

# The Thornton Walk

**Chalton with Blunham and Moggerhanger; an ancient history and a delightful 5.8 miles/9.4 km. walk.**

Blunham and Moggerhanger lie in the angle where the Ivel runs into the Great Ouse. They were for centuries the same parish and form an attractive combination of low and high ground. Chalton, a mere hamlet today, was once the important manor held by Adelaide, sister of William the Conqueror. The Domesday Book entry refers to Adeliz, wife of Hugh of Grandmesnil.

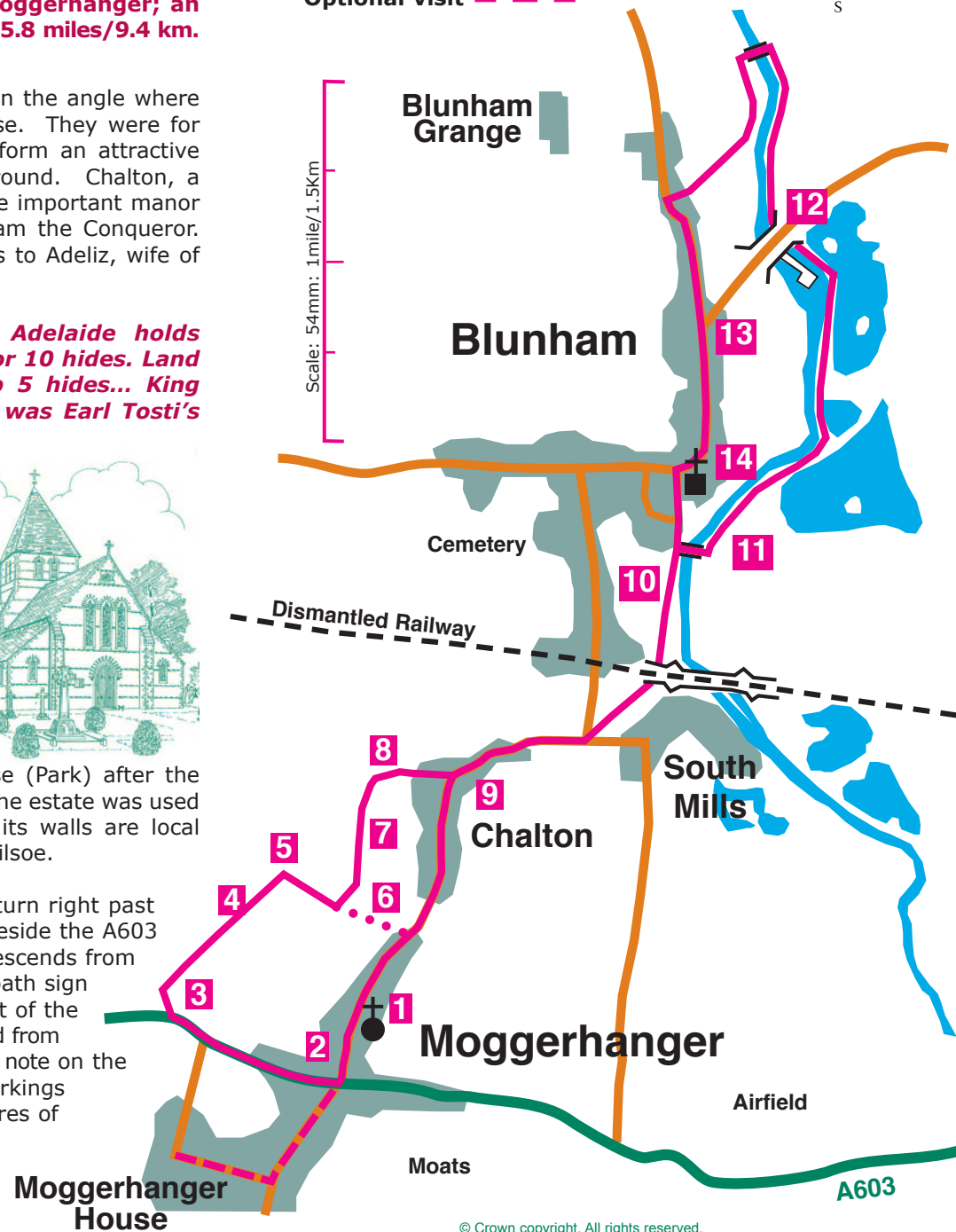
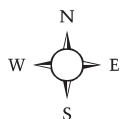
***M "in Wixamtree Hundred Adelaide holds Chalton herself. It answers for 10 hides. Land for 10 ploughs. In lordship 5 hides... King Edward held this manor. It was Earl Tosti's before 1066"***

**1.** Park outside St John the Evangelist church in Moggerhanger. The church is open every day for the community shop. Coffee is served by volunteers. St John's was consecrated in 1861 by Elizabeth Dawkins as a memorial to her husband who died in 1859. The Dawkins family had bought Moggerhanger House (Park) after the Thornton family. Oak grown on the estate was used for the roof of the church and its walls are local sandstone from Kempston and Silsoe.



**2.** Walk to the crossroads and turn right past the Guinea public house. Walk beside the A603 towards Bedford. As the road descends from the village there is a public footpath sign on the right. This is the remnant of the old road that led to Great Barford from Moggerhanger. Take this path and note on the left the remains of the gravel workings belonging to the Thorntons, squires of Moggerhanger Park between 1790 and 1812.

**Key**  
**Route** —————  
**Short cut** .....  
**Optional visit** - - - -



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**3.** The footpath runs downhill affording glorious views of the valley of the Great Ouse, with Ravensden water tower, 1953, visible in the distance.

**4.** The path cuts through a hedgerow and we now walk on the other side of the ditch with views eastwards towards the Ivel and beyond it the Greensand Ridge and Sandy Heath transmitter. Cross over the farm track and continue straight ahead after the culvert.

**5.** Signposted to turn right after the plank bridge, the footpath follows the sloe hedge planted at the time of the 1796 Enclosures. Before then this would have been entirely open field. From this point there is an excellent view of the old listed dovecote (Late 18c) on the Chalton Manorial site.



**6.** For the shorter walk continue ahead through a short wooded stretch to return to your car passing Moggerhanger Lower School and the Victorian vicarage on your left.

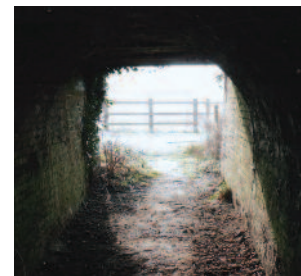


**7.** The longer walk follows a path northwards across an open field until you reach a much more ancient hedgerow of mixed planting which marks the boundary of the Domesday Book Chalton Manorial desmesne. It is bounded by a deep ditch unchanged since the Norman Conquest in 1066. The mill to this manor was at South Mills (now the Abbey Corrugated plant). William the Conqueror put his trusted immediate family and loyal barons in strategic manors bounding the river Great Ouse for north of this was the Danelaw.

**8.** This footpath became a private road between Chalton and Great Barford during the 18th Century but now crosses the cycle track (Route 51) on the old railway line on the way to Great Barford bridge. Turn right and follow the footpath to Chalton. You can return to Moggerhanger church from here by turning right and following the road past Chalton Manor farmhouse (where the Thornton family once lived) on the right and the village hall on your left. If you want to extend your walk to Moggerhanger Park see point 14.



**9.** From point 8 walk from Chalton following the road down a hill to a triangle of grass by Chalton Terrace. Cross the road to the footpath sign and take the path across the field diagonally towards the little tunnel with a signpost to Blunham. Here you cross the cycle path (Route 51 University Way). This old footpath went under the railway as a direct route for worshippers from Moggerhanger and Chalton to get to Blunham church before 1861. Go through the tunnel and look out for the WWII Farm Camp huts standing on the ridge and furrow to the left before going through the kissing gate at the far end.



**10.** This stretch is now part of the Kingfisher Way which follows the river Ivel on your right towards Blunham Old Rectory built 1873/4 to the designs of John Usher. A marvellous spot for seeing water vole, damselflies and kingfishers. At the right time of day you may be lucky enough to see one of our rarest mammals, the otter. Pass through the next two kissing gates and turn right towards Blunham weir. Cross the weir bridge enjoying the view and then turn sharply left through the gates and ▶





follow the Kingfisher Way along the Ivel. Take care not to disturb the cattle.

**11.** Following the river Ivel on your left you will see

across the water the recently restored Blunham Mill before you reach the main road and twin bridges. Cross the road to read the information board about the river Ivel navigation describing the history of river trade here in the 18th and 19th Centuries.

**12.** For a shorter walk turn left along the road to reach Blunham village passing the Post Office on your left.

For a longer walk continue along the Kingfisher Way until you reach the next available bridge. Cross over and turn left following the river upstream. Cross the stile and proceed until you reach a foot-path turning right at the signpost. This is a good stretch to observe water fowl. Turn left along the road until you reach the grass triangle with the post box. The village pound site nearby is still indicated by a low brick wall and has its name preserved in Pound Close. Follow Blunham High Street into the village centre where some of the interesting historic buildings include the Old Rectory, the former Manor Court House /Brotherhood House and onion sheds.



**13.** Blunham High Street takes you past the thatched John Donne Lower School on your left and the village shop on your right before you see the entrance to the church of St Edmund or St James.

The poet John Donne was once rector here. This church dates back to the 11th Century and is constructed from local sandstone. It is open every day and there is a Hidden Britain information point inside. The Thornton mausoleum, built 1805/6, lies behind it. Many of the Thornton family are at rest here.



**14.** Pass through the churchyard and turn left down the hill, pass through the barrier on your left and take the kissing gate on your right to retrace your steps along the river towards Chalton, Moggerhanger.

To extend your walk from Moggerhanger you may wish to visit Moggerhanger Park. Cross the A603 using the crossing on your left. Walk straight over into St Johns Road turning right into Park Road. At the end of Park Road you will see the gates to Moggerhanger Park. A 33 acre estate containing Moggerhanger House, a late 18th century grade 1 listed country house designed for the Thornton family by Sir John Soane. Here you may partake of light refreshments or a full meal and gain more information about the house.



## Planning your Walk

### Public Transport:

The walk can be accessed by train at Sandy. A Monday to Saturday bus service operates in Moggerhanger (route M3), please phone for further details. There is a Sunday and Bank Holiday service (also route M3).

### For bus times:

Bedfordshire Bus Information Line 01234 228337 (office hours)  
Traveline 0871 200 22 33

### For train times:

National Rail Enquiries 08457 484950  
The nearest train station is on the Eastcoat Mainline, 4km/ 2.5miles away at Sandy.

### Parking :

Car parking is available at various points along the route, please park sensibly if parking on the road.

### Accommodation:

There are several guest houses and B&B's in the vicinity. For further details on accommodation, please contact Sandy Tourist Information Centre 01767 682728.

### Useful Maps:

The walk is covered by Ordnance Survey Landranger sheet no. 153 and Explorer sheet no. 208.

**The walk is 5.8 miles/9.4 km.**



Line drawings are produced by courtesy of Keith Lawrence



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