



View of the Beane Valley

The photograph on the front cover is of Walkern Mill. All photographs by Paul Waller.

Printed on environmentally friendly paper.

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Project Partners

Hertfordshire Environment Forum

The Hertfordshire Environment Forum was established in 1992 by a county-wide group of local authorities. Its aims are to stimulate environmental awareness amongst the people of Hertfordshire and to encourage involvement, activity and sustainability amongst all of Hertfordshire's population, by putting the decisions of the Rio Summit into effect locally through Local Agenda 21. The Forum seeks to achieve these aims with the help of a broad spectrum of interest groups in the county.

Project Partners

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency combines the work previously done by the National Rivers Authority (NRA), Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Pollution (HMIP) and the waste regulation authorities. Its main aim is to secure the environmental protection of water, land and air.

The Agency has major responsibilities for management and regulation of rivers and the water environment, for controlling industrial pollution and for regulating the disposal of wastes.

Countryside Management Service

The Countryside Management Service is working with local communities in Hertfordshire and north London to enhance and promote enjoyment of the countryside. It is supported by Hertfordshire County Council and local District and Borough Councils. If you wish to know more about the Countryside Management Service contact one of the local area teams or write to, The Countryside Management Service, c/o Environment Department, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DN.

Start your walk with a phone call

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Mondays to Fridays
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IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Hertfordshire Passenger Transport

Public passenger transport issues in Hertfordshire are addressed by the County Council's Passenger Transport Unit (PTU). As a business unit within the Environment Department, the PTU actively promotes the use of public passenger transport. This also forms an integral part of the TravelWise initiative, designed to encourage sustainable transport policies.

The PTU is delighted to promote access to the Hertfordshire countryside by public transport.

supports a diverse range of invertebrates which feed the fish population. Water crowfoot requires fast flowing clean well oxygenated water to thrive. In slow flows it becomes choked with algae and silt.

Other Walks in the Valley

The River Beane and its valley can be found on the Ordnance Survey Landranger map number 166 (available from your library or many local shops). You can use an OS map to design your own walks in the valley.

Additional walks recommended by locals are along the footpaths north of Walkern towards Comer and east of the river through High Wood to the village of Benington. However, no matter what part of the valley you explore you are sure to be delighted and surprised.

Footpaths are clearly indicated on OS maps, as well as being waymarked on the ground. Many of the public rights of way in the Beane Valley are signposted and kept clear by the local parish councils, supported by the County Council and the Countryside Commission.

When following a map for the first time it is useful to remember to...

- follow your progress by keeping your finger on the map.
- note the symbols used on the map as you pass the actual features on the ground.
- look out for woods, churches and other features to remind you when to look for turnings.
- use grid lines to judge the distance you have walked. They are 1 kilometre apart.

Waymark signs (illustrated below) will help you to identify the different types of rights of way.

 Yellow arrows: These indicate a footpath which is for pedestrians only.

 Blue arrows: These indicate a bridleway which can be used by horse riders, cyclists and pedestrians.

 Red arrows: These indicate a Byway Open To All Traffic (known as a BOAT) which is open to all pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and may be legally used by other wheeled vehicles.

 Black arrows: These indicate a Road Used as a Public Path (known as RUPP) which is a road where there is a right of way for pedestrians. In some cases, there may be rights for other users. Gradually they are being reclassified into one of the other categories.

Water crowfoot is important to a chalk stream ecosystem, as it

Some of this is being achieved through natural regeneration, while other areas are getting a helping hand.

Water Issues

In some of the upper sections of the river the water flow is very low, at times these sections can be totally dry. Less water does not just mean less room for the aquatic life, it also leads to slower flows, allowing silt and organic debris to collect. This smothers the gravel bed, killing many invertebrates and damaging fish spawning grounds. Underwater, spring fed water is usually cold, allowing more oxygen to dissolve in the water, thereby improving its quality. Dry springs and slower moving water raise the temperature, lowering the oxygen content and adversely affecting the range of creatures that live in the river.

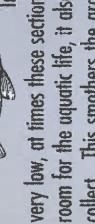
The River Beane Restoration Association, (made up of members of Parish Councils, committed groups and individuals in the valley) has been working to improve the river flow. This will hopefully help to revive degraded sections of river. Ironically there are also problems with flooding in the area. The Environment Agency is currently investigating solutions to both of these problems.

Natural History

There are many small woods dotted about the Beane Valley, mostly oak, hazel and hornbeam. Some of these woods have been managed for many centuries by coppicing. Coppicing is a traditional practice used to encourage the quick growth of trees. The tree is cut near the base and allowed to send up several shoots from below the cut. These long straight shoots have a variety of uses depending on the type of wood, including thatching pegs, hurdles and firewood. Today, much less coppicing is carried out as the need for these products is no longer as great. However, the benefit of this type of management is a variety of wild flowers which thrive in the dappled sunlight of the woodland floor which coppicing creates. Ransoms also carpet these woodland floors and in the spring fill the air with the smell of garlic.

These woods also provide homes for many birds including long-tailed tit, woodcock, nuthatch, tree creeper, and green and greater spotted woodpeckers. Muntjac, Fallow Deer are also in the valley.

The lower reaches of the river in particular, support a variety of wildlife. Fish include pike, perch, roach and trout, whilst water voles live in holes on the banks. Occasionally you might even see the blue flash of the kingfisher. Dragonflies and damselflies hunt insects up and down the river. Plants include water crowfoot in the river and meadow sweet on the banks.

 Roach

The soils and the local rock type, helped to determine the shallow fast flowing gravel bed nature of the river. Today human intervention is the single biggest influence on the river's form. Straightening, dredging, weir construction and water extraction have all helped to change the character of the river dramatically.

Quarrying has also occurred in many sites in the valley. Once deserted they can become havens for wildlife including birds such as the little ringed plover and tufted duck, as well as wild flowers like the bee orchid which thrive on the poor soils left after quarrying.

At Watford much of the old quarry workings are being restored to a more natural state.

BEANE
walk

A walk along the River Beane and its gentle valley slopes.



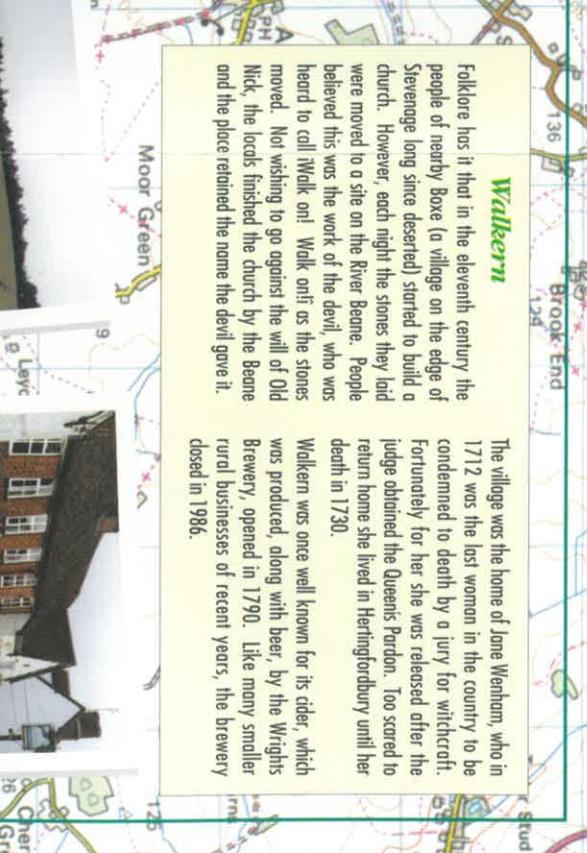
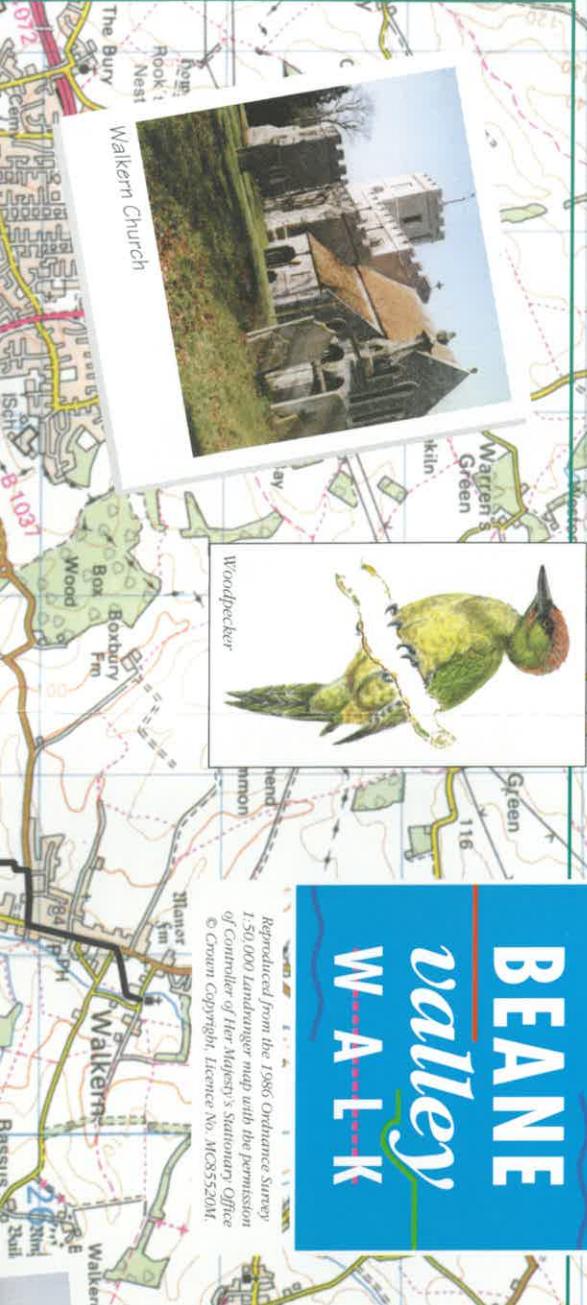
BEANE valley WALK



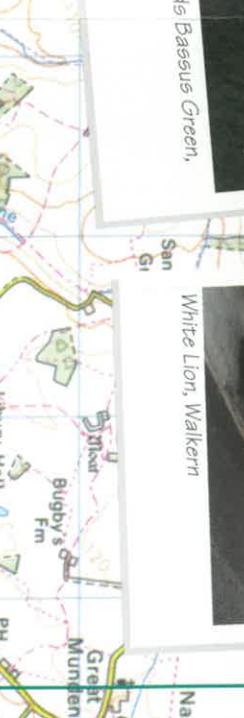
Walkern
Folklore has it that in the eleventh century the people of nearby Boxe village on the edge of Stevenage long since deserted started to build a church. However, each night the stones they laid were moved to a site on the River Beane. People believed this was the work of the devil, who was heard to call Walk on. Walk on! as the stones moved. Not wishing to go against the will of Old Nick, the tools finished the church by the Beane and the place retained the name the devil gave it.

The village was the home of Jane Wenham, who in 1712 was the last woman in the country to be condemned to death by a jury for witchcraft. Fortunately for her site was released after the judge obtained the Queen's pardon. Too scared to return home she lived in Hertfordshire until her death in 1730.

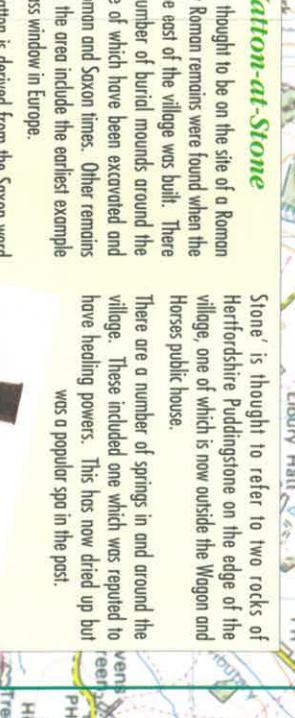
Walkern was once well known for its cider, which was produced, along with beer, by the Wrights Brewery, opened in 1790. Like many smaller rural businesses of recent years, the brewery closed in 1986.



Aston
The Bury of Aston was given to the brother of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century. It later became part of a Benedictine Abbey. After the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 it was granted to one of Henry VIII's knights, who then built the main part of the house. The village has a number of cottages dating from around this time.



SEVENAGE
The Bury of Aston was given to the brother of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century. It later became part of a Benedictine Abbey. After the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 it was granted to one of Henry VIII's knights, who then built the main part of the house. The village has a number of cottages dating from around this time.



Knebworth
The Bury of Aston was given to the brother of William the Conqueror in the eleventh century. It later became part of a Benedictine Abbey. After the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 it was granted to one of Henry VIII's knights, who then built the main part of the house. The village has a number of cottages dating from around this time.



Looking down the river at White Hall



Stapleford

Watton-at-Stone

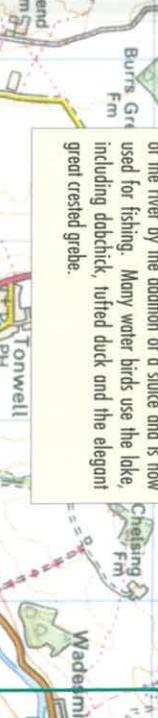
Woodhall Park

Herford

Waterford Marsh

KEY

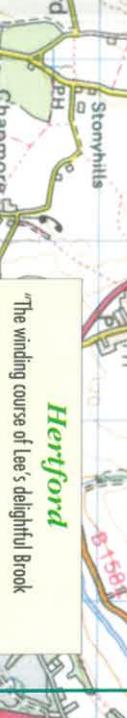
High Wood to the river



Sheath



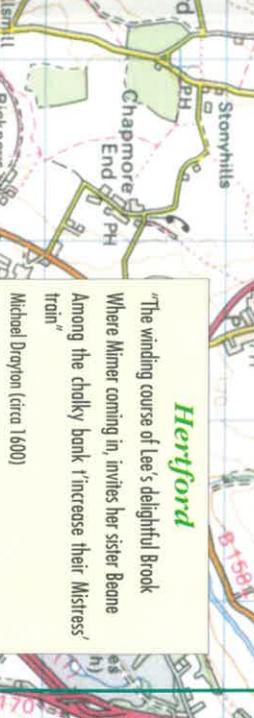
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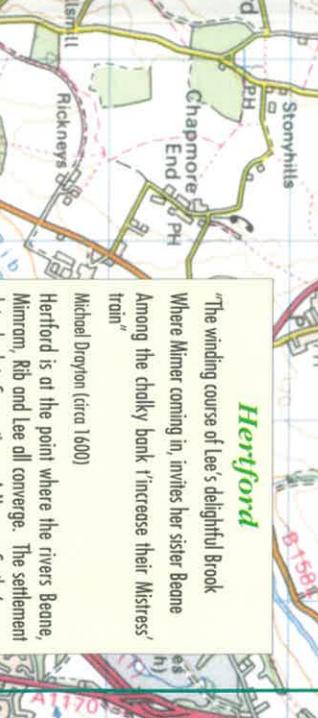
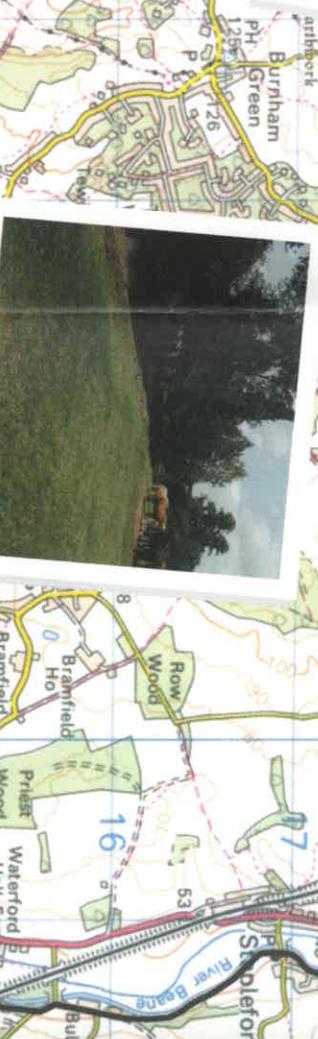
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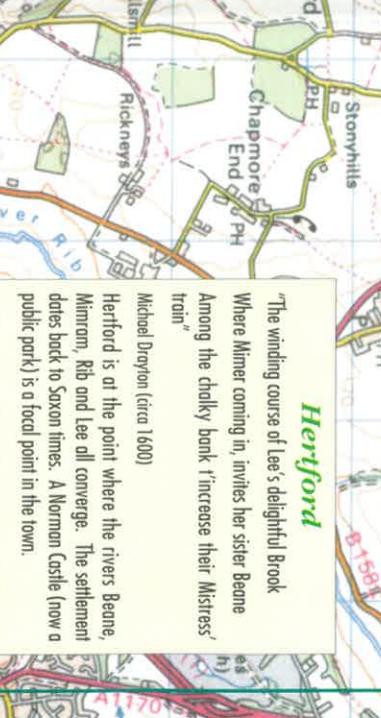
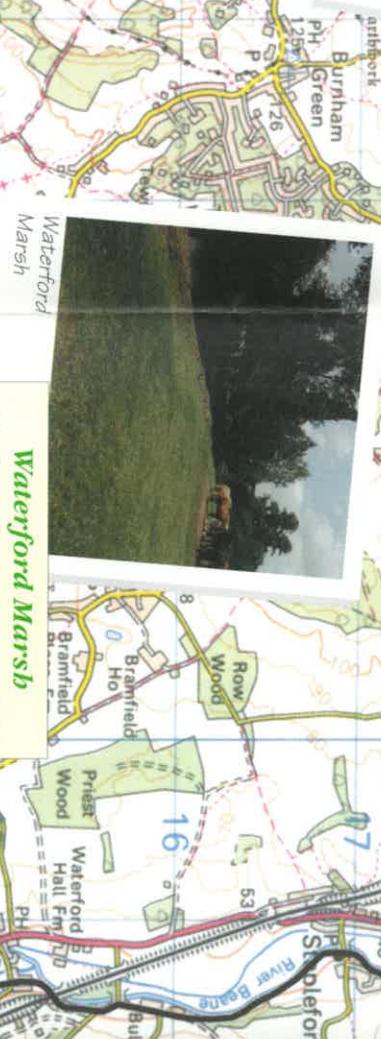
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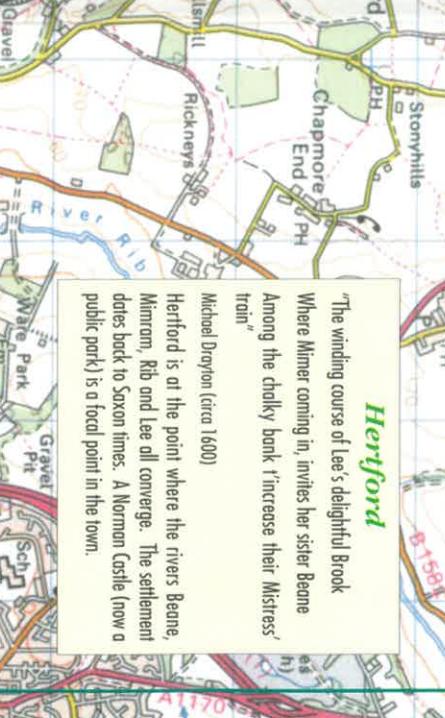
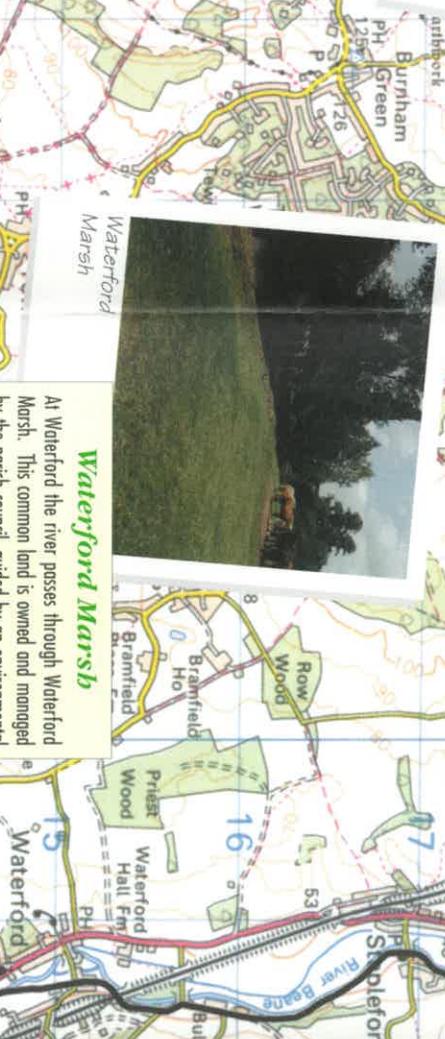
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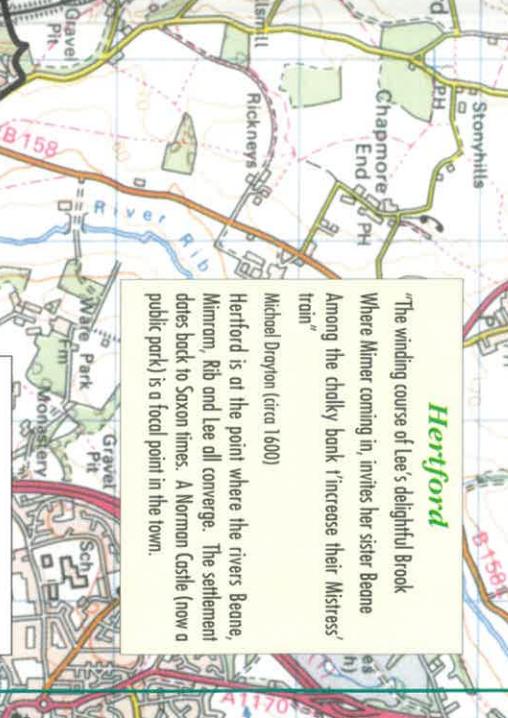
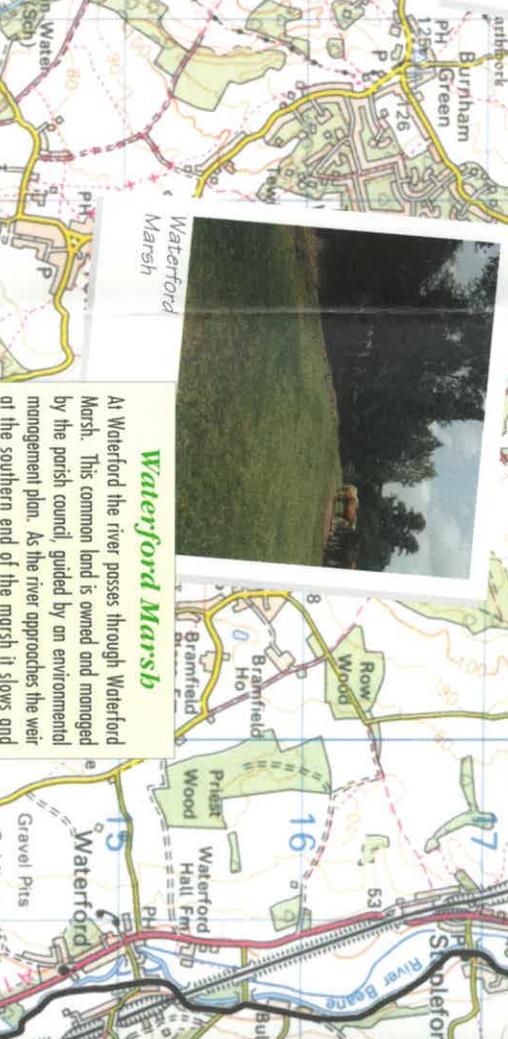
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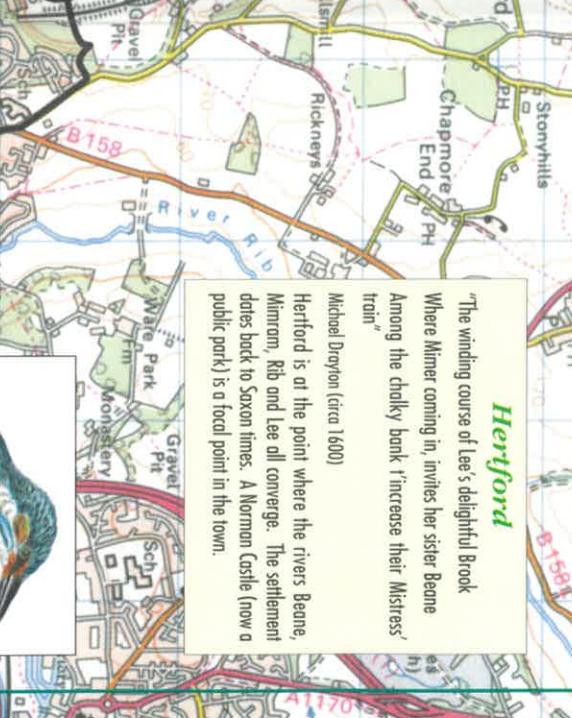
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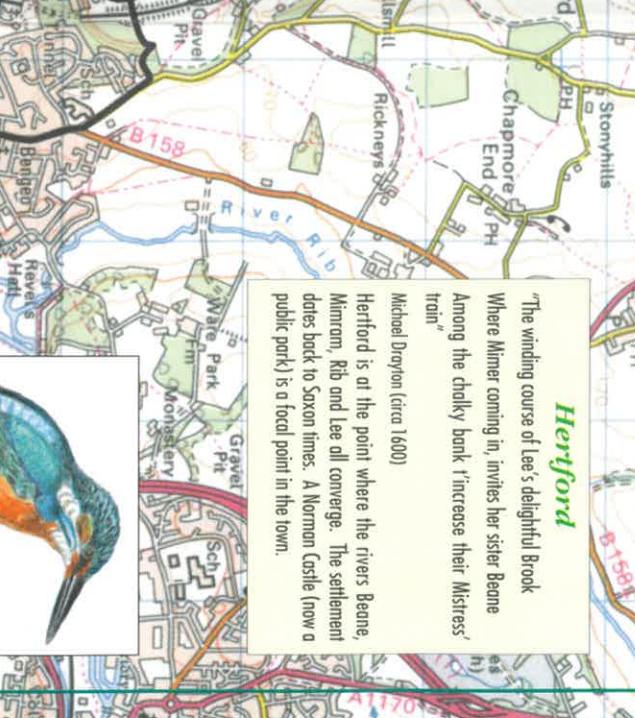
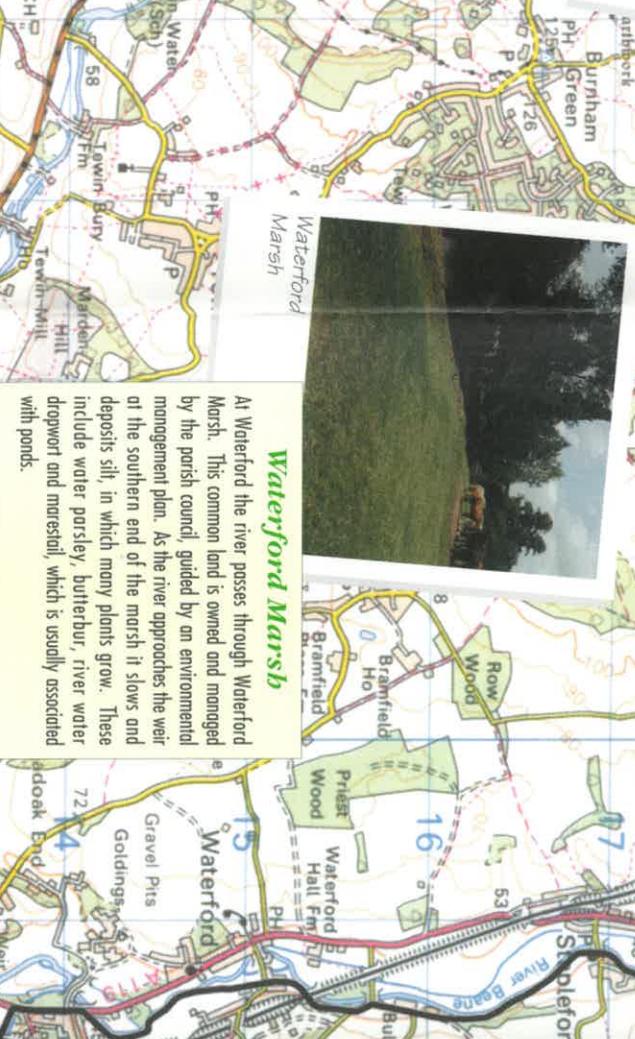
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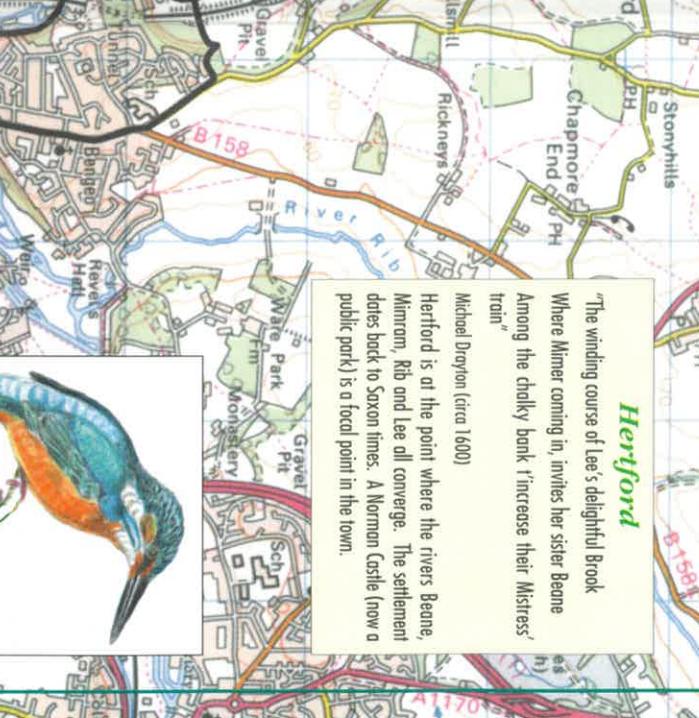
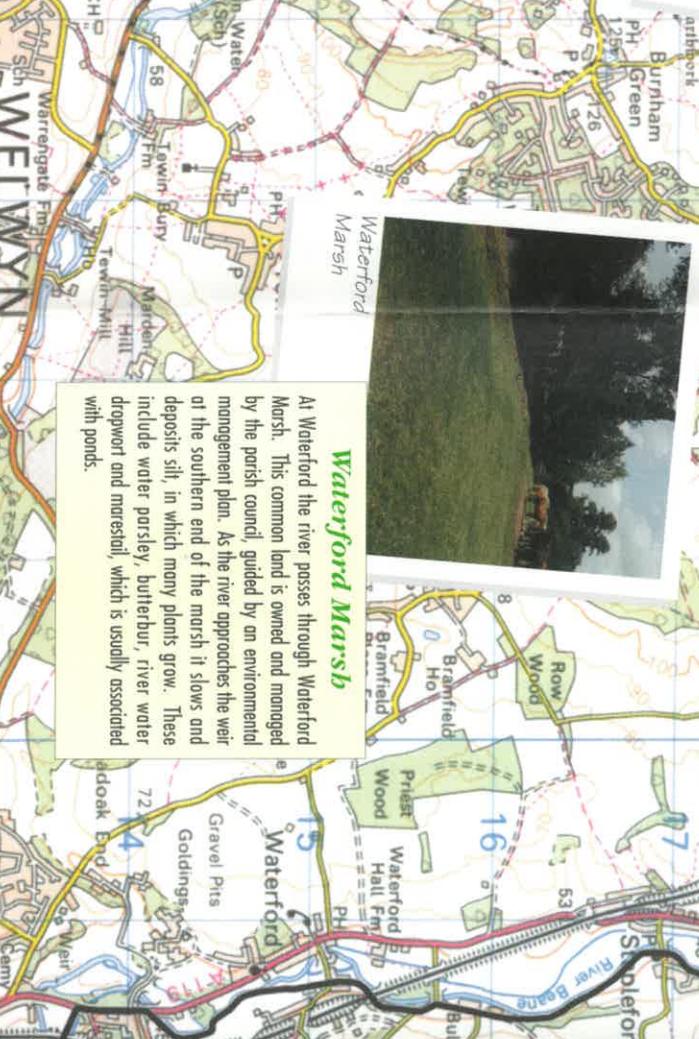
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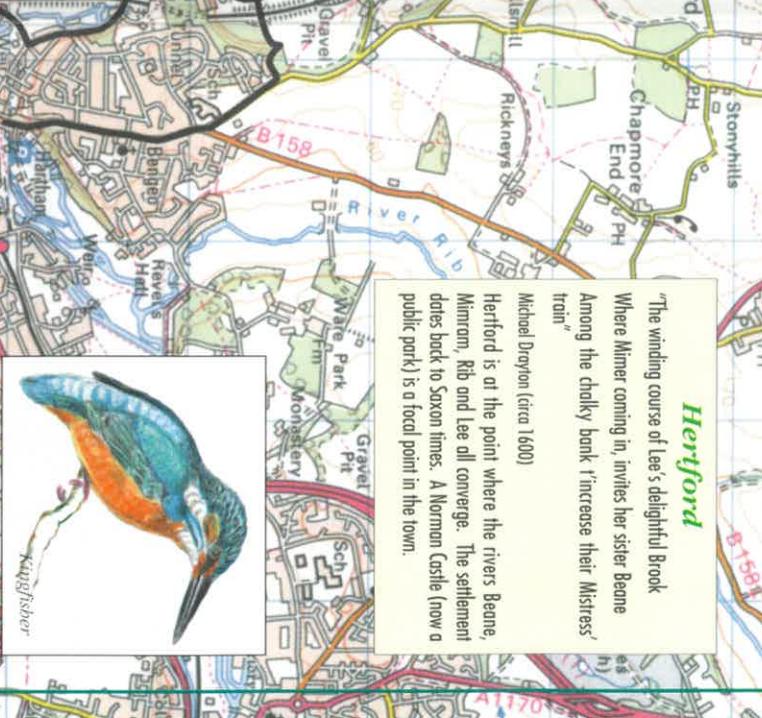
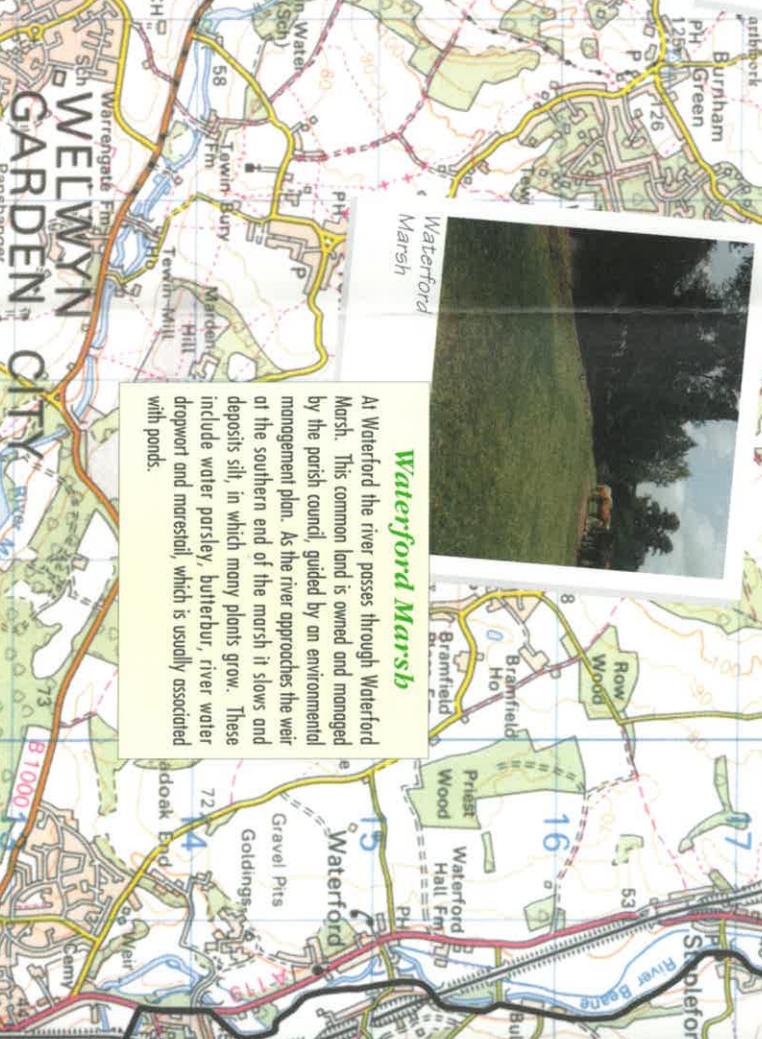
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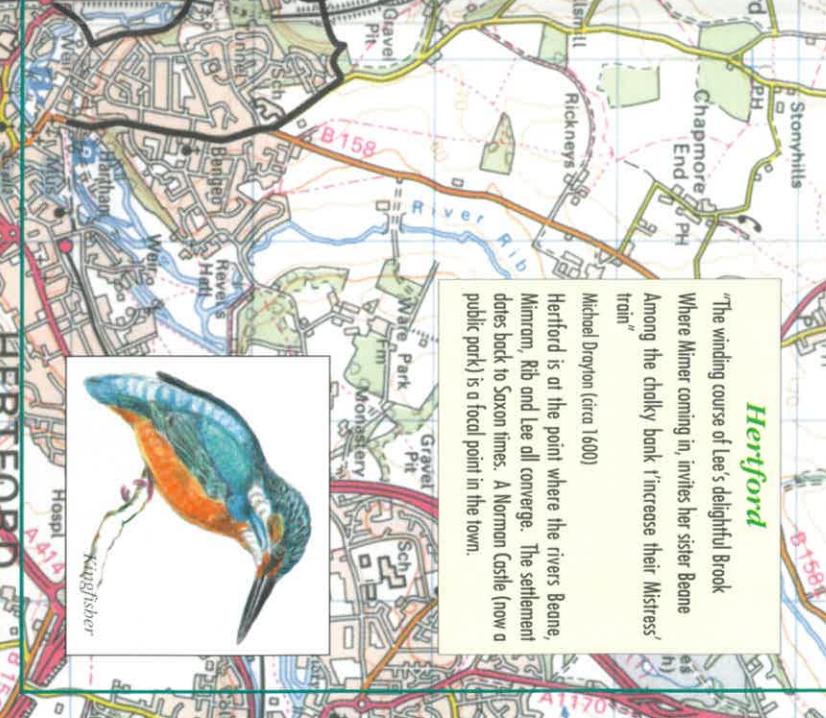
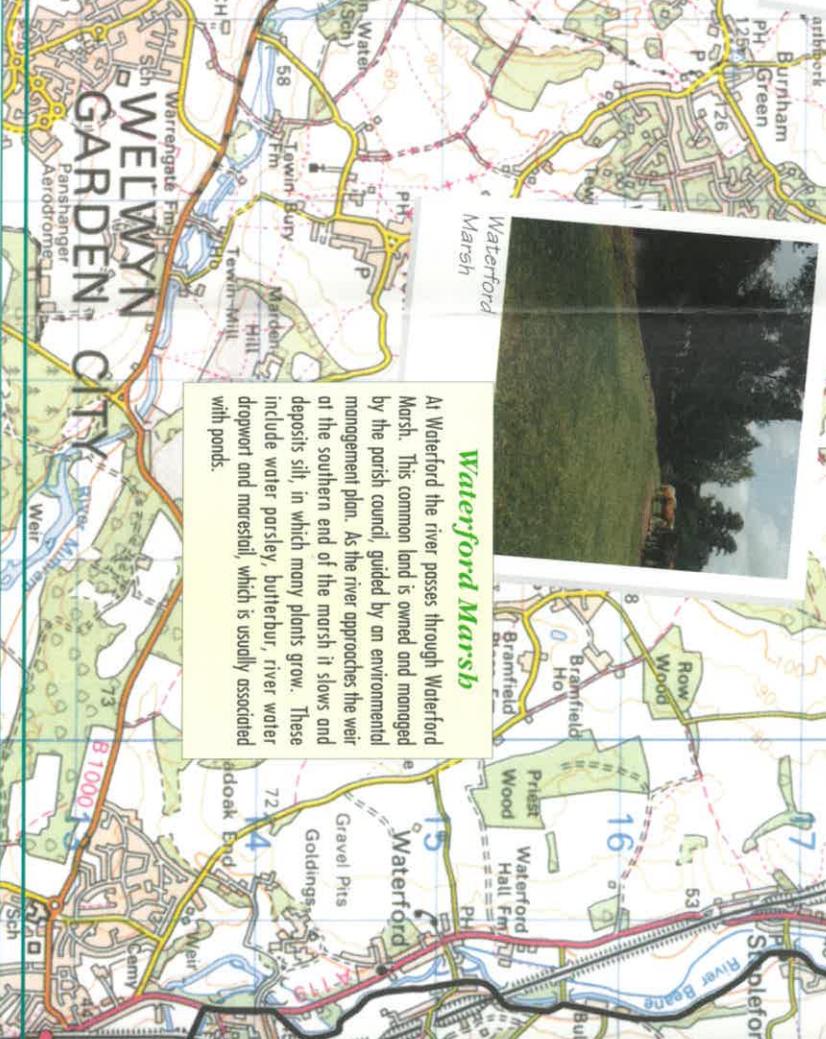
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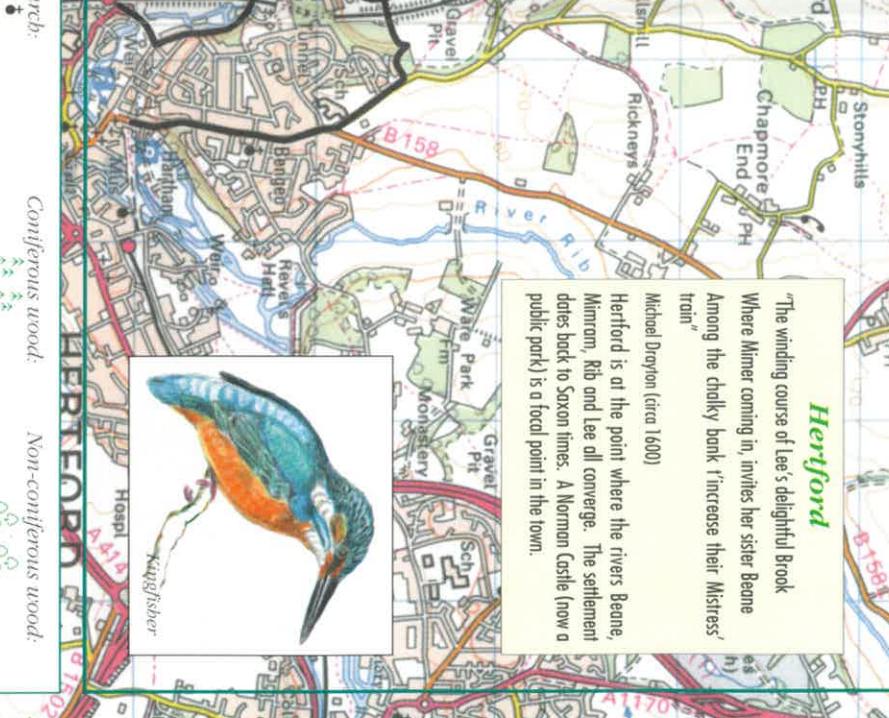
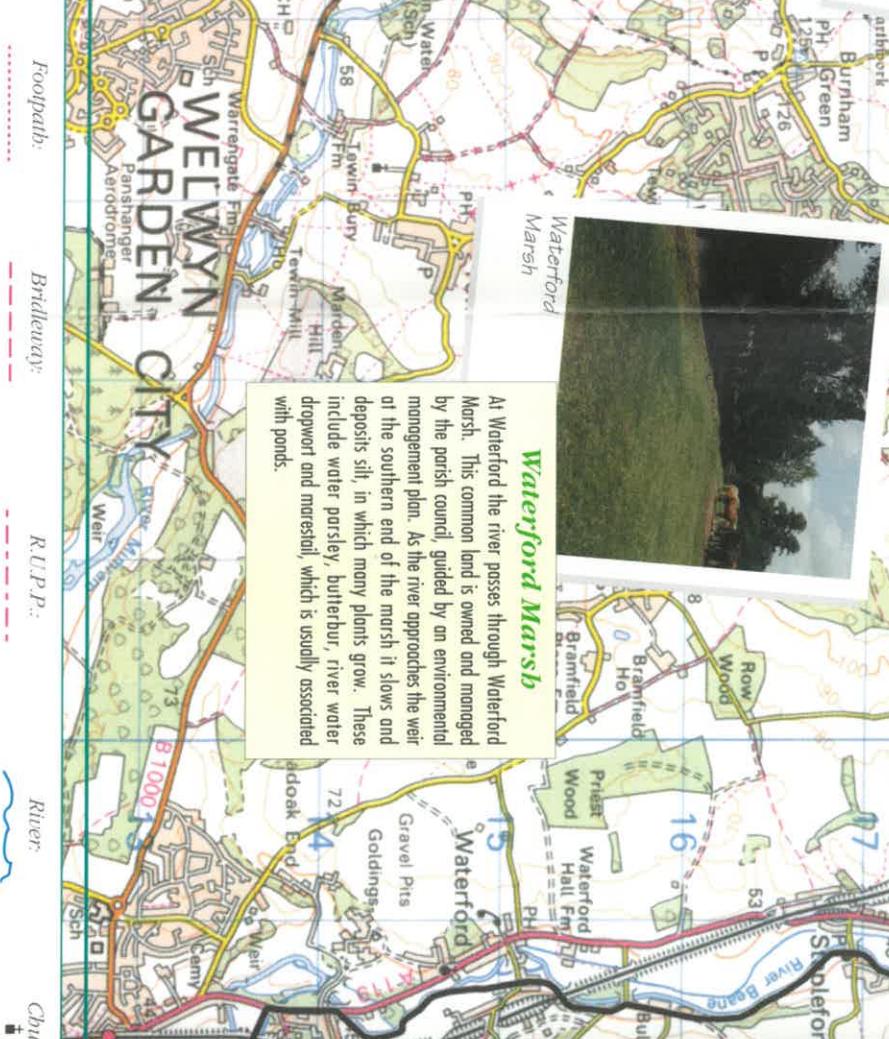
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