

The Ramblers' Association

Ouse Valley Group

Ouse Valley Ramblers' Guided Walks

Mike's Walk N° 9

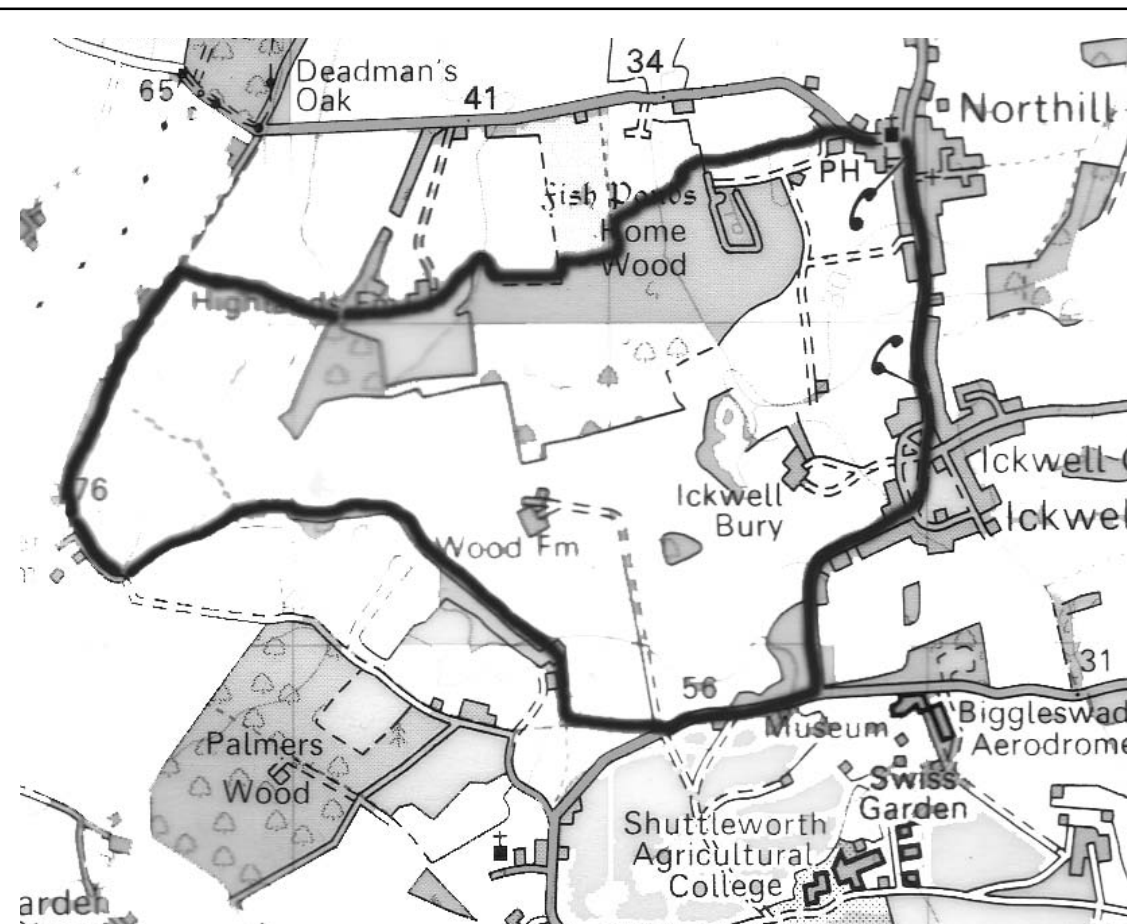
Northill, Bedfordshire

Area	Northill, Bedfordshire.
Walk Leader	Mike Dawson
Start Point	Footpath West of Northill Church
End Point	As above 12:30 to 1:00 pm (latest) depending upon progress
Places Visited	Ickwell
Approximate Distance	6.0 miles - Honest !!
Time To Complete	2 to 2:1/2 hours depending upon duration of stops.
Difficulty	Easy- Undulating countryside with no real hills.
Car Parking	Around Northill Church

Walk Itinerary

The itinerary below is a guide to the walk

- [1] Depart Northill Church heading west.
- [2] On the left is a footpath marked "Greensand Ridge". Follow this.
- [3] Have dogs on leads as you walk past paddocks containing horses.
- [4] Follow the footpath towards the wood on the horizon. Enter the wood and follow the signs for the Greensand Ridge.
- [5] Eventually you will enter a large field with a large Georgian house to your right. There is a Greensand Ridge sign showing the footpath is across the field. Follow the sign direction and on the other side of the field is a kissing gate. This takes you in to a field with a solitary horse in it - dogs on leads!!
- [6] Go through the field noting that the horse ignores you - must see plenty of walkers.
- [7] After leaving the paddock follow the line of the footpath straight on to the woods.



- [8] Follow the footpath until a track is met at a T-junction. Turn left before the track and follow the signed bridleway
- [9] Follow this bridleway and later turn left towards Old Warden.
- [10] Skirting Palmers wood follow the footpath until a footpath T-junction is met. Turn left.
- [11] Turn right at the farm track and meet the road.
- [12] Turn left and follow the road taking care of the traffic.
- [13] Turn Left at the junction for Ickwell and Northill. As you enter Ickwell watch out of the footpath on the right hand side of the road to avoid the road as it goes in to a narrow cutting. From here on there are either pavements or Ickwell green to walk on.

Notes The Walk Area

Northhill & Ickwell

The centre of Northhill village, consisting of the church, the Crown Inn, pond, green, village hall and school, forms a pleasant visual group. To the south is Ickwell, with a large attractive, traditional village green, with dwellings of various periods .

The church of St Mary the Virgin, dominating the Northhill scene is of mainly ironstone construction and was commenced about 1330. The earliest recorded rector of the parish is Richard De Loda, in 1224. The Traily family was patron of the living in the 13th century, but it later passed to the Crown. In 1620 the rectory and the advowson was purchased by the Worshipful Company of

The existence of a Chantry College, associated with the church and founded in 1404, can only be identified by various fish-ponds and field names, such as College Pond Field, College Wood and College Meadow. The College was dissolved in 1547.

The Crown Inn, with extensive public grounds, adjoining Northhill green, has been restored and extended. The earliest parts of the building are 17th century, some of which have been exposed during the restoration.

There are a number of interesting buildings of various periods close by, including Well Cottage, Cowhovel Row, The Grange, the Red Clapboard House, several sympathetically restored cottages.

The largest group of buildings in Ickwell includes Ickwell Bury, a former mansion, which became a boarding school for boys prior to being severely damaged by fire in 1937. The original buildings dating from 1683 included the house, stables and barns surrounding a courtyard. After rebuilding following the fire the estate was occupied by the Wells family of

Bedford. Now owned by the Harpur Trust, the house is a residential centre of the Yoga for Health Foundation. A large, well-preserved dovecote is to be found in the grounds.

The Old House, on Ickwell green, is of medieval origin and is still partially surrounded by a moat. The grounds are occasionally open to the public. Tompion's Cottage on the corner of the green bears a plaque as the birthplace of the famous 17th century clockmaker in 1638.

There is an excellent cricket pitch and club house on the green, and the red and white striped Maypole provides a permanent and eye-catching feature. Many of the older houses are colour-washed in the traditional 'Ickwell Peach'. The custom of celebrating Mayday was recorded in Ickwell over 400 years ago.

There is little evidence of Roman occupation, save the scattering of coins distributed throughout the parish. As part of the Wixhamtree Hundred, it is thought that the Hundred meet was held at Deadman's Oak, now the road junction at the south end of Sheerhatch Wood.

Although known to have been continuously inhabited for over 1,000 years, Northhill has developed and grown at a fairly leisurely pace. Two large Conservation Areas, designated by the local authority, contain the more historically important features, including many listed buildings. There has been no large scale building development, and the quiet charm of the peaceful village atmosphere has been largely undisturbed by the more intrusive aspects of the late 20th century.