

Pavenham Road is the *Sun Inn*. This has been a pub from at least 1822 and before that it was three cottages built at the beginning of the 17C, or even earlier.

Continuing straight on, the large detached house on the right is *The Old Bakery* where, until quite recently bread was baked and sold on the premises.

Past the phone box can be seen one of five water taps still preserved in the village, a reminder of the days when there was no running water in the home.

Arriving at the junction with the High Road, turn left and head towards the church and on your right is *Snowdonia*, an interesting building because it was originally three cottages! For many years it also served as the Post office. The large stone building with the high pitched roof is the former vicarage. Known as the *Old Rectory* it dates from the 17C and at one time was a farm house. In the 1970's it was converted to two dwellings. At the north end is *Rectory Cottage*, dated 1846 and to the rear are the *Old Rectory Stables*.

This concludes the walk, if you need to rest then sit in the bus shelter and reflect on the similarity between the shelter and the church *Lych Gate*. The former was built in 1936 and the latter in 1917.



The main walk uses field paths between the villages and may be unsuitable for the elderly or people with some disabilities but you can still use this leaflet to visit each church by car and then follow shorter sections covered by the text. Try these:

Felmersham: Walk down to the river with views over the meadows, or up the High Road and along Grange Road, following the notes in reverse order.

Sharnbrook: The High Street, South towards the old windmill is readily accessible, also North West to the rural quiet of Yelnow Lane.

Odell: Either side of the church has steep gradients but from The Bell PH walk down Mill Lane to the river.

The nearest toilets for the disabled are at Harrold Odell country park, 1 mile from Odell, (Refer to map).

PARKING

Parking is available in Sharnbrook to the East of the church & very limited street parking in Felmersham adjacent to the church or by the river. Please show consideration for residents.

WAYMARKING.

The path is marked with arrow signs, yellow for footpaths and blue for bridleways.



ORDNANCE SURVEY.

This walk and other footpaths in the area are covered by Pathfinder map 1001. A companion leaflet, *Footpaths Around Felmersham & Radwell*, is also available.

COUNTRY CODE.

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life & work.

Guard against all risk of fire.

Fasten all gates.

Keep your dogs under close control.

Keep to public paths across farmland.

Use gates & stiles to cross fences, hedges & walls.

Leave livestock, crops & machinery alone.

Take your litter home.

Help to keep all water clean.

Protect wildlife, plants & trees.

Take special care on country roads.

Make no unnecessary noise.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This walk has been developed by Felmersham and Radwell Parish Paths Partnership, with support from Bedfordshire County Council. The Parish Paths Partnership (P3) is a national scheme, developed to ensure that a network of parish footpaths is legally defined, properly maintained and well publicised for the new Millennium.

If you are interested in joining the local group or if you wish to report a footpath obstruction, damaged stile or missing waymarker, please contact Mr Chris Ure, the P3 representative for Felmersham and Radwell.

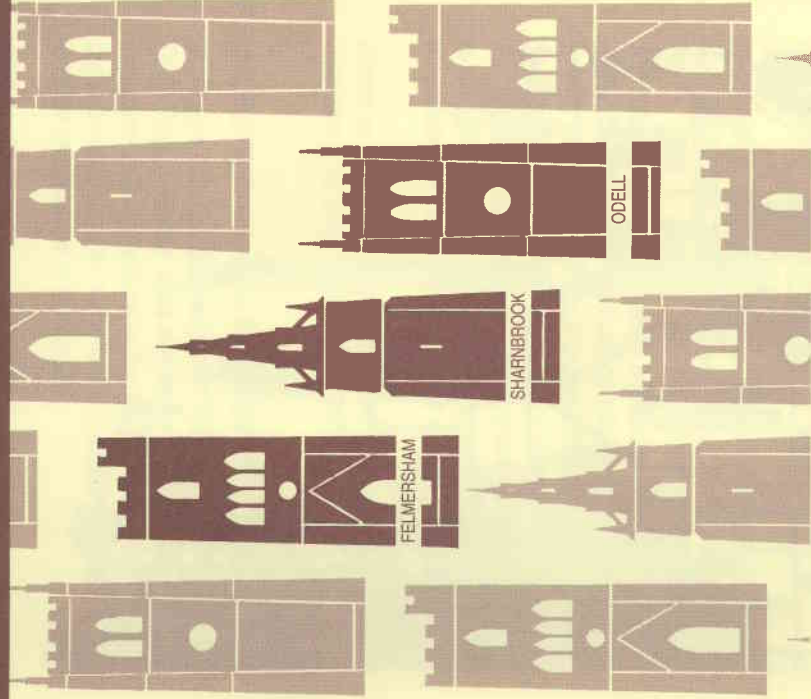
The leaflet was produced by David Cardy, Glenda Davis, Robin Shaw, Ken Shrimpton & Chris Ure.



www.felmersham.net/p3.htm

THREE CHURCHES WALK

A Circular Route to the Country Parish Churches of Felmersham, Sharnbrook & Odell



A Walk of Approximately Six Miles on Public Rights of Way in North Bedfordshire

INTRODUCTION

The walk follows a circular route around part of the Great Ouse valley, connecting the three fine parish churches of Felmersham, Sharnbrook and Odell. In addition to the churches, each parish has interesting buildings and the whole area is rich in plants, birds and other wildlife, there is something for everyone.

Felmersham is situated 7 miles North West of Bedford, with Sharnbrook and Odell each about 2 miles further.

The total length of the walk is approximately 6 miles and at least 2½ hours should be allowed, plus ample time to visit the churches. It is possible to start and finish in any of the three parishes or alternatively visit just two of the churches by following an out and back route between them. There are three pubs on the route for refreshments, with some shops in Sharnbrook.

Buses serve each village from Bedford and/or Rushden (tel. 01604 620077 for information).

FELMERSHAM (Church to Bridge)

St. Mary's Church. Built between 1220 and 1240 in the Early English Gothic style of architecture, the most important external feature is the West Front, considered to be one of the finest examples of Early English architecture in the region.

The larger handle on the south door is known as the sanctuary ring. Fugitives could claim sanctuary by holding the ring, they then had the protection of the church. On entering the church the first impression is one of space and light. The nave is lined with alternate round and octagonal pillars and the central tower is supported on four finely moulded columns. These features are part of the original architecture.

The chancel was restored in 1853 when large Gothic windows were replaced by the present lancet windows. Reglazed in 1951, the east window records the deaths of the three Wells brothers who were killed in the second world war. Other points of interest are the early 16C oak screen, the pulpit (1895), the parish bier

Head north towards the river, on the right is *Bridge Cottage*, the front extension was once the village forge.

Felmersham Bridge was built in 1818, it was strengthened and repaired in 1993, but there has never been a weight restriction placed upon it, a tribute to those early 19C bridge builders.

From Felmersham, follow the footpath towards Sharnbrook, signposted on the right hand side of the bridge. (Refer to map).



SHARNBROOK

On your left as you approach Sharnbrook is an old tower windmill. Built in 1880 it had a tail pole attached to the cap to enable the miller to winch the sails into the wind. Whilst this method was used on post mills it was normal practice on tower mills to use a fan. By 1890 it had fallen into disuse. In 1967 Mr Clement Howard renovated the mill, converting it to an observation tower and installing a clock and bell.

On reaching the High Street turn left and on the left is the Old Police Station and the former Magistrates Court. Continue walking for 200 metres and on your right is the *Baptist Chapel* (no longer used for services). It was designed by the Bedford architect, John Usher and built in 1865 in the Venetian style. An Independent church was established in Sharnbrook in 1719 and it is believed that the first purpose-built chapel was opened in 1786. However, by 1865 it was unable to meet the requirements of the worshippers.

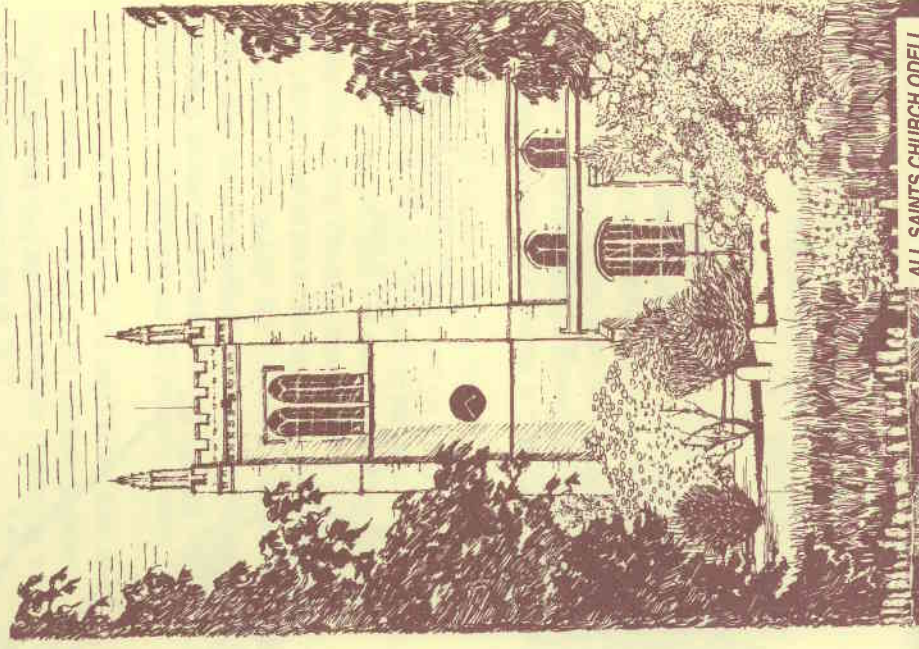
In the centre of the village, the green space was created by demolishing some properties in Church Lane. The route of the original lane can still be seen.



ODELL

Odell takes its name from Woad, a plant used in Saxon times as a dye. Originally known as Woad-hill the name was corrupted into Wodell and by the 16C the name Odell was being used. In the past Odell was known for lace making and more recently its leather works, which has now closed.

All Saints Church. Built in the 15C in the Gothic Perpendicular style, the most striking feature of this building is the heavily buttressed tower in four stages with pinnacles. Inside it has a spacious interior with slender clustered shafts supporting lofty arches to form the four bay arcade. The tower screen is 1637 and the chancel screen is in the Perpendicular style. Of interest is the hour glass for timing sermons, the Jacobean pulpit and three seat sedilia in the chancel.

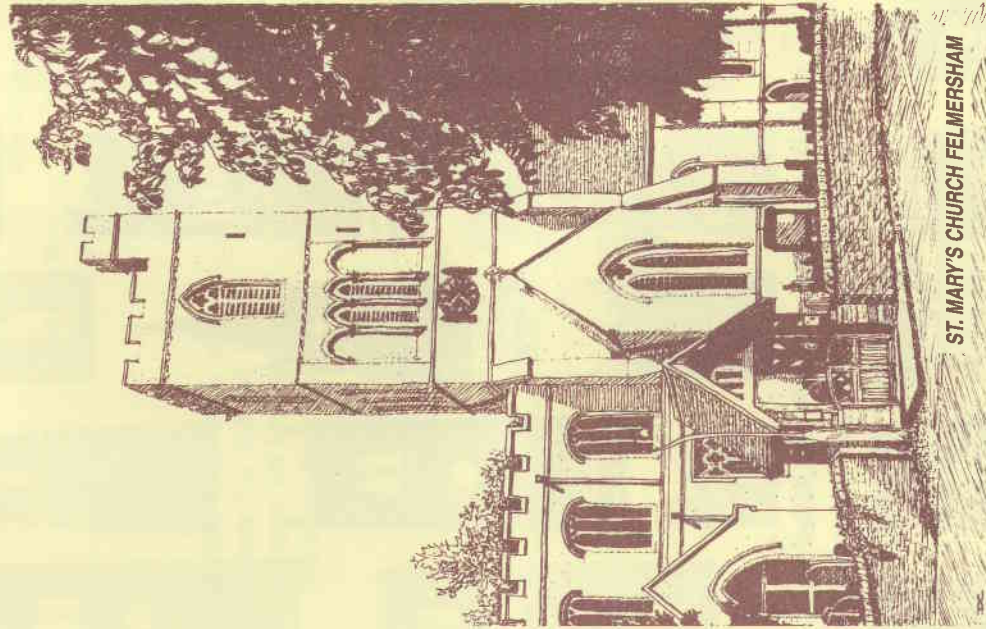


ALL SAINTS CHURCH ODELL

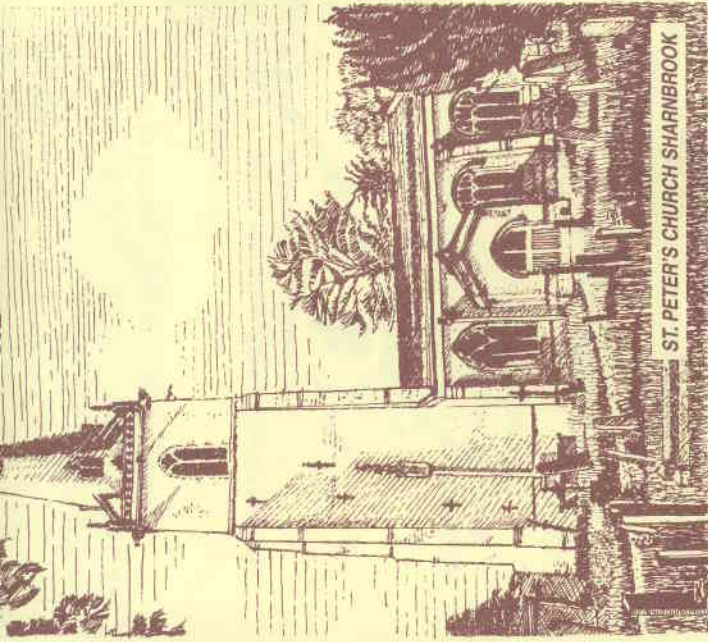
(1893), the wooden-framed, flail-locking turret clock (possibly mid 17C) and the new millennium window in the Memorial Chapel.

Facing the church is the *Tithe Barn* which was built in 1428 and was sympathetically converted into four dwellings in the early 1980's. Prior to this it had stood empty for many years and it was the conversion that probably saved it from eventual ruin.

On the opposite side of the road to the church is *Rose Cottage*, built as a priest's house it dates from the 16C. Next door is the *Old School House*, built in 1846 it was used as the village school until its replacement was built in 1974.



ST. MARY'S CHURCH FELMERSHAM



ST. PETER'S CHURCH SHARBROOK

Parts of the present *St. Peters Church* date from Norman times, but the original building was enlarged in the 13C with further additions in the following centuries. The chancel arch, the nave arcading and the outer walls of the aisles are 13C and the spire is 15C. An unusual feature of this church is that the chancel is lower than the nave. The screen is circa 1500 and the stone font is perpendicular Gothic with a cover made in 1910.

From the church go along Lodge Road to Yellow Lane. The walk skirts the *Colworth Estate* which dates from Tudor times and from 1546 until the end of the 17C was owned by the Montague family. The Elizabethan house, built by the Montagues, was replaced with the present mansion which dates from 1715. In 1948 *Colworth House* was acquired by Unilever Plc. and in recent times the estate has been developed into a modern research facility. Please note the house is not visible on this walk.

Continue along Yellow Lane to the footpath towards the parish of Odell. (Refer to map).

In 1634 Odell's famous rector, the Rev. Peter Bulkeley, was suspended from the living because he could not accept the Laudian discipline. He would not wear a surplice neither would he sign the cross in baptism. Born in the village, he emigrated to New England and helped to found the city of Concord, Massachusetts, where he became its first minister.

Odell castle. Around 1633 William Alston built a mansion house on the site of an old motte and bailey castle which stood on the hill opposite the church. The building stood for almost 300 years when in 1931 it caught fire and was gutted. Many of the old outbuildings remain. A new house was built in the classical style and is still known as Odell Castle.

From the castle the road drops downhill to the stone built village centre where, on the triangular green, markets and annual horse fairs were held.

Odell water mill still retains the cast iron waterwheel and the water sluice is also visible, however the mill stream has dried up. The mill was converted to a house in the early 1950's.

From Odell, follow the bridleway and footpath back towards Felmersham. (Refer to map).



FELMERSHAM (Grange Road to Church)

The stone building 75 metres along Grange Road built close to the left side is the former pub known as the *Six Ringers*. It is of uncertain age but it may be over 400 years old. Why Six Ringers when up until 1955 the church had a ring of five bells? A report in 1880 indicated that two men were needed to ring the "heavy hung" 1 ton tenor! Hence the need for six ringers. In 1955 the bells were rehung and augmented to a ring of 8 bells.

Moving on up the hill, on the right is *Town Lot Lane* which gets its name from Town (the old name for village) and Lot (meaning allotment). The village allotment was part of the Enclosure Settlement of 1776 and the allotments at the top of the lane are still in use. Walking on down the hill, at the junction with