

3 Abbots & Priors

This circular ride connects Priory Country Park (named after the adjoining Priory of Newnham) with the Abbey Church of Elstow, all that remains of a much more extensive monastic foundation. Elstow is full of interest because of its many connections with John Bunyan and this ride passes his birthplace. Most of the ride is on cycle paths. It is readily accessible from east and south Bedford and by rides 1 or 5 from the rest of the town (see Connections). People coming by car can park in Priory Park. This ride also provides access to ride 13.

6.5 Miles
EASY

PUBS

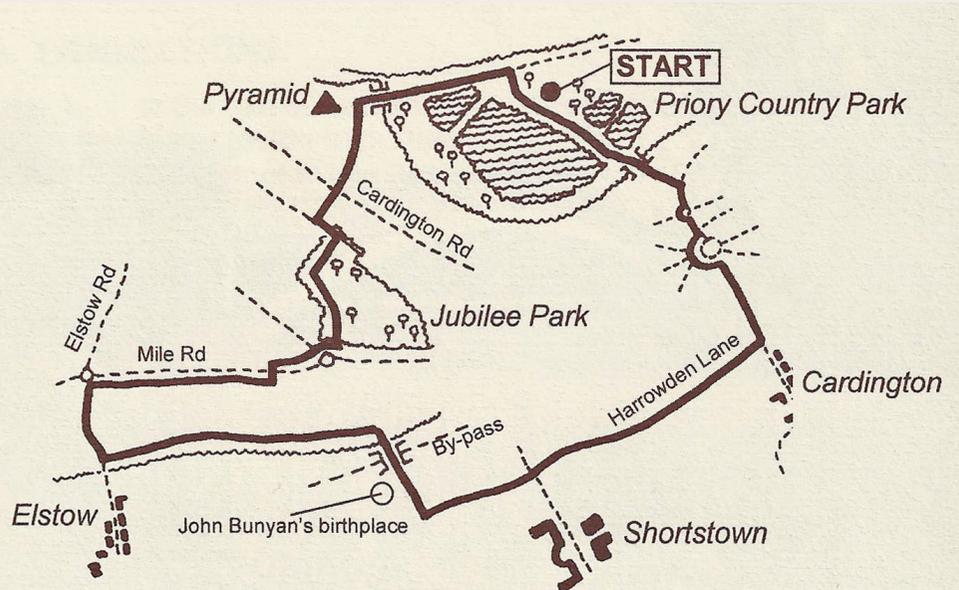
Beefeater, Priory Park
The Swan, Elstow
The Red Lion, Elstow
The Gate, Harrowden

TEAS & SNACKS

Kiosk, Priory Country Pk

PICNIC SITES

Elstow Green
Priory Country Park



Route of Ride 3

Our description starts from Priory Park but you can obviously join at any point and get back to where you started.

1. PRIORY PARK TO ELSTOW (2.5 miles)

- # From the car park head back to the entrance and turn left onto the cycle track just before the bridge. Follow this straight through to the pyramid, where you turn sharp left onto the cycle track from Newnham Bridge. Use the toucan crossing to get over Cardington Road and walk through the alleyway just to the left into Nash road.
- # At the end turn left into Moulton Avenue and then cross over to enter Jubilee Park. Take the path straight ahead with the skateboard rink on your right. Bear left at the far side of the park and continue on the path past the lodge.
- # Turn right along the concrete fence and then bear left. Where the path reaches the main Road (Harrowden Road) turn right along the path up to the far side of the roundabout. Use the island to cross London Road to reach the start of the Mile Road cycle path.
- # Follow the signs for the cycle path all the way down Mile road, crossing to the other side of the pedestrian crossing, along the footpath and the service road. Left into Moor Lane, right into Stapleton Road and then first right, back to the service road, where you go left.
- # At the end of Mile Road, keep on and turn left down the path into the cul-de-sac. This is Elstow High Street. Go down the High Street and turn right at the signs for the Abbey Church and Moot Hall, into Church End.

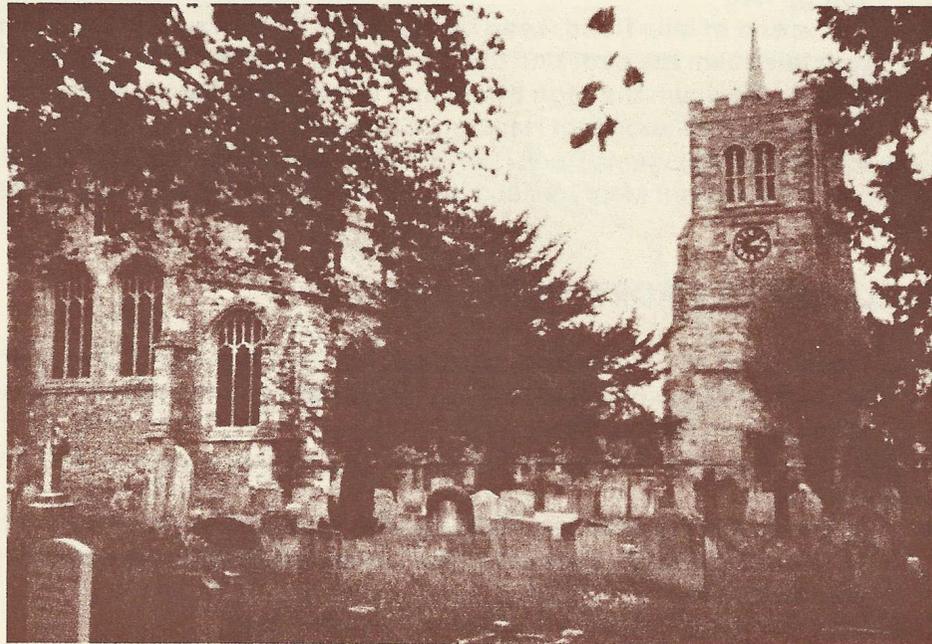
Take time to explore Elstow Green (site of Vanity Fair in Pilgrim's Progress), the museum in the Ancient Moot Hall and the Abbey Church with its separate bell tower.

2. ELSTOW TO PRIORY PARK (4.0 MILES)

- # Coming out of Church End, turn right into the High Street and on the far side of Bunyans Mead fork left by the railings onto the path down to and along Elstow Brook.
- Dismount for the short (100 yards) section where cycling is banned and then resume riding.*
- # At the end of the path turn right onto the bridleway (*known as Bumpy Lane but it's not that bad*). Cross Meadowsweet Drive and continue under the A421 by-pass.
- The site of Bunyan's birthplace is just beyond on the right.*



THE MOOT HALL ELSTOW FROM CHURCHYARD



THE ABBEY CHURCH, ELSTOW WITH ITS DETACHED TOWER

- # At the end turn left into Old Harrowden Road.
Take care at the end crossing the main road into Harrowden Lane.
- # Follow this to Cardington where you turn left. Immediately after the bridge (*built by Smeaton of Eddystone Light fame*) turn onto the cycle path and follow this carefully round the roundabout, crossing Cardington Road using the toucan to get to Stannard Way. Go left up Stannard Way, over the roundabout and next left which brings you to the entrance to Priory Park.
- # Go over the river (Cardington Lock) and bear right over two bridges. Turn right at the lake and follow the path back to the car park.

4. CONNECTIONS

From the rest of the town - use rides 1 or 5 to get to Newnham Bridge..
From this little white bridge follow the path round the end of the lake and under the road. Swing right over King's Bridge and fork left up past the pyramid on your right. You are now on the route (Section 1 above).

Ride 13 Elstow, Haynes, Rowney Warren, Cardington. *Starts from Elstow Green and meets this ride at Cardington. If you decide to do Ride 13 as well it will add 12.5 miles to the distance.*

Ride 18 Greensand Ridge. *People living in South Bedford can use this ride to join ride 18 (turn right onto Cardington at the end of Harrowden Lane). For most other people it will be easier to start Ride 18 in Priory Park.*



PRIORY COUNTRY PARK, THE START OF MANY RIDES