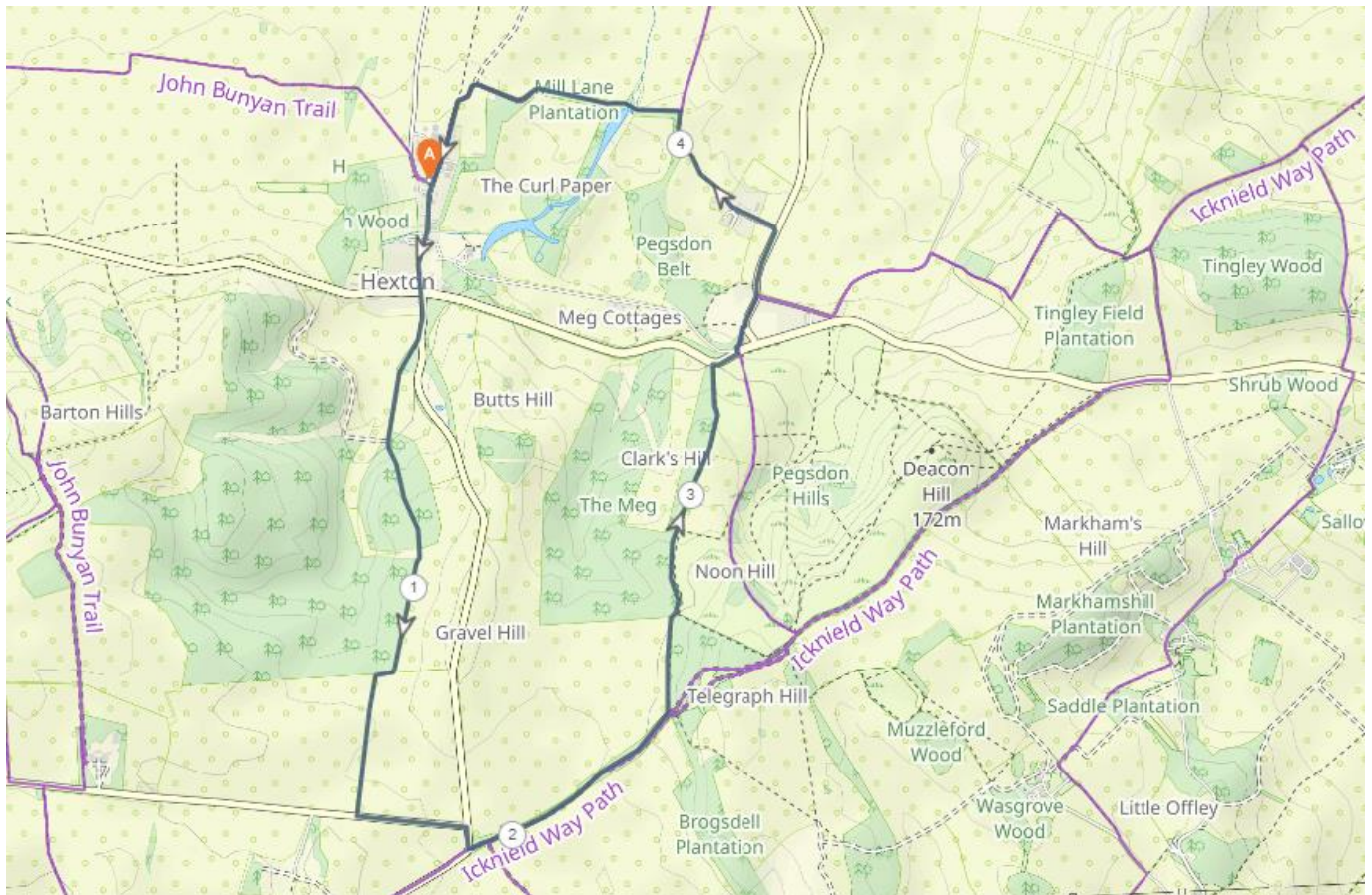




The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Hexton & The Icknield Way



This walk is just shy of five miles, taking in Ravensburgh Castle, the largest Iron Age fort in the East of England, the ancient Icknield Way, and the beautiful Pegsdon Hills.

Distance: 4.8 miles / 7.8 km

Ascent: 338 feet / 103 metres

Duration: 2 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Start/finish: The Raven Pub, Hexton

Refreshments: The Raven Pub

Hexton dates from Saxon times, however it was redeveloped as a 'model' village in the 1920s. Only a handful of early buildings remain, including the mock Tudor Raven pub, where this walk begins and ends. Whilst the pub has a car park, it is also possible to park on Mill Lane.

From the front of The Raven turn right and walk south to the main road, past the high garden wall around Hexton Manor.

At the cross roads, take some time to admire remarkable concoction of village pump, street light and signpost all in one, which was erected in 1846.



Cross over the B655 and walk down the road opposite (Hexton Road).

As the road starts to bend left there is a signed footpath forking off to the right through a gate. Take this path



Follow the path down the field margin until it reaches the corner of the next area of woodland on your left.

On your right is Ravensburgh Castle, the largest Iron-Age fort in the east of England. It was allegedly the headquarters of the Celtic Chief Cassivenaunus, mentioned by Julius Caesar in his histories. The moat is 55ft. wide and the rampart 18ft. high. A large wood was planted on the summit in 1920 which makes it difficult to distinguish from the footpath.



As the track turns right, towards the castle, into a field with 'Private Property' signs, take the path to your left which goes steeply uphill through the wood. In summer, the path is bordered by spectacular wildflowers.

After emerging from the wood, walk along the field margin, keeping the trees on your right.



At the way-mark post at the end of the wood, turn sharp right and then sharp left to continue down the field margin.



At the end of the field, you will reach a road. Turn left along the road until it meets the road signposted Hexton / Lilley. Turn right in the direction of Lilley. Cross over and walk a short distance down the road until it bends to the right. On the bend, to the left, is a path with a row of triangular concrete bollards in front of it. This is Icknield Way.

The Icknield Way is an ancient trackway in southern and eastern England, stretching from Norfolk to Wiltshire. It follows the chalk escarpment, including the Berkshire Downs and Chiltern Hills.



Historically, it extended from Berkshire through Oxfordshire, crossing the River Thames near Cholsey.

Today, the Icknield Way remains a fascinating route, dotted with archaeological remains, and offers splendid tracks and green lanes along the chalk “spine” of England.

Take this path, which gradually rises uphill. Enter a section with trees on either side.



A short distance later you will encounter a fork of three paths. Take the path on the left (not the red way-marked path going straight ahead).

You will now be on a field margin with trees and scrub to your right and a wood in front. At the end of the field margin, you will reach an information board for the Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve.

There is a gate into the reserve on your right and the continuation of the footpath on your left. If you have time, it is worth exploring the Reserve.



Chalk-loving plants such as horseshoe vetch, yellow-wort, milkwort and rockrose grow in abundance, plus five species of orchid and the uncommon slender tare. The views from the top of the hill are superb.

It is possible to exit the reserve through a gate on the northern side, which rejoins the route described below at the B655.

Follow the path along the left side of the reserve. The wood to your left is Meg Wood, named after 'Old Meg' who was burned as a witch in the sixteenth century.

The path emerges through a gate on to the B655. Go right, along the road. Just beyond the speed limit signs, cross over the road and go up the lane opposite.

Continue straight up the lane till you come to the triangular, grassed farm drive to Green End Farm on the left.



Go along the farm drive until it peters out just beyond Green End Cottage.

Pass to the left of the metal gate and continue along the footpath which skirts the left margin of a field. You can find blackberries along this footpath in August and September.



Shortly after this path turns to the left, it exits on to Mill Lane. The first house on your right is Mill Cottage.

Continue along the lane, which dog-legs to the left a couple of times and then, just after a pair of speed limit signs, enters Hexton village.

Follow it through the village until you are back at The Raven where the walk ends.



This route last walked by CPRE in August 2024.

If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and promote the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone. For more information on our work, or to sign up for our newsletter, make a donation, or volunteer with us, please visit www.cpreherts.org.uk

CPRE Hertfordshire is a registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel 01438 717587.

Note: all walkers do so at their own risk. Suitable footwear and clothing are recommended.