

The Parks Trust Self-Guided Walks: Stony Stratford & Passenham

Walk by Peter Burrett, Monday 8th September 2014

Start point

Free car park at picnic area off Calverton Road, Stony Stratford. Travelling from Stony town centre the car park is on your right just after Milford Avenue on your left. Coming from Calverton, the car park is on your left just before reaching the Stony built up area.

Walk overview

This is a figure of eight walk, taking in part of the Ouse Valley Park, the small settlement of Passenham and Stony Stratford town centre. It starts and finishes at the same car park.

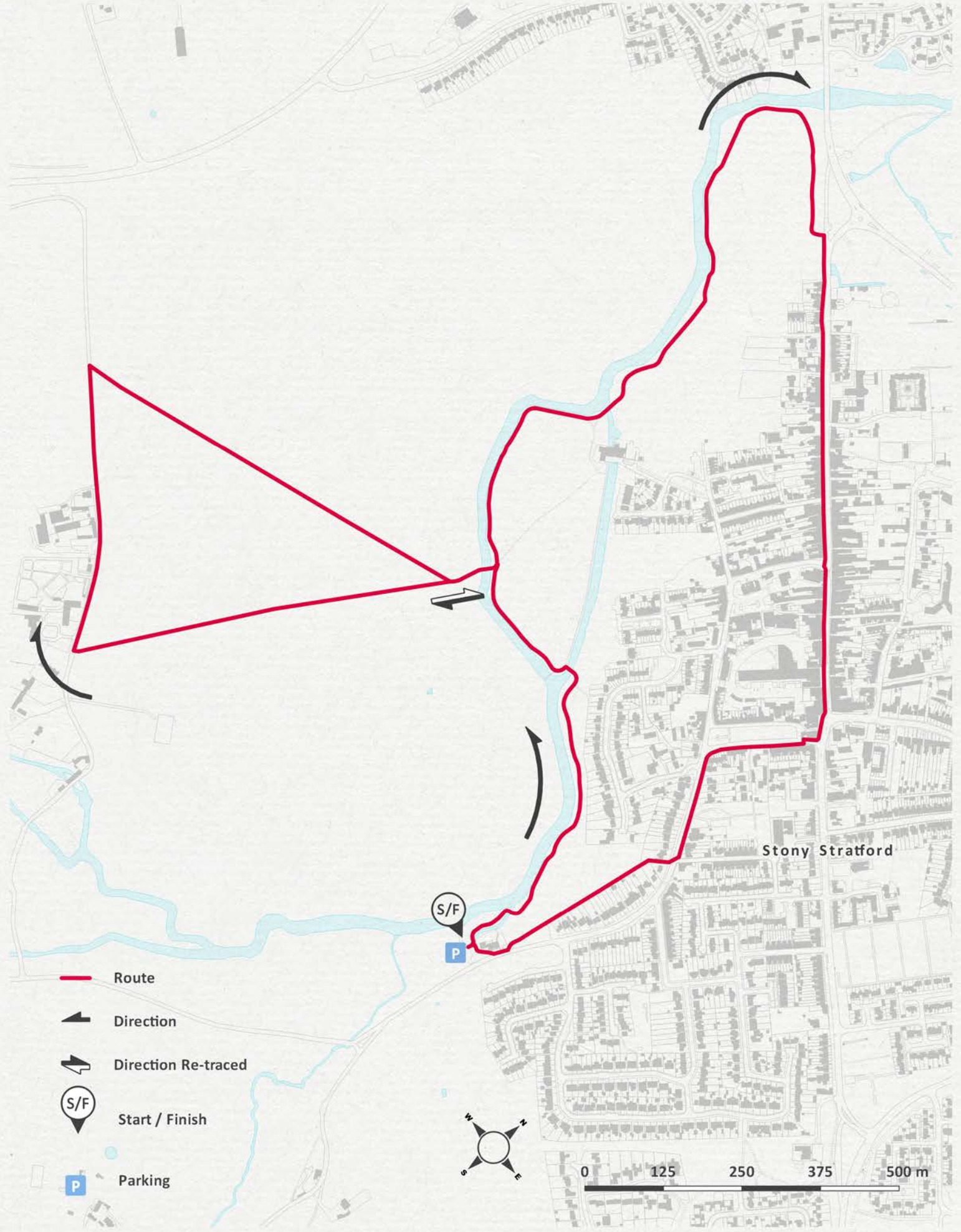
The walking is mostly easy, along hard core footpaths of reasonable quality, but sections across meadow land make it unsuitable for wheelchair users.

Distances & times

Figure of eight walk; Car park – Ouse Valley Park – Passenham – Ouse Valley Park – Stony Stratford – car park. 3.4 miles - 100 minutes.

As well as a large number of seats and picnic benches along the Ouse Valley Park section of the route, there are also a wide selection of pubs, cafes and restaurants to suit all tastes in Stony Stratford town centre.





The figure of eight walk

From the picnic area car park, head north on a pathway, parallel with the River Great Ouse, with weeping willows to your left on the river bank. Pass over a short metal bridge and continue on the footpath. There are sweeping views across meadow land on the far side of the river, towards the village of Passenheim.



Take a wooden bridge over the river to what is almost an island between two courses of the Great Ouse. Bear left on another footpath, past Stony Stratford Sluice (a weir) and to another, more substantial, bridge known as "Long Plank". Cross this bridge – signed "Passenheim" – and pass through a gate onto Parks Trust grazing land.

From here you will see two church towers. To your immediate left, along the line of a boundary fence, lies Calverton Church. Almost directly in front of you is St Guthlac's Church, Passenheim. It is towards the latter you should walk.

This pasture is rough and may get boggy in adverse weather conditions. At time of visit it was dry and easily traversed, although unfortunately still too rutted for wheelchair access. A gated fence divides the meadow in two; continue across to another gate at the corner of two fences directly opposite St Guthlac's.



Leave the meadow and turn right onto Passenheim Lane. There is no formal footpath here, so care should be taken, although traffic is very light and there is a grass verge that provides more secure passage in drier conditions.

Passenheim is little more than a collection of a dozen or so dwellings, but is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles of 921 AD and this stretch of Passenheim Lane has several buildings of note. St Guthlac's Church has a tower dating from the late 1200s and restored original wall paintings.



Passenheim Manor and the neighbouring Coach House are privately owned, but worthy of a photograph.

Shortly after the sign welcoming drivers to Passenheim, there is a signed footpath on your right, leading back into the Parks Trust grazing area. Pass through a gate and take a path diagonally right across the meadow, roughly towards the distant housing of Stony Stratford.

In this part of the meadow there is possible evidence of Medieval strip farming, resulting in uneven surfaces. After passing through two further gates you arrive back at the gate where you initially entered the meadows, from where both church towers could be seen.

Pass through this gate, which is alongside a Parks Trust "Ouse Valley Park" sign, retrace your steps across the "Long Plank" bridge and back on to the island. Turn left onto a footpath that follows the course of the Great Ouse. If now feels the right time for your picnic, there are benches dotted along the footpath, or several picnic tables alongside a prominent children's play area.

At a signpost, turn left signed "Riverside Walk" and "Ouse Valley Park". Walk over a wooden bridge and through a gate into further Parks Trust grazing land. Continue across either a shallow ford or a wooden bridge, depending on time of year and how high the Great Ouse is flowing. Keep following the footpath to the left, alongside the Great Ouse to your left and through a further gate.



You will see an arched bridge across the river in front of you. Keep following the path to the right, ignore a ramp on the left signed "Ouse Valley Park" and continue in direction signed "Stony Stratford". Turn left up a shallow ramp, then right onto Stony Stratford High Street.

Stony Stratford is steeped in the past and grew up along Roman Watling Street as a coaching town between London and Ireland, via Chester. As such, inns played a big part in the town's development. Look out for several plaques on walls along the High Street reflecting this history.

The Rose & Crown Inn (no longer trading) was reputedly where, in 1483, King Edward V stayed before being taken to London and becoming one of the Princes in the Tower by his uncle the Duke of Gloucester; later King Richard III.

It is further reputed that the phrase "cock and bull story" was connected to the neighboring Cock Hotel and Bull Hotel, although there is no evidence to support this.

There has been a chartered market in the town since 1194. In 1290 the first Eleanor Cross was built here on the orders of Edward I in memory of his wife. It was destroyed during the Civil War in 1646.



Stony now has a range of independently owned retailers, and a plethora of eateries of all types, as well as a significant number of remaining pubs. It is well worth taking a slow amble along its high street to browse the local businesses and historical sites.

When you reach the Bull Hotel, continue straight across into the one-way section of High Street, past the Old George with its beamed ceilings (1609). Just after the end of the High Street, opposite the service station, turn right into Horsefair Green, crossing the road to join a pavement.

At the end of Horsefair Green, turn left onto Calverton Road, pass a cemetery on your left, then follow a "public footpath" sign opposite Park Road. The path initially passes between two high fences and emerges on Calverton Road near a sculpted Stony Stratford sign.

The car park is a few metres beyond this.

