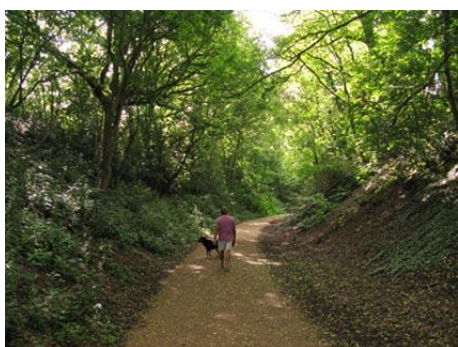


WHAT TO SEE ON THE NICKEY LINE

The Nickey Line is not only a rural walk with lots of nature to see and hear but an archaeological and social journey too with railway and other features remaining along its length. Here are some examples:

HollyBush Lane to Roundwood

Holly Bush Lane Cutting



This deep cutting took the tight southward curve to join the main line towards Harpenden Station. It is now leafy and atmospheric, especially when the sunlight or moonlight filters through the high tree tops. Definitely worth a visit.

South Curve Buttress



This large brick buttress was built when the tight southward curve was added in this deep cutting so that trains would turn to Harpenden station rather than use the original north curve towards Luton.

Ambrose Lane Ramp



The ramp, built in 2014 in a Sustrans managed project, starts from the meeting of the two railway curves and goes up the old north curve which can still be seen through the fence where the ramp turns left and disappears on this photograph.

Ambrose Lane Bridge



Ambrose Lane bridge has 3 arches with the main one actually used by the Line. Stand there for a minute and you can still imagine trains running under the bridge....

Luton Road Bridge



Luton Road bridge is one of larger bridges on the Nickey Line, spanning the main Harpenden to Luton road, with good views North and South. An imposing set of wooden steps, built in 2014, descends the high embankment to the road and local shops below.

Up To Roundwood Crossing



The Line climbs steadily up from Luton Road to Roundwood Crossing on the high embankment which decreases until you can join/leave the Line from Park Hill at a level access. A small cutting then builds up until you reach the steeper slope up to Roundwood Crossing where a wooden then metal bridge used to stand before the cutting was in-filled.

Roundwood to Redbourn Lane

Roundwood Crossing & Halt



Roundwood Crossing provides level access for users with short but steep slopes on either side. The Line was infilled after the trains stopped running and the footbridge removed. The Roundwood Halt platform is the only one still visible on the Nickey Line.

Roundwood Semaphore Signal & Rail Section



The Line by and west of the Halt became very muddy and a 200 metre section was replaced in 2022 with crushed concrete and soakaways on either side. An original length of rail was uncovered in the work and mounted below the iconic old semaphore signal.

Pig Viewing Area



The Pig viewing area, near the 'Five Ways' path junction, is one of the popular features on the Nickey Line for families. You can normally see one or more pigs in the neighbouring small holding plus donkeys and other animals / birds too as you walk past. N.B. Feeding the pigs is not allowed!

Five Ways Path Junction



Five Ways, the Townsend Lane extension where 5 paths meet, including access to Rothamsted Estate footpaths and the Chiltern Way, is one of the busiest points on the Line. It also hosts the now somewhat old and worn Harpenden Lost Rails Interpretation board with its soundboard of memories.

Platelayers Hut 2 Floor



Nine Platelayers Huts were built at intervals along the Line to shelter the workers who maintained the railway line and to house tools and materials. Several have now been uncovered including this one, Hut 2, on the North side of the Line near Five Ways.

'Scallops'



Friends have been clearing and maintaining open patches of ground ('Scallops') on the North side of the Line between Roundwood and Redbourn Lane to encourage biodiversity and, with associated hedge cutting, open views over the Ver Valley. Look out for flowers in the Summer too!

Knott Wood Bluebells



Knott Wood is a striking Bluebell Wood and runs alongside the Line a bit over half way from Harpenden to Redbourn Lane. Owned and managed by Rothamsted Estate, it is usually open to the public in the Bluebell season (April/May) with a gate about 100 yards up a path from the Line on the North side of the wood.

See our Website April Nature Notes on bluebells.

Ver Valley View



From Five Ways path junction to the edge of Redbourn, you can pick up views of the Ver Valley where there are gaps in the hedge / tree line, including where the Friends have cut the hedges back to open up the view such as in Scallop 1 opposite Knott Wood.

Wildlife Interpretation Board



The Wildlife Board was our first interpretation board, funded by the Big Lottery and situated opposite Knott Wood. The artwork was produced by Friends members.

See our website for more about it.

Ver Valley View



Another lovely view on a nice day, taken by Friends committee member Ian Caldwell

Platelayers Hut 3



Platelayers' Hut 3 is 200 metres North of the Redbourn Lane / Harpenden Lane roundabout. It was brick built with a brick floor and a cast iron stove at the far wall.

Read our website August 23 report on the Platelayer's Huts!

Ver Valley View



The Ver is a chalk stream and, like others, is under constant threat from low rainfall and over-extraction of water.

Read more about it and about local efforts to support its continued existence and good health in the Ver Valley Society website.

Redbourn Lane to the M1

Line Around Redbourn



The Line around Redbourn runs alongside the Bypass road. It is screened by trees so can be relaxing if you ignore the traffic noise. It was resurfaced some years ago with compressed fine material and can be a bit rough to cycle on places, also of varying widths so cyclists please pass other users with care.

Redbourn Millenium Site



The Millenium (picnic) Site was created on the site of the small marshalling yards in front of Redbourn Station. The 1985 plaque was originally mounted in Harpenden but was 'lost' then rediscovered in 2009 near Park Hill steps by the Friends' chairman. It was remounted here by Redbourn P.C. with an explanatory plate added by the Friends.

Redbourn High Street



Redbourn High Street Bridge is a metal raft bridge with an open view to the South as well as the High Street. Access to the Street is by steps, a ramp and also through the Millenium Site just a few yards away.

River Ver Bridge



The Line crosses the River Ver not far from the High Street on a brick built bridge. Sometimes there is a good flow of water under the bridge, sometimes very little. It was luckily all but dry when Friends recovered a second commemorative plaque, almost identical to the plaque from Harpenden now in the Millenium Site, from the base of the bridge

Redbourn Orchard



Redbourn Orchard is on the South side of the Nickey Line, a few hundred yards West of Chequer Lane. It was created in 2018 by Countryside Management Services and Friends volunteers. It is maintained by the Friends who have planted new / replacement local Herts varieties of apple and pear trees including Brownlees' Russet introduced by William Brownlees of Hemel Hempstead in 1848.

M1 Tunnel



The M1 originally crossed the Nickey Line when it was still a steam railway and the bridge was made large enough to add a second set of tracks! When the M1 was converted from 3 to 4 lanes a side, the bridge was in-filled to support the greater carriageway weight, leaving a very long and dark tunnel. Three sets of lights have been tried but it still remains on the dark side.

M1 to Hunters Oak

From M1 to Cherry Tree Lane



The M1 to Cherry tree Lane section is a pleasant level walk between hedges and trees, running parallel to the main Redbourn - Hemel road but is not particularly noisy.

Owen's Siding Platelayers Hut



Owen was a quarryman, living at Wheathamstead at the time of the 1901 census. He extracted sand and gravel from a number of locations in the St Albans area, including a quarry situated between Hemel Hempstead and Little Revel Lane. The sidings were used to move the quarried gravel and a Platelayers Hut (Hut 7) was built there too. This can be found about half a mile West of the M1.

Cherry Tree Lane Bridge



Cherry Tree Lane bridge is a brick 2 arch bridge on the edge of Hemel Hempstead. It has a crude set of steps on the East side going up from the Line to the road. A railway gradient post is mounted opposite the steps on the East side of the bridge. Our volunteer Roger Green restored the post and did much work locally on and around the bridge. A plaque to his memory is mounted on the bridge's West side.

Hunters Oak to Adeyfield Road

Three Cherry Tree Lane Bridge



Nickey Line bridges were built before large horseless carriages became normal. Buses and large lorries hitting or being stuck under them has been a recurrent theme. Three Cherry Tree Lane was last hit by an unidentified lorry in 2010 and it almost knocked the raft off its supports. The Line was diverted for over 16 months.

Yew Tree Wood



Yew Tree Wood is a 2.7 acre wood (yes, with lots of Yew trees) on the North side of Redbourn Road in Cupid Green. The path route was diverted through the Eastman Way industrial estate after Line closure but rejoins it in Yew Tree Wood by the still exposed bridge near the old Godwin's Halt. You will find the second Lost Rails board in the Wood, featuring old Hemel Hempstead railway photographs.

Godwin's Halt



Godwin's Halt was built to serve a local landowner's, Mr Godwin's, estate. This was the highest point on the Line. The Halt had fallen into disuse by the 50's. The cutting was in-filled when the trains stopped running but the top of the bridge - columns and the raft - were left above ground on the edge of Yew Tree Wood.

Yew Tree Wood to Queensway



The path West of Redbourn Road / Yew Tree Wood was resurfaced in 2023 with grit topped tarmac and is a colourful, easy tree-lined walk, if still a bit gritty, towards Queensway. The path goes through a cutting with tree roots atmospherically exposed before taking you onto a large embankment with an avenue of trees which can be very colourful too in Autumn.

Queensway Bridge



Queensway Bridge is a striking brick bridge with buttresses which used to carry the railway on its embankment across 'Highfield Lane' in a more rural time. West of the bridge, the path now descends a steep set of steps into Keens Field with a concrete side strip for cycles.

Keens Field to Adeyfield Road



The railway continued on its embankment across the edge of Keens Field then under a road bridge before arriving at Hemel Hemstead station. The first half of the embankment is now gone, replaced by housing which the path runs by before splitting into a new level route (left/ South route) and the remains of the old embankment (up steps to right / North). Both routes come to the end of the pathway at the old road bridge, now in-filled up to the top of the still visible arches.