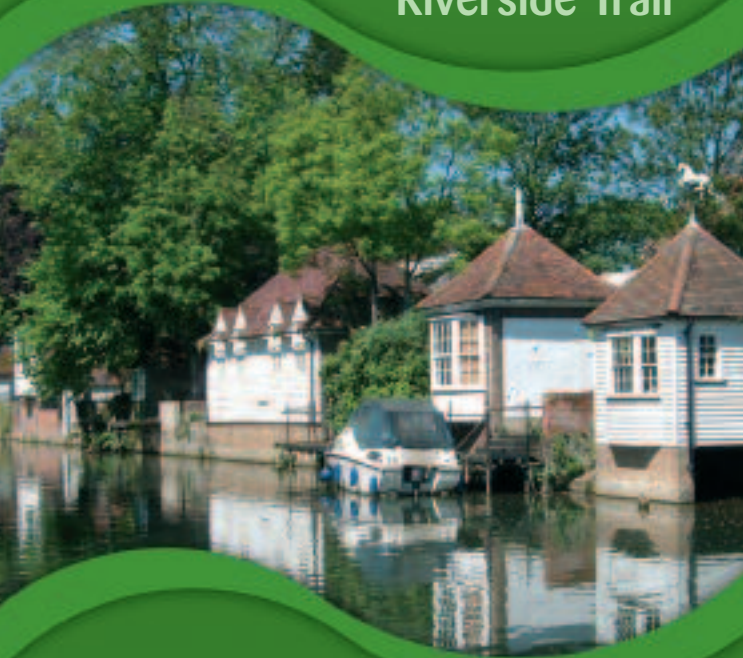


# Hertford & Ware Walks

## Riverside Trail



|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Rating       | Moderate (flat, some unsurfaced paths)  |
| Route        | Figure of Eight   |
| Time         | Approx 2½ hours   |
| Distance     | Approx 5¾ miles   |
| Toilets      | Hartham Car Park & Leisure Centre<br>Broadmeads Car Park<br>Fanshawe Pool & Gym |
| Start/Finish | Hartham Common Car Park<br>Broadmeads Car Park<br>Fanshawe Pool & Gym           |

## Points of Interest

### Hertford

Hertford is the second largest town in East Hertfordshire and was the site of the first General Synod of the English Church in 673AD. It has been a strategically important site since Saxon times as it is the meeting place of four rivers; the Mimram, the Rib, the Lea (Lee) and the Beane.



### Ware

The great road Ermine Street ran through Ware where it met the River Lee. The town in Roman times was thriving and remained an important site during the Saxon-Dane conflicts. In later years Ware, due to its situation between London and the barley growing counties of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, was a prosperous centre for the malting industry. The town's importance as a coaching stop is evident by the number of old inns in the town centre.

### The River Lee Navigation

The River Lee Navigation runs a distance of 28 miles from Hertford, through Ware and south to the Thames at Limehouse. The original River Lea rose at Leagrope Marsh near Luton and flowed



some seventy miles to the Thames at Bow Creek, downstream of the Isle of Dogs. It was navigable with difficulty up to Hertford but over the years the meandering course of the river was straightened with new cuts. As so little of the present route is on the river itself, it is called a 'navigation'. By convention the old river is spelt Lea while the navigation is spelt Lee. Since the first record of the River Lea in the Treaty of Wedmore between King Alfred and the Danes in AD879, the river has been used in a variety of ways, including the transportation of goods, waste disposal, flood control, mill power and more recently, leisure.



### Hartham Common <sup>12</sup> and The King's Mead <sup>4</sup>

This wet meadow of the Lee Valley floodplain is Hertford's oldest documented historical monument and acts as a 'green wedge', separating the towns of Ware and Hertford. Commoners and Burgesses of Hertford have had grazing rights on the Common

Taking steps towards a healthy Herts





for nearly 1000 years. Livestock was allowed to graze the area between Lammas Day (Aug 12th) until Candlemas Day (Feb 1st). For the rest of the year the area was left ungrazed to produce a hay crop, this is known as the Lammas Meadow. In the Middle Ages the Common was the site for jousting tournaments, archery competitions, fêtes and general merrymaking. With grazing dating back to pre-historic times this site has never been ploughed or sown and is home to an interesting variety of plants and animals.



### Jacob's Island ⑪

This natural island has recently been managed as an otter habitat. Otters were released back into the countryside in 1991 and have been seen in this vicinity. Otters need dense undisturbed river-bank vegetation to breed.



## About the Walk

Start at the car park ①. Where Hartham Lane forks keep right and go past Hartham Pumping Station on your right. Cross over the small bridge and walk down Thornton Street. Turn right into The Folly. ② At the 'Old Barge' Public House turn left onto the towpath with the River Lee Navigation on your right.

Continue along the towpath and cross over the weir. **Take Care.** Cross the road, turn right and then immediately left, down the ramp and back onto the towpath. Follow the towpath along the river towards The Meads ④, past Hertford Lock ③. Continue along the towpath past the Pump House on your right, under the A10 flyover, past the footbridge on your left (access to Fanshawe Pool & Gym), and past the lock and weir at Ware. ⑥ On



reaching the road turn right, (Amwell End) to Broadmeads car park ⑫ and Ware railway station. Turn right along Broadmeads passing a school on the right. Where the road ends, join the surfaced cycle path, turn left through the kissing gate ⑦ and walk towards the railway line. At the gate cross over the line. **Take care.** The path winds through wet grassland and leads to a small building and



footbridge. At the small building keep to the left and go over a stile to reach the embankment. Follow the path along the embankment with low

lying land on either side. Turn right at the base of the chalk slope and go under the A10 flyover (path may be muddy in wet weather). Continue straight on with houses on the left, past the allotments, to the gate onto Mead Lane. Follow the road to the right onto the path leading to the railway crossing. **Take care.** Turn right after the crossing and walk to the end of the road to a gate on the left leading to a track onto King's Mead. Go through the kissing

gate on the left and follow the hedge on the left to reach Hertford Lock. Cross the bridge to Lea Island. ⑩ Walk towards the bridge to Jacob's Island ⑪ but do not cross the bridge, turn left and follow the River Beane river bank.

Cross the footbridge to Hartham Common ⑫ and continue walking along the river bank towards Hartham Common Tennis Courts. At the tennis courts turn left and follow the path towards Hartham Leisure Centre ⑬. At the junction turn right back to the car park ①.



## Points of Interest

### Lea Island ⑩

This can be seen from the towpath, just past Hertford. Behind the island is the original course of the River Lea, which can be seen from the Ware end of the island.

### Chadwell Springs ⑨

Chadwell Springs, at the base of Bushy Dell Nature Reserve, marks the source of the New River. This is a man made waterway constructed by Sir Hugh Myddleton in 1613 to supply London with fresh drinking water.



### Gazebos ⑥

These 'summerhouses', built in the 18th Century in the gardens of former High Street coaching inns, line the banks of the River Lee at Ware.

### Bushey Dell Nature Reserve ⑦

This chalk grassland slope, with its well drained soils, is home to lime-loving plants such as cowslips, bird's foot trefoil, salad burnet and the rare grass broom rape.



## Wetland Birds

King's Mead floods in winter and is an important feeding ground for migrating and over-wintering birds. Wintering species include gadwall, shoveler, wigeon and teal.

## Milling

In the late 18th Century Hertford was an important centre for malting, brewing and corn milling. Thanks to the surrounding agricultural estates and a canal system which brought water-borne trade into the town centre, Hertford expanded.

## Rivers and Ditches

The area is criss-crossed by rivers and ditches which are home to many waterside plants and animals. A section of the Lea was straightened in 1765 and its banks protected to create a canal linking the towns of Hertford and Ware. The old river course still meanders over the floodplain.

## Other Local Walks

For further information contact the Countryside Access Development Officer at East Herts Council on **01279 655261**, visit [www.eastherts.gov.uk](http://www.eastherts.gov.uk) or try Countryside Management Services (eastern) on **01279 843667**. Alternatively, plan your own route by using Public Rights of Way, Ordnance Survey **Explorer map no. 194** will show you this area. For public transport information ring Hertfordshire Traveline on **0870 6082608**. For more information about river or canal walks contact British Waterways London on **020 7985 7200** or visit [www.waterscape.com](http://www.waterscape.com).

## Healthy Steps

While you are out, you are also doing your health a favour. Regular moderate activity such as brisk walking is enough to keep you in shape. You don't need to sweat or pant - feeling warm and breathing harder than usual will give you benefits. You're never too old or too far gone to start.



# Riverside Trail Map



## Key to Symbols

- Toilets
- Car Park
- Train Station
- Bus Stop
- Telephone

## Points of Interest

- 1 Hartham Car Park
- 2 Folly Island
- 3 Hertford Lock
- 4 King's Mead
- 5 Fanshawe Pool & Fitness Centre
- 6 Gazebos
- 7 Bushey Dell Nature Reserve
- 8 New River
- 9 Chadwell Springs
- 10 Lea Island
- 11 Jacob's Island
- 12 Hartham Common
- 13 Hartham Leisure Centre
- 14 Hertford Museum
- 15 Ware Museum
- 16 Broadmeads Car Park