

Silsoe – Shillington

Walk: approx. 9.3 miles/15km **Time:** 3.5 hours.

Enjoy the undulating countryside from the Lower Greensand Ridge of the north, to the chalk hills of the Chilterns in the south

Silsoe

The Danes are believed to be the first settlers and the village name said to derive from 'hoh' in Sifels hoh meaning Sifel's Hill and in 1086 is recorded in the Domesday Book as Sewilessou. The village benefitted from a Royal Charter granted for a weekly market and a twice yearly fair and by 1563 Silsoe boasted 21 families, most working for the Wrest estate as servants, gardeners and stable hands who lived in thatched and terraced cottages, some of which still exist in the village today.

Church of St James the Great

The church stands on the site of a much earlier chapel, first mentioned in the 13th century. The old Chapel had a squat tower and tiny steeple and following reports from surveyors about the tower's dangerous condition, there seemed to be an opportunity not only to repair the tower but to improve it as well. Lord de Grey, owner of Wrest Park and the first President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, took on the project but sadly the new construction proved too heavy for the walls of the Chapel, and fell to the ground. The old church was demolished, and the new church was built in 1829-31, to which Lord de Grey contributed £4,000.

Wrest Park House and Gardens

There are two manors recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, the larger one owned by Hugh of Walter, ancestor of the de Grey family which was later to become the

Manor of Wrest. The present house was built by the Earl de Grey within a short distance of the original house. The foundation stone was laid on 12 February 1834 and the family moved in to their new home in autumn 1839 and as the new house went up the old one was demolished bit by bit.

The 90 acres of gardens were originally laid out from 1700-1850 and include the Formal and Great Gardens; they provide a fascinating history of gardening styles, inspired by the great gardens of Versailles in France.

English Heritage took over the house and gardens in 2006 and has embarked on a 20 year restoration project.

Whitehall Plantation

The poorly drained quality of the soil in this 17th century plantation is reflected in the tree species, particularly the fast growing poplar. A hollowed out course of the old road to Higham Gobion can still be seen as you make your way through the wood.

The Camp

The outer banks of the medieval earthworks of The Camp, once enclosed a lake which may have been used as a fish farm to provide food for the manor of Higham Gobion.

Higham Gobion

This small village gets the second part of its name from the Gobion family, who lived in the area following the Norman invasion of 1066. The remnants of the

11th century motte and bailey castle are still visible. There is a stream that marks part of the county boundary between Central Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. Near Shillington, a number of streams converge to form the River Hit, which joins the River Flit near Shefford.

Shillington

Known in Saxon times as Scytlingedune, meaning the hill of Scytell's people the village has grown steadily around the church.

The present All Saints church dates from the 14th century and is on the site of an earlier 11th century building erected by the Abbot of Ramsey Abbey. From the churchyard there are extensive views over the surrounding countryside.

In the second half of the 19th century many hundreds of men, women and children across Bedfordshire were engaged in digging coprolites. A source of phosphate derived from fossilised animal dung, the coprolites were treated in huge tanks then sent to a mill at Royston for processing into agricultural fertiliser. At its height, the mined coprolites were worth about £3.00 a ton, wages were high and a good 'fossil digger' could earn 40 shillings (£2) a week. The population of Shillington was about 1,800 and expanded to 2,400 during this period, but with the import of cheap foreign phosphates for chemical manure the industry had died out by the 1890's.



Circular walks

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Healthy walking

Why not get out and get healthy? There is no better way to start than by taking a walk. Just 30 minutes a day can improve health and well-being, reduce the risk of heart disease, help to prevent diabetes, improve muscle strength even reduce anxiety and depression. So make today the day you start to enjoy Bedfordshire and enjoy good health. For information on healthy walking log on to www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

Planning your walk

Wrest House car park is the suggested starting point and the walk is described in an anti-clockwise direction. However, you can begin at any other point and walk in either direction.

Refreshments, parking and toilets

There are public houses and shops in both Silsoe and Shillington. The car park at Wrest Park House is used with permission of English Heritage, and is not a public car park. Please park considerately, remember to take all valuables with you and ensure that your car is securely locked

Public transport

For bus information contact Traveline 0871 200 2233. The nearest railway station is approximately 3 miles away at Flitwick.

Ordnance Survey maps

The route is covered on Ordnance Survey Landranger Series map 153. It is also shown on Explorer map 193. (Preferred).

Did you enjoy the walk?

This is one of a series of circular walk leaflets produced by Central Bedfordshire Council. If you wish to request a leaflet, give us some feedback or report any problems encountered, please contact us on **0300 3008305** or e-mail us on recreational.routes@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Tips for enjoying your walk

Parts of the walk can become muddy especially after heavy rain, so strong waterproof footwear is recommended. Take care where conditions are rough and do let someone know where you are going. Please be aware that much of the walk is unsuitable for wheelchairs and difficult for pushchairs.

Other walks

To discover more walks in Central Bedfordshire visit www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/countryside or www.letsgo.org.uk

Or why not explore the Greensand Ridge by following the fabulous Greensand Ridge Walk, a walk that passes through many of the area's most valuable landscapes and historic towns www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/greensand



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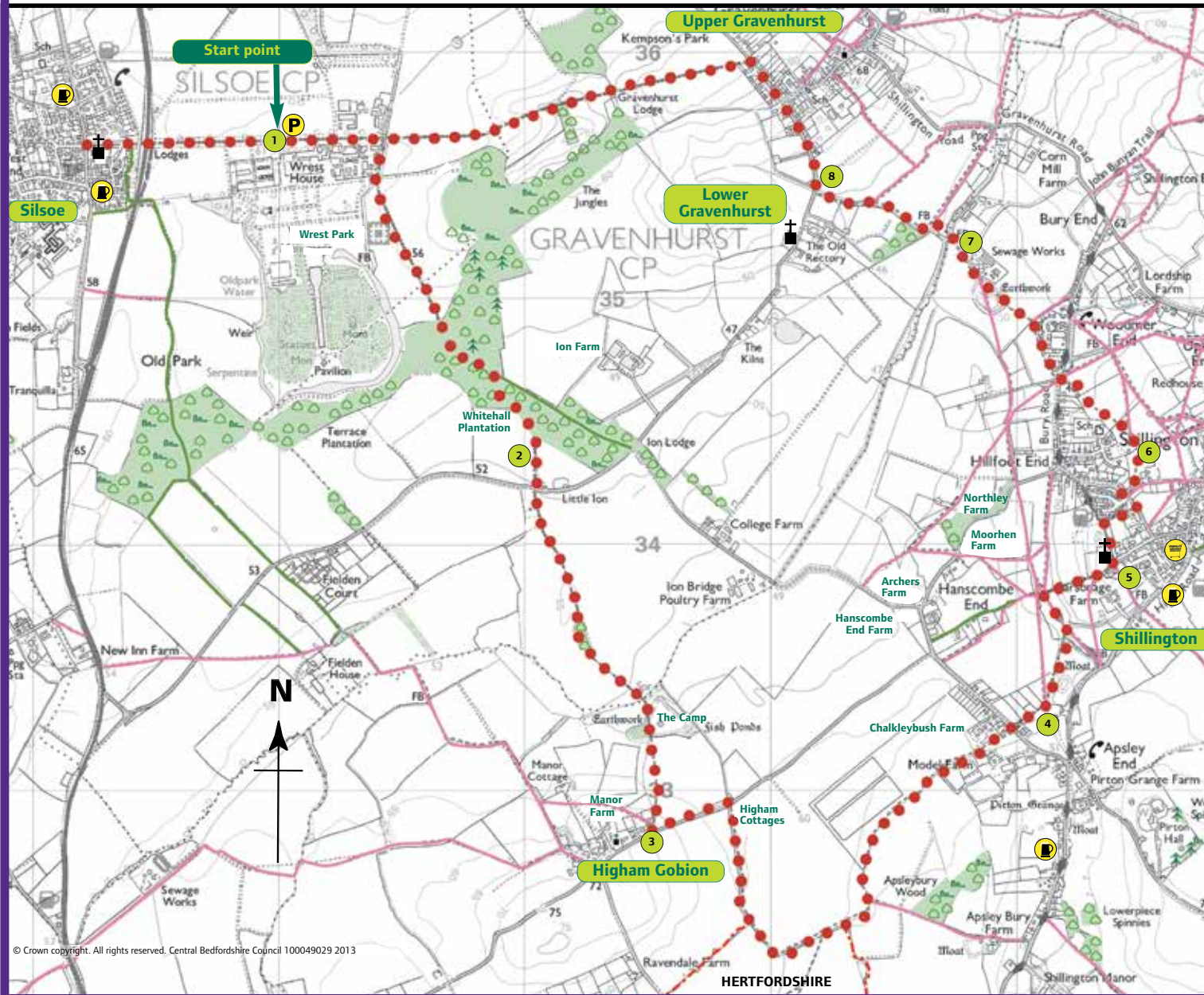
Walk

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Sandy and Everton | 7 Rushmere and Stockgrove |
| 2 Old Warden | 8 Cranfield |
| 3 Silsoe - Shillington | 9 Totternhoe |
| 4 Ampthill - Maulden | 10 Dunstable Downs |
| 5 Ampthill - Millbrook | 11 Whipsnade |
| 6 Woburn - Eversholt | ■ ■ ■ Greensand Ridge walk |

Walk 3

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Key

	The walk		Parking
	Footpath		Public house
	Bridleway		Local shop
	County boundary		Woodland
	Church		

Please follow these tips to keep you and your dog safe:

- Always keep you dog in sight and train it to come back when called.
- Never let your dog chase wildlife or grazing animals – it could get injured too.
- Unless you're already friends, keep you dog away from other people and either dogs – not everyone loves your dog as much as you do!
- Always clean up after your dog.
- Look out for horses, cyclists and runners – for everybody's safety its best to put your dog on a lead as they come by.
- Follow all local signs about grazing animals.

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Countryside code

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them

- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Consider other people.

- 1 From the car park, head away from Wrest Park House following the road to the right. Turn right at the bridleway, passing the former Silsoe Research Institute buildings and continue between a pair of brick pillars and along a wide track to Whitehall Plantation.
- 2 Turn right onto another woodland track that brings you to the Gravenhurst Road. Cross the road and follow the bridleway, skirting a small woodland, to the earthworks of 'The Camp'. Continue on until you reach the road near Higham Gobion.
- 3 Turn left along the road, then right at the footpath opposite Higham Cottages. Follow the field edge paths round to Chalkleybush Farm and cross Hanscombe End Road to follow a narrow path between the houses.
- 4 Continue on through a series of kissing gates following the stream, then bear left at the bridge. Cross the meadow and turn right onto the bridleway that leads up to All Saints Church in Shillington.
- 5 Follow the path through the churchyard, keeping the church on your left, to a pedestrian gate, and on past the allotments. Turn right and continue on to Hillfoot Road, where you turn left and then right, opposite Church View Avenue. After a short distance, turn left at the kissing gate and head across the arable field and down a slope in the corner to the playing field.
- 6 Cross the playing fields, heading for the left hand corner, and follow the path to Bury Road. Cross the road and join the path near the houses, bearing right to follow the backs of the houses through horse pastures and across the slightly domed mound of the Church Pannell earthworks.
- 7 Continue following the path by the stream, turn left after the second bridge and then right to follow the field edge to Barton Road, between Upper and Lower Gravenhurst.
- 8 Turn right along the road, and walk up the hill into Upper Gravenhurst to a bridleway on the left. Follow this back to Wrest Park House.

