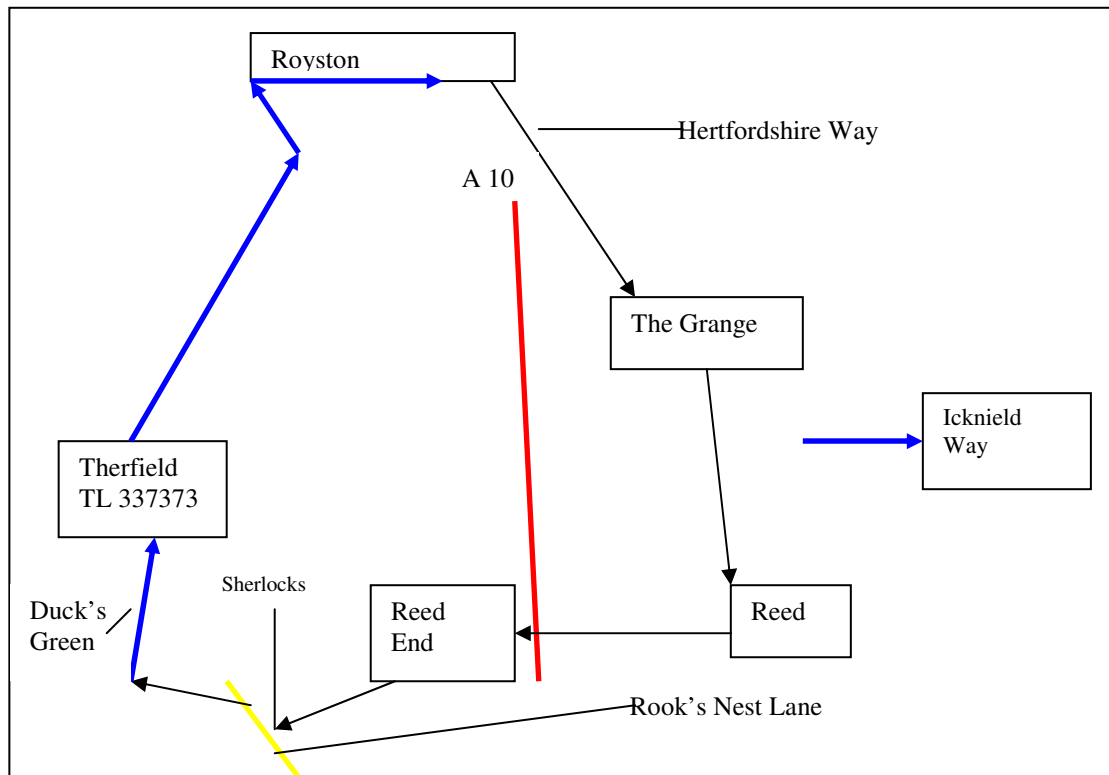


The Icknield Way. Part 11 from Therfield to Royston 16 May 2010

Maps OS Explorer 194 & 209. This route takes in a short stretch of the Way and then loops back to the E and S along the Hertfordshire Way and through villages and hamlets to reach the Way again at Duck's Green and follow it back to the start in Therfield. 14 km



From Therfield village green, the Way passes by the side of the Fox and Duck (once again missed on this leg because of the urgency imposed by the participation of England's cricketers in the 20-Twenty world cup final in Barbados). Heading northwards along broad tracks and hedgerows painted with crab apple and hawthorn flowers, wide vistas open up as the path begins its descent from 160 to 100 masl and arrives at Therfield Heath National Nature Reserve. This is a fine chalkland habitat (albeit overpopulated due to its proximity to Royston – and its incongruous golf course). Pasque flowers are said to abound here and today there was evidence of other emerging spring chalkland flowers including rock rose, spring gentian and wild thyme.

The Heath is also home to several Bronze Age barrows and a Neolithic long barrow. More of these on the next leg (the main site is to the W of the path) this time we paused to admire a round barrow after battling across the aforementioned golf course.



Crab apple



Field pansy



Hawthorn.....



Entrance to Therfield Heath



Round barrow



Gentian



Wild thyme

Royston boasts a medieval cave (open on Sundays but not this one) and a glacial 'pebble' said to have been the plinth of a 12th Century cross. It is also at the junction of Ermine Street and the Icknield Way – importance enough for any hamlet!

We leave the Way here in Royston and return on part of the Hertfordshire Way – leaving the town in a SE direction, past the Grange to Reed. Brown hares (including a leveret) bound about here, more than in previous stretches of the walk. So do tumbling peewits and a splendid group of swallows which posed on a wire fence, feathers ruffling in the breeze. Footpaths in Reed lead on to Ermine Street (A 10) and then some of the paths marked on the map tend not to exist, but order is restored later to take us across fields to Sherlocks, Duck's Green drove and so to Therfield church and the village green.