

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 slightly right to the nearest 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.

On reaching the cross, follow faint path going half left (at last time of walking there were posts with blue rope across route, go over/under and continue in same direction), a white information board will appear on your horizon, head towards this and at board turn right. You will pass three wooden benches.

Follow the path with fence and wood on left until you reach a metal pedestrian gate next to a wooden gate, go through metal gate and straight ahead, ignoring path to left. Follow this path to the edge of the wood and turn right and follow path and leave park through wooden gate.

On exiting the park turn left along the road and follow roadside footpath uphill (Bedford Street). At the top of the hill the road bears right, at the brown sign for Houghton House carefully cross the road on to a concrete road, turn almost immediately left following the concrete track for about 700 yards to a small parking area on the left.

Q.1 There is an information board about Houghton House on the left. When was the Mansion built?

Turn right along the concrete roadway to the right of the cottages, heading towards a reservoir, just before the gates pass through a metal gate in the hedge on your left and turn right along farm track. At the house at the end of this track pass through kissing gate and straight on with hedge on right. You will come to a wooden bench.

Q.2 On the green plaque on the bench how many benches were erected by Bedfordshire County Council?

At the entrance to the woods go through kissing gate to the right of the woods, and follow the track to the right of the wood for about 300 metres and turn right at the waymarker along the farm track and past the farm at Brickhill Pastures to Limbersley Lane.

Turn left, taking care as you walk along the lane, until you reach a kissing gate on the right and heading across a small pasture. Go Through next kissing gate and turn left, then immediately right along the grass field track to another kissing gate and into a large pasture following the hedge-line on the left.

At the next kissing gate head into the rough grass area known as Church Fields. Follow path straight ahead, ignoring all paths to left and right. At the end of the field go through gate and enter the churchyard through the second gate on your right.

Q.3 Who is the Church dedicated to?

Turn left keeping the church to your right and following the surfaced path to the gate, ignoring exit to your left. The path continues on for some distance, and then bears left until it reaches George Street at a staggered barrier. Turn right and follow the road round the corner and on to a path on the right between gardens, waymarked with a Greensand Ridge Walk marker.

At the cross tracks continue ahead with fence on your left.

Cross the road called The Brache, through kissing gate opposite and bear right across the meadow to a kissing gate in the left-hand hedge-line (*at this point following rain the route becomes very muddy and wet until you reach point below marked with **) and turn right following hedge. At gate in corner turn left, still in field with farm buildings on your right, pass Greensand Ridge marker post and pass through gate.

Ahead, slightly downhill to left hand corner of small field to go through small gate set into metal farm gate (small Greensand Ridge Walk marker on post to right of gate). Follow enclosed track to next farm gate * and turn left to pass through kissing gate and follow path uphill with hedge on left. At the top of the field turn right and continue to follow path with hedge on left to pass

through kissing gate. Follow path slightly downhill and pass through kissing gate into small wood. On exiting wood turn right and follow field edge with trees on right, to yellow topped marker post and ramp up to gate. Through gate and ahead with fence on left, pass through kissing gate on to a path between fences, entering wood and following path downhill through wooded area to Gas House Lane. Turn left along Gas House Lane.

Q.4 At the end of the Lane on the right there a Public Bridleway Marker – how far is it to Houghton House?

Turn right into Church Street. Continue along Church Street to the town centre, at the cross roads cross with care and ahead into Woburn Street. Continue along Woburn Street until you reach an entrance on your right signposted 'Amphill Great Park, Central Car Park' go through gate and immediately left following small path through trees follow path to the next entrance, turn right and follow path left passing garages, then turn 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 16th Jan 2018

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

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Bedford, Bedfordshire, MK41 0WN