We can imagine these Saxons following the river valley as they carried their payment into Viking territory.

The Hicca Way reminds us of this piece of forgotten history. Whilst Etonbury has long since been abandoned, Hitchin grew and thrived as an important town in the region.

NATURE The River Hiz is a high quality chalk bed stream. Like many, it has suffered in the past from excessive water extraction at its source causing the springs to dry up, but recent efforts have been made to limit this impact. The surrounding area is also classed as nitrate sensitive and managed to ensure water runoff from the fields does not contaminate the river.

Many sections of the original river remain in good condition, supporting a diversity of water plants, including Yellow Flag iris, and Watercress which used to be grown commercially at Ickleford. Willow trees are common along the bank, with a fine example of pollarded willows at Glebe Meadows, Arlesey.

If you are lucky, you may spot a Kingfisher, Water Vole or even an Otter. In the riverside meadows a rich variety of wild flowers can be found including Cowslip, Black Knapweed and Marsh Valerian.

WALKING THE HICCA WAY

The route has been designed so it can be walked in 2 (or more) sections. The linear section from Hitchin to Arlesey (8 miles) allows for the return trip to be made by train (or other public transport). From Hitchin out to the river source at Charlton, the partial loop adds interest, and a chance to see more of both town and country.

For the most part, the route is clearly marked with the special Hicca Way discs, alongside standard footpath markers. The arrow points in the direction to follow. Through Hitchin itself, you will be following mostly roads – an information map is available from “Hitchin Initiative”, 27 Churchyard (N of St Mary’s).

EATING OUT

ARLESEY The Old Oak PH. (A café is planned for Henlow Bridge Lakes in 2013.)
ICKLEFORD Plume of Feathers PH | The Old George PH Ickleford Stores (snacks / drinks)
HITCHIN Numerous around town centre
CHARLTON The Windmill PH

DOG WALKERS

Keep dogs under close control at all times. Use a lead where livestock are grazing (including the Commons), through crop fields and nature reserves. Always clean up after your dog, as a courtesy to other walkers and the landowners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Hicca Way has been established and promoted by Arlesey Conservation for Nature (ACORN) in partnership with representatives of Ickleford Parish Council and Friends of Charlton Village. Supported by Beds Rural Communities Charity (BRCC), Countryside Management Service (CMS), Central Beds Council, Herts County Council, and North Herts District Council. Footpath Improvement work undertaken by BRCC (IVC) and CMS. Leaftlet final artwork by BRCC.

Main funding for leaftlet design, signs and improvement work has come from Section 106 agreement with Ickleford Parish Council and the owners of Charlton Village, The Windmill (Charlton), The Old Oak (Arlesey), Jenkins & Potter, private landowners and the Wildlife Trust (BCN).

TRANSPORT

BY CAR: At Arlesey, a new commuter car park should be available west of Glebe Meadows from 2013. Hitchin has a number of pay car parks – check on-line (e.g. en.parkopedia.co.uk) for details. A small car park in Nightingale Rd allows 3hrs free. Parking is very limited in Charlton – take care not to cause an obstruction.

BY TRAIN: Generally twice an hour through the day between Hitchin and Arlesey – see www.nationalrail.co.uk or call 08457 484950.

BY BUS: See www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or call 0871 2002233. There are no buses to Charlton.

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Notes on Route

The section of footpath from Ickleford (Gerry’s Hole) down to Hitchin (Cadwell Lane) will be closed until 2014/15, due to construction of a railway embankment. Until then, follow the alternative (dotted) route by road as shown.

Alternative links to Hitchin Station are shown, depending on which direction you are approaching from.

Take care to follow the established path where it cuts across the arable fields north of New Ramerwick Farm.

Key to symbols

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