

## Around the **CHELVESTON PLATEAU**

**Nine Villages**  
**Seven Churches**  
**Five Public Houses**

### **Walks and Cycle Routes Around The Decommissioned Airfield**



Chelveston memorial to the 305<sup>th</sup>  
Bombardment Group of the US 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force

*Produced by the Parish Councils of Dean &  
Shelton and Chelveston-cum-Caldecott, 2010*

## **Nine Villages – A Hidden History**

Straddling the Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire border lies a high plateau used as a military airfield from the 1940s until the 1960s. It then became a Ministry of Defence (MOD) radio signals station until being decommissioned in 2006.

Before its resale into private ownership, the MOD and local councils reinstated the many footpaths and bridleways which had been closed for over 60 years. Now an extensive rights of way network connects the nine villages of Chelveston, Caldecott, Upper and Lower Dean, Hargrave, Melchbourne, Newton Bromswold, Shelton and Yelden. Walkers, cyclists and horse riders alike can all now enjoy unprecedented access to areas between the villages which were sealed off for two generations.

The villages themselves are rich in historical features – including seven ancient churches, five traditional pubs, an old windmill, the site of a motte and bailey castle and several memorials to the US 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force which was based on the airfield during the World War II.

The map overleaf shows the whole rights of way network, most of which is well marked and well worth exploring. Three of the new inter-connecting routes across the old airfield are described in more detail inside the leaflet.

**We hope you enjoy this new amenity!**

## **The Seven Churches**

The Bedfordshire churches of Yelden, Melchbourne, Shelton and Upper Dean are part of the “Stodden Churches” in the Sharnbrook Deanery. The web site <http://www.stodden.org> has descriptions of these churches. St Mary’s church Shelton is particularly attractive, in a beautiful setting dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. The interior is thankfully unrestored with remains of ancient wall paintings and carved stone features contributing to its rustic charm.

The Northamptonshire churches of Hargrave, Chelveston and Newton Bromswold are similarly rich in history. All Saints Church Hargrave dates from the late 12<sup>th</sup> Century and was restored between 1868 and 1870. St Peter’s Newton Bromswold was dedicated in the late 13<sup>th</sup> Century. St John the Baptist in Chelveston dates from the mid 13<sup>th</sup> Century and was restored in 1849. All are worth a visit.

## **The Five Pubs**

Star & Garter: Chelveston	01933 623295
Swan: Newton Bromswold	01933 413506
Chequers: Yelden	01933 356383
Three Compasses: Upper Dean	01234 708346
St Johns Arms: Melchbourne	01234 708238

All five pubs are excellent way points on the various routes, with parking for patrons. The publicans welcome walkers and cyclists.

### **Route 1 Start at Yelden**

(Parking for patrons at Chequers Pub in village centre) *Map Refs. 1,2,3,6,7,8,1. Circular walk approximately 5.5km.*

From the pub turn right down the High Street. After 250m turn left up Church Lane. Follow the road and then a rough track for 1400m to the car park (Ref. 2) at the old airfield entrance. Turn right through the metal gate onto the main concrete track. Note the completely different terrain on the plateau, almost moorland in appearance, contrasting with the gentle farmland below. After a further 1300m a bridleway goes off to the right (Ref. 6). To extend the walk, join one of the other circular routes at this point (Routes 2 or 3). Otherwise turn right onto the bridleway and follow the path until it leaves the airfield site through a gate. The bridleway crosses a field and takes a right turn just beyond the hedge line. Keeping the hedge to the right, the path crosses the field corner and then goes through a caravan storage site at Middle Lodge. Carry on for a further 400m to a junction with another bridleway (Ref. 8). This is the Three Shires Way. Turn right to return to Yelden in a further 950m or left to walk to Shelton via Refs. 9 & 10.

### **Route 2 Start at Chelveston**

(Parking for patrons at Star & Garter Pub on B645). *Map Refs. 5,4,3,6,5. Circular walk approximately 4.8 km.*






Turn right at the Star & Garter and go up the track just past Disbrowe Court. Go through a gate and 150m further on, the path divides (Ref. 5). Go straight ahead up the bridleway for 1100m to enter the old airfield site, pausing to take in the views of Northamptonshire farm land behind. On the top of the airfield site, the terrain becomes a plateau and assumes a moorland aspect. In the centre of the old airfield site the bridleway crosses a concrete track (Ref. 6). Here to extend the walk, join circular Routes 1 or 3. Otherwise turn right, and after a further 550m turn right again onto the signed footpath (Ref. 3). Follow the signs, passing the old airfield buildings to reach a gate. On leaving the airfield site, keep to the footpath with the hedge on the right. The view now returns to rolling farm land with the Northamptonshire villages of Caldecott and Chelveston before you and Higham Ferrers church in the distance. Just short of the main road at the village of Caldecott (Ref. 4) skirt to the right, then turn right again away from the road onto the footpath to Chelveston. 500m further on, the path crosses a small wooden bridge and forks (Ref. 5). Turn left to return to Chelveston.

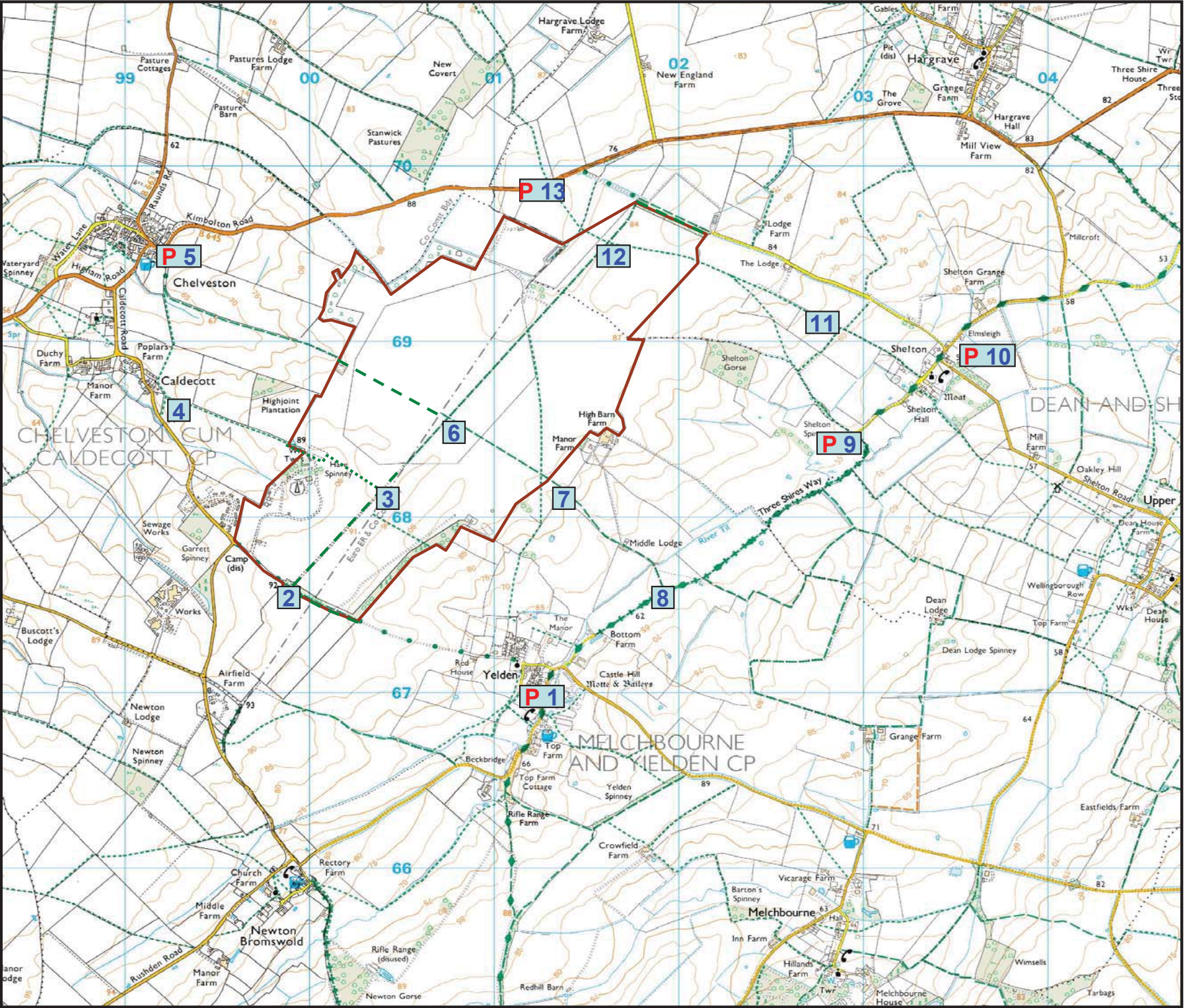
### **Route 3 Start at Shelton**

(Park in the village or off the track at ref 9). *Map Refs. 10,9,8,7,6,12,11,10. Circular walk approximately 7.1km*

From the village take the track past the church (do visit) and Shelton Hall. Continue to the Three Shires Way junction (Ref. 9). Turn left and follow the byway signs through a gate onto a track with hedges on both sides (can be muddy). Paths through the hedge off to the left can extend the route around Dean Lodge and Grange Farm. The byway continues for another 1000m to a bridleway junction (Ref. 8). Turn right here and go through the caravan storage site at Middle Lodge, across a field and through a metal gate onto the old airfield site (1000m). Note the moorland terrain on the plateau above which buzzards can often be seen circling. Keep to the bridleway for a further 600m until the concrete track in the centre of the site (Ref. 6). To extend the walk, join circular Routes 1 or 2. Otherwise turn right along the track for 1350m and then take the footpath on the right (Ref. 12)\*. After leaving the site, cross the field ahead onto a picturesque grass track to a turn at Ref. 11. Go straight on for a further 500m to Shelton (Ref. 10), or turn right and then left to return to the Three Shires Way after 750m (Ref. 9).

*\*Note continuing along the track out of the site and bearing left down to the main road (B645) brings one to an alternative starting point with parking (Ref. 13).*

-  Airfield Perimeter
-  Public Bridleway
-  Public Footpath
-  Public Byway
-  Parking



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