

## An insignificant English parish?

A self guided walk in Bromham in Bedfordshire



Discover the changing face of an English village

Find out why Bromham once boasted four manor houses and three greens

Learn why the original medieval village was destroyed

See different patterns of human settlement over the centuries

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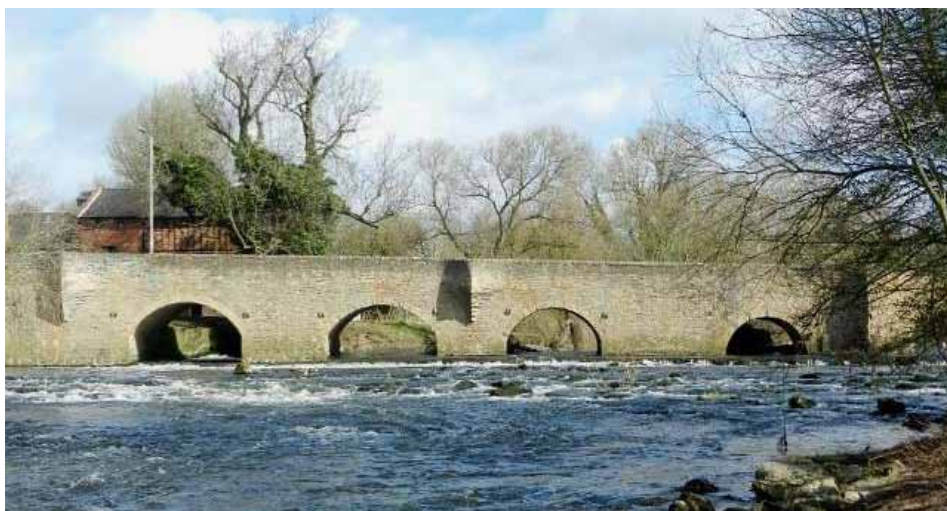
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# An insignificant English parish?

## Be surprised by the Bedfordshire village of Bromham

At first sight Bromham near Bedford might seem like a typical commuter village in the Home Counties.

Along the main road is a mixture of old and new houses, churches, schools and pubs. But go off the beaten track and discover a village that has a fascinating history.



The Great Ouse flowing beneath Bromham Bridge  
Pat Wilson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This walk takes you on a journey through several millennia of human habitation from prehistoric settlements to Anglo-Saxon mills and from medieval manors to twenty-first century developments.



St Owen's Church tower  
Pat Wilson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Find out why the church is isolated from its parish. Visit a vast landscaped park where a village once stood.

Discover why Bromham Bridge is so much longer than the river it crosses.

See the sites of four manor houses, three village greens and a Roman Road.

This walk looks at modern Bromham to find clues to the past and discover how much the built environment of this village has changed through the centuries.



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## Practical information

<b>Location</b>	Bromham, Bedfordshire
<b>Start and finish point</b>	Bromham Mill, Bridge End MK43 8LP
<b>Getting there</b>	<p><b>Train</b> - The nearest stations are Bedford (2 ½ miles) and Bedford St Johns (3 ½ miles). Both are served by direct services from London St Pancras and the East Midlands including to Luton, Leicester, Derby and Nottingham.</p> <p><b>Bus</b> - Bromham is served by buses from Bedford, Milton Keynes and Northampton; alight at Swan Green (Stop 20 on the walk).</p> <p><b>Car</b> - Bromham is 3 miles northwest of Bedford town centre. It is easily accessible from the M1 (Junctions 13 and 14 for Milton Keynes) and from the A1 at Sandy.</p> <p>There is a car park at Bromham Mill but please note that events are held there regularly so please check ahead before parking. There is also a car park at Bromham village hall.</p> <p><b>Bicycle</b> - Bedford is on National Cycle Route Number 51 (Colchester to Oxford via Harwich, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge).</p>
<b>Distance</b>	3 ½ miles. There is an optional extension of another 3 miles to visit the old ford.
<b>Directions from nearest bus stop to walk start</b>	From the bus stop at Swan Green walk along Stagsden Road towards Bromham Bridge for about 100 metres. The entrance to Bromham Mill is on the left hand side.
<b>Level</b>	Gentle – A mostly flat route on paths and pavements

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### Conditions

The route through parkland can be muddy in winter.

### Suitable for

**Families** – take care of children by the river at the start of the walk and watch out for traffic along Northampton Road

**Pushchairs/ wheelchairs** - an entirely step-free route

### Refreshments

There is a café at Bromham Mill (see opening times below). There are also picnic tables at the Mill.

The Prince of Wales pub, Northampton Road (near Stop 18 ) is open daily for refreshments and food.

The Swan pub, Swan Green, Stagsden Road (near Stop 20) is open daily for refreshments and food.

### Toilets

Public toilets available at Bromham Mill. Baby changing facilities at Budgens, 100 Stagsden Road

### Places to visit

**Bromham Mill** is only open on Sundays and Bank Holidays between 1pm and 5pm from April to October. For more information go to <http://www.friendsofbromhammill.org.uk/visiting.html>

**Bromham Lake Local Nature Reserve** is home to a variety of wildlife. The 25-acre site includes woodland, grassland and open water. Free entry. Access from Lower Farm Road (after Stop 10)

### Visitor information

**Bedford Tourist Information Centre.** The Old Town Hall, St Paul's Square, Bedford MK40 1SJ  
Tel: 01234 718112 Email: [touristinfo@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:touristinfo@bedford.gov.uk)



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## Start and end of the route



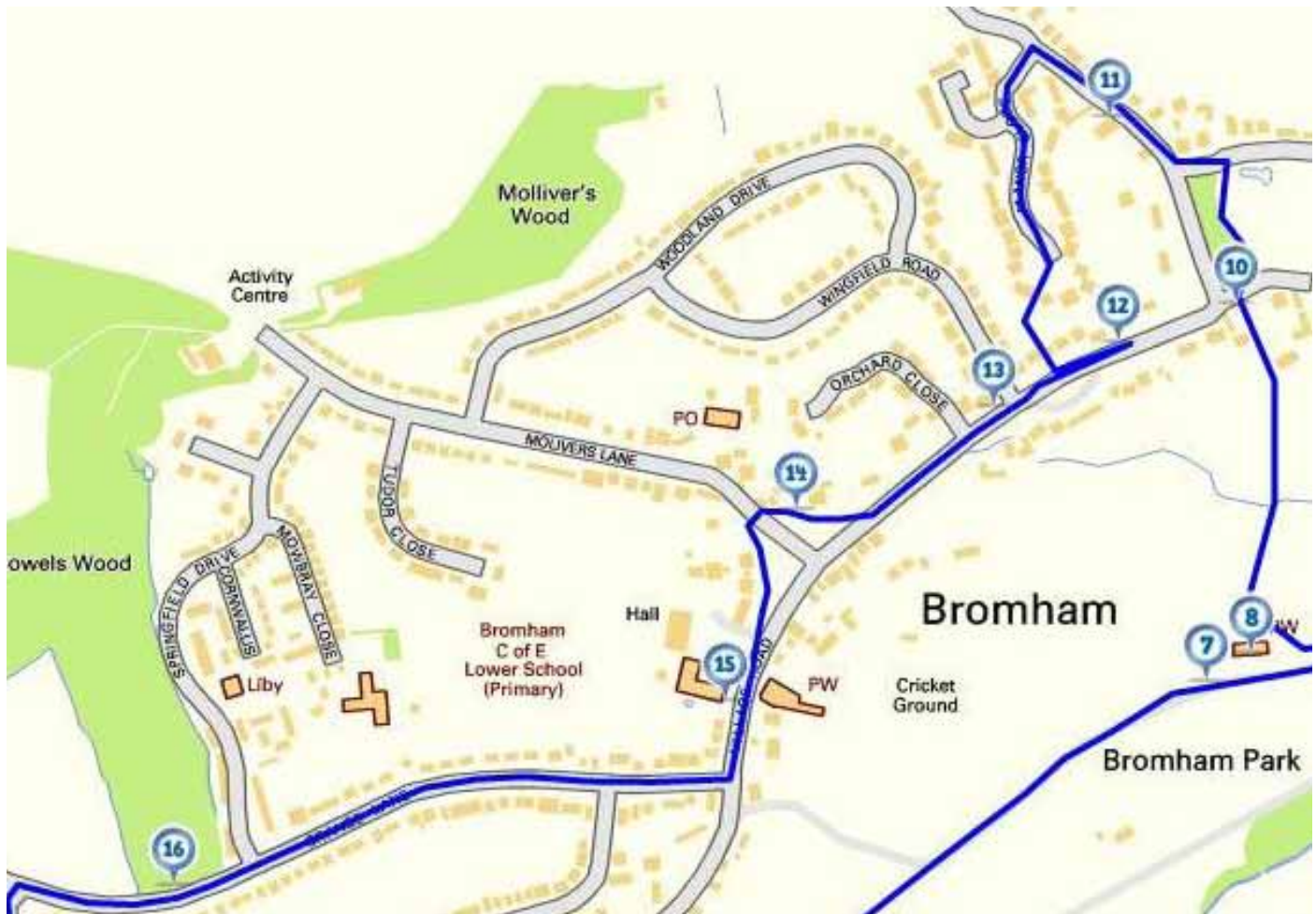
### Stopping points

- S.** Bromham Mill
- 2.** View of the River Great Ouse, Bromham Bridge
- 3.** Bromham Bridge
- 4.** Bromham Mill race
- 5.** Holy Well at Bromham Mill entrance
- 6.** Bromham Park
- 7.** Stone wall edge of St Owen's graveyard
- 8.** St Owen's Church
- 9.** View of Bromham Hall
- ... ..
- F.** Bromham Mill



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## Second part of the route



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### Stopping points

- 10.** Vicarage Green, corner of Village Road and Oakley Road
- 11.** Mollivers House, Oakley Road
- 12.** Old Yews Cottage, 129 Village Road
- 13.** Vine Cottages, 109-113 Village Road
- 14.** Greenwood Cottage, Village Green
- 15.** Bromham Lower School, Village Road
- 16.** View into Bowels Wood, Grange Lane

## Third part of the route



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### Stopping points

- 17.** Bromham Grange and Grange Court, off Northampton Road
- 18.** Peacock Road overlooking play area
- 19.** Thistley Lane
- 20.** Swan Green
- F.** Bromham Mill

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## Directions

These directions are for use with the audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

### 1. Welcome to Bromham

#### Bromham Mill

##### Directions 1

From the entrance to Bromham Mill turn left onto the main road and onto Bromham Bridge. Take great care as there is no pavement across the bridge. Stop at the first pedestrian refuge and look down over the river. Listen to Track 2.

### 2. Meanders

#### View of the River Great Ouse, Bromham Bridge

##### Directions 2

Remain on the bridge to listen to Track 3.

### 3. Crossing point

#### Bromham Bridge

##### Directions 3

Retrace your steps back over Bromham Bridge with care. Stand in the wide V-shaped refuge and peer down over the stone wall to get a good view of the mill race. Listen to Track 4.

### 4. Flour power

#### Bromham Mill race

##### Directions 4

Walk back to the entrance to Bromham Mill. Facing the mill buildings, stop by a green 'Bromham Mill' sign next to a low stone wall on the right. There is a small white gate that leads down to some steps. Peer over the wall into the pool of water. Listen to Track 5.

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## 5. Holy waters

### Low stone wall at Bromham Mill entrance

#### Directions 5

From the mill entrance turn right onto the main road. Go past the thatched cottages (including the Old Smithy which was once the blacksmiths) then turn right into a narrow lane (by a black and white pole) called Millfield. Follow the lane past several houses to a bridge over Bromham Brook. Cross the bridge then continue through a kissing gate. Follow the grass path ahead. Stop by the large tree and take in the landscape around you. Listen here to Track 6.

## 6. Landscape transformation

### Large tree in Bromham Park

#### Directions 6

Walk along the track towards the church ahead. After a short distance the path becomes a surfaced track. Stop when you reach the stone wall of the new churchyard. With your back to the corner of the wall, look at the field ahead of you and to the right. Listen to Track 7.

## 7. Nobles and peasants

### Stone wall edge of St Owen's graveyard

#### Directions 7

Walk just a little further and stop outside the church gate. Listen to Track 8.

## 8. The missing village

### St Owen's Church, Bromham Park

#### Directions 8

From the church continue on the driveway and through a gate marked 'Public Footpath over Private Land'. Follow the path down which bends right past a yellow stone house then left to reach the black iron gates of Bromham Hall. Walk a few metres and look over the low stone wall to see the back of the large house below. Listen to Track 9.



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## 9. Hereditary possession

### Bromham Hall

#### Directions 9

Retrace your steps back towards the church. Cross back over the stile at the metal gate. At the stone wall on the right climb over the narrow stone stile in the wall, turn left and walk back to the church porch. Follow the path around the church to the north gate. Take the right hand footpath across an open field then into a narrow footpath between hedges. At the end of the footpath is a lane. Turn left and immediately you are on the bend of a main road alongside which is a green space called Vicarage Green. Stop here. Listen here to Track 10.

## 10. The village meeting place

### Vicarage Green, corner of Village Road and Oakley Road

#### Directions 10

Retrace your steps away from the road and look for a yellow dirt path. This takes you across an area of open ground called The Paddock and you'll emerge at Lower Farm Road.

**From here there is an optional extension of about 3 miles there and back to visit the Old Ford. To do this follow the directions below.**

To continue the walk turn left at Lower Farm Road to the junction with Oakley Road. Turn right along Oakley Road. After about 50 metres stop outside a large L-shaped building on the left side called Mollivers House. Listen to Track 11.

### **Optional extension to the Old Ford, off Lower Farm Road**

From the exit of The Paddock, turn right along Lower Farm Road. Continue for just under a mile when the lane becomes a path. Follow the path for the last third of a mile down to the ford. **The path can be very muddy after wet weather and is not advised for pushchairs and wheelchairs.**

**To resume the walk:** Retrace your steps and return the same way along Lower Farm Road. At the end of Lower Farm Road, turn right onto Oakley Road. After about 50 metres stop outside a large L-shaped building on the left side called Mollivers House. Listen to Track 11.

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## **11. A second manor**

### **Mollivers House, Oakley Road**

#### **Directions 11**

Continue along Oakley Road for another 100 metres then turn left into Manor Close. Where the road splits, keep left. Follow the road to the end where there is a footpath between houses Number 14 and 15. Follow this footpath until you come to Village Road by a bus stop. Turn left and walk 50 metres until you come to the post box by Old Yews Cottage. Listen to Track 12.

## **12. The 'new' village**

### **Old Yews Cottage, 129 Village Road**

#### **Directions 12**

Retrace your steps back along Village Road. Immediately after crossing over the end of Wingfield Road on the right side is a row of three whitewashed thatched cottages. Listen to Track 13.

## **13. Two chimneys, three hearths**

### **Vine Cottages, 109-113 Village Road**

#### **Directions 13**

Continue along Village Road for about 200 metres. When you reach the start of the triangular-shaped Village Green on the right side of the road, bear right on the grass path along the right hand edge of the green. Stop outside Greenwood Cottage which is set back on the right. Listen to Track 14.

## **14. The heart of the village**

### **Greenwood Cottage, Village Green**

#### **Directions 14**

Continue on the path at the edge of the Village Green. Cross over Mollivers Lane and continue around the paved path at the edge of the Green. At the end of the Green pass the entrance to the Village Hall on the right and stop outside the village school (almost opposite the Baptist Church). Listen to Track 15.

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## **15. Those that seek me early shall find me**

### **Bromham Lower School, Village Road**

#### **Directions 15**

Continue along Village Road then turn right into Grange Lane. Continue for about 350 metres until you reach the turning into Springfield Drive on the right. Just beyond is fenced off woodland. Stop when you have a good view into the woodland and listen to Track 16.

## **16. Ancient woodland**

### **Bowels Wood, Grange Lane**

#### **Directions 16**

Continue along Grange Lane to the junction where there is a village sign. Turn left along Northampton Road. After about 50 metres and just before the bus stop turn right down a lane signposted as 'Leading to Bromham Grange, Grange Court and 55 Northampton Road', which is also signposted as a Public Bridleway. Go past several stone houses. Stop by the last house on the right called Bromham Grange before the field gate. Listen to Track 17.

## **17. The fourth manor**

### **Bromham Grange and Grange Court, off Northampton Road**

#### **Directions 17**

Now retrace your steps back down the lane for about 50 metres. Look for a stream running through a garden on the left. Continue along the lane back to Northampton Road. Turn right and walk along the pavement for about 50 metres to a mini-roundabout where there is a right turn into Peacock Road. Walk up Peacock Road until you can see the low, bowl-shaped fields on the right, thought to have been a mill pond. Listen to Track 18.

## **18. Proud as a peacock**

### **Peacock Road overlooking play area**

#### **Directions 17**

Continue along Northampton Road for a further 350 metres until you reach the junction with Stagsden Road. Do not turn right or left here but go straight ahead into an unpaved private road called Thistley Lane. Stop after about passing some cottages by a wooden fence on the left. Listen to Track 19.

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## **19. How Romans built their roads**

### **Thistley Lane**

#### **Directions 19**

Retrace your steps along Thistley Lane to the road junction. Turn right along Stagsden Road and continue walking along it until you come to a green triangular area on the left near The Swan pub. Listen to Track 20.

## **20. Bridges and bypasses**

### **Swan Green**

#### **Directions 20**

From Swan Green continue along Stagsden Road for another 100 metres back to Bromham Mill. Listen to Track 21.

## **21. Continuity and change**

### **Bromham Mill, Bridge End**

#### **Directions 21**

You have now reached the end of the walk. Do visit Bromham Mill and the café if it is open. To get to Bedford you can catch a bus from the stop on Swan Green.



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## Further information

### **Bedfordshire & Luton Archives & Records Service**

[www.bedford.gov.uk/communityarchives](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/communityarchives)

### **Bromham Mill**

[www.bedford.gov.uk/leisure\\_and\\_culture/local\\_history\\_and\\_heritage/bromham\\_mill.aspx](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/local_history_and_heritage/bromham_mill.aspx)

### **Bromham Millers**

[www.bromhammillers.co.uk](http://www.bromhammillers.co.uk)

### **Friends of Bromham Mill**

[www.friendsofbromhammill.org.uk](http://www.friendsofbromhammill.org.uk)

### **St Owen's Church, Bromham**

[www.bromhambenefice.org](http://www.bromhambenefice.org)

### **The Prince of Wales pub**

[www.princeofwalesbromham.co.uk](http://www.princeofwalesbromham.co.uk)

### **The Swan pub**

[www.swan-pub-bromham.co.uk](http://www.swan-pub-bromham.co.uk)

### **Visit Bedford**

[www.visitbedford.co.uk](http://www.visitbedford.co.uk)

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## Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Pat Wilson** for creating the walk, providing photographs and the audio commentary
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