

# Walk the HOOP

Hitchin Outer Orbital Path



St Mary's Church Hitchin

## How was HOOP created

HOOP was conceived by volunteers from the North Herts Ramblers Group. With the support of Countryside Management Service and North Herts District Council the path was waymarked and promoted. HOOP has been very popular with walkers since it first opened in August 2010.

## Places of Interest

- A Old Market Square and Museum
- B Oughtonhead Common Nature Reserve
- C Cadwell Farm lavender fields
- D Icknield Way - the oldest road in Britain
- E Purwell Nine Springs Nature Reserve
- F The hamlet of Charlton where the river Hiz rises.

## Refreshments

- Old Market Square
- The Plume of Feathers, Ickleford
- Cadwell Farm
- The Wilbury at Wilbury Hills
- The Hitchin Garden Centre, Cambridge Road

## Public Transport Information

Intalink Traveline on 0871 200 2233  
www.intalink.org.uk

## Countryside Code

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

## HOOP - Hitchin Outer Orbital Path

HOOP allows you to explore the history of Hitchin and surrounding villages, travelling through beautiful Hertfordshire countryside and encompassing a wide range of wildlife habitats.

After a short walk out of Hitchin Town Centre you follow waymarked footpaths and quiet countryside lanes.

HOOP is 12 miles long (19.4 km) and relatively flat with under 690 ft (210 m) of ascent/descent.

HOOP can be walked in several stages using bus connections on local roads to and from Hitchin Town Centre.

Section	From	To	Miles Km
1	Hitchin Town Centre (Market place)	Ickleford	4.3 7.0
2	Ickleford	Cambridge Road	2.9 4.7
3	Cambridge Road	Wymondley Road	1.9 3.0
4	Wymondley Road	Hitchin Town Centre (Market place)	2.9 4.7
<b>HOOP</b>	Hitchin Outer Orbital Path		12.0 19.4

## North Herts Ramblers Group - NHRG

This brochure has been produced by North Herts Ramblers Group. NHRG is part of Ramblers, a charity whose goal is to protect the ability of people to enjoy the sense of freedom and benefits that come from being outdoors on foot.

NHRG caters for walkers of all ages and all levels of ability, providing a varied programme of weekly walks in this area, social events and holidays in the UK and overseas. Walking is a healthy way to enjoy our beautiful countryside and to meet new like-minded people. For further information on NHRG and HOOP:

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

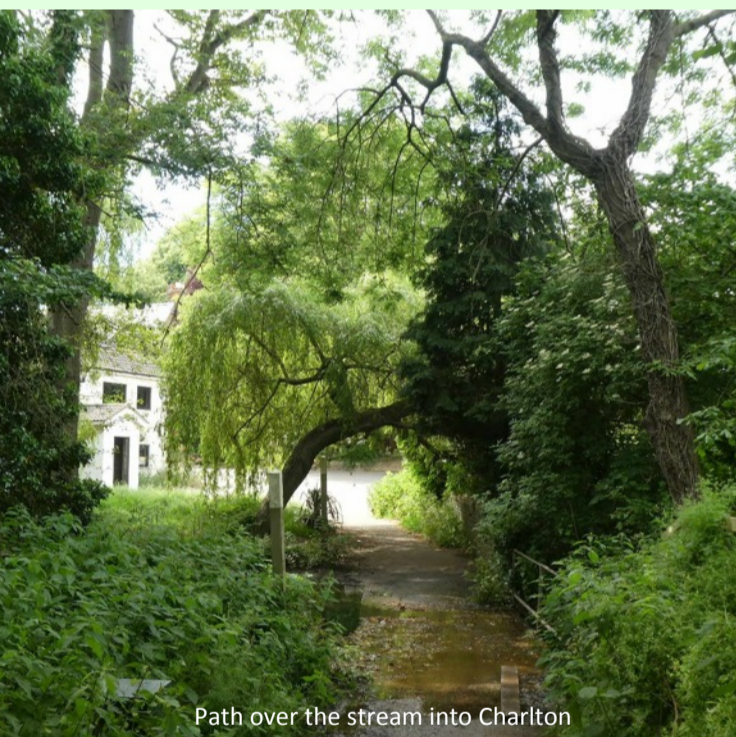


Poppies near Cadwell Farm

Follow the HOOP waymark



Path by Ippolyts Brook



Path over the stream into Charlton



Longhorn - Oughtonhead Common



Viewpoint on Oughtonhead Nature Reserve

## Section 1 - Hitchin Town Centre (Market Place) to Ickleford – 4.3 miles (7.0 km)

Leave the Market Place in the centre of Hitchin at the arcade known as West Alley. Cross Payne's Park using the pedestrian crossing and then turn left towards Hitchin library. Cross over Nun's Close then left past the physic garden and Library entrance. Cross Old Park Road by the pedestrian crossing, turn right then left and follow a narrow path running between the side of a house and retirement homes. Continue until the path emerges onto Gray's Lane, passing a children's play area along the way.

Follow Gray's Lane until it comes out into open countryside. Continue along this track for a mile, ignoring the track on the right leading to an isolated cottage and pass Oughton Head Farm on your right. When you reach a T-junction turn left then after a short distance turn right. Follow this path from the source of the River Oughton into Oughtonhead Common Local Nature Reserve – with a number of trails to explore. Continue along the south bank of the river for about half a mile until you reach a wide opening on the left leading to a bridge.

## Section 1 continued...

The bridge is hardly visible and is covered in vegetation. Cross the river and pass Old Westmill Farm, turn right onto Westmill Lane then immediately left onto a wide hedged track. After 400 metres take the right hand fork and then at the junction turn right onto the Icknield Way Trail and head towards the A600 Bedford Road. Turn right when you reach the road and cross using the horse crossing, continue down the track into Ickleford. Pass the Plume of Feathers pub and continue until you reach Arlesey Road. Cross using the pedestrian crossing, turn right and then turn left down a track signposted Icknield Way just before you reach Ickleford Stores.

## Section 2 - Ickleford to Cambridge Road – 2.9 miles (4.7 km)

Follow the track crossing over the River Hiz by a bridge. Pass the remains of an old railway bridge and then using the footbridge cross over the East Coast Main Line. Continue along the Icknield Way through sloping farmland for about a mile to Wilbury Hills plantation. Just before reaching the road, take a sign posted path on the left through the trees.

## Section 2 continued...

Here you will find a bench donated by NHRG looking over the Hitchin rail flyover curve. Continue straight ahead and on exiting the plantation take a sharp right to reach the Stotfold Road with the Wilbury pub on the left. Take care crossing the road then turn right onto Icknield Way Road. This is where the route joins the Letchworth Garden City Greenway. Pass the cemetery, then turn right onto Campfield Way then right again at the T junction with Highover Road. Cross over the railway line using the footbridge and take the first turn right into Hillbrow. After a sharp left turn take the first alley way on the right (between no 55 and 57) passing a children's play area on the left and out into countryside again. Cross diagonally left across the field and over the ditch by a bridge in the far corner. The large circle of trees nearby marks the site of a Bronze Age burial ground. Turn left and follow the broad track keeping the hedgerow on your left, until you reach a wooden gate leading to the A505 Cambridge Road, where you turn right. Refreshments can be obtained from the Hitchin Garden Centre a short distance down the road.



**Section 3 - Cambridge Road to Wymondley Road – 1.9 miles (3.0 km)**

Take great care crossing Cambridge Road. Pass the 'Healthy Living Centre' on the left followed by a bus stop. Now look out for a public footpath sign pointing left into the wood. Follow the well-used path and take the right hand path with the golf course fence on your left. Follow the path to the right through the trees and onto the edge of a field. Go left along the field boundary to Queenswood Drive. Turn left and continue up Kingswood Avenue, with fields on your left. At the end of Kingswood Avenue, leave the Greenway and go straight ahead onto a well-used track with playing fields on the right.

**Section 3 continued...**

Go past Purwell Ninesprings Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve, which is worth a visit. Continue until you meet Wymondley Road. Turn right and then head towards the railway bridge.

**Section 4 - Wymondley Road to Hitchin Town Centre (Market Place) – 2.9 miles (4.7 km)**

Cross Wymondley Road where the narrow path ends. Pass under the railway bridge and then almost immediately turn left onto a track. Turn right at the end of a children's play area and follow the grassy track with Ippolyts Brook on the left. This takes you to the junction with Stevenage Road.

**Section 4 continued...**

Turn right, cross over Whitehill Road then cross Stevenage Road using the traffic island opposite Blackhorse Lane. Follow this lane until it meets London Road. Cross London Road and continue down Newlands Lane, crossing Gosmore Road and continuing down Black Kiln Lane - a restricted byway - to the village of Charlton. Turn right along Charlton Road. At the T junction with Willow Lane, turn right. Just before you reach Park Way cross the road and use the pavements continuing alongside the main road then turn right through the pedestrian underpass and emerge by a car park. Turn left onto Old Charlton Road, then right at Tilehouse Street and first left to Bucklersbury which leads back to the Market Place.

