

Walk Description and Details

Whilst walking through three limestone villages, this walk provides the opportunity to see a watermill, a windmill, a journey by the River Great Ouse, and on a disused railway line.

The walk starts and ends at Bromham Mill (GR TL011507) OS Explorer Sheet 208, OS Landranger, Sheet 153, situated alongside the 26 arches of Bromham Bridge across the River Great Ouse. There is a car park at the rear, and toilets. Note: the car park opening hours are 0900 to 1900 hours. Bromham Mill is only open April to October 1300 to 1700 hours.

Distance: If visiting Oakley, 8.5 miles (13.5 kilometres), duration 3.5 to 4 hours, plus stoppages. Not visiting Oakley, 6.5 miles (10.5 kilometres), and duration 2.75 to 3.5 hours, plus stoppages.

Terrain: Fairly easy going, with some ups and downs. Can be muddy, especially during wet periods; wear boots, or wellingtons.

The Geology

The Jurassic limestones (the Great Oolite) that can be seen in various buildings and structures during this walk, were exposed in a long winding ribbon in North Bedfordshire by the meandering Great Ouse river as it cut down through the layers of rock. Oolitic limestone is an attractive building stone and much of it was quarried locally, although there is little evidence of that today. The limestones are described as oolitic because they are often made up of small rounded particles called ooliths that have the appearance of fish roe (oolith = egg stone). Each oolith is made up of concentric rings of calcium carbonate that formed around a nucleus of sand or shell fragment as it rolled around on the shallow sea floor, gathering layer after layer of limestone. Bedfordshire at this time (about 200 million years ago) lay far to the south in warm subtropical latitudes, in an environment rather like that of the Bahamas today.

Above the limestone, there is in many places a layer of Oxford Clay, also Jurassic in age, but the landscape has been sculpted by the advance and retreat of ice sheets during the Anglian glacial episode, just under half a million years ago. The ice sheets crushed and scraped the underlying rocks and often transported the debris great distances. As the ice melted it left a thick blanket of clay, sand, pebbles and boulders that is known as till or boulder clay. Today the clay soils derived from the till contain a mixture of rock types, some of which are sharp and angular whilst others are rounded and water-worn by melt-water streams, and some have been brought from as far away as Scandinavia.



River Great Ouse, on the way to Oakley

BEDFORDSHIRE GEOLOGY GROUP



Oolitic Limestone

The Bedfordshire Geology Group was formed in 2004 by a group of enthusiastic amateur and professional geologists. We aim to encourage an understanding of the rocks and landforms of the county for the benefit of all. One of the main ways of doing this is by identifying and popularising Local Geological Sites which are of scientific and educational importance.

Members enjoy field trips, clearing overgrown sites, lectures, workshops and social events – all aimed at getting familiar with local rocks and fossils. We also arrange guided walks in order to share our interest in the varied scenery of Bedfordshire

We work closely with local companies, museums and county parks. Recently we have collaborated with The Wildlife Trust, The Greensand Trust, Natural England and English Heritage on different projects around the county.

Educational support for schools is arranged by request. This often involves classroom-based sessions that introduce pupils to exciting geological topics such as dinosaurs and volcanoes. Alternatively we can organise outdoor visits to help students learn more about their natural environment.

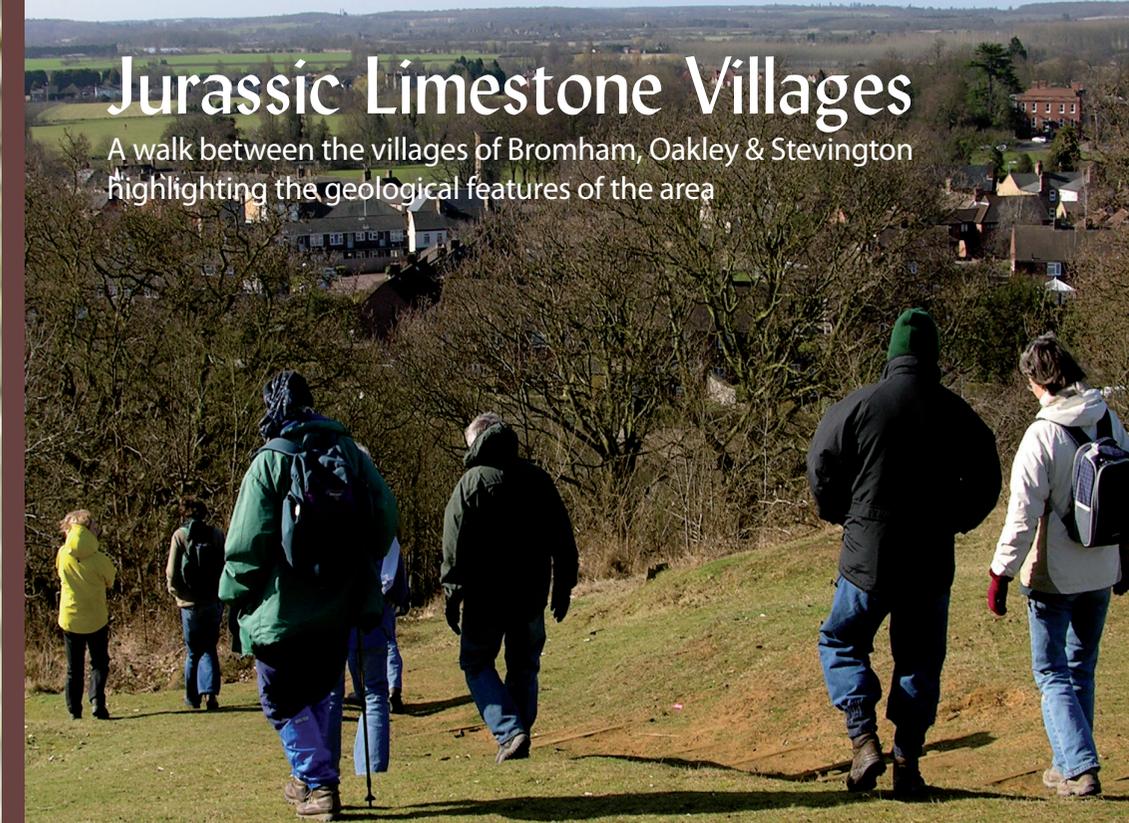
For more information, contact us through our website
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www.bedfordshiregeologygroup.org.uk

GEOTRAILS IN BEDFORDSHIRE

Jurassic Limestone Villages

A walk between the villages of Bromham, Oakley & Stevington
highlighting the geological features of the area

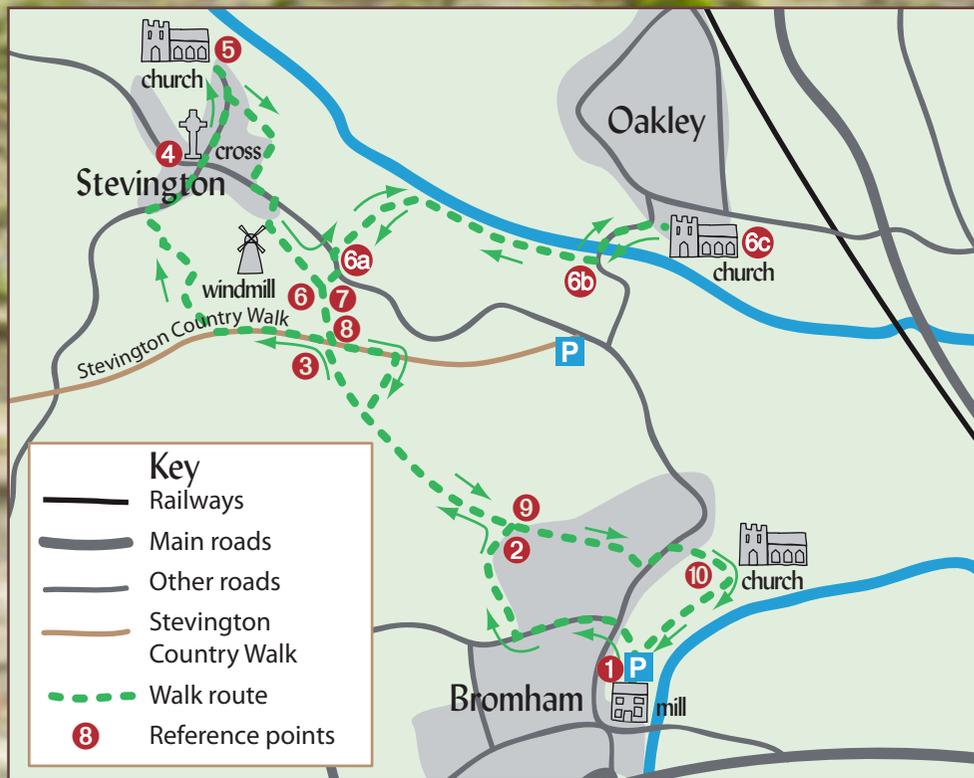


Bromham

Oakley

Stevington





Directions

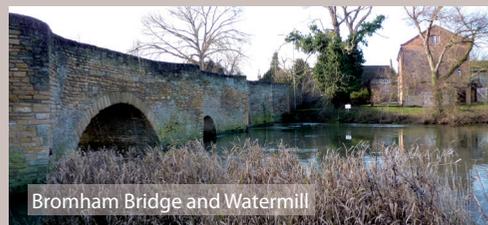
1. Leave the car park via the rear exit, with the Bromham Heritage Trail sign on your left, and follow the left-hand path upwards through the park. At the exit, about 200 metres, turn right and follow the narrow footpath down and over the river footbridge to a kissing gate. At the gate, take the forward, slightly right footpath, cross the road and continue for about 200 metres until a second road is reached.

Turn left, and cross a cattle grid. Then go to the main road, carefully cross, turn right, then left into Grange Lane.

Proceed on Grange Lane for about 500 metres, turn right into Springfield Road, and after about 200 metres take the footpath on the left at the point where the wood ends and the second lot of houses starts.

Continue on the footpath until a road is reached, with a Scout Hut on your left.

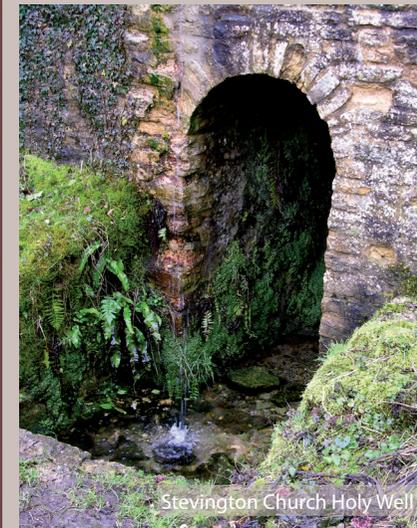
2. Go forward on the track marked "Ouse Way", and follow this to a farm building. At the farm building, take the right-hand path, with a fence on your left, until a cross pathway is reached; proceed forward at this point and down to another cross pathway. Note the various types of pebbles in the fields as you pass by. These are fragments of the oolitic limestone and also glacial erratics ("foreign stones") from the boulder clay.



3. Take the left-hand path, marked "Stevington Country Walk" (disused railway line), and continue to a cross path. Take the right-hand path marked "Stevington Village". Follow this path to a "T" junction.

At the "T" junction, turn left, over a stream footbridge, and follow the path to the rear of houses, and onwards until a road is reached.

Turn right at the road, and continue through the village of Stevington to the crossroads.



4. At the crossroads, with care observing for traffic, note the limestone cross, and then continue straight ahead down to the Church of St. Mary The Virgin, noting the Jurassic Limestone houses and buildings on the way.

At the church, either immediately enter the yard to explore the stonework, or take the path a further 30 metres, and look at the Holy Well on the left within the supporting church wall. The well waters are reputed to never freeze. This is a spring fed by groundwater where the limestone aquifer is overlain by impermeable clay, squeezing out the water along the junction. The church has been altered and restored on many an occasion, with one end still without a roof.

5. Retrace your steps back to the village, and just prior to the first left-hand building (The Old School House), take the pathway on the left. Follow this path, over a stream footbridge, and continue at the rear of houses to a road.

At the roadway, turn left and continue for about 300 metres (note the limestone almshouses on the right); take care towards the end of this section where the pavement ends. Ignore the Foxbrook turning and continue a further 100 metres, then turn right, Stevington Windmill is straight ahead.

Continue towards the Stevington Windmill track "T" junction, noting the oolitic limestone walls and buildings on the right.

If you wish to visit the windmill, take the dead end path to it. The base wall of the windmill is Jurassic Limestone, with ooliths and with shells of bivalves and brachiopods, animals which lived on the sea floor, in some of the stones.

Having visited the windmill retrace your tracks to the "T" junction and turn right. Follow the path for a few hundred metres, until another "T" junction is reached.

6. At this "T" Junction, the option to visit Oakley is available. Note: If you do visit Oakley, the directions return you back here, to Point 6, and then you need to follow the instructions from Point 7 to go on to Bromham.

Please note the route to Oakley (Point 6a) is via the River Great Ouse, which floods at various times, making the exit onto the Oakley Road impossible from this path. If you don't wish to visit Oakley, then continue from Point 7.

7. To continue to Bromham, at the "T" junction (Point 6), continue on the track up the hill, for a further 200 metres or so, until a cross pathway is reached.

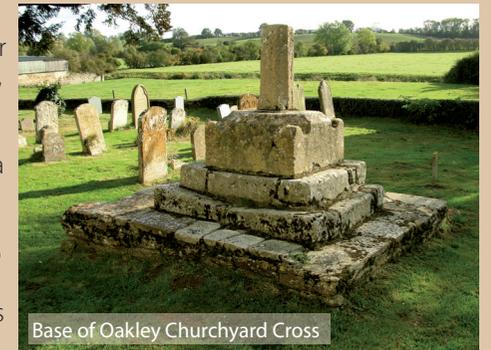
Diversion to Oakley

6a. To visit Oakley, turn left at the "T" junction and go down to the road. At the road, turn left, and continue for about 100 metres. Then take the footpath on the right and go through the kissing gate. Follow the path down to the River Great Ouse and continue with the river on your left. Go over the stile and continue until a kissing gate is reached (ignore the two stiles by the weir).

Go through the kissing gate and up to the road. (should the path be flooded, then retrace your steps back to Point 6, and follow the instructions).

6b. At the road, with care (traffic and no pavement), turn left and then proceed over the two bridges. After crossing the bridges, continue forward right towards St. Mary's Church at the end of the road. At St. Mary's Church, note the Jurassic Limestone, with a point of interest opposite the main church entrance, the base of a churchyard cross. The church is normally open for those who wish to visit.

Leave the church, and retrace your steps back to the two bridges.



6c. Negotiate the two bridges, again with care, then right onto the footpath, and return to Point 6 to follow the instructions in Point 7. At Point 6, take the left hand path up the hill, in the opposite direction to the Windmill.

8. Take the left-hand path, marked "Stevington Country Walk" (the east section of the disused railway line) and not the path to Bromham. Continue on this path for a few hundred metres until a barrier and cross pathway are reached. Turn right at this point, continue to a second cross pathway, and then turn left. This is the original track you walked from Bromham to Stevington. Continue on this path to the road, with the Scout Hut now on your right.

9. Continue down this road (Molivers Road) to the end where it joins Vicarage Road. Cross the road with care and then turn left, and follow the pavement for about 100 metres until a footpath within the hedge is reached on your right. Go down this path to a field, and then forward to St. Owen's Church.

Enter the churchyard via a gate in the wall, and follow the path to the right of the church. Take the opportunity to examine the oolitic limestone in both church and surrounding walls.

10. Exit the churchyard by the front gate, turn right along the roadway, and walk on the road for about 400 metres until the road bends to the right. Take the path straight ahead and continue. Follow this grass path until a cross path is reached. Take the slightly ahead path, and then left down to the track road, cross over, and go down to the kissing gate. Carry on, and over the river footbridge. Up the path, and just prior to the road, turn left and into Bromham Mill car park.

If you wish to visit Bromham Bridge, carry on forward at this point on the road, Millfield, turn left at the main road, and down to the bridge, where good examples of oolite can be seen.