

# **WALKING AROUND HUNSDON AND SURROUNDING PARISHES**



**View of St Dunstan's Church and Hunsdon House  
from Hunsdon FP1**

Hunsdon Parish Council

[www.hunsdon.org.uk](http://www.hunsdon.org.uk)

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# Key to Waymarks



**A Public Footpath (FP) for use of pedestrians only.**



**A Bridleway (BR) which can be used by horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians.**



**A Byway open to all traffic (BOAT).**



**A Restricted Byway (RB) can be used by pedestrians, horse riders, cyclists and non-motorised vehicles**

## Identification of Paths

Each of these categories of paths are given a separate series of numbers applicable within the respective parish. To aid in identification a prefix letter, as shown below, has been added before the path number.

E :- Eastwick and Gilston  
H :- Hunsdon  
HW :- High Wych  
SA :- Stanstead Abbots  
W :- Widford  
WS :- Wareside



Public Footpath



Bridleway



Restricted Byway



National Trail or Recreational Path



Parish Boundary

This book has been produced by Hunsdon Parish Council using grants from East Herts. Council's Local Environment Action Fund and the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme. The Parish Paths Partnership is administered by the Countryside Management Service which is part of Hertfordshire County Council, and Hertfordshire Association of Local Council.

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Please note that all the details of these walks can be accessed on the “Hunsdon” website at [www.hunsdon.org.uk/footpaths/](http://www.hunsdon.org.uk/footpaths/). In addition Hertfordshire County Council have a “HCC Definitive Map” web page which has a “Rights of Way GIS Map” covering the whole of Hertfordshire with the path numbers marked. Also on the same page is the “Rights of Way Google Map”, which in conjunction with Google maps allow the paths to be navigated in real time and if you tap on a marked path, the path number and details appear at the bottom of your screen. It is suggested that the .pdf of a walk could be used in parallel with Google maps”, if required.



## Map of Hunsdon Parish Showing the Parish Paths



## **The Parish Paths Partnership and Local Environment Action Fund**

The Parish Paths Partnership Scheme was launched in 1992 as a parish based initiative to create an increased awareness of and improvement to, public access to the rights of way network with Hunsdon joining the scheme in 1999. In Hertfordshire the County Council's Countryside & Rights of Way service continues to work with Town and Parish Councils to improve Rights of Way for local people to enjoy and use for every day travel.

Each council has a footpath warden who does not necessarily have to be a member of the council and he or she is responsible for monitoring on a regular basis the condition of the paths within their parish, in turn co-operating with landowners to keep the paths clear of obstructions.

Initially on joining the scheme a survey of all the gates, bridges and other physical features including condition of surfaces was undertaken to determine those that needed replacing or upgrading. One of the objects of the scheme is for the parishes to undertake work with any volunteers that they can muster, but if this is beyond their resources this is where the County Council comes into the picture. Practical help is available from the Countryside & Rights of Way who advises both parish councils and landowners on types of structures to meet current legislation.



Each member parish has the benefit of a grant structure by the County Council via the Countryside & Rights of Way. Although there is a limit on the amount of money available it can be used to fund enhancement of the network and any associated publicity. In the case of larger schemes these may be overseen by the Countryside Access Officers at County Council level.

### **East Herts Council's Local Environment Action Fund**

This publication was part funded by East Herts Council's initiative to help parish councils, schools and voluntary groups in their efforts to enhance their local environment, in this instance by promoting the use of the local rights of way network.

#### **SOME OF YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES WHEN USING A PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY**

**=> Keep to the right of way and not trespass on other land.**

**=> Keep your dog under control - we are fortunate to still have deer, hares and other animals and birds throughout the parishes and the less they are disturbed the better.**

**Please ensure you remove your dog's waste.**

**=> Use gates and stiles to cross fences hedges and walls - remember to leave any gates as you find them.**

**=> Take special care where part of your route involves walking along country roads.**

**=> When using paths across the former Hunsdon Airfield be aware of the movement of heavy machinery using the internal roadways and low flying aircraft using the microlight airstrips.**

## Hunsdon and the Parish Paths Partnership

Having, in the intervening years since joining the scheme, brought the paths and structures within the parish up to standard it was decided to let people know about the many footpath walks on their doorsteps. In 2003, with encouragement and financial help from the Countryside Management Service, Hunsdon together with Eastwick and Gilston Parish Council decided to embark on a joint footpath map project. The joint approach was made because quite a few of the paths passed between the parishes and in doing so formed circular walks. They approached an artist who created a map of the parishes, the result of which can be seen on the several map



boards that have been erected in the two parishes. Hunsdon's board was erected on the Village Hall Car Park in March 2004. The map board was regarded as Stage 1 of the project and whilst showing all the paths, was not a lot of good for walkers unless they had a very good memory, so the purpose of the boards was to create a state of awareness of what was available in terms of public footpaths in the surrounding area.

Stage 2 was the concurrent reproduction of the map in folding paper form which was distributed throughout the two parishes.

This book created by the original Hunsdon Footpath Warden, John Ashley M.B.E, represents Stage 3 of the project and whilst Hunsdon based, provides a series of set walks using the public rights of way within both Hunsdon and all the adjacent parishes starting and finishing at the Hunsdon Village Hall. This approach has been adopted because many of the present definitive footpaths have evolved from routes in the past that connected the local communities and therefore there is limited scope to create circular walks strictly within Hunsdon. All the walks radiate



out into adjoining parishes and are of varying lengths to suit abilities of the walker and at the same time bring them back to their departure point, in this case Hunsdon Village Hall. Another of the benefits is that the walks are able to take advantage of many of the spectacular views across the boundaries in the other parishes as well as embracing many local points of interest which would not be available if the walks were confined purely to Hunsdon.

Whilst some of the walks pass close to pubs, details of which are given in the text, some do not, however Hunsdon has two good pubs and the village shop selling cold drinks and sandwiches etc. so walkers can take advantage of these facilities before or after their walk.

Much of Hunsdon Parish is taken up by the land occupied by the old wartime airfield, but the internal roadways there are not public rights of way. In consequence of this the walks featured will only use the definitive rights of way published in legal form in 2020 by the County Council.

## **JOHN ASHLEY M.B.E**

The original edition of this walks booklet was created by John Ashley and published in 2005 but is now out of print. In 2019 the editors decided to update the wonderful work of John Ashley by bringing the booklet up to date, correcting changes that have taken place in intervening years. To do this a grant was secured from Herts County Council for which we are most grateful and all paths were surveyed and any changes noted.

**We acknowledge that the booklet is John Ashley's work and it has been a pleasure to revisit all the walks and amend them, incorporating changes where appropriate.**

A few words about John:

John Ashley MBE, 1931 –2017, moved to the village of Hunsdon to run the village post office and shop with his wife Betty, after a number of years in industry. He soon became involved with the local community as a parish councillor and parish clerk. In 2002 on stepping down from the council he became the village footpath warden and in that role undertook, with the support of the county council, much work to improve and publicise the footpath network.

In 2002 John was richly rewarded by appointment as MBE for services to the community.

We see the publication of this edition of the booklet as the continuation of John's work and praise him for all his contributions.

Bud Carthy and Martyn Reid with thanks to Ken Warren for IT support 2020.

### **NOTE**

Whilst this booklet has been designed for walkers, it is of course possible for these routes to be used by runners. For longer walks or runs routes could be combined as necessary. It should be noted that all walks have distances and times to assist in deciding which routes might be appropriate to requirements. It will be left to the individual to decide whether the paths across fields are suitable to be run on.



# A Series of Short Walks

## To Fillets Farm and back.

Distance approx. 1 - 1 ¾ miles (1.6 - 2.8 km) depending on route. Hard surface or grass.



From the Village Hall turn right and immediately right again on to Hunsdon RB 12 (*Back Lane*) and follow this until reaching Fillets Farm where you turn left on to Hunsdon RB 3 and walk through what was the farmyard. Whilst the land is still farmed the old barns have now been converted into offices and holiday lets. On reaching the brook going under the track you can turn left into the field and follow the grass path, Hunsdon FP 6 which is fully signed taking you back to the village and the start. If you wish to continue on the Hunsdon RB 3 carry on up the hill until it meets Stanstead Road (B180)

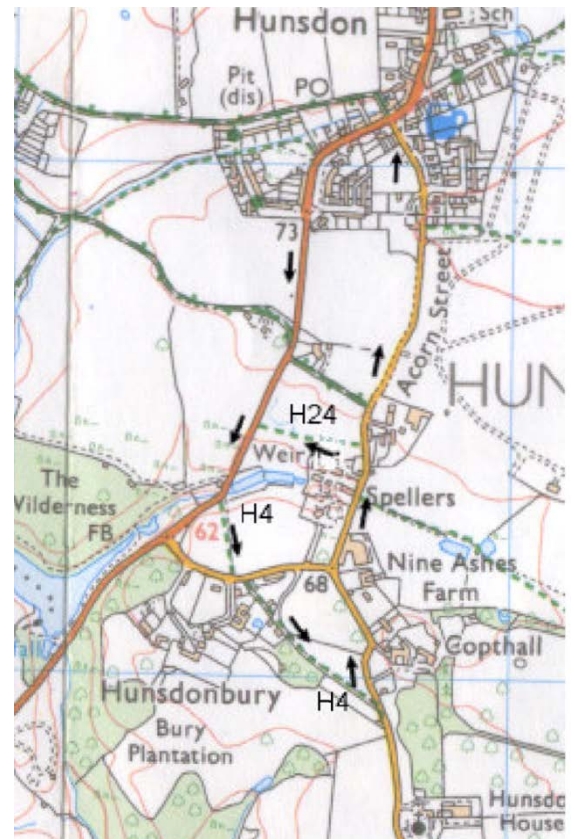
where again if you turn left along the road you can go back to the start. To continue the walk turn right for a short distance then cross the B180 and go on to Hunsdon RB 3a, an unmade road. This takes you to Acorn Street where by turning left along the footway beside the road you will come back to the village hall.

## To Hunsdonbury and back.

Distance approx. 1 ¾ miles (2.8 km) Hard surface and grass.

Outside the Village Hall turn right and walk along the roadside footway, past Tanners Way until reaching the entrance to Fillets Farm, now signed as Oak Park with its offices and holiday lets. The footway ends here so walk along the roadside down the hill to a sharp bend at the bottom where on the left is a metal kissing gate marking the entrance to Hunsdon FP 4. The path goes unmarked across a grass field but follow a depression running to the far side, this being once the route of an old road to Hunsdonbury. Look in front for a gap in the hedge with a kissing gate and make for this bringing you on to the Hunsdonbury lane.

Turn left for a short distance and look across the road for a gap in the hedge to the rear of East Lodge.



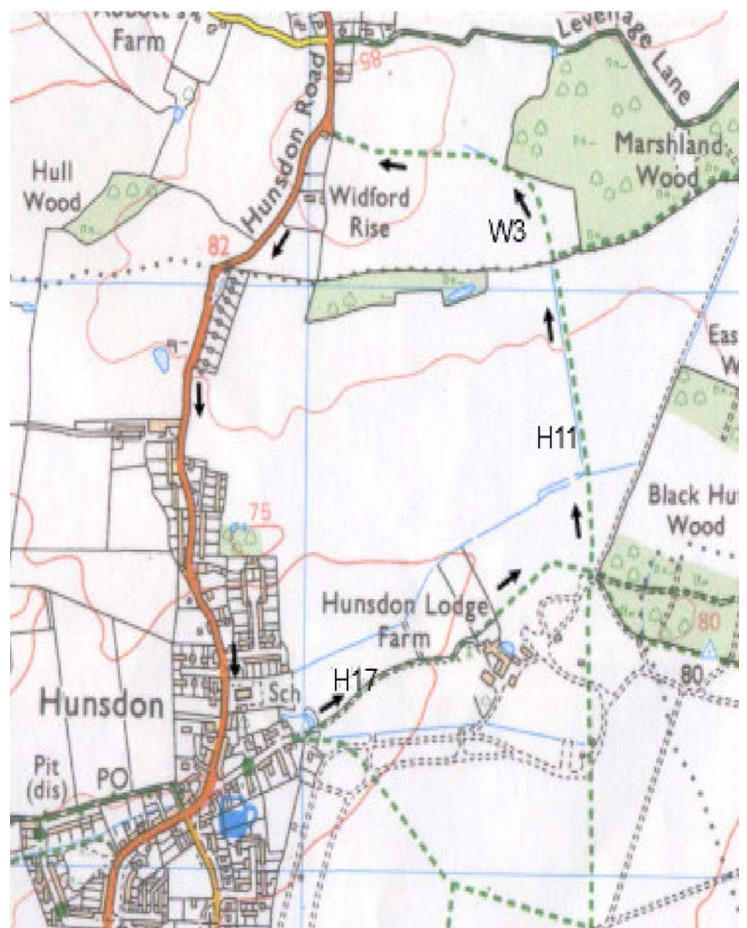
This leads to a long narrow path, still Hunsdon FP 4, opening out to fields and the front of Warren House. This is shown on the 1842 Tythe Map as Church Walk and was the route from what was then The Rectory at Hunsdonbury to St Dunstons Church. The original line of the path was recently diverted and continues across the front of Warren House between a newly hedged path to a gate. Go through this and continue forward with the hedge to your right finally coming to a kissing gate on Church Lane. Turn left here making your way back along Church Lane subsequently becoming Acorn Street, and back to the Village Hall. Please note the absence of a pavement here. If you wish to try a slight diversion on the way back look out for Walnut Tree House on the left in Acorn Street and a stile in the field fence. The path, Hunsdon FP 24, takes you across a paddock, over a further stile across a field to yet another stile on to Stanstead Road (B180). Be careful using this road as there is no pavement. Turn right onto the road and this will take you back to the Village Hall following the outward route.

## Widford Rise and back

**Distance approx. 2 miles (3.6 km) Involves some walking across cultivated fields and may be heavy going after wet weather.**

From the Village Hall turn left, cross the road by the village pump and proceed down Drury Lane. At the end of the lane continue ahead through the kissing gate, past the pond and along the farm track (Hunsdon FP 17), until you reach a small copse on your right. This is the site of the original Hunsdon Lodge Farmhouse, with some barns dating from the 16th Century on the site of what was thought to be a royal hunting lodge in the time of Henry VIII.

From the copse the footpath continues ahead across the cultivated field. On reaching the waymark junction post just short of Black Hut Wood, turn sharp left (Hunsdon FP 11) across the field, over a small footbridge and continue along the right hand side of the hedge and ditch to the top of the field.



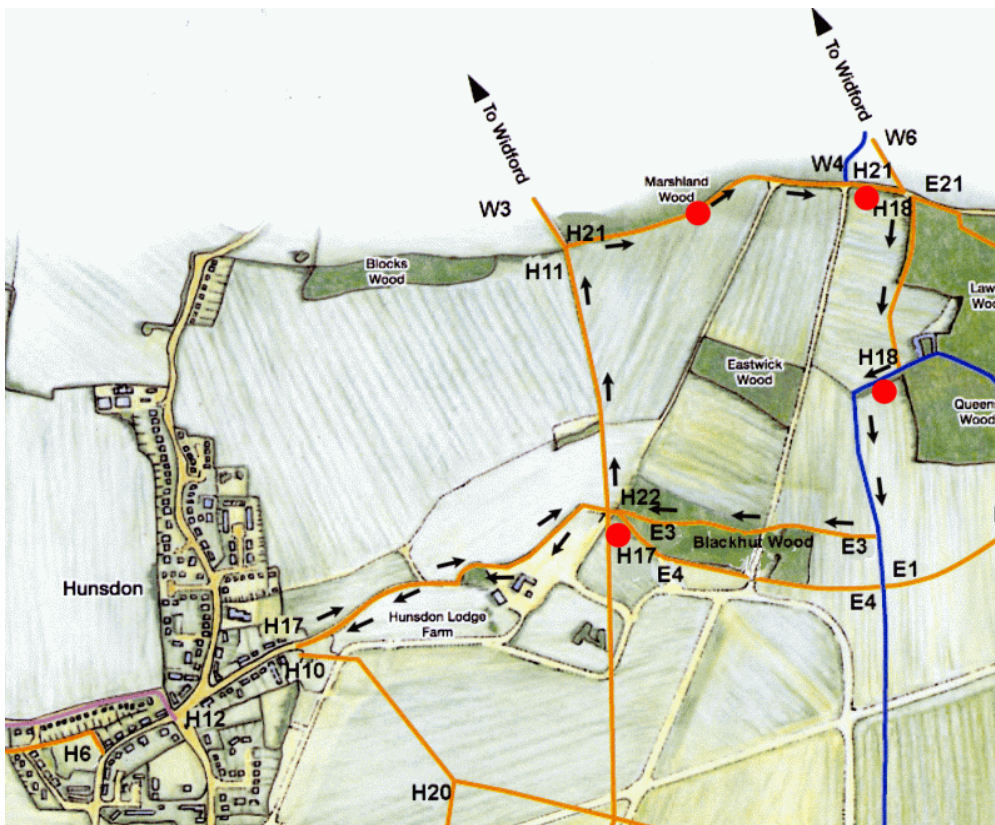
From here pass through the hedge over a small footbridge into Widford Parish, where the path becomes their No.3. Proceed ahead across the field to the corner of Marshland Wood bearing left, following the path until it reaches the B180. Turn left and make your way back along the road to the starting point in the village centre.



## The Green Route - A walk without a map!

The walk is 3.2 miles or 5 Km and at medium walking pace takes about 1 hour. The middle part of the walk is across arable land, which in wet weather can be heavy going. Depending on the time of year the paths are not always well marked, in which case navigation is achieved by following the posts.

As a further initiative to promote use of the public footpath network around the village the parish council, working as part of the Parish Paths Partnership, has created a circular walk to the north east of the village which has been identified in situ by a series of green collars around the arrow discs on the waymark posts. There are some directional notes and map below but you don't need to take them with you as you just follow the arrows! The walk is signed so that it can be done either clockwise or anti clockwise but for the purpose of these notes the clockwise direction has been used.



Starting from the Village Hall Car Park turn right, past the Crown Public House and the village pump and proceed to the end of Drury Lane. Pass through the kissing gate, past the pond and straight ahead along the farm track, until you reach a small copse and some barns on your right, the site of the original Hunsdon Lodge Farmhouse. Past the copse the footpath continues ahead across the cultivated field. On reaching the waymark junction post just short of Black Hut Wood turn sharp left as denoted by the arrow and cross the field, over a small footbridge and continue along with the hedge and ditch on your left to the top of the field.

From here pass through the hedge over a small footbridge turn immediately right and with the hedge on your right until a further footbridge takes the path back through the hedge again. Turn left and follow the path along the length of the edge of Marshland Wood where a bench has been placed for you to pause and take in the view, then a short stretch into open country again, until reaching the corner of Lawns Wood.

At this point turn right following the edge of the wood on your left. At the waymark post at the corner of the wood continue straight ahead across the cultivated field until reaching a bridleway. Turn right here and at the end of the hedge you will find a bench just behind the end of the hedge.

At the post near the bench bear left across cultivated land before turning sharply to the left at the next post. You are now on what used to be part of Cock Robin Lane some of which still exists in its original form further to the south. On reaching the next waymark post turn right, still on cultivated land, then passing part of Black Hut Wood on your left thence across the concrete track bearing left and right through the middle of the remainder of the wood. On emerging from the wood go ahead to the junction waymark post in the field where you started the circular part of the walk and continue ahead to take you back to the village over the outward route. A further bench is placed at the corner of the wood should you wish to pause before completing your walk

As described in the notes, several parts of the walk are across cultivated land and can be heavy going in the winter or after heavy rain so stout footwear is recommended at these times.

Bench sites denoted by red dots. Prefixes to path numbers :- H - Hunsdon, W - Widford, E - Eastwick & Gilston



# Longer Walks

## To Little Briggs and back

The walk is just under 5 ½ miles (9 km) and at a medium walking pace should take you approximately 2 hours. There are no paths across arable land, they are all on hard surface, grass or field edges.



From the Village Hall turn right along the High Street to the entrance to The Dell Play Area adjacent to number 1 High Street. Follow the path (Hunsdon FP 6) diagonally across the play area to the far corner, through the kissing gate and forward ahead across Tanners Way to the path to the left of the bridge and thence alongside the brook. Go ahead along the field edge with the brook on your right. At the end of the field the path meets Hunsdon RB 3. Turn right for a short distance along this and then turn left at the next waymark post and along a farm track, the continuation of Hunsdon FP 6. Where the track ends at a cultivated field the path divides. Take the right hand path of the two across the field aiming at a tall willow tree in the hedge line. On reaching the tree there is a gap in the hedge and marker post with a pond on your right.



Go ahead following the track between the fields. The initial stretch of path is the site of the old Fillets Farm demolished in the mid-1800s when the new farm was built on its present site. You can still see parts of the old iron boundary fencing and gate post in the hedge. The path now passes into Stanstead Abbots and becomes their Hunsdon FP 6a taking you to a wood called Black Bushes with Newgate Wood across the field on your right. Go along the edge of Black Bushes and at the far corner bear to your right past a small pond. Follow the grass track between the fields to a small copse, Thirsty Spring, then forward along a field edge path with the trees and a subsequent hedge to your right. Go ahead with the stream to your left and field fence to the right until reaching a hedge at the end of the field. Go through the gap in the left hand corner end of the hedge where the remains of a kissing gate can be seen, with a waymark disc on the gate post. Beyond the gate the field edge path runs to the rear of Newlands before passing over a bridge and reaching a bridleway, (Stanstead Abbots BR 18), leading from the B180 at Newlands up to Little Briggens.



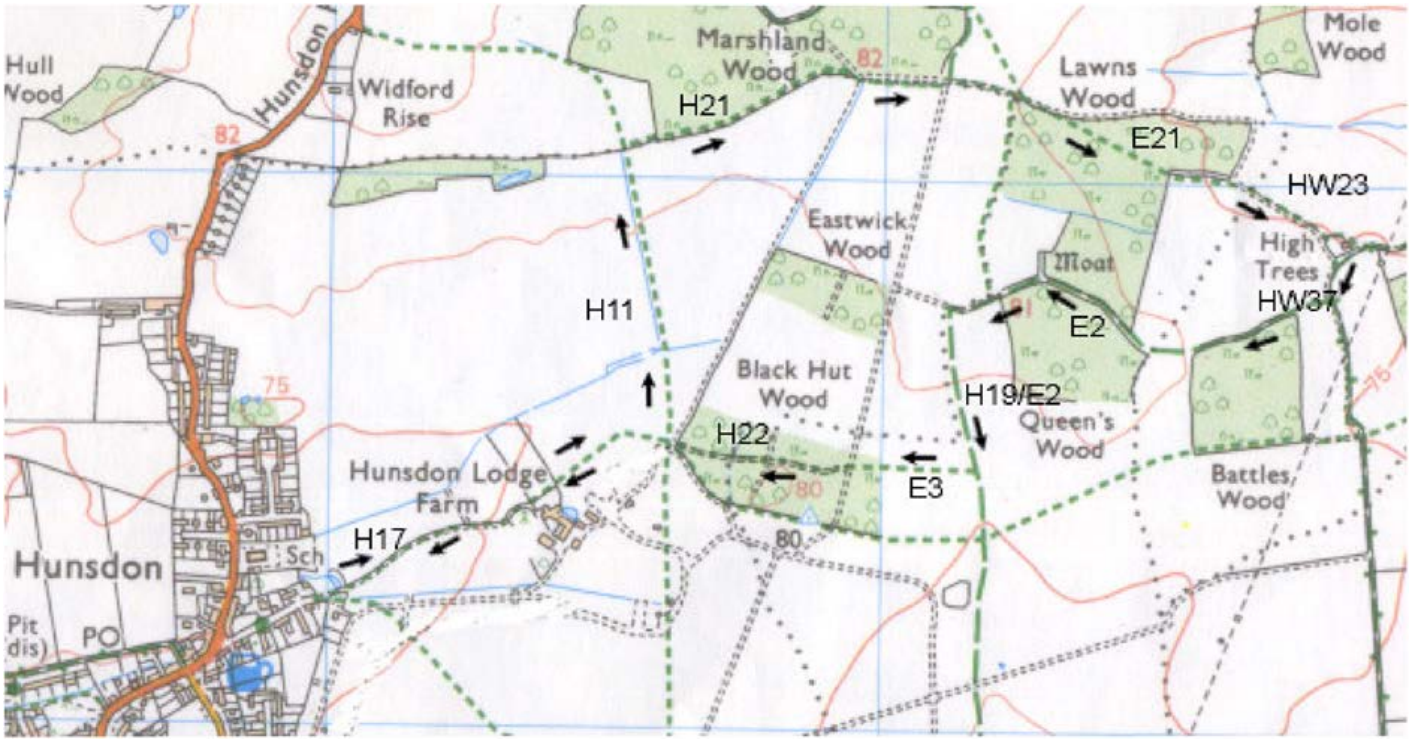
Turn right along the bridle way climbing past Little Briggens then at the end of the farmyard bear sharp left following the track for some distance until reaching a cross track. Turn right here onto a further bridleway, (Wareside BR 17), climbing gently, past a pond on your left then following the contours. Shortly before reaching Young Wood on your right you pass into Wareside Parish and the path becomes their Wareside BR 37. Turn right at Young Wood and follow the bridleway (Wareside BR 38), with

the wood and hedge on your left, up the gentle slope towards Moat Wood where just before reaching the wood you again pass back into Stanstead Abbots and the bridleway becomes their Stanstead Abbots BR 4. Look out where the edge of the wood turns sharply to the left and through the bushes you will be able to see the large moat after which the wood was called. Continue along the bridleway until reaching the pond on Hunsdon No 6 path and then turn left and follow the outward route back to the Village Hall.



## A walk through the woods

The walk starts from and terminates at Hunsdon Village Hall, is just under 4 miles or 6 kilometres and at medium walking pace should take you 70-75 minutes. Parts of the walk are over cultivated land and can be heavy going in the winter or after heavy rain so stout footwear is recommended.



From the Village Hall turn left, cross the road by the village pump and proceed down Drury Lane. At the end of the lane continue ahead through the kissing gate, past the pond and along the farm track (Hunsdon FP 17), until you reach a small copse on your right. This is the site of the original Hunsdon Lodge Farmhouse, with some barns dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century on the site of what was thought to be a royal hunting lodge in the time of Henry VIII. Past the copse the footpath continues ahead across the cultivated field. On reaching the waymark junction post just short of Black Hut Wood turn sharp left (Hunsdon FP 11) across the field, over a small footbridge, and continue along the right hand side of the hedge and ditch to the top of the field. From here pass through the hedge over a small footbridge turn immediately right and follow the north side of the hedge until a further footbridge takes the path back through the hedge again. Turn left and follow the path, (Hunsdon FP 21) along the length of the southern edge of Marshland Wood and into open country again for a short distance until reaching the corner of Lawns Wood.

Here the path goes into the wood. (The track to the left of the wood is not a public path.) As you enter Lawns Wood look out for an earth bank on your right, behind which is a small medieval moat. There are several tracks branching off but waymark posts in the wood will keep you on the right route. On emerging from the wood keep to the field edge alongside the wood thence along a farm track (High Wych FP 23) towards a small group of trees where the waymark post directs you to the left around the rear of the cottage, (*High Trees*), where the path joins up with a RB (High Wych 37).

Turn right for a short distance until reaching a waymark post directing you again to the right. The RB becomes a bridleway from this point and passes initially over a short stretch of cultivated field, then alongside Battles Wood before crossing a further short stretch of cultivated land to reach Queens Wood. (Eastwick FP 2) Follow the track (Eastwick FP 2) through the wood.

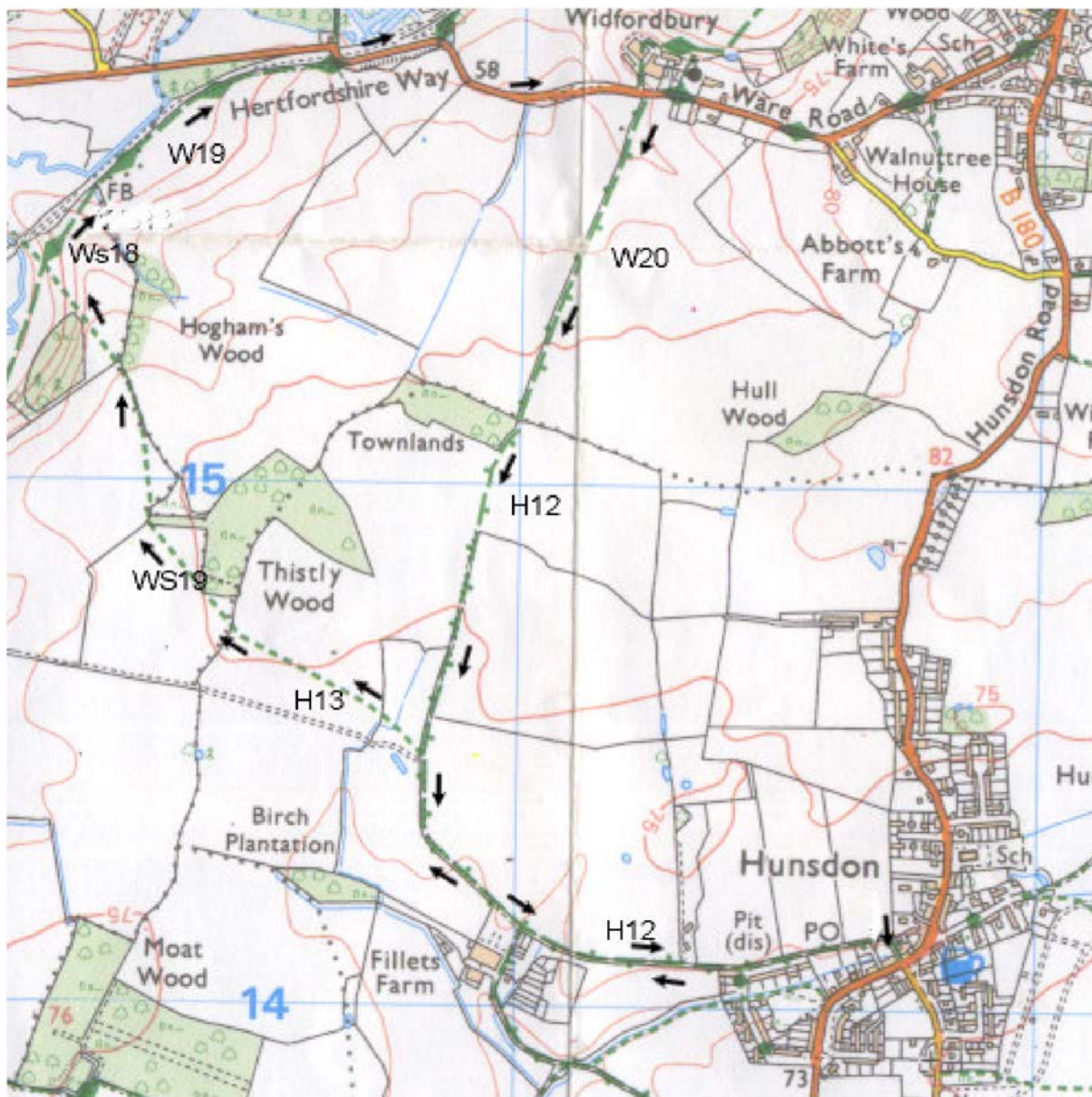
On emerging from the wood note the large water filled medieval moat on your right. The bridleway, the north end of Cockrobin Lane, then turns slightly to the left across cultivated land before turning sharply to the south. Although part of Eastwick BR2 this section, just coming inside the Hunsdon boundary, is numbered Hunsdon FP 19. On reaching the first waymark post turn right, (Eastwick FP 3) across cultivated land and passing on the left, part of Black Hut Wood, thence across the concrete track and through the remainder of the wood.

The flora in Black Hut Wood has now recovered from a spell of War Games in the 1980s and in spring Early Purple Orchids and Primroses are becoming a common sight. There is also a particularly large patch of wild bluebells just as you come to the first part of the wood from the field path. Many of the old wartime airfield structures including huts, slit trenches and a pillbox are also visible from the path in the second part of the wood. About three quarters of the way through this part you will notice a shallow ditch crossing the path. This denotes the Hunsdon Parish boundary that has survived as a marker presumably since the original boundaries were established. The ditch continues along the northern edge of the wood, again denoting the boundary when this and Eastwick Wood were all one. The last few metres through the wood from the ditch become Hunsdon FP 22 and on emerging you again join Hunsdon FP 17 taking you back to the village over the outward route.



## A walk with a view

The walk is just over 4 miles or just under 6.5 km and at a medium walking pace, should take you about 80 minutes. Paths Hunsdon FP 13 and Wareside FP 19 cross cultivated fields and stout footwear is recommended in autumn and winter.



From the Village Hall turn right and immediately right again on to Hunsdon RB 12 (Back Lane). Follow this route past Fillets Farm on your left climbing gently until you reach a waymark post directing you to the left (Hunsdon FP 13). Follow the path across a patch of rough land, over two footbridges thence across a cultivated field to a further footbridge and through a hedge. From here the path becomes Wareside FP 19. Proceed right to a waymark post at the corner of Thistly Wood, then slightly to the right to a gap in the hedge. Carry on forward right, across the cultivated field. The path, when it is marked on the ground, turns in the middle of the field to the left then ahead to the hedge and stile on the opposite side. Look out for the panoramic views to the left of Wareside and the Ash Valley.

Climb over the stile and forward across the meadow keeping to the brow of the hill, being careful of any cows in the field until reaching a hedge to your front running alongside the track bed of the old St Margarets to Buntingford branch line, now a farm roadway.

(If you have planned your walk at the right time of day you can break off here for refreshments by going down to the gate and stile by the River Ash, cross the old railway and follow the path along the river which will take you into Wareside where there are two pubs serving food.)

On reaching the hedge turn right, this is Wareside BR 18. Follow the hedge on your left and at the bottom of the hill you reach a gate, the parish boundary with Widford, and the bridleway becomes Widford BR 19. This part of the walk along the side of the valley runs alongside the track bed of the old St Margarets to Buntingford Branch on the left. The line was opened in 1863 and closed to passenger traffic in 1964. Although the line rises to Widford much of it is in a cutting and it is particularly interesting to note the depth just prior to Widford. **(Note the old railway track bed is not a public right of way.)**

Continuing along BR 19 you reach a point where the levels meet and the track merges with the bridleway. Shortly after this the path leads off to the left through the trees, follow this until you reach the B1004 road. Cross the road and follow the footway past the old station, now a coal and garden sundries depot, until you reach Widfordbury Farm on your left. Turn right here and cross the road joining Widford RB 20. Follow this up the hill to a small wood, Townlands, turning round at the top of the hill to take in a further wide view from Wareside round to Widford Rise. From Townlands the path becomes Hunsdon RB 12, giving views over Hunsdon and after initially going downhill, ultimately takes you back to Hunsdon village centre.



**Wareside from near Hogham's Wood with old railway in foreground**



## Cockrobin Lane

**The walk is approx 3 miles, 4.8 km and takes about 60-70 minutes at average walking pace. Stout walking boots are recommended as much of the walk is over cultivated fields which can be muddy after any prolonged rain. Walkers are reminded that there are both agricultural and commercial tenants on this land and care must be taken to ensure that there is no disturbance to their activities. You should also be aware of the use of heavy machinery using the roadways and of low flying aircraft using the microlight airstrips.**

From the Village Hall turn left, cross the road by The Pump and proceed down Drury Lane to the entrance to Amiens Close on your right and then take the path immediately left past the Pill Box to pass through the kissing gate in the hedge. You are now on Hunsdon FP 10 and continue straight, across the old airfield perimeter road in a South Easterly direction past the waymark post. Continue forward until you reach the post marking the junction with Hunsdon FP 20. Take the left hand path, easterly. This will eventually take you across two pieces of old



airfield roadway and Hunsdon FP 11 after which it starts to go downhill, passing into Eastwick Parish, becoming Eastwick FP 23 just before crossing another section of roadway and terminating at the junction with Cockrobin Lane (Eastwick BR 2).

Old 19th Century maps show Cockrobin Lane as an integral part of the road network at the time, following on from Eastwick Hall Lane along the route of the present bridleway Eastwick BR 2 before joining the road from Gilston Church south of High Trees in High Wych Parish.

All of it can still be walked but the part from where you are now standing up to Queen's Wood to the north was levelled in 1941, as part of the construction of Hunsdon Airfield, although you can still see a faint depression across the fields following the bridleway indicating its original route.

Continuing with the walk, turn right and follow the lane between the hedges giving you a good idea what it must have been like all those years ago. In the spring the verges are lined with cowslips and other wild flowers.

The lane now begins to descend and it was towards the bottom of the slope that problems arose some years ago. The adjacent stream spread across the path in the winter and combined with the continual passage of horses the surface became a morass and was impassable on foot for much of the time. Several years ago Hertfordshire County Council and Eastwick & Gilston Parish Council embarked on an ambitious scheme to separate the stream from the bridleway and now the surface is raised above the stream, held up by a wooden sleeper retaining wall giving all year round access. Passing along this section with the stream on the right and a small wood, Rowndsell Shaw, on the left, the path rises slightly to the left away from the stream before joining Eastwick Hall Lane at Eastwick Hall Cottages.

At this point turn right and follow the road/farm track, Eastwick FP 8, as it climbs past Eastwick Hall Farm. At the top of the slope, ignoring the track off to the right, carry on forward with the boundary hedge of Hunsdon House to your left. A short way along the path you pass back into Hunsdon Parish and it becomes Hunsdon FP 5. Look out to your left as you go along the path for the view of Hunsdon House through gaps in the trees. Further along, the path begins to turn gradually away from Hunsdon House passing through a new plantation of small trees. Finally an open field is reached. Turn slightly right to follow the path across to the small clump of trees at the far corner surrounding Nine Ashes Ponds. Bear round the right side of the larger pond then along a grass path with the wire fence to your right, finally reaching a stile opposite Spellars House on Acorn Street. Turn right and follow Acorn Street back to Hunsdon and the starting point of the walk.

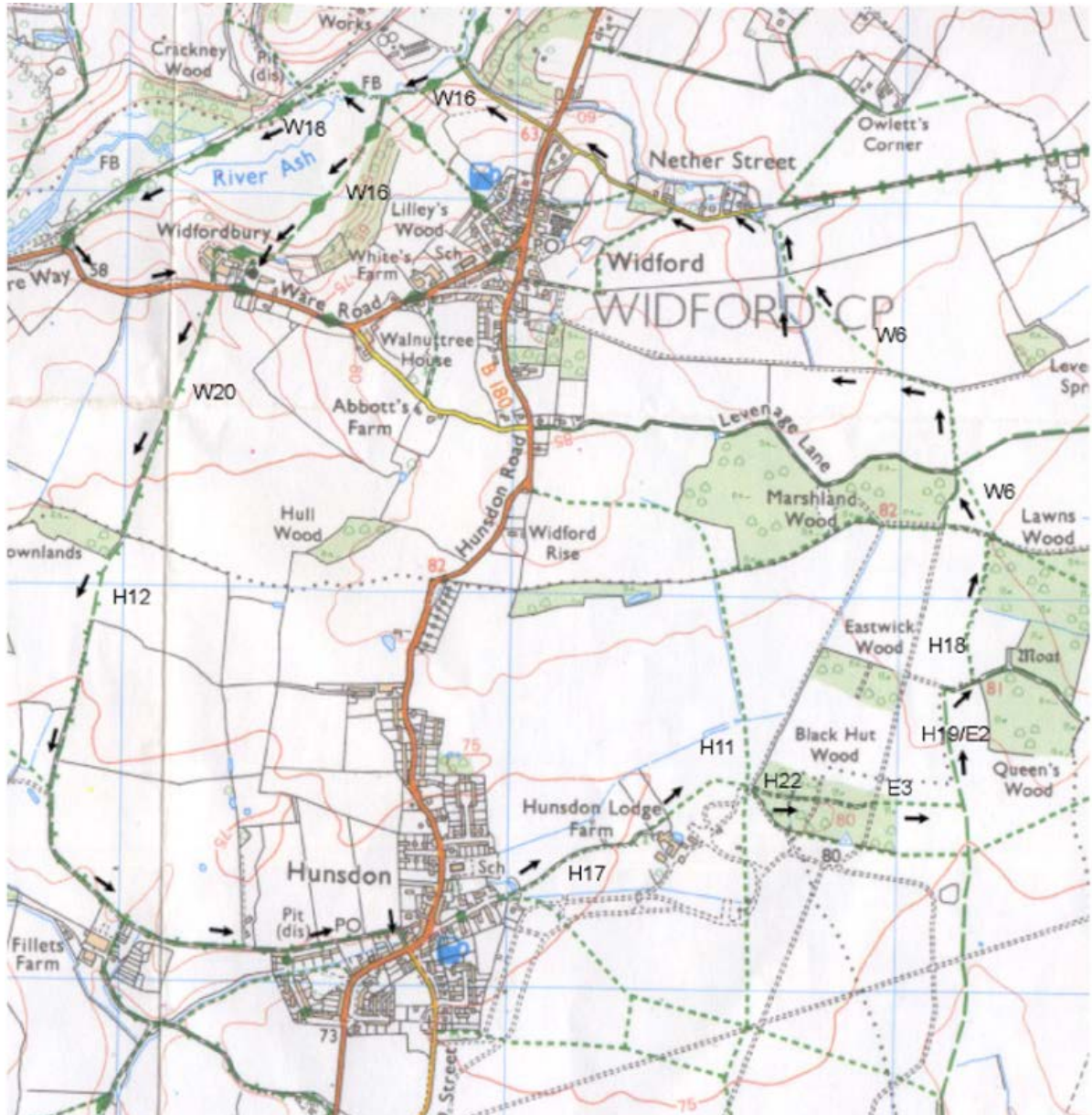
### **The former Hunsdon Airfield**

**The routes of the footpaths across the old airfield may seem a bit haphazard today but if you overlay them on the old 1842 Tythe Map they conform to many of the old field boundaries and woods. Today all across this open space you will be rewarded with the sound of skylarks aloft, not a common feature of many country walks these days. Depending on the time of your walk you may also see deer, foxes, hares and other wildlife.**



## North to Widford and the Ash Valley

The walk is just under 5 miles for Option (a) or just over 5 miles for Option (b) (8 km or 9.3 km) and at a normal walking pace should take you between 1 hour 45 min and 2 hours. The first half of the walk involves some walking across cultivated fields and may be heavy going during wet weather.



From the Village Hall turn left, cross the road by The Pump and proceed down Drury Lane. At the end of the lane continue ahead through the kissing gate, past the pond and along the farm track (Hunsdon FP 17), until reaching a copse on your right, site of the original Hunsdon Lodge Farmhouse with the remaining barns dating from the 16th Century on the site of what was thought to be a royal hunting lodge in the time of Henry VIII. The footpath continues ahead past the farm across a cultivated field. Cross Hunsdon FP 11 marked by a waymark junction post and go to the corner of Blackhut Wood. Enter the wood at the waymark post, (Hunsdon FP 22). A shallow ditch some 100 metres into the wood denotes the parish boundary where the path becomes Eastwick FP 3.

The parish boundary ditch has survived as a marker presumably since the original boundaries were established. It continues along the northern edge of the wood, again denoting the boundary when this was one expanse of trees known as Eastwick Wood. In spring Early Purple Orchids and Primroses are becoming a common sight. There is also a particularly large patch of wild bluebells on your right as you pass the second part of the wood. Many of the old wartime airfield structures including huts, slit trenches and a pillbox are also visible from the path in both parts.

At the end of the first part of the wood cross the concrete track and continue forward with the remainder of the wood on your right before crossing cultivated land to meet up with the northern section of what was Cockrobin Lane. Turn left at the junction. Although mainly an Eastwick path this part of what was Cockrobin Lane goes just inside the Hunsdon border so carries the number Hunsdon 19, instead of Eastwick FP 2 as does the rest of the old lane. The bridleway turns towards the right at the corner of Queens Wood, then look out for the waymark post directing you to the left (Hunsdon FP 18) which initially goes across cultivated land before following the edge of Lawns Wood on your right. Before turning on to Hunsdon FP 18 you may wish to continue a short distance along the bridleway for a glimpse of the large medieval moat on the left.

At the top corner of Lawns Wood you reach the Widford Parish Boundary. Go forward left across cultivated land (Widford FP 6) to the northeast corner of Marshland Wood, over a small bridge through the hedge and continue ahead northwards until you meet a farm track and hedge. Turn left here and proceed along the track until you reach a waymark post. Here you have two options, turn right across the cultivated field, continuing on the footpath which crosses a field and then bears right and then left through a small group of trees to Nether Street. Or in the winter when the going can be difficult, continue on the farm track, which is now a permissive route. This then turns right into another field. At the waymark post continue right on the permissive route as indicated on the post, and by a duplicate set of arrows on the map, and then bear left with a ditch to your right and continue around the perimeter of the field, where the permissive path then meets up with the Public Footpath, which joins from the right. Continue to Nether Street on the Public Footpath. Turn left along Nether Street and where the lane divides take the right fork to reach the B1004 Widford- Much Hadham road. Cross this and proceed down Pegs Lane opposite.

Towards the bottom of Pegs Lane you will see a post on your left with several finger signs attached. Take the left hand narrow bridleway between two wire fences (Widford BR 16) and follow this between two hedges, shortly coming to the view of the River Ash on your right. A short distance further on emerging from the hedged section you come to a junction of three paths, that to the left going back up the hill to the centre of Widford, the centre going as a bridleway to Widford Church and Widfordbury Farm with that on the right, through a kissing gate to the old Widford Station site. At the kissing gate this walk provides you with two options: -

#### **Option (a) (The difficult route - steep hill to be climbed)**

Take the centre path going towards the hill (Widford BR 16). Go through a small gate, closing it behind you, as this is still cattle country. In spite of being classified as a bridleway there is no clearly defined route through the meadow grass but keep the fence to your right and after the second oak tree where the fence turns to the right break away and head for the clearly seen steps between the church and the farmhouse at the top of the hill.

The route continues uphill on Widford FP 17 and through the churchyard. The climb up the hill is steep (so bear this in mind when making your earlier choice of options) and culminates in the set of steps cut out of the hill bringing you, via a kissing gate, out into Widford Churchyard. Pause for a moment at the top before going into the churchyard to take in the views along the valley.

Proceed through the churchyard to the road and turn right towards the entrance to the farm then left across the road to take the route back to Hunsdon by Widford RB 20. Follow this to the top of the hill and the small wood known as Townlands. This is the boundary with Hunsdon (Hunsdon RB 12) and it is then initially downhill. Ignore the right turn to Fillets Farm (BOAT H3) and continue straight to the rear of Hunsdon Village Hall and the starting point of the walk.

### **Option (b) (The easier route)**

Taking the right hand path at the junction of the three referred to earlier (Widford FP18). Pass through the kissing gate and follow the path with the bushes on your right. This brings you to a bridge over the River Ash with a kissing gate on the approach side. Cross the bridge and bear left following the path until it divides, that to the right leading to Little Blakesware. You take the left hand fork (still Widford FP 18) which brings you to a stile in the middle of the fencing. From here the path is classified as a RB. Initially there is little evidence of this as it is meadow land but a path through the grass is clearly defined by constant use and follows on the right the line of the old St. Margarets to Buntingford railway line opened in 1863 and closed to passenger traffic in 1964. Initially the track bed, on your right, is in a cutting in the trees but as the contours change it emerges onto an embankment. The River Ash meanders through the valley on your left and flows under a bridge, pass through with a five bar gate. From here a corresponding steel girder bridge carrying the old railway over the river is seen to the right at this point. Pass through the next five bar gate from here the walk passes beneath a row of mature Horse Chestnut trees and at this point one can at last see the possibility of it being a RB. The path terminates at a field gate by the old station site, now a coal and garden sundries yard. A reminder again, please make sure that you have left any gates that were closed in the same position after you have passed. Turn left from the gate and follow the footway by the road up as far as Widfordbury Farm and then turn right across the road to follow Widford RB 20 as in Option (a).

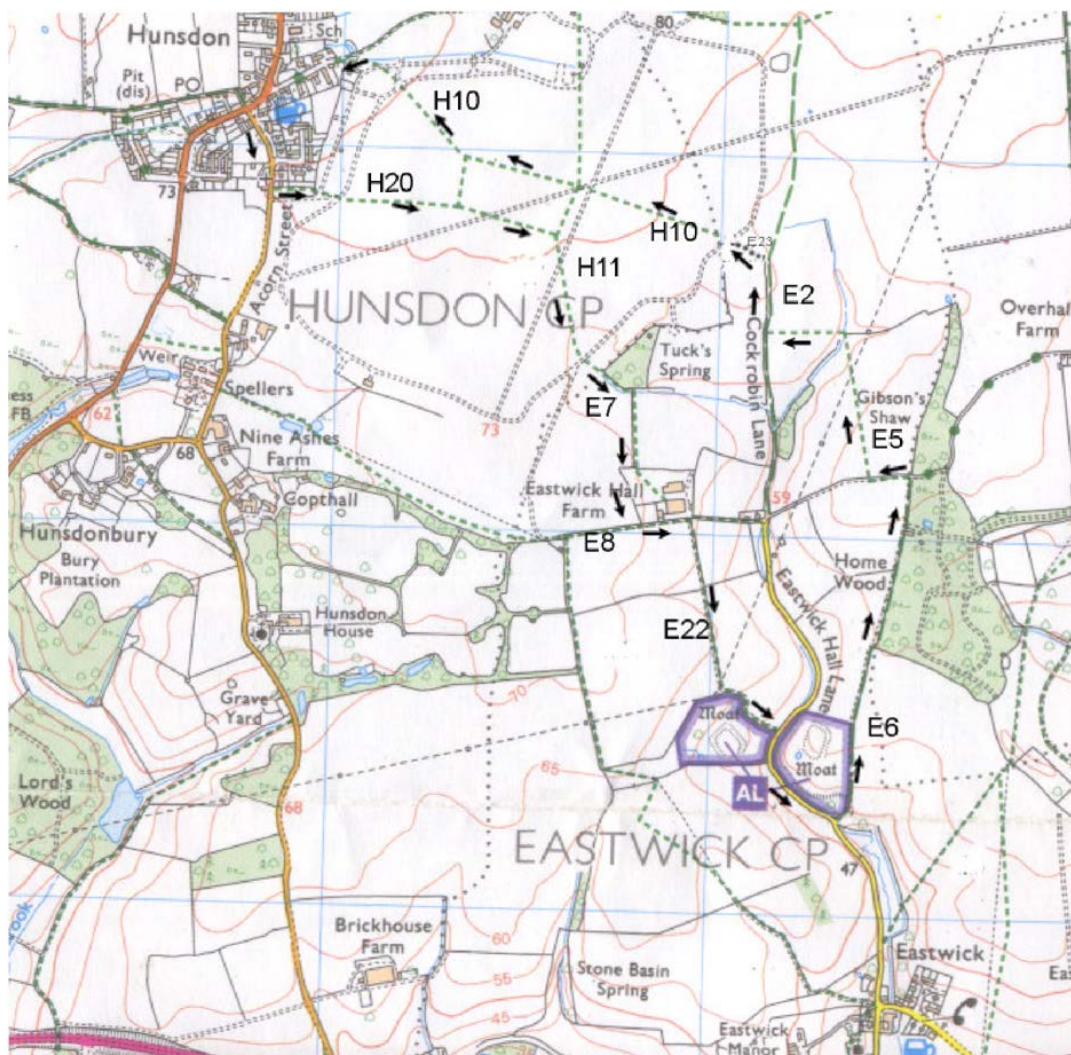


**View from Widford Church along the Ash Valley north of Widford**



## Towards Eastwick, with a glimpse into the past.

The walk is approx 4 miles (just under 7 km) and at a normal walking pace should take about 90 minutes. Some of the cross field paths on the old airfield may not be easy to walk in the autumn and winter due to the wet ground conditions. Walkers are reminded that there are both agricultural and commercial tenants on this land and care must be taken to ensure that there is no disturbance to their activities. You should also be aware of the use of heavy machinery using the roadways and of low flying aircraft using the microlight airstrips.



From the Village Hall, cross over the road and proceed south along Acorn Street, passing Wicklands Road on your left and a short distance beyond, opposite The Old Rectory, turn left at the footpath sign and follow the path (Hunsdon FP 20) through Hempstalls Close to a kissing gate. From here go forward right using part of the old airfield roadway to a waymark sign at the edge of the cultivated field. Follow the path across the field and

over a further section of roadway until reaching a waymark post junction with Hunsdon FP 11. Bear right and over a further two sections of roadway until reaching the corner of a small wood, Tuck's Spring, which is also the boundary with Eastwick & Gilston Parish.

The path, with the wood to your left, now Eastwick FP 7, continues to the far corner where the path turns left through a hedge. On emerging turn right and follow the hedge on your right along the field edge. At the top of the field continue into the wood and at the waymark post you cannot go forward due to a fence so turn right to follow the "permissive" path then bear left through the young tree plantation with the hedge of Eastwick Hall Farm on your left. The path terminates at a stile on the farm track, Eastwick FP 8. Climb over the stile and turn left down the track to a footpath sign opposite the farm barns directing you to the right, Eastwick FP 22. Follow this along



the field edge with a hedge to your left until reaching the electricity pylon at the far corner of the field. Turn to the left with a small wood on your right following the field edge emerging on to Eastwick Hall Lane where a right turn is made along the lane.

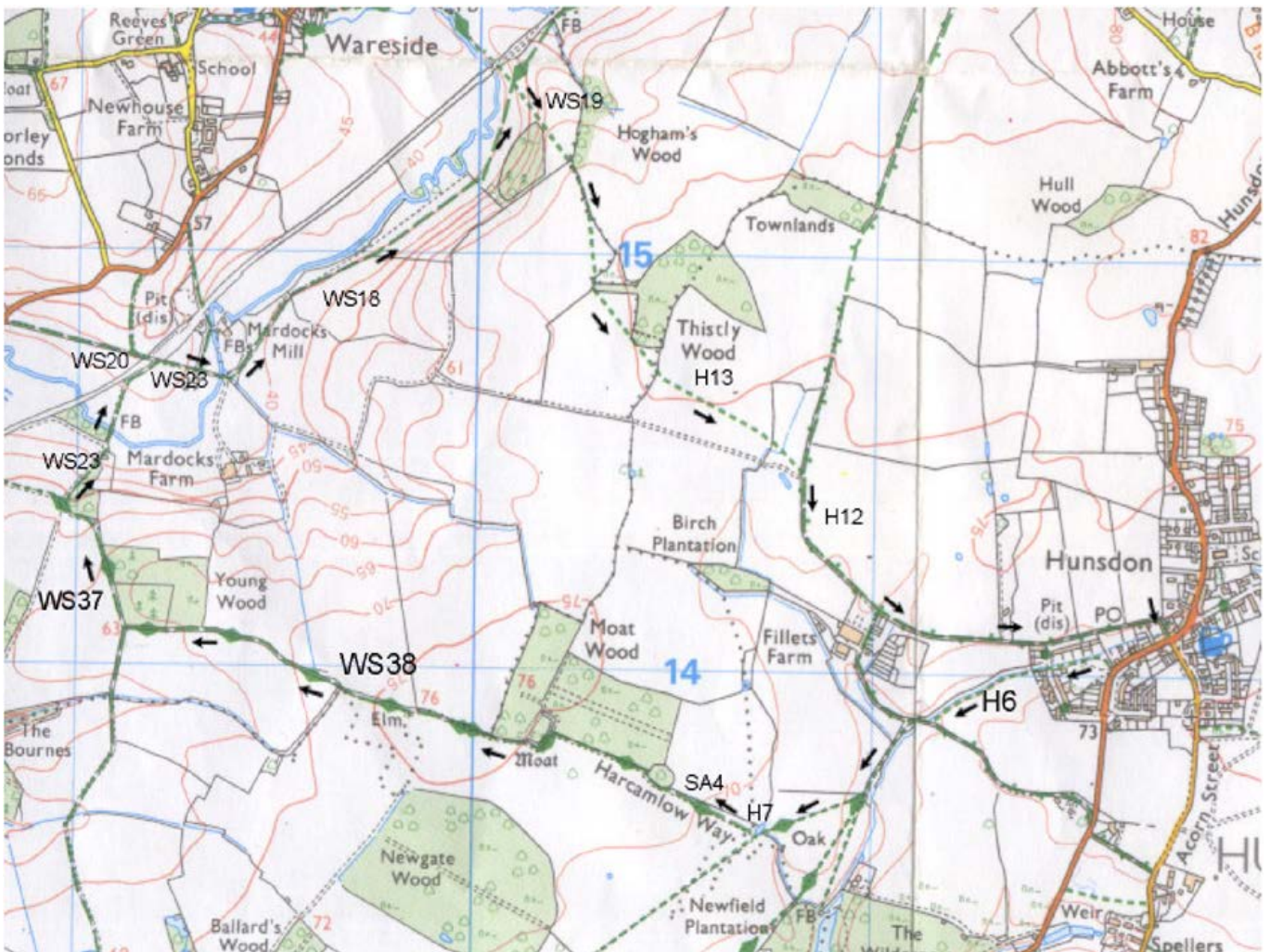
This is the point where a glimpse into the past is possible. On either side of the road is a Scheduled Ancient Monument in the form of a moat thought to be connected with the old Eastwick Hall. Signs denote these with a brief history, a map showing their position and public access points. The first is found on the right shortly after joining the lane and the other slightly further down the lane on the right, with a further access point to it from Eastwick BR 6, which you will come to shortly. The sites are themselves not public rights of way as such but are open to the public from the points noted above.

**(If you are making your walk at the right time of day you may like to make a further deviation by continuing a short distance further down the lane to Eastwick for refreshment at The Lion Public House.)**

Going back to the walk, after joining Eastwick Hall Lane, carry on for two to three hundred yards and look for a footpath sign on your left and turn off here on to Eastwick BR 6. This climbs away from the road, past one of the S.A.Ms where you can gain access from the path, then following the edge of Home Wood to your right, past a cottage, until meeting a track at a T-junction. Turn left and the track becomes Eastwick FP 5. A short distance along the track at the waymark sign turn right across the cultivated field, the path taking you to the bottom corner. Here turn left through a hedge, again crossing a cultivated field and subsequently joining Cockrobin Lane (Eastwick BR 2). Turn right along the lane until it emerges from the hedges on either side and at the waymark sign turn forward left across cultivated land (Eastwick FP 23). Cross the old airfield roadway and the parish boundary back into Hunsdon, the path now becoming Hunsdon FP 10. Carry on in a straight line across two further portions of roadway and Hunsdon FP 11 until reaching a waymark junction post. Turn to the right and follow this to a further section of roadway past the waymark post and then go through the kissing gate in the hedge past the pill box on your right across the entrance to Amiens Close, into Drury Lane taking you back to the Village Hall.

## Towards Wareside, Mardocks and the Ash Valley.

The walk is approx 4.7 miles (7.6 km) and at normal walking pace should take 1 hour, 35 minutes. Some parts of the walk involve crossing cultivated fields and may make for heavy going during and after periods of wet weather.



From the Village Hall turn right along the High Street to the entrance to The Dell Play Area adjacent to No.1 High Street. Follow the path (Hunsdon FP 6) diagonally across the play area to the far corner, through the kissing gate and forward ahead across Tanners Way to the path to the left of the bridge and thence alongside the brook. Go ahead along the field edge with the brook on your right. At the end of the field the path meets Hunsdon RB 3. Turn right for a short distance along this and then turn left at the next waymark post and along a farm track, the continuation of FP 6. Where the track ends at a cultivated field the path divides, take the right hand path of the two across the field aiming at a tall willow tree in the hedge line.

On reaching the tree there is a post and a gap in the hedge with a pond on your right.

Follow the blue Bridleway marker on the next waymark post to your right and go round the pond following the hedge line on your right. The path has now become a bridleway and the first few metres round the pond and along the hedge being the shortest section of path in the parish, (Hunsdon BR 7) and from thereon you pass into Stanstead Abbots Parish where it becomes BR 4.

You are now on the Harcamlow Way. Carry on forward with the hedge to your right which subsequently merges into Moat Wood. Look out where the wood juts out into the field and you will see the moat after which the wood is named. It will be easier to see in the winter or early spring when there are no leaves on the bushes to obscure the view.

Passing on from the wood the hedge continues on your right and shortly you descend into Wareside Parish and the bridleway becomes their No. 38. Continue downhill passing Young Wood on the right until meeting Wareside BR 37 at a T junction. Turn right and follow the bridleway which is in the form of a farm track, past Young Wood still on your right, past a short gap and the next relatively small group of trees is Doghouse Wood. At the end of the wood a track leads off right (Wareside BR 23). Follow this and keep going ahead, descending as you go, past the cottage, Doghouse on your right, across a footbridge over the River Ash and finally meeting up with the old railway track bed on the left. Follow the field edge path to the right of this until meeting Wareside BR 20 coming across the bridge over the old railway. Bear right following BR 20, passing over the river again and coming to the entrance drive to Mardocks Farm. At this point turn left through a field gate where the route becomes Wareside BR 18.

On entering the field note Mardocks Mill on your left beside the river. The bridleway is across pasture and is not always clearly defined on the ground but aim for the gateways that connect the fields, keeping the river to your left. Please remember to leave any gates as you find them. Look for Hogham's Wood on the hill to your right, which at one point appears to be straight ahead. Keep the barbed wire fence by the river on your left as you go through the gate. Be careful if there are any cows in the field. As you walk below Hoghams Wood ignore the stile in the fence on your left, as it leads to a dead end by the river. Continue to the waymark post below the wood, turn right up the hill across ill-defined ground keeping Hogham's Wood on your right, until you reach the stile at the top of the field. It is worth pausing here to look back and take in the view of Wareside and the Ash Valley.

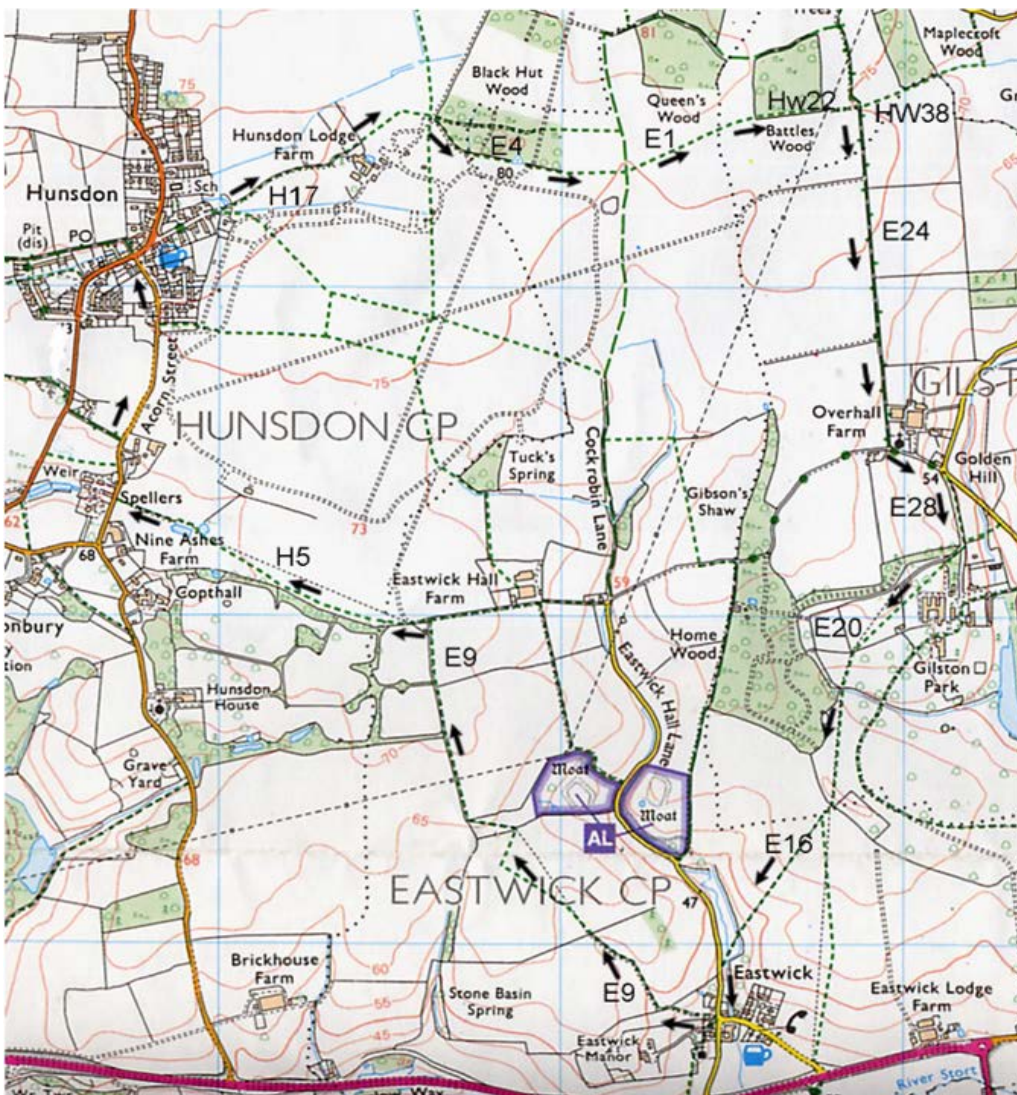
On entering the cultivated land the path goes forward, slightly right and in the middle of the field again turns to the right to a gap in the hedge at the corner of Thistly Wood. Go through the gap and forward left to another corner of the wood with a signpost. Thence ahead to a gap in the hedge with a small bridge over a ditch. From here you are back in Hunsdon on Hunsdon FP 13. Go straight ahead across the cultivated field to a waymark post at the far side, then over two small bridges bearing slightly to the right and finally meeting RB 12. Turn right and follow the track taking you back to the starting point at the Village Hall.



## Gilston Park and Eastwick

The walk, which starts from and terminates at Hunsdon Village Hall, is just under 4 miles or 6 kilometres and at medium walking pace should take you 70-75 minutes. Much of this walk is over cultivated fields particularly in the vicinity of Eastwick. These can be heavy going in the winter or after heavy rain so stout footwear is recommended.

From the Village Hall turn left, cross the road by The Pump and proceed down Drury Lane. At the end of the lane continue ahead through the kissing gate. Carry on past the pond and along the farm track (Hunsdon FP 17), until just past a copse on your right, site of the original Hunsdon Lodge Farmhouse, the footpath continues ahead across the cultivated field. Cross Hunsdon FP 11 at the junction post and at the corner of Blackhut Wood turn right and follow the farm track, with the wood on the left. At the waymark post at the next corner of the wood turn left, now Eastwick FP 4. With the wood still on the left follow this along the grass path, across an old airfield roadway, finally emerging on to cultivated land.



Carry on ahead to the waymark post crossing Eastwick BR 2 (Cockrobin Lane), the path now becoming Eastwick FP 1. Aim for the waymark post at the corner of Battles Wood, where the path now passes into High Wych as FP 22.

Where the path meets an unmade road, turn right. This is initially High Wych RB 38 thence after a short distance is back into Eastwick as their RB 24. Follow this road for some distance, passing Overall Farm on the left and then turning to the left at the bottom past Gilston Church.

A short distance past the church a footpath sign on the right directs you along a tarmac road, one of the drives to Gilston Park (Eastwick FP 28). Follow this until you reach some small dwellings on the left and turn right at the waymark sign, (Eastwick FP 20) through some woodland thence alongside the perimeter fence of Gilston Park.

Now go forward left and diagonally across a pasture field to a bridge and the gap in the hedge in the far corner. Look to your left for views of Gilston Park. From the bridge cross a field bearing slightly left to another bridge in a gap in the hedge at the far corner.

Proceed straight ahead uphill across a cultivated field to a gap in the hedge at the far side where there is a marker post. From here the path divides and you take the right hand route aiming for the yellow mansion house on the opposite side of the valley, as you cannot see the post at the field bottom. Cross the cultivated field, Eastwick FP 16, going downhill to the gap in the hedge at the bottom where there is both a marker post and kissing gate. Pass through the gate and turn left across a small stretch of rough land to a bridge at the corner, thence left again to a further kissing gate finally joining Eastwick Hall Lane.

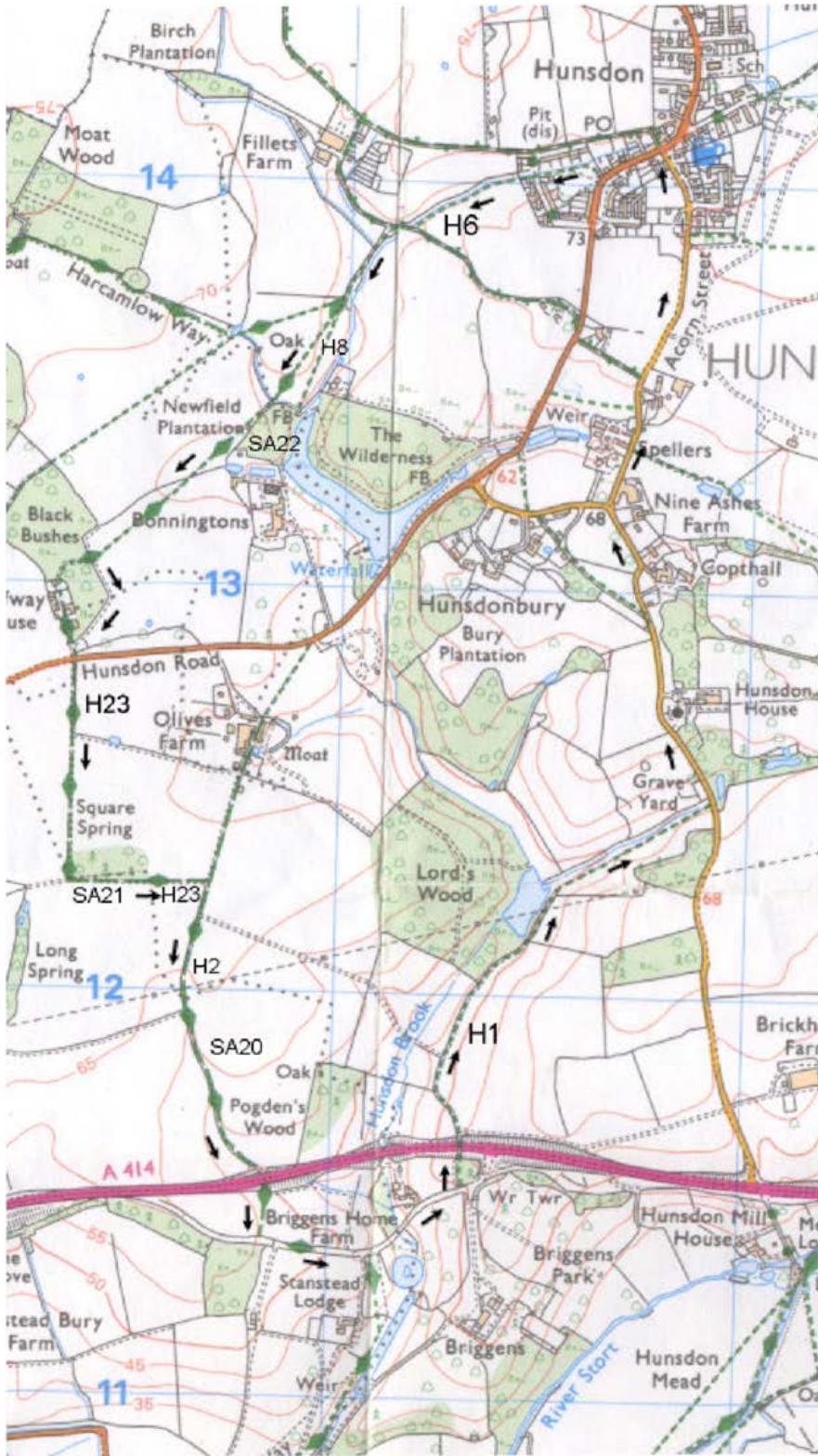
Turn left down the lane to the War Memorial opposite the Lion Public House, (where if you have timed your walk correctly you could avail yourself of some refreshment), and then turn right through a kissing gate into a grass field (Eastwick FP 9). If you have a dog with you please keep it on a lead as several horses graze the field. Continue ahead left, diagonally across it to a kissing gate in the hedge. Pass through this and bearing slightly to the left, cross the cultivated field to a hedge/ditch at the far side. From here, cross a further cultivated field bearing slightly left to a waymark post in a high hedge. Pass through this going forward, left and follow the path to a further hedge in the top left hand corner. Bear right at the marker post and keep this hedge on your left carry on through the plantation until reaching a farm track, Eastwick FP 8, west of Eastwick Hall Farm.

Turn left and ignoring the track off to the right, carry on forward into the plantation with the boundary hedge of Hunsdon House to your left. A short way along the path you pass back into Hunsdon Parish and it becomes Hunsdon FP 5. Along this stretch look to your left, where you might catch a glimpse of Hunsdon House, through gaps in the trees. The path eventually bears right to reach a cultivated field follow the path across this to the small clump of trees at the far corner surrounding Nine Ashes Ponds. Bear round the right side of the larger pond then along a grass path with the wire fence to your right finally reaching a gate opposite Spellars House on Acorn Street. Turn right and follow Acorn Street back to Hunsdon Village Hall.



## Olives Farm, Briggens and St Dunstan's Church.

The walk is just less than 6 Miles (9.5 km) and at normal walking pace should take about 2 hours. Several sections of the walk prior to Newgate House involve crossing cultivated fields; otherwise it is over hard tracks or field edges.



From the Village Hall turn right along the High Street to the entrance to The Dell play area just beyond the Post Office by No.1 High St. Follow the path (Hunsdon FP 6) diagonally across the play area to the far corner, through the kissing gate and forward ahead across Tanners Way to the path to the left of the bridge and thence alongside the brook. At the end of the field the path meets Hunsdon RB 3. Turn right for a short distance along this and then turn left at the next waymark post, along a farm track, the continuation of Hunsdon FP 6. Where the track ends at a cultivated field the path divides. Take the left hand path of the two across the field (Hunsdon FP 8), aiming for the right hand one of two electricity poles.

At the hedge the path passes into Stanstead Abbots and numbered as their No. 22. Go through the gap in the fence and proceed across the paddock exiting at a gap in the opposite fence. Then turn immediately left to follow the paddock fence line until you

meet a hedge ahead of you. Turn right and continue with the hedge on your left until you reach a farm track. Turn left past Newgate House at the edge of Black Bushes Wood. Follow this path to the B180.



Cross the road and follow the field edge path (Hunsdon Bridleway 23) with the hedge on your left. Ignore the first path to the left and carry on to the group of trees, Square Spring.

At the far corner of this wood turn sharp left on what now becomes Stanstead Abbots Bridleway 21. This carries on to approximately the end of the wood and then comes back in to Hunsdon as No. 23 again. The parish boundaries to the west of Hunsdon with Stanstead Abbots are quite bewildering, twisting and turning for what now appears to be no apparent logical reason although no doubt there was one at the time. Back to the walk! Continue ahead until reaching the junction with Hunsdon Bridleway No. 2.

Olives Farm can be seen on the left but you turn right along the bridleway which is a well-defined farm track. Ignore the branch off to the left, and further on where the track turns off to the right, carry on ahead on the lesser-used grass track, again passing into Stanstead Abbots (Bridleway No. 20). Follow this downhill and through an under-pass below the A414 ultimately reaching what was the original A414, now just a minor service road to the local properties. Looking back at the stream of traffic going over the bridge it is hard to imagine that only a few years ago this was the main east-west road.

Turn left along the road passing across the bridge over Hunsdon Brook, fed by the very stream encountered at the start of the walk after flowing through Bonningtons Lake and Lords Wood. Pass what was Briggens Home Farm on your left and just before reaching the road to Briggens itself you will see a post mounted footpath sign on the left at the corner of a clump of trees. Follow the path (Hunsdon FP 1) up a slope and you then find yourself on the purpose built concrete footbridge over the dual carriageway of the A414. You may wish to pause for the view or if you find the noise overpowering then press on to the path on the other side. This now follows the field edge past Lords Wood and its accompanying lake, unfortunately now silted up. Look out for the views of St Dunstons Church and Hunsdon House before approaching St Dunstons Lower Churchyard which is reached after passing through a kissing gate on to Church Lane. Turn left and follow the road, initially with no pavement, back to the start of the walk at Hunsdon Village Hall.

# A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUNSDON

**Early History** There is evidence of Bronze Age and early Roman occupation in the area, and reference appears in Domesday Book. The original Hunsdon church would have been wooden with the priest's residence nearby probably where Hunsdon House stands today. A mill was located on the river Stort in 1086 and although modified over the years was still working up to 1902. The last Saxon Lord of Hunsdon was Lewin whose manor house probably stood where Hunsdon House stands. In 1086 a resident Parish Priest suggests a well-developed community.

**Middle Ages** The first of the Engayne family known to have held Hunsdon was Vitalis, or Viells, who died in 1248. After the death of the last Engayne his manor house, which stood where Hunsdon House now stands, was bought by Richard, Duke of York, father of Edward IV in 1445, probably for his Chamberlain Sir William Oldhall who in 1450 was MP for Hertfordshire. One of the Engaynes created a large hunting park later included in the great hunting park of Henry VIII.

**Tudor and Stuart Times** the Duke of York began building Hunsdon House in 1447 and Henry VIII went on to undertake a further rebuilding 1525-1536. Henry used the house as a nursery for his children and loved the hunting park. Both Mary and Elizabeth lived there at some time, as did Edward VI after the death of his mother Jane Seymour. Edward gave the house to his sister Mary for life, and after Elizabeth acquired it as Queen she gave it to her cousin Sir Henry Carey in 1558, creating him the first Lord Hunsdon.

In 1653 the house was sold and by 1743 it had been bought by Josias Nicholson who rebuilt some of the house and whose daughter and heiress married Felix Calvert of Albury. Their son, Nicholson Calvert, inherited the house in 1759. In 1840 the last of the Hunsdon Calverts inherited the house but lived at Bonningtons. A younger brother Edmund lived at Hunsdonbury while the youngest brother, another Nicholson, became Rector of Hunsdon Church. In 1858 the whole estate which included much of the village was sold. Hunsdonbury had been the home of Hunsdon Rectors for some 200 years and the Calverts were responsible for many alterations to the area around Hunsdonbury.

Bonningtons which became part of the manor of Hunsdon by about 1790 was owned and lived in by the Calverts for many years, Hunsdon House lying empty for much of the time. In the 1840s Bonningtons with some of the village was again sold.

In the 16th century two small cottages stood where the present Briggens house now stands and by 1676 was a substantial house and was acquired by Robert Chester. He it was who in 1717 having become a director of The South Sea Island Company remodelled the house and grounds. When The Company collapsed in 1720 Robert Chester became bankrupt but lived on there until his death in 1732.

**The Landscape** the Act of Enclosure created many small fields especially near the River Stort, but the great hunting park belonging to Henry VIII remained largely unaltered for many centuries. The area is now given over mainly to agriculture, especially grain crops.

**Recent History** The large flat landscape was ideal for the construction of a World War II airfield and Hunsdon Airfield, from which the well-known raid on the prison at Amiens was launched, was built. The original Turkey Cock pub and several houses near the end of the runway were demolished for safety reasons. The arrival of the RAF increased the local population tenfold, many of whom joined in the many activities. Largely as a result of the RAF presence the village got water-borne sewerage, piped water and electricity for the first time. The airfield has since been returned to agricultural use.

(Notes provided courtesy Hunsdon Local History and Preservation Society)

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