

MAULDEN WOODS

Ancient woodland, meadows and a church with extensive views

Distance

4 miles

Directions, Parking and Public Transport

Maulden Woods adjoin the A6 five miles south of Bedford, just north of the roundabout with the A507 at Clophill. Plenty of free parking is available in the main car park for the woods, Deadman's Hill lay-by, grid reference TL073394, (Explorer 193, Landranger 166).

Stagecoach buses run between Bedford and Luton and stop at Clophill, although this is a mile from the start point along the busy A6.

Details can be obtained from

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

Refreshments and Facilities

Apart from an occasional refreshment van in the lay-by, there are no refreshments or facilities in the woods, but there are picnic tables at the car park entrance and on the route itself. There are several pubs in nearby Clophill serving food and drink, including the Flying Horse near the A507 roundabout.

Points of Interest

Maulden Woods is Forestry Commission woodland and is the largest ancient woodland on the Greensand Ridge, an area of high ground crossing Bedfordshire. It has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of the variety and quality of its flora and fauna. Several areas of the woodland are carpeted with bluebells in spring and there are many secluded spots where you may see fallow and muntjac deer. It is also home to badgers, butterflies such as the common blue and small copper and many birds, including birds of prey.

Maulden Church Meadow (A) is an ancient pasture designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of its importance as a scarce, lowland grassland habitat. Plants such as quaking grass, lady's bedstraw and meadow saxifrage are found on the higher northern end, with harebell and sheep's sorrel on the more acidic southern part of the site. The field ponds are an interesting feature, now unusual in Bedfordshire, and support varied marginal plants.

The parish church of St Mary the Virgin at Maulden (B) dates back to the 13th century. In the churchyard there is a 17th century octagonal mausoleum and crypt, the Ailesbury Mausoleum, which is occasionally open to the public. The Mausoleum was built in 1656 by Thomas, Earl of Elgin. It was originally connected to the church but the covered passageway was demolished in 1859 when the church was rebuilt and the mausoleum refurbished. It is no longer used for burials.

On some of the paths towards the end of this walk you will see markers indicating the Faith Woodlands project (C). This area of the woodland has been given by the Forestry Commission to promote mutual understanding between people of all faiths, through the enjoyment of peace and relaxation and healthy walking in beautiful surroundings.

The Walk

As you enter the woods from the lay-by (1), you will see an information board facing you with details about the woodland. Take the wide ride ahead of you past this board and leading away from the car park. Continue ahead for almost a mile, ignoring all paths leading off from or crossing this one and continue ahead until you reach the edge of the wood. This main ride is a good place to see glow worms on a summer's evening.

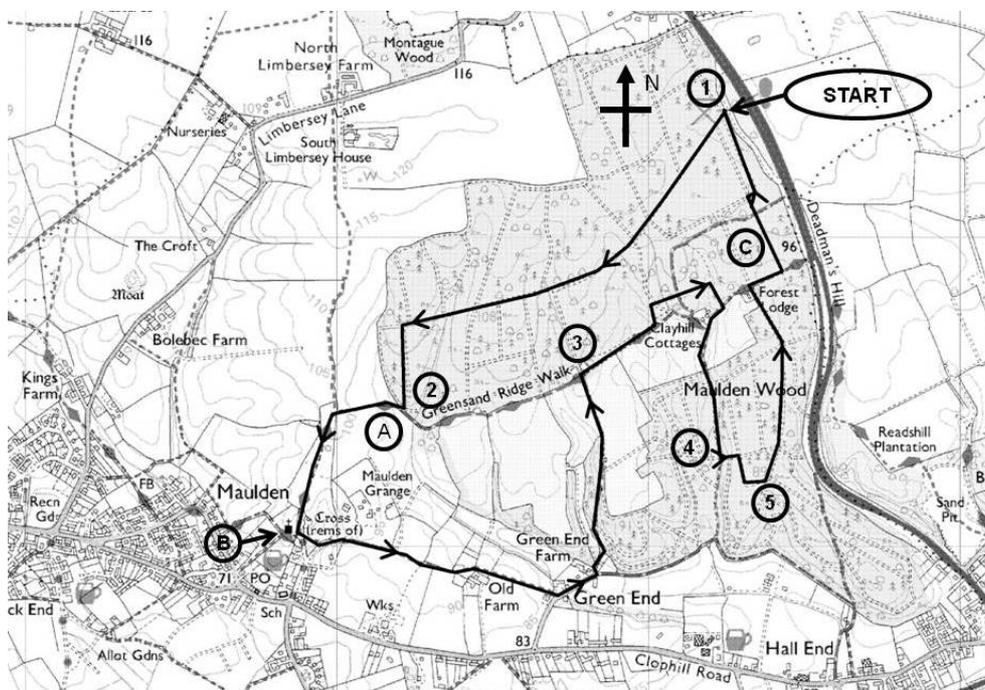
When you reach a T-junction at the end of the ride, go round the barrier and turn left. Continue until you reach a junction of five footpaths (2) where there is a large stone with a plaque commemorating the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002. Take the path to the right, which leads out of the woodland and continue for about 250 yds to a kissing gate. Go through the gate into Maulden Church Meadow (A).

Turn left and head across the meadow to Maulden Church (B), which will shortly come into view. Keep to the centre of the meadow near the pond where a grassy track goes off to the right. A kissing gate leads to a road beside the church. There are fine views from the church, several seats and interesting features in the churchyard. If you visit the church, you will need to retrace your steps back to the road before continuing with the walk.

Take the footpath opposite the church across a field, cross the minor road and take the footpath by the second set of wrought iron gates. The short path climbs into fields with extensive views on the right. Follow the upper field edge and continue ahead for almost 400 yds through one kissing gate to reach a second kissing gate in front of some houses. Go through this gate into a field and follow the path which shortly bears right round a group of converted farm buildings. Continue ahead in the same direction until you come to a kissing gate leading to a footpath between two houses. Take this footpath and the steps which lead from it to a minor road where you should turn left. Continue past the houses and take the first bridleway to the left, which takes you back into the woods on a partly surfaced track.

This track climbs for about 300 yds to bring you out into a more open area. There are benches here, including some carved ones, and a pond. Continue past the pond on your right for about 200 yds until you come to a thatched octagonal house at a junction of footpaths (3). Turn right here and follow the bridleway, the Greensand Ridge Walk (GRW), along the edge of the wood. This is an undulating path with fields on your right. After nearly 400 yds you will see a waymark indicating that the GRW path turns left. Follow it into the woods and immediately right, then continue to follow the GRW waymarks, a muntjac deer, until the path comes out onto a surfaced road. Turn right here leaving the GRW, go past Roy Collings Barn and Clayhill Cottages and follow the yellow waymarks.

Continue ahead on a grassy track and go over one crossing path. At the next junction of paths (4), where the yellow waymark points ahead only take the track to the left which climbs and bears right. Continue for about 300 yards along this path until it bears left and meets a crossing path (5). You will see that the path to the right leads out of the woods. Take the path to the left and continue ahead. This path soon widens into a ride, with a bank on the right and the A6 beyond. This bank is a haze of bluebells in spring. After about a quarter of a mile you reach a building on your left, Forest Lodge. Turn right just after the lodge and then take the first track left at a Maulden Woods welcome board. This is a pretty track going through part of the designated Faith Woodlands area (C). Continue ahead, crossing an intersecting footpath, until you reach a main track. Turn right here and follow the track 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/>