



**Begin your walk through history at Camelot Rugby Club on Chaulden Lane.**

Like the two cricket clubs in the town, Hemel Hempstead's rugby union club is situated on Trust land, part of the water meadows that stretch all the way to the other side of the Bulbourne valley.

**From the car park, turn right down Old Fishery Lane.**

Just before the hump-backed bridge, look through the gate into Gadespring Cressbeds. Watercress was commercially grown here until 1991 using the clean water of the River Bulbourne. It was very popular in Victorian times and, after the opening of the railway, production flourished, with daily deliveries to London. In 2011, the site was purchased by the Box Moor Trust to be restored as a nature reserve. Guided tours are available on the last Sunday of the month and the bird hide is open to the general public on Thursday mornings.

**From Gadespring, continue over the canal bridge and past the side-stream to the River Bulbourne (watercress still grows naturally in the water - not suitable for eating).**

Before you go underneath the road and rail bridges, look around to see how human transport has changed over time. The oldest route is the 'London Road' you can see through the bridges (now the A4251). This ancient road linked to the Roman Akeman Street that joined St Albans and Cirencester. In 1762, it became the Sparrows Herne Turnpike between London and Aylesbury. Many coaching inns provided rest for travellers and their horses, including the 'Swan Inn' that you can see at the bottom of Box Lane. The road became infamous for its poor state, partly because of damage caused by carts carrying heavy goods into London. In 1797, the Grand Junction Canal (now Grand Union) opened so barges could carry bulky loads, like grain and coal, from the countryside into the capital. After being dug by hand, the canal was filled with water from the River Bulbourne. The railway line came soon afterwards in 1837 and, in the 1990s, the A41 dual carriageway. All four run beside each other, along the flat valley bottom.

**Continue underneath the tunnel.**

On the other side, try to imagine how this place was when the road was quiet and before the canal, railway and A41 were built: these were peaceful water meadows in Tudor times. The land was originally owned by the monks of Ashridge but seized by King Henry VIII when he 'dissolved' England's monasteries in the 1530s.

His daughter, Queen Elizabeth I, gifted it to her favourite courtier, Robert Dudley, who quickly sold the land on. The moors ('mor' was an Old English name for a marsh) were bought secretly by local people to protect them and, in 1594, the Box Moor Trust was established to look after them. In 1833, 800 homes were issued with metal 'right to pasture' plaques to show that they had grazing rights - you can still see these on older houses. Grazing tickets could be exchanged to enable different types of animals to be grazed and the Trust's 'Ticket Day' is still held every March. On either side of this track is Herdsman's Moor. This is where the Herdsman employed by the Trust to look after the land and livestock had his cottage until it was demolished when the A41 was built.

**Retrace your steps underneath the bridges and turn right through the kissing gate into Fishery Moor. Walk over the moor until you reach the gate onto Fishery Road.**

Many areas of the Trust have associations with wartime activities. Fishery Moor was used as a training ground for the Home Guard during the Second World War and prisoners of war waiting to return to their home countries were housed at Howe's Retreat up Felden Lane. Today, Howe's Retreat is a winter home for the Trust's Belted Galloway cattle. Many horses that took part in the battles of the First World War (like those in 'War Horse') recuperated on the moors before returning to work on local farms. This railway station opened in 1837, with one of the first railway lines in the world. The slanted 'skew' railway bridge was an engineering wonder at the time.

**Cross Fishery Road, going onto Station Moor through the gate opposite. Follow the grassy path ahead.**

The railway was originally to follow the River Gade valley but opposition from local landowners meant that it was re-routed along the Bulbourne instead, cutting through the Trust land. This is why the station is so far away from Hemel Hempstead Old Town. The neighbourhood of Boxmoor, with its Victorian housing, developed as a result. Londoners travelled out for day trips, some visiting the fairground and tea gardens at 'Howe's Pleasure Ground' (now Howe's Retreat). The Horse Chestnut trees on this moor are just some of those planted to commemorate royal events, including the Coronation of George VI in 1937 and Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. The leaf is the Trust's logo and, since 1996, an annual Conker Festival has been held.

**Cross the river bridge and continue on the wood bark path until the canal.**

The Trust has improved this river habitat, reversing some of the effects of human activity. Evidence of local people's past employment is all around, such as the remains of orchards to supply the London markets with fruit. Further up the canal at Boxmoor Wharf (currently used by B&Q), barges were unloaded with barrels of whisky, port and even the lime juice from the Caribbean that was made into Rose's Lime Cordial. In the distance, on Two Waters Moor, is the old 'Nicky Line' that linked the straw-plaiting trade of Hemel Hempstead with the hat-making industry in Luton. This moor gets its name from the confluence of the Rivers Bulbourne and Gade.

**Go through the gate and up the steps to Station Road. Turn left and walk along to Blackbirds' Moor on your left.**

Boxmoor Cricket Club began on this moor in 1857. Heath Park is also Trust land and where Hemel Hempstead Cricket Club was founded in 1850. Just across the road, beside the canal, was an open air swimming pool. It used canal water, compete with fish and leeches! It closed in 1937 - perhaps you know someone who remembers it?

**Retrace your steps to the canal. Go down the steps and turn left along the towpath. Follow the canal past the Fishery Inn and the canal lock.**

Opposite Fishery Wharf are cricket willows. These have been grown by the Trust for more than 100 years. The collars keep the trees growing straight and they are harvested after fifteen years and sent away to be shaped into cricket bats.

**Go along the towpath until the hump-backed bridge at Old Fishery Lane.**

As you go underneath, look for the grooves worn into the sides of this bridge, made over the years by the towing ropes of horse-drawn barges.

**Immediately after the bridge, turn left and cross it to return back along Old Fishery Lane to Camelot Ruby Club.**

**Safety**

Please take great care when following this route, particularly on roads and by the canal where there can be deep water. Please do not approach grazing livestock and follow guidance on gates. Advice on bringing your dog can be found in our 'Dogs and the Box Moor Trust' leaflet. We cannot accept responsibility for the children under your care.

**Did you know?**

- If you live in Hemel Hempstead or Bovingdon, this is your land!
- This is only a taste of the history of the Box Moor Trust. Come to one of our history talks or read '*Royalty to Commoners*', for sale from the Trust.
- Since 1809, twelve trustees have been elected by the local population to manage the Trust estate for the community.
- The land is open to the public all year round. You can walk on most of the estate and there are four special walks to follow.
- The Box Moor Trust Centre on London Road opened in 2013 to replace our office and barns which burned down on Christmas Day 2000.
- More than 4,000 people, including schools, uniform groups and adult groups, visit us every year to learn about the Trust and its land. We hold public events, including the Autumn and Conker Festivals in October and our Spring Lambing Weekend.
- If you would like to help us look after your land, we have a thriving group of volunteers involved in all aspects of the management of the estate.

Email: [education@boxmoortrust.org.uk](mailto:education@boxmoortrust.org.uk)



**The  
Box Moor  
Trust**

*The Box Moor Trust  
Family Local History Walk*

**The Box Moor Trust is 425 years old in 2019! Learn more about the history of Hemel Hempstead and the role of the Trust on this circular walk for families.**

**In Tudor times, local people banded together to buy valuable meadows beside the Rivers Bulbourne and Gade as a way of safeguarding their grazing and fishing rights. Since then, this land has been held 'in trust' for the residents of Hemel Hempstead and Bovingdon.**

**Today, the Trust manages almost 500 acres of agricultural and amenity land on behalf of the community who still retain the right to graze animals on the estate.**

**To find out more about the work of the Trust, visit our website or the Box Moor Trust Centre on London Road, Hemel Hempstead. If you have enjoyed this walk, why not explore further on our Orange, Blue, Green or Red walk routes? Please visit our website: [www.boxmoortrust.org.uk](http://www.boxmoortrust.org.uk)**

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