

## Day 3 – Stevenage to Knebworth

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### No. of Pubs

6

### Walk Information

**Distance miles** – 13.8 (22km)

**Time estimated** – 4:39

**Cumulative Accent feet** – Long 778 (237m)

**Terrain** – Town Paths, Roads, Country Lanes, Tracks, Footpaths, Bridleways & Byways

### Viewpoints

**a** – From the end of Kitching Lane to Almshoe Farm

**b** – Uphill after Pub-33 The Rusty Gun

### OS Explorer Maps

193 – Luton & Stevenage

166 – Luton & Hertford (Landranger)

### Facilities

**Stevenage / Old Stevenage**

B&B / Hotel / Parking Paid / Train / Bus

### Knebworth

Hotel (Stevenage or Woolmer Green) / Parking Free (Sundays) / Parking Paid / Parking Street / Train / Bus



*Preston Village Well*

## **Trail Description**

From Stevenage Station head towards The Gordon Craig Theatre. Before you cross the road (A602), take the stairs to your right and go down to the A602. At the bottom of the steps turn right & right and follow the path with the A602 on your left towards the Police Station. Go past the Police Station on your right and down to the underpasses. Turn right and continue through an underpass and then almost immediately turn left through another underpass (signposted; London Road (South) 1min (cycling) – Knebworth 17mins (cycling)).

### ***Point of Interest***

***The Six Hills Roman barrows*** – The monument includes six Roman barrows known as 'The Six Hills' and the archaeologically sensitive area between them situated in an area of grassland formerly known as Sixpenny Common, c.120m west of London Road, immediately south of its junction with Six Hills Way in Stevenage new town. Antiquarian descriptions of the barrows indicate that all the mounds were formerly encircled by ditches – from which material for the mounds was quarried – and outer banks, features which are believed to have survived around the two northernmost mounds into the 19th century. Although the ditches and banks are no longer apparent, evidence for these will survive beneath the present ground surface.

*The barrow mounds are very similar in appearance and size, being on average about 18m in diameter and 3m in height, although they are thought to have originally stood at least 1.25m higher than at present. The conical profiles typical of Roman burial mounds have been gradually eroded by turf paring and weathering, and, except where there is evidence of disturbance, all the mounds are now smoothly rounded. The barrows are fairly regularly spaced at intervals of approximately 5m-10m (measured from the foot of each mound) in a line running north to south, aligned alongside a cycle track which is thought to perpetuate the route of the 'Via Alba', a Roman road running between St Albans and Sandy.*

*Only the third barrow from the north has not been disturbed by excavation. Three of the mounds have depressions on their summits indicating that shafts were sunk into them, while the two southern barrows were dug into on the sides. The second mound from the north is believed to have been investigated in 1741 when scraps of wood and iron were recovered, and it seems likely from antiquarian reports that all the other excavations date from the 18th century.*

Retrace your steps through the underpass and then turn left onto a Footpath going through another underpass (signposted; Gunnels Wood Road Ind Area 3mins (cycling)). Continue on the Footpath crossing a road (Kings Way). Shortly the Footpath goes around a bend to the right and then turn left going under Gunnels Wood Road via an underpass (signposted; Hospital 12 mins & County Council Offices 1min(cycling)). Turn left as you exit the underpass and shortly turn right on Six Hills Way. Continue on Six Hills Way towards and go under the A1(M) via an underpass. Turn left as you exit the underpass onto a short path up to the road (Chadwell Road), you are now in Norton Green.

Turn left on Chadwell Road and head out of Norton Green. As you leave Norton Green the road turns into a Byway. Continue on the Byway until it diverges left/straight and right, take the byway to the right (signposted; Hertfordshire County Council Byway).

Continue on the Byway and as you pass Oak Grove on your left the Byway again diverges straight and right, take the Byway to the right. Continue uphill on the Byway (Kitching Lane). Near the top of the hill the Byway diverges left and right, take the Bridleway to the left (signposted; Public Bridleway (Blue Arrow)). Continue on the Bridleway towards Hillside House (don't take the Bridleway to the right), and continue up to Almshoe Bury (Farm). As you reach the Farm turn left in front of the barn (signposted; Public Footpath (Yellow Arrow) & Hertfordshire Way). Noting that on the hillside on the other side of the valley (and off route is a Point of Interest), are the remains of Minsden Chapel.

### **Point of Interest**

**Minsden Chapel** – *A detailed mention in the Domesday Book (AD 1085) is testimony to Minsden's antiquity. It notes that Minsden was a manor and that living there were eight villeins, two cottars, six serfs and (crucially) one priest. Later manorial documents for Missenden still exist.*

*Minsden chapel was named after St Nicholas – the protector of children and the poor. Its mother church was St Mary's at Hitchin. The chapel of ease served the farming communities of Minsden, Langley, Preston and even farther afield – Robert of Walsworth rode to services in the middle of the fifteenth century. As the chapel stood near St Albans (High)Way, it was also a sanctuary for travellers and pilgrims en route to St Alban's Abbey. During the Reformation (from 1538) worship at Minsden chapel declined. The congregation was small and couldn't afford a minister. As the local people were too independent to travel to St Mary's, every few months a clergyman rode to Minsden to conduct baptism, marriage and burial services. The chapel continued to drift apart from its mother and became increasingly neglected. In 1650, a report noted 'that no dues had been paid to the Vicar of Hitchin for many years (by Minsden); that it had been destitute of a preaching minister for divers years past; that the chapel had fallen into great decay'. Then, incredibly, it added that 'it was fit to be made a parish church'*

Follow the Footpath bearing left shortly after the Barn and continue downhill until you reach a road (London Road), cross the road and turn right passing Pub-33 The Rusty Gun on your left.

### **Pub-33**

The Rusty Gun

Shortly after passing The Rusty Gun turn left on a Footpath (signposted; Public Footpath 1 – Preston 1½). Follow this Footpath uphill. Shortly after reaching the top of the hill, the Footpath turns right and passes to the left of a Reservoir as you reach a road (St Albans Highway). Turn left onto St Albans Highway and very shortly turn right onto School Lane. Continue on School Lane into Preston. When you reach the small village green, turn left in front of Pub-34 The Red Lion.

### **Pub-34**

The Red Lion

Continue past The Red Lion on your left and on into the local lane ahead, this lane soon bears left and changes into a Footpath (signposted; Public Footpath 3 – Primary School 210yds). At the end of the Footpath turn left onto a lane (Back Lane). Continue on Back Lane, and as it bears left turn right onto Preston Hill Farm Road.

Follow Preston Hill Farm Road which turns into a Footpath as Preston Hill Farm Road bears right. Continue straight on the Footpath (signposted; Public Footpath 001 – The Firs 590yds). When you reach the end of the Footpath and exit the woods (“The Firs” wood on your left and “Hearnsfield Wood” on your right), turn right keeping the woods on your right and shortly the Footpath turns left and continues up to and past two cottages. Turn right shortly after the cottages onto a Footpath across a field and into a wood. As you get to the end of “Foxholes Wood” on your right take the Footpath to your left (signposted; Public Footpath 9). Continue on the Footpath/Track bearing right around Stagenhoe and up past Garden Wood. The Footpath changes into a small lane (Church Lane) eventually passing All Saints Church on your left and down into St Paul’s Walden.

### **Point of Interest**

**All Saints Church** – *The history of the parish goes back to at least the 9th century; in AD 888 Ethelred, the procurator of Abbots (St Paul's) Walden, granted land here to his servant Wulfgar, who in turn granted it to the Abbey of St Albans.*

*The hamlet of St Paul's Walden lies in beautiful countryside about 3 miles south of Hitchin. The village seems much too small for the impressive 14th/15th-century parish church, which is not, as you might expect, dedicated to St Paul, but to All Saints.*

*The reason for the oddity is that until the Dissolution of the Monasteries the manor of what was then Abbots Walden was owned by the Abbey of St Albans. When the Abbey was dissolved by Henry VIII the manor was granted to the Dean and Chapter of St Paul's Cathedral in London. The Dean and Chapter renamed the estate 'St Paul's Walden'.*

### **THE BOWES-LYON CONNECTION**

*The Bowes-Lyon family, Earls of Strathmore and Lords of Glamis, owned the mansion of St Paul's Walden Bury in St Paul's Walden. The most famous member of the family was Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon (1900-2002), better known as Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, wife of George VI.*

*Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon's birthplace is subject to some debate. Stories suggest that she was born in Westminster at her parent's home or in an ambulance on the way to the hospital, but a third tale suggests that she was born in the Strathmore's country house at St Paul's Walden. We do know that when her birth was recorded in the national census of 1901 it was recorded as St Paul's Walden Bury.*

*While the Queen Mum's birthplace is a subject of debate there is no doubt that she was baptised at All Saints church in St Paul's Walden on 23 September 1900, and that her childhood was divided between St Paul's Walden and Glamis Castle in Angus.*

*A wall tablet commemorates Queen Elizabeth's baptism, but another tablet marks a much sadder family event; the death in 1893 of Violet Hyacinth Bowes-Lyon, eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Glamis, who died at the age of 11.*

*In the churchyard is a commemorative column emphasising the village's association with the Bowes-Lyon family.*

*Almost lost amidst the church's links to the Bowes-Lyon family is the fact that novelist Jane Austen also has associations with St Paul's Walden and is thought to have visited the church. Aside from the Bowes-Lyon monument in the churchyard, there are also several medieval coffin lids, now broken.*

At the end of Church Lane turn right onto the B651 and pass Pub-35 Strathmore Arms.

### **Pub-35**

Strathmore Arms

Continue down hill on the B651 and just before a road to the right which goes up to The Bury, turn left onto a Footpath (*signposted; Public Footpath 6 – Reynolds Wood 450yds*). Continue uphill to Reynolds Wood and continue through and out of the woods. After exiting the woods keep the field on your right until you reach a Byway. Turn left on to the Byway and at the end turn right onto a lane. Continue downhill on the lane for circa  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile and as you reach Graffidge Wood, turn left onto the Footpath (*signposted; Public Footpath 038 – London Road  $\frac{1}{2}$* ). Follow the Footpath through the woods; noting that you will pass two Tumulus, one on route and one off route which is on private property.

### **Point of Interest**

***Tumulus – Roman barrow and Bronze Age bowl*** – The monument includes a Roman barrow and a Bronze Age bowl barrow located in Graffidge Wood, 250m east of Wintergreen Cottages. The steep-sided Roman barrow stands to a height of approximately 1.3m and is some 18m in diameter. A depression approximately 5m across in the summit of the barrow mound is thought to indicate the site of an excavation in the 19th century, and a slight declivity to the south may be connected with this investigation. An encircling ditch c.3m-5m wide, from which material for the mound would have been quarried, has been largely infilled but is still visible, particularly to the north and west. The barrow was investigated in 1869 when evidence of burning was found. This may have represented a funeral pyre built over a rough stone platform, since the burnt debris contained human finger bones. However, it is possible that the cremation took place elsewhere and the remains were subsequently placed in a small stone chamber or wood-lined grave beneath the mound. No secondary burials were reported from this investigation but, since only a small portion of the barrow was investigated, any such deposits will survive undisturbed. Immediately to the east is a bowl barrow constructed during the Bronze Age. The circular barrow mound is some 23m in diameter and 0.5m high with a smooth, gently rounded profile. The quarry ditch is apparent as a shallow depression some 3m wide around the northern arc of the barrow mound and will survive elsewhere beneath the present ground surface. There is no evidence that the barrow has been disturbed by excavation, and it is thought that significant funerary deposits will be largely intact.

### **Point of Interest (On Private Property)**

***Tumulus – Bell barrow*** – The monument includes a substantial Bronze Age bell barrow situated in Graffidge Wood, 400m south east of Keepers Cottage. The circular barrow mound is c.25m in diameter and approximately 2.5m high. The berm (platform) on which the mound stands is some 31m wide, sloping slightly down to the encircling ditch. Upcast from this ditch would have been used in the construction of the mound. Although the ditch is partly infilled, it can still be traced as a shallow depression c.0.4m deep and 4m wide.

*The mound is rounded with a depression some 3m deep in the summit. While this may have resulted from a limited archaeological investigation, probably during the 19th century, no records of this have been traced. It is possible that this depression and a smaller one next to it were caused by the uprooting of trees.*

As you reach the end of the Footpath and exit Graffidge Wood, you reach a road (B656). Go straight across the B656 and take the Footpath (signposted; Public Footpath) and enter Knebworth Park via a kissing gate. Bear to your right and follow this Footpath uphill, keeping a fence to your right. At the top of the hill continue straight and go through another kissing gate.

Head towards the Cenotaph, passing it on your left and exit Knebworth Park via another kissing gate in the right hand corner of the park. Continue through a small wood and then bear left through a field, exiting the field via a gate and continue through a cottage driveway!

Exit the cottage driveway and turn left onto a road (Park Lane). Continue on Park Lane going past Pub-36 The Lytton Arms.

### **Pub-36**

The Lytton Arms

Soon after passing The Lytton Arms turn right onto a Footpath (signposted; Public Footpath & Stevenage Outer Orbital Path). Follow this Footpath and continue straight across the fields until you reach another Footpath crossing left to right in front of you. Turn right and head towards the woods (New Wood). Continue through New Wood until you reach a road (Slip Lane). Turn left onto Slip Lane and continue into Rableyheath and Pub-37 Robin Hood & Little John.

### **Pub-37**

Robin Hood & Little John

Retrace your steps a few yards and turn right via a kissing gate onto a Footpath (signposted; Public Footpath). Head diagonally to your left across a field, heading for the far left corner of the field and through another kissing gate. After a quick right & left (signposted; Public Footpath 10 & Stevenage Outer Orbital Path). Follow the path keeping the field to your right and the field boundary to your left until you reach a lane (Wych Elm Lane). Continue straight onto Wych Elm Lane, cross over the A1(M) and turn left onto Gipsy Lane (Note the incorrect spelling of Gipsy Lane on the road sign).



*Gipsy Lane (Gypsy)*

Follow Gipsy Lane until you come to the edge of Knebworth. Continue straight over the road (Gipsy Lane which now goes left and right in front of you!), and onto a Footpath (signposted; Public Footpath). Continue on this Footpath, parsing houses to your right and then playing fields to your left. As you exit the playing field you cross a road (Lytton Fields). Continue onto a Footpath on the other side of Lytton Fields. Shortly at the end of the Footpath turn left onto a lane (Gun Lane). Continue for a short distance on Gun Lane and continue straight onto Station approach.

**Pub-38**

The Station

Opposite Pub-38 The Station is Knebworth Station, the end of the walk.

## Maps

*These overview maps are not to scale and are designed to give a flavour of the route and to guide you around Pubs Trail Hertfordshire. For detailed route finding please use the relevant OS Map/s.*







