



The Ramblers Association

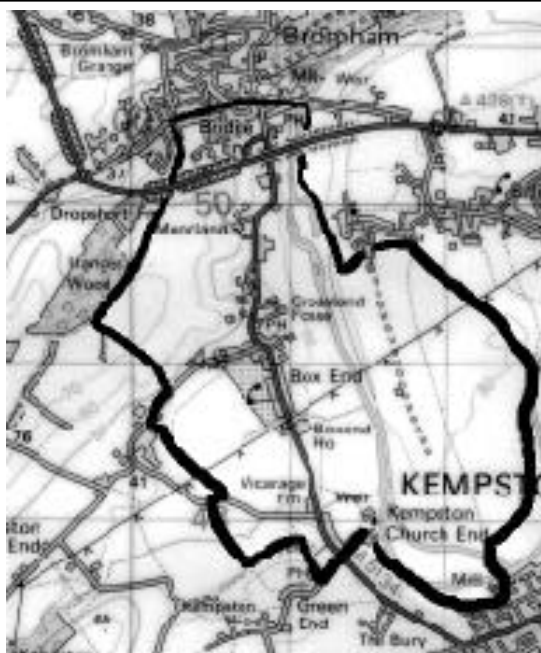
# Ouse Valley Group

Ouse Valley Ramblers' Guided Walks

## Walk N° 6

## Kempston Church End, Bedfordshire

Area	<b>Kemston</b> , Bedfordshire.
Walk Leader	Mike Dawson
Start Point	Kemston Church at 10:00 am
End Point	Kemston Church at approximately 12:30 pm
Places Visited	Kemston -> Biddenham -> Bromham -> Kemston
Approximate Distance	7 miles
Time To Complete	Approximately 3 hours
Difficulty	Easy - Mostly flat countryside or undulating hills.
Car Parking	Kemston Church
Public Transport	Maybe someday.



### Walk Itinerary

- [1] Depart from Kempston Church End through the archway of what once was an old workhouse. Then along the footpath by the river to Kempston.
- [2] At Kempston cross the river by the mill and skirt the ploughed field by following the hedge on the right. Notice some hop vines growing here, an indication of an earlier crop.
- [3] After nearly a mile turn left across the building site that is to be new housing and a golf course.
- [4] At the outskirts of Biddenham turn left and follow the footpath down to the new access road. Cross the road and go down to the river, then turn right and follow the gravel path to Bromham.
- [5] At Bromham turn left at the road and cross the old multi arch bridge, a listed Ancient Monument. Go through the village and where the old Northampton road turns right, turn left along a track. Where the track splits take the right hand fork.
- [6] At the Bromham bypass cross the road carefully and climb the bank and follow the footpath over the ridge to the woods
- [7] When 3/4 the way past the woods turn left towards Church End. At the end of this field turn right along the road until another footpath is encountered on the left. Cross this field aiming for the top right hand corner.
- [8] Cross the style out of this field and follow the footpath on the right of the arable field down to the road. At this road turn right and then left at the next cross field footpath.
- [9] Climb the small hill and when encountering a footpath cross roads (marked with a cast iron sign !) turn left. This will take you to the church yard where the footpath meets a T-junction. Turn right so that the grave yard is to your left and follow to the road where a left turn will take you back to the Church End car park.

### Notes On The Walk

This walk is primarily on established paths and farm tracks so the going should not too muddy. Some stretches can be muddy after prolonged rain but there are no ploughed fields to negotiate.

The walk is through areas where horses are at pasture and may be encountered. However occasionally adjacent fields may contain livestock (Inc. sheep, cattle and horses) dogs **MUST** be kept on a lead during these times. Please follow the guidance of the walk leader.



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### **Kempston**

Kempston lies below the river Ouse just west of Bedford. Angles, Saxons, Romans, Danes and Vikings each in their turn found it a convenient place to raid or settle, but the parish eventually shaped itself into 13 or so endships, ie hamlets, centred round All Saints' church. The High Street became known as 'the Town' and gradually absorbed some of the Ends but continues to be regarded as part of the village by many.

The Out-Ends, unofficially called the 'Odd Ends', together with Church End now form 'Kempston Rural'. Wood End and West End are signposted but for others, names like Moor End House or Box End Road offer the only clues. Some have never been mapped at all, such as Crow End, Mill End and Howe End. The parish includes Kempston Hardwick (meaning sheep pen) and Gibraltar Corner, named after a cottage out on its own like the Rock.

#### *The Little Church of the Conqueror's Niece*

William the Conqueror's niece Judith built a little church whose walls still stand; they stand by the river among quivering white poplars, with two cypresses looking down on the tower.

A riverside path from the village brings us to an archway at the end of a row of old cottages which were once the parish workhouse, and an avenue of limes leads us to a 15th century porch with a mass dial on its walls and a vaulted roof from which quaint heads are looking down. Over the porch is the priest's room, reached by an outside stone stairway. The sturdy tower has massive walls three feet thick which the Conqueror's niece may have seen building; it was the 15th century which raised it to its present height and set the weathercock in its place.

The church door which the village folk have been opening and shutting for at least 500 years. The Norman arches at each end of the nave are 13th century arcades, a 14th century font with saints carved round its sides, and clerestory windows of the 15th century. Near the font is a memorial stone, supposed to be that of an old Crusader, which was found last century under the floor of the porch, with a skeleton beneath it.

From a tombstone in the churchyard we learn that the Brooks family held the office of parish clerk for 145 years. Robert was first in 1726, staying for 40 years; then came three Johns; and lastly



came William, who held the office for 45 years from 1826.

### **Biddenham**

Biddenham is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086 as Bideham.

The building of the church was started in the 12th century and illustrates four periods of architecture, Norman, Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular. Two bells have been donated making a peal of eight. The font is 15th century with octagonal stem and bowl and there are leper's squints, small apertures to enable the congregation in the side aisles to see the altar.

The main charity of Biddenham was the distribution of bull beef on the 21st December, St Thomas's Day. The charity was left by the Boteler family who owned the village and lived in the manor house in the 16th and 17th centuries. Effigies of William and Ursula Boteler are in the church.

In 1608 the plague reached Biddenham but luckily it was confined to one household where seven members of one family died.

At the present day on the first Sunday in December every year many people who live in Biddenham gather in the village hall for a ploughman's lunch before setting off to walk the footpaths, some of which are quite long walks extending to the river and through acres of farmland. This is done in order to preserve the footpaths because if they are neglected for a number of years, they are forfeited.

### **Bromham**

The limestone village of Bromham lies three miles west of Bedford by the river Ouse and is approached via a stone bridge with 26 arches, which is scheduled as an Ancient Monument.

The mill, recorded in the Domesday Book, is now owned by the County Council, with machinery in working order and open to the public with a picnic area nearby.

The 13th century parish church built of limestone is approached through the park. Interesting monuments include a 15th century brass to the Wydville family and a marble statue of a recumbent knight, Sir Lewis Dyve, whose grandson another Sir Lewis, an ardent Royalist swam the river to avoid capture by the Roundheads in 1642.

