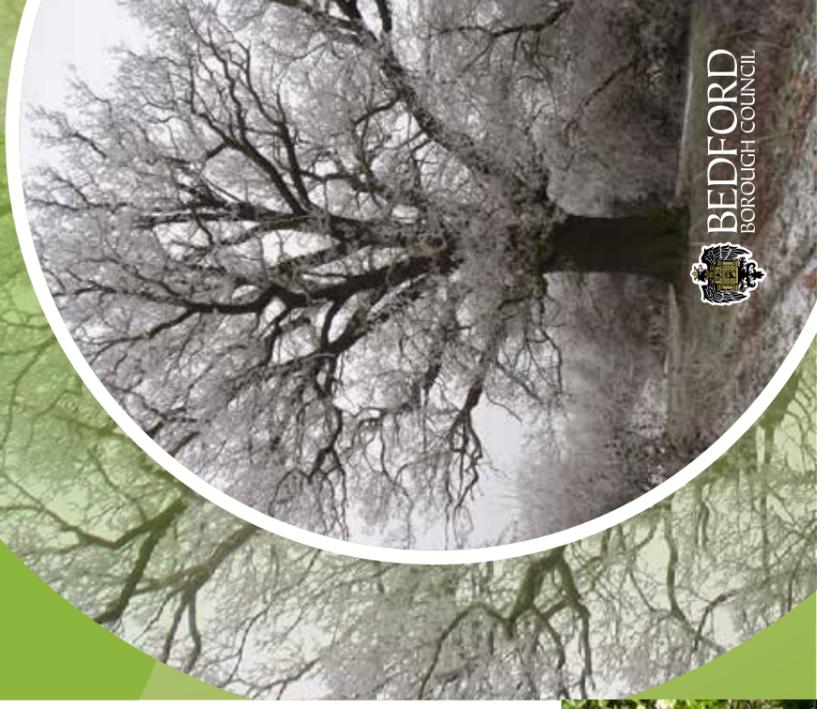


West of Stagsden

Either 4.5 or 9 miles / 7 or 14.5 km Time: 2 or 4 hours



Explore a valley with fields and small woods west of the quiet village of Stagsden in north Bedfordshire

Stagsden

The settlement of Stagsden (formerly Stachedene) dates back to the Iron Age. Roman remains have also been found. Following the Norman invasion, the parish was divided into six manors which were gifted to supporters of William. After a period of ownership by the Earls of Peterborough and then the Trevors, much of the parish was bought by the Crown in 1873.

Slate roofed brick-built 'Crown cottages' built during this period are dotted around the parish. The Crown estate of 3360 acres and many farms and cottages was sold at auction in 1921. The old school house, now the renovated Village Hall, remains in Crown Estates ownership.

Local geology and soils

Although older buildings in the village are of locally quarried limestone, surrounding land is underlain by the glacial chalky boulder clay visible in ditch cuttings. The soils are alkaline, clayey and require artificial drainage. They support large crop yields particularly of wheat. Some low land is underlain by acid clay soils and more suited to pasture.

Flora and fauna

Stagsden's farmland and base-rich woods host a variety of flora and fauna. Primroses, Bluebells and Cowslips abound in Spring.

The route passes several classic bluebell/anemone woods that host plants such as Spurge laurel, Wayfaring tree and Guelder rose, indicators of their ancient woodland status. You pass a giant oak alongside the stream beyond West End Farm.

Grass verges provide habitat for a range of common wild flowers and rarities such as the Bee Orchid. Buzzards are a familiar sight in the skies above; Red Kites rarer. Other birds include Skylark, Woodpeckers, finches, Red Legged and some Grey Partridge.

The call of Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Whitethroat can be heard along with numerous Swallows and the odd Yellow Wagtail. In winter Redwings and Fieldfares join resident Song and Mistle Thrushes feeding on grassland and tall, berry-bearing hedges.

Our summer butterflies include Meadow Brown, Gatekeeper and both Common and Holy Blue. Grass snakes still survive in the area. Hares, foxes and deer can also be seen.



A farmed landscape

The crops grown around Stagsden are predominantly winter wheat and oilseed rape which has bright yellow flowers in Spring. You may come across a field of barley, field peas or beans grown for animal feed. There are a few beef suckler herds in the area. However, there are now almost as many horses in Stagsden as there are cattle! Game covers and small spinneys provide habitat for birds.

Planning your walk

The Royal George pub in the centre of Stagsden is the suggested starting point and the walk is described in an anticlockwise direction. There are several other potential starting points and a number of paths and bridleways, which are marked on the map, offer alternative and shorter routes if you get tired or the weather changes.

Refreshments, parking and toilets

There is parking on the High Street and alongside the churchyard. The Royal George pub has kindly agreed to allow parking for walkers who take refreshments there. Inform the landlord if you intend to leave your car in the car park. You may also be able to get coffee at Manor Farm shop opposite the church.



Other walks

Find out about more of Bedfordshire's walking and riding routes as well as nature reserves and country parks by visiting www.lets-go.org.uk



Countryside Code

www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

- 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
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

Maps and GPS

The route is on OS Landranger map 153 and the more detailed OS Explorer sheet 208. There is a downloadable Garmin GPS track and route for the walk on www.stagsden.bedsparishes.gov.uk along with details of other local walks in and around the parish

Tips for enjoying your walk

If you have a dog, take care where there are livestock or, if possible, take an alternative route. Cows with calves can be a problem. Parts of the walk can become muddy especially after heavy rain so strong waterproof footwear is recommended.

Take care where conditions are rough and let someone know where you are going if you will be on your own. Please be aware that much of the walk is unsuitable for wheelchairs and pushchairs. There are stiles on the walk.

Public transport

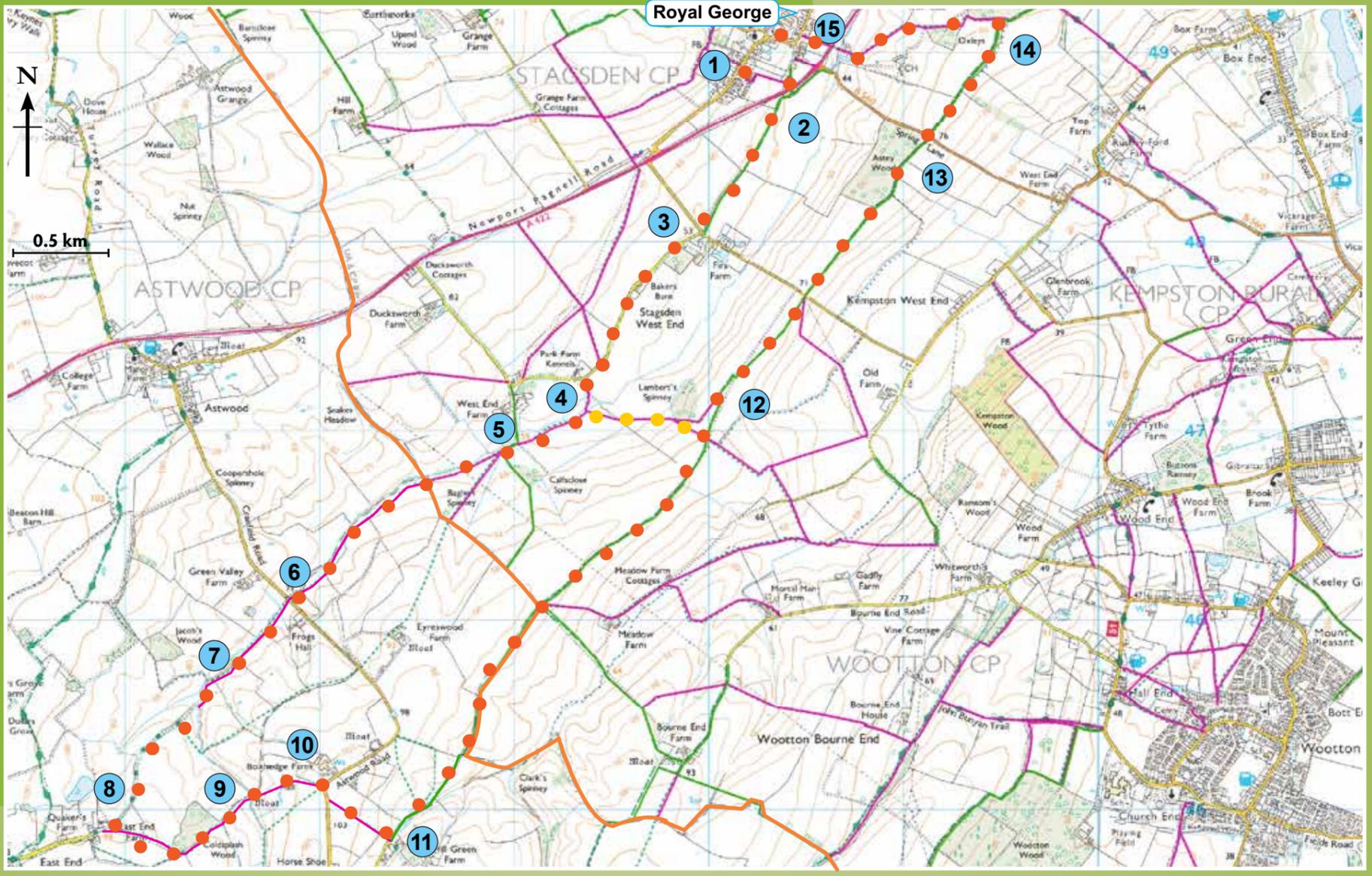
There is an hourly bus service through Stagsden that travels between Bedford and Milton Keynes. For details, contact Traveline on 0871 2002233 or go to www.traveline.info

Circular walks



West of Stagsden

Either 4.5 or 9 miles / 7 or 14.5 km Time: 2 or 4 hours



Key

- **The walk**
- **The short cut**
- **Public Bridleway**
- **Bedford Borough Boundary**
- **Public Footpath**
- Woodland**
- Directions**

For the **4.5 mile walk** follow sections 1 to 4 and then 12 onward.
For the **full 9 mile walk** follow all sections.

- 1** Turn left out of Royal George car park then left into Oakcroft. Keep straight ahead into field and turn left onto footpath around edge of field. Turn left at bottom corner and down steps to the underpass. Turn right, go under the bypass and branch right.
- 2** The footpath continues along edge of fields to Firs Farm.
- 3** Cross over the road and continue straight ahead in the direction of Stagsden West End.
- 4** After two thirds of a mile, turn left onto the footpath just before Park Farm. Follow this path into the small plantation after 50 yards and across the footbridge.
For shorter 4.5 mile walk angle left across field to marker post in hedge and then across next field toward right edge of Lamberts Spinney. From there, turn up hill to ridge and turn left back onto the main circular route at 12 below (orange dots on map). For Main 9 mile walk turn right and follow edge of field.
- 5** Continue on the left bank of the stream past the bridge at West End Farm through several hedges and over ditches keeping the stream on your right. The path goes through a narrow rough field with a large ancient oak tree and continues on along a short green lane between hedges. In the field beyond, head for the left hedge line and then cut across the field toward the far bottom corner by the stream where there is a stile into the next field. Keep to right hand edge and go over the stile and across the road.
- 6** Go through the kissing gate, keep close to the stream, go over the stile to the right of the old building and continue straight ahead through several fields following path markers and keeping the stream on your right for half a mile.
- 7** Turn right and go over a footbridge, and up hill through the copse for another half mile before emerging on to a gravel track.
- 8** Just beyond Quaker's Farm take the marked path to the left through a gate in the beech hedge. Follow the path along the track, and left across a field to the marker post and back onto the track.
- 9** Keeping Coldsplash Wood on your left, follow signs along hedge line, cross over the stream at the bottom of the field and head uphill keeping to the right of the hedge. At the marker post head across field keeping left of small spinney and go to the corner by the far wood.
- 10** Cross over the road, walk along to the right and take the path on the left after 100m. Follow the direction across the field, through the gap at the bottom
- 11** Turn left onto the bridleway. Follow signs alongside hedge crossing over a small stream and continue with hedge now on your left. Continue straight ahead and at corner post leave hedge and keep straight on heading across field towards the tallest pylon. You will eventually see a short marker post on the horizon. Continue straight ahead past this post along path under pylon and keep to the ridge.
- 12** Keep straight on until you reach the road. Cross over the road and continue along ridge track keeping to the right of Astey Wood.
- 13** Cross the road, continue on footpath straight ahead along hedge and onto golf course. Keep to the right along the top of the course and follow marker posts around woodland edge.
- 14** Turn left along gravel path and right at corner of Oxleys Wood (around the back of the golf hut). Continue down the hill, past the pond and head for the main entrance to the course (there is a green keepers building just to its right). Go over the small footbridge right of the road bridge and take footpath up to main road.
- 15** Take extra care crossing main road, go over stile directly ahead and walk up the field to village road. Turn left and follow main road up through village to return to the Royal George for a well deserved drink.

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