THE ROMAN ROAD WALK
LINTON - HILDERSHAM
CIRCULAR ROUTE 6.5 MILES
Allow approximately 3-4 hours

This is an attractive circular walk passing through arable farmland, the valley of the River Granta, along an ancient Roman trackway, and through two historic villages.

Starting from Linton
The circular walk can be reached by going down Meadow Lane, at the side of The Dog and Duck public house, off Linton High Street.

Starting from Hildersham
The walk passes through Hildersham village. Parking is available at The Pear Tree Public House, or on the streets in the village.
HISTORIC VILLAGES

This walk passes by Hildersham and Linton - two attractive villages with much associated history and well worth exploring.

Hildersham is one of many small but attractive villages around which the agricultural life of South East Cambridgeshire has centred since very early time. The name Hildersham derives from Hilderic, and Anglo-Saxon personal name, and the village is referred to as Hildricesham in the Domesday Book. By 1471 in the Patent Rolls, it had become Hildersham.

Until the 14th century there were two manors, an upper and lower, divided by the river. Until the 1680s the combined manors were part of the estate of the Linton lords. It is the last parish in England in which the medieval system of strip fields was abolished and the common lands enclosed and redistributed under an Act of Parliament passed in 1883. This medieval field system can still be seen working in Laxton, Nottinghamshire.

Holy Trinity Church is a good example of the flint rubble construction common in this part of East Anglia where stone and brick were unavailable. It dates back to the 12th century and its most notable features are the four brasses in the floor of the chancel aisle and the Victorian murals and ceiling in the chancel.

Hildersham seems always to have been over-shadowed by Linton which was a source of employment other than on the land. Linton was a market town in Norman times with a royal charter dating back from 1246. It served neighbouring parishes for trade and crafts until the market, as well as two annual fairs, finally ceased in the 1860s, at about the time the railway link with Cambridge was built.

Little Linton was once the manorial centre for the two Linton manors, and the moats which were associated with the manor house still exist in the dense woodland behind the farmhouse. Although the farm is largely arable, sheep and horses are often grazing in the fields around the farm buildings.

FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE - WHY?

- Because the countryside is a place to be enjoyed by all; do protect wildlife, plants and trees, don't leave rubbish behind, don't disturb others with unnecessary noise.
- Because the countryside is a place of work; do keep to paths and use stiles and gates to cross fences. Don't let your dogs disturb stock and don't interfere with crops or machines.

Enjoying the countryside means respecting its life and work. If you don't you won't!
WILDLIFE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Contrasting landscapes and abundant wildlife provide an enthralling aspect to the walk. The Roman Road is a haven for wildlife, with grassland providing a rich habitat for chalk-loving plants such as yellow rattle, bladder campion, harebell, and vetches. The southern section of the Roman Road, which is incorporated in this walk, has been less intensively managed than the northern end, and scrub is more dominant than grassland. The hedgerows in this section are some of the best in the country, being dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn with buckthorn and dogwood.

This walk passes through countryside which is studded with small woodlands. Rivey wood is a remnant of ancient woodland, as indicated by the presence of species such as dog’s mercury and some bluebells. Borley wood is now a conifer woodland but on an ancient woodland site, wooded since 1487. Dense Corsican and Scots Pine result in a sparse ground flora, but there are open areas where bluebells, fog’s mercury, barren strawberry and twayblades survive. Rivey Wood is a favourite haunt of the cuckoo and blackcap in Summer, and of the greater spotted woodpecker and jay throughout the year.

From Rivey Hill excellent views can be obtained towards Hadstock and Duxford, and even as far as Orwell Hill and Barrington Cement Works. The watertower on Rivey Hill is visible from many miles away. It was built in 1936 and supplied Linton with its first mains water. Major work in 1988 has provided a new station beside the old one, feeding Linton, Balsham and the tower in Shudy Camps. The tower is 92 feet high - imagine the view from the top!

The valley of the River Granta also has many small patches of woodland, which are a popular home for marsh tits, as well as blue, great and coal tits. Hildersham and Linton river meadows provide an interesting wetland habitat. Teasels and comfrey grow beside the footpath and moorhens are often feeding in the field edge. Mallard and heron frequent the area and may be seen flying overhead. In winter fieldfares, redwing and lapwing are found on the meadows between Little Linton and Linton Village College, and marsh marigolds provide colour on Hildersham meadow.

This circular walk provides an invigorating contrast of high hills and wet meadows - the nearest thing to hill walking within 10 miles of Cambridge!

ANCIENT PATHS

Many of the rights of way running through these parishes were once ancient trackways which ended at Linton’s market place. A good example is the one running along the river from Hildersham to Linton.

The clapper stile on this path is a rarity. It marked the boundary between the manors of Great and Little Linton. It can be quite a puzzle to find out how it works! The bars are hinged at the centre of three uprights, so that when bars at one end are pressed down for walkers to step over, the other end flies up. When you let go of the end a clapping sound occurs - hence the name clapper stile.

South East chalk landscape

The Roman Road is the northern boundary of the Hildersham Linton parishes as well as of other parishes along the valley. The Roman Road is called Wolves or Woles Street in a 13th century record from Linton. It continued as Woolstreet Way until the 18th century, when in the belief that the road ran as far as Chester, once the Roman town of Deva, it was named Via Devana. What is known, is that it linked Colchester (at one time capital of Roman Britain) with Godmanchester, another important town and fort. Where it crossed the Cam, a small Roman town grew up later to become Cambidge. The Roman Road is now a valuable part of our historic landscape and is protected by English Heritage as an ancient monument.
HOW TO GET THERE

By bus:- Stagecoach Cambus stops at Hildersham Turn and Linton.
Tel: 01223 355554

By train:- Nearest Station is Cambridge.
Tel: 0345 484950

By road:- From A11 to Newmarket and A604 to Cambridge and Haverhill

Inquiries:- Cambridgeshire County Council Public Transport
General Inquiries Tel: 01223 717740

FURTHER INFORMATION

Footwear - The route can be muddy in winter. Strong, waterproof footwear is essential.

Maps - The route can be followed on OS 1:50,000 Landranger Sheet 154 Cambridge, Newmarket and surrounding area or on 1:25,000 Pathfinder Series Sheet TL44/54 and TL44/55.

Waymarking - The route is signposted from the road by green metal signs and with small coloured waymark arrows along the route. Other rights of way cross the circular walk and these may also be marked with yellow arrows for footpaths, blue arrows for bridleways, and red arrows for byways.

Refreshments - Refreshments can be obtained from public houses and shops in Linton and Hildersham.

Chilford Vineyard - is open during the summer for tours and sales from the shop.

Detailed information from:
The Wildlife Trust, Tel: 01223 712400

ACCESS FOR ALL

The Cambridgeshire countryside is there to be enjoyed by EVERYONE. This route follows grassy tracks some of which are grazed or follow cultivated field edges. There are a few stiles to cross including a rare clapper stile in Linton which needs to be pressed downwards in order to step over. There is a steep hill to climb from Linton to Rivey wood which can be wet and slippery after rain. The Roman Road Walk (Linton - Hildersham) leaflet is available on tape, on request. Further information on other ‘Access for All’ sites is also available on tape and as a leaflet.

Come and enjoy it.