

ROCKINGHAM FOREST WALKERS



The Ampthill Park Armistice Trail

Permanent Trail PT295

11km - BWF Grade 2

Start / Finish:-

West Car Park off Woburn Street,
Ampthill, Bedfordshire, MK45 2LL

Explorer Map 193, Grid TL024:381

Entry Fee £1.00 – no award.



Bus service within 1 km of the start. Nearest railway station is Flitwick. To find the car park from Ampthill town centre, go along Woburn Road, as it bears left, turn right here. From the A507 turn into Woburn Road and turn almost immediately left into car park.

The organisers are not liable for accidents, thefts and/ or damage to property. Every effort will be made by the organisers to make these safe, enjoyable and memorable events

Exit the car park via the staggered gate in the top right hand corner and walk half right to the right hand cross, erected to commemorate the park's use in the First World War. (*The other cross to your left on the ridge line was erected to commemorate Henry VIII's first wife, Katherine of Aragon, who lived there in the now vanished Ampthill Castle*)

In September 1914 following the outbreak of the First World War, The Duke of Bedford, using his own funds and land, formed 'The Bedfordshire Training Depot' in the Ampthill Park grounds.

The depot would form part of the Bedfordshire Regiment and initially men between 19 and 38 years old enlisted at their local recruiting offices or at the Kempston Depot for a period of 3 years or the duration of the war. Ex-soldiers enlisted for one year or the duration and could be between 19 and 45. Once the new recruits' applications to serve were approved, they reported to the regimental depot at Kempston (which can be visited when undertaking the Ise Valley Vagabonds Bedford River Walk) to be kitted out before heading for the Training Depot at Ampthill

Some 2,235 men were trained in the camp between October 1914 and October 1916, at which time the camp's function changed, becoming the Number Nine Regimental Command Depot. Known locally as the Bedfordshire Command Depot, it became a depot for nursing wounded soldiers back to health.

During the Command Depot's life, over eight thousand wounded soldiers were treated on site, with almost half of them returning to the front line

Once it became clear that the armistice would lead to peace being struck up, the camp effectively became redundant. Being a fully equipped site, it was offered to the War Office but they declined and on 8 January 1919 it was closed, although activity and decommissioning continued in to March 1919.

Once the site was clear, The Duke decided that it would be appropriate to erect a memorial cross on the site, to honour the 707 men who had been through his camp but had not returned, many of whom he would have personally seen or met at some point.

Turn left and walk to the edge of the escarpment. Turn right along broad path to pass an information board. Fork left with rise on your right, and pass three wooden benches. Path meets a wooden fence and goes to the right. Follow this to reach a wooden kissing gate next to a large wooden gate. Turn left through kissing gate, ignore path immediately to the left and go ahead to the edge of the wood. Turn right and follow path to leave wood at wooden gate to road.

Turn left, uphill, on pavement to the bend at the top of the hill and the brown sign for Houghton House (note the pillbox in the field to your left). Cross road **with care** and continue ahead on the concrete road opposite (Greensand Ridge Walk). Follow the road/track for approximately 700 metres to reach a small parking area on your left.

Q1. There is an information board about Houghton House on the left. When was the Mansion built?

Continue ahead on Greensand Ridge Walk. At the end of the row of cottages, follow Greensand Ridge to the right and then follow around to the left, passing farm barns. Continue ahead on track to the house at the end. Pass through kissing gate and straight ahead, hedge on your right, to a wooden bench.

Q2. On the green plaque on the bench how many benches were erected by Bedfordshire County Council?

Go ahead to metal kissing gate at entrance to wood. Go through gate and turn right, then left and follow path alongside edge of wood. After

approximately 300 metres you will reach a waymarker on your left. Turn right along farm track and through the farm at Brickhill Pastures continuing along a tarmac lane to reach a road (this is Limbersley Lane).

Turn left and walk along road **with care**, to reach a kissing gate on your right. Turn right through gate and go straight ahead across a small pasture. Go through next kissing gate and turn left then almost immediately right along grass track between the fields. Keep ahead to reach another kissing gate. Go through and into a large pasture, and follow the hedge-line on your left.

At the next kissing gate, go through into an area of rough ground (*this is known as Church Fields and in the summer many orchids can be found here*). Follow path straight ahead, ignoring all paths/forks to the left and right. At the end of the field, go through the gate and enter churchyard through the second gate on your right.

Q3. Who is the Church dedicated to?

Turn left, keeping the church on your right. Follow the tarmac path through the churchyard, ignoring the small black metal gate on your left next to the church and continue through the churchyard to the far end. Go through gate and continue on tarmac path. Path goes around a left hand bend and goes downhill to go through a staggered barrier and out on to a road (*this is George Street*).

Turn right on road and follow around a left hand bend and keep going until you reach a marker post on your right. Turn right, on Greensand Ridge Walk, between gardens. Go over cross track. Go over cross track, horse paddock on your left, to reach road (*this is The Brache*).

Cross road and go through kissing gate opposite, then bear right across the meadow to a kissing gate in the left hand hedge line. (*At this point after rain, the route becomes very muddy and wet, until you reach the point below marked with **)

Go through kissing gate and turn right along the hedge. At corner of field, turn left, keeping in the field and go along the fence line, with farm buildings to your right, to reach a Greensand Ridge Walk marker post. Turn right

through a metal kissing gate and go to fence. Turn left and follow Greensand Ridge Walk to go through a small metal gate set within a larger metal gate (known as a Bristol Gate). (There is a small Greensand Ridge Walk marker on the post to the right of the gate). Follow enclosed track to the next farm gate. *.

Turn left through kissing gate and follow path, uphill, with hedge on your left. At the top of the field, turn right, following path (hedge still on left) to pass through kissing gate. Follow path, slightly downhill, and pass through kissing gate to go alongside/through edge of small wood. Keep straight ahead along right hand edge of field with trees on right to yellow topped marker post. Turn right up ramp and pass through kissing gate, fence on left, to pass through a further kissing gate on to a path between fences to enter a wood. Follow path downhill through wooded area, going down steps and on to lane (*this is Gas House Lane*). Turn left along tarmac lane to road.

Q4. At the end of the Lane on the right there a Public Bridleway Marker – how far is it to Houghton House?

Turn right along road (*this is Church Street*) and follow uphill into the town centre and cross roads. Cross straight over first road **with care**, and turn left on pavement and almost immediately right into unnamed Woburn Street. Ahead uphill to pass Courthouse and now closed Police Station on your left to reach an entrance on your right signposted 'Amphill Great Par, Central Car Park' (*just past the entrance to your left is Amphill Rugby Club. In this area trenches were dug to train the troops in trench warfare*).

Turn right through gate and immediately turn left, following small path through the trees. Follow path to the next entrance, turn right and follow path around to the left, passing garages. Continue ahead along track, with trees on your left, back to the car park.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk. Have a safe journey home.

Route checked & updated 4th Feb 2018

Special thanks to Adrian Moody for his invaluable input.

When you have finished the walk please send your answers on a Permanent Trail Entry Form, your IVV cards, payment of £1.00 per walker (please make cheques payable to **Rockingham Forest Walkers**) and a stamped addressed envelope for return of cards to:

Phil Percival,

The Permanent Trail Officer

Rockingham Forest Walkers

77 Thor Drive,

Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK41 0WN