

The Parks Trust Self-Guided Walks: Walton Lake to Caldecotte Lake

Walk by Peter Burrett, Wednesday 19th June 2013

Start point

Close to the northern end of Newport Road, which links the H9 Groveway and the H8 Standing Way in Woughton Park, there is a free car park at Walton Lake.

Walk overview

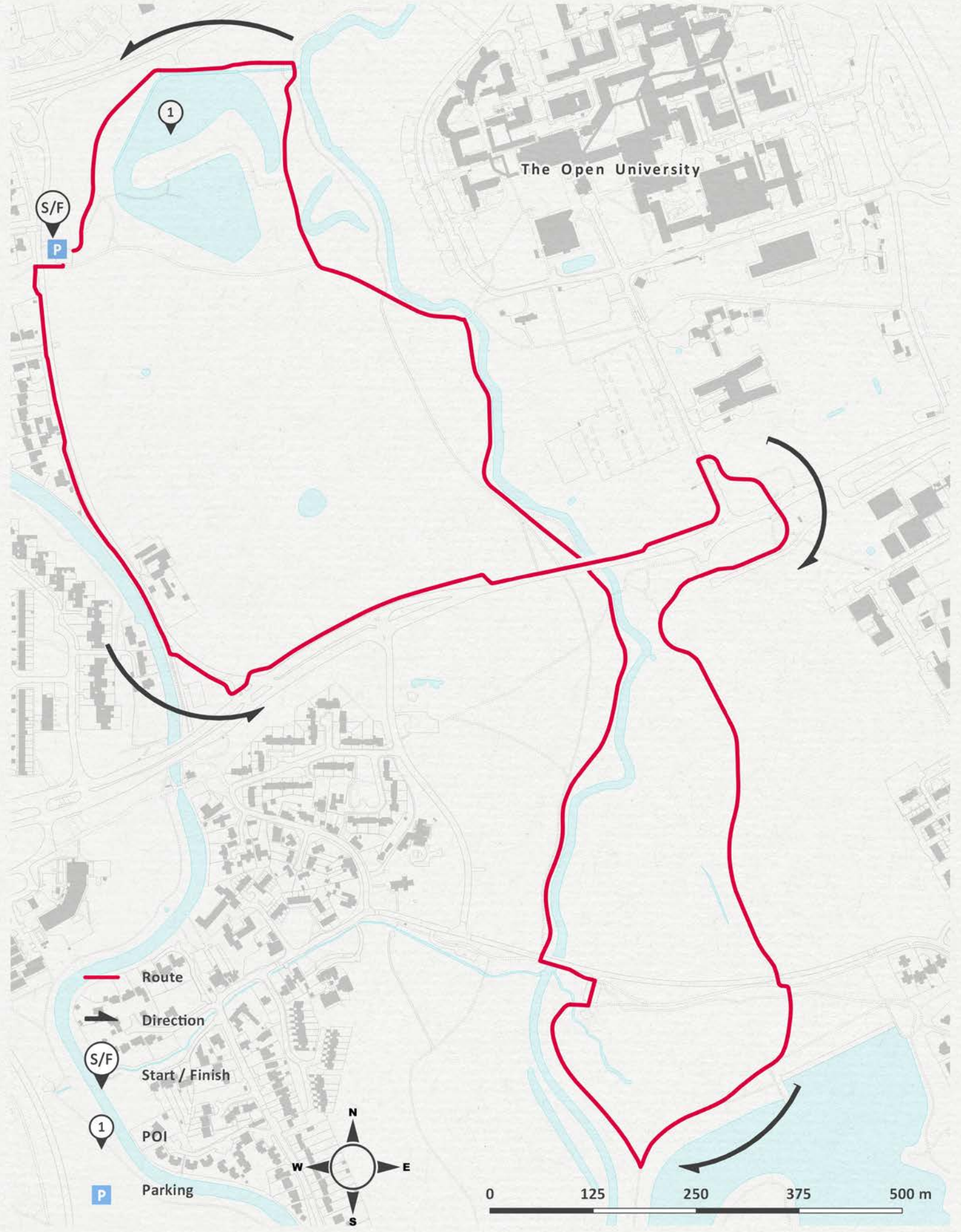
This is a “figure of eight” walk, finishing at the same Walton Lake car park.

The walking is easy along firm footpaths. There is one minor incline, and a single flight of steps to be negotiated if access to the Grand Union Canal is desired.

Distances & times

Figure of eight walk; Car park – Walton Lake – outskirts of Open University – Caldecotte Lake – car park = 2.6 miles, 80 minutes. There are no formal refreshment stops, but several benches / picnic tables along the route.





The figure of eight walk

Take the footpath directly from the car park past three separate Parks Trust boards, one featuring a useful map of Walton Lake and its environs, another detailing a nature trail around the lake.

The path splits. Stick to the left hand trail, up an incline to a bench. From here there is a good view across Walton Lake (viewpoint symbol on map). This was constructed as an anti-flooding balancing lake for the River Ouzel, but since Willen and Caldecotte Lakes were created has been allowed to fill with reeds to create a distinct habitat for wildlife.



Continue on the footpath around the lake, although the lake itself was largely hidden at time of visit by trees and other vegetation. Take either of two bridges on your right, across a small brook. Pass another Parks Trust nature trail board, then an oxbow lake on your left which was originally part of the River Ouzel's course until the river cut itself a more direct route. When you reach a T-junction, turn left.

After a short distance the path starts to follow the bank of the River Ouzel, on your left. The buildings of the Open University campus can be seen across the river. Pass another Parks Trust noticeboard, which features otters that are present in this stretch of the river, then a wooden bridge on your left which leads across the Ouzel into the Open University. Keep to the path.

At time of visit the meadowlands bordering the path were awash with buttercups and cow parsley. The path twists and turns to keep close to the river, and passes under the H9 Groveway grid road, then past the wooden Simpson foot bridge which is currently closed for safety reasons. Shortly after this you pass a sports field to your right and picnic bench to your left. On the opposite side of the Ouzel is a "restricted access" area currently used as pasture for livestock.

You reach Simpson Road. Turn left across the road bridge over the Ouzel. On the opposite side of the road is the Caldecotte car park. Walk through the car park, turning sharp right onto a footpath signed "Caldecotte Lake" and "Riverside Walk". Pass a board showing a map of Caldecotte Lake, and you will see the windmill atop The Caldecotte Arms in the distance.

Before you reach a weir on the River Ouzel on your right, turn left onto another footpath. This runs parallel with an arm of north Caldecotte Lake. (*It is not intended to explore the lake on this walk, but it will feature in a future route*). Where the path divides, stay left. At a T-junction with a redway, turn left for a few yards to a crossing point over Simpson Road. Continue down the footpath which is directly opposite.

This path takes you across grazing land for approximately 500 metres, before turning sharp right and leading towards H9 Groveway. The preferred route from here would be to almost double back and take the Simpson footbridge across the Ouzel. As this is currently closed, take the underpass beneath the H9. The path joins Walton Drive. Turn left, then join the footpath right along Groveway for approximately 700 metres.

This footpath follows the H9 road bridge across the Ouzel to Newport Road. Turn right onto another footpath up this tranquil road into Woughton Park. Through hedgerows on your left the road follows a short stretch of the Grand Union Canal, the towpath of which is accessed via a set of steps.

Carry on up Newport Road, past The Old Simpson School House (now a private residence) and two bus stops until you reach the Walton Lake car park.

