

Countryside code

Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs

Even when going out locally, it's best to get the latest information about where and when you can go; for example, your rights to go onto some areas of open land may be restricted while work is carried out, for safety reasons or during breeding seasons. Follow advice and local signs, and be prepared for the unexpected.

Leave gates and property as you find them

Please respect the working life of the countryside, as our actions can affect people's livelihoods, our heritage, and the safety and welfare of animals and ourselves.

Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home

We have a responsibility to protect our countryside now and for future generations, so make sure you don't harm animals, birds, plants, or trees.

Keep dogs under close control

The countryside is a great place to exercise dogs, but it's every owner's duty to make sure their dog is not a danger or nuisance to farm animals, wildlife or other people.

Consider other people

Showing consideration and respect for other people makes the countryside a pleasant environment for everyone – at home, at work and at leisure.

for further information, please visit
www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

For further information, including public transport, please contact:

Tourist Information Centre
1 Market Place, Saffron Walden
Essex CB10 1HR
Tel 01799 510444

Email: tourism@uttlesford.gov.uk

Website: www.uttlesford.gov.uk



Pub contact details

The Bluebell Inn, High Street, Hempstead: Tel. 01799 599486
Red Lion Public House, Great Sampford: Tel. 01799 586325

Acknowledgements

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Essex County Council Highways Department
Photography by Gordon Ridgewell

The area of this trail is covered by:
Ordnance Survey Explorer 195 – Braintree & Saffron Walden
Scale 1:25 000

This is a country walk on uneven ground and it may be muddy in parts depending upon weather conditions. Please wear suitable clothing and sturdy walking boots or shoes.

View of Thaxted
Church and Windmill

Stoney Lane, Thaxted



Uttlestord

Country walks

Historical notes

The area covered by these three linked walks is associated with the birth, childhood and early career of the notorious highwayman Dick Turpin.

Hempstead, his birthplace; and Thaxted, where he was apprenticed, as well as the picturesque village of Great Sampford which lies between them, are all worth a visit in their own right.

Dick Turpin was born around 1706 in the village of Hempstead, near Saffron Walden, and was raised in the Blue Bell Inn. He was baptised in St Andrew's Church where William Harvey, Chief Physician to Charles I and discoverer of the circulation of the blood, is buried. Not much is known of Turpin's early years. Local legend has it that he became an apprentice butcher in Thaxted with Ducketts, opposite the Parish Church and that when he married he moved into a cottage in Stoney Lane which may be the one that is called to this day "Turpin's Cottage".

After a fairly ordinary childhood and early years, his criminal career started with cattle stealing, and he had to flee into the countryside to avoid being captured. He then associated himself with other unsavoury characters and formed a gang with whom he proceeded to terrorize the areas in the North of London, around Loughton and Epping Forest, robbing anyone that passed their hiding place.

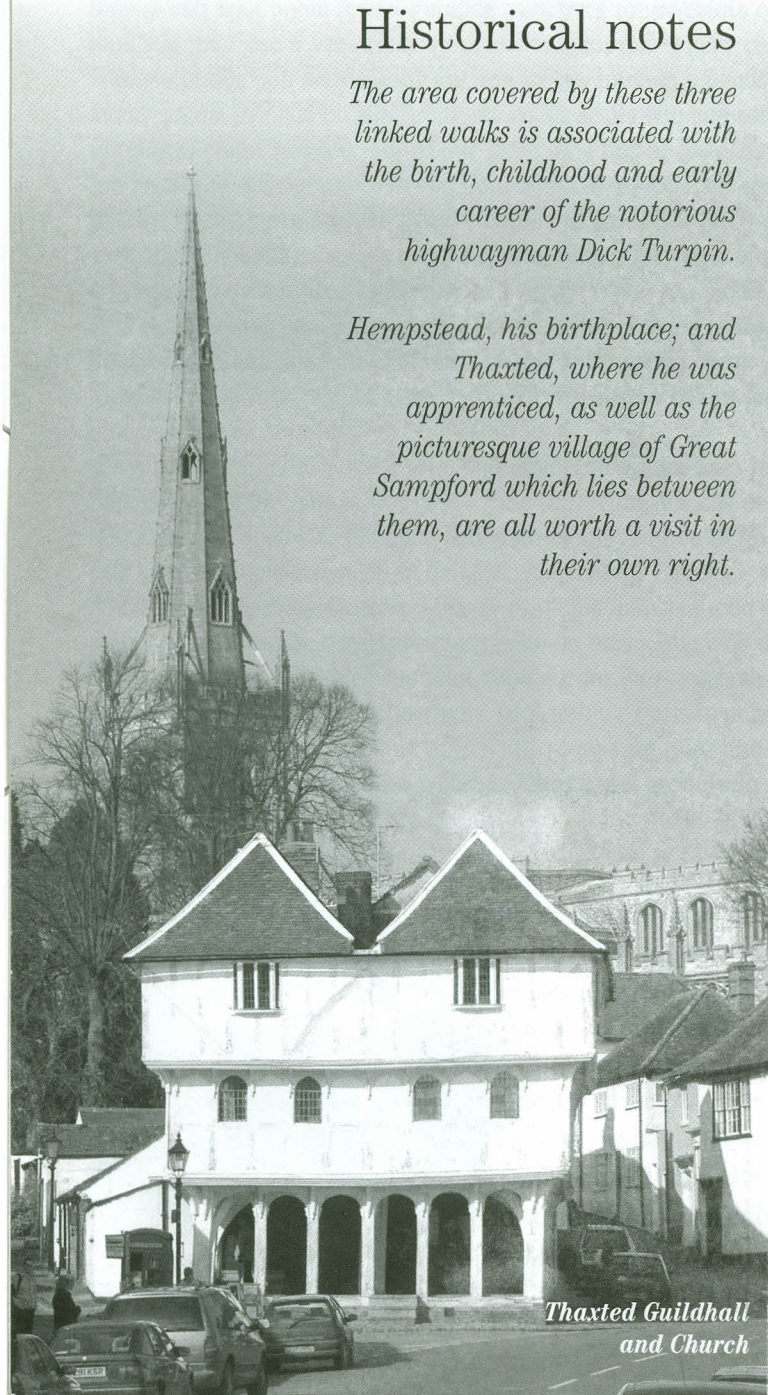
A number of romantic adventures have been attributed to Dick Turpin and his faithful mare "Black Bess", including a dashing ride from London to York in twenty four hours. The reality is a little more prosaic, since, far from being a latter day Robin Hood, he and his Essex gang became truly hardened criminals who didn't hesitate to torture and beat their hapless victims. His exploits eventually led him to flee to Yorkshire where he lived under an assumed identity, calling himself John Palmer. The King offered a hefty reward

of £50 for his capture. Eventually the law caught up with him after his former schoolmaster in Thaxted recognised his handwriting and identified him as Dick Turpin. He was hanged in April 1739 in York, where he is now featured in the Castle Museum.

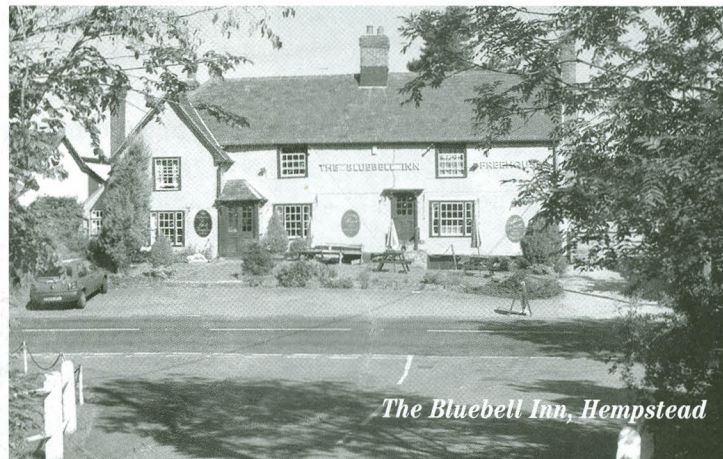
The historic town of Thaxted, which prospered due to the cutlery industry, contains many interesting features. The magnificent Church of St. John the Baptist, Our Lady and St. Lawrence is of cathedral proportions and the exterior contains a large number of interesting gargoyles and other figures. It is the home of the annual Thaxted Festival in June/July. The Windmill and the Guildhall both house small museums.

Great Sampford was a Saxon settlement on the rising ground above the river Pant which flows from its source near Wimbish and was referred to as Sanfort or Sanforda in the Domesday Book and means the "sandy ford". Great Sampford is an attractive rural village with a number of interesting buildings including pretty pargetted cottages and the Church of St. Michael the Archangel, which was re-built in the 14th century and boasts some handsome features.

West Wood is an ancient woodland, once owned in medieval times by the Knights Templar. Nowadays it is a nature reserve owned by the Essex Wildlife Trust, which is currently restoring the wood to its ancient coppice cycle. In spring the wood has oxlips, early purple and greater butterfly orchids and a wonderful variety of nesting birds.



Thaxted Guildhall and Church



The Bluebell Inn, Hempstead



West Wood, Great Sampford



Turpin's Trail is in three interlinked sections between Thaxted, where our anti-hero worked, and Hempstead, where he was born. Each separate walk takes between 2.5 and 3.5 hours. The full circular walk from Thaxted to Hempstead and back to Thaxted will take you about 9 hours. The whole trail is well way marked so our instructions are limited. Starting and finishing at any point is an option.

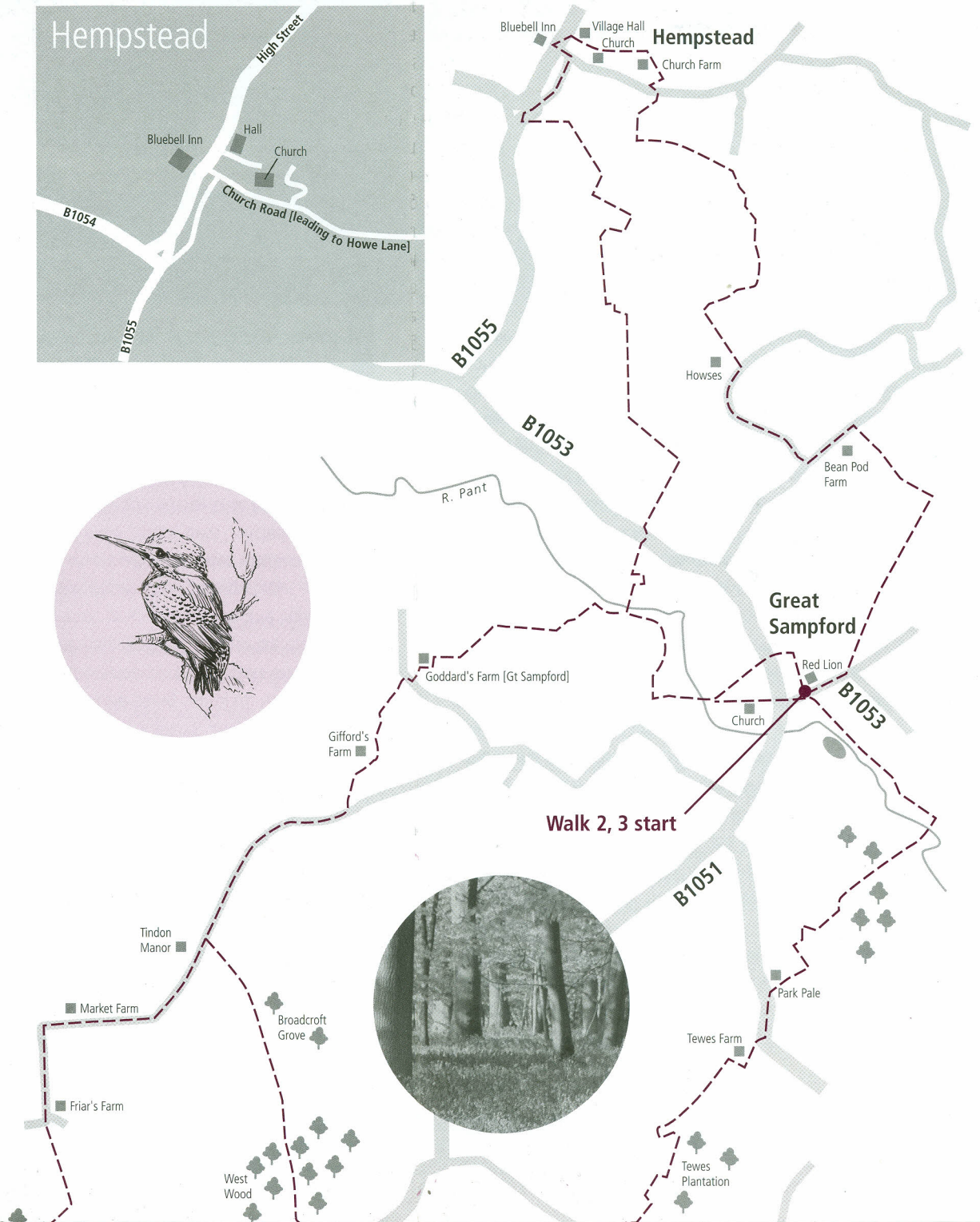
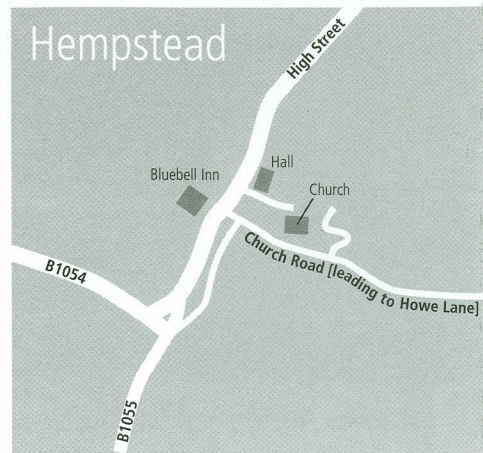
Walk 1: Thaxted to Tindon Manor, West Wood and back to Thaxted

Start at the Park Street car park in Thaxted. Follow the signs into the town in the direction of the Guildhall. Look out for Dick Turpin's Cottage in Stoney Lane to the right of the Guildhall. Cross the road and look out for Duckett's butchers, where Turpin once traded as a butcher. Cross the road again with care at the bend by the Swan hotel and continue down Watling Lane. The metalled road eventually runs out and the footpath bears right by the River Chelmer. Follow signs across a road (B184) and into farm drive and farmland (Goddard's Farm) and on to Bow Croft Wood (see blue bells in early summer). At Friar's Farm (attractive gardens and pond) follow a track, bearing right at Market Farm and then onto a road. Pass Tindon Manor behind a yew hedge on your left.

20m past the yew hedge Walk 1 turns right into a green lane. (Walk 2 continues along the road towards Great Sampford.) Walk 1 continues: Stay on the green lane for 1km until you reach West Wood (see Historical Notes) and a further 0.5km until you reach the road (B1051). Turn left along the road, taking care of traffic because of the bend, and turn right after 200m onto a track. **(Just before Great Clark's Farm, Walk 2 comes in from the left.)** Bear right through the farmyard, right at the road and right again at a T-junction. Re-enter fields on the right after 200m. Bearing slightly left, head for a gap in the distant hedge. Head for a wood, follow its edge on your right, turn right at the end and soon left over a wooden bridge. The walk diverts left after 500m through a hedge and into a green lane and then into a wide track. Continue straight into a field, cross a stream, climb a bank and after 500m follow Cophall Lane back to the centre of Thaxted.

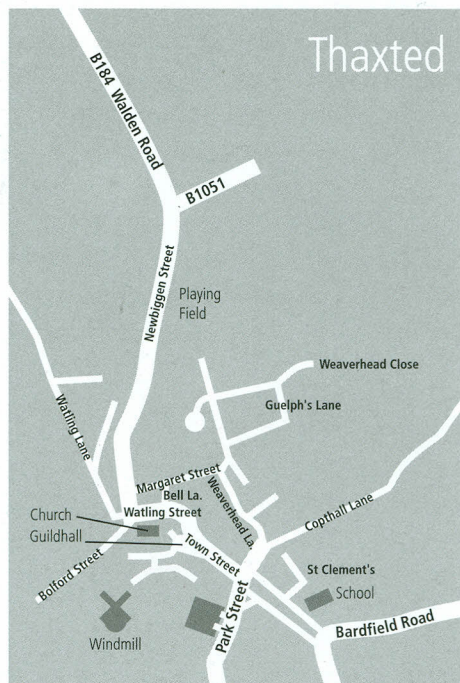
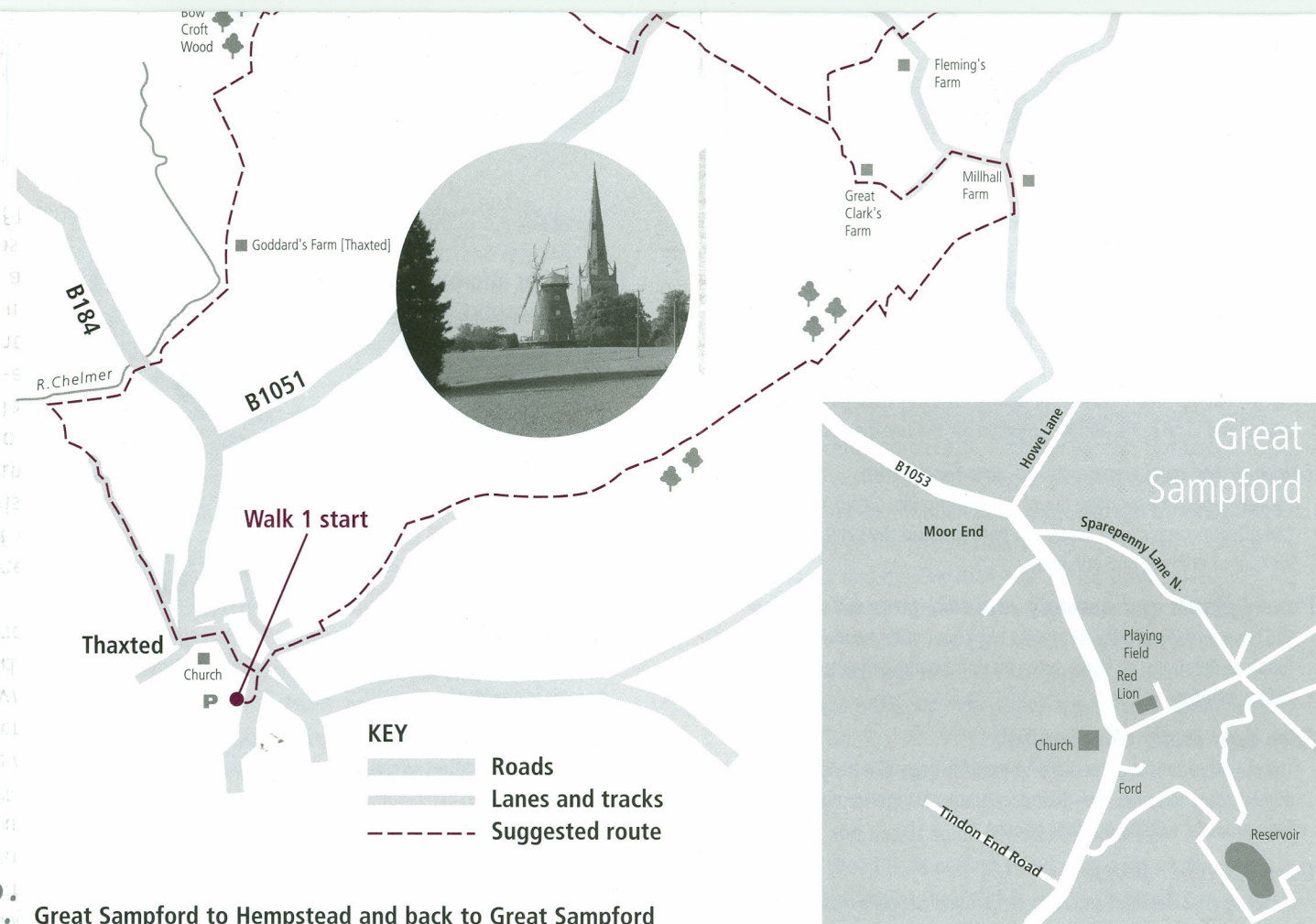
Walk 2: Great Sampford to Tewes Plantation, Tindon Manor and back to Great Sampford.

From the Red Lion public house (where parking is available for walkers), cross the road (B1053) continue on a path between



patrons), cross the road (B1055) continue on a path between houses, bear left and head for a gap in the distant hedge. Follow the River Pant for about 600m. (Look for a reservoir feeding the Pant. Here water is being transferred from Cambridgeshire to the Essex river system to supply water to the south of the county.) Cross by a concrete footbridge and head straight up the field, hedge on left. On reaching a wood ahead follow the signs by the wood and the plantation to Park Pale. Take care on the road, wind through Tewes Farmyard, follow hedge and stream, turn left over bridge and follow edge of Tewes plantation. Cross the byway near Flemings Farm with care, continuing in the same direction until you reach the drive to Great Clark's Farm. (Here you meet Walk 1– left into the farmyard to Thaxted). Walk 2 continues right.

This section of the walk to Tindon Manor is part of Walk 1 but in the opposite direction through West Wood. On reaching the road at Tindon Manor turn right. Bear left along the drive through Gifford's Farm; note "1625" on the chimney. Continue on a broad path to Goddard's Farm, through the yard, right in front of the last barn. At the end of a hedge bear right and down the field, crossing right across a ditch and follow the Pant. Pass the first footbridge and cross the next bridge over the river. Head up the hill, through the churchyard, cross the road and back to the Red Lion.



Walk 3: Great Sampford to Hempstead and back to Great Sampford

The final link to the birthplace of our anti-hero also starts at the Red Lion. Take the path to the left of the pub into the playing fields, left past the tennis court, cross the road (with care), pass between the houses and bear right when you enter the open field. Cross the bridge over the Pant (as walk 2), right and cross back over the river at the next bridge. Bear right, cross three horse paddocks by stiles and then cross a field and the road (B1053) with care. Climb the steps and 300m ahead turn left through gate, then two more gates before reaching a track with cattle grid to right. Bear part left through gap in hedge and go north with hedge on right down field (view Hempstead church in distance), over stream by bridge and steps up a bank. Turn left and then soon right up field. Take left gap through hedge 100m after top of field and bear part left towards church and corner of hedge line. Here bear slightly right. Enter distant paddock by stile, leave by gate on left, head down the field and right onto road (B1055). Promptly bear right on byway past Wellyards. On reaching

road turn left and find The Blue Bell Inn, the birthplace of our anti-hero Dick Turpin. Leaving the pub, turn left along the road, then right by village hall, through the churchyard. Turn right after second stile, past pond and willow trees, right and onto road. Left along road, right after 20m and shortly right over stile, cross field by diagonal and then left. Climb stile on left and continue straight for 500m, right onto track and follow River Pant (on left). Cross a footbridge, keep left, then cross handrailed bridge and the Pant again. Follow path upwards, wood to left, turn right on track and then bear left after 50m onto green lane. Turn left at road, left at T-junction to Bean Pod Farm, right (where waymark hosts a birdbox) into farm. Bear left past farm building and continue past fenced paddocks on left, bear to right of hedge at gap but continue straight to ditch. There turn right, switch to right of ditch after 300m and continue straight back to Great Sampford. There you turn right when you reach the road and walk the final 200m back to the Red Lion.