

The Parks Trust Self-Guided Walks: Lodge Lake, Loughton & The Teardrop Lakes

Walk revised by Peter Burrett, Monday 29th July 2013

Start point

Turn off Danstead Way (H4) onto Bradwell Road in Loughton Lodge. There is a free car park about 250 metres on your right.

Walk overview

This is an hourglass-shape walk, with a short stretch in Loughton being retraced on both outward and inward journeys. The walking is easy along footpaths and red ways, and should be accessible throughout the year - including for wheelchair users - although there is a short optional climb via a footpath to a viewpoint above the Teardrop Lakes.

There are no opportunities to buy food or drink along the way, but there are plenty of benches on which picnics could be eaten.

Distances & times

Hour glass walk; Car park – Lodge Lake – Loughton – Teardrop Lakes – Loughton – Lodge Lake - car park = 4.7 miles, 120 minutes.

The hour glass walk

Loughton Lodge Section (1)

Take the pedestrian exit from the car park onto a footpath. On your left is the first of several fixed exercise apparatus, part of the Lodge Lake "trim trail". The eastern flank of Lodge Lake itself is on your right, although partially hidden by extensive reed beds at time of visit. This is one of Milton Keynes' balancing lakes, designed to hold excess floodwater until it can be slowly released into Loughton Brook.

A peninsula of paddocks and woodland extends almost right across the lake, from south to north. The lake is very popular with fishermen, as evidenced by wooden platforms on the lake shore at regular intervals.

On your left you pass a gated community of apartments (Woodward Place). Here the eastern section of the lake is very narrow. There are lots of coots hoping to be fed and, at time of visit, an impressive display of water lilies.

Walk over a concrete bridge after which the path curves left to give views of houses in Great Holm. Walk across a second, wooden, footbridge over Loughton Brook. At a footpath T-junction turn left, signed "Loughton Village" and "Teardrop Lakes". Loughton Brook is on your left as you pass under Portway (H5).



Ignore a wooden bridge over Loughton Brook to your left and continue straight on. Where the footpath forks, take the left strand signed "Loughton Village" and pass over a two part footbridge over Loughton Brook. The brook, which has been landscaped to form a series of pools and ponds, is now to the right of the footpath.

Cross Lincslade Grove and pass a ground level sign advising that you are now in the Loughton Village section of Loughton Valley Park. On your right are several very large stepping stones over the brook. Proceed on the existing footpath, ignoring another to the left. At a footpath T-junction, turn right across a concrete bridge over Loughton Brook.

After just 50 metres you will come to another footpath T-junction. Ahead of you is The Green and a large thatched residence. Here there is an information panel giving a history of Great & Little Loughton, merged into one community in 1408. Turn left down a minor road (also known as The Green), past a whitewashed cottage on your right until you come to Bradwell Road.

Walk across Bradwell Road into Leys Road, taking the footpath alongside it. You pass a Loughton Parish Council noticeboard. You will come to a narrow road bridge on Leys Road. For safety reasons, take a short diversion across a footbridge to your left and rejoin Leys Road close to a whitewashed building that is now a private residence, but still displays the "Wheatsheaf" sign from its historical function as an inn. Loughton's old bakehouse – now also a private house – is next door.



The large open space on your right forms part of the grounds of Loughton Manor Equestrian Centre. Just beyond Manor Cottage on your right, Leys Road narrows to a lane. When you come to footpaths left and right, take the right hand one. There is a further ground level sign for Loughton Valley Park. Follow a higher sign to "Teardrop Lakes" and "Milton Keynes Bowl".

The path follows a narrow brook to the right. Cross over Redland Drive, continuing on the footpath. Pass a weir on your right then through a cavernous underpass beneath Childs Way (H6).

You emerge close to the most northerly of the four Teardrop Lakes. Turn left from the underpass and follow a footpath for about 200 metres to a red way, where you turn right. There is another signpost to "Teardrop Lakes" and "Milton Keynes Bowl". Follow the red way alongside a strip of woodland on the left which shields the Teardrop Lakes from the sight of the A5, if not its noise.

The lakes themselves are on your right. They have a healthy population of birdlife, including coots, moorhen and grey herons. There are footpaths crossing between first and second, and second and third lakes, but remain on the red way until it veers right and crosses between the third and fourth lakes and over a bridge. Just before the bridge is a milestone sculpture associated with the National Cycle Network movement.



Shortly after the bridge, leave the red way, turning right onto a footpath. You are now walking north westwards on the opposite sides of the lakes. Just after crossing another short bridge, there is an opportunity for a diversion to a viewpoint that is well worth taking. Turn left up a footpath that winds to the top of a mound where there is a bench. You will get good views towards the city centre, and across the parkland around the Teardrop Lakes.

Once you've descended via the same access path, take the footpath on your left – a different route to the ascending path - to rejoin the main lakeside path. Pass a cricket ground on your left. At the end of the most northerly Teardrop Lake, pass through the Childs Way (H6) underpass again.



When you reach the weir beyond the underpass, walk to the left of it and proceed through a car park onto Redland Drive, Loughton. Cross the road and turn left along a red way past Loughton Manor Equestrian Centre and The Grove Independent School.

At the end of Redland Drive turn right at a sign for "Local Centre" (refers to the nearby shopping area at Shenley Church End) and "Great Holm" onto another red way for about 150 metres of Ashpole Furlong. Here there is a fabulous view across the grounds of the equestrian centre to the distant Loughton church. Turn right again into Whitworth Lane.

Follow Whitworth Lane between large residential properties on the left and the extensive grounds of the equestrian centre to the right for about 600 metres. Just before a sharp left hand turn in the road, take a short stretch of footpath on your right. You arrive back on Leys Road, just before the narrow road bridge.

You now turn left to retrace your outward route. *Follow Leys Road, cross Bradwell Road into The Green, then right onto the footpath signed "Lodge Lake" and "Bradwell Abbey" almost opposite the large thatched house. Follow the footpath over a footbridge and left past a sign for Loughton Valley Park. Loughton Brook and the giant stepping stones are now on your left. Cross Lincelade Grove and walk along the footpath directly opposite. Turn sharp left over the two part footbridge. With the brook now on your right, proceed under Portway (H5).*

From here a new route is followed. Once under Portway, the footpath bears left. Keep straight ahead, ignoring the footpath on your right that would take you straight back to your starting point. Shortly afterwards turn right onto the red way that runs in front of the Kam Tong Garden Chinese restaurant.

Walk along the western side of Lodge Lake until you reach a T-junction with another red way. Turn right along the northern shore of the lake, past a weir on your right and a picnic area on your left. You soon arrive back at the starting point car park off Bradwell Road.

