**D - Munden Estate** is an area of 850 acres, which includes a formal lime avenue to the house, medieval parkland and meadow pasture. This section of the river corridor also contains the site of several Roman villas. Bricket Wood Common is also part of the estate.

**E - Bricket Wood Common** is an open space well worth a detour or special visit. It consists of diverse habitats including ancient semi-natural woodland, hornbeam coppice woodland, wet heath, ponds and seasonal streams. The Common supports an array of wildlife including great crested newts, butterflies, heather, fungi and bluebells. Cattle grazing has recently been introduced to maintain the balance between woody and shrubby plants and the species rich grass and heathland.

**G - Watling Street** is the name given to an ancient trackway that was first used by the Britons mainly between the modern cities of Canterbury and St Albans. The Romans later paved the route.

**H - Sopwell Nunnery** dates back to 1140 when a nunnery stood on this site. Following the dissolution of monasteries by Henry VIII in 1539, Sir Richard Lee, a soldier and royal engineer, was granted the land by the King and built his house on top of the medieval nunnery. This romantic ruin is all that remains of the Tudor mansion built around 1560. The open space is worth exploring with raised walkway, willow tunnel and River Ver, frequented by kingfishers. Here you will walk under the Alban Way, a multi-user route along the former route of the Hatfield to St Albans branch line of the Great Northern Railway.

**I - Verulamium** was one of the largest towns in Roman Britain. A short walk from the Abbey Station are Verulamium Park, the Hypocaust, Verulamium Museum and the Roman Theatre.

**J - St Albans Abbey Station.** The Abbey line was the first railway St Albans received in 1858, the mainline didn’t open until 10 years later. The station, known originally simply as ‘St Albans’, changed to ‘St Albans Abbey’ in 1924, to distinguish it from the mainline station, now known as ‘St Albans City’.

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**Abbey Line Trail**

Enjoy the combination of taking the train and walking up to 9 miles in the beautiful Colne Valley countryside.
The Abbey Line

The ‘Abbey Line’ is a 6.5 mile (10km) branch line in Hertfordshire linking Watford Junction and St Albans Abbey Stations. It is part of the national rail network.

Opened on May 5th 1858, the Abbey Line has given over 150 years of service to the local community.

Being a branch line, trains were usually made up of 3 to 4 coaches, and hauled by a tank engine. These engines were housed at the Watford Junction engine shed. Diesel trains gradually replaced steam in the 1950s, but the technology was largely untried. The Abbey Line played host to a variety of experimental designs until steam engines were fully replaced by diesel trains in 1955. Since 1965, new stations have been opened at Garston and How Wood, and in 1987-88 the branch was electrified.

Since 2005, the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership (CRP) has promoted the use of the line. It brings together local people and organisations who work in partnership to improve their local railway.

Points of interest along the Trail

A - Watford Junction. The original Watford station, which opened in 1837 was built on the London to Birmingham Line, just north of the present-day St Albans Road rail bridge. The original station now houses a used-car sales office. In 1846 the line became part of the vast London & North Western Railway (LNWR), and Watford Junction Station moved to its present location in the 1850s.

B - Orphanage Road housed the London Orphan Asylum. Built in 1871, the buildings still stand and are now private residences. They once housed 600 orphans from the London area. In World War II, the orphans were evacuated from Watford; the boys to the Seymour Hotel, Totnes and the girls to a number of houses near Tewkesbury. The site was used as an Army hospital during the conflict.

C - Colne Valley. The River Colne is a tributary of the Thames, rising 5 miles to the east, in North Mymms Park. The river meanders within the valley bottom and there are lots of associated pools and springs, important for wildlife. You are likely to hear the “peeewit” call of lapwings here and see herons and little egrets fishing in the pools.