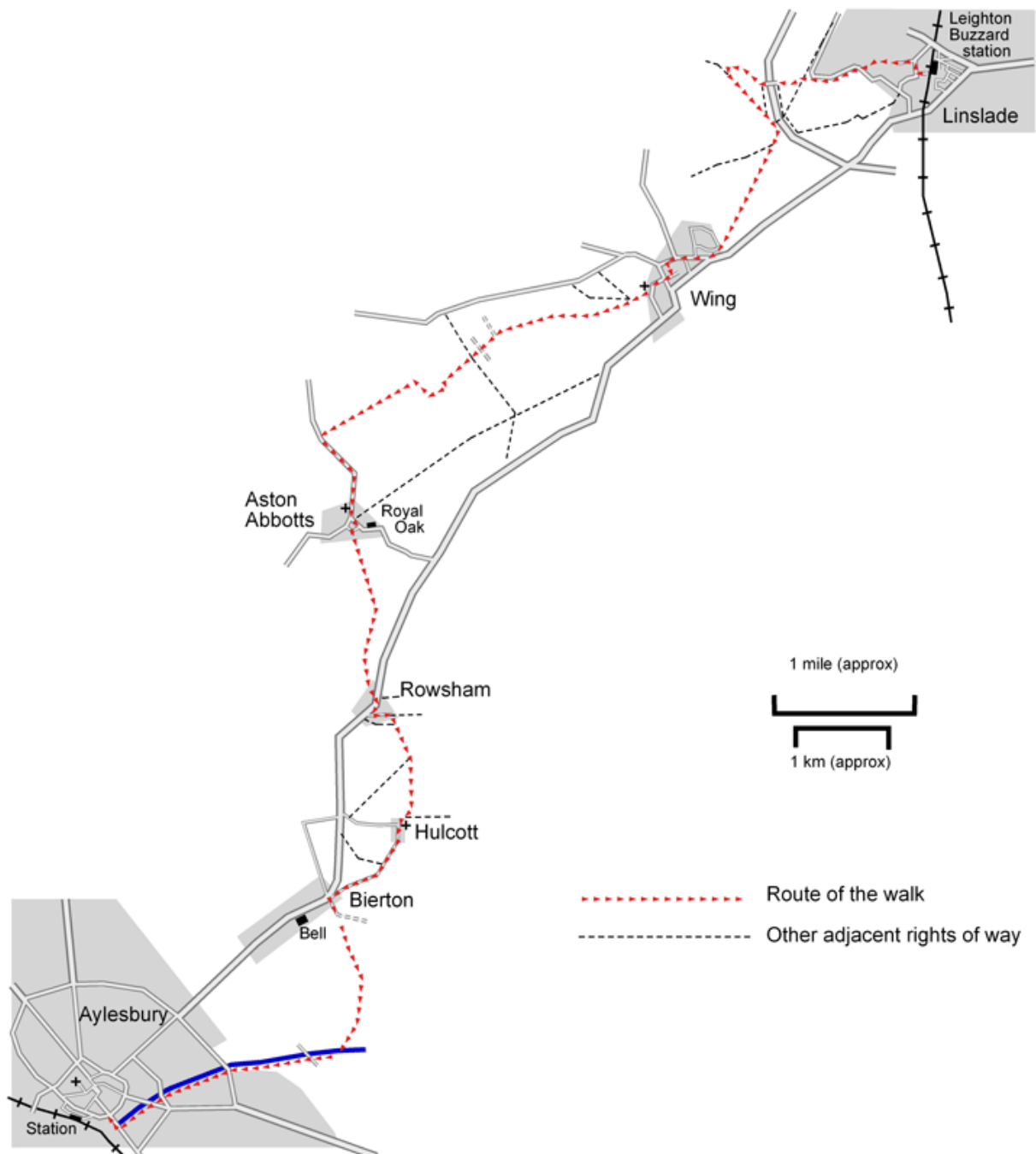


Leighton Buzzard – Wing – Aston Abbots – Rowsham – Bierton – Aylesbury

Most of the walk is on pasture, open and fairly hilly from Wing up to Aston Abbots and then down to Rowsham, then flat as you approach the canal, finishing along the towpath. Generally easy walking though in the wettest conditions a couple of arable fields between Wing and Aston Abbots may be heavy going, and some gateways can be muddy especially between Bierton and the canal. Two stretches of quiet country road. Wing church has been described as one of the outstanding Saxon churches in England.

Checked 2007



Distances

Leighton Buzzard to Wing	2.5 miles (4 km)
Wing to Aston Abbotts	3.4 miles (5.5 km)
Aston Abbotts to Rowsham	1.3 miles (2 km)
Rowsham to Bierton	1.8 miles (2.7 km)
Rowsham to Aylesbury	3 miles (4.8 km)
Total	12 miles (19 km)

Two long but gradual climbs of about 40 and 60 metres (130 and 200 feet).

Travel

The hourly Arriva bus 100 links Aylesbury, Bierton, Rowsham, Wing and Milton Keynes, and the 70 links Milton Keynes, Bletchley, Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable and Luton. No Sunday service on either route.

The 150 links Linslade / Leighton Buzzard with Wing, Rowsham, Bierton and Aylesbury in one direction, and Milton Keynes in the other. On weekdays there are hourly departures from Aylesbury and less frequent ones from Milton Keynes, but not all services make the whole journey between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. On Sundays there are departures every two and a half hours for the whole route.

The 65 links Aylesbury, Bierton, Rowsham, Aston Abbotts and Linslade / Leighton Buzzard, two-hourly until about 1400 and then one bus in the late afternoon, and no Sunday service.

Travel information for Buckinghamshire is available on www.buckscc.gov.uk/travelinfo or by telephoning 0871 200 22 33.

Ordnance Survey Map

This walk is on the Ordnance Survey Explorer map 192 *Buckingham and Milton Keynes* as far as Aston Abbotts, where it goes on to 181 *Chiltern Hills North*.

Refreshments

The Cock Inn and the Queen's Head, and Chinese and Indian restaurants etc at Wing.

The Royal Oak at Aston Abbotts.

The Bell at Bierton is 400 yards from the route (the Red Lion is at the other end of the village).

Of course there are many opportunities for refreshment in Aylesbury.

Please always be considerate about muddy boots in pubs etc; either take them off, or cover them up.

Never eat or drink your own provisions on pub premises (including the garden, if there is one).

Route

The walk starts in Bedfordshire, at Leighton Buzzard station, which is in Linslade, over half a mile (1 km) west of the town centre.

Bus passengers should get out at Victoria Road (from the Aylesbury direction this is the first stop after going under the railway bridge; from Leighton Buzzard town centre it is the second stop after going over the canal and turning left), then go up Victoria Road (signposted "St Barnabas' Church") to a T-junction, turn right, and where the road bears right, go into the park ahead and bear left along a tarmac path to cross a footbridge.

Leave the station by the exit on the opposite side of the tracks from the main station building.

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Take the road leading away from the railway, to a T-junction with Southcourt Road.

Cross Southcourt Road and turn right, then next left up Rock Lane.

At the end of Rock Lane, take the tarmac path ahead (next to house number 41), soon crossing a road and continuing ahead on the path uphill.

Cross the end of a road, and continue on the level path slightly left, next to house number 290, with houses on your right.

The old trees along this path suggest it might be an ancient trackway, and the 1770 map of Buckinghamshire by Thomas Jefferys does indeed show a road on this line.

The Linslade you have come through is a comparatively recent settlement, following the arrival of the London to Birmingham railway in 1838, with the railway station situated at the nearest point to Leighton Buzzard. Old Linslade is a small settlement shown on the map over a mile (2 km) further north.

Until 1965 the county boundary used to be on the river between Linslade and Leighton Buzzard.

Cross another road, then yet another, and take the signposted bridleway ahead, now with open country on your left and a road and houses on your right.

After 700 yards, at the end of the bridleway, go through the kissing gate into the field ahead (entering Buckinghamshire) and continue down the left-hand field edge to a small footbridge.

Go ahead up the bank and over the footbridge over the new bypass.

The hilltop village on the skyline to your right is Great Brickhill, on the Greensand Ridge.

(There is a shortcut to the left beside the bypass if you wish.)

Bear right along the left-hand side of a field, to a wood corner.

Go ahead a few yards, enter the wood by a plank bridge and go diagonally through the wood to a T-junction of paths just before a field.

From here, the official right of way bears right to a stile into the field ahead, which it crosses to join another path at the far side, which comes back across the field to re-enter the wood 50 yards to the left of where you are now standing, then continues just inside the wood edge to leave the wood near the corner behind you to your left. However, turning left at the T-junction and keeping left at a log horse jump will take you along a well used path directly to the exit from the wood.

Go out of the wood on to a track between this wood and another small one, and turn left into a field.

Cross the field to a hedge gap opposite.

Continue ahead with a hedge on your right to a gate through the road fence.

Go alongside the road fence 200 yards to a gate at the end of a hedge.

Continue with the hedge on your right, towards a pylon.

At the field corner go through a small thicket to a kissing gate into the field ahead.

The 1770 map shows a five-way junction here.

Go through the gate and across the field, about 30 yards to the right of the pylon. To your left and ahead you can see the mature trees bordering the grounds of Ascott House. Head just to the right of these to two stiles in a hedge.

Go on in the same direction across another large field slightly downhill to a stile into a small field to the right of a converted farm.

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Cross the small field to the stile opposite then cross the corner of the next field to a plank bridge with stiles in the left-hand hedge.

Cross and turn right along the field edge.

Ignore two gates (one of them decrepid) to the right, and by the next gate cross a stile into the field on the right.

Cross the field to a kissing gate in line with the leftmost of the red brick houses ahead, on to a road on the outskirts of Wing.

Turn left, and follow the curving pavement right and left and through a gap on to the main road.

(For bus stops serving both the 100/150 and the 65 services, turn left.)

The entrance to Ascott House (National Trust) is to your left along the main road. The house was bought by the Rothschild family in 1876, and “houses a quite exceptional collection of fine paintings, Oriental porcelain and English and French furniture ... [and] the extensive gardens ... a topiary sundial” [NT Handbook]. Open in the afternoon Tuesday to Thursday late March to mid September, and Friday to Sunday in April, August and early September.

To continue the walk, turn right, and at the roundabout keep right along Stewkley Road as far as Redwood Drive, just after slight right and left bends. (The bus stops on this road are for the 65 service only; for the more frequent 100/150 you need to stay on the main road.)

Turn left into Redwood Drive, and then right and left again into Redwood Close.

Take the tarmac path across a recreation ground to join a road.

Turn right, and at a crossroads (pubs on either side) continue ahead to the church.

If you are starting the walk from Wing make for the church.

Wing church is described by Simon Jenkins in *England's Thousand Best Churches* as one of the outstanding Saxon churches in England.

Go ahead through the churchyard to the left of the church to a kissing gate. (From here you can see your route up the ridge ahead, going through gaps in the hedges.)

You are now near the north east corner of the area that was proposed for the third London airport, stretching out ahead and to your right nearly to Dunton and Whitchurch. The village of Cublington would have been obliterated.

Go slightly left downhill to cross a plank bridge.

15 yards to your right is a broad, shallow grassy ditch (an old trackway). Follow this up over the shoulder of the hill and down the other side to a footbridge.

Go ahead up three fields, to a stile by a tree at the top of the third field.

In several places ahead the best view may be over your left shoulder, towards the northern end of the Chilterns and the Dunstable Downs, with the conspicuous white lion at Whipsnade.

The former Rothschild house of Mentmore is on the rounded hill in the middle distance (concealed by trees for most of the year).

Later in the walk, Wingrave church comes into sight.

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Go ahead on a track between arable, then along the right-hand edge of a field to the end of the field, where the main track turns right.

Leave the track here and bear slightly left across the field, parallel with the hedge on your left, cross a track then bear slightly right to go down into a valley. (The path across this arable field ought to be clearly marked on the ground, as should a cross-path, which you ignore.)

Go up the opposite side of the valley and cross stiles.

Turn left along the field edge, and go over two small bridges in the corner, into the next field.

Turn right along the field edge, and continue over a stile (beside a gate) into the next field (by a small wood).

Turn right in front of the wood and go up the field edge, and at the top of the field turn left, and continue along the edge of five fields to the Aston Abbots to Cublington road.

Turn left along the road for half a mile (0.8 km), to Aston Abbots.

As you go into the village, you may see alpacas grazing in the field on your left, though you may need to go up on to the opposite bank to see over the hedge.

Pass to the left of the small village green.

Ross Road on the left is presumably named after Rear-Admiral James Clarke Ross, who in 1831 located the magnetic north pole, and lived in the well concealed large house up a drive from the green. His tomb is in the graveyard on the north side of the church. The house is called The Abbey; Astons Abbots was one of the manors held by the Abbots of St Albans, hence its name.

Continue 100 yards to a road junction in front of an old half-timbered house.

From here the Royal Oak pub is just round the corner ahead, but to continue the walk turn right.

The road is still called "The Green". Originally the whole of the area inside the rectangle of roads in the middle of the village was the village green, until 1795, when the village was enclosed (i.e. the old open field system that was farmed communally was replaced by individual holdings). Most of the buildings have been added in the last fifty years.

Where the road bends right, turn left into Bricstock, and go across the recreation ground to cross a stile to the left of a large tree, at the bottom of a slope.

The view from the seat on the recreation ground is towards Aylesbury, with the tower at Stokenchurch (near the M40) visible beyond.

Continue ahead along the right-hand edges of a field, then a newly planted wood, into another field.

The 1770 map of Buckinghamshire by Jefferys shows the direct route to Aston Abbots and Cublington from the Aylesbury direction on this line, presumably between the hedges on your right. Bryant's map of 1825 does not show this route at all.

The correct route across this field is a little to the left of the hedge, to a stile with farm buildings ahead.

Go across a small field and into a paddock beside the farm buildings. The official route goes straight across the paddock to a stile on the other side, but if this is very muddy you may be able to work your way round to the right; do not approach the buildings to your left.

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Continue in the same direction along the left-hand side of the next three fields (on an often muddy track in the first field).

From a gateway on the left half way along the second field there are good views both to right and left.

To the right, Whitchurch church is against trees on the skyline, just peeping over the nearer ridge. To the left of that, and lower down, is Hardwick. In the distance between them is Quainton Hill, with its mast on top.

To your left, the view through the gateway is across to Wingrave on the next hill, and the white lion at Whipsnade and Ivinghoe Beacon in the distance.

Go through the gate a little to the right of the field corner of the third field.

From here, the fence going downhill ahead points towards Wendover. The main summit to the right of that is Coombe Hill, with its Boer War monument. To the right of that is Pulpit Hill, then the hills slope steeply down from Whiteleaf, above Princes Risborough. The Chilterns finally disappear at Shirburn Hill (near the M40) seen in line with Buckinghamshire County Council's high-rise offices in Aylesbury.

The highest point on the Chilterns is to the left of Wendover, and from there the range slopes gradually down to the gap near Tring where the Grand Union Canal passes through the hills, then rises a little to Ashridge. The distinctive summit over to the left is Ivinghoe Beacon.

Go slightly left downhill to a stile immediately to the right of the nearest house, and to the left of sheds.

Cross, go through a gate and diagonally across the next field to the A418 at Rowsham.

Cross, turn right to pass the bus shelter (this side for buses to Aylesbury), and then left along Bennett's Lane.

Follow this to the end and bear right up the drive towards Seabrook Farm, and a little before the farm go through the kissing gate on the left.

Go up the hill to a stile to the left of the gateway on the skyline, then continue in the same direction over the top of the hill down to another stile (70 yards left of a gate).

This route is also shown on the Jefferys map as the direct road between Aylesbury and Wing and Leighton Buzzard.

Cross the stile and go slightly right, over a small plank bridge in the middle of the field to a larger footbridge with handrails.

Cross, ignore another footbridge on your right, and go up the right-hand edge of two fields, following the hedge of the second field as it curves to the right, to a stile with a moat to the left of it.

Cross the next field to a stile by a gate, to Hulcott village green.

Go left to the diagonally opposite corner of the green and continue ahead along a surprisingly wide but quiet country road.

The Jefferys map shows this as the most direct route from Aylesbury to Wing and Leighton Buzzard. The Bryant map shows the main road as a dog leg, further to your right than the present one, as did the Ordnance Survey until after Second World War. However, judging from the width of the tarmac, the road you are walking on must have taken a proportion of the through traffic.

Go along the road for a little over half a mile (1 km). Where the road forks right to join the A418, keep left along Hulcott Lane until this ends, near a bus stop, at the main road at the first houses in Berton (where the Bell pub is 400 yards ahead).

Opposite is Rowsham Road, which used to be the main road.

Turn left up the private road (Gib Lane – a public footpath) to the first bend, in front of a bungalow. The public footpath here goes straight ahead, but there is a notice requesting you to go round to the left and then turn right and left to rejoin the path the other side of the garden. Go along the right-hand side of two fields.

The two large trees by the gateway at the end of the second field are black poplars. The black poplar is our tallest native tree and also one of the rarest. Some authorities mention it as occurring mainly in Cheshire, but there are in fact a significant number in the Vale of Aylesbury. They were once valued for their shock- and fire-resistant timber, used in wagon-bottoms, brake-blocks, floorboards and around fireplaces, clogs and fencing. The curved branches, which sweep down and then up again, were split for use as the cruck frames of medieval buildings. Note the deeply fissured bark. You will see more black poplars later, by the canal.

Here turn right, then left over another stile, to continue along the right-hand side of the field to a stile on the right at the end of the field. Go over the stile, turn left through the gate and cross two fields to the nearest pylon ahead.

Hares can sometimes be seen in these fields.

60 yards before you reach the pylon you cross the route of the first railway to reach Aylesbury and the first branch line to be built in the whole country. Parallel hedges some distance to your left show the direction, practically a straight line from Cheddington on the London and Birmingham Railway to the former High Street Station in Aylesbury, close to the site of the present AVDC offices.

The line was opened in 1839 but competition from the Great Western line via High Wycombe and Princes Risborough and more especially from the Metropolitan via Amersham led to its closure to passengers in 1953 and to goods traffic in 1963.

Bear very slightly right, going under a second pylon line then passing an isolated stile, to a gateway just past the third pylon line.

Bear further right to the canal bridge visible just to the right of the end of a hedge.

Cross the bridge (with care – very steep and can be slippery – hold on to the parapet) and turn right along the canal.

From here you follow the canal 1.5 miles (2.5 km) into Aylesbury.

You will be unlucky not to see herons by the canal. In summer, you may see a tern flying along the canal fishing. In winter, as you approach Aylesbury, you can expect to see a variety of ducks (by the last bridge there is an identification panel, sadly defaced the last time we checked); in summer there will probably be only mallards.

At the end of the canal, go ahead to the main road.

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To go directly to the railway station, it is best to turn left and cross at the pedestrian crossing, then turn right, then left at the roundabout. For the town centre and the bus station turn right, and continue ahead at the roundabout (and for the bus station turn left at the top of the street).

The picturesque old parts of Aylesbury are well concealed beyond and to the left of the market place, round the church and the award-winning museum.