

A Tale of Two Grids

Here is a town fashioned from two grids that coexist but rarely harmonise. They are occasionally visible to each other through the trees, but are so different that the occupants of each can hardly imagine the other exists: the alternative only appearing when switching from car to bike or foot to bus.

Cars, buses, lorries and motorcycles inhabit the road grid, made up of straight lines and direct routes, while walkers and cyclists traverse the Redways, a softer grid-network of paths and lanes that embraces curves, detours and slopes. One is a place of mechanical human transit, the other a multi-species space for plants and critters, as well as people. Redway dwellers are constantly reminded of the grid by its continuous rumble, the background to any walk, cycle or run.

The Redways are segregated, shared-use pathways over 270 kilometres in length that were built in parallel to the road system 50 years ago, when climate change was on the periphery of consciousness, they were always secondary to the roads, neither as ergonomic nor as direct.

A bus stop was originally envisaged at the mid-point of every grid-square, with flexible routing patterns that would allow most journeys to be made without changing buses. Now the dominant mode of transport is the car. Car driving is just too easy here.

The two parallel systems subsist in different colour fields: the roads a monochrome of white, black and grey with yellow stripes; the Redways, green and red, with occasional signs of yellow and blue. The trees and bushes that border the Redways also border the grid, and in summer the boundaries are set in varieties of green; in autumn, they become orange, and in winter colour disappears only to blossom again when spring returns.

The road grid is filled with an assortment of shiny vehicles, moving at high velocity across horizontal planes. The Redways are slower with more diversity: flowers, bushes, bodies balanced on two wheels, seated on four wheels, pushing buggies or perching on two legs, scuttling on four legs or more, slithering on none. There are different rhythms here. Changes in seasonal time can be seen and felt, cycles of growth and hibernation, ancient woodland and the flow of rivers and canals, weave multiple temporalities through the same place.

Air quality differs too. On the road grid, pollution caused by the combustion of fossil fuels and toxic dust from wheels and brakes, hangs in the air. Drivers and passengers, closest to the source of these fumes, breathe in their own engine emissions. While 20 million trees help filter particles, the toxic air inevitably seeps between the grids.

The current season is summer and the balance of colour on the Redways is out of kilter: the greens are not as verdant as usual, due to lack of rain. The town is scorched. We're in the middle of a heat wave and it's going to get hotter. A number of trees have prematurely turned orange, shedding crisp dead leaves. It looks like autumn, only it's not. The other significant colour is the cooling blue of water: the town hosts a number of man-made bodies of water known as balancing lakes, which have been designed to mitigate flooding from rivers and their tributaries.

KEY

Redways: Over 270 kilometres of shared use pathways in Milton Keynes.

Road grid: A high-speed road system that runs between districts rather than through them.

Grid-squares: The housing districts and industrial estates that fill the grid

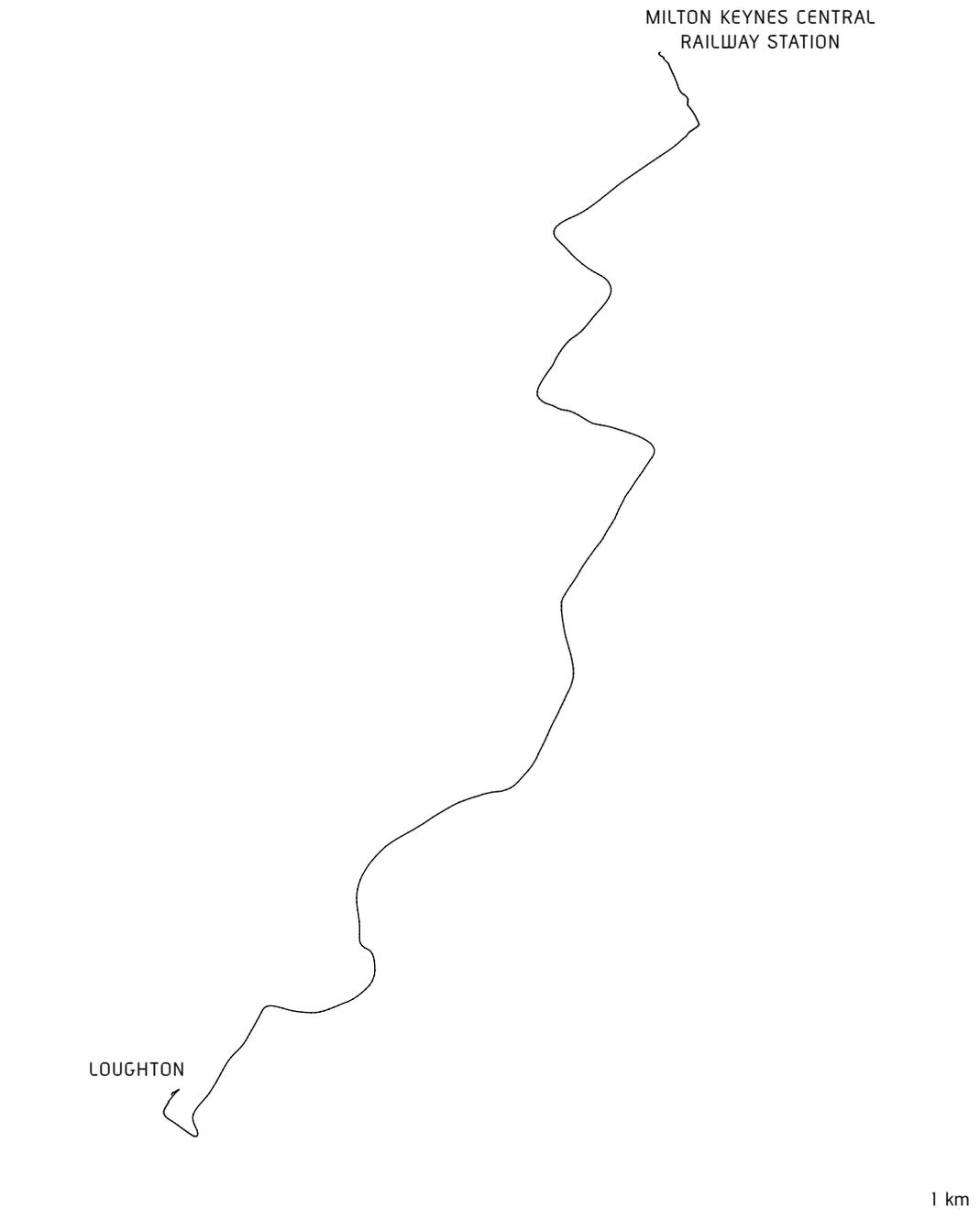
Rush Hour

My first journey in Milton Keynes passes quickly in an early blur of long shadows, trees, roads and smooth red tarmac: the smell of damp night turning into morning in the air. What strikes me about this snappy trip is the speediness of the commute and the proximity of countryside to city. The course of travel is swiftly towards the train station, with all faces walking or riding in the same direction. Most people wear formal clothing; shiny leather shoes, pressed white shirts, rucksacks, suits and floral dresses, and as we cycle, the backdrop to our images shifts from rural to urban. I am following Tadj, cyclist since the age of 10, who intuits the feel of the Redway surface beneath his tyres. He has cycled this route for many years through snow, sun, gusts of wind and blossom.

Our journey ends with a flourish of two customary yellow poles that announce the start or finish of a Redway. Here, Tadj secures his bike in a blue locker. Outside the train station waiting people exhale smoke: no more puffing trains, just puffing people. I say goodbye, get back on my cycle and weave my way through people and bikes as the shadows of cyclists and pedestrians mingle in the bright morning light.

Location	Loughton to Milton Keynes Central railway station
Journey type	Outward commute
Fellow traveller	Tadj
Date	17 July 2018
Departure time	06.25
Distance	1.7 km
Duration	8.49 minutes
Average speed	11.7 km/h
Temperature	13 degrees

Take a sharp left down a narrow pathway and then right onto a wide Redway route that takes you through a semi-circular avenue of trees. The route straightens to pass stables on the left. Go left into a small cluster of redbrick houses before turning right up Common Lane, following the path to the left and crossing the A5 and the rail-tracks over a concrete bridge.



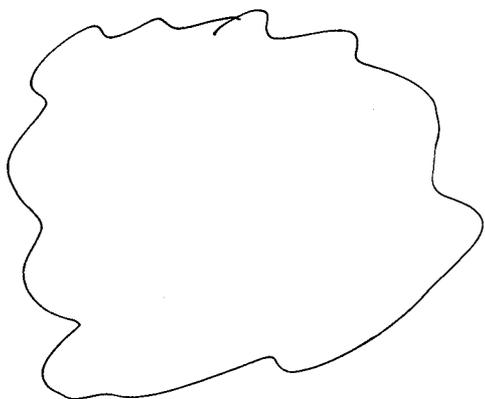
There is Always an Alternative

I cycle with Nicky from her home in Bancroft to Merebrook Infant School, one of the places she teaches cycling. It is the summer holidays and there are no more lessons, but Nicky has generously dressed in her Milton Keynes Council work-wear to recreate her commute for me. As we cycle, the lesson unfolds and I am reminded of the importance of bike maintenance, signalling and looking over my shoulder before turning left or right. I hear about signage: yellow poles denote Redway starts and ends, white triangles intersect with roads, painted yellow arrows on pathways signify you are going into the centre, green that you are heading out of town. Gravel paths give priority to walkers, otherwise the Redways are a shared space for walkers, cyclists, runners, dogs (and insects, plants, trees, birds, voles etc.) Rules of the road transposed mean those with two wheels keep left and ring our bells if we wish to overtake. As we cycle I hear the sounds of soft wind passing through the leaves of surrounding bushes and gravel being displaced by our tyres.

On the Redways, I say hello – you dip your chin in recognition and reply ‘good morning’ in return. I move aside to let you pass and you smile.

There is always an alternative, more than one route. There and back: back and forth: from and to: a return. Childhood memories of wobbling between traffic cones and being awarded a metal cycling-proficiency badge. Now called Bikeability, the badges are plastic. To be able: ability rather than proficiency.





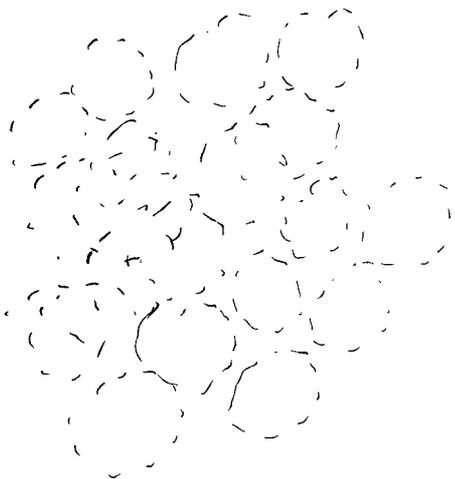
PUDDLES



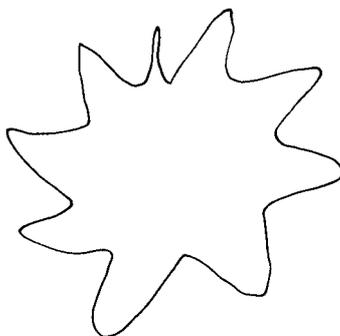
SOLITUDE



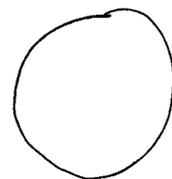
FEAR



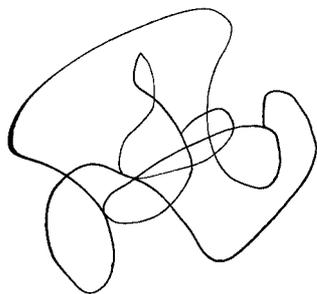
SMELL / SCENT



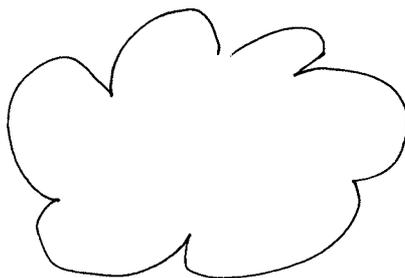
SURPRISE



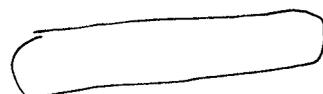
FUN



DISORIENTATION



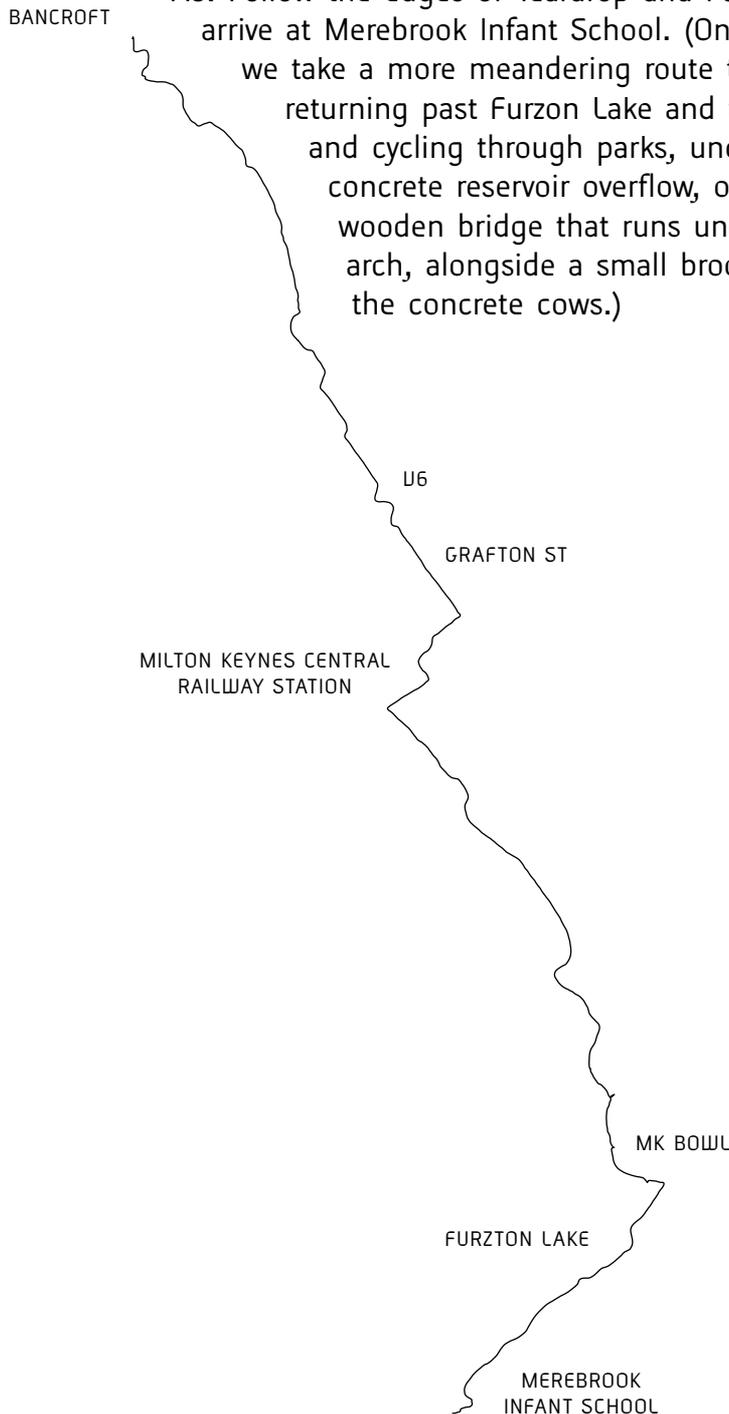
JOY



SERENITY

Location	Bancroft to Merebrook Infant School
Journey type	Outward and return commute
Fellow traveller	Nicky
Date	18 July 2018
Departure time	08.36 / 09.22
Distance	7.8 / 8.78 km
Duration	35.25 / 44.56 minutes
Average speed	12.2 km/h / 11.7 km/h
Temperature	22 degrees

Cycle down the U6 until you get to the Railway station. Cross the tracks on the concrete bridge, immediately turning left to skim the A5. Follow the edges of Teardrop and Furzton lakes to arrive at Merebrook Infant School. (On the way back we take a more meandering route that involves returning past Furzon Lake and the MK Bowl and cycling through parks, underneath a concrete reservoir overflow, over a clattery wooden bridge that runs under a railway arch, alongside a small brook and behind the concrete cows.)



1 km



Top Dog

Jenna is waiting patiently with her dogs in a field at the end of the Redways. She can't walk her dogs on Redway paths, as they would be too much of a nuisance to other walkers and cyclists. Here in the field, they are enclosed and able to run off the lead.

A professional dog walker, she has seven dogs with her today: Bailey (an Alsatian), Boris (part Yorkshire Terrier), Arnold (Bichon Frisé), Blu and Ziggy (Cocker Spaniel brothers), Jake (a black Cockapoo) and Kolle (Jack Russell). Most of the dogs are off the lead; they know the walk and are playing with each other or snaffling in long grass. I join the pack and as we walk their individual characteristics emerge: Bailey wants to be in charge, so Jenna keeps him on a lead to maintain her position as top dog. Blu and Ziggy are brothers and spend most of their time fighting – younger pesters older, who gets annoyed and bites back. Jake just wants to have fun. Arnold is always at the rear. Boris doesn't like men on bikes and Kolle prefers human beings to dogs.

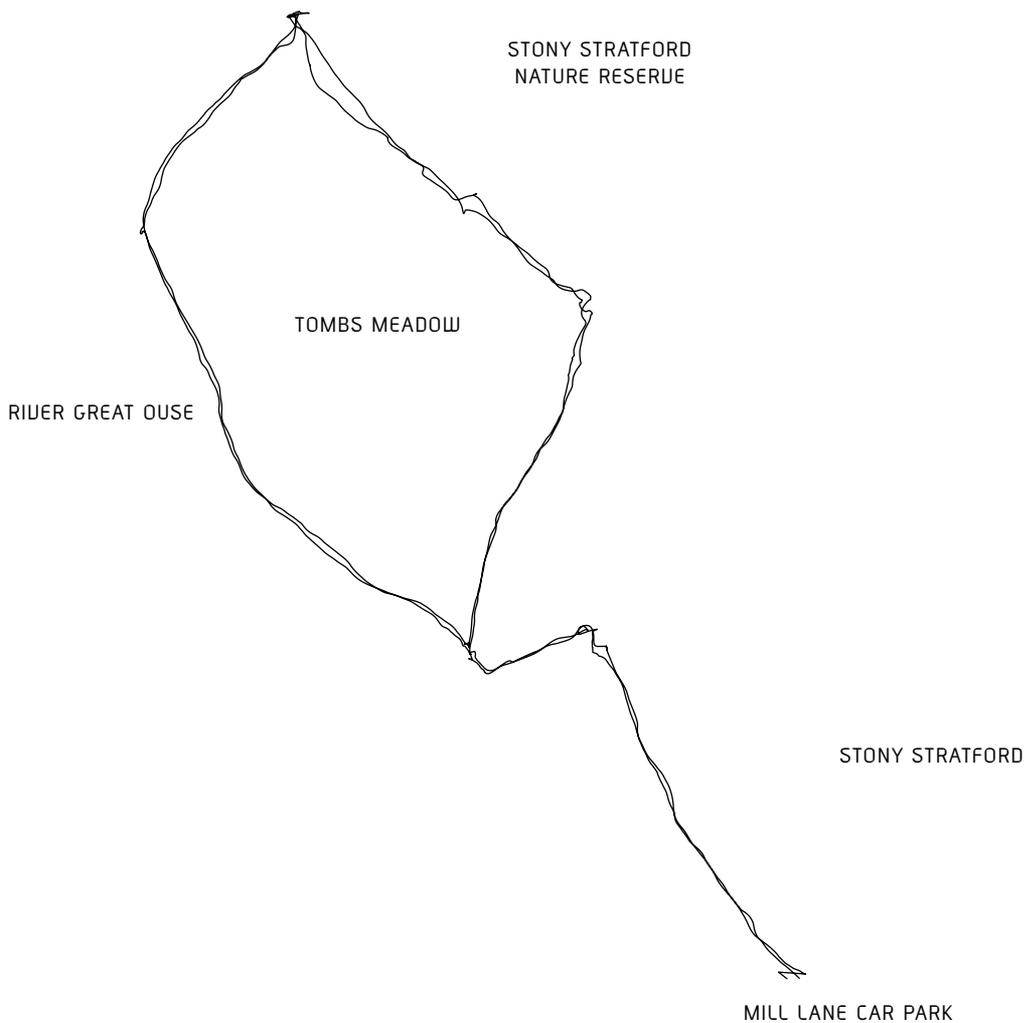
It is hot. The dogs are panting and we are slow. They know the route, and are animated by the prospect of diving into the river for a swim. All except Arnold (the white fluffy Bichon Frisé), who knows if he goes in the muddy water he will have to have a bath later.

We circle the field and repeat the walk. The grass is yellow and the bushes drooping from lack of rain. The dogs jump into the cool water again and stir up more mud. They run, nip, bark, poo, pee and hump. Jenna carries everything she needs: poo bags and treats, while her alert eyes constantly scan the field for other dog walkers or cyclists. She has seven multi-coloured dog leads hanging from a belt around her waist, a set of umbilical cords that link maternally to her charges, enabling her to pull each of them back to her belly if needed. As the newest member of her pack, I am reserved, quietly observing how the others behave.

On our return to the car park, Boris makes a last dash for freedom and is enticed back with a dog treat. Jenna and I say goodbye as her white van woofs into the distance.

Location	Stony Stratford
Journey type	Dog walk
Fellow travellers	Jenna with dogs Bailey, Boris, Arnold, Blu, Ziggy, Jake and Kolle
Date	19 July 2018
Departure time	11.00
Distance	2.26 km
Duration	33 minutes
Average speed	4.1 km/h
Temperature	24 degrees

Walk down the path from Mill Lane car park to the field and through the gate. Continue straight ahead. Go through the next gate and enter the field. The walk continues around its edge, along the banks of the River Great Ouse, before circling back to the start.



Life Cycles

Trevor says to park my bike in the kitchen, so I wheel it into the house and lean it against the cooker. Jennie and Trevor live directly on a Redway. Before meeting I imagine we might explore local paths, but they have other plans and drive me in their white electric car to the starting point of their walk: the Camphill Community, a working community of adults with learning difficulties. The campus includes the Chrysalis Theatre, a building with a cornflower entrance that rises up like the butterfly its name suggests it will become.

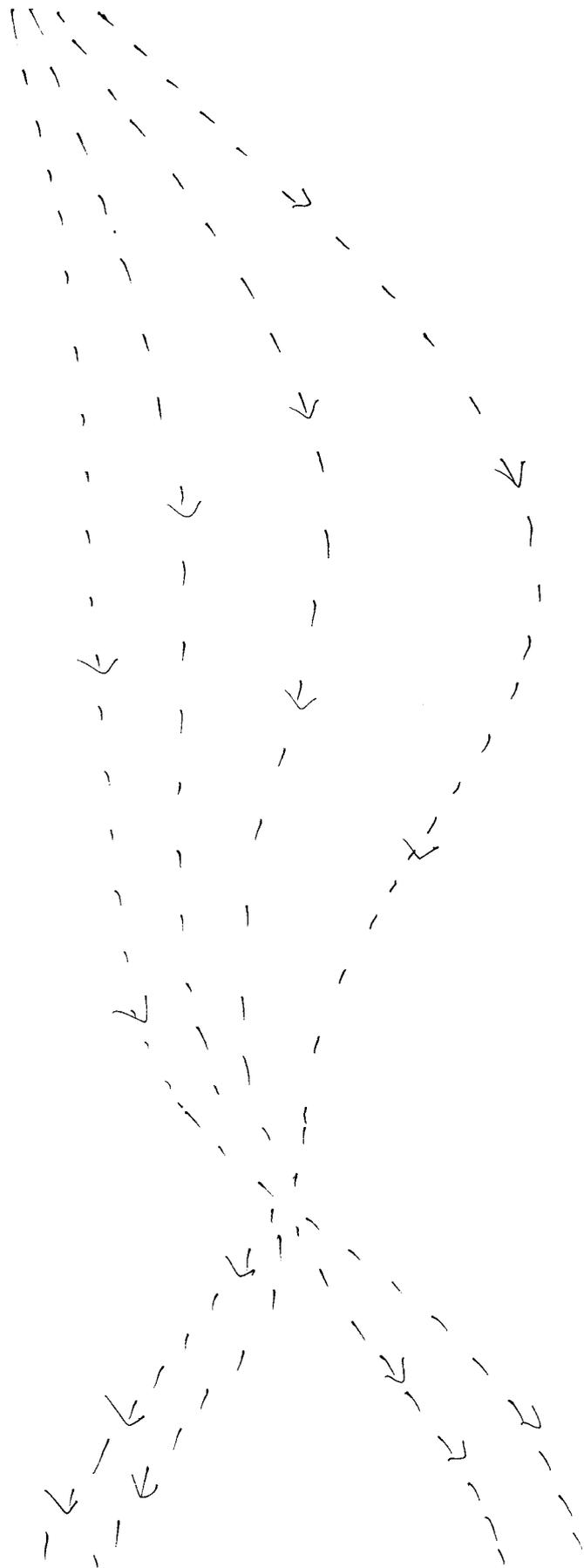
Their chosen walk embodies meaning in Jennie and Trevor's lives, and as we view the Labyrinth earthwork and Peace Pagoda they share memories of planting daffodils to mark the anniversary of Hiroshima. Nearby, the Medicine Wheel, a circle of stones, retains memories of a ceremony in which sticks and hands drummed individual and collective voice into being.

From inside a bird hide, I see a heron with a ginormous wingspan land in the reeds.

We leave the parched landscaping around the lake to enter the shade of the Tree Cathedral. Based on Norwich Cathedral, the copse consists of different tree species, planted in the form of a nave, chapel, tower and spires. Under a Redwood tree spire, we meet a gravedigger and his mate. They are looking for a site to bury ashes, prompting our discovery of a shared desire to be buried in cool damp earth and ingested by organisms. With images of our own ends in mind, we walk through Lovat Fields Retirement village on our way back to the car park.

A Redway route appears when you least expect it and whisks you in a different direction.





Location	Camphill Community
Journey type	Leisure walk
Fellow travellers	Jennie and Trevor
Date	19 July 2018
Departure time	13.40
Distance	4 km
Duration	50 minutes
Average speed	4.2 km/h
Temperature	25 degrees

Start in Camphill Community car park. Turn right past the community café and walk between the Labyrinth and Peace Pagoda before heading right to the Medicine Wheel. Turn left and follow the path around the edge of the peninsula between North and South Willen Lakes. Continue to walk around the South Lake, taking the exit that leads through the Tree Cathedral before returning to Camphill Community car park.



On the Run with the Redway Runners

Feet cluster in a variety of primed trainers. They belong to a band of runners wearing green hi-vis vests with individual names printed on them in black; I see Sophia, Andy, Terri, George, Becky, Bob, Tony and Chris. Thirty runners with lots to say, everyone chats and laughs as a white sheet of paper circulates and people squiggle their names on it in biro.

It is time to go. Nearly everyone wears a similar-looking black GPS watch, which they set as we leave. Drawn into movement, double the number of feet to bodies starts to move. I am at the back, following the spine of runners on my bike, as their bright green vests flow from the car park onto the Redway. Runners run on the left, the same as bikes and cars, and as they run, the burbling talk continues, underscored by the rhythm of plastic on tarmac: settling into a pace, the fastest at the front and slowest at the back.

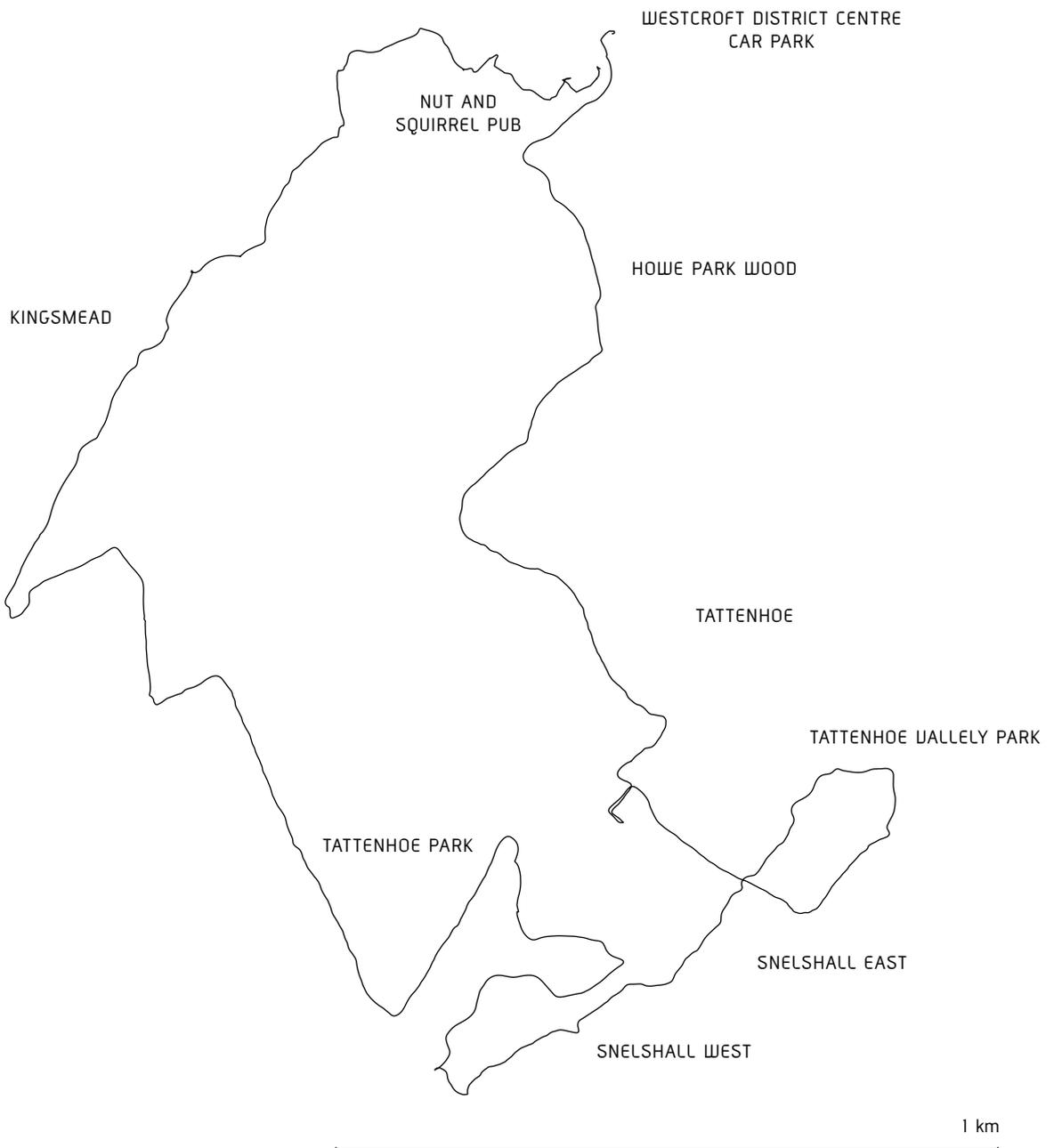
Ahead and behind, Gary and Alastair doggedly shepherd the run. They have made a route for us to follow and depending on the places we find ourselves in, we modify our form; side-by-side, a slinking line, filling the space of a street.

Occasionally green vests at the front peel back to join the back of the block, before sprinting forwards again. It is an every-ability run and running together means looking out for and supporting fellow club members; as one struggles, another encourages. A driver shouts 'good running' as we pass. I'd like to be able to accomplish the tiredness I see amongst the club members, like Rebecca, who joined with a couple of friends who then gave up and has continued on her own, or Terri, who doesn't like to run the Redways alone at night.

Returning, green runners sprint towards deep grey clouds in hope of a shower. At the pub we refresh ourselves with a downpour of drinks while outside, the clouds burst and much needed rain falls.

Location	Westcroft District Centre car park
Journey type	Group run
Fellow travellers	Redway Runners
Date	20 July 2018
Departure time	18.34
Distance	7.23 km
Duration	54 minutes
Average speed	8 km/h
Temperature	20 degrees

Cross Chaffron Road, turning left into Hengistbury Lane and right onto Portishead Drive. Follow the Redway past Giles Brook School into Pendeen Crescent, off Snenshall Street. Keep turning left and loop around across Snenshall Street again. Keep to the left of the water in Tattenhoe Park, crossing at the first available turn to your right, while almost looping back on yourself. Finish the run by winding your way to Bronte Avenue, and joining the Redways at Kingsmead and return to Westcroft, via Shenley Road.



No Right Turn

The world's first circular walk that takes the shape of a square: boredom, alienation, avoidance and the wicked problem of the Redways form the basis of our cyclical discussion. All of which is material to the grist of a walk that tries to avoid the MK shopping centre, but capitulates to its pull at its start and end, since we begin and finish in the place we want to circle. We meet in the newly built section known as Intu, which was constructed around a protected great oak tree that subsequently died. At the centre of the centre: the loss of one of the oldest trees in MK.

We talk about the repetition and monotony of the day-to-day reality of cycling the Redways to get to work. Listening to podcasts is part of the solution. Excellent for helping time pass, but ultimately boredom wins out. There are not many other people walking and after last night's rain the air is moist and insects dart in and out of flecked light beneath trees.

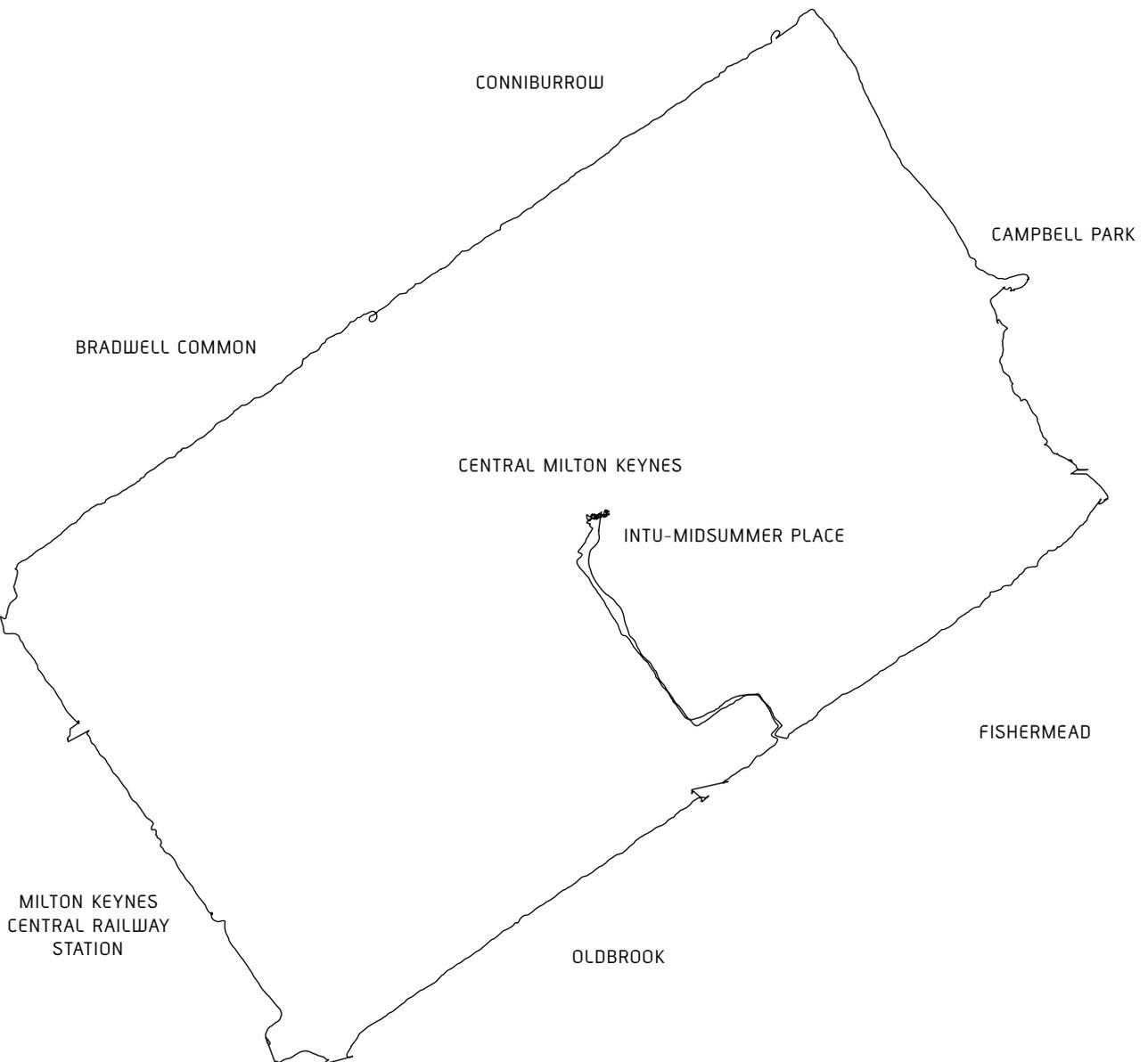
We go round in circles chewing on the fat of the question of the Redways. How might they work? Is the solution cultural, where runners, cyclists, walkers, mobility scooter and wheelchair users might recognise this as a shared space, or are there practical solutions like separating walkers and cyclists with a single white line painted down the middle of each Redway? Different solutions: doing something specific that makes an immediate difference, or long-term change in cultural perception and use. A more equal society would enable the Redways to continue to develop as a mutual space.

Will MK become an atomized place of private, individual driverless pods, or develop a comprehensive public transport system? Culture has been an important part of the history and development of this town. What about artists now? Does MK need a club for artists – like runners? How does MK support current artists and what can it do to attract them to the city?

A man disappears into a hedge, perhaps he is living there. There are homeless individuals and communities living in tents in underpasses in the centre. I notice Toys R Us has closed and that the dry grass bordering the Redways is dotted with round green weeds.

Location	Intu, Midsummer Boulevard, Central Milton Keynes
Journey type	Walk
Fellow traveller	Tom
Date	21 July 2018
Departure time	11.26
Distance	9.01 km
Duration	120 minutes
Average speed	4.5 km/h
Temperature	21 degrees

The departure point for this walk is the Intu shopping centre. From here, take the Redway towards Fishermead. Turn left at Campbell Park, then left at Conniburrow. Take your next left towards the station after Bradwell and then left again following the Redway through Oldbrook before heading back to the shopping centre at Fishermead.



1 km



Tour de Milton Keynes

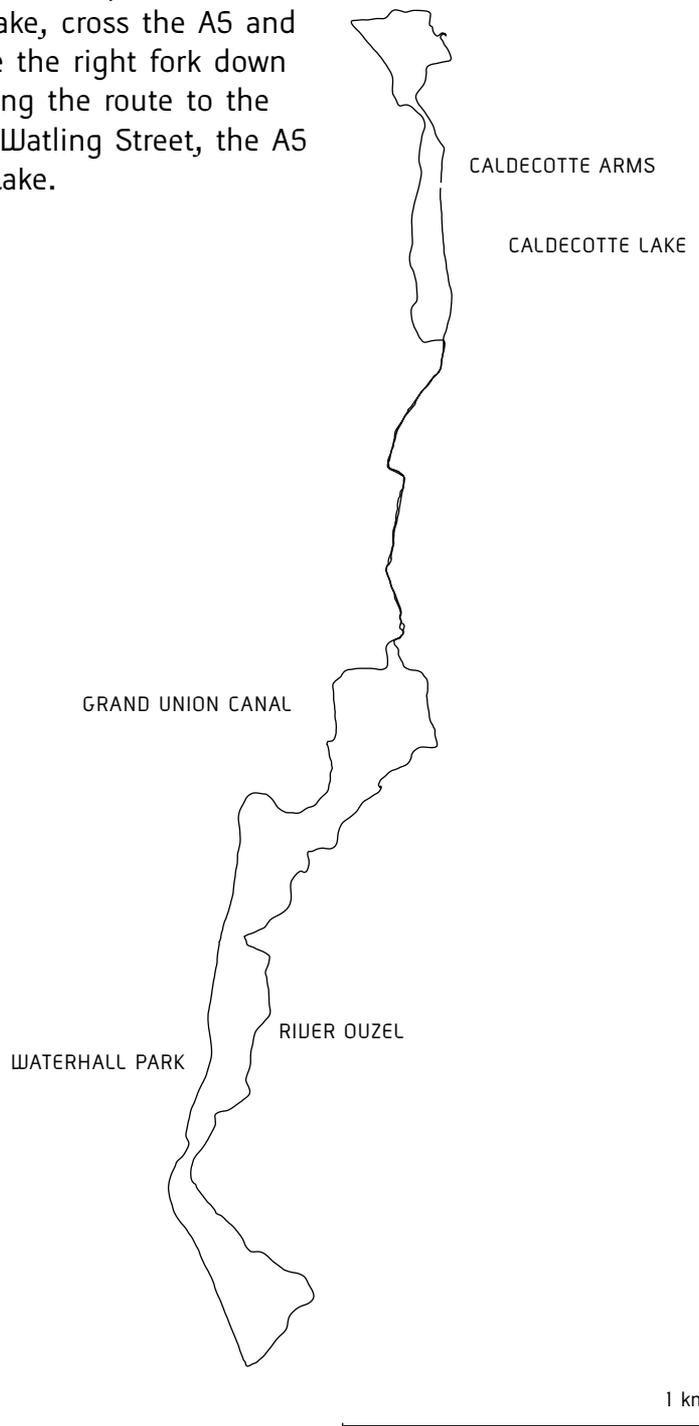
Riding low with the flow, two waterways and one lake to follow-cross-follow on this route that connects Caldecotte Lake, the Grand Union Canal and Ouzel River. The presence of water makes the surrounding dryness all the more pronounced; the river is low and the earth in an adjacent field so cracked, I worry my whirling wheels will get wedged in its haphazard crevices.

There is a lot of cycling chic in the group, from hi- to no-vis, pearls and shorts to neckerchiefs and t-shirts. The youngest cyclist, nine-year-old Shankar, looks cool in cycling shades and yellow and white fingerless gloves. David, here to get fit, wears pouches of sand around his ankles to help with resistance. A charismatic man of mobility, he's the only participant on an older, more classic-styled bike. A woman of 70 has taken up cycling for the first time and is riding a battery-powered foldable bike: neat and small, it whirrs as she goes up and down pathways. A hybrid 'dog-walker-cyclist', she finds exercising her dog by bike tires him out more and exhausts her less. Kay, from Bletchley, catches the train to work in Central MK and walks everywhere else. For her, guided rides are about being free to experience the visual pleasure of her surroundings to the full. The joy of cycling for pleasure, with no purpose other than ending up somewhere else.

We pass a community orchard, where people can help themselves to fruit. Hot and cool sensations merge, as the correlation between sun, water and trees shift as we change position. Sunlight skims the lake. Canal water vapours freshen the air. Cycling in the shade of trees, the sun behind. River to my right and sun ahead.

Location	Caldecotte Lake
Journey type	Leisure ride
Fellow Travellers	Jane (cycle leader), Nattu, Shankar, David, Kay and others
Date	22 July 2018
Departure time	10.01
Distance	9.45 km
Duration	54 minutes
Average speed	10.4 km/h
Temperature	22 degrees

A globular route along and between Caldecotte Lake, the Grand Union Canal and the River Ouzel (a tributary of the River Great Ouze). Starting at the bike stand behind the Caldecotte Arms, face away from the lake and exit through the car park on the left path. Cross the Ouzel and turn left. Keep to the outside path around the lake, cross the A5 and Watling Street and choose the right fork down to Watershall Park, following the route to the parks tip and back. Cross Watling Street, the A5 and return to Caldecotte Lake.



Driverless Cars

Our meeting place: the heat of the midday sun. This mostly female walking group has been running for 13 years. We head for the shady cool of Stanton Wood, a loop of long-established woodland within a ten-minute walk of the city centre. In Stanton Wood and neighbouring ancient woodland, Linford Wood, there are Ash, Oak and Maple trees providing home for shrubs, wild flowers, birds, moths, fungi and dragonflies.

Our peripatetic conversation proceeds backwards: traversing from future to present, and ending in the past. Walking, I see ghostly figures from architectural drawings all around; passing imagined users lolling on a corner, pushing a pram or holding hands with a child. A woman with a plastic bag is either coming from, or going to, the imaginary shops, while a teen reclines on a chopper bike. All similar looking, pale Northern Europeans, like me, striking informal poses against a hand-drawn backdrop of low-rise housing, roads, trees, paths and parked cars.

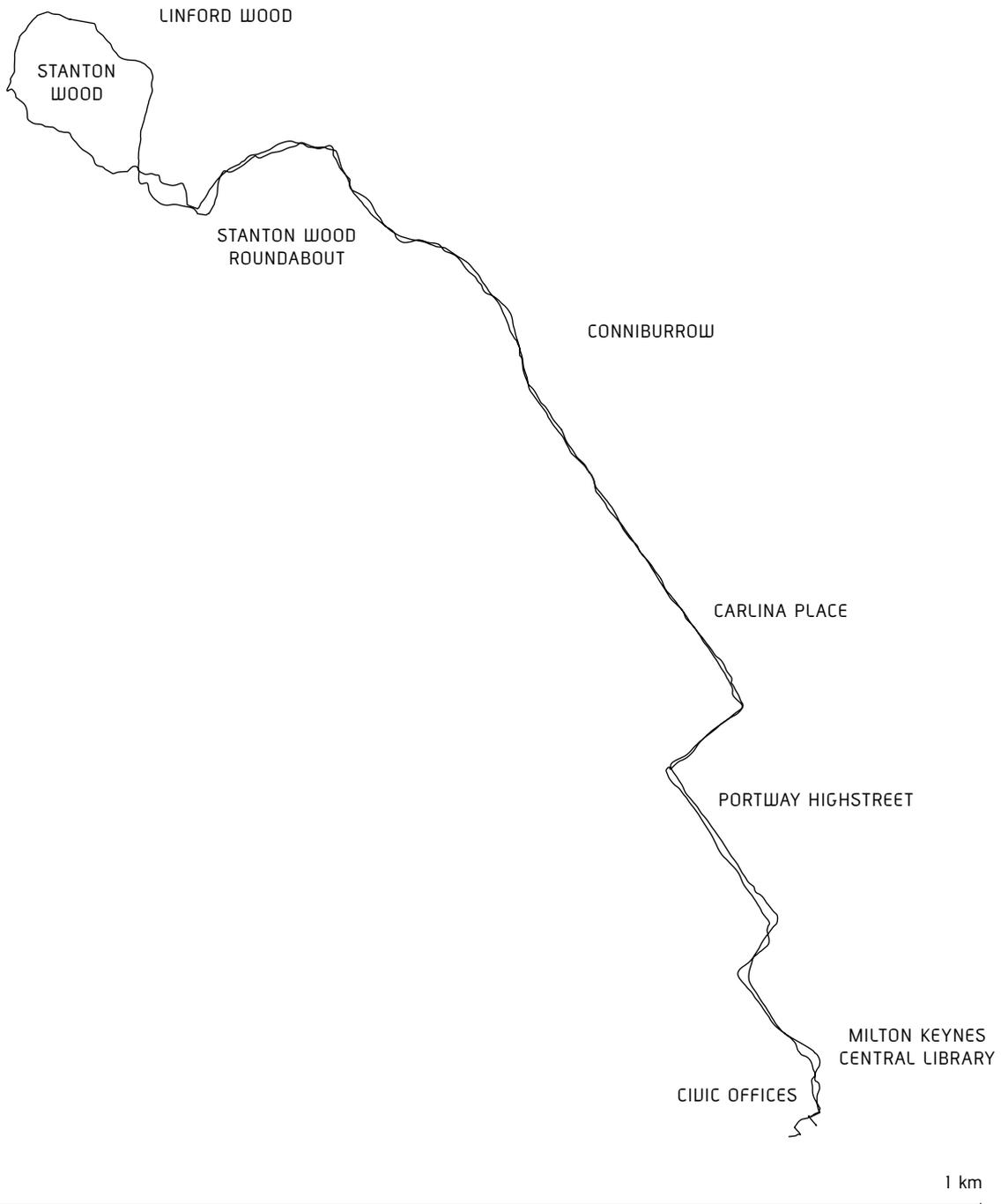
The Redways are currently the test site for driverless cars and delivery pods that may skim red tarmac to make door-to-door deliveries across the town soon. When will they become Redway pirates, and smuggle the future directly into homes? In the drawings of Milton Keynes, did any pen imagine saucer-like delivery husks? The Redways of recent yore haunted by a spectre of the future.

This walking group is one of many who use the Redways for wellbeing and it welcomes fellow walkers, from widows to people with physical and mental health needs. Employees of the Milton Keynes Development Corporation¹ (MKDC) had groups that cycled the Redways during the development period. Perhaps group leisure culture was planted then too.

Liz moved here over 40 years ago, before the shopping centre was finished. My family arrived in a village on the Bedfordshire/Buckinghamshire border in the 70s. Shirley came to MK 10 years ago. Tina has been here for 20 years. We all have our founding stories, which dovetail with stages in MK's development: the queen's visit to open the shopping centre, the hospital being finished, Broughton being built. Everybody is new here.

Location	Civic Offices to Stanton Wood
Journey type	Round walk
Fellow travellers	Liz (walk leader), Liz, Shirley, Susanne, Tina and Joan
Date	23 July 2018
Departure time	12.05
Distance	3.27 km
Duration	45 minutes
Average speed	4 km/h
Temperature	30 degrees

Departing from the Civic Centre on Silbury Boulevard, turn left down North 8th Street and cross the Portway, heading down through Conniburrow towards Linford Woods and turn left, where you will find the small gate to Stanton Wood.



Eternal Sunset

We ride together. Tonight 15 people with bikes gather on open space in the middle of Broughton, a new housing estate with smooth bike lanes, a supermarket, takeaway and doctor's surgery. Bikes, sunglasses and helmets congregate in anticipation of a collective outing. We stand, bikes next to us or between our knees, a combination of prop or seat, but unquestionably part of us (or are we part of them?) We are meeting for a circular Redway ride. It's the same structure as the running group: leader at the front and someone who oversees slower riders at the back. We cycle and stop and cycle and stop: keep together, drift apart, and muster again. A blue butterfly flits by, and I will it to settle so I can look at its wings.

The Redways are wide enough to pedal in pairs. I cycle with Patience, who is also new. From the back we find common ground: we are both recovering from bike accidents. Hers in September. Mine November. Hers a dislocated jaw and reconstructive surgery, mine a broken wrist with titanium plate that vibrates as I grasp my handlebars.

We are suffering from brain nerves: of bollards, inclines and gravel. Physically healed, it's the psychological side of recovery that is challenging. Bones and brains on bikes; I see her anxiety increase as we approach yellow Redway bollards, of which there are many. Mine builds every time I go downhill or cycle across gravel. The only thing to do is cycle it out, and keep on keeping on until the anxiety has been ridden over so many times that memories no longer come back. Keith, who is overseeing slower riders at the back of the group, had a bad motor-biking accident. He keeps me company telling stories about cats.

I feel the muted glow of tender sun on my skin as the group circles away from the sinking orb. As pathways darken, we turn on our lights to both see and be seen. Air becomes dusk, and my front light catches the surrounding foliage of weeds, bushes and trees, which transform into infinite tunnels, that channel us back to the beginning.

Location	Broughton
Journey type	Circular cycle
Fellow travellers	Broughton Cycling Group
Date	24 July 2018
Departure time	19.23
Distance	30 km
Duration	180 minutes
Average speed	13 km/h
Temperature	28 degrees

This ride starts in the square at the intersection of Countess Way and Warwick Avenue in Broughton. First head to Willen Lake followed by Gifford Park. Turn left onto the Old Railway line leading to Bradwell Abbey and make your way past Lodge and Teardrop Lakes, Coffee Hall, and Woughton on the Green, returning to Broughton via Monkston.



1 km



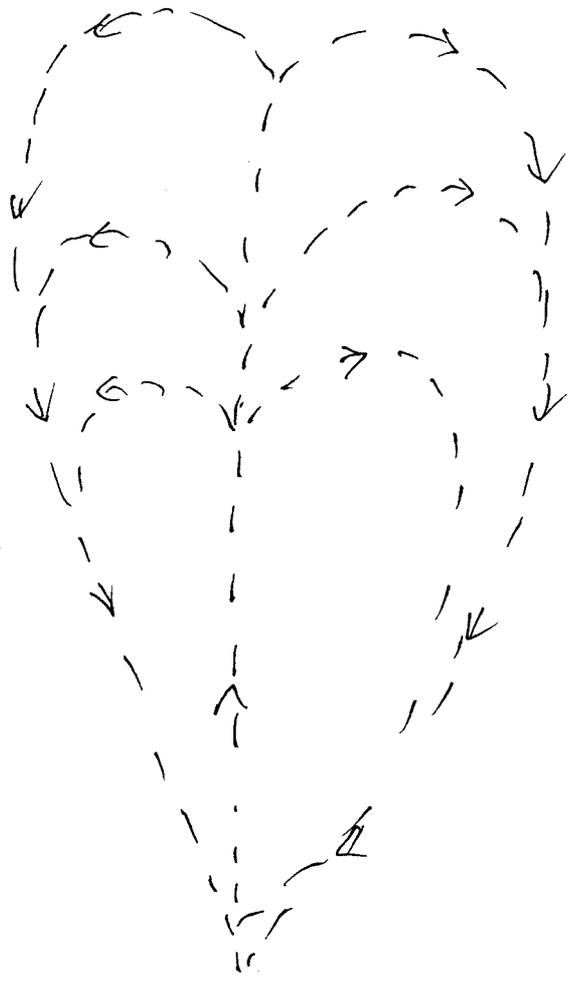
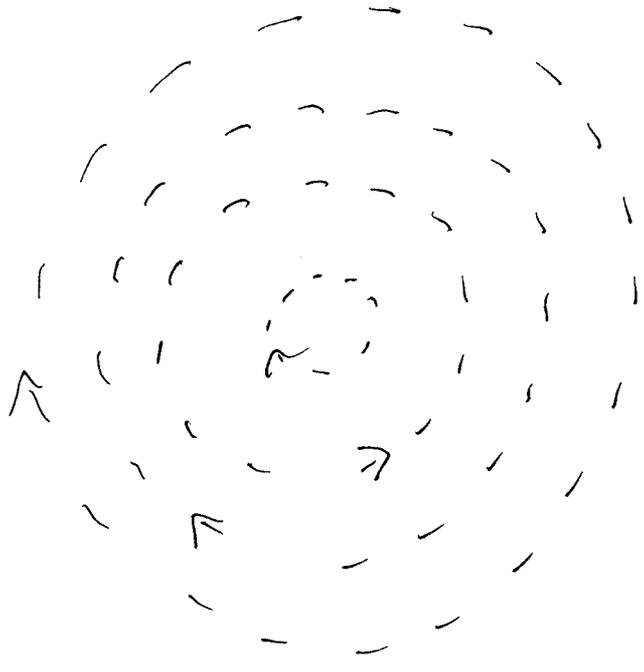
Shiva and Shrines

No silence. Tyres on tarmac, a constant drone mixed with the high frequency breeze of engine rumble: neither rain nor thunder, just traffic. Mistaken sounds, for sounds that are not mistaken. A new housing estate at the edge of Milton Keynes where the dusky pink sky feels cool to skin and a woodcock chirrups like a cuckoo. Early, I circle round looking at homes: a variety of modernist and more traditional-looking housing.

I text Nattu, who I met on the Caldecotte ride, to say I have arrived. He opens his front door and welcomes me to family life, we all four say hello and goodbye within seconds of each greeting as Nattu and I leave to commute to the train station along the superhighway, a long straight lane running adjacent to the road. The surface is ultra smooth, and on our journey we only see one other cyclist. There is time for talk and Nattu tells me the reasons his family moved here. One of which is the Redways, as well as the pull of affordable housing, low-density living, electric cars and proximity to London. His nine-year-old son, Shankar, loves to cycle too, and they spend weekends getting to know MK by the Redways and the Redways by bike.

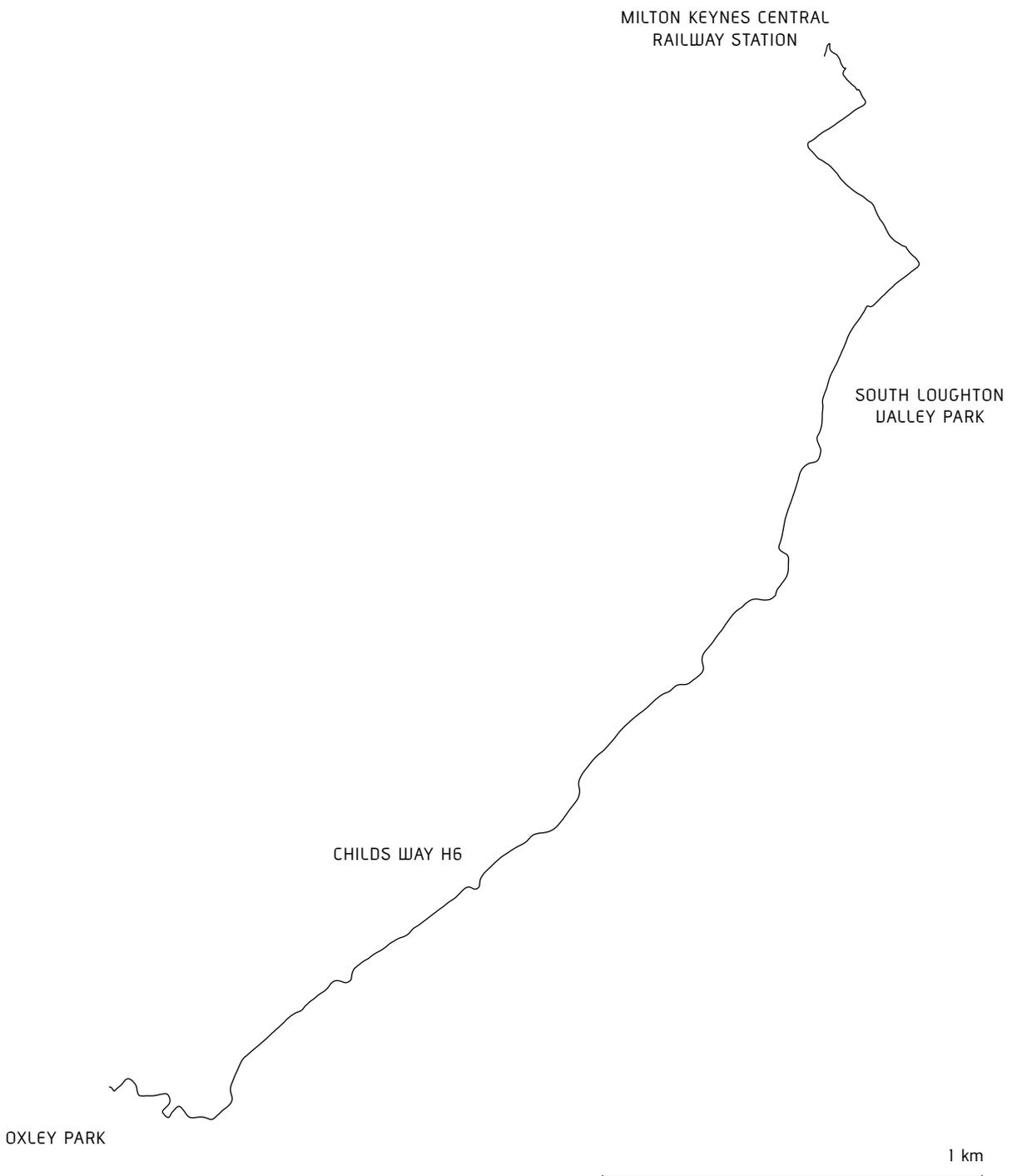
The opposite end of the day is warmer and 12 hours later, I meet Nattu to resume his homeward trip. I am invited for chai by Nattu's wife Sujata, and conversations about bikes and schools, Shiva and shrines becomes an invitation to eat Dosas cooked in golden ghee and orange gunpowder chilli, which Shankar teaches me to eat with my hand. It is getting late and Nattu reciprocates my gesture, offering to escort me home with Shankar now my work is done. On this second return trip we pause on a concrete footbridge to look across the treetops at the red sun liquifying on the horizon: the concentric rings of a Dosa, atmospheric layers of flaming sun, melting ghee and the yellows and reds of sunset and shrine. Redway reciprocity.





Location	Oxley Park to Milton Keynes Central railway station
Journey type	Outward and return commute
Fellow travellers	Nattu and Shankar
Date	26 July 2018
Departure time	06.28 / 18.11
Distance	9 km
Duration	19.07 minutes / 21.26 minutes
Average speed	12.3 km/h
Temperature	18 degrees / 28 degrees

Get onto Childs Way in the direction of central MK. When you arrive at the edge of Loughton Valley Park turn left at the A5 and then right over the concrete bridge to the station.



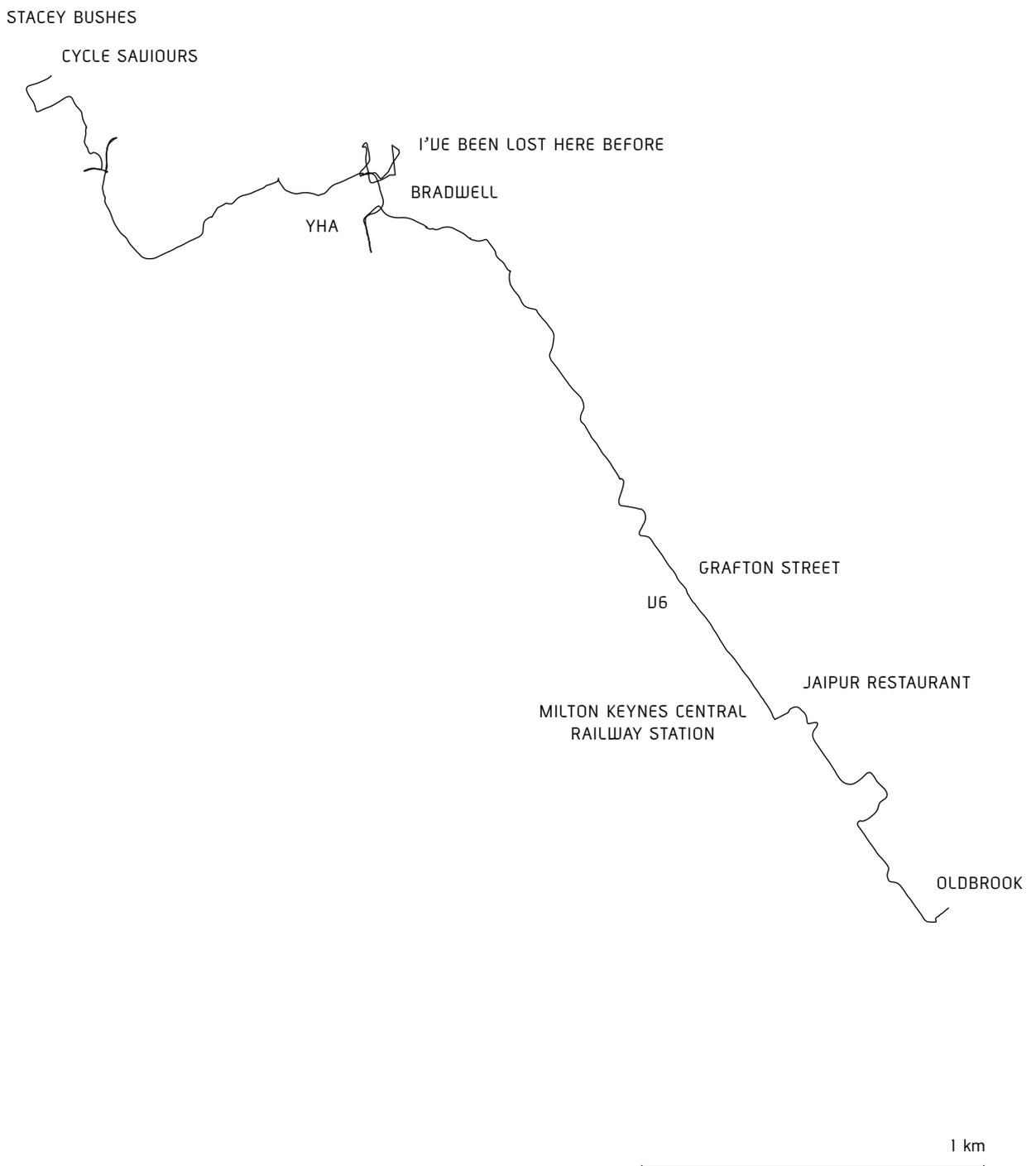
I've been lost here before

I've been cycling the Redways on a borrowed bike, lent to me by the charity *Cycle Saviours*. It is a hybrid, with fat tyres that have softened my ride and transported me across difficult terrain. To get there I hop from block to block – gradually making my way: place to place, grid-square by grid-square, counting roundabouts to where I want to be.

On this ride, my thoughts disappear underground to a different sphere, the existence of which is largely unnoticed above. It is an environment that was here millions of years before the town of MK: a subterranean network of interconnected mycelium fibres beneath the grid. Plants and trees in Milton Keynes are dependent on this unseen community beneath the surface of the town, its Redways and borders. Tiny fibres that act as both digester and feeder, decompose and recycle nutrients within their lifecycle, their mesh expanding the areas through which plants can absorb water and nutrients. In this mutually beneficial relationship, plants and trees symbiotically provide the energy the fungus needs to fruit and propagate. This vast underground realm only becomes visible the moment it reproduces: creating a fruiting body, fungal structures that come in many different colours shapes and sizes and contain spores, some of which are known as mushrooms.

Location Oldbrook to Stacey Bushes
Journey type Single trip
Traveller Hayley
Date 27 July 2018
Departure time 15.07
Distance 6.33 km
Duration 30 minutes
Average speed 12.6 km/h
Temperature 30 degrees

Take the U6 cycle route to Bradwell and the cross Monks Way to get to Stacey Bushes.



Running in the Rain

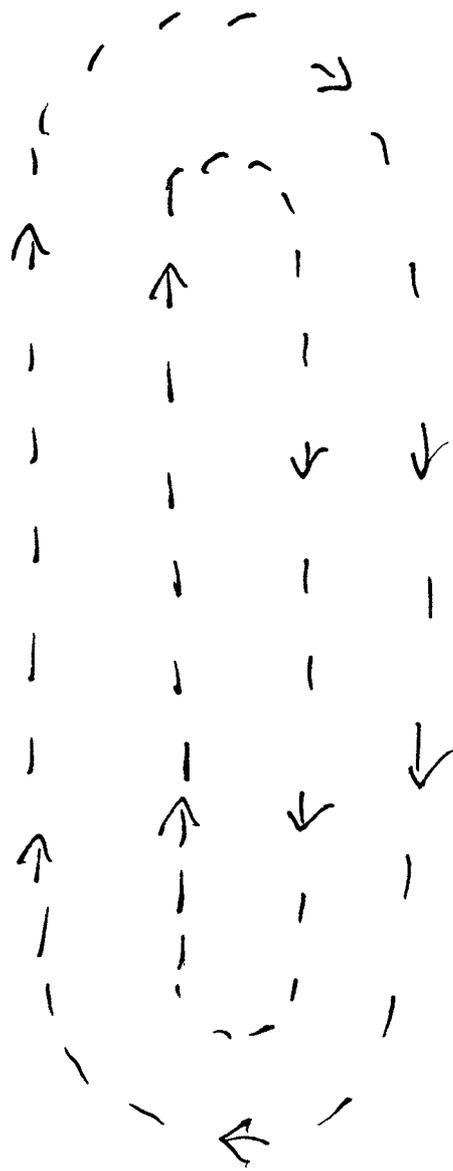
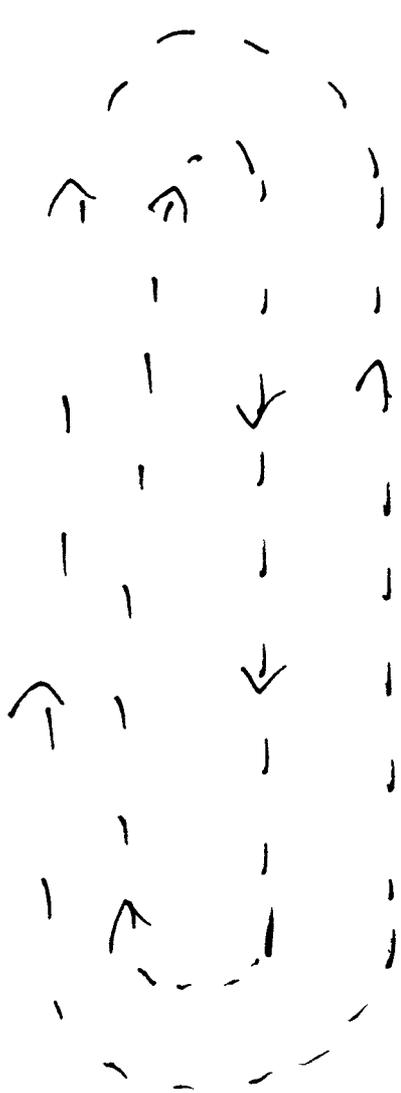
Colin is a visitor, about to run the grid for the first time. He tries to plan a route, but can't work out how, so embarks on an improvised set of left and right turns. I follow and just as the run starts, rain begins to fall. The initial droplets emulate a slow jog, getting heavier as his pace quickens and he runs into a mass of dark cloud. And as I follow, he disappears, always running away from me, facing the other direction. This is the image: a runner in a white t-shirt sprints alongside traffic, under a rainbow and into mauve cloud. Later, running alongside a block of houses, a nurse leaves home and jogs behind him, not for fitness, but to get to work. He hesitates and asks which direction to turn, and I give him the name of a grid square: Coffee Hall.

597 calories. 1.7 meters of elevations, up, down and around: crossing concrete bridges and passing under roads. Running, his focus is on the ground and its mix of different coloured tarmacs, grass verges, curbs and paving slabs. Slugs crawl across wet paths, some of which are cracked and full of holes, others smooth; most are somewhere between. He can take some of his surroundings in, but it is difficult for him to make out one place from another: there are no landmarks or vistas to gain a sense of orientation, all the paths are standardised, and the buildings hidden by greenery. Good running though, and if he knew the names of places he would be able to make the grids add up.

And then there is the anxiety of not knowing where you are going, and the possibility of ending up somewhere miles away, wet, tired and cold.

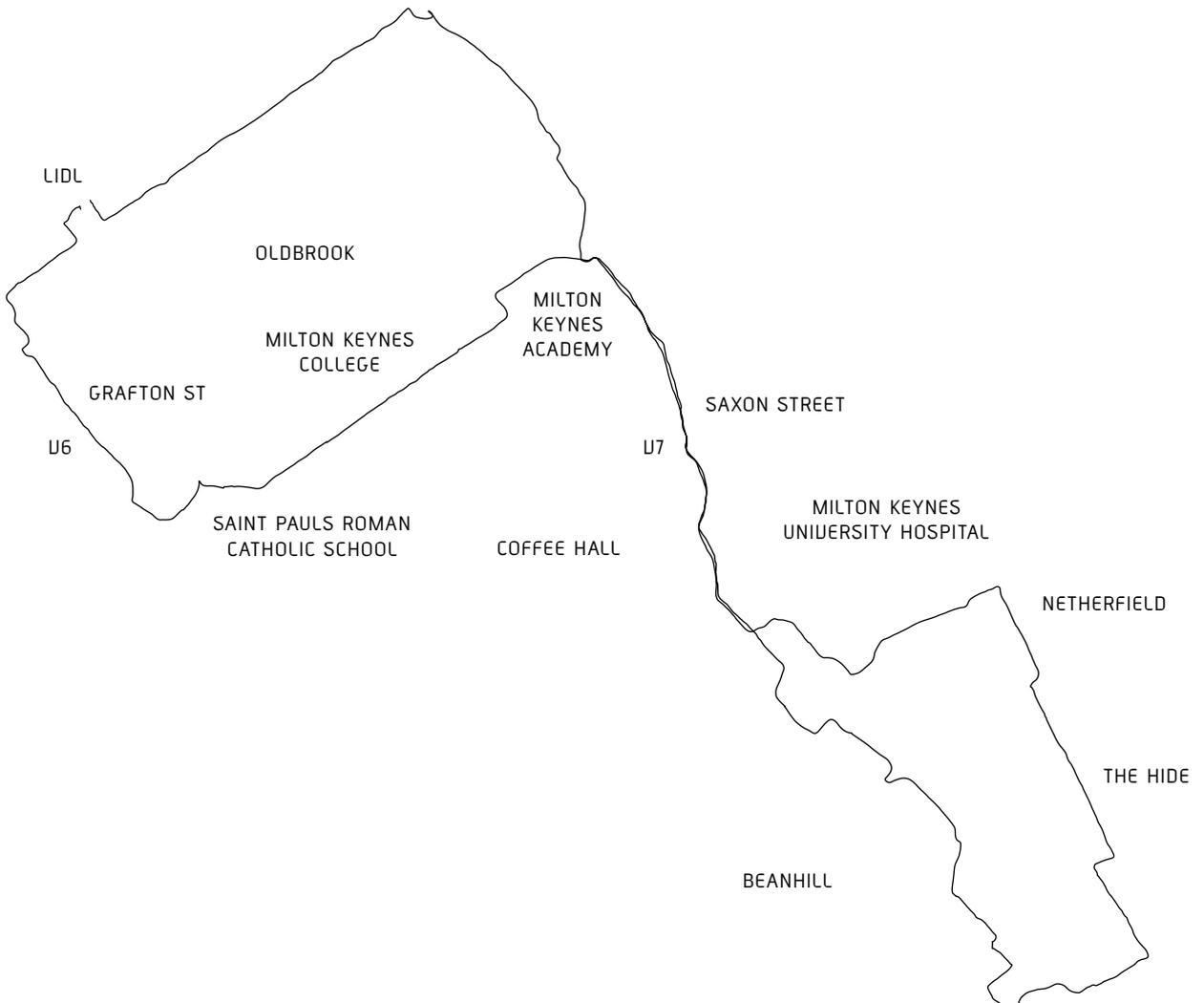
This is a run which started slowly and built in momentum, getting quicker towards the end. From the map, it might be visually described as two magnifying loops connected by a stem. From behind, it was the outline of a lone male figure, running through wooded areas, housing estates, along highways and roads. Always facing the other direction. Always running into the distance.





Location	Oldbrook
Journey type	Circular Run
Fellow Traveller	Colin
Date	28 July 2018
Departure time	18.50
Distance	8 km
Duration	51.50 mins
Average speed	9.5 km/h
Temperature	20 degrees

This figure-of-eight run starts outside Lidl in Oldbrook. Go under the U6 and turn left, then left again into Leadenhall before following the U7 past MK hospital in Eaglestone West. Carry on through Beanhill and turn left into Netherfield, and left again up the Hide before returning to Oldbrook on the U7.



1 km



Metamorphoses

Having seen an advert announcing the *Festival of Curves, Detours and Slopes*, a group of runners, walkers, dog-walkers, cyclists, people on mobility scooters and in wheelchairs gather at a designated meeting place on the Redways. After a while, they slowly begin to move off: runners jog (almost) on the spot, cyclists orbit round, walkers take long strides, dogs bark and wheelchair users roll. Breaking out of its original bunching, the group forms a line, which proceeds at a steady pace, neither slowing nor getting faster. In this stretched configuration, they snake the Redways, crisscrossing the town, from side to side and top to bottom, scurrying and darting along its paths. A mushroom appears on a verge and as a walker stops to pick the fungus, known as a Blusher, there is a gust of wind, which unexpectedly fills the air with red and green fungal spores.

As the spores enter the lungs and eyes of the crowd, the assembly starts to disperse, moving through the network as solitary agents: random dots and dashes hyphenating its lanes. The molecular exchange with the Redways has begun. Everyone starts to tire. Squatting, with no energy left, a woman takes a nut bar from of her bag. She holds it to her mouth with both hands and as she begins to nibble, her fingernails become long, thin and opalescent. Another, bending over to tie his shoestring, starts to feel stiff, as if blood were solidifying in his veins. Someone drinking water gets a sinking feeling and a runner, waiting for a car to pass at an intersection, notices his clothes turning bright yellow.

Whatever is happening, it is getting quicker. With nut bar in hand, the woman's top and bottom front teeth instantly enlarge downwards and upwards, while fur crawls onto the backs of her hands, obscuring their fleshiness. Shrinking in size, she turns into a grey squirrel.

The man who tied his shoe is now an underpass, frozen in a concrete moment of arching over.

The golden clothes start to bind their host more tightly until he becomes a yellow Redway post, while a runner who jumps over a puddle, switches form with an Aylesbury Peregrine before flying over the grid.

After a backpack turns into a beetle's shell, its owner sinks down onto all fours and scuttles to safety in an adjacent hedgerow.

A pair of wheel-hubs from a mobility scooter rotate off their chair transforming into a pair of matching cobwebs while their owner, now a spider, tries to decide which web to make home.

While waiting impatiently for another runner, a woman's tapping foot takes root and her legs form a skin of bark. Reaching up to scratch her head, her arms and fingers extend into branches that sprout leaves, enabling the Aylesbury Peregrine, the runner she was originally waiting for, to rest in her branches.

I made the journeys described in *A to B in MK* between the 16th and 29th of July 2018, while I was artist in residence in Milton Keynes. During the two weeks I was in MK there was a heat wave in Britain and fires in Europe, including across Sweden and inside the Arctic Circle. On the 1st of August, 2018, two days after my time in the town ended, Earth Overshoot day was announced, a date that marks an overstepping of the global ecological resources the Earth needs to regenerate, both urgent reminders that we need to stop burning fossil fuels and that the economic model we are currently in is intrinsically linked to the depletion of resources, climate change and the mass extinction of plants and animals.

With thanks to everyone who shared their experiences of the Redways with me.

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Hayley Newman is an artist with a passion for humour, subjectivity, documentary practices and fiction. She creates performances, interventions, music and texts and has made work in nightclubs, shops, on trains and marches as well as for the concert hall or gallery. Growing up in Bedfordshire, on the Buckinghamshire border, she spent her teens hanging out at the Milton Keynes Shopping Centre and The Point cinema. She lives and works in London and is Reader of Fine Art and tutor on the doctoral programme at the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL.

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