

# Swan's Way

The 65 miles Swan's Way long distance bridle route runs from Salcey Forest in the north to Goring-on-Thames in the south

## Linear Walk

### Features of Interest

The bridle route crosses a very wide variety of scenery starting at Salcey Forest in Northamptonshire, then across the Ouse valley, offering fine views and passing through part of the growing new city of Milton Keynes. South of Milton Keynes is the Vale of Aylesbury with its hilly areas of Waddesdon and Quainton. Swan's Way follows the chalk scarp of the Chiltern Hills with its beechwoods, valleys and views down to the Thames at Goring.



**1** Salcey Forest is a large remaining area of Ancient Royal Hunting Forest of over 1200 acres. The Forestry Commission have provided rides, walks (including those for the disabled) and a picnic area. The south eastern part of the forest (mature oaks, hazel and ash) is an important nature reserve, with grassland rides and woodland margins being valuable for butterflies, moths and birds.

**2** The church of St. James the Great in Hanslope with its slender and graceful spire is a notable landmark. The spire, rebuilt after being struck by lightning in 1804 rises from the fifteenth century tower and is supported by 4 flying buttresses.

**3** The land drops down dramatically from east of Haversham into the Ouse Valley providing a panoramic view of Linford Lakes. The route passes the remains of the twelfth century Church of St. Peter's now restored as a local monument.



**4** A modern building just to the east is the A.R.C. Wildfowl centre and nature reserve creating a valuable nature resource from wet gravel pits. Visitors are welcome by appointment.



**5** The Grand Union Canal, built between 1793 and 1805, runs through Milton Keynes. It provided a vital link between London and the Industrial Midlands but today it is used for leisure purposes.

**6** Between Stantonbury and New Bradwell the ride follows a disused branch railway line which was closed in 1964, now providing a cycleway, footpath and bridleway.



Bradwell Windmill was built around 1817 and ceased working in 1876. It has now been restored as an example of industrial archaeology.

**7** Bradwell Abbey Priory was founded in the middle of the 12th century by the Benedictine

Follow the Countryside Code:

- 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

Further Information:

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Email: [row@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:row@buckscc.gov.uk)

or visit our website at [www.buckscc.gov.uk/rights\\_of\\_way](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/rights_of_way)



Monks. After Dissolution, the abbey continued to be used as a farm by various tenants.

- 8 Now only the 14th century chapel of the Abbey and a few remains of structures incorporated into later buildings still stand. The 17th century farmhouse became the home of the 'City of discovery Centre' which offers environmental interpretation facilities for people in the area.



- 9 Loughton Valley Park extends from Milton Keynes Bowl to Loughton Village and forms part of the city's generous network of parks and open spaces.

- 10 Loughton Brook has a long history of flooding. To control it four balancing lakes have been built along its course. Swan's Way passes by two of these lakes, Bancroft and Lodge Lake where skilful planning has combined engineering works



with an attractive parkland setting.

- 11 Whaddon Village is on a high plateau and has an interesting church. Whaddon is where Edmund Spenser wrote some of the poem "Faerie Queen" in 1590.



- 12 The Priory earthworks to the east of Whaddon, alongside the path, mark the site of Snelshall Priory, a Benedictine Abbey founded in about 1166 and dissolved 1535.

- 13 The attractive village of Swanbourne was virtually destroyed in the civil war. The majority of its black and white cottages are 17th century.

- 14 North Marston was a famous place of pilgrimage. The spring, reputed to have healing properties, is now marked by a pump and a stone structure. The church is very attractive with a nave roof dating from the 1300's. It was restored by Queen Victoria using a fortunes left to her by a local miser.

- 15 Among the hills, surrounding Quainton lies Fulbrook Farm, a 16th century moated manor house. On the northern slopes of Quainton Hill, ridges mark the site of a deserted mediaeval settlement.

- 16 Denham Lodge is a very fine early 17th century house, still surrounded by a water filled moat. In addition there are the earthworks of a deserted mediaeval village.



- 17 Quainton village has many fine buildings including the old windmill. The church at Quainton has a large collection of family monuments and statues.

- 18 Swan's Way, south of the A41 skirts the eastern edge of Waddesdon Manor and grounds. The Estate is built in the French 'Chateau' style. The gardens were all carefully designed to give views out over the surrounding countryside. The house and gardens are now managed by the National Trust.

- 19 From Waddesdon to Stone, Swan's Way passes through some very attractive countryside and parkland, belonging to the



Waddesdon Estate.

- 20 Upper Winchendon situated on a ridge gives extensive views of the Thame Valley and the Chilterns. The twelfth century church is a delight.

- 21** Eythrope Park is a most attractive parkland and farming area. The charming surroundings of the River Thames are worth lingering over.
- 22** Stone has fine partly Norman Parish Church with a remarkable Norman Font with a design of human heads, birds, animals and fishes.
- 23** Moreton Farm is a good example of a deserted mediaeval village with a moat which would have surround the old Manor House. Many of these deserted villages resulted from a change over from cereals to sheep in the late mediaeval period.
- 24** Ilmer is an attractive village, worth the slight detour. St. Peter's Church is one of the oldest in the Diocese of Oxford, with Norman traces. The unusual shingle spire was restored in 1979.
- 25** Bledlow is a very attractive village with a fine setting on the western scarp of the Chilterns. Of particular interest is the Norman Church of the Holy Trinity with its flint faced walls. The river Lyde rises from a spring in the churchyard and a garden has been laid out here with broadwalk. The Lions Pub dates from the 17th century.
- 26** Bledow Cop rises 799 feet above sea level and has a round barrow atop the crest. Bledlow Cross at Wainhill was probably carved by a local landowner, imitating the nearby Whiteleaf Cross in the late 18th century.
- 27** From the west of Bledlow, Swan's Way follows the Ridgeway long Distance Route south westwards to Swyncombe Downs. The Ridgeway long Distance Route was opened up in 1973 running from Ivinghoe Beacon in Bucks to near Avebury in Wiltshire, following the chalk ridge and affording magnificent views. It is one of the great prehistoric tracks of England.
- 28** Beacon Hill north of the M40 rises to 784 feet. The Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve is well known for its many plants and juniper, privet and yew scrub.
- 29** Watlington Hill and its white mark are managed by National Trust. Watlington Hill rises to 686 feet giving superb views. This is of particular



interest to naturalists are its yews.

- 30** The Watlington White mark was carved in 1764 by a Mr. Horne. The church did not have a spire and Mr Horne thought it should, so he had one carved on the hillside, so when he looked out his bedroom window, the carving appeared to be the spire of the church!
- 31** Ewelme is a picture book village well worth seeing. At its heart is the marvellous complex of church, almshouses and the village school, all built in the mid 15th century by the Earl of Suffolk and his wife Alice who was the granddaughter of the poet Chaucer. Its industries include watercress in the stream running through the village and a honey bottling factory.
- 32** Swan's Way crosses Grim's (The Devil's) Ditch which runs east to west. The ancient earthworks can be traced in Hertfordshire, Bucks and Oxfordshire. Here it formed a territorial boundary between two Iron Age tribal kingdoms.



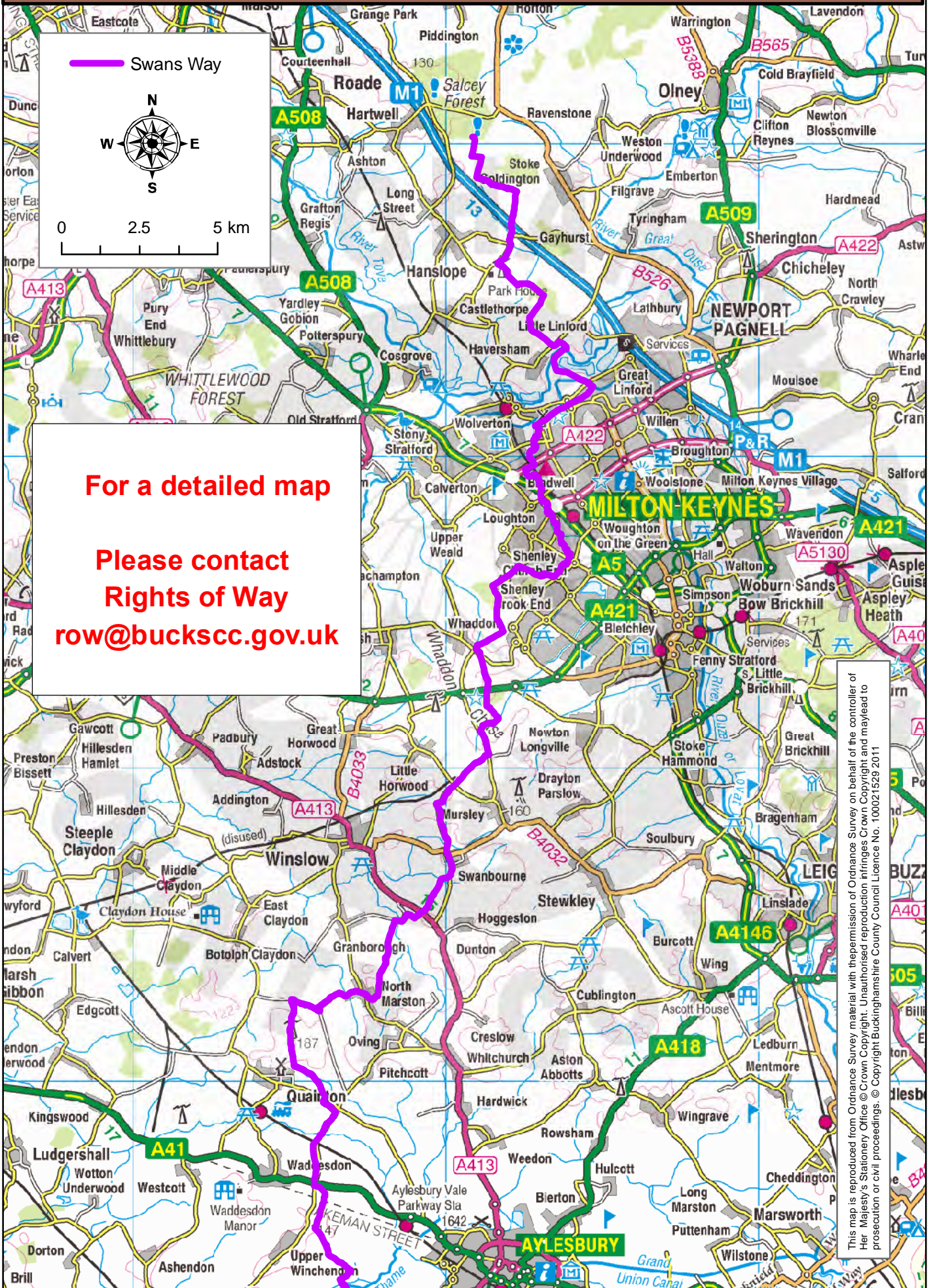
South Stoke is a Thames side village with considerable charm and interest, with its thatch and church which is over 700 years old. The Thames

railway bridge just north of the village is one of Brunel's finest visited by engineers from all over the world.

- 33**
- 34** Goring on Thames is a most attractively sited town in the river gap of the Chilterns. The scenery around includes some of the most picturesque reaches of the Thames and the richly wooded hilltops and high commons of the Chiltern Hills.
- 35** The locks and weirs, the Church of St. Thomas dating from 1125, and the fine collection of historic buildings make Goring an ideal start or finish to Swan's Way.



# Swan's Way Route - overview



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