



Stevington and Oakley Loop

This easier route on part of the Bunyan Trail follows a tight looping meander of the River Great Ouse, and visits a windmill at Stevington

Essential Facts

- Route distance: 10.0 km (6.3 miles)
- Approximate time: 2 hours 45 mins
- Approx. total ascent: 57 metres
- Start point Grid Ref: SP 992 530
- GPS Ref: SP 99278 53021
- Recommended O.S. Map: Explorer 208
- Toughness Rating: The Chilterns 1

Please see the notes on Toughness Ratings at the end of this report

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CHALLENGE ?

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THE ROUTE

The walk starts at Stevington Windmill car park. The restored windmill is a dramatic view on the skyline and can be visited with a brief detour of about 200 metres. Return to the car park to start the walk.

From Start Point, **S**, follow the track towards the windmill but turn left almost immediately along a footpath beside a ditch. Reaching a T-junction turn left for 100 metres to reach a road. Turn left, and follow the road for 100 metres. Cross the road at the entrance to Park Farm House and cross a stile to follow a footpath beside an avenue of trees. Reaching the riverbank, turn right. Watch out for Oakley House on the far bank. Avoid a stile leading over a weir (unless you want to explore the island), and keeping right emerge onto a road at Oakley twin bridges. Turn left and cross the bridge.

Where the road turns sharp right on the far bank continue straight on following a footpath across a field. Reaching a road, turn left and follow the road, now in the village of Oakley. At a Y-junction, follow the road to the right, into the High Street, passing The Bedford Arms. Continue for about 700 metres to a crossroads and turn left. At the bottom of the hill, cross the river and immediately turn left at point **A**, down some steps onto open access land. Follow the riverbank until you reach a wood. Do not enter the wood but turn right and leave the meadow over a stile and footbridge and climb to join a grassy track. Turn left.

At a gate marked Private, follow the path right as it climbs a bank away from the river and dog-legs sharply right and left four times, lastly through a narrow copse. Reaching a field gate and stile on the left, turn left. Continue over a further gate and stile at the rear of a cattle farm, at point **B** (muddy area and animals in field). Strike half left to cross the field to a stile in the hedge near a warning sign about cattle.

Continue with a hedge on the right until reaching a stile crossing through the hedge. Over the stile, turn left immediately and continue with the hedge now on the left. Follow the path sharp left and then right, around the edge of a field. Note the Osier Beds restoration scheme on the left. Leave the field on a track between cottages. Reaching a lane, turn left through a kissing gate (or turn right, to explore the village of Pavenham – approx. 200 metres to village centre and The Cock public house, then return by the same route).

Continue along a riverside path, crossing several stiles and footbridges, for about 1.2 km. Approaching a wood, veer to the right, away from the river. Skirt around the wood on the left, climbing gently through a series of kissing gates, until reaching the corner of the wood at point **C**. Turn left, through a kissing gate, and follow the edge of the wood for 80 metres, then turn left through another kissing gate and continue downhill keeping the wood on the left. The wood is full of bluebells, in season.

Approaching the river follow the path as it turns right and continues along the river reaching Stevington Church after about 800 metres. Note the spring emerging from the wall below the church, known as the Holy Well. Reaching a T-junction, turn right up a track, which shortly becomes a lane. Passing the church on the right, continue up the lane to the village centre and crossroads outside The Red Lion. Note the historic monument known as Stevington Cross.

Turn left into Park Road and follow it for about 400 metres, avoiding footpaths to left and right, to reach the Windmill access and car park, **S**.



Oakley Bridge



Stevington Church



The Great Ouse in Flood

Refreshment

The Bedford Arms
Public House
High Street, Oakley
Tel: 01234 822280
Meals and snacks
available

The Red Lion
Public House
1 Park Road,
Stevington
Tel: 01234 824138
Ales and food

The Cock
Public House
High Street, Pavenham
Tel: 01234 822834
Meals and snacks
available

The Ship
Public House
Silver Street, Stevington
Food available



The Cock Inn

LOCAL INFO

Stevington Windmill is the last surviving windmill in Bedfordshire. It was built in the 18th century and was still in use as recently as 1939. It later fell into disuse and disrepair but was eventually bought by Bedfordshire County Council and restored as a contribution towards the Festival of Britain in 1951.

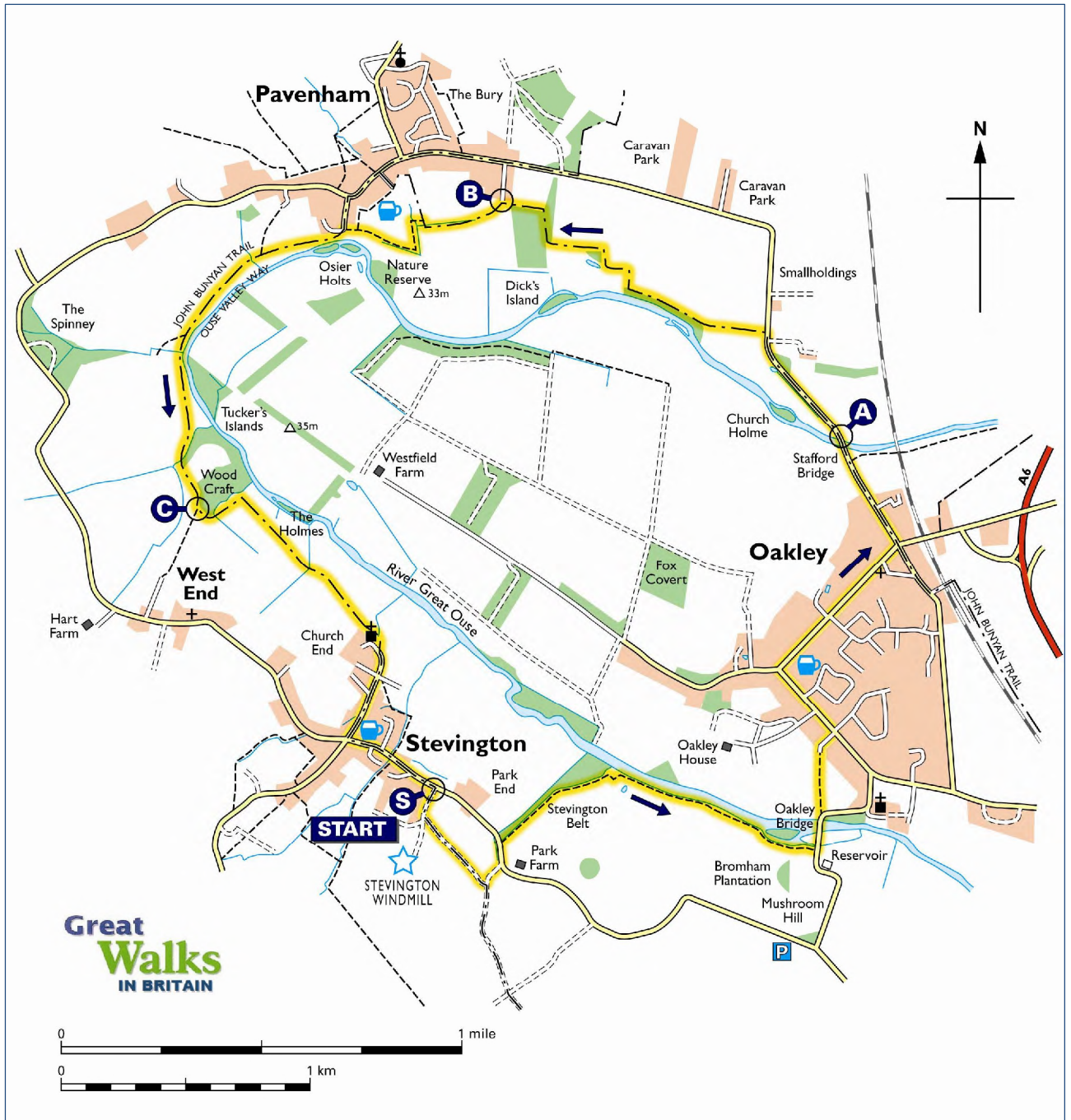
The whole building, essentially a box mounted on a wooden pole, has to be turned by hand to face the wind by using a long pole which sticks out behind, called the tail-pole. The leverage provided by this pole, together with the careful balancing of the structure, allowed a single man to move the entire building using his shoulders against a 'yoke' on the tail pole. This arrangement, with four sails using cloth covers, is the earliest design of windmill known and dates back to medieval times.

The windmill is free to view externally. It is also possible to obtain a key from either of the pubs in the village (a substantial deposit is required), which gives entry to the building itself.

Oakley twin bridges, despite their simple stone construction and extremely narrow design for 19th century bridges, were built in 1815 by the Duke of Bedford. Prior to this there had only been some wooden footbridges and vehicles had to cross by a ford. The northern bridge, adjacent to a one-time watermill at this site, spanned the main river and the mill stream. The southern bridge crossed a smaller side channel of the river and a low causeway across an island connects the two bridges. The southern bridge, a single arch, has the distinction of being the only road bridge in the county with wooden railings. There are several adjacent riverside meadows and picnic areas open to the public.

STEVINGTON & OAKLEY LOOP G.P.S. WAYPOINTS

WAYPOINT NAME	MAP REF	CO-ORDINATES	ELEVATION: Metres
ARO S	S	SP 99278 53021	46
ARO A	A	TL 00930 54460	34
ARO B	B	SP 99570 55430	45
ARO C	C	SP 98350 54160	46



Great Walks
IN BRITAIN

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MAP LEGEND					
	Great Walks route		Church with tower		Spot height - metres
	M6 Motorway		Church with spire		Information centre
	A23 Main road		Other place of worship		Parking
	B2116 Secondary road		Cathedral / Abbey		Public convenience
	Minor road		Building		Public house
	Other road		Built up area		Picnic site
	Track		Woodland		Camp site
	Footpath		Sand, shingle or mud		Major tourist feature
	Bridleway		Water feature		Other tourist feature
	National trail				
	Railway				

Safety First

Safety should always be your first priority in planning and undertaking a walk, whether on your own or leading a group. Please read these Safety First and Walking Our Routes notes.

Lead a group of other walkers only if you have leadership and navigational experience adequate for the 'worst case' conditions which may be encountered on the particular walk, bearing in mind the terrain, possible weather and navigational demands.

Weigh up the capabilities of your party, in terms of fitness and walking speed. Adjust your time expectations accordingly.

Ensure all your party are adequately clothed for the weather and conditions. Footwear is particularly important. Clothing must protect against cold, wet or strong sun according to the time of year.

Emergencies are quite rare, but it is essential to think ahead about what to do if someone in your party sustains an injury. Will you have a First Aid kit? Is there a qualified First Aider in the party? How could help be summoned in a serious eventuality?

Refreshment, particularly water, can be vital. Dehydration in hot summer conditions can be rapid, and frequent intake of fluids is essential.

On tougher walks it is a good idea to tell someone where you are planning to go – and when you expect to be back. Remember - mobile phones often lose reception in mountainous or isolated areas.

All our walks use legitimate routes: Public Rights of Way, Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Permissive Paths, Access Land, Byways and Roads.

Road walking calls for particular care. When there is no defined footpath or verge wide enough for safe walking it is usually best to walk on the right – facing oncoming traffic. An exception may be a tight bend, where walkers would be more visible on the left.

Occasionally you may find a public footpath blocked or unuseable. It is perfectly in order to take the shortest available diversion without damaging crops, perhaps around a field margin.

It is courteous to close gates after passing through, sometimes even if the gate was open when you arrived – particularly if it is obvious livestock may escape.

Mutual respect for farm animals is to be encouraged! Don't frighten or annoy them, but equally don't put your party members in danger or discomfort. You certainly wouldn't be the first walkers to go round the outside of a field of frisky bullocks.

Dogs should always be kept on a lead anywhere near farm animals, and under close supervision elsewhere in the countryside.

Walking Our Routes

Our walks are designed to be negotiated using the route directions in conjunction with the map section provided. We suggest walkers also take the Ordnance Survey Explorer or Outdoor Leisure map recommended for each walk.

On mountain, moorland and open heathland walks it is **ESSENTIAL** to have navigational expertise and tools, including the recommended Ordnance Survey map(s).

Take care to observe any cautions in the route description; exposed paths, areas liable to flooding etc.

Consider conditions before setting off. Will heavy rain have made a water meadow impassable? Will frost or snow make a path slippery?

When navigating the route look for clues to confirm you are in the right place. Are map features where you would expect on the ground? Are features mentioned in the text where expected? If you suspect you may have taken a wrong turn, take action sooner rather than later. It is better to re-trace to a known point rather than carry on regardless with the possibility of becoming increasingly confused.

All our routes are carefully checked before publication, but features can change on the ground – sometimes surprisingly quickly. Footpaths may be re-routed, buildings can appear or change significantly and these days pub names seem to change frequently.

The approximate time given for each walk is based on an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (4 km/hour), plus an allowance for ascent, descent and any difficult terrain.

Total ascent is the approximate total ascent over the whole walk.

GPS users can enter in the waypoints provided in each of our walk reports. It is important to read our guide **Introducing GPS for Walkers**, available as a PDF file from the Great Walks in Britain web site.

Remember that GPS is a great navigational tool, but only one of those available to the navigator. Never dispense with conventional map and compass – and the training and skills to use them, especially on mountain, moorland or open heathland walks.

TOUGHNESS RATINGS

All our **Chilterns** routes can be undertaken by reasonably fit walkers able to utilise our map segments, together with the route guidance notes. Always consider recent and forecast weather.

Each walk has been allocated a **Toughness Rating**:

1. Easier walks with modest ascent and generally on well defined paths. There may be stiles or narrow gateways to negotiate.
2. Routes which are more demanding. They may include more ascent and possibly paths which are looser or more difficult underfoot.
3. More strenuous walks with some steep sections, higher paths or places which may be wet and boggy.
4. The most demanding walks in this edition. There may be prolonged steep ascents. Conditions may be challenging underfoot.

Toughness Ratings are allocated in the context of the terrain in the edition area. For example a walk rated as demanding in the Chilterns may be equivalent to an easier or moderate route in the Brecon Beacons.