



# HERITAGE BEDFORD

VISIT • DISCOVER • EXPLORE



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THE  
**BEDFORD  
CLANGER**



## VISIT



Bedford is a town with a long history and wonderful heritage. Some of this heritage is easy to spot, some needs a little more guidance to seek it out. Whether you want to explore a family-friendly museum, take a tour with an expert

guide, research something in particular, or just wander in the Victorian parks, Bedford has something for you.

As well as historic buildings, engaging exhibition programmes and cultural festivals, there are regular musical and theatre performances and river boat cruises to be enjoyed.

## DISCOVER A FEW MOMENTS IN BEDFORD'S HISTORY

In 1224, Falkes de Breauté refused to give up Bedford Castle to King Henry III. Henry and his army finally took it from Falkes following a siege that lasted eight weeks. Spend an afternoon in Castle Gardens reliving the story through excavated remains, discovery boards, history mosaic and an unexpected icy Victorian addition!

In 1566, Sir William Harpur and his wife Alice gave a financial endowment to support several charities in Bedford. This eventually became the Harpur Trust. You can visit the memorial to the town's great benefactor inside St Paul's church.

John Bunyan was born just outside Bedford in 1628. Due to his preaching activities,



Bunyan was imprisoned in Bedford jail for twelve years and later for another six months. He became one of the world's most widely read Christian writers. There are several heritage sites associated with Bunyan in and around Bedford. Join visitors from around the world inspired by his life, times, and works.

In the late 1800s the town welcomed many people from home and abroad who came to Bedford to take advantage of the Harpur Trust schools. The town became known for offering a certain lifestyle and large houses were built. In the 1900s Bedford housed a remarkable



religious community in some of those properties, now the Panacea Museum.

During World War II over 400 musicians and technicians were evacuated to Bedford so that BBC radio broadcasts could continue. Seven recording studios were established and over 8,000 broadcasts were made,

including 1,000 from St Paul's Church. In 1944 the Prom concerts were staged in Bedford Corn Exchange, which also played host to the famous band leader Glenn Miller. His American Band of the Supreme Allied Command were billeted in Bedford and played several concerts in the town. Look out for blue plaques on buildings or take a walking tour to find out more.

Since the 1940s people from around the world have migrated to Bedford. This has created a vibrant cultural town that celebrates different communities throughout the year. Check what's on at local venues.



### **BUNYAN MEETING CHURCH, MILL STREET**

An active Independent church, Bunyan Meeting was built in 1850, and stands on the site of Bunyan's original church where he was minister from 1671 to 1688. Scenes from The Pilgrim's Progress can be found on the bronze entrance doors and in stunning stained glass windows.

[bunyanmeeting.co.uk](http://bunyanmeeting.co.uk)

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### **JOHN BUNYAN MUSEUM, MILL STREET**

The museum tells the story of the Bedford man who wrote The Pilgrim's Progress, one of the greatest novels in the English language. During his life Bunyan was a soldier, tinker, preacher, dissenter, and spent 12 years in Bedford prison for illegal preaching.

[bunyanmeeting.co.uk/museum](http://bunyanmeeting.co.uk/museum)

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### **THE BASEMENT AT BUNYAN GALLERY, MILL STREET**

The most recent addition to the Bunyan Meeting complex, The Basement at Bunyan is a community-orientated arts centre. It offers spirituality, heritage and creativity to Bedford, with a wide programme of exhibitions, workshops and activities.

[bunyanmeeting.co.uk/basement-at-bunyan](http://bunyanmeeting.co.uk/basement-at-bunyan)

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### **THE HIGGINS ART GALLERY & MUSEUM, CASTLE LANE**

Explore world-class collections of fine and decorative arts, watercolours and prints. Enjoy the inspiring stories of local people and find out more about Bedford through collections of archaeology, ethnography, social and natural history.

[thehigginsbedford.org.uk](http://thehigginsbedford.org.uk)





### **PANACEA MUSEUM, NEWNHAM ROAD**

Telling the story of the Panacea Society, a Christian group formed in the early twentieth century who created their own ‘Garden of Eden’ in the centre of Bedford, the Panacea Museum is located across several Victorian buildings that formed the community’s headquarters. See the historic campus, enjoy gardens and restored houses.

[panaceamuseum.org](http://panaceamuseum.org)

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### **ST PAUL'S CHURCH, ST PAUL'S SQUARE**

St Paul's stands at the very heart of the County Town of Bedford. Its worshipping community welcomes pilgrims and visitors alike, and offers a haven of tranquillity at the centre of this busy town. The church, open almost daily, also hosts many cultural events including Tuesday lunchtime concerts.

[stpaulschurchbedford.org.uk](http://stpaulschurchbedford.org.uk)

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### **BEDFORD CENTRAL LIBRARY, HARPUR STREET**

The library has a comprehensive Local Studies collection of books and periodicals of local interest, biographies connected to the area, and books by local authors. Bedfordshire newspapers dating back to the early 1800s are available on microfilm. Free Wi-Fi and activities for families and children are also available.

[bedford.gov.uk/libraries](http://bedford.gov.uk/libraries)

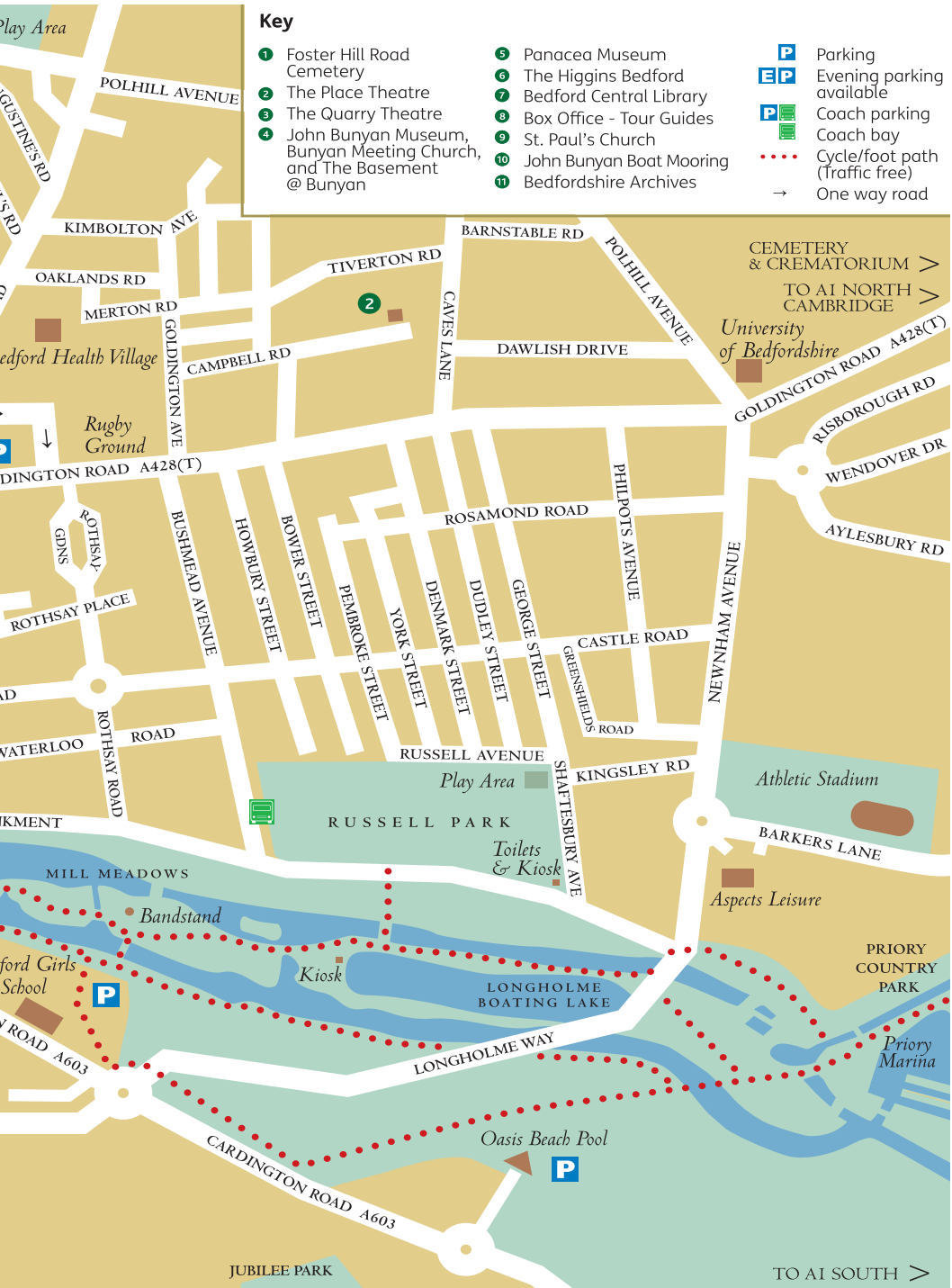
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### **BEDFORDSHIRE HERITAGE LIBRARY, HARPUR STREET**

On the 2nd floor of Bedford Central Library, the Bedfordshire Heritage Library houses rare or delicate items of historical significance, such as directories, journals, poll books, and town and village histories. It is open every Tuesday 11-1 and 2-4, and special works relating to John Bunyan can be viewed by appointment. [bedford.gov.uk/libraries](http://bedford.gov.uk/libraries)





**Key**

- 1 Foster Hill Road Cemetery
- 2 The Place Theatre
- 3 The Quarry Theatre
- 4 John Bunyan Museum, Bunyan Meeting Church, and The Basement @ Bunyan
- 5 Panacea Museum
- 6 The Higgins Bedford Bedford Central Library
- 7 Box Office - Tour Guides
- 8 St. Paul's Church
- 9 John Bunyan Boat Mooring
- 10 Bedfordshire Archives

- P** Parking
- EP** Evening parking available
- P** Coach parking
- Coach bay
- ... Cycle/foot path (Traffic free)
- One way road

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CEMETERY & CREMATORIUM >  
TO AI NORTH CAMBRIDGE >

University of Bedfordshire  
GOLDINGTON ROAD A428(T)

RISBOROUGH RD  
WENDOVER DR  
AYLESBURY RD

NEWNHAM AVENUE  
KINGSLEY RD

ATHLETIC STADIUM  
BARKERS LANE  
Aspects Leisure

PRIORY COUNTRY PARK  
Priority Marina

TO AI SOUTH >

JUBILEE PARK



### **BEDFORD ASSOCIATION OF TOUR GUIDES**

If you want to know more about Bedford, why not take a walking tour led by a professional guide. Book either a place on one of our regular walks or organise your own custom group tour.

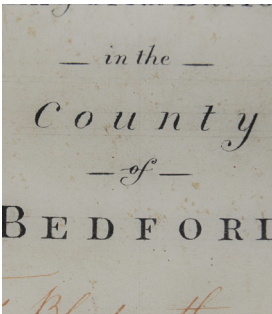
[bedfordtourguides.org](http://bedfordtourguides.org)



### **JOHN BUNYAN BOAT**

Cruise the River Great Ouse in warmth and comfort, watch the scenery drift past and enjoy refreshments on board. The boat is available Tuesdays to Sundays, April to October, for charter by groups of up to 50. It also offers weekly public cruises and special interest cruises.

[johnbunyanboat.org](http://johnbunyanboat.org)



### **BEDFORDSHIRE ARCHIVES, PREBEND STREET**

A must for anyone researching Bedfordshire family or local history. Make an appointment to investigate documents from the last 850 years with friendly expert advice on hand to assist you.

[bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk](http://bedsarchives.bedford.gov.uk)



### **BEDFORD CEMETERY, FOSTER HILL ROAD**

Since 1855, Bedford's Victorian cemetery has been the last resting place of many who built the town's heritage. The Friends preserve the grounds and carry out fascinating guided walks about the remarkable people commemorated; the good, the bad, the ordinary and the inspiring. "All Human Life is Here." [fosterhillroadcemetery.co.uk](http://fosterhillroadcemetery.co.uk)





### **QUARRY THEATRE, ST PETER'S STREET**

The Quarry Theatre is a performing arts facility for Bedford School and the town. The church, originally built for Bedford's Moravian community, was converted to house a theatre and fully licensed bar. The programme includes professional productions, comedy, music and NTLive screenings. [quarrytheatre.org.uk](http://quarrytheatre.org.uk)



### **THE PLACE THEATRE, BRADGATE ROAD**

This hidden gem has become a favourite with local audiences. It is a premier facility for a diverse range of groups, offering a range of theatre, comedy and music, both professional and community produced. [theplacebedford.org.uk](http://theplacebedford.org.uk)

### **OTHER COMMUNITY VENUES**

Bedford has many different communities that have built or adapted buildings for their particular use. In Queen's Park, to the west of the town centre, the Guru Nanak Gurdwara Sikh Temple is modelled on a traditional Gurdwara. It opened in 2008. The Jamia Masjid Gulshan-e-Baghdad, completed in 2001, was the first purpose-built Mosque in Bedford. Closer to the town centre the Polish Church of Sacred Heart of Jesus & St Cuthbert is housed in a former Anglican church.





### **THE EMBANKMENT**

Building of The Embankment and its gardens began in 1866 as a solution to the routing of a new sewer. Later the gardens developed to the east and became a wonderful place to promenade. With changing floral displays, bridges in different styles, the castle mound, ice house, hotels and cafés, it remains a jewel in Bedford's crown.

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### **RUSSELL PARK**

Located off the Embankment the land was given to the town in 1894. It opened as a park in 1898. It is used for sports and various festivals and includes an inclusive play space.

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### **MILL MEADOWS AND PRIORY MARINA AND COUNTRY PARK**

The area on the south side of the river was gradually developed for leisure activities from the 1880s. It provides a walk from the town to Priory Country Park. The park, opened in 1986, has lakes, meadows and woodland. The route also explores some of the town's medieval and industrial heritage.

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### **BEDFORD PARK**

This park opened in July 1888. The Victorian design has been maintained. There are facilities for various sports and the park is used for a number of events throughout the year. Foster Hill Cemetery is directly to the north of the park.



### **ELSTOW ABBEY**

An historic church with a living pilgrim faith. Founded c.1075 by Judith a niece of William the Conqueror. Elstow is the birthplace of John Bunyan and many of the sights and scenes of 'The Pilgrim's Progress' can be traced back to his experiences in and around the Abbey Church.

[elstow-abbey.org.uk](http://elstow-abbey.org.uk)

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### **MOOT HALL, ELSTOW**

Built in the 15th century as a market house and courtroom for Elstow Abbey, the Moot Hall was restored in 1951 as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations and opened as a museum of 17th century life, dedicated to John Bunyan, who was born in the parish.

[moothall.weebly.com](http://moothall.weebly.com)

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### **RIDGMONT STATION HERITAGE CENTRE**

A hidden gem on the Marston Vale Community Rail line, the picturesque station building is built in the distinctive Victorian Gothic 'Cottage Orné' style, and includes a museum, tea room, gift shop and tourist information point.

[ridgmonthheritage.org.uk](http://ridgmonthheritage.org.uk)

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### **R101 MEMORIAL, CARDINGTON**

A short bus ride away in Cardington village cemetery is the grave of the 48 victims of the R101 airship disaster. The memorial was designed by renowned architect Albert Richardson. The ensign of the ship, which was built at Cardington and crashed in France in 1930, is in the nearby church.



# HERITAGE BEDFORD

Heritage Bedford is an informal group of heritage and cultural organisations that come together to share resources and to promote heritage on Bedford's doorstep. We do not claim to represent all the wonderful heritage and culture of Bedford. For the resident of, or visitor to, Bedford we offer a starting point from which we hope you will explore further.

## GETTING HERE:

Bedford is easy to reach by public transport, bike and car. Once in Bedford the town is easy to navigate on foot and the centre of the town is pedestrianised.

### By train:

Bedford train station is served by Thameslink, East Midlands Railway and the Marston Vale Line. St John's station is also served by the Marston Vale Line. Timetables are available at [nationalrail.co.uk](http://nationalrail.co.uk)

### By bus:

A Park & Ride service operates from the junction of the A6 and A421 at Elstow, providing regular services to Bedford town centre. There are regular bus services to towns and villages in Bedfordshire and beyond. To find up-to-date information on routes and providers see [bedford.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel](http://bedford.gov.uk/parking-roads-and-travel)

### By bike:

Bedford is situated on Route 51 between Sandy and Milton Keynes.

### By car:

Bedford is located between the A1 and M1 and is well served by the A421 dual carriageway which links the two major roads. The A6 and A428 provide routes from north and south.