

(Saxon Heckstane Tune - Town of reed and stones)



This is a circular walk of approximately five miles.

This walk starts and finishes at The Raven public house in Hexton.



Though dating back to Saxon times there is little of old Hexton left. It was completely redeveloped in the early 20th century as a 'model village', with the result that only a handful of early buildings remain. Among the model village buildings is the mock tudor Raven pub.

From the front of The Raven turn right and walk down to the cross roads, past the high garden wall around Hexton Manor. The cross roads is marked with the remarkable concoction of village pump, street light and signpost surrounded with chains with a plaque commemorating its erection in 1846.



Cross over the B655 and down the road opposite (Hexton Road). Just as the road bends left there is a signed footpath forking off to the right through a gate. Take this path, which at this point is a metalled track.



Follow the path around the edge of the wood and 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. Unfortunately in the 1920's a large wood was planted within the Castle summit which makes it extremely difficult to realise exactly what you are looking at.



The track turns right, towards the castle, into a field with Private Property signs. Immediately to your left is a path which goes steeply up hill through the wood. Take this path. When it emerges from the wood again carry on down the field margin to the end of the wood, keeping the wood on your right. At the way-mark post at the end of the wood turn sharp right and then sharp left to go down the field margin. Follow this path straight down until it comes to a lane.

Turn left along the lane 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.



Take this path, which will gradually rise up hill. It will enter into a section with trees on either side. A short distance along this section you will encounter a fork of three paths. Take the path coming in from the left. (Do not take the red way-marked path going straight ahead.) You should 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 emerge on to a field with 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.) Follow the path down the side of the hill. The wood to your left is Meg Wood, named after 'Old Meg' who was burned as a witch in the sixteenth century.

Eventually the path emerges through a gate on to the B655. Go right, along the road. (Take care, the sight lines are not good.) 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 your left. (It is not signposted, but has a dead end sign.)



Go along the farm drive until it peters out just beyond Green End Cottage and becomes a footpath along the field margin. Keep on this path. Shortly after it turns sharp 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 September 2016

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

CPRE Hertfordshire is a registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel 01438 717587. For more information on our work visit www.cpreherts.org.uk. We are the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.