

things to do & see around Studham

- Annual Fair every May
- Cricket, football, tennis. Playing fields
- St Mary's Church, if locked key from 01582 873257
- Studham Nursery, Jean & John, Clements End Rd 01582 872958
- Red Lion PH, Debbie & Graham, 01582 872530
- The Bell PH, Steve & Sharon, 01582 872460
- Harpers Farm Shop, Dunstable Road, 01582 872001
- Whipsnade Tree Cathedral (NT) 01582 872406
- Whipsnade Wild Animal Park 01582 872171
- Dunstable Downs (NT) 01582 608489
- London Gliding Club 01582 663419



speckled wood

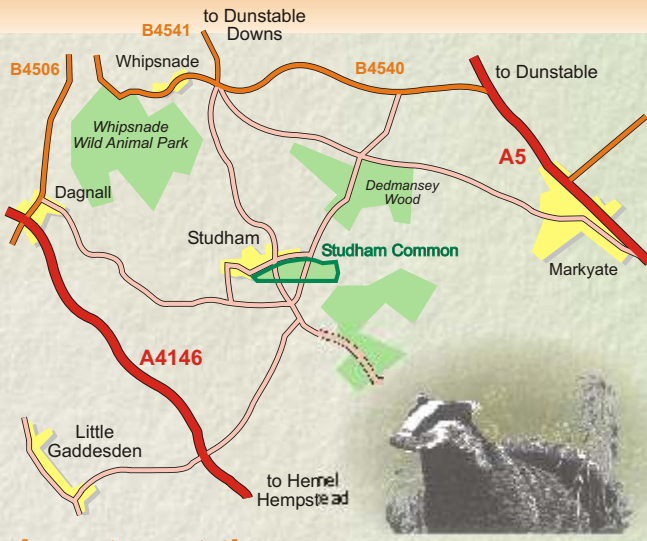
things to note...

- Please remember the old country code
- **TAKE nothing but photographs - LEAVE nothing but footprints**
- There are litter bins and dog waste bins in the car parks
- Please do not pick wild flowers or dig up plants
- Local by-laws do not permit cars, motor bikes, lighting of fires or flying model aircraft on the common
- Do not leave valuables in your parked car

if you enjoyed this walk...

If this walk has whetted your appetite, there are many other beautiful walks to explore around here. We hope this leaflet will inspire you to find out more about the **Friends of Studham Common**. We have a lot of fun and enjoyment with our conservation work and social activities. We warmly welcome new members.

For other walks in the area visit www.chilternsaonb.org



how to get there...

Studham lies 10km (6miles) west of the M1 (Junction 9 or 10) and the A5. It is 6km (4miles) due south of Dunstable on the B4541 and 12km (7miles) north of Hemel Hempstead, just off the A4146.

Public transport: Traveline 0870 608 2 608

P Parking: There are small car parks on East and Middle Commons (see main map)

for more information...

Visit the website of the North Chilterns Trust www.northchilternstrust.co.uk which has a link to Studham

For information on the Friends of Studham Common, phone John McDougal on 01582 873257

To report a problem, contact South Beds District Council on 01582 474167

acknowledgements...

Photographs: by the Friends of Studham Common unless otherwise stated. Dormouse: Colin Carver/RSPB Images. Buzzard: Paul Doherty/RSPB Images. Skylark: Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. Kestrel: Paul Burnett/Nutrocker. Illustrations by Steve Halton.

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enjoy - explore - enhance
your local environment

Studham Common



an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

about Studham Common

Studham Common, in South Bedfordshire, has been used as common land for centuries. Today this beautiful open space is a highly prized feature of the village, valued by the community as a place of recreation and a haven for wildlife.

The common is in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is a designated County Wildlife Site. Its rich mosaic of habitats - grassland, woodland, scrub thickets and hedgerows - supports an abundance of wildlife, including endangered and rare species such as the skylark and the dormouse.

Since medieval times the common was used by the local people for grazing, collecting wood and extracting gravel. More recently, the grassland areas were ploughed up for growing vegetables during World War II, destroying the local flora. The good news is that careful management since the 1960s has encouraged the return of a large number of indigenous plants, along with the wildlife that thrives on them.

The common is owned by South Bedfordshire District Council which is responsible for its overall management. Much of the day to day work is undertaken by the Friends of Studham Common (FOSC).

in this leaflet...

Our aim is to introduce you to Studham Common and inspire you to help conserve this rare natural asset.

In this leaflet you will find:

- a map and 45-minute guided tour of Studham Common and its wildlife
- ideas for other things to do in and around the village
- information about joining the Friends of Studham Common, your friendly local conservation group.



kestrel

wildlife on the common...

The common covers 154 acres divided into three areas. East and Middle Commons are mainly open grassland, bordered by hedgerows or scrub thickets. West Common, the smallest, is a mix of woodland, scrub thickets and a small playing field which serves as the village green.

The unusual combination of clay soil overlying chalk supports an interesting variety of plants. These offer rich habitats for a wide range of insects, birds and small mammals, some of which have been declining in numbers elsewhere.

Over 200 plant species, 26 species of butterfly and over 20 species of bird have been recorded. Skylarks, which are in national decline, breed in the grassland area and fill the air with their beautiful song in spring.

The common's eastern boundary is an ancient hedgerow dating back at least to medieval times. It is one of only two sites in the county where the dormouse, a rare, protected species, is found.

The 'clay-with-flints' grassland is of special value. It is one of the few habitats of this type remaining in Bedfordshire. In summer, the meadow grasses and flowers are a wonderful sight and provide food and protection to a host of butterflies, insects and small animals.

Up until the 1930s, sheep and cattle made a vital contribution to wildlife diversity by controlling the growth of invasive plants. This includes scrub plants, bracken and rough grasses. Today, control is achieved through mowing the grassland and cutting back vigorous weeds in the hedgerows and wooded areas.



knapweed



common blue

caring for the common...

The Friends of Studham Common (FOSC), with support from the North Chilterns Trust (NCT), help to conserve and promote the common as a haven for wildlife and a place to be enjoyed and appreciated by all.

In 2001, a five-year Management Plan was drawn up by the NCT, in consultation with the District Council, FOSC and the general public. **Its main aims are to:**

- protect and enhance the wildlife diversity of the common
- improve public access in order to encourage wider use
- raise local awareness of the common's value and support for safeguarding it.

blackthorn

the Friends of Studham Common

FOSC was formed in 1997 with 30 volunteers. Our aim is to maintain and improve the common for the benefit of wildlife and people.

Once a month, on a Saturday, we undertake conservation activities as recommended in the Management Plan. This includes clearing footpaths and scrub areas, restoring hedgerows, tree care and providing nesting boxes for bats, birds and dormice.

We are an informal and friendly group, with regular social events and opportunities to learn about wildlife in the area. Through affiliation with Beds CC Parish Paths Partnership we also have access to training and other conservation activities. These range from badger-watching and First Aid courses to learning how to use a brushcutter safely!



hedgerow planting

We warmly welcome new members of all ages and support of all kinds. Join us and help to keep the Common beautiful for everyone.

Contact:
John McDougal on 01582 873257

Studham Common Walk

2.4 km (about 1.5 miles)



Starting point:

2 With the Red Lion to your right, head across the common. Keep the goal-posts on your left and take the bridleway that leads westwards, towards the Old School House. In spring, you can see the delicate white flowers of pignut in the rough grass at the edge of the playing field; its tubers are a favourite food of badgers. In summer, this area is bright with the flowers of rosebay willow-herb and knapweed.

3 On your left is a small wood, flanked by blackthorn scrub. The phrase "a blackthorn winter" is often used when its white blossoms appear during a cold snap. Wild hop vines climb through the bushes on the right. The gorse here was once an important source of fuel for the commoners and now provides valuable protection for nesting birds. Bracken grows alongside the bridleway and elsewhere on the common. In spring its unfurling "crosier" tips look very attractive. Bracken is an invasive plant which quickly stifles other plant growth. Every year FOSC volunteers cut it back along with gorse and bramble bushes to keep paths open and create glades amongst the trees.

The bridleway opens out into an area of rough grass where in summer you may see the small black chimney sweeper moth whose caterpillars feed on the flowers and seeds of pignut. Ahead is the Old School House.

Optional detour/Blue Walks: About 20 minutes

This route takes you past the school and up Valley Road to Studham's beautiful 13th Century Church, returning to West Common along pleasant footpaths. One route passes the traditional Bell PH dating back to the middle ages. (See routes on the map.) For the more energetic, footpaths beyond the church take you to Whipsnade and Dunstable Downs, with magnificent views across the Vale of Aylesbury.

Access Information

The Blue Walk has no gates, stiles or steps. The paths are earth or grass and some of the paths are narrow. There are no steep slopes. This walk is likely to be suitable for all terrain pushchairs during drier months.

4 70 metres before the Old School House, take the path on the left running up into the wood. At the top of the incline, follow the path along the edge of the wood. Most of the woodland here dates from after World War II. Near the path there are cherry and oak trees and some large hawthorns. On the left are some deep pits; their origin is uncertain but they may be "marl" pits, where people dug out chalk to improve heavy clay soils. Speckled wood butterflies often fly in the patches of sunlight.

1 The walk starts and ends at the War Memorial on West Common, close to the Red Lion PH. The open grass area here is for everyone's enjoyment at rest or play and where popular events like Studham's Annual May Fair and Bonfire Night take place.

Access Information

West Common has no gates, stiles or steps. The paths are earth or grass. There are some slopes. This area is likely to be suitable for users of pushchairs and mobility scooters, especially during summer.

The paths around Middle Common and East Common have no gates, stiles or steps, however there are four narrow wooden bridges (50cm wide). The paths are earth or grass. There are no steep slopes. Suitable for pushchairs if these can be carried over the bridges.

10 Cross over Byslips Road to Middle Common. Continue along the bottom path to return to the War Memorial, or take a detour up to the Jubilee Copse. Look out for rooks and green woodpeckers foraging for insects in the grass around here.

9 Turn left on this track to return to Middle Common. Dead trees like the one on your left provide a vital source of insect food for woodpeckers and other birds. The trees and thick scrub to the right cover pits where the commoners used to excavate for red gravel. The verges here are one of the best areas on the common for wild flowers and butterflies. The yellow bird's-foot trefoil is food for the caterpillars of the common blue butterfly. The caterpillars of the marbled white and various "brown" butterflies feed on the grasses here, while the adult butterflies drink the nectar of the bramble, knapweed and thistle flowers. In some years you may spot wild orchids. Here, as in other parts of the common, FOSC volunteers periodically clear small areas of scrub and thick grasses to create a variety of 'microclimates'. This is essential to encourage a wider diversity of wild flowers and insect life.

8 Follow the path round to the left, along the hedge that forms the county boundary between Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire. This mature and dense hedgerow is a haven for wildlife. It is one of the few sites in the county where the dormouse, a protected species, is found. Hazel in the hedge is an important food for them. Blackthorn is abundant here and provides beautiful white blossoms in spring and sloes in autumn. Bluebells grow in the shade of the large beech trees. Follow the path down the slope to the concrete track that runs along the bottom of the common.

dormouse

Optional detour/Green Walk: About 30 minutes.

Turn right into the neighbouring field and follow the path which leads towards the Sports Field on Clements End Road. Here you can watch cricket on summer weekends, before returning via Common Road and the Old School House (see route marked in green on the map)

Access Information

The Green Walk has two narrow kissing gates.

6 Half way along this path is a bench where you can rest and enjoy the fine views over the common and the open countryside beyond. This is also an ideal place to spot kestrels, sparrow-hawks and, if you are lucky, buzzards, red kites and the occasional hare. The common is at its best in early summer, with a succession of grasses and wild flowers, such as buttercup, sorrel, oxeye daisy, clovers and several types of yellow dandelion-like flowers. Mowing for hay is left until late in the season to ensure that seeds have set and ground-nesting birds such as skylarks have finished nesting.

7 Cross Byslips Road to regain the path on East Common. Continue beside the hedgerow which forms the southern boundary. Much of oldest hedgerow here has been lost over time and FOSC volunteers are gradually restoring it with new hedging plants and trees.

ox-eye daisy



5 The path now crosses the road to Middle Common. Continue straight ahead, along the southern boundary path, the highest point of the common. Looking to your left, near the road, you will see two beech copses planted in 1973 and further over, the Jubilee Copse, planted by villagers in 1977 to commemorate the Queen's Silver Jubilee. The young trees beside the path were planted by the Parish Tree Warden. In the autumn the brambles behind them provide a rich harvest of blackberries for people and wildlife.

