THE ROMAN ROAD WALK
CIRCULAR ROUTE 6 MILES
Allow approximately 3 hours

Passing through the Gog Magog Hills and the valley of the River Granta, this delightful circular walk stirs many memories of former days. Prehistoric man lived and died in these hills and Roman legions once marched along the tracks.

The walk passes from Stapleford along the River Granta up to Copley Hill, along the Roman Road and back through Wandlebury, providing a variety of walking in open valleys and gently wooded hills.

Bury Farm, Stapleford

Starting from Stapleford
The walk commences at Bury Farm, Stapleford, at the junction of Haverhill Road with Bury Road. Parking is available at the Longbow Public House, Church Street, or on side streets in the village.

Starting from Wandlebury
The walk passes through Wandlebury Car Park which is situated just off the A604. Voluntary donation appreciated.

Joining the walks from nearby villages
The walk can easily be joined from Sawston, Babraham and Fulbourn by using existing public rights of way.
LANDSCAPE & WILDLIFE

Contrasting landscapes complement the historical appeal of this walk. The Gog-Magog hills are the beginning of a series of chalk out-crops stretching southwest to the Dunstable Downs and the Chilterns. They rise to 70 metres, and here give fine views towards Cambridge and the Isle of Ely.

In comparison to the wooded chalk hills, the valley of the River Granta is typical Cambridgeshire arable farmland. The main crops grown are wheat, rape, peas and barley.

The Roman Road is a unique feature in the landscape, not only for its archaeology and history, (having been for perhaps 2000 years in popular use as a roadway), but also as a refuge for wildlife. The grassland is a rich habitat of chalk-loving plants such as yellow rattle, bladder campion, harebell and vetches; and the almost unbroken extent of hedgerow, dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn with buckthorn and dogwood, is unequalled in the country.

Yellow hammer

Bush vetch

FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE - WHY?

- Because the countryside is a place to be enjoyed by all; do protect wildlife, plants and trees, don't leave rubbish behind, don't disturb others with unnecessary noise.

- Because the countryside is a place of work; do keep to paths and use stiles and gates to cross fences. Don't let your dogs disturb stock and don't interfere with crops or machines.

Enjoying the countryside means respecting its life and work. If you don't you won't!
ANCIENT HISTORY
AND LEGEND

The circular walk takes you through a countryside that has experienced many changes from Bronze Age Settlement to modern arable farming, and evidence of these changes are still there to be seen. The area is steeped in ancient history and fascinating legend.

The Gog Magog Hills have always had a special mystery and attraction. The origin of the name 'Gog Magog' is uncertain. Gog and Magog appear in both the bible and the Koran, are found in medieval legends of Alexander, and as Gogmagog or Goomagot, feature in the Arthurian tales. Around the year 1620 scholars from Cambridge were said to have cut and re-cut figures in the turf on the hills.

Opinions vary as to why and when the hills were first called 'Gog Magog'; Wendy Clark, in her book ‘Once Around Wandlebury’ says that in his letters Lord Francis Godolphin who lived at Wandlebury, often referred to his house at ‘Hogmagog’ hills suggesting that the name is derived from the latin 'hoga' which means height.

The Magog Trust has purchased 160 acres of farmland on the Gog-Magog hills in order to improve the attractions and wildlife benefits of these important landmarks. Much of the site is now being managed to re-establish chalk grassland and perimeter tree belts will include walks with spectacular views from the hilltops.

On the crest of the Gog-Magog hills is Wandlebury Ring, an Iron Age hill-fort more than half a mile in circumference, dating from the 3rd Century B.C. It was originally defended by a triple bank and ditch, but the inner bank and ditch was destroyed in 1694 when the ground was landscaped for a house built within the enclosure by Lord Godolphin.

The Wandlebury Estate is now owned and managed by the Cambridge Preservation Society; it is a Country Park and Nature Reserve, and is well worth exploring. A series of interpretive boards give details of the archaeology, history and natural history of the estate.

Stapleford village sign

The Roman Road, passing Wandlebury to the north-east, is an important feature of our historic landscape. It has been traced for about 35 miles from Sible Hedingham in Essex, through Cambridge to Godmanchester. In the belief that the road ran as far as Chester, once the Roman town of Deva, an 18th Century antiquary named it Via Devana. What we now know, is that it linked Colchester (at one time capital of Roman Britain) with Godmanchester, another important town and fort. Where it crossed the Cam, a small Roman town grew up, later to become Cambridge.

Copely Hill, seen on the south side of the Roman Road, is a natural chalk hill and may have been used as a burial ground in the Bronze Age.

The village at Stapleford derives its name from 'Staple' meaning post, 'ford' indicating a river crossing. The Parish Church of St. Andrew was built in Norman times and contains a fragment of a Saxon grave slab.
HOW TO GET THERE

By bus: Stagecoach Cambus stops at Wandlebury, Babraham Turn and Stapleford.
Tel: 01223 423554

By train: Wagon Railway Station at Great Shelford.
Tel: 0345 484950

By road: Follow A604 south-east from Cambridge

Inquiries: Cambridgeshire County Council Public Transport
General Inquiries Tel: 01223 717740

FURTHER INFORMATION

Footwear - The route can be wet and muddy in places, particularly after heavy rain. Strong, waterproof footwear is essential.

Maps - The route can be followed on OS 1:50,000 Landranger Sheet 15 (Cambridge, Newmarket and surrounding area) or on 1:25,000 Pathfinder Series Sheet 1004 (TRL 45/55).

Waymarking - The route is signposted at metalled roads. Look also for the Roman Road Circular Walk waymarks which indicate the direction of the route along the rights of way. Occasionally, other rights of way cross the route and these are also waymarked. Yellow arrows mark footpaths, blue arrows bridleways, and red arrows byways.

Refreshments - Refreshments can be obtained from Public Houses and shops in Stapleford and Babraham.

Detailed information from:

The Warden, Wandlebury Country Park
Tel: 01223 248706

The Wildlife Trust, Tel: 01223 846363

The Magog Trust, Tel: 01223 842473

ACCESS FOR ALL

The Cambridgeshire countryside is there to be enjoyed by EVERYONE. This route follows wide grassy tracks and field edge paths. Sheep may be grazing on some sections of the route which passes farmyards. There is one main bridge crossing. Please be careful crossing the busy A604. 'Access for all' and 'The Roman Road Walk (Stapleford - Wandlebury)' leaflets available on tape, on request.

Come and enjoy it.