

Harrold-Odell Country Park and Odell Great Wood

Observing the wildlife, flora and fauna around Harrold and Odell

Distance

4 miles

Directions, Parking and Public Transport

The park is signposted off the A6 via Sharnbrook, about six miles north of Bedford. Park in the Harrold-Odell Country Park near the Visitor Centre, grid reference SP956566, (Explorer 208, Landranger 153).

There is a regular bus service to Harrold from Bedford Bus Station. Details can be obtained from

http://www.bedford.gov.uk/transport_and_streets/public_transport/timetables_and_maps.aspx

Refreshments and Facilities

There are toilets, a café and an information room at the Visitor Centre (A) or refreshments can be taken at the Bell Inn at Odell (5).

Points of Interest

Harrold-Odell Country Park (A) is a designated nature reserve; the two lakes have been created from disused gravel pits and attract a variety of wildfowl and water mammals.

Odell Great Wood (B) is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and, in the spring, is carpeted with bluebells and primroses.

All Saints Church, Odell (C) has an excellent 15th century rood screen and a memorial to Lieutenant Richmond, who died in the ill-fated R101 airship crash in 1930. It is kept locked but the contact numbers as to where to obtain the key are posted on the notice board by the gate.

The Walk

Leave the car park by passing the Country Park Visitor Centre (A) on your right. Turn left along the gravel path then right to enter the line of trees along the edge of the park. After 100 yds, where the path meets another coming in from the road, turn right and follow this path to the lake shore. Turn left and follow the lakeside path for ½ mile until you come to a footpath sign (1).

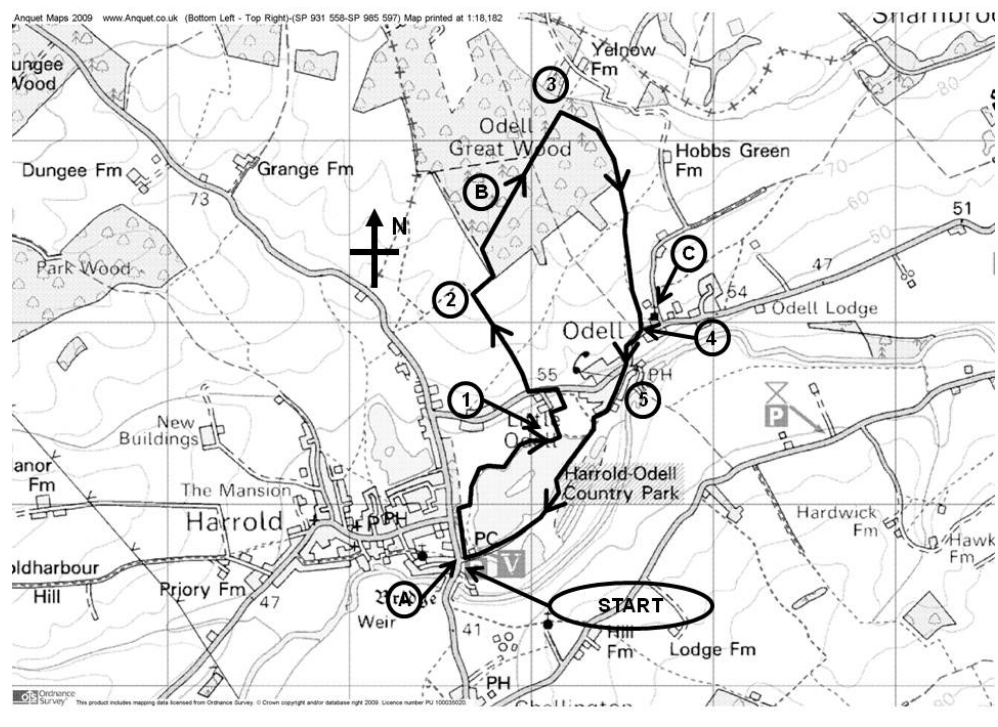
Turn left and, keeping the hedge on your left, follow the field edge, which turns right, then left, to Odell High Street. Turn left for 100 yards, by an isolated bungalow with two large trees in the front garden, then cross the road and immediately go over the stile. Carry straight ahead up the field

and cross a second stile. Follow the field edge, with the hedge on your right, uphill to another stile in a cross-field fence. Keep straight ahead for a further 25 yds then turn right through a metal kissing gate (2).

Go straight ahead to the next corner of the field and through another metal kissing gate into Odell Great Wood (B). Turn immediately left and follow the footpath for 180 yds. Turn right at the waymark and follow this path until you come to a clearing in the woods where six paths meet. Continue ahead on the same path for a further 300 yds then turn right at the footpath sign (3) and follow the yellow waymarks to the edge of the wood.

Turn left at the footpath sign over a wooden bridge. As there is no handrail it can be slippery if wet, so take care. Then immediately turn right to follow the field edge downhill for 90 yds. Go through the gap in the hedge and, ignoring the path which goes straight across the field, take care to follow the footpath diagonally across the field and then down towards a double five-barred gate in the bottom right-hand corner of the field, keeping the church (C) to your left. (If the diagonal path is badly obstructed by crops you can take the path which goes straight across the field, follow the sign to cross a second field, then turn left to walk down an avenue of trees and on through a double five bar gate. You then continue down the avenue to a second double five bar gate where you rejoin the main route.) Go through the gate and cross the grass verge to rejoin Odell High Street (4).

Cross the road and turn right to follow the footpath down the slope with the stone wall on your left to the Bell Inn (5). To complete the walk, continue straight ahead along Horsefair Lane and go through the gate into the Country Park, then along the gravel path back to the car park.



Acknowledgement

This walk was first published by Ivel Valley Walkers in 2010 in their book 'Favourite Walks in and around Bedfordshire'. The book was published to celebrate the 25th anniversary of this Ramblers Group. IVG has over 300 members and offer a varied programme of more than 200 guided walks each year. These are open to all, although membership of the Ramblers is encouraged for regular walkers. Further details of the Group can be obtained from the web page <http://www.ivelvalleywalkers.co.uk/>