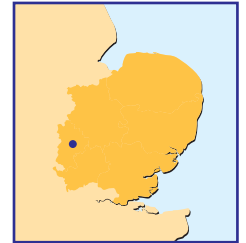


# CYCLING DISCOVERY MAP



**Starting point:** Bedford, Bedfordshire

**Distance:** 24 miles/37 km (or with short cut 19 miles/30 km)

**Type of route:** Day ride - moderate, circular; on roads, cycle paths and tracks

## THE THATCHER'S WAY

This cycle ride starts from the peaceful setting of the Priory Country Park. From here the route heads south into an area of rich, rolling countryside. Alongside the wooded slopes of The Greensand Ridge, the ancient craft of thatching is kept alive in enchanting picture book villages, such as Swiss-style Old Warden and Ickwell with its maypole. Along this route you can discover a magnificent collection of flying machines, stroll amongst the landscaped parkland of Humphry Repton and enjoy a pint or two in our very own Ireland.



Old Warden

### Essential information

<b>Starting point:</b>	Bedford - Priory Country Park. Located 11/2 miles east of the town centre. Entrance off Barkers Lane, SP from the A428.
<b>Alternative starting point:</b>	Old Warden - Old Warden Park. Located 21/4 miles west of Biggleswade. From A1, take B658 towards Shefford. After 1 mile, at the roundabout, continue SA towards Old Warden. Shortly on your L is The Shuttleworth Collection aerodrome, and the entrance to Old Warden Park. Join the route by leaving the car park, and turning L onto the road. After about 1/4 mile, turn R, SP 'Ickwell 1/2, Northill 1'. Start from 'J Ickwell'.
<b>Car parking:</b>	Bedford - Priory Country Park (free). Old Warden - Old Warden Park (free).
<b>Nearest railway station:</b>	Bedford - St. Johns (11/2 miles west of Priory Country Park). Biggleswade (21/4 miles east of Old Warden Park).
<b>Type of route:</b>	Day ride - moderate, circular; on roads, cycle paths and tracks.
<b>Summary of route:</b>	Bedford (Priory Country Park) - Cardington - Airship sheds - Warden Street - Ireland - Southill - Old Warden - Ickwell - Northill - Moggerhanger - Blunham - Willington - Bedford (Priory Country Park).
<b>Distance:</b>	24 miles/37 km.
<b>Short cut:</b>	From Warden Street, east along unclassified road to Old Warden, 1 mile (2 km). Total route with short cut, 19 miles (30 km).
<b>Terrain:</b>	Gently rolling. Moderate climb between Cardington and Warden Street. Lowest point - 69 feet (21 metres) between Great Barford and Willington. Highest point - 266 feet (81 metres) between Cardington and Warden Street.
<b>Cycle hire:</b>	Bedford - Priory Marina Cycling Limited, Priory Marina, Barkers Lane (01234) 340090. Willington - Danish Camp Riverside Visitor Centre, Chapel Lane (01234) 838709.
<b>Cycle repair:</b>	Bedford - Cycle King, 40-42 Greyfriars (01234) 351525; Michael's Cycles, 54-56 Midland Road (01234) 352937; Priory Marina Cycling Limited (see cycle hire above).
<b>Ordnance Survey map area:</b>	Landranger 153 - Bedford & Huntingdon.
<b>National Cycle Network links:</b>	Route 51. This ride follows the NCN from the village of Blunham west (via Willington) to the Priory Country Park.

### Key to Symbols & Abbreviations

	Cycle Parking
	Places of Interest
	Refreshments
	Children Welcome
	Picnic Site
	Shop
	Toilets
	Tourist Information
	Caution/Take care
L	Left Turn
R	Right Turn
T-j	T-junction
SA	Straight Across/Ahead
X-roads	Cross roads
SP	Sign-posted
NS	Not Sign-posted

The Shuttleworth Collection, Old Warden



# Points of Interest

(listed as you would find them along the route)

Please note: within this map there is only room to list basic details regarding opening times. In this respect, if you are planning to visit any of the places of interest on this route, we advise you to telephone in advance to confirm exact opening days and times. Refreshment establishments listed on this map are just a small selection of those available. For further information, please contact the nearest Tourist Information Centre.

**A Priory Country Park** (Bedford) - 300 acres with lakes, riverside walks, bird-watching, marina and visitor centre. Canoe slalom course. Open all year. Admission free. (01234) 211182.

🚲 beside visitor centre.

✂️ **Priory Marina Beefeater** (01234) 352883. 🚰

🚰 beside visitor centre (also separate automatic toilet).

🚰 throughout park

**B Cardington** - attractive village set around a well-kept green. Many of the 200 year old cottages were built by the Whitbread family and proudly display their initials. The 18th C. house of the prison reformer, John Howard (1726-90) can be seen in Church Lane. 🏠

🏠 **St. Mary's Church** - rebuilt 1897-1901. Contains ensign of the R101 airship, which crashed over France on its maiden voyage in 1930. The cemetery opposite has a memorial to the disaster.

✂️ **The Kings Arms** (01234) 838533. 🚰

**C Airship sheds** - dominating the skyline, this is the former airship research/manufacturing centre set up by the Admiralty from 1916. The sheds eventually housed the R100 and R101 airships. *Not open to the public.*

**D Warden Street** - as the name suggests this little hamlet is set along one long street. Close by are the remains of a Cistercian Abbey (private), identified by its Elizabethan chimney.

🏠 **Old Warden Tunnel** (access via bridle path between Cardington and Warden Street) - nature reserve set beside the former railway line. Wildflowers. Open all year. Admission free.

**E Just off the route** - Rowney Warren Wood (1/2 mile west of route). Former heather-covered heath situated on The Greensand Ridge. Now extensive woodland with wildflowers. Forestry Commission. Open all year. Admission free. 🚰

**F Ireland** - tiny hamlet set amongst open countryside and woods.

✂️ **The Black Horse** (01462) 811398. 🚰

**G Southill** - the village estate was bought from the Byng family in 1795 by Samuel Whitbread, founder of the famous brewing dynasty. Almost every building bears his family's initials. Southill Park (private) is still the family home. 🏠

🏠 **All Saints' Church** - contains Byng family vault, including tomb of Admiral Sir John Byng (1704-1757) who lost Minorca to the French, and was subsequently executed on board his ship.

✂️ **The White Horse** (01462) 813364. 🚰

**H Old Warden** - picturesque village, whose estate was bought by the London tradesman Sir Samuel Ongley in 1700. In the 19th C. the 3rd Lord Ongley recreated the village by converting the old estate cottages, and building new ones with thatched roofs and latticed porches - to create the popular "Swiss" look of the day. 🏠

🏠 **St. Leonard's Church** - 12th C. famous for its woodcarvings collected by Lord Ongley from 1841. Some of the carvings reputedly come from Anne of Cleves private chapel in Bruges (Belgium). There are also memorials to the Ongley and Shuttleworth families.

**Shuttleworth College** - the village estate was sold in 1872 to Joseph Shuttleworth (a partner in a Lincolnshire ironfounders firm). He built this Jacobean-style mansion, which became part of an agricultural college in 1946. *Not open to the public.*

✂️ **The Hare and Hounds** (01767) 627225. 🚰

**I Just off the route** - Old Warden Park (1/4 mile east of route). Three different places to visit.

🏠 **The English School of Falconry** (Bird of Prey and Conservation Centre) - one of the finest collections of birds of prey in the country. Daily flying displays. Open Feb-Oct. Admission charge. (01767) 627527. ✂️ 🚰

**The Shuttleworth Collection** - unique collection of vintage aircraft, started by Richard Shuttleworth in 1928. Open all year. Admission charge. (01767) 627927. ✂️ 🚰

**The Swiss Garden** - unique 19th C. landscape garden with rare trees, ponds, bridges and tiny folly buildings. Open all year. Admission charge. (01767) 627666. ✂️ 🚰

**J Ickwell** - typical old English village set around a large green, with its thatched houses, cricket pitch and permanent maypole. Birthplace of Thomas Tompion (1639-1713), the 'Father of English Clockmaking'. The little smithy on the green was his workshop.

🏠 **Ickwell Bury** - neo-Georgian house built 1937, with 17th C. dovecote and stables. *Not open to the public.*

**K Northill** - picturesque village with its pub, church and 18th C. thatched cottages grouped around a little pond.

🏠 **St. Mary's Church** - 14th C. ironstone church, with fine examples of 17th C. painted glass. The one handed clock was built by Thomas Tompion.

✂️ **The Crown** (01767) 627337. 🚰

**L Moggerhanger** - hilltop village dominated by its church. There are remains of several medieval moats.

🏠 **Church of St. John the Evangelist** - built 1860-1 of French influence. Chancel tower has pyramid roof.

**Moggerhanger Park** - recently restored Georgian Grade I listed building designed by the eminent architect Sir John Soane. The grounds were landscaped by Humphry Repton. Open all year. Admission free (to grounds). (01767) 641007. ✂️

✂️ **The Guinea** (01767) 640388. 🚰

**M Blunham** - set within the Ivel Valley, this large village has thatched 17th C. buildings surrounding its church.

An old bridge spans the river. 🏠

🏠 **Church of St. James** - 15th C. stone screen and monument to Godfrey Thornton (died 1805), who lived at nearby Moggerhanger House. He was a director of the Bank of England.

✂️ **The Salutation** (01767) 640620. 🚰

**N Willington** - attractive village. Here the conquering Danes cut a channel from the river and built a harbour. In 1529, the estate was bought by Sir John Gostwick, Cardinal Wolsey's Master of the Horse. 🏠

🏠 **Danish Camp Riverside Visitor Centre** - on the site of what is thought to be a Danish encampment and boat repair yard. Nordic log cabin serving refreshments, cycle hire and walks. Open all year. Admission free. (01234) 838709. ✂️

**St. Lawrence's Church** - 16th C. in late-Perpendicular style. Partly rebuilt by Sir John Gostwick, his tomb, together with other family memorials can be seen.

**Willington Dovecote and Stables** - distinctive 16th C. stables and stone dovecote, lined internally with nesting boxes for 1,500 pigeons. The National Trust. Open by appointment only. Admission charge. (01480) 301494.

✂️ **The Crown** (01234) 838308. 🚰

# ROUTE DIRECTIONS

**STARTING POINT:** Bedford (Priory Country Park).

**A** Priory Country Park (Bedford) - 300 acres with lakes. 🏡 ✖

**1** With the Visitor Centre to your L, go SA so that you have the lake in front of you. Turn L along the cycle path which runs beside the lake.

**2** Turn L over 'Marina Ford Bridge' and follow the path through the wooded area, then across 'Jetty Bridge'. On the other side, bear L, then R across the 'Cardington Lock' and 'Sluice' bridges. You then leave the park.

**3** At the T-j, turn R (NS) onto Stannard Way. Pass SA the 1st roundabout, then just before the 2nd one, bear R onto the cycle path, SP 'Kempston and Cardington'. Follow the path anti-clockwise around the busy roundabout, crossing over the A603, then bear L across the two slip roads of the A421. △

**4** Take the next R turning off the roundabout, SP 'Cardington'.

**B** Cardington - attractive village. 🏡 ✖ 🏠

**5** Turn R onto Southill Road, SP 'Old Warden 4, Southill 6'.

**C** Airship sheds - former airship research and manufacturing centre.

**6** The road crosses over the old railway line, where a scene from the classic film 'Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines' (1965) was shot.

**7** The road now starts to climb uphill onto The Greensand Ridge. This is a line of sandy hills with extensive woodlands, private estates and open heathland.

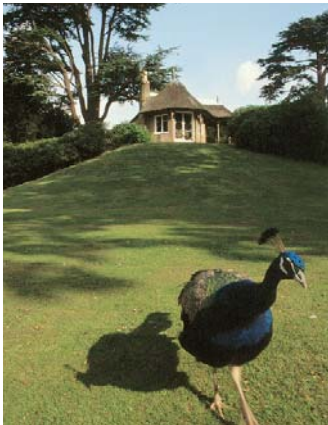
**D** Warden Street - remains of Cistercian abbey. 🏡

**8** Turn R, SP 'Haynes 4'.

**Short cut** (1 mile). Total route with short cut - 19 miles. Continue SA to Old Warden. After 3/4 mile at the T-j, turn L, SP 'Old Warden'. Remain on this road for 1/4 mile.

**Please now continue from 'H Old Warden'.**

**9** Turn L, SP 'Old Warden 2'.



*The Swiss Garden,  
Old Warden*

**E** Just off the route - Rowney Warren Wood (turn R at this junction for 1/2 mile. When you reach the X-roads with the A600, go SA, SP Haynes. The wood is on your L). Extensive woodland offering walks. 🏡

**10** Turn R, SP 'Ireland 1/2, Shefford 2 1/2'.

**11** Turn L, SP 'Southill 1 1/2, Shefford 2'.

**F** Ireland - tiny hamlet. ✖

**12** Turn L, SP 'Southill 1 1/4, Stanford 1 3/4'. △

**13** Turn L, SP 'Southill 1/2, Old Warden 2 3/4'.



*Moggerhanger Park*

**G** Southill - 'Whitbread' estate village. 🏡 ✖ 🏠

**14** Turn L (opposite The White Horse pub), SP 'Old Warden 2'.

**15** As the road bears sharply R around the corner, go SA, SP 'Old Warden 1 3/4'. The road passes through Warden Warren.

**16** Turn R onto Bedford Road, SP 'Ickwell 2, Northill 2 1/2'.

**H** Old Warden - attractive 'Swiss' style village. 🏡 ✖ 🏠



*Ickwell*

**17** Turn L, SP 'Ickwell 1/2, Northill 1'.

**I** Just off the route - Old Warden Park (continue SA for 1/4 mile). Swiss Garden, vintage aircraft and bird of prey collections. 🏡

**J** Ickwell - large green with maypole. 🏡

**K** Northill - 18th C. thatched cottages. 🏡 ✖

**18** Turn L, SP 'Moggerhanger 1 3/4'.

**19** Turn R, SP 'Moggerhanger 3/4, Blunham 2 1/4'.

**20** At the X-roads with the A603, go SA, SP 'Chalton 1/2, Blunham 1 1/2'. △

**L** Moggerhanger - hilltop village. 🏡 ✖

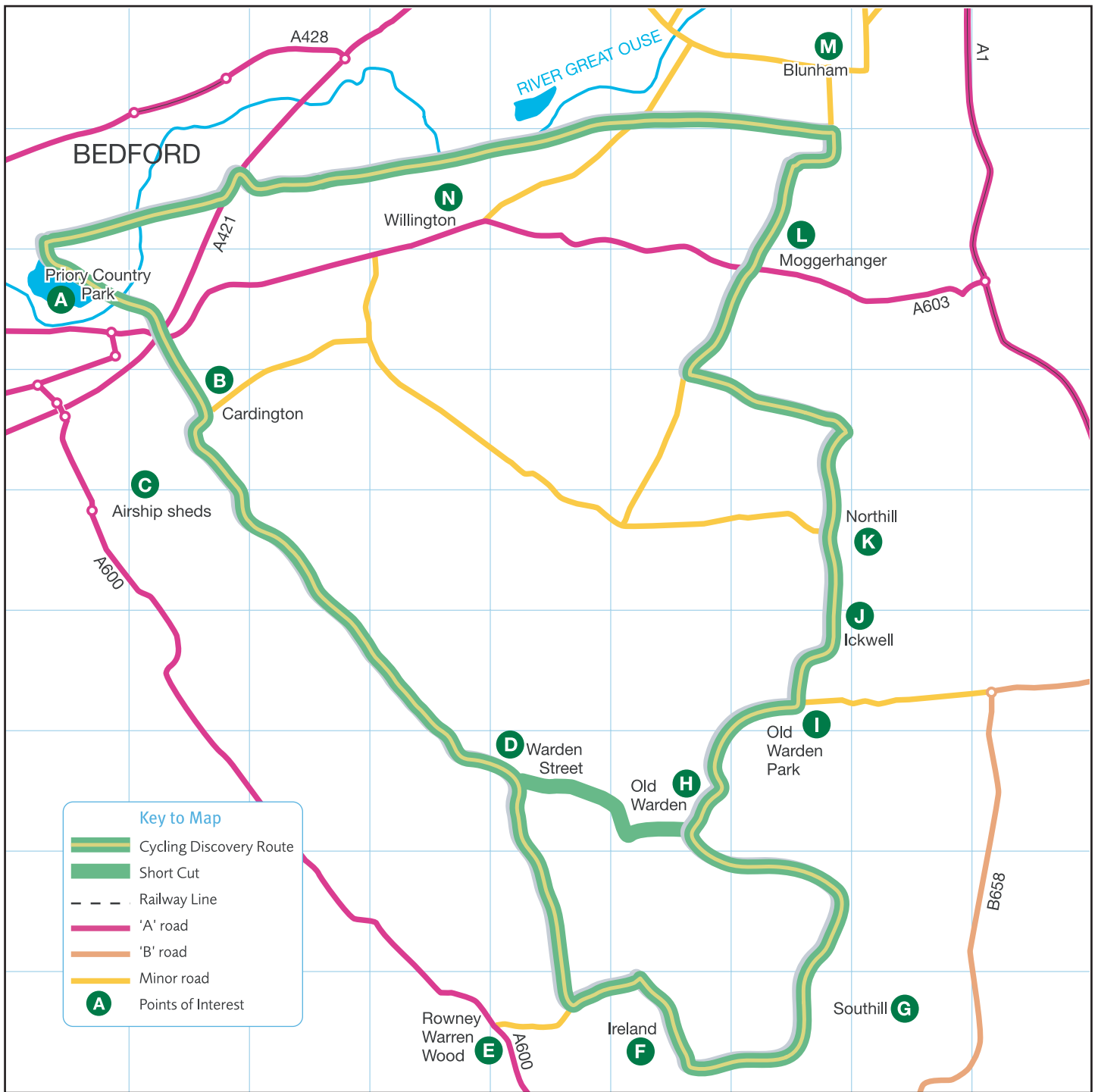
**21** Turn L, SP 'Blunham 1 1/2, Great Barford 2'.

**M** Blunham - set within Ivel Valley. 🏡 ✖ 🏠

**22** Turn L onto the National Cycle Network - Route 51. Follow the track to the village of Willington.

**N** Willington - attractive village. 🏡 ✖ 🏠

**23** Remain on the National Cycle Network - Route 51 back to the Priory Country Park.



The Map shown in this route provides just a general outline - In this respect, we recommend that you purchase the Ordnance Survey Landranger Map which covers the area. Ordnance Survey map area: Landranger 153 - Bedford & Huntingdon. 'Reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO ©Crown copyright (2006). All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100017282'.

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