

2017 WALK 12 BARKWAY AND REED

This circular walk of about 5¼ miles starts and finishes in Barkway, which is situated on the B1368 3½ miles south of Royston in the north of the county. The route takes in the village of Reed with its Saxon church and includes a short detour to enjoy the fine views from the chalk escarpment over the flat land to the north. There is another short detour to visit the site of a long-abandoned moated settlement, before returning across the fields to Barkway.

The route is mainly level and can be muddy in places. The first half of the walk in particular is exposed, especially in windy weather, so warm clothing might be needed. Binoculars would be useful to help identify landmarks when you reach the viewpoint on the edge of the chalk escarpment.

There is a pub at the southern end of Barkway.

Park on the roadside towards the northern end of the High Street in the centre of Barkway.

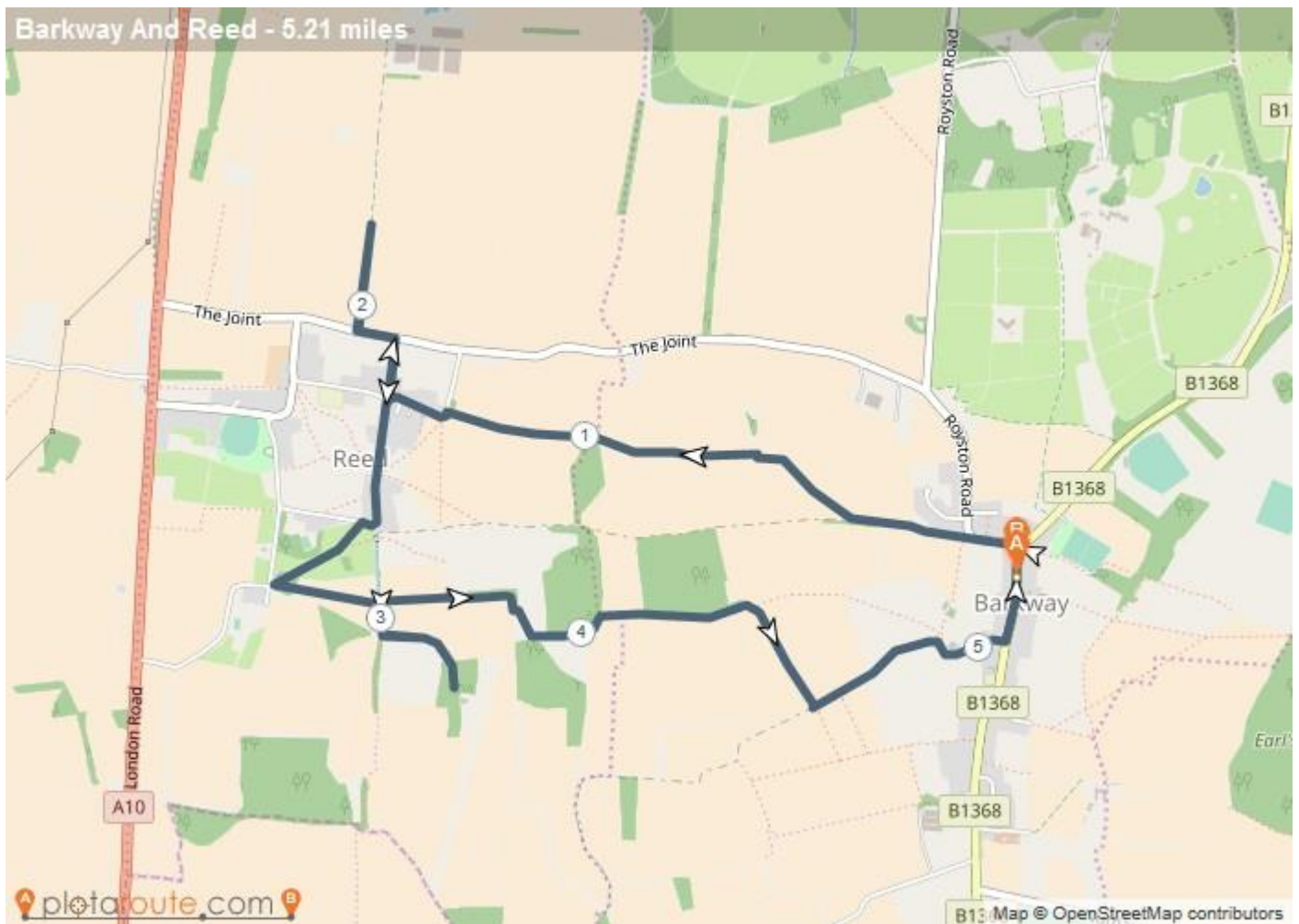
The High Street contains a delightful selection of houses of various architectural styles and ages which use a mixture of building materials, including this fine thatched cottage (see photo right).

Barkway was once a coaching town on the road between Ware and Cambridge, a route now superseded by the modern A10 to the west.

This walk passes through two very different landscapes. To the north on the thin soils of the chalk escarpment there are large, straight-sided fields which were created by the enclosure of the former open fields of Barkway and Reed parishes in the early 19th century. About 60% of the land in the two parishes was enclosed following an Act of Parliament in 1808.

Between the two villages there are small, irregularly-shaped fields with areas of woodland, winding green lanes and remnants of old common land or 'waste' such as Gannock Green. There are a number of moated settlements, including the abandoned site at Gannock Grove which this walk visits. Many moats date from the 12th century and surrounded isolated houses and farms. The underlying clay soil here is poorly drained, so the moats may have been a defence against flooding rather than intruders. This is a more ancient landscape pattern, medieval or even Saxon in places.





To begin the walk, head north along the High Street in Barkway, taking the opportunity to admire the variety of buildings. Where the road forks, turn left onto Royston Road which is signposted to Reed and Royston. There is a fine half-timbered black and white house by the junction (see photo right).



Where the road turns right, cross over and take Public Byway 2 signposted 'Reed 1¼', which heads west. After a short distance you will have a large field to your right and a thick hedge on the left.

Pass the end of a hedge to your right, then bear right on the footpath keeping the hedge to your right (see photo right). You are now heading towards a tall mast, one of several located on the edge of the chalk escarpment. Stay on the path as it bears left. You are now heading west again.



A little further on the path crosses a ditch and continues in the same direction, now with the ditch and a hedge to your left. Walk along the wide stone-covered track passing a telegraph pole on your left.

Go around the tip of the wood ahead. From here the track continues towards the trees and houses of the village of Reed. If you turn to look behind you the landscape beyond the escarpment will now be visible.

As you approach the village go through the gap in the hedge (see photo right), then turn left on the tarmacked lane. Follow the road past a thatched cottage and other houses.



Just before a small pond turn right to follow the public footpath heading north between hedges (see photo right). This is also the route of the Hertfordshire Way (see photo left).



When you reach the road cross over and turn left to walk along the road for a short distance, then turn right at the signpost 'Public Bridleway 1 Grange Farm 1½' which is also the route of the Herts Way. The view along the bridleway (see photo right) isn't promising! In about 350 yards though you will be rewarded with one of the best views in Hertfordshire.



A good viewpoint is by the gap in the hedge just below the brow of the hill. From here you can see a wide sweep of countryside, including far-reaching views towards Cambridge: the towers and spires of the city are visible if you stand to the right of the hedge. From the left of the hedge (see photo right), Wimpole Hall sits just below the ridge in the far distance.



It's said that on a clear day Ely Cathedral is visible from here.

From this point retrace your route to the road, then turn left and right to return to the pond in Reed. The seat labelled 'Best Kept Small Village 1996' is a reminder of the county's Best Kept Village competition which ran for many years, organised by CPRE Hertfordshire's predecessor organisation, The Hertfordshire Society. On a sunny day this is a good spot for a coffee stop if you have remembered to bring a flask (see photo right).



Head south from the pond along the High Street, past cottages in a variety of styles (see photo right).



Then turn right onto Driftway.

Almost immediately go through the kissing gate on the left and head diagonally across the field, towards the second kissing gate: you will see Reed church in the distance.



Keep heading towards the church, going through a third kissing gate into the churchyard. On the north wall of the church there is a blocked-up door with a rounded arch (see photo right), typical of the Norman or earlier Saxon style of architecture.



This way of positioning the stone blocks on the corners of the tower and nave walls is known as 'long-and-short-work', which is a Saxon feature (see photo left).

To resume the walk go past the south porch of the church (see photo right) and beyond the large yew tree you will see a gap in the hedge ahead (see photo below left). Go through the gap and straight on along the path crossing the field.



If you want to take the detour to visit the abandoned moated settlement at Gannock Grove, turn right at the far side of the field just before the hedge (see photo right). Follow the hedge along the track: where the track diverges take the left fork then immediately turn left by the signpost marked as a 'No Through Route'.



If you are **not** going to Gannock Grove go straight ahead here and keep going to reach the steps up the bank. Pick up your route at the third photo below where the text reads '**Go up the steps**'.

The path to Gannock Grove runs through a tunnel of overgrown hedgerows (see photo right) for 350 yards to reach the abandoned settlement.



The deep moat and the area it encloses have been recolonised by trees (see photo right).



Retrace your route to the start of the overgrown hedgerow 'tunnel', then turn right and go along the path between the hedges (see photo right) to reach a flight of steps on the right.



Go up the steps. With your back to the hedge go straight ahead across the next field towards the trees on the far side. You are now heading east.

You can now follow the route of the Hertfordshire Way clockwise direction, marked by green arrows on white roundels (see photo right), back into Barkway.



Keep to the right of the tree belt which extends into the field, following the track as it runs around the edge of the trees and adjacent tree belt (see photo right). There are views opening up to the south.



Follow the track round the edge of the tree belt where it turns to the right. After a short distance go through the gap in the hedge at the end of the tree belt (see photo right), then turn half-right and cross the field diagonally to the right, following the line of the path towards the far right corner.



Turn left at the waymark post at the far corner of the field onto another track heading for the edge of another wood. Follow the track keeping the wood to your left. Beyond the wood the track crosses a narrow field towards another wood. There is now a solar farm to your right. Where the track turns left just before the wood leave the track and keep straight ahead with the edge of the wood to your left. You are still heading east and following the Hertfordshire Way clockwise.

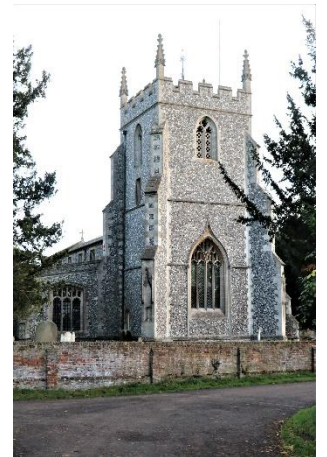
At the end of the wood and just past the end of the solar farm **do not** turn slightly left on the footpath, but instead bear right along the bridleway to head south-east keeping the hedge (see photo right) to your left, and staying on the Hertfordshire Way clockwise.



You will reach a T-junction of paths, opposite a signpost pointing right on Byway 23 to Buckland, by a large oak tree. Turn **left** here (see photo right) and go along the green lane towards Barkway in the distance.



The lane becomes a tarmacked road and Barkway church (see photo right) comes into view. Bear right to go past the church or go into the churchyard to explore the exterior and interior. The oldest visible structure of the building dates from the 13th century.



Opposite the churchyard is a wagon wash (see photo right) which was used from the 17th century to clean horse-drawn carts and wagons. The sloping sides allowed easy access for the horses. On either side there are walkways for those doing the cleaning. From the gateway by the wagon wash there is a view of the Manor House which dates from the 17th century.



From the wagon wash continue along the lane to reach the High Street (see photo right). Here you can admire some more of the variety of houses before returning to your car.



If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and celebrate the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone to enjoy. Our website www.cpreherts.org.uk contains more information about our work and how you can donate and perhaps volunteer.

This route was last walked by CPRE in November 2017.

Note: all walkers do so at their own risk. Suitable footwear and clothing are recommended.

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel: 01438 717587. We are the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.