

Walk on the WILD SIDE

JO VAUGHAN DONS HER WALKING BOOTS FOR A GENTLE STROLL IN THE HEART OF HERTFORDSHIRE



ASHRIDGE Farm, near the small village of Ashwell close to the A1, is a quiet location worthy of more than an overnight stop. This walk takes you from the campsite to the village via farmland, and then back again in a large loop, taking in some of Ashwell's historic cottages, local pubs and village shops. The countryside is

gently undulating making this an easy stroll, although there is one section that takes you on a busy road, so watch out for traffic. There's a surprising amount to do in the area, with one of the major attractions being the Shuttleworth Collection at Biggleswade. You can also meander around the historic town of Baldock,

while the university city of Cambridge is just a short drive away.

INFORMATION TOURISM

Luton Visitor Information Centre, Luton Central Library, St George's Square, Luton LU1 2NG. Tel 01582 401579

DIRECTIONS

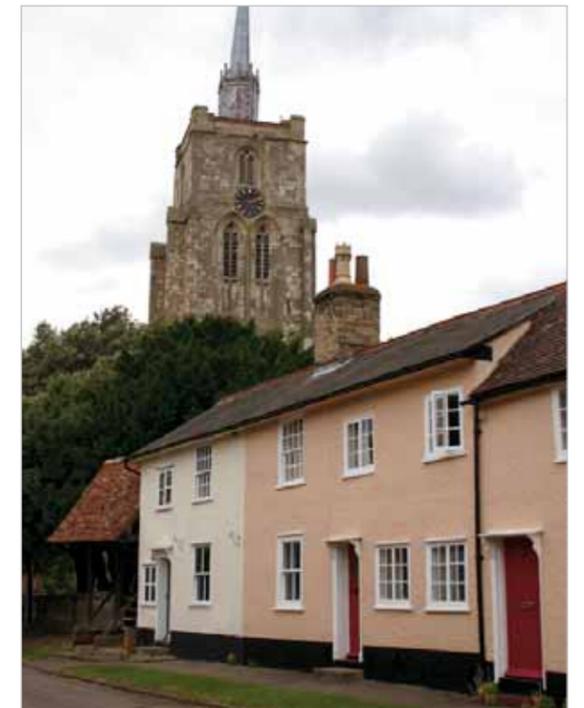
- 1 Leave the site via the main entrance and turn immediately left along the gravel lane. Continue behind the caravan storage area where the track becomes rougher and grassier.
- 2 After passing some trees on your left, turn left at a footpath post following the black arrow. At the road, turn right to walk along the left of the two roads on your right (signposted 'Guilden Morden' and 'Wrestlingworth'). Walk along the wide grassy bank.
- 3 Soon after the first large tree on the left side of the road you will see a partially obscured footpath sign – cross the road and follow the direction of the footpath, doubling back on yourself at an acute angle across the field. Cross the private driveway and continue ahead along the footpath towards the church spire in the distance. The path does become quite overgrown, so long trousers are essential.
- 4 Go over a small wooden bridge that spans an overgrown stream and follow the yellow arrows across the next field (still heading towards the church ahead). When you reach the road, cross it and continue to follow the public footpath sign. Go through a kissing gate and continue down the right flank of the field. Go through another kissing gate and turn to the right along the road.
- 5 Having admired the working watermill on the left as you go over the stream, continue past the church and the Bushel and Strike pub. At the Ashwell Museum (a white timbered building), continue ahead down Alms Lane, and at the end of the road turn right. At the Rose and Crown pub, turn left (signposted 'Public Footpath – Silver Street'). Continue through the pub car park and walk to the right of the pub garden.
- 6 At the end of the alley, opposite Ashwell Primary School, turn right.

Now cross the road and head down Back Street. At the end fork left and join the main road, walking along the pavement, with a high brick wall opposite. Then fork right by the bus stop along Hinxworth Road, and almost immediately take a left fork (signposted 'Public Bridleway').

- 6 When you come to an opening in the hedgerow ignore the turning to the left and carry straight on. Go over the crest of the hill and continue following the hedgerow on your left, which now forks slightly to the left. When you come to a T-junction with a hedgerow ahead of you, turn left following a blue arrow.
- 8 At the road, turn left and then shortly afterwards turn right at the entrance to Farrow's Farm (take care along this section of road due to fast-moving traffic). Continue past the pig farm and then, where the track turns 90 degrees left, follow this in the direction of a yellow arrow. Walk past a small copse on your left and carry straight on. Follow the path as it bends around to the left, still keeping a barbed wire fence to your left. Continue towards the church spire in the distance.
- 9 Go through a gap in the hedgerow and turn left. Continue down the gravel track, but before you reach the road and just before a bungalow called High Acre, turn right along another gravel track of a similar size. Continue past the allotments on your left, and then fork right on to a narrower path following a yellow arrow rather than joining the road.
- 10 At the end of the path carry straight on, past the yellow grit box, and continue ahead at the T-junction on the bend. Continue down Ashwell Street, ignoring Claybush Road on your right. At the junction go straight across, still on Ashwell Street. Soon the road returns to being a gravel track – carry straight on. At the end, when you come to Station Road, you'll see The Caravan Club sign ahead of you. Return to the site.

INFORMATION | ATTRACTIONS

- **Baldock Museum**, Town Hall, Hitchin Street, Baldock SG7 6AX. Tel 01462 892640. Open Sun 2-4pm, and Wed 10am-3pm. Cost: 25p (children free). A permanent display describes the course of Baldock's history from its foundation by the Knights Templar to the present
- **Ashwell Village Museum**, Swan Street, Ashwell, Baldock SG7 5QH. Tel 01462 742956. Open Sun and BH 2.30-5pm. Cost: adults, £1; children, 25p. Housed in a small but interesting timber building, this museum offers a collection of village bygones and agricultural implements. Limited disabled access
- **Shuttleworth Collection**, Old Warden Aerodrome, Biggleswade SG18 9EP. Tel 01767 627950 or see shuttleworth.org. Open all year from 10am daily. Cost: adults, £10; seniors, £9; children (up to 16), free. Also at the aerodrome is the Bird of Prey Centre and the Swiss Garden (both at extra cost). The Shuttleworth Collection itself brings together full-scale planes spanning 100 years of flight. Full disabled access



INFORMATION | GENERAL

NEAREST CLUB SITE: Ashridge Farm, Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Baldock SG7 5QF. Tel 01462 742527. Open all year
DISTANCE: 7.7 miles/12.3km
TERRAIN: Some road walking, gravel tracks, grassy paths (overgrown in parts)
NUMBER OF STILES: None
ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: Ordnance Survey Explorer 208 – Bedford, St Neots, Sandy & Biggleswade. Long trousers
LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Easy
REFRESHMENTS: The Bushel and Strike pub serves food at the weekends
TOILETS: None

