

PILGRIMS' TRAIL



Milton Keynes

2019





Pilgrimage was once Britain's most popular expression of leisure and spirituality, an activity enjoyed by Kings and labourers alike. But the tradition was cut short in 1538, when Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell banned pilgrimage in Britain. Ever since, the tradition has lain fallow. Today, there is a global renaissance of pilgrimage – 250,000 on the Camino to Santiago, 2 million on the Hajj, 100 million to Kumbh Mela¹ and in Britain, the British Pilgrimage Trust are reopening many of the old and forgotten routes.

In 2017 I took a photograph of a street sign in Milton Keynes city centre. It said 'Pilgrim Street' but it went nowhere, a fragment of infrastructure waiting to join up with future development. It got me wondering though, could one actually make a pilgrimage in the city? The people of Milton Keynes have always been considered pioneers – pilgrims of a sort – travelling to a new place, a place of possibilities, a new place to live.

Fast forward to 2019 and A Word in Edgeways, comprising of Nicky Kenny, Philippa Tipper and myself, were commissioned by Culture MK and the City Discovery Centre to create a new walking and cycling route through Milton Keynes called the 'Pilgrims' Trail.'

The trail would take in the rich medieval landscape along modern city pathways from the earthwork remains of Snelshall Priory on the South-western edge of the city to St Mary's Chapel at Bradwell Abbey. We set out to create a record of the trail through our practices; working with plants, image making and storytelling and curating these into an almanac, of sorts, which is what you are holding now.

We loved the idea of an almanac being a really accessible form for collecting and curating our research; a kind of pilgrim's holiday album. It's a folk framework, a way of capturing the inter-related connections around us as we move through the year. Anyone can make one. Everyone we walked and cycled with, made this one.

As we explored the city's grid squares containing the route, we wove elements of the season, the places, colours, weather, symbols, plants and people together. Our discoveries began to collect themselves into stuffed notebooks, pegged up maps, nature tables, votives, photographs, song lyrics, tables and charts and foraged plants. Walking and cycling with members of the community helped us unearth their stories.

¹ British Pilgrimage Trust, 2019

New Pilgrim Tales of Milton Keynes



uring June, July and August, I gathered plants along the trail at different locations and times and in different landscapes. In my studies on plant and folk medicine, I've always been drawn to the connection between plants, landscapes and their healing and energetic properties. These connections make sense when we consider how plant communities are connected to each other, and to us. Plantain, growing along the footpaths from Bradwell Abbey, soothing in their green medicine, are exactly where we might need them to be if we were looking for a natural blister plaster. Each column and line in the tables I created for these three months, reflects these connections. I hope they might suggest an approach to you for collecting your sensory experiences of places and plants along the trail and we've included a blank table for you to play with. I hope it's a devotional plant practice that feels really accessible to you.

Nicky, the photographer and cyclist in our collective, captivated by the hedgerows and magnificent landmark oaks along the trail, wrote the song on page 24. She sings it too, and you may be lucky enough to hear its melodies as you walk or cycle the trail.

People have shared their stories along the trail, through the woods, over a cuppa, in company or one to one. Philippa didn't so much collect stories as people's heartfelt experiences of being out and about in their favourite places, sharing their knowledge of the history, the plants and creatures, their love for the changing seasons and the

growing city. We measured the age of ancient oaks by linking arms around their massive tree trunks, made up stories from objects found discarded, or lost, on the pathway, created new myths about the birds and the blackberries and shared folk tales of the past. There's no limit to the way you can share your stories of the journey through the landscape.

We heard about the passion that people have for making community in each of the areas; Mary from the retirement village devoting her time to creating new stories through tapestry kneelers in St Mary's Church; Kate and Tony's enthusiasm for the green woodpecker and the badgers that must be protected, the continuing unearthing of the history of the land and archival discoveries from Richard and Nick.

The planners of this brave new city allowed the space to breathe and tell the story of the past, acknowledging the old boundaries and pathways, merging new routes with ancient trackways and hedgerows to ensure we share our walks with our ancestors - from farmers to soldiers, from merchants to pilgrims.

When it came to waymarking the trail, we were inspired by Fanboy's graffiti of a green man in the underpass by Shenley Wood and worked with artist Jamfree on waymarking the trail using stencils and involving members of the public/pilgrims in choosing the sites as we walked and cycled. The three images that have formed the waymarker sign are the rose, the compass rose and the bee.

The Rose; in this case the five petalled *Rosa rugosa* which fills the municipal planting of MK, one of the oldest species of rose and a real survivor in extreme environments. The symmetry of its five petals mirror the the path of Venus, the guiding star. The Rose grows on the Tree of Life, it symbolises both heavenly perfection and earthly passion, regeneration and resurrection. The Compass Rose is a symbol for true direction and navigating your way, unerring and impartial justice, with the central point signifying the source of life.

Bees are crucial to our survival, as key pollinators in our environmental web of life. They symbolise immortality, rebirth, order, industry, soul. In folklore they often represent the stars and are winged messengers, carrying news across the realms, bringing secret wisdom. They are linked to the oak and thunder gods. They are bestowers of eloquence and song, the 'birds of the Muses' - the kind of traveller-guide to inspire you on your own pilgrim walk.

We hope you are guided by the waymarkers, delight in the scent and strength of the rose, explore your own path through the landscape, sing your song and share your story of the Pilgrim Trail in Milton Keynes.

Alissa Pemberton, Nicky Kenny, Philippa Tipper

Milton Keynes, September 2019



Green Man - Fanboy, Shenley Wood underpass, 2019

Tender Pilgrims



e are on a pilgrimage in parts that fit around our everyday lives.

We gather rose petals to make a honeyed heart medicine. Taking only what has already been visited by the bees. The petals, poised to fall, gather easily.

At Westbury Farm we watch the beekeeper separate the queen. Some of the bees get crushed to a propolis golden sludge. It is an indelicate operation taking place in the Great Hall while the weather outside foretells of gloom.

Today we walked at a great pace. The landscape rushed past and disoriented me. I had no time to make a map of the medicine around me. The buttercup haze of the water meadows are studded with Gospel Oaks. The cow parsley tries to help me see, catching willow pollen on its lacy face and showing me the spun magic of June.

We worship at St Giles's church as so many pilgrim parishioners have done. You can see why these edgeland folk worked and walked hard to keep their little church open. The stumps of old yews ring the bone pale walls and the Hawthorn blossom hushes and falls.

Will you walk with me and talk of contemplation? Will Mary cure me of my terrible visions? I bring moon herbs as offerings and wax from the meadow bees. Revelation must be terrible and yet we walk towards it, tender pilgrims that we are. Men make maps but do not care when they get lost. They have other machines for knowing and are busy wrestling with the land. Building moats and fishponds around our hearts.

My father asked me how the knowledge came to me, but my mother didn't. She knows it is the ancestral line of witches and wise women. Father thought it might be from the great farmers in our family. Those that had cleared the land and grown our food. But I know it is older, much older. Why would my lips sing the names of plants each day when I wake as though from gathering Pennyroyal to save my sisters from being with child?



I work on my Materia Medica each morning. My plant learning is never done. Each season brings new changes and observations to be noted. I have only a small amount of paper though so I press the plants between the thin leaves of my bible and I make up songs to sing the children.

Today on my wanderings, I find a grove of Hemlock. Sun blazes in the little clearing of the spinney. The tall stems of this powerful one darken the place with their blood splashed stems. This deadly trickster masquerades as cow keck and hog's wort but if you listen, it will warn you. A foul portent emanates from its feathery leaves.

Today the dawn chorus quietened and a stillness hangs in the air. We feel in our bones the last few weeks before solstice. The sun, when I see her, traces great arcs in the sky. My days on the farm are long. Sixteen hours. These are our haydays. Many wander the gypsy switch paths this month. The hawkers, the pilgrims and the traders. There are beautiful trinkets to be had, crafted in these long days. There are plants to be traded too, for many have the summer ills from breathing the seed.

I am thinking about the plants I shall gather for our solstice ritual. *Daisy, Queen Anne's Lace, Betony, Nettle, Elder, Comfrey, St Joan's Wort, Rose, Plantain.*

I plan to wear them as a crown which will be committed to the fire. They say my hair is the colour of the meadow in July. We must try to keep the sun now that she is here. There is plenty more for ripening. Five coloured ribbons lay upon my bed awaiting the crown and the longest day. My father gifts me two wriggling puppies from the litter in the farmyard. I name them Juno and Hera.

I sleep longer in these early June days despite the work there is to do. My night dreams are complicated, like puzzles. I am still piecing them together during the day. I draw maps of them but where they start and finish is unclear. The patterns of places and plants and days seem to spiral in on themselves, guided by the weight of the sun as it moves towards midsummer.

As St John's day approaches, I begin to see the flashes of moon herb appearing along the greenways. What a joy it is to see Artemisa's gift to the people. *Artemesia vulgaris. Moon Herb of the People. Mugwort.*

Her charms will ripen in time to become most important for those pilgrims who seek protection. Until then I secretly watch for the ruby resin of the wort of St Joan and my mouth for heresies.

This is an extract from Alissa's trail diary for June 2019.

Summer Plant Almanac



To walk the Pilgrim's Trail in **June** is to experience both the old greenways and the city planner's vision of a new, blossoming city of trees. At Bradwell Abbey, common plantain, or 'waybread', is trodden in living pathways along the trail and the valley parkland is dusted with daisies, their ubiquity concealing their magical healing.

This trail is a journey through a jigsaw city, its fragments creating biodiverse edgelands where healing plants thrive. Hedgerows old and new fizz with elder, parks with fairytale Lime trees and everywhere, everywhere, the Rose.

July brings the brightest colours to the trail. Shenley Wood's glades are filled with tall, frothy Meadowsweet and butterflies. Bright white Yarrow lines the redways. Mown, trodden, edged out, these powerful healing plants are truly resilient.

Towering spikes of magenta rosebay willowherb, the pioneer plant, call **August** in and provide a theatre for dragonflies and damselflies. The wild west of the city at Tattenhoe, with its meanwhile ponies, bakes in the sun. It sits wild and ungoverned next to the little church in the woods of St Giles. St Mary's Chapel at Bradwell Abbey is at the opposite end of the trail. A cool, stone sanctuary containing a quiet atmosphere of devotion. What plants will you discover between them?



JUNE

| Place | Landscape | Plant | Action | Colour | Image |
|----------------|-----------|----------|-----------|--------|---------|
| Bradwell Abbey | Footpath | Plantain | Soothing | Green | Path |
| Loughton | Grassland | Daisy | Bruising | Yellow | Sundial |
| Shenley | Edgelands | Comfrey | Repairing | Purple | Bee |
| Westbury | Hedgerow | Elder | Repelling | White | Fire |
| Tattenhoe | Parkland | Lime | Sleeping | Lime | Gold |
| Snelshall | Briar | Rose | Softening | Pink | Heart |

JULY

| Place | Landscape | Plant | Action | Colour | Image |
|----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|--------|-------|
| Bradwell Abbey | Valley | Mugwort | Dreaming | Silver | Smoke |
| Loughton | Footpath | Yarrow | Fixing | White | Blood |
| Shenley | Wetland | Meadowsweet | Pleasing | Yellow | Water |
| Westbury | Grassland | Self heal | Soothing | Purple | Tea |
| Tattenhoe | Settlement | Nettle | Nourishing | Green | Seed |
| Snelshall | Glade | St. John's Wort | Comforting | Red | Resin |

AUGUST

| Place | Landscape | Plant | Action | Colour | Image |
|----------------|-----------|--------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| Bradwell Abbey | Brook | Rosebay willowherb | Pioneering | Pink | Dragonfly |
| Loughton | Meadow | Queen Anne's Lace | Fertility | Red | Crown |
| Shenley | Wood | Oak | Courage | Green | Acorn |
| Westbury | Orchard | Damson | Enriching | Purple | Blossom |
| Tattenhoe | Wood | Crab apple | Wilding | Yellow | Apple |
| Snelshall | Hedgerow | Blackberry | Astringent | Black | Thorn |

(Make your own)

| Place | Landscape | Plant | Action | Colour | Image |
|-------|-----------|-------|--------|--------|-------|
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The Cracked Pot

An elderly woman had two large pots, each hung on the ends of a pole, which she carried across her neck and filled with water each day. One of the pots had a crack in it while the other pot was perfect and always delivered a full portion of water, at the end of the long walk from the stream to the house, the cracked pot arrived only half full.

For years this went on daily, with the woman bringing home only one and a half pots of water. Of course, the perfect pot was proud of its accomplishments. But the poor cracked pot was ashamed of its own imperfection, and miserable that it could only do half of what it had been made to do.

After years of what it believed to be bitter failure, it spoke to the woman one day by the stream. "I am ashamed of myself, because this crack in my side causes water to leak out all the way back to your house."

The old woman smiled, "Did you notice that there are flowers on your side of the path, but not on the other pot's side? That's because I have always known about the crack, so I sowed flower seeds on your side of the path as I walked along, and every day while we walk back, you water them. For years I have been able to pick these beautiful flowers to decorate the table. Without you being just the way you are, there would not be this beauty to grace the house."

Traditional tale adapted by
Philippa Tipper



Drawn to the City

Stories are not to be taken lightly, have you ever asked yourself what is the power behind the words and the images that keep us captivated?

"It's just fantasy", you may hear, "Fiction – all made up stuff", but, is it?

"Like water, stories are much taken for granted. They are seemingly ordinary and neutral, but are one of humanity's most powerful weapons for good or evil"

Ben Okri

Buildings don't make a place. They are empty shells, they have no stories, no life until they are peopled.

Milton Keynes can not be defined or judged by its buildings. We might talk about them but it's the people that create, shape and invest with truth, and love the stories, the histories, the myths of Milton Keynes.

The stories are changing, shifting like the sand in an hour glass, which runs out and is turned again, the grains fall, the patterns change, the stories pour out afresh. What is so special about these stories? What do you understand about the people and the place from the stories that you see and hear?

"It is easy to forget how mysterious and mighty stories are. They do their work in silence, invisibly. They work with all the internal materials of the mind and self. They become part of you while changing you. Beware the stories you read or tell: subtly, at night, beneath the waters of consciousness, they are altering your world."

Ben Okri

Stay and watch the folk talk and pass the time of day. We shouldn't be so afraid to share a smile or a joke. Learn a little about our neighbours, get involved in making things happen in your community.

That's what brought me here and keeps me here; the passion that people have for making a community. There's so much happening in quiet ways, extraordinary things achieved by ordinary people. They make the city breathe, they are the lifeblood and the heart pulsing life through the streets and the buildings of the cityscape.

This is what our work celebrates.

So dear, planners, never forget without these people your buildings are dead, because people hold the stories and tell the stories that make this place real.

Long may the stories be told, chronicled, heard, read, be discovered and re invented.

Philippa Tipper

Edited extract from 'Drawn to the City'
ISBN: 0953946746

The Land Dispute



One day a man who owned a field left it in the care of another man. He took good care of the land, ploughing, weeding, planting and harvesting it. When the owner came back he said to the man who had been taking care of it,

'Give it back now. The land belongs to me.'

'No,' said the other man, 'I won't. The land belongs to me. You are the owner, but I am the one who has worked the land all this time. The land is mine.'

They began to fight, until the neighbours brought them to the Wise Woman in the village to settle the dispute. Each man said, 'The land is mine! The land belongs to me!'

The Wise Woman walked to the field, lay down in the dirt, and put her ear to the ground. 'What are you doing?' they asked.

'I'm listening.'

'What are you listening to?'

'The land.'

Both men laughed at her. 'Listening to the land? Listening to the land? What does the land have to say?'

The Wise Woman looked up and said. 'The land, well she says she does not belong to either of you. She belongs to no one. She says it is you who belong to the land.'

Traditional folk tale adapted by
Philippa Tipper



On the 15th June the Todd Family in Loughton created this wonderful display for the 2019 Loughton Scarecrow Trail.

The Scarecrow Trail takes place every two years and is a firm local tradition.

"It is still not too late to act. It will take a far-reaching vision, it will take courage, it will take fierce, fierce determination to act now, to lay the foundations where we may not know all the details about how to shape the ceiling. In other words, it will take cathedral thinking. I ask you to please wake up and make changes required possible."

Greta Thunberg
Climate Activist



M for Mary



As you go on your way,
You'll tell good tales and
shape yourselves to
play; For truly there's no
mirth or comfort, non,
Riding the roads as dumb as is a stone."

The Host of the Tabard Inn at Southwark gave good advice to the pilgrims stopping at his tavern on their way to Canterbury in Chaucer's tales.

Indeed life would be very dreary if we travelled through it in silence. So let's make the journey seem much shorter by spinning a good yarn or two to share with friends and strangers alike to entertain, enlighten and delight our fellow travellers.

For people in medieval times going on a pilgrimage was a bit like going on a package holiday. Pilgrims travelled in groups for safety and company. They typically travelled on foot – barefoot even – and were entitled to free refreshment and shelter, often very basic, in hospitals or hostels set up by religious orders. The more wealthy pilgrims travelled on horseback and stayed in inns. These were the self financed pilgrimages. For some, pilgrimages were life changing, for others it was a way to see the world and have a good time.

It's hard today to understand the importance the medieval believer attached to relics and holy places, as tokens or totems of salvation. Many of these holy tokens have been found in the excavations in Milton Keynes and we know that it was firmly on the pilgrims' map to visit.

The 14th century Chapel of St Mary at Bradwell Abbey was once such place and gives us a glimpse of what life was like 600 years ago. A shrine that attracted pilgrims from all over, just like the ones Chaucer wrote about in The Canterbury Tales.

Bradwell Abbey was a Benedictine Priory that had been established in the 12th century. It owned a vast amount of land around the area and the tenant farmers had to work the land on behalf of the Abbey and bring their tithe, their rent in harvested food, to the monks.



The Abbey buildings were big, really big.

The Abbey itself was impressive, including beautiful stained glass (you can see a replica of the window that was found in the cloisters in the city centre church) and white printed clay tiles made locally at Brickhill.

It was a place of worship for the monks, but it was also their home and provided a livelihood to many other servants and farmers too. The pigeons cooing today would have been there, raised as meat in the Dovecot to help relieve the winter diet. The great fishpond would be teeming too, carefully managed to ensure fresh fish was available for the Friday meals when no meat was allowed. Rabbits would be fair game too, especially newborn rabbits which 'didn't count' as meat.

The pilgrims would have arrived through the gateway to the north (off what is now Monks Way), they would have passed the fields being ploughed by oxen, creating the ridge and furrow patterns we can see to this day. They would be shown into the nave of the church from the west door (you can follow the route by following the gravel pathway that marks out the shape of the abbey buildings), and after making an offering or saying a prayer there, they would be shown to the chapel of St Mary.

This special chapel was built in the 14th century on the west wall of the big church to protect a statue of Mary, 'Our Ladie of Bradwell'. This had become really popular as a shrine, and a fine money making opportunity for the abbey. It was hailed as a healing shrine and people came to seek cure or relief from their various ailments. The pilgrims would bring with them images of the bit of their body that needed healing and would go and pray to Mary by the statue. The paintings on the walls in the chapel show this, as well as a judgement scene with an angel weighing up the good and bad things from a life.



'During conservation work in Bradwell Abbey farmhouse in 2019, a 12th century stone carving of a head was discovered. It is believed to depict Eleanor of Aquitaine, King Henry II's consort. She had strong links with the Benedictines and was one of the most powerful and influential figures of the Middle Ages.'

There is a glorious angel that watches over it all, and the walls of the chapel are stamped with an M for Mary, just in case you'd forgotten who to pray to.

Like any good tourist destination there would be souvenirs to purchase, badges, tokens, little bottles of holy water, things for pilgrims to show where they had visited, which might help them get free lodging on their journey to the next shrine.

Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*)



Britain's second largest butterfly, the Purple Emperor (*Apatura iris*) is elusive. It spends most of its time in the woodland canopy, particularly in oak, but comes down to feed on smelly things.

In the early morning and late afternoon the males come to the ground to feed on moisture from the damp earth and animal droppings or carrion for salts and minerals.



Butterfly enthusiasts are known to use all sorts of things to lure Purple Emperors down to the ground; banana skins, smelly cheese, shrimp paste. Milton Keynes Parks Trust's very own Martin Kincaid didn't need anything other than patience and open toe sandals.

"The best way to watch them is to lie back and look up into the canopy of oak leaves. It might look a bit odd, or a little suspicious, a man lying back, near the path with binoculars, so I try to find quiet spots and times of the day on the off chance that I might spot something special.

Whether it was my smelly feet or whether it was because it was so quiet I'm not sure, but down from the canopy fluttered a Purple Emperor and sat with me, displaying its magnificent wings as it fed on the morning dew and other more dubious comestibles.

A woman came along with her dog. I tried to indicate that I was not doing anything dodgy but that there was something interesting to see. Sure enough, the Purple Emperor stayed and showed off for her as well. It was magical to see, and even better to share it with someone else. I spent a good 20 minutes or more in the presence of the Emperor. I feel really lucky."



Identification tips

Caterpillars: bright green with yellow spots and diagonal yellow lines along sides.

Adults: large and dark with white banded wings. Males have an iridescent purple sheen on upper wings, while females are brown with no purple sheen.

Wingspan: 7.5 – 8.4 cm



The New Pilgrims' Trail – Milton Keynes



Treasure in the Woods

Told to us by many local people as we walked the trail.



Did you know that Alan Turing, the brilliant mathematician and wartime code-breaker, is reputed to have buried silver in Shenley Wood?

It is said that Turing took the view that if Britain were to come under German occupation, bank accounts would be useless and his savings would at best be frozen, at worst taken over by the occupying forces. Either way, he calculated, he would lose just about everything he had.

So, he drew all of his savings out of the bank and bought two very large ingots of silver bullion to be hidden away until it was safe again to cash them in.

Turing acquired an ancient perambulator to secretly transport the ingots on his own and headed off, late one moonlit night to the woods, not far from Bletchley Park.

One silver ingot was buried under the forest floor, the other under a bridge in the bed of a stream. He made a cryptic plan of the position, wrote out instructions for the recovery of the buried treasure and enciphered them.

Alan Turing returned after the war with his friend Donald Michie to try to find his treasure. Michie had a commercial metal

detector (or in some stories Turing made his own metal detector). Although they found the stream and the bridge everything looked very different and they believed that the bridge was rebuilt and the stream bed had been concreted over. Deep in the woods they found the old pram but could not locate the other silver ingot.

Giving up both bars as lost forever, they made their way to the Crown Inn at Shenley Brook End for some bread and cheese.

Since then, metal detectorists have investigated further. They have dowsed the map, and, with permission, searched with detectors, more advanced and deeper seeking than Turing's prototype.

However their search was in vain, even though they made use of their well-proven divining rods to assist in the venture. The ground in the area in question is covered in thick, thorny, undergrowth and fallen trees, which made the task virtually impossible.

The treasure remains hidden to this day. Like all good treasure stories there is a map and the location seems to be Shenley Wood.

Shenley Wood still exists, but is now surrounded on all sides by new roads and housing developments. Will the wood ever give up the secret location of Turing's treasure? Or is it a modern myth?



Could the treasure be buried beneath the banks of Meadowsweet in the heart of the wood?

The Clever Hedgehog



Deep in the hedgerow, buried under the leaves, the tiniest of noses twitched in the early evening mist. Sniff, sniff – oh the creeping scent of fallen rosehip, nibbled acorn and juicy slug.

Hedgehog emerged, pin-cushion covered with leaf litter, black eyes sparkling.

“A little dinner, then back to the warmth of my home,” she snuffled, poking under twig and through moss.

Suddenly a terrible stench filled the air. The crows ‘caw-cawed’ and, with a clattering of wings, rose up through the skeletal branches of the woodland, high into the dusky night.

A pair of green hooves and a forked tail crushed the snail that Hedgehog was sniffing out, and a crackly laugh split the misty air.

“That was my dinner!” shouted Hedgehog. “And you could be my dinner,” the devil replied.

Hedgehog prickled up to her spikiest. “I don’t think so,” she said, “you’d have to catch me first and I’m way faster than you, you stinky old devil.”

The devil snorted and spluttered, “You? Fast? Look at the size of you? Yes, you have prickles, yes you can climb with your lanky little legs... but really? Outrun me?”

“Yes yes yes I could. I bet you ANYTHING I could outrun you in a race!”

“Oh you think you can place a bet with the devil do you? Alright then, if you outrun me I shall never bother this woodland again, but if I outrun you I shall EAT you.”

“Deal! But we can’t race until midnight,” said Hedgehog. “Meet you at the edge of the wood and we will race round the whole wood, from this gate here around the entire perimeter, right back here.”

The devil laughed. They shook paw and claw and with a puff of stinky smoke the devil disappeared.

Now, you may know that hedgehogs are very chatty, and when they chat they are very, very noisy. Hedgehog began to sing out, her voice carried through the woods and across the fields loud and clear. Soon there was a whole gathering of grunting, snuffling, snorting hedgehogs gathered by the gate to the wood. A plan was hatched and the hedgehogs headed off deep into the hedgerow, and woodland undergrowth.

“Bong” the church bells rang at midnight, the damp mist was lit by a yellowish glow as the same sickly stench filled the air and the devil appeared.

“So my spikey friend, now for the fun part of my night visit. Are you ready?”

“Oh, yes. I’m ready. Very ready.” Hedgehog did a few stretches, the devil lined up next to her.

Owl, who had been recruited to be the judge, cleared his throat, “Once round the entire wood, following the hedgerow boundary, from this gate and back to it. One, two, three - HOOT”

And they were off, in a flurry of leaves and twigs, the devil kicking up soil and hurtling along as fast as his hooves could carry him, cackling as he ran. Hedgehog scurried along, under and through the hedgerow, wiggling past tangles of roots and stems, humming a little tune to herself.

At the first ‘corner’ of the woodland boundary, the devil paused and looked back. Seeing nothing he went to sit down. “Oh, here you are at last. Off we go again!” There at his feet was hedgehog, as if she’d been waiting for ages. Quick as anything she scurried off down the bank into the hedge and off around the wood.

The devil was taken aback, hmm, lucky this time, but she’ll soon tire out. And he set off following the edge of the wood to the next big boundary oak.

Again, this time a bit puffed out, he looked back, went to sit and there was hedgehog. “Here you are at last. Off we go again!” and hedgehog ran off into the night. The Devil was amazed, and getting tired too. Each time he went to rest or stop, there was hedgehog, fresh as a daisy and ready to keep running. At last he dragged himself puffing back to where they had started and rested himself on the gate. There was hedgehog looking bright and ready for action.



“Hoot, hoot hoot. I declare Hedgehog the winner. You, devil, are never to visit this woodland ever again!”

“Pah, I wouldn’t want to,” he said as he stomped his hooves into the ground and a billowing cloud of yellow stink enveloped him. True to his word, and not a little frightened of Hedgehog, he never, ever, came back.

Hedgehog breathed deeply in, the night was getting chilly. She slurped up a slug and crunched a beetle. “It’s good to have friends” she sighed to herself as she burrowed deep into her safe wintry home, deep in the leaves, hidden in the hedgerow, watchful of the wood.

Traditional tale adapted by
Philippa Tipper



Under Snelshall Oak

Under the hawthorn
Spent out and heavy
He lays
A bank full of nettles
Protects from the path
Where he lays
And he turns
As he winds in the dusk
As all that he loved they are lost

Under the blackthorn
Busy and silent
She sees
A web full of twilight
Awakens the moth
And she sees
And she weaves
And she winds in the dusk
As all that she turns they are lost

Sleep comes in waves and in dreams
Of memories and things yet unseen
The sounds of the daylight begin
The cycle complete, holding him

Under the hedgerow
Pink is the yarrow
That yearns
With seeds full of summer
She'll sow for the love
That she yearns
And she waits
As he turns in the dusk
As all that she finds is not lost



Under the oak tree
Binding the wound as
He prays
A handful of flowers
And rose for his heart
As he prays
Sowing seeds
As he winds in the dusk
With hope in his heart all's not lost

Sleep comes in waves and in dreams
With memories, with things yet unseen
The sounds of the daylight begin
The cycle complete, freeing him

Under the hawthorn
Spent out and weary
They lay
A meadow full of daises
Smile up at the sun
Where they lay
And they turn
As they honour the ground
As all that they love they have found

Nicky Kenny





One of the things I hear myself and others say the most when cycling through this expanding new town is, "WOW, it doesn't feel like we are in Milton Keynes!" This is just one of the reasons why I love to get out on my bike and explore. Milton Keynes has a unique network of Redways, over 200 miles of paths for cyclists and pedestrians, that are mostly away from the traffic and busy grid roads and are mostly surfaced with red tarmac. The national cycle routes 6 and 51 join this famous red tarmac in parts of the town, as does the long distance footpath, The Midshires Way and also many bridleways. Add to this the numerous leisure and cultural routes and trails designed by MK Council and The Parks Trust, Milton Keynes offers its residents and visitors a huge amount of choice to explore differing landscapes and vistas.

So, how do you navigate such a vast network or pick a route? Cycling or walking through Milton Keynes can take you on a journey past many lakes, rivers, brooks, medieval fish ponds, along the Grand Union Canal, through ancient woodlands such as Shenley, Great Linford and Howe Park Wood. You can meander through 6,000 acres of parkland and green space, cared for and managed by The Parks Trust, which includes Sites of Special Scientific Interest with rare and protected species of plants and wildlife. You can weave your way through beautiful old villages that are tucked neatly next to modern estates and old coaching inns, past modern sculpture and along art trails

and then there are the trees. Oh the trees! Over 22 million trees and shrubs have been planted across the new town and they sit comfortably aside modern architecture and beautiful, ancient oaks.



But where to begin? There are numerous cycling and walking clubs in MK but I just love to get out and explore, with friends if they are available or just on my own if they're not. The Redways were designed to be 'convenient, safe and pleasant' and in my experience they are just that and so much more. Don't be afraid to get lost! I often discover new places and hidden gems accidentally and even when I'm in the midst of all that huge open space I never feel worried about exploring on my own. The redways, one of the largest urban cycle path networks of its kind, are massively underused by residents and tourists, so let's make the most of them and get out there and enjoy our 'forest city'.

Nicky Kenny



ilton Keynes was built around a handful of small villages and over farmland, however the area has a rich historic legacy, with evidence of permanent settlement dating back to the Bronze Age. Around a quarter of the urban area of MK now consists of parkland, lakes or woodland and maintains this rich ancient heritage alongside modern development. Ancient woodland areas such as Shenley, Kingsmead and Howe Park Wood are full of veteran trees and there are many ancient oaks standing tall in most of the new estates, once part of the woodlands that still survive, proud boundary markers of the fields that were farmed before the houses and roads were built.

When we first began to research the Pilgrims Trail, we set off from Westbury Arts Centre on a cold day in March, to take a walk through Shenley Wood. We had barely been walking for five minutes, along Foxcovert Drive, when an ancient oak came in to sight and stopped us in our tracks. Sitting on the edge of the wood stands a beautiful English or pedunculate oak tree, *Quercus robur*, with a girth of just over five metres, which ages the tree to between three and four hundred years old. What makes this tree particularly striking is its large girth with a hollow centre, that draws the viewer nearer to look inside. When you approach the tree you are greeted with lovely gnarled shapes inside its expanding interior, one of which looks very much like a face, if you have an active imagination like me! During the course of our research I returned to this tree many times, to show people we walked and cycled with and I

took many pictures of this face, one of which you will find on the opposite page.

As we researched the Pilgrims Trail further I became fascinated by the amount of ancient oaks along the trail and all over MK. Ancient and veteran trees are especially important for wildlife and our native oak supports more life forms than any of our other native trees.

Other fantastic oaks along the route of the Pilgrims Trail are near the original site of Snelshall Priory, which lies unmarked on the western edge of MK near Kingsmead. There are beautiful specimens scattered all over Tattenhoe Park, particularly the magical snippet of woodland in the Water Sinney. And of course within Howe Park Wood you will find not only ancient oaks and incredible ash trees but a veteran crab apple too.

If you would like to age some oaks near you, The Woodland Trust have produced a guide on how to estimate their age, which you can find on their website.

You can add ancient or special trees near you to the map on The Woodland Trust's Ancient Tree Inventory, which you can find online here:

<https://ati.woodlandtrust.org.uk>

Or celebrate the trees that you love on Tree Dressing Day, which falls on the first weekend of December. Initiated by Common Ground in 1990 Tree Dressing Day has become a valuable way for communities to come together and celebrate the trees they share their space with. More info can be found here:

<https://www.commonground.org.uk/tree-dressing-day/>

Nicky Kenny

Pilgrim Badges and the Devil in a Boot



Pilgrim badges were worn by devotees as a sign of fellowship with other pilgrims and to merit gifts of food and shelter on their travels. Each shrine generated its own badge, so the many shrines to some of the most popular "saints" resulted in a number of different styles of badge being produced in different parts of the country. One such badge found at Shenley Church End celebrates the story of Sir John Schorne and the Devil in a Boot.

Sir John Schorne was not a canonized saint, but he had a strong following and royal patronage. His followers asked him for help in the relief of gout and the ague. He is said to have performed many miracles which drew pilgrims to visit Buckinghamshire.

John Schorne was rector of North Marston in Buckinghamshire (approximately 15 miles from Milton Keynes) in 1290, until his death in 1313. His fame and veneration were the result of his being said to have forced the devil into a boot when driving the evil out of an epileptic woman. He also, during a drought, struck the ground with his staff and a spring (now a well) broke forth. This spring contained a lot of iron compounds, and among other purposes was good against gout - which may have been the devil in the boot.

The well is still in the village and the water is very good.

Pilgrims were provided with small lead badges showing John Schorne, bareheaded, wearing a long robe; in front of him was a long boot with the devil's head appearing at the top.

In 1478 the pope gave permission to move the body of John Schorne from the parish church at North Marston to the Lincoln Chapel at Windsor. Later his remains were returned to Long Marston where they remained for the next hundred years until the Reformation - at which time the offerings of pilgrims were estimated at £500 a year. Erasmus says that there were nearly as many pilgrims to Long Marston as to Walsingham.





1. Bradwell Abbey - home to Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre, the site of a 12th century Benedictine priory, the chapel of St Mary displays unique wall paintings depicting medieval pilgrimage.
2. The Concrete Cows - created in 1978 by Canadian artist, Liz Leyh. The original cows are now sited at Milton Keynes Museum. The cows you will find on the trail, next to Monks Way, are replicas created by artist Bill Billings.
3. Millennium Circular Cycle Route - a 12 mile circular route around Milton Keynes. The Pilgrims Trail joins this route through the picturesque Loughton Valley.
4. Loughton Valley Linear Park - a beautiful section of parkland managed by The Parks Trust. Like most parkland in MK it was designed to hold floodwater to protect housing. Now home to a huge amount of wildlife, including kingfishers and woodpeckers. Examples of medieval fields and old springs can still be found here.
5. Lodge Lake - a very popular fishing spot in MK and home to many birds, including herons, swans and little grebes.
6. Stepping Stones - located in the Loughton Valley Linear Park, south of Lodge Lake, these large stepping stones across the shallow stream are great fun for children and adults to jump across.
7. All Saints Church - The medieval building of All Saints sits in the heart of Loughton and is home to a lively family church. Located not far from the Pilgrims' Trail.
8. Pirate Park, Loughton - an excellent park for children with a wooden pirate ship. The Grumpy Cook Café at the Pavilion, Linceslade Grove, Loughton, is located near the park.
9. The Talbot Inn - an ancient coaching inn on London Road, Loughton. Large pub with a big garden and extensive menu. A resting place for pilgrims and travellers for many centuries who would have journeyed along the ancient trackway of Watling Street.
10. St Mary's Church - has existed in some form from 1223, parts of the nave date back to c.1150, and parts of the chancel date back to c.1180. The church is Grade I listed and, like All Saints in Loughton, is part of the Watling Valley Ecumenical Partnership and holds regular services.
11. Shenley Toot - this small pasture area is a scheduled ancient monument. In 1239 AD it was a moated motte and bailey castle, home to the family of Hugh Earl of Chester. Now managed by The Parks Trust and often grazed by cattle in the summer months you can discover bluebells in the spring and the heady scent of lime blossom during the summer.

12. Shenley Wood - ancient woodland composed principally of ash and oak trees, with an 'understory' of hazel, the wood was first recorded in the Domesday survey of 1086. Managed by The Parks Trust, an excellent spot for walks and picnics.
13. Westbury Arts Centre - a Grade II listed 17th Century farmhouse building, which provides both permanent and temporary artists studio spaces, as well as rooms and exhibition spaces available for hire.
14. Milton Keynes Boundary Walk - a 63 mile circular footpath. You can go from Bottle Dump roundabout, past Tattenhoe Park, Kingsmead and Oxley Park from there you can turn past Woodhill towards Shenley Wood to join the Pilgrims' Trail. This is part of the long distance walk known as the North Bucks Way, shared by the Swans Way and the Midshires Way.
15. Oxley Mead - is a 3.7 hectare biological Site of Special Scientific Interest on the south-western outskirts of MK. An ancient hay meadow which has a nationally rare plant community and is managed by The Parks Trust.
16. Snelshall Priory - an ancient scheduled monument which contains the extensive earthwork remains of a Benedictine priory built around 1200. The stones from the priory are believed to have been recycled to build the nearby St Giles Church in Tattenhoe.
17. Tattenhoe Valley Linear Park - spans two miles with various habitats including a brook, ponds, meadows, beautiful trees and is teeming with wildlife. Managed by the Parks Trust.
18. Water Spinney - at the western edge of Tattenhoe, the brook runs through a small woodland which is a scheduled ancient monument. The site includes a large medieval fishpond.
19. Howe Park Wood - is a 21.4 hectare ancient woodland and Site of Special Scientific Interest. In medieval times it would have provided habitats for food and a source of raw materials for a variety of crafts for nearby villagers. Now actively managed by The Parks Trust it is home to a wide variety of wildlife and more than 200 plant species. There is a visitor centre and cafe for further information and refreshments.
20. St Giles Church - the church dates from around 1538. It is the second church building on the site, the first is thought to date back to medieval times, as the yew trees in the grounds are believed to be around 800 years old.
21. The Prince George - opened in February 2014 after an extensive construction programme, it stands spectacularly proud in the Milton Keynes suburb of Tattenhoe. It is named after Prince William and Kate's first born. Large pub and garden that serves food.



The Parks Trust

www.theparkstrust.com

MK Heritage Association

www.mkheritage.co.uk

MK Natural History Society

www.mknhs.org.uk

Westbury Arts Centre

www.westburyartscentre.co.uk

Watling Valley Ecumenical Partnership

www.watlingvalley.org.uk

Shenley Parish Council

www.shenleybrookend-pc.gov.uk

Milton Keynes City Discovery Centre

www.mkcdc.org.uk

Culture MK, MK Council

www.destinationmiltonkeynes.co.uk/Culture-in-MK

Louise Izod - Public Art, MKC
 Shane Downer - Heritage, MKC
 Noel James - City Discovery Centre
 Westbury Arts Centre
 Shenley Walkers
 National Women's Register walkers
 Nick Crank
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 Records of Buckinghamshire
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Canonical sundial by the entrance to St Giles's Church, Tattenhoe

