwell. Continue ahead until you reach Northill.

Tucked away next to the Church is The Crown.

Welcome To The Crown At Northill - Well worth a stop if you arrive here at lunchtime.

After a quick libation, continue in the same direction a before and turn left after the Church.

You are now following the Greensand Ridge Walk (GRW). The path turns left away from the road on the first bend. Path is well waymarked.

GRW will continue ahead between fenced paddocks, towards woodland ahead. Follow GRW signs into the wood and out the other side. The path will follow a field edge and through a narrow strip of woodland before reaching Highlands Farm

Follow the markers across a horse paddock and around the farm. Follow the markers to a strip of trees before rising to the ridge. Turn left and continue along the ridge

Take a moment to enjoy the views to your right.

You will shortly after come across a gravel track with the option to go left or straight ahead (after a slight dog leg). If you wish to visit the Old Warden nature reserve see A. below. If not see B

- A. Continue ahead. After about 350ms there is a thin strip of woodland. This is the reserve. Entrance is on the far side. After you have visited the reserve retrace your steps. For more info about the reserve: <https://www.wildlifebcn.org/nature-reserves/old-warden-tunnel>
- B. Turn left and follow the gravel track which gently travels downhill towards Warden Street. At the end of the track a bridleway heads off to your right, into Warden Street.

The footpath now follows a road passing a few cottages which make up Warden Street.

You will emerge onto a road. With care continue ahead, for about 200ms.

You may like to stop in the entrance to the farm. In the field opposite, between two telegraph poles, is a small rise running from the far side of the field to your right. This rise is what I understand is the remains of a Roman Road.

Continue till you reach the Footpath sign and turn left through the hedge.

Follow the field boundary ahead. At the end of this field the path take a slight right turn before taking a left turn and becomes a grassy path between two fields, rising gently towards some woodland.

As you meet the woodland, continue ahead with woodland to your right. Shortly after you will meet another path, turn right.

The finish point is just ahead of you

After your walk

On the day I visited the church was open to visitors. There is a memorial in the church to Richard Shuttleworth, killed whilst night flying during the war

The nearest place for refreshments is The Hare and Hounds in Old Warden Village.

<https://www.hareandhoundsoldwarden.com/>

The Shuttleworth Collection which was mentioned earlier in the guide is a short drive away

<https://www.shuttleworth.org/restaurant/>