

# Amersham

## Ruth Ellis' Grave, Martyrs' Memorial, High & Over, Stiff Leadbetter House



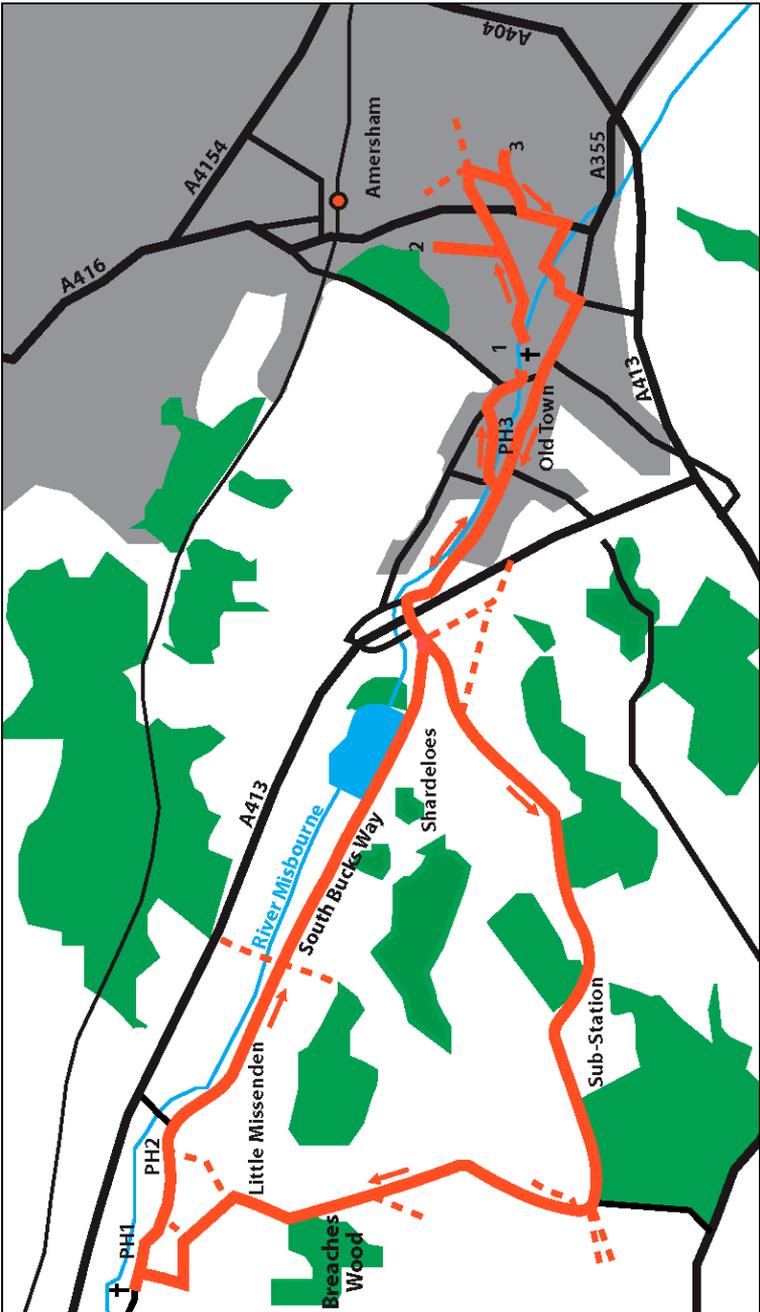
Martyrs' Memorial

The best starting place for this walk is St Mary's Church. Take the path that leads past the vicarage at the east end and cross the small bridge over the Misbourne. Turn right onto the Chiltern Heritage Trail. On the left is the graveyard (1) that is the final resting place of Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in England.



There is no headstone, although a little research will pinpoint the grave's location.

At the far end of the graveyard (past a wooden bridge and uphill along a narrow path) there is a signpost to the Martyr's (sic) Memorial  $\frac{3}{4}$  left.



When you reach the brow of the hill you can see the memorial on your left (2). Continue to a signpost on the edge of the field and then go left to reach it. The memorial commemorates several Protestant martyrs put to death at a nearby spot in 1521 for their beliefs that included, much to the church's consternation, reading the bible in English.

Retrace your steps to the footpath signpost and turn left through the hedge and descend to Station Road. Cross straight over and climb to where this path meets three others. Turn right and, after you cross a quiet residential road, there is a house on the left that gives you an indication of the architectural importance of the area.

At the next road - Highover Park - turn left uphill and amongst a rather undistinguished housing estate you will find no. 42, named High & Over (3).



Perhaps in a moment of hyperbole, John Betjeman described this reinforced

concrete structure in a Y shape by Amyas Connell, as 'scandalizing the whole of Buckinghamshire' when it was built. It is one of the first 'modernist' houses in the country, later to be joined by others in the locality, and has been described rather pompously as a 'complex reworking of Corbusean modernism'. Saved from demolition in 1962, the house is now a Grade II\* listed building.

Turn back and continue to the bottom of the road and there are more 'Sun Houses' to admire. Turn left onto the main road opposite Ruckles Way and then, just past a pedestrian crossing, go right signposted the Chiltern Heritage Trail.

At the end of the tarmac track, turn left over a footbridge and go to the front of Tesco. Use the pedestrian crossing, go to the right of Fox's and cross over to the petrol station side of the road. Diagonally left over the traffic island is Bury Farm where William Penn (see Jordans walk) courted Gulielma Springett before heading off to America,



Now walk towards Old Amersham and then along a High Street that is an attractive mixture of different architectural styles.

There is much to admire including a 1783 Baptist Chapel behind the Kings Arms and the 1657 almshouses, in addition to plenty of pubs and restaurants for refreshment.

If you only fancy a short walk, call it a day in Amersham Old Town. Otherwise, continue all the way through the town, onward past the last house until the path on the left side leaves the road and reaches the very busy bypass (you can hear it before seeing it). Cross to a lane on the other side hidden behind bushes and bear right to the entrance to the Shardeloes Estate.



Go to the left of the beautifully located cricket pitch and follow the drive uphill until just before the concealed entrance of Lower Park House. Here turn left along a hedge and pass a row of show jumping fences.

The path becomes a track and then back to grass. Keep straight, there is no need to go off right or left. Just before the end of the final field you leave the hedge on the left, bearing slightly right to go through a gap in the hedge in front of you. Go right along a narrow path through an area that's great for blackberries in September. You now climb following an old wooden fence and drainage ditch. You will go under a line of pylons leading to a large electricity sub-station hidden on your left. After a second line, you turn right along the edge of a wood that is carpeted with bluebells during the spring.



Continue straight when you reach a broken fence and turn right when you get to Mop End Lane. At the entrance to Mop End Farm go over a stile (ignoring an adjacent bridleway) and the path goes  $\frac{1}{4}$  left towards the far end of a line of ash trees.



At the stile go right and follow the hedge under a row of pylons. When you get to a field boundary hedge that doesn't quite reach the track you're on, there's a wooden footpath post directing you diagonally across the next field. Go through a field boundary and keep straight on to the next stile (or

follow the hedge to the left if you don't want to trample the crops).

Turn right onto Toby's Lane that, at this point, is a narrow bridleway. After skirting Breaches Wood, you will start glimpsing Little Missenden through the hedge on the left. Look out for a metal gate and then take the clear well used path downhill across the field to Beamond End Lane. Now turn right past Town Farm Cottage.

At the road junction go left to admire the wall paintings of Little Missenden church or right to the 16<sup>th</sup> century Red Lion (PH1) that survived a severe fire in 2006 and now offers good food and live music.



Continue through this attractive, well-heeled village until just after The Crown Inn (PH2) and then go right along the South Bucks Way. This is a clear wide track that turns to grass and runs parallel to the A413 and the River Misbourne all the way to Shardeloes (about 1 mile / 1.6 kms).



Shardeloes dates from 1758. Built by the marvellously named Stiff Leadbetter, it was formally the seat of the Drake family and has seen time as a maternity hospital whose most famous product was probably Sir Tim Rice.

Passing Shardeloes you reach the cricket pitch again. Go to the left of the pavilion and through the entrance gate. Retrace your route across the bypass and towards Old Amersham.

Instead of going all through the town look out for Mill Lane on your left, go over the Misbourne and immediately turn right following the river behind the High Street. If you so desire, a footbridge conveniently crosses the river to The Eagle (PH3).



If not, continue until you reach a wooden fence and the brick wall of a collection of old brewery buildings. Follow the wall around to the entrance of what is now The Maltings Craft Workshops and unfortunately no longer the maltings of Wellers Brewery.

Bear left up to School Lane and then right to a mini roundabout, go right again and you will return to the church.

*Starting Point: St. Mary's Church*

*SU958973*

*Explorer Map 172*

*Chiltern Hills East*

*Length:*

*Urban and Rural Walk: 8¼ miles / 13.2 kilometres*

*Urban Walk around Amersham: 1¼ miles / 2.9 kilometres*

*Terrain:*

*The Amersham part of the walk includes uphill sections, while the 'rural' section is largely undemanding after climbing past Shardeloes.*