

THE WALKERS GUIDE

TO THURLEIGH



The Jackal Pub & Restaurant

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WALKS AROUND THURLEIGH

THURLEIGH VILLAGE

The village of Thurleigh stands on a 250 ft. high plateau and because of its height and lack of sheltering hills the 3,500 acre Parish is subject to high winds. The name Thurleigh (pronounced Thurlie and once spelt Thurley) is believed to come from the Saxon word "Leah" which means "clearing". Thurleigh is a very pretty village in which you can explore the rich farming countryside of North Bedfordshire; with plentiful walks in and around the Thurleigh area.

PARKING AND REFRESHMENTS

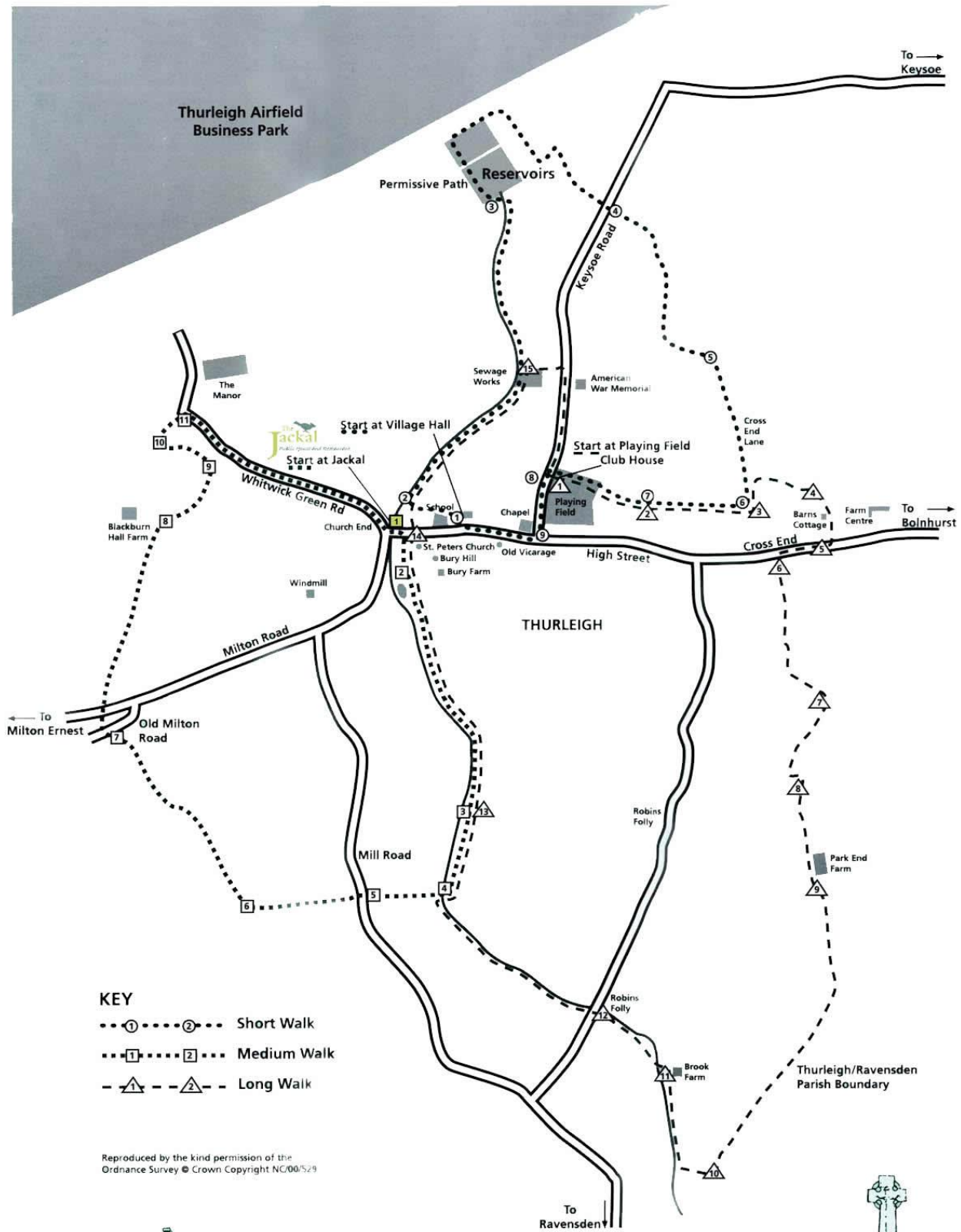
There is ample car parking here at **THE JACKAL**. You will receive a very warm welcome so why not start or end your walk with a really good pub lunch. Park your car in our car park, use the facilities before you go, order your lunch whilst putting on the old boots, and return to a refreshing drink and your ordered food ready and waiting for you. *(please let us know you are coming via telephone or email beforehand)*

WALKS

There are three walks **short, medium and long**, range from 2 to 5 miles and take between 1 and 2¾ hours. Each walk covers a different part of the Parish. Please see the walks and the map to go with the walks on our dedicated walkers' web page.

During the walks please remember the Country Code - Remove Litter, Keep to Public Paths and Control Dogs (because of horses and bird-rearing close to certain paths). Wear strong shoes and warm waterproof clothing if necessary.

MAP



- KEY**
-①.....②..... Short Walk
 - ①-----②----- Medium Walk
 - - - - -① - - - - -② - - - - - Long Walk

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The Post Office



Thatched Cottages



The War Memorial

SHORT WALK (Green Route)

(Approx 2¼ Miles. Takes about 1 Hour)

Dogs MUST be kept on a lead at Stages 1 - 3 and Stage 6.

1. Start from the Village Hall and proceed down the signposted footpath behind the School. (*Thurleigh was the first village in North Bedfordshire to have its own **Village Hall** (1927). The original wooden building was erected on the site of the old church school, it was refurbished in the 1970s and later rebuilt as you see it today. The **School** was built in 1876 and little effort was made to blend in with the Victorian building when four classrooms were added in 1973. Walking down the hill in the distance on the right can be seen **Thurleigh Manor**, formerly called Whitwick Manor, which was built in 1833 within the moated site of Thurleigh Hall, previously destroyed by fire.*)
2. Turn right at the waymarker at the bottom of the hill, keep to the right hand side of the brook along the field edge, past the Sewage Works and continue to the Reservoirs. (*The two **Reservoirs** were installed to take excess water from the airfield runways. By the kind permission of their new owners, St. Modwen Developments Ltd., local people are working to turn the reservoirs into a conservation area. The tranquil site is already rich in wildflowers, insects and waterfowl.*)
3. Walk ahead along the permissive path on the left hand side of the reservoirs and then turn right before the airfield fence onto the bridleway. Keep on the bridleway which becomes a hardcore track leading to Keysoe Road.
4. Cross the road onto the signposted footpath directly ahead. This waymarked path is partly ditched, partly rough meadow (*the site of a former airfield radio installation which hosts a whole variety of interesting wildflowers*) and partly across open land.
5. At the newly built footbridge, turn right onto Cross End Lane and continue down the lane to the stile and signposted footpath in the hedgerow on the right. (***Cross End Lane** now a BOAT, is shown on a 1765 County map as the main highway between Thurleigh and Keysoe*)
6. Climb the stile, then over two more stiles (Beware of Horses), and walk ahead to the waymarker post on the opposite side of the field.
7. Continue along the hedge to the waymarked gap, bear left and walk down the inside of the Playing Field to Keysoe Road.
8. Turn left on the road, then right through the Close. (*Clearly visible ahead when walking down Keysoe Road is the rear of the **Chapel**. The initial Baptist church was erected in 1827 on land adjacent to a pair of cottages bequested to the church as a manse by its first minister. The original church was extremely small and was twice enlarged to accommodate its increasing congregation. In 1888 the present red-brick Chapel was erected. Immediately opposite the Chapel is the Village Garden.*)
9. Turn right into the High Street and return to the Village Hall. (*On the corner of Vicarage Green is the **Old Vicarage**. Evidence that the village was inhabited from very early ages was uncovered when an archaeological "dig" took place in the grounds during 1976. It unearthed an Iron Age hearth, several Roman remains and also the outer bank and ditch of Thurleigh castle.*)

MEDIUM WALK (Blue Route)

(Approx 3¼ Miles. Takes about 1½ Hours)

Dogs MUST be kept on a lead at Stages 1 - 3.

1. Start at "The Jackal" (*Why not order Lunch for your return*) public house, cross the High Street and walk down the signposted footpath alongside the Churchyard wall. (*St Peter's Church is the earliest surviving building in the Parish. Over the centuries it has undergone several re-buildings and restorations. The oldest part of the church remaining is the bottom of the central Norman tower with its Adam and Eve doorway built about 1150AD. In the 15th century the building took on the shape very much as it is today. In the 1980s a new roof was installed. Opposite the main door in the churchyard can be seen the base of a Priest's Cross which has been declared an ancient monument*).
2. Continue down to the brook, keep to the left hand side of the pond and follow the course of the brook and hedgerow. Leave the brook and bear left towards the footbridge over the ditch and the waymarked gate.
3. Through the gate, proceed directly ahead and then turn right at the waymarked gap in the hedge.
4. Over the footbridge leading across the brook, turn immediately left and then right following the hedgerow to Mill Road.
5. Cross the road onto the signposted footpath, down the slight bank and over the stile. Keep to the right hand side of the ditched hedgerow and then over the next stile. (*This hedgerow consisting mainly of hawthorn, elder and brambles produces a mass of 'White May' in Spring and is rich in wildflowers such as clover, plantain, speedwell, mayweed and scarlet pimpernel*).
6. Continue ahead, turn right at the waymarker on the tree, over another stile and keep along the well marked footpath all the way to Old Milton Road. (*Horses can be seen grazing in the paddocks on the left*).
7. Cross the road, walk through the small clump of trees on the raised ground ahead (*contains ash, oak, hawthorn and silver birch*), over the main Milton Road and continue along the signposted hardcore track to Blackburn Hall Farm. (*At the time of Domesday **Blackburn Hall** and estate were owned by the de Leye family, it has also been named Black Bird and Black Bull Hall. The present Hall supports very ancient chimneys from a much earlier dwelling*).
8. Just past the entrance to the Farm cross the track diagonally, turn right at the waymarker and follow the hedgerow and ditch around to the next waymarker.
9. Remain on the footpath which turns left and then swings left and right to the large footbridge. (*Ahead can be seen the vast expanse of the former Thurleigh **Airfield**. By 1941 large parts of the Parish had been incorporated into the airfield first used by Polish airmen flying Wellington Bombers. In September 1942 it became the base for nearly 2000 airmen and ground crew of the 306th USAAF Bombardment Group. A memorial to the American serviceman from Thurleigh who died during the war is in Keysoe Road. Work began expanding the airfield in 1952 to become part of the Royal Aircraft Establishment and in 1969 it was short listed as a site for London's Third Airport. The MOD closed the airfield in 1996; it now houses Thurleigh Business Park*).
10. Turn right over the bridge onto the bridleway and continue for a short distance to Whitwick Green Road.
11. Turn right again and walk down the road to Church End and the "Jackal" public house. (*Note the many horse chestnut trees in the parkland on the left and the picturesque view of the church nestling in the village. Standing out against the skyline in the distance is the remains of Thurleigh **Windmill**. The five floor, sixty feet tower mill was created in about 1890 and originally supported four double shutter sails. A base house with a steam engine was later added to provide steam power. The mill last worked in 1917*).

LONG WALK (Red Route)

(Approx. 5 Miles. Takes about 2¾ Hours)

Dogs MUST be kept on a lead at Stages 2, 7, 8, 12 and 13.

1. Start at the Playing Field Clubhouse and walk eastward along the inside of the field and through the gap in the hedge at the bottom.
2. Bear right and continue ahead to the waymarked stile on the opposite side of the field. Over two more stiles (Beware of Horses) and the footpath opens onto Cross End Lane.
3. Turn left along the lane and then right at the next waymarker. Cross the newly built footbridge and follow the hedgerow around to the left towards the "Farm Centre". (*The freshly grown fruit on the farm attracts an abundance of butterflies and birds, particularly partridges*)
4. Where the footpath meets the bridleway turn right through the yard of Barns Cottage (Beware of friendly Dogs) onto Bolnhurst Road.
5. Turn right along the road for a short distance heading towards the village. (*The hedgerow here contains dog roses, lots of bindweed and in the grass verge the large-leafed, blue-flowered comfrey*).
6. Turn left onto the signposted bridleway and follow along around the double S bend.
7. Leave the bridleway at the waymarked turning right over the footbridge onto the footpath to the newly built stile.
8. Cross the ditch and stile, turn right and follow the waymarked route and over the next stile onto the BOAT which passes around Park End Farm. (Beware of Horses) (*In the past Thurleigh had a number of quite separate "Ends" consisting of a moated farmhouse and several cottages around a central green. **Park End** had many more houses than it does at present probably because the existing bridle path was once the main roadway to Wilden*).
9. Leave the Farm by the signposted gate on the opposite side and follow the hedgerow until the BOAT turns into the waymarked footpath at the piped in ditch.
10. Continue down the open field to the bottom of the hill (Thurleigh / Ravensden Parish Boundary) where the footpath turns right onto the hardcore track. Turn right again and follow the track, with the brook on the left, to the derelict buildings at Brook Farm.
11. Cross the footbridge opposite the farm and continue, with the brook now on the right, until the footpath reaches the road known as "Robins Folly". The origin of this name is unknown.
12. Cross the Folly onto the signposted footpath, continue along the hedgerow and brook, (*the wildflower speedwell is prevalent here*) turn right over the footbridge and proceed up the left hand side of the hedgerow.
13. Go through the gate, over the ditch, and follow the waymarked footpath along the course of the brook all the way back to the village. (*As the village is approached the 17th century **Bury Farm** lies immediately ahead. Behind the Farm is the castle mound known as **Bury Hill** which is scheduled as an ancient monument. No written records exist for the castle and it is probable that it was built around 1140AD without the king's permission. Little masonry stone has been found in the area which could mean that the castle was predominantly built of timber and clay or the stone may have been used in later years to rebuild the church*).
14. The footpath comes out alongside the churchyard wall onto the High Street almost opposite "**The Jackal**". (**Why not stop for a Snack and a Pint**) Cross the street and follow the signposted footpath straight ahead, turn left and then right at the respective waymarkers and continue along the field edge, keeping to the right hand side of the brook, as far as the Sewage Treatment Works.
15. Immediately past the works turn right along the fence and exit onto Keysoe Road. Turn right down the road, past the American War Memorial, and then left into the Playing Field. (*The **Memorial** to the American airmen who died in the second world war was erected and dedicated in 1982 when more than 100 veterans from the former Thurleigh base attended*).