

15 Old Warden

A longer circular ride from Old Warden Church, but one which includes particularly interesting places early on (Swiss Garden, Shuttleworth Collection, Ickwell and Northill) so that those seeking a shorter ride can simply ride out and back from these, a 3 mile round trip to Northill. The ride continues beyond Northill to Cople and Cardington whence it returns via Warden Tunnel and Warden Abbey. Inexperienced riders may find this ride a little too busy on flying days at Shuttleworth.

**12 Miles
HARDER**

PUBS

Hare & Hounds, Old Warden
Crown, Northill
Kings Head, Cardington
Five Bells, Cople

TEAS & SNACKS

Café, Shuttleworth Museum

PICNIC SITES

Northill Village Pond
Ickwell Green
Swiss Gardens

Our description starts at from the car park at Old Warden Church but the ride is easily picked up from Bedford at Cardington (see Connections).

A LONGER CIRCULAR RIDE FROM OLD WARDEN CHURCH

At Old Warden Church car park take some time to read the local information boards and look in the church.

Leave the car park and go back down the hill. Turn left at the bottom.

At the next junction decide whether to visit the Swiss Garden and/or the Shuttleworth Collection. The Swiss Garden was restored in the early 1980s to its former romantic glory. There is an admission charge but there is a free lakeside picnic site alongside.

The Shuttleworth Collection is nationally famous for its collection of veteran aircraft (and other early vehicles). There is a café, although it is closed on flying days except to people visiting the spectacular flying displays. To visit those continue straight on. They are both on the right after a quarter of a mile and about a mile from Old Warden Church. If you decide to skip these:-

Turn left at the junction for Ickwell Green and Northill.

People going to the Swiss Garden and the Shuttleworth collection first, need to return here and turn right after their visit.

Ickwell Green comes up after another half mile, a classically beautiful English scene, especially when cricket is being played, or the May Day festivities are being celebrated. Just up the road to Caldecote on the right is the cottage where Thomas Tompion, the famous clock maker to Charles II, was born.

Continue on the road to Northill.

This is another attractive village with its fine church, village pub and pond. We suggest that those not wishing to do the full circuit turn round here (about a 3 miles round trip).

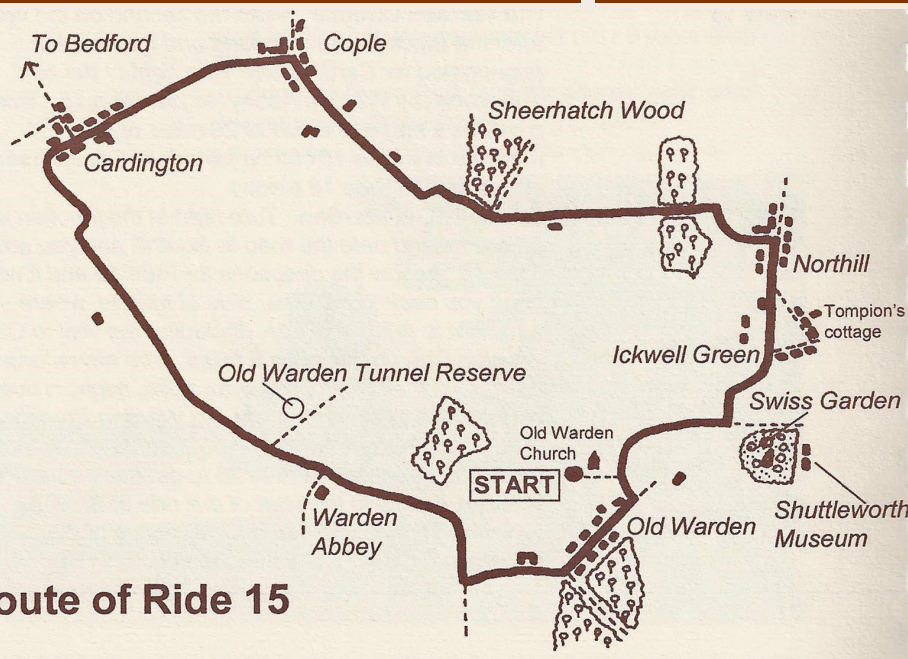
From Northill turn left up by the church and follow this road all the way to Cople (just over 3 miles).

It's a bit of a drag up to Sheerhatch Wood on the top of the Greensand Ridge, but there's a very fine view from the top and you can enjoy the nice run down to Cople. If you want a longer ride, the right turn to Moogerhanger at the top of the hill will take you to Willington on Ride 18 (see Connections below).

In Cople turn left by the church and follow the road to Cardington. On Cardington Green the road from, Bedford (see Connections) comes in from the right. If you want to visit the church or the grave of the victims of the R101 tragedy (in the cemetery beyond the church) then turn right, otherwise:-

Continue straight on to return to Old Warden.

There is an impressive view of the huge hangers built for airship manufacture ninety or so years ago. The site of Cardington Manor, a moated manor house, is



Route of Ride 15

on the right about one and a half miles after you have left the village. When you get to the bottom of the hill you are probably feeling tired as you have been climbing gently all the way from the railway bridge, so if you are walking up enjoy the lovely views behind you. At the top of the hill you can turn left onto a bridleway and visit the Warden Tunnel Nature Reserve. Leave your bikes at the edge of the reserve and explore it on foot, respecting the wildlife. You can carry on along the bridleway for an off-road route back to the church (Ride 18).

Continue on the road back to Old Warden, following the signs and ignoring turnings to the right.

Enjoy the downhill run and keep your eye open for evidence of Warden Abbey (private) which is to your right beyond the minor road on the right. Those heading for Rowney Warren should take this road (see Connections below).

Follow the road out of the village as it swings left and then turn left into the lane and up the little hill to the church car park.

We suggest that those who joined the circuit at Cardington, also take this turn in order to visit the church and find out more about the area.



A TYPICAL COTTAGE IN THE BEAUTIFUL VILLAGE OF OLD WARDEN

CONNECTIONS

From Bedford

This ride can be accessed at Cardington by riding out the 2 miles from Priory Country Park on Ride 18. Priory Park is itself accessed from within the town by Ride 1 and the town rides connecting to it.

Rides 13

Elstow, Haynes, Rowney Warren. Can be joined at Cardington. It provides a circular extension to Warden Abbey, adding an extra 9 miles net. It includes an off-road section from Elstow to Haynes which can be difficult in wet weather. At Cardington Green turn right to join it. Follow the directions in Ride 13 to Warden Abbey where you rejoin this ride by turning right at the T-junction.

Ride 14

Rowney Warren, Shefford, Ireland. Can be joined by turning right into the minor road (signposted for Haynes) just beyond Warden Tunnel and then going right at the next junction and straight on to the A600. You can return the same way or by Ride 16 via Southill (see Connections for both in Ride 14). Both add 8 miles or so net.

Ride 16

Southill. This is a lovely circular extension adding, just under 6 miles. You can join it by turning right at the next junction (about 1 mile) after Warden Abbey. The directions for Ride 16 will take you back to Old Warden Church.

Ride 18

Greensand Ridge. This lovely off-road ride can be joined at two places:-

1) at the top of the hill out of Northill turn right on the road to Moggerhanger. The off-road sections of this part are not too difficult. It will take you via Willington and Priory Park to Cardington, where you rejoin this ride (15). It adds about an extra 5 miles net.

2) at Warden Tunnel, continue past the nature reserve to return off-road to Old Warden Church. This is slightly more difficult. It is about the same distance as the road route via the village.