Walk Description and Details

This walk will take you through the Jurassic Limestone region of Bedfordshire, over a landscape sculpted by the advance and retreat of ice sheets during the Anglian glacial episode, just under half a million years ago. The ice sheets crushed and scraped the underlying rocks and often transported the debris great distances. As the ice melted it left a thick blanket of boulders, pebbles, sand and mud that is known as till or boulder clay. Today, the soils that are derived from the till contain a mixture of rock types, some of which are sharp and angular, whilst others are rounded and water-worn by melt-water streams.

The Jurassic Limestones can be seen in various buildings and structures during this walk. The limestones are often described as oolitic because they are made of small rounded particles (called ooliths) that have the appearance of fish roe. Each oolith is made up of concentric rings of calcium carbonate that formed around a nucleus of sand or shell fragment as it rolled around on the shallow sea floor, gathering layer after layer of limestone. Oolitic limestone is an attractive building stone and much of it was quarried locally, although there is little evidence of that today.

Whilst walking through three limestone villages, this walk provides the opportunity to see a watermill, a windmill, a journey by the River Great Ouse, and on a disused railway line.

The walk starts and ends at Bromham Mill (GR TL011507) OS Explorer Sheet 208, OS Landranger, Sheet 153, situated alongside the 26 arches of Bromham Bridge across the River Great Ouse. There is a car park at the rear, and toilets. Note: the car park opening hours are 0900 to 1900 hours. Bromham Mill is only open April to October 1300 to 1700 hours.

Distance

If visiting Oakley, 8.5 miles (13.5 kilometres), duration 3.5 to 4 hours, plus stoppages. Not visiting Oakley, 6.5 miles (10.5 kilometres), and duration 2.75 to 3.5 hours, plus stoppages.

Terrain

Fairly easy going, with some ups and downs. Can be muddy, especially during wet periods; wear boots, or wellingtons.

GEO TRAILS IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Jurassic Limestone Villages

A walk between the villages of Bromham, Oakley & Stevington highlighting the geological features of the area.

The Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group exists to encourage understanding of the geology and geomorphology of the county and to undertake site recording, interpretation, advice and education.

LOCAL GEOLOGICAL SITES (LGS) are places that reveal our geological past and are considered important enough to deserve conservation. They include sites where rocks can be seen (such as quarries and road cuttings) or where the geology or geological processes can be inferred from the shape of the landscape.

Official LGS are recognised by county councils and by Natural England.

For more information about the B&LGG and our events as well as the geology and geomorphology of your area visit our website at:

www.bedsrigs.org.uk

or contact
B&LGG c/o Bedford Museum, Castle Lane, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK40 3XD
Tel: 01234 353323, Fax 01234 273401

Bromham
Oakley
Stevington

The Bedfordshire & Luton Geology Group are GeoEast Partners.
Directions

1. Leave the car park via the rear exit, with the Bromham Heritage Trail sign on your left, and follow the left-hand path upwards through the park. At the exit, about 200 metres, turn right and follow the narrow footpath down and over the river footbridge to a kissing gate. At the gate, take the forward, slightly right footpath, cross the road and continue for about 200 metres until a second road is reached.

2. Turn left, and cross a cattle grid. Then go to the main road, carefully cross, turn right, then left into Grange Lane.

3. Continue on Grange Lane for about 500 metres, turn right into Springfield Cross, turn right, then left into Grange Lane. Continue for about 200 metres until a second road is reached. At the road, turn left and continue for about 100 metres until a Scout Hut on your left.

4. At the T-junction, turn left, and continue for a further 100 metres. Then take the footpath on the right and go through the kissing gate. Follow the path down to the River Great Ouse and continue with the river on your left. Go over the stile and continue until a kissing gate is reached (ignore the two stiles on the way).

5. Go through the kissing gate and up to the road. (should the path be flooded, then retrace your steps back to Point 6, and follow the instructions).

6. At this T-junction, the option to visit Oakley is available. Note: If you do visit Oakley, the directions return you back here, to Point 6, and then you need to follow the instructions from Point 7.

7. To continue to Bromham, at the T-junction (Point 6), continue on the track up the hill, for a further 200 metres or so, until a cross path is reached.

8. Take the left-hand path, marked “Stevington Country Walk” (the east section of the disused railway line) and not the path to Bromham. Continue on this path for a few hundred metres until another “T” junction is reached.

9. To continue to Bromham, at the “T” junction (Point 6), continue on the track up the hill, for a further 200 metres or so, until a cross path is reached.

10. Exit the churchyard via the gate in the wall, and follow the path to the right of the church. Take the opportunity to examine the oolitic limestone in both church and surrounding walls.

11. Continue down this road (Molivers Road) to the end where it joins Vicarage Road. Cross the road with care and then turn left, and follow the pavement for about 100 metres until a footpath within the hedge is reached on your right. Go down this path to a field, and then forward to St. Owen’s Church.

12. Enter the churchyard via a gate in the wall, and follow the path to the right of the church. Take the opportunity to examine the oolitic limestone in both church and surrounding walls.

13. Exit the churchyard by the front gate, turn right along the road, and walk on the road for about 400 metres until the road bends to the right. Take the path straight ahead and continue. Follow this grass path until a cross path is reached. Take the right, slightly ahead path down to the road, cross over, and go down to the kissing gate. Carry on, and then over the river footbridge. Up the path, and just prior to the road, turn left and into Bromham Mill car park.

14. If you wish to visit Bromham Bridge, carry on forward at this point on the road. Milledale, turn left at the main road, and down to the bridge, where good examples of Oolite can be seen.

Diversion to Oakley

6a. To visit Oakley, turn left at the “T” junction and go down to the road. At the road, turn left, and continue for about 100 metres. Then take the footpath on the right and go through the kissing gate. Follow the path down to the River Great Ouse and continue with the river on your left. Go over the stile and continue until a kissing gate is reached (ignore the two stiles by the way).

6b. At the road, with care (traffic and no pavement), turn left and then proceed over the two bridges. After crossing the bridges, continue forward right towards St. Mary’s Church at the end of the road. At St. Mary’s Church, note the Jurassic Limestone, with a point of interest of interest church entrance, the base of a churchyard cross. The church is normally open for those who wish to visit.

6c. Leave the church, and retrace your steps back to the two bridges.

6d. Negotiate the two bridges, again with care, then right onto the footpath, and return to Point 6 to follow the instructions in Point 7. At Point 6, take the left-hand path up the hill, in the opposite direction to the Windmill.

100 metres until a barrier and cross pathway are reached. Turn right at this point, continue to a second cross pathway, and then turn left. This is the original track you walked from Bromham to Stevington. Continue on this path to the road, with the Scout Hut now on your right.

9. Continue down this road (Molivers Road) to the end where it joins Vicarage Road. Cross the road with care and then turn left, and follow the pavement for about 100 metres until a footpath within the hedge is reached on your right. Go down this path to a field, and then forward to St. Owen’s Church.

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