

Totternhoe

Walk: approx. 4.2 miles/6.8km **Time:** 2 hours

There are nature reserves, ancient monuments, wonderful views and historic landscapes to enjoy on this pleasant walk around Totternhoe.

Totternhoe Knolls and Castle Hill

The earthworks of Castle Hill are remains of a late 11th or early 12th century motte and bailey castle. It was probably only used for a short period and was known as the castle of Eglemont (Eagle Mount). Little is known about the castle, why it was built, or even its creator.

The yard (bailey) has been used for various activities, including sheep pasture and as a village sports field and is now managed as a meadow to encourage the growth of wildflowers which attract butterflies and other wildlife.

The castle mound (motte) and yard is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Flora and Fauna

Totternhoe Knolls is part of the Chiltern Hills, An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The chalky soil of the nature reserve and picnic site supports a wide variety of chalk downland plants and wildlife. The reserve is split into three distinct habitats; the Beechwood, a plantation dating from about 1870, Castle Mound and Little Hills, sited within an important medieval quarrying area the resulting spoil tips are now home to a range of wild flowers, including seven species of orchid, and an abundance of butterflies to be seen during spring and summer.

Along with the Beechwood and Castle Mound and Yard areas, Little Hills has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Local Nature Reserve, due to the rare chalkland plants to be found there.

Quarrying

The area has been quarried for centuries and yielded Totternhoe stone known as 'Clunch' a hard form of chalk with properties that make it suitable for carving ornamental stonework. Clunch has been used in many local churches and even as far away as Windsor Castle and inside Westminster Abbey where it has lasted for 900 years. It is only during the last century that the large scale quarrying now visible has taken place with the quarried chalk used mainly for cement production.

The Sewell Greenway

Part of the walk follows the Sewell Greenway, a shared use path created from a former railway embankment and cutting. The railway, opened in 1848, once linked Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable. Following its closure in 1967 it has been managed as a nature reserve with a wealth of wild flowers and butterflies.

Sustrans (the sustainable transport charity) worked closely with the Wildlife Trust and the North Chilterns Trust to enhance and maintain the diverse flora and chalk grassland of this County Wildlife Site.

Maiden Bower

Although only apparent as a circular hedge, this is a truly historic site. The hedge follows a bank and ditch which marks the boundary of an Iron Age fort.

The site may have originated even earlier (c.4000BC – 2000) as a Neolithic causewayed enclosure. A causewayed enclosure is a roughly circular or semi-circular area enclosed by ditches interrupted in several places by a series of entrances (or causeways), possibly used as a tribal trade and ceremonial centre.

St Giles Church

Built from locally quarried limestone St Giles church nestles in the Church End conservation area. The oldest part of the present church is the 14th century chancel. The porch and tower are both 15th century whilst the nave and aisles are early 16th century, there is also a beautiful Tudor carved wooden roof above the Nave. The modern stained glass window at the east end of the chancel was designed by John Piper and depicts the Tree of Life.



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Healthy walking

Why not get out and get healthy? There is no better way to start than by taking a walk. Just 30 minutes a day can improve health and well-being, reduce the risk of heart disease, help to prevent diabetes, improve muscle strength even reduce anxiety and depression. So make today the day you start to enjoy Bedfordshire and enjoy good health. For information on healthy walking log on to www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

Planning your walk

Totternhoe Knolls Picnic Site is the suggested starting point and the walk is described in a clock-wise direction. However you can walk in either direction.

Refreshments, parking and toilets

There is parking at the Totternhoe Knolls Picnic Site. Refreshments are available at the Cross Keys Public house on Castle Hill Road and The Old Farm Inn on Church Road Totternhoe, please inform the landlords if you intend to leave your car.

Public transport

For information contact Traveline 0871 200 22 33. The closest train station is at Luton, on the Bedford to St. Pancras Thameslink Line contact Traveline or www.thameslink.co.uk

Ordnance Survey maps

The route is covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer map 192 available from local bookshops and some petrol stations.

Did you enjoy the walk?

This is one of a series of circular walk leaflets produced by Central Bedfordshire Council. If you wish to request a leaflet, give us some feedback or report any problems encountered, please contact us on **0300 3008305** or e-mail us on recreational.routes@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Tips for enjoying your walk

Parts of the walk can become muddy especially after heavy rain, so strong waterproof footwear is recommended. Take care where conditions are rough and do let someone know where you are going. Please be aware that much of the walk is unsuitable for wheelchairs and difficult for pushchairs.

Other walks

To discover more walks in Central Bedfordshire visit www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/countryside or www.letsgo.org.uk

Or why not explore the Greensand Ridge by following the fabulous Greensand Ridge Walk, a walk that passes through many of the area's most valuable landscapes and historic towns www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/greensand



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Walk

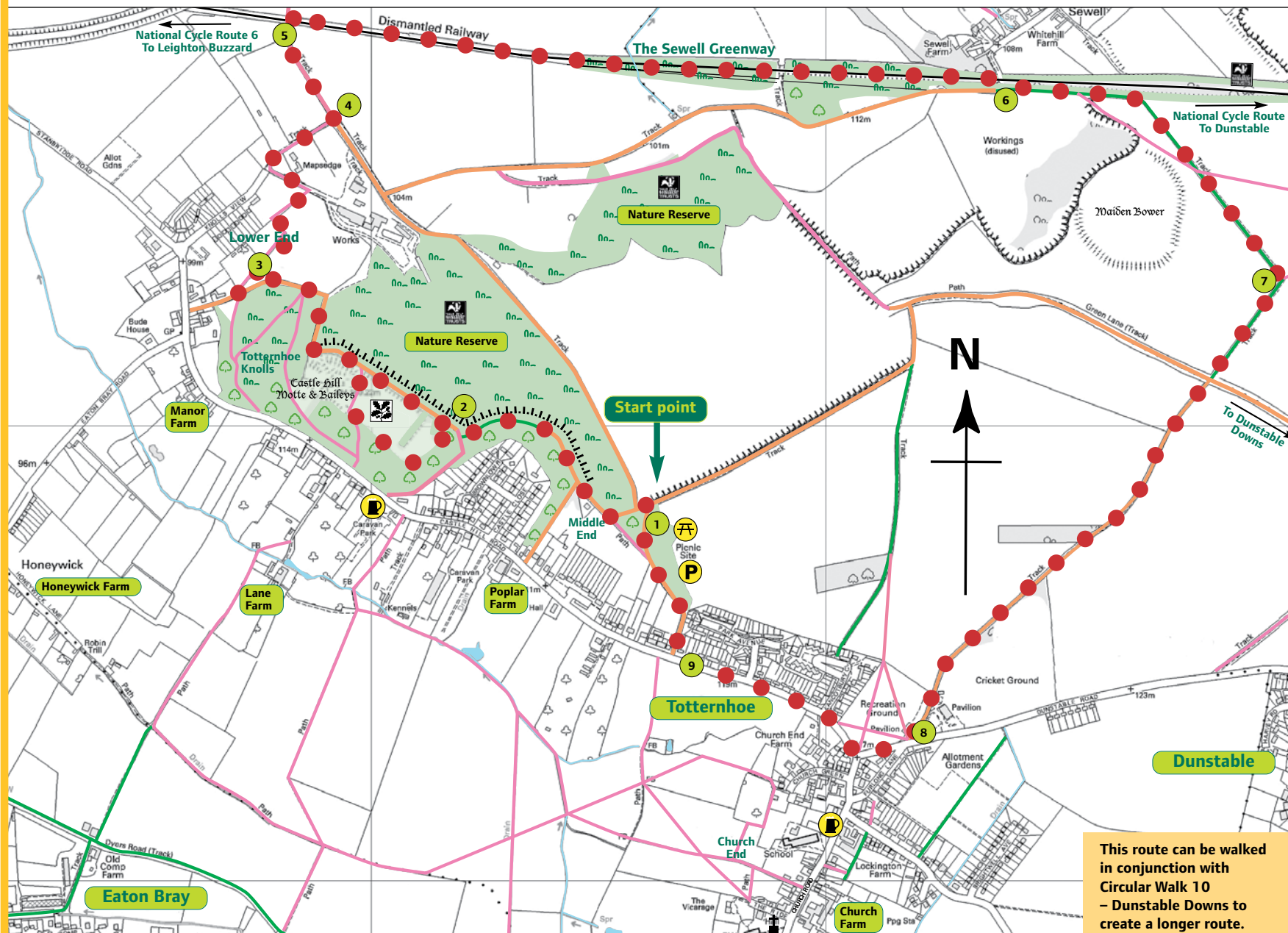
- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Sandy and Everton | 7 Rushmere and Stockgrove |
| 2 Old Warden | 8 Cranfield |
| 3 Silsoe - Shillington | 9 Totternhoe |
| 4 Ampthill - Maulden | 10 Dunstable Downs |
| 5 Ampthill - Millbrook | 11 Whipsnade |
| 6 Woburn - Eversholt | ■ ■ ■ Greensand Ridge walk |

Circular walks














Totternhoe

Countryside code

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Consider other people.



Key

- Key**
- | | | | |
|---|-----------|---|--------------------------------|
|  | The walk |  | Church |
|  | Footpath |  | Parking |
|  | Bridleway |  | Public house |
|  | Byway |  | Picnic area |
|  | Woodlands |  | Open space /
Nature reserve |
|  | Cliffs |  | Wildlife Trust |
| | |  | National Trust |

Please follow these tips to keep you and your dog safe:

-  Always keep you dog in sight and train it to come back when called.
-  Never let your dog chase wildlife or grazing animals – it could get injured too.
-  Unless you're already friends, keep you dog away from other people and either dogs – not everyone loves your dog as much as you do!
-  Always clean up after your dog.
-  Look out for horses, cyclists and runners – for everybody's safety its best to put your dog on a lead as they come by.
-  Follow all local signs about grazing animals.

This route can be walked in conjunction with Circular Walk 10 – Dunstable Downs to create a longer route.

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Central Bedfordshire's Travel Choices has supported the printing of this leaflet. Travel Choices is a Sustainable Travel and Transport project for Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard and Houghton Regis. For further information, please visit www.cbtravelchoices.co.uk

- 1 Exit the car park through the vehicle barrier and turn right uphill on the track. At the T-junction turn left on the byway and gently ascend above the village.
- 2 At this point you have an opportunity to explore Totternhoe Knolls and its spectacular views, accessed via the kissing gate.
- 3 Continue along the byway passing the nature reserve and the Knolls on your left. The Byway descends – take care as this can be slippery. At the bottom of the hill, take the fenced in footpath on your right until the junction with 'Knolls View'. Turn Right, crossing the works entrance and follow the track.
- 4 At the T-junction turn Left down the track.
- 5 At the Sewell Greenway cycle route, turn right and continue along the former railway embankment.
- 6 Cross the bridge and bear right leaving the Sewell Greenway, continue uphill along the bridleway. For a closer view of Maiden Bower, fork right on the footpath, later rejoin the bridleway.
- 7 Bridleway turns sharp right, continue on with views of Maiden Bower to your right. At the cross roads with 'Green Lane' continue ahead and descend, passing the Cricket Ground.
- 8 At Dunstable Road turn right then along Castle Hill Road.
- 9 Take the third turning on the right to return to the picnic site.

