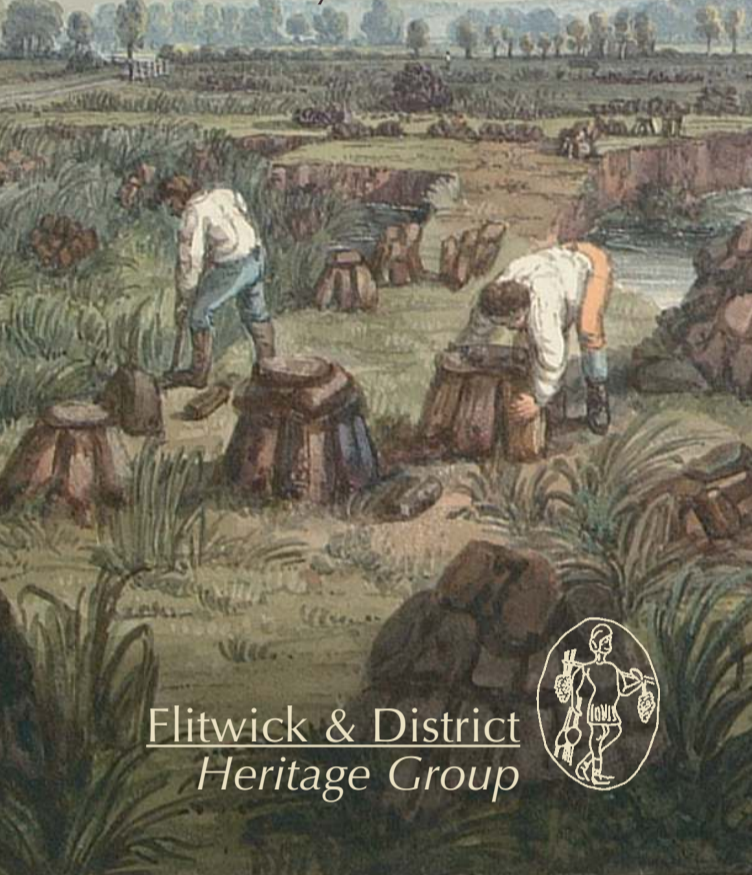


Two Moors Heritage Trail

A waymarked circular walk along the River Flit and nearby areas of interest



Flitwick & District Heritage Group

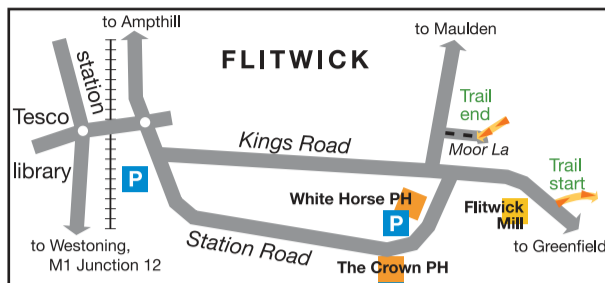


The Two Moors Heritage Trail

Flitwick and Flitton are about 10 miles south of Bedford, and 3 miles from Junction 12 of the M1.

Car Parking is available on the street in Maulden Road, Station Road, and (by request) at nearby public houses.

Public Transport: Flitwick railway station and bus-stops are about 1/2 mile from the start point. You may find OS Explorer map 193 useful when walking the trail, which begins at TL042347.



Flitwick & District Heritable Group can be contacted via our website <www.FDHG.co.uk>, where you can find more information about Flitton Moor and other local wildlife sites.

This leaflet was funded by the Greensand Country Landscape Partnership <www.greensandcountry.com> with help from Central Beds Council, Flitwick Town Council, and Flitton & Greenfield Parish Council. Works and events on the Trail are supported by the Greensand Trust and volunteers from the Parish Paths Partnership (P3).

If you would like to help with management of the Moors or work on the Heritage Trail please contact the Greensand Trust on 01234 743666.



The cover illustration is a detail from Thomas Fisher's painting *Flitton Moor, Bedfordshire* showing peat cutters working c. 1815.

Leaflet text and original art ©Sarah Wroot 2021

This 5 mile/8km walk is a gentle introduction to the landscape of this area. It takes you past several sites of interest for their wildlife or history. Information boards and our website provide more detail.

Two Moors and two watermills

The River Flit once powered several mills in this area. The walk follows the river, starting near

Flitwick Mill ① which is now a private residence restored by the owners, who recently discovered a small medieval mill structure still standing inside the building. The Goodman family owned the mill from the mid-19th century until it ceased working in 1987.

See www.flitwickmill.co.uk for more information.



In the 1930s Flitwick Mill used steam power in times of low water.

'Mill Lane' was named for **Greenfield Mill ④** demolished in the early 1970s. It was one of the later mills on the Flit; several disputes with the Goodmans of Flitwick Mill are recorded.



Vera Merryweather's sketch of Greenfield Mill from an old postcard photograph.

② **Flitwick Moor** is exceptionally important for mosses, with over 130 species of bryophytes (mosses and liverworts). It is also nationally important for its fungi with over 500 recorded species. Cotton Grass grows here, more usually seen on upland peat bogs, and in late spring some areas are carpeted with Golden Saxifrage.



Cotton Grass

⑤ **Flitton Church** is built of local sandstone, probably from a quarry in the village. There is a list of vicars dating back to 1261.

The de Grey Mausoleum dates from the early 17th century with later additions. It houses splendid memorials celebrating the de Grey family, who lived at Wrest Park near Silsoe. English Heritage maintain the mausoleum; visits can be arranged through their office at Wrest Park.

⑥ **Flitton Moor** is a new wetland created from farm land in 1987 by Bedfordshire County Council, and now owned by Central Bedfordshire Council. The moor is managed by the **Friends of Flitton Moor**, a dedicated group of local volunteers. Watch for signs of our work as you walk around the Moor.

The Jack Crawley Memorial Barn ★ houses the **Flit Valley Discovery Centre**, opened in 2018 by Baroness Young. It is a source of information about the whole Flit Valley as well as the life and work of Jack Crawley.



Jack's view of the River Flit near the barn.

The Two Moors in history

In this area the River Flit originally flowed in several channels through a large peat bog. The leaflet cover shows local people cutting peat from this moor. There was no formal boundary between the parishes of Maulden and Flitton until the drainage ditches on the northern boundary of the modern Flitton Moor were cut in the late 18th century. The area nearest Flitton was known as 'Flitton Moor' while Flitwick used the area to the west.

Peat from Flitwick Moor was used as a filter during coal gas manufacture. The peat was loaded into wagons that ran on movable rails – some of which can still be seen – for transport to gas depots in towns to the north. Peat-digging continued here until the advent of North Sea gas in the 1960s.

Peat digging for industrial use in the 1950s, by kind permission of Bedfordshire Archives [Z50/50/37].



⑦ **Ruxox Moat** surrounded a monastic *grange*, a farm supplying food and other products to Dunstable Priory, to Flitwick church and the local poor. A chapel dedicated to St Nicholas stood here from 1150 until Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540.

The Heritage Trail waymark includes an image of the *intaglio* (carved stone) ring seal of *Bonus Eventus*, the god of initiative and good events, which was found near here. It can be seen in Bedford Museum.

⑧ **Ruxox Farm** is one of the most significant historic sites in Bedfordshire. Archaeological finds from prehistory into the Roman period including ironworks, and at least one villa suggest this area has been continuously inhabited for over 9,000 years.

Ruxox might be named for a Saxon who farmed here 1,000 years ago – *Hroc's Oak* – but could also mean 'rook's oak'. The present farmhouse is a typical 'Model Farm' constructed in the 1850s by the Duke of Bedford's estate.



⑨ **Flitwick Moor** water was once sold as an iron-rich blood tonic. In the 1890s Henry King Stevens began bottling 'Flitwick Spring' water for sale in London after it became more widely known, but the springs did not produce enough water to sustain the business, which failed in the 1930s. Stevens' house stood on the site of the Gun Club; he created garden walks in **Folly Wood**, to the left as you enter the moor.

⑩ **Ancient grassland:** Meadow Ant hills take many years to reach this large size. The remains of two wagons used for peat extraction were found some years ago in the fen to your right.

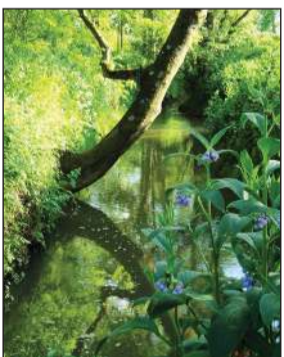


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Begin your walk at the kissing-gate across the road from Flitwick Mill (1). There is more information about the mill on the inside flap of this leaflet. The mill recorded in the AD1086 Domesday Book probably stood here but the existing building dates from the 18–19th century.

Follow the marked footpath to the river to enter Flitwick Moor (2), a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and one of the most important wetland sites in southeast England. The Wildlife Trust manage the Moor and own most of it.

At the bench continue ahead along the River Flit or Fleet in Anglo-Saxon, which means 'fast flowing stream' as in Fleet Street. You may see kingfishers flitting along the river.



Continue ahead beside the river at the junction with a large bridge on right (or turn right for refreshment at 'The Compasses' in Greenfield).

The River Flit flowing through Flitwick Moor (Jim Trollinger).

Pass through the kissing-gate to Maggots Moor, which is part of Flitwick Moor SSSI.

As you walk along the edge of the meadow notice the depressions (3) to your left. These are old river channels, where the Flit flowed before it was diverted to supply water to Greenfield Mill. Look for relatively rare Meadow Saxifrage here in late spring.



Pass through a kissing gate to cross the river. The houses on the right are on the site of Greenfield Mill (4). There is more information about the mill on the inside flap of this leaflet.

Pass through another kissing-gate, then turn left onto a bridleway. Pass a Flit Valley Walk information board. The recently laid hedge on your left used binders from the osier bed on Flitton Moor. **Turn right at the waymark post, cross the field and walk the path beside an ancient water meadow.**

The ditch to your right was one of the old courses of the River Flit before the current canalised (straightened) line was cut in the 19th century.

Cross the bridge, pass through two kissing-gates and walk along a fenced path to pass behind the garden of The White Hart pub. The thatched house to your left is 3 Brook Lane, said to be the oldest private residence in the county. It was originally three cottages built to house the labourers who built the 12th-century church.

Emerge in Brook Lane opposite Flitton Church (5) and the de Grey Mausoleum. The present church was built in the 15th century.

Turn left down Brook Lane, through a kissing-gate and cross the Flit to enter Flitton Moor (6), a County Wildlife Site and Local Nature Reserve.

The Jack Crawley Memorial Barn ahead of you houses **The Flit Valley Discovery Centre** with information about the history and wildlife of the entire Flit Valley.

Turn left after crossing the river, then right to circuit the moor. Alternatively enter the woodland on your left by the small gate to explore the paths in the plantation, including the view from the pond platform. Exit by the same gate to continue the circuit of the moor.

At the far corner of the moor there is an experimental osier bed supplying 'withies' for basket making and 'binders' for hedge-laying. There is evidence that Flitton was a centre for basket making in the 12th century, so osiers were growing here 900 years ago.

Leave Flitton Moor through a kissing-gate beside the parish Millennium Seat and turn right on the gravelled cycleway running beside the River Flit. The river here runs in a canalised straight cut dug later in the 19th century.

Pass a bridge on your left, turn right at the end of the field and walk along the avenue of Lime trees to Ruxox Moat (7) at the end of the avenue. This is an unusually-large D-shaped moat surrounding the site of a medieval moated grange.

Continue on the track around bends, past Ruxox Farm (8).

Walk along the farm track to Maulden Road. Cross with care and continue on The Ridgeway, an ancient trackway. This was part of a pre-Roman route between Shefford and Woburn.

Turn left at the junction, passing Pussy Pond on your left. It is named for the Pussy Willows which were collected here to be strewn on Flitwick church floor on Palm Sundays.

Walk along the path behind the Industrial Estate, carefully cross Maulden Road and follow the track. Turn right, then left through the car park to re-enter Flitwick Moor (9). Water from springs near here was once famous, and peat dug from the moors heated local homes.

Cross the bridge over the central drain and continue on the boardwalk through an area of *Phragmites* reed and ponds.



The Moor along the central drain (David Sedgley).

Turn right at the kissing-gate and walk along the edge of the meadow. To the right is an area of fen, which is cut and raked annually to keep it clear of scrub (10).

Turn right through the next kissing-gate, follow the main track through the moor and turn left beside an information board to the end of the Trail in Moor Lane (11).