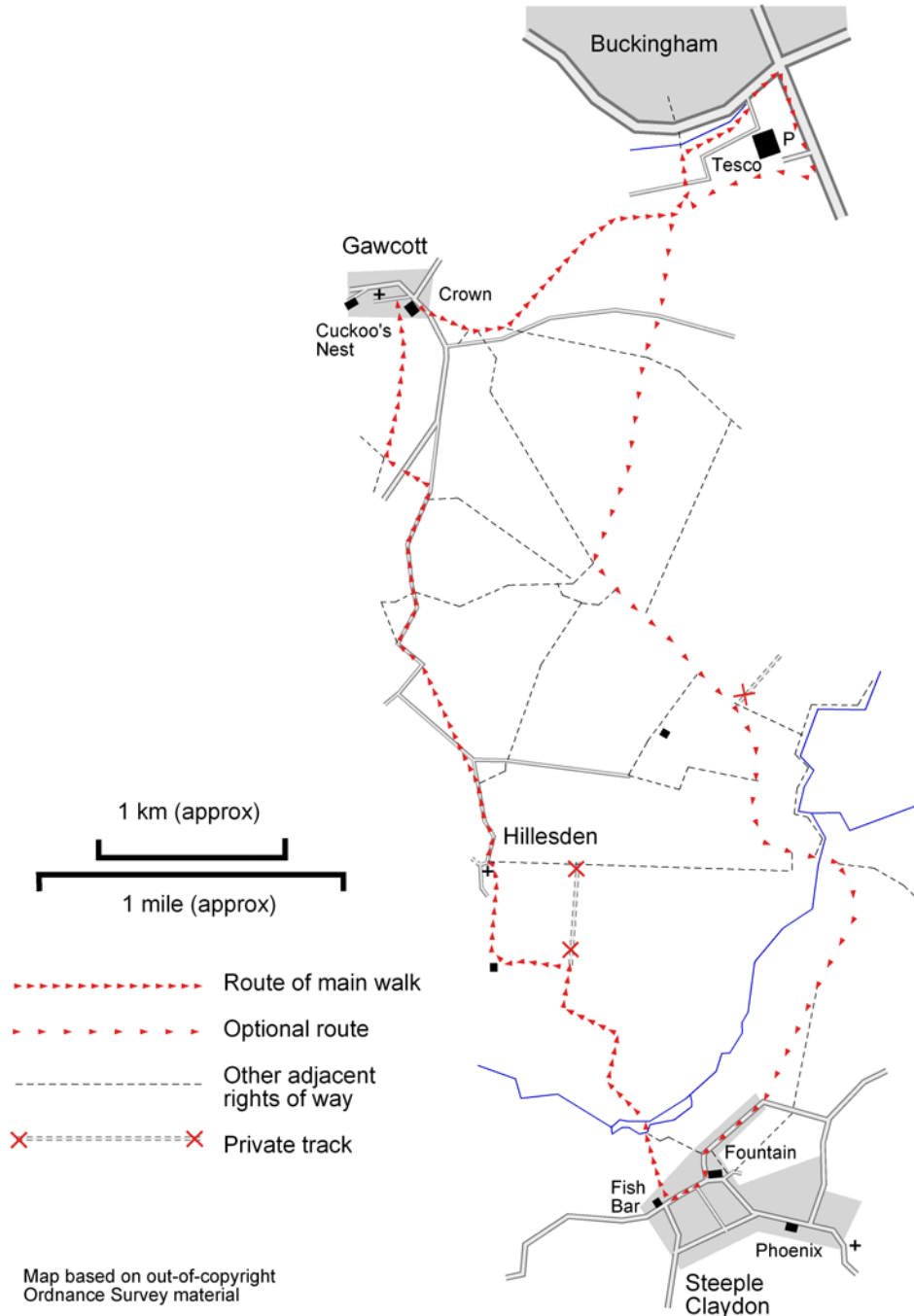


## Steeple Claydon – (Hillesden) – Buckingham Tesco

Open country, not spectacular, but varied and attractive, with some fine views of the surrounding countryside. Mostly pasture, sheep country with some cattle, and the arable generally has good tracks except for three fields as you approach Steeple Claydon on the optional route. Two interesting churches.

Minor route change 2009



## Distance

5 miles (8km)

(9.5 miles (15 km) as a circular walk)

Not flat, but the climbs are neither long nor steep.

## Travel

The 16 and 17 buses link Aylesbury, Steeple Claydon, and Bicester and the 18 links Bicester, Steeple Claydon and Buckingham (Tesco stop C, and the town centre). No Sunday or Public Holiday services, and services to Steeple Claydon in the morning and from there in the evening are limited.

The 66 bus route links Aylesbury and Buckingham (Tesco and the town centre), about hourly (two hourly on Sundays). Beware: most 66 buses to Aylesbury use stop C, not on the main road, at Buckingham Tesco, but some, particularly on Sundays, use stop A on the main road. Check the timetable!

The X5 (half-hourly) links Milton Keynes, Buckingham (Tesco stop B) Bicester and Oxford.

There are occasional buses from Gawcott to Buckingham (none on Sundays).

Detailed travel information for the whole of this area is available from the Traveline South East website [www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk](http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk) or telephone 0871 200 22 33

## Options

While our walks are intended to be linear routes using public transport, we recognise that public transport to this part of Buckinghamshire is limited, and the bus service to Steeple Claydon infrequent, so we give various options:

1. At the end there are directions for making this a circular walk, starting and finishing at Buckingham Tesco where there is a more bus frequent service, and customer parking.
2. There are no obvious parking places in Steeple Claydon for a car-based circular walk starting from there, but with care you should be able to find somewhere to park without causing an obstruction, perhaps in one of the side streets off West Street near the Fountain. There is no general right to park on road verges, and it can cause offence near houses, so please be sure to park considerately.
3. There is parking at Hillesden, where they expect visitors to the church, but it is perhaps not ideal to start the walk at what is probably its high point (in both senses).
4. If you are doing the walk as a circular from Buckingham and do not need the rather limited opportunities for refreshment at Steeple Claydon you may like to use the attractive short cut to Hillesden included in the route description.
5. By using the end of our Winslow – Addington – Adstock – Padbury – Buckingham route it is also possible to finish in Buckingham town, where there are also buses, though fewer. Please download the last three pages of that walk description, starting from the reference in bold type to the former wireless station.

## Ordnance Survey Map

This walk is all on the Ordnance Survey Explorer map 192, *Buckingham & Milton Keynes*.

## Refreshments

At Steeple Claydon the Phoenix is at the other end of the village, towards the church (from the Co-op, go up Challoners Hill and bear left at the top). The Fountain does not do food, and the Prince of

Wales is open in the evenings only, but the Co-op shop, near the Fountain, is open seven days a week and there is a bakery nearby and a fish bar.

The Cuckoo's Nest and the Crown at Gawcott.

There are refreshments (and customer toilets) at Buckingham Tesco, and the petrol station sells snacks.

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

Get off the bus in Steeple Claydon in West Street, between the Fountain pub and the fish bar, and walk away from the pub and towards the fish bar, to Whites Close on the right.

Go along the enclosed path on the right, through a kissing gate and along the field edge to another kissing gate.

Continue ahead to cross two footbridges.

Go half left across the field ahead to go through a gate next to a double electricity pole.

Turn right along the field edge, to a track.

Turn left along the track, which you follow when it turns right, to a track junction.

Turn left, and follow the track up the hill and to the right just before the farmhouse ahead, then right again after barns.

Continue towards the church 200 yards to a high step-stile over the deer fence on your right.

**A herd of deer may be seen here, though there were none visible the last time we checked.**

Cross the stile and continue in the same direction on the other side of the fence (or you could continue along the track if you prefer) to a narrow gate in the far left corner, next to the churchyard wall.

Turn left for the church.

**Hillesden Church is described in the Shell guide as “the finest Perpendicular church in the county”. It was an early inspiration for the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott. A drawing of the church he did aged 15 is kept in the vestry (which is unfortunately usually locked).**

**At the time of the Civil War, Hillesden House was the seat of the Denton family, who, though related by marriage to the Parliamentarian John Hampden, fortified it for King Charles. However, it was taken by Cromwell and destroyed. Holes in the church door are purported to be bullet holes from the siege.**

From the church follow the road downhill.

After the last house cross the stile on the left and continue parallel with the road across two fields, and then rejoin the road (or you could follow the road if you wish).

Cross the road to a stile with a footpath signpost and continue in the same direction, heading for a hedge corner on the slope ahead (and crossing a stile, at first invisible, in the dip on the way).

Rejoin the road and continue half a mile (0.8 km), round a right-hand bend, passing a pond on your left and Stockingwood Farmhouse and Oak Lodge Farm on your right, then go uphill to a slight left bend.

Immediately after the bend, go through the gate on the left (the bridleway sign may not be clearly visible), and follow the enclosed track to a road.

Cross the road and continue ahead 60 yards to a path crossing.

Turn right and cross the field slightly left, to a stile in a hedge corner. The path should be clearly marked on the ground, heading about half way between a mast to the left and buildings to the right. Cross the stile and go along the right-hand side of two fields, to a stile 100 yards before the end of the second field.

Cross the stile and continue in the same direction along a path that becomes a tarmac drive, to a road.

At the road our route turns right and right again, to pass the Crown pub just past the next road junction, but for the church and/or the Cuckoo's Nest pub and/or the older parts of the village turn left, then for the Cuckoo's Nest turn right down the path past the church then left. Retrace your steps to this point and go on to the Crown pub.

**Gawcott Church was designed by its rector in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Rev Thomas Scott, father of Sir George Gilbert Scott whose "Gothic leanings did not start from his paternal church, for this is in the classical Georgian style" (Pevsner), a style fairly unusual in rural Buckinghamshire.**

100 yards beyond the Crown Pub take the kissing gate to the left and go along the left-hand side of three small fields, to cross a wide gravel drive leading to converted farm buildings on your left.

Continue ahead along the bridleway across two more fields, then on entering the third field (with a big hollow in it) turn left along the fence to a gate.

Continue ahead along the edge of the next big field to another gate.

Follow the old hedge line (a grassy ditch with a few tall trees) ahead as it curves slightly right, to a gate.

Continue ahead along the left hand edge of the next field and through a bridle gate on to a cross path.

To return to Steeple Claydon without continuing towards Buckingham, turn right here, and continue at:

*\*\*Go through the field gate ...*

To continue towards Buckingham, turn left along the enclosed path, to a road (leading from the older to the newer part of the Buckingham Industrial Park).

Cross the road and continue down the track ahead.

At the bottom of the slope, just before the stream crossing, there is a footpath to the right. To continue into Buckingham town, continue ahead here (and follow the description in our Winslow to Buckingham walk); for Tesco turn right along the footpath.

Follow the footpath alongside the stream (ignoring a footbridge) to join the exit road from the industrial estate on to the bypass.

Turn right along the bypass, then right at the roundabout.

Most buses use stop B, on the near side of the road. The 66 for Aylesbury generally uses stop C, which is not on the main road but near the recycling point to your right; confusingly, some, particularly on Sundays, use stop A on the other side of the road. Check !

## **To start from Buckingham Tesco**

Start on the main road near bus stop B.

Turn right, away from Buckingham, cross the Tesco entrance road and continue 80 yards on the road verge.

At the end of the industrial/commercial buildings, take the bridleway to the right, at first through a thicket and then along a field edge, then again through thick scrub.

Ignore a road with industrial buildings to your right, and continue ahead with a high fence on your right.

Shortly after the bridleway turns quite sharply to the right, ignore the road ahead and turn sharp left along an enclosed path, along the right-hand side of a field, to a full-width field gate ahead and a bridle gate to the right.

This is where those starting from Steeple Claydon come through the bridle gate and can turn right for the return route, if they do not wish to continue to Tesco or Buckingham town.

*\*\*Go through the field gate and along the right-hand side of two fields, to a road.*

Cross the road and continue along the tarmac drive opposite.

Where the main drive turns left, continue ahead along the right-hand side of the fence for two fields, down to cross a stream at a gate.

From here, the official route continues ahead for a short distance in the field on the left, then crosses into the field on the right, but when we checked we could find no way through the hedge or over the ditch, so it is best to go into the field on the right straight away, and continue with the hedge on your left, to the top of the field.

Cross the footbridge and turn left along the track, which you follow three quarters of a mile (1.2 km), passing a small wood on your left, then a major farm track on your right, to where the track bears left.

**Steeple Claydon church is visible half right, and to the left of that is Quainton Hill, with its mast, 7 miles (11 km) way. There are occasional glimpses of Hillesden church among trees to your right.**

Take the right fork, across the field and under the pylon line, to go up a wide track between hedges for 500 yards. then along the left-hand side of a field.

When you come to electricity wires (on poles, not pylons), you have the option of going directly to Hillesden, by crossing the stile on your right and then after 100 yards turning right up a broad avenue. (This avoids three arable fields on the way to Steeple Claydon, which may be heavy going especially in muddy conditions.)

Otherwise continue ahead to cross the King's Bridge over Padbury Brook.

Continue ahead, ignore a gate on the right and after a further 30 yards turn right at a waymark post and cross a stile.

Bear half left to a fence corner, and continue ahead 70 yards to cross a footbridge on the right.

Go diagonally left to a gate in the opposite hedge a little to the right of electricity wires.

Go up the field ahead to a gap to the right of a fairly large tree on the skyline.

Go downhill, parallel with the field edge on your left. There are two stiles in the hedge ahead; make for the right-hand one, 60 yards from the left-hand field corner.

Go up the field ahead to a stile, then ahead up the middle of the next very large field (noting the fine example of ancient ridge and furrow cultivation on either side) then bear right, aiming for a poplar tree, to cross a stile in the far right-hand corner of the field, on to a road.

Go ahead along the road to the centre of the village, with the baker's, the Fountain, and the Co-op to the left and bus stops to the right.

It is not obvious which buses stop at which stop. The stop on the opposite side of the road appears to be mostly for Aylesbury and Bicester, the one on the near side for Buckingham, but watch for buses coming from both directions.