

Bengo Trails 7: Ware Park Manor and the River Lee Navigation

This trail takes walkers from St Leonard's Church, through the grounds of the former Ware Park Manor, and returns along the River Lee navigation. It provides commanding views across the Lee Valley and King's Meads while remaining within the bounds of Bengo.

This trail was produced by the [Love Bengo Community Group](#)ⁱ.

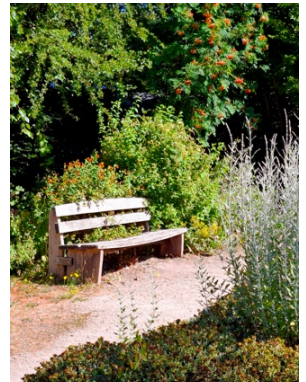
Starts and ends: St Leonard's Garden opposite St Leonard's Church, St Leonard's Rd, Bengo, Hertford SG14 3JW

Distance: 2.5m/4km

Conditions: Pavements, footpaths and bridleways. Some uneven surfaces which can be wet and muddy in winter. Contains uphill and downhill sections.

St Leonard's Garden is a delightful community garden overlooking the 12th century St Leonard's Church.

Starting at St Leonard's Garden, head east along St Leonard's Road, turn right and continue downhill along Ware Park Road. There is no pavement towards the bottom of Ware Park Road – take care when walking in the road. Cross the bridge over the River Rib and follow the raised pavement alongside the road.



The **River Rib** originates to the north, near the village of Buckland, and runs roughly parallel to the A10 until it joins the River Lee in Bengo.

Continue along Ware Park Road until it curves around to the right and crosses over a disused millstream.

The disused **Ware Park millstream** is barely recognisable; all that remains are the ornate cast iron balustrades of the bridge. The millstream used to take water from the River Rib to power the Ware Park Mill. The water wheel was unique in the area in that it was an overshot wheel, where the water runs over the top of the wheel, rather than the usual undershot wheel.

Turn right immediately after the bridge onto restricted byway 98. Continue to follow the path uphill through the woods, which are within the grounds of the old Ware Park Manor.





Ware Park Manor is mentioned in the Domesday book and has passed through many changes over the years. It was owned by the Fanshaw family in the 16th-17th century, before being sold to London barrister William Parker. In the early 20th century, it passed into the hands of Hertfordshire County Council and was used as a hospital for tuberculosis patients. The Manor house was converted to flats in the 1980s.

Continue to follow the byway until it levels out and passes through a gate into open fields. Keep following the path in a straight line across the fields until a metal gate where the path meets the farm track. Turn right through the gate and follow on to the farm track (part of restricted byway 97). Ware Carmelite Monastery can be glimpsed through the hedge on the opposite side of the track.

Ware Carmelite Monastery used to house an order of Carmelite nuns. The order was established in Notting Hill in the 1920's before moving to Ware in 1958.

Just before the road bridge over the A10, turn right and head downhill on restricted byway 97. Keep following this path as it curves around to the right and follows the River Lee Navigation.



The River Lee Navigation forms the southern boundary of the Bengeo ward. The river is a major tributary of The Thames and has been a trading route since the bronze ages. Various Acts of Parliament have been enacted since the 15th century to improve the river for navigation. The river was of great importance to the various industries of Hertford but is now mainly used for leisure as well as being a haven for wildlife.

Continue to follow the byway, passing the New Gauge House on the opposite side of the river.

The New Gauge House dates from 1856 and was built to extract water from the River Lee to supply the New River. The New River was opened in 1631 to supply drinking water to north London and the original source was the nearby Chadwell Spring. The flow of water from the spring proved to be insufficient, hence the extension to extract water from the River Lee. The metal structure in front of the building is an eel screen which is a recent addition to prevent eels from entering the New River thereby protecting the population in the River Lee.



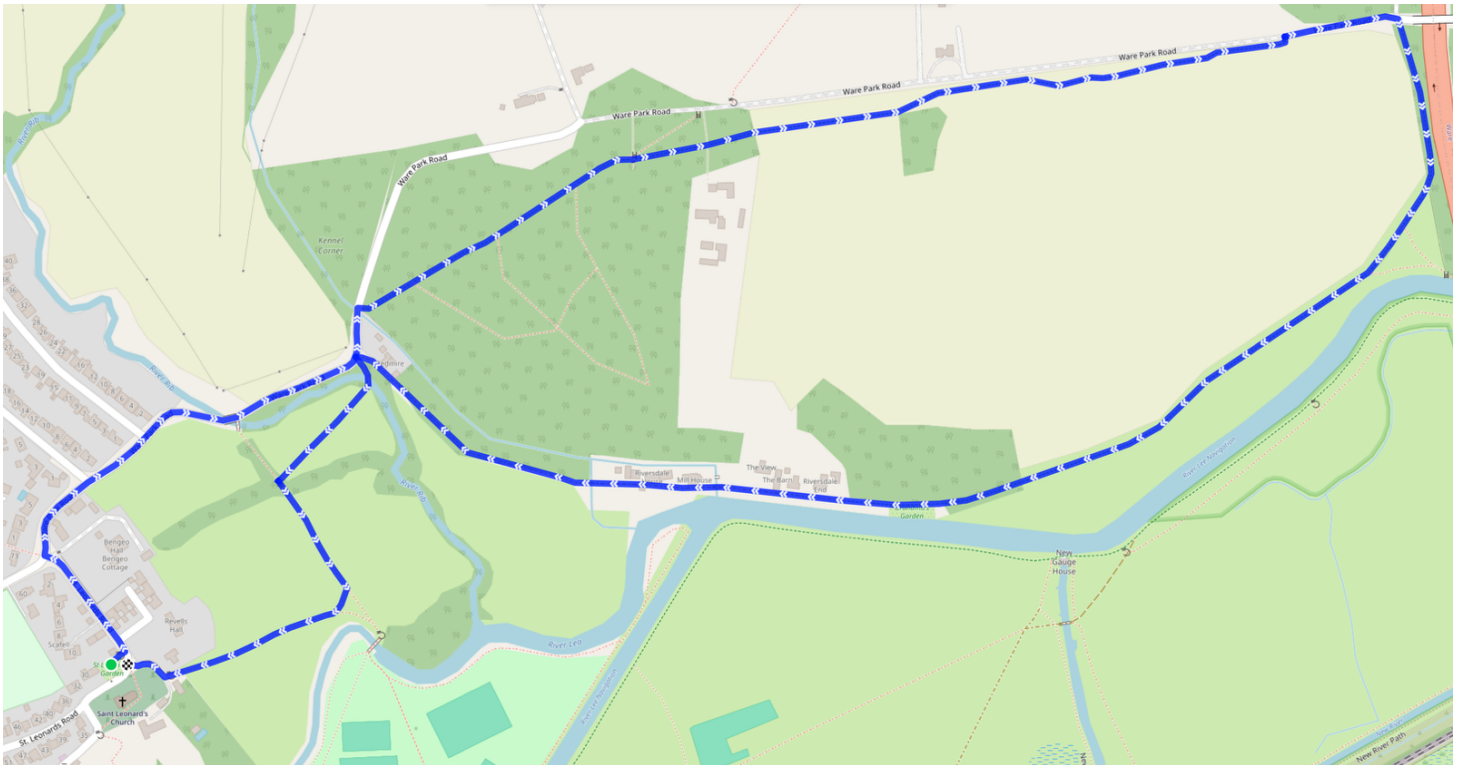
Continue to follow the byway until the site of Ware Park Mill.



Ware Park Mill was one of many mills in the Hertford area. Built in 1721 it was used to grind corn for animal feed until the 1950's when it was demolished. The remains of the mill race can still be seen.

Continue to follow the byway. Just before it joins Ware Park Road, turn left to cross the footbridge over the River Rib. Follow the path diagonally across the field, then turn left across a small bridge. Follow the path and just before you reach the footbridge over the river, turn right and walk up the slope towards St Leonard's Church. Turn right through the gate and return to St Leonard's Garden where the trail ends.

Route mapⁱⁱ



ⁱ Formerly the Community Steering Group for the Bengoe Neighbourhood Area Plan ⁱⁱ Route map sourced from openstreetmap.org