



**I G Liddell**

***Get out of London!***

**North-east to Epping**



The text in this document is merely an indication of what might be possible ... or what might have been possible at the time of researching (2019) or later revision. All walking routes are subject to change, but the pace of urban change is greater than in rural areas.

Each reader must assess whether each part of the route qualifies as suitable or safe for public access. The author does not warrant any point of legality or safety in any part of the description of the route.

Thanks are due to many people who have helped me with route-finding and with intelligence local to a number of areas traversed by the route. Their contributions enrich the route and the stories along it. Clearly, any mistakes and misinterpretations remain with the author.

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Front cover photograph:  
Hill Wood, Epping Forest

# Trafalgar Square to Epping station

# CARD NE

Start	Nelson's Column, Trafalgar Square — <b>WC2N 5DU</b>
Finish	Epping station— <b>CM16 4HW</b>
Distance	35.6km
Duration	4 hours 35 minutes
Ascent	292m

## Introduction

The route of the walk starts at the foot of Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, one of the most iconic spots in London.

Trafalgar Square was laid out from 1830, on land which used to be royal mews stabling for Whitehall Palace (which is down Whitehall on the left). Work began on the National Gallery in 1832, and Nelson's Column was erected in 1843 (the Landseer lions only arrived in 1867).

The equestrian statue of King Charles I to the south of the square is the London zero-point for road distance measurement. Rather confusingly, the epicentre of road *numbering* for England and Wales is at St Paul's Cathedral, next to St Martin le Grand, which was the headquarters of the General Post Office. The days of the post coaches may have passed, but the atavistic streak maintained the GPO at the heart of the road system.

The route is split into two sections at Snaresbrook, giving most of "rural" Epping Forest to the northern section. Snaresbrook Underground station (Central Line) is about 550m distant from the break-point between the sections.

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*Trafalgar Square —  
King Charles I and  
Admiralty Arch*

# Trafalgar Square to Snaresbrook

17.5km  
3hr 34min  
50m ascent

## Introduction

**1.1** This section heads north-east to City Road, and on to the Grand Union Canal. The canal network is followed to the Olympic Park, where streetscapes take over as far as Jubilee Pond on Dames Road. From there to Snaresbrook, it follows the Epping Forest Centenary Trail and is on Epping Forest Land, apart from a short section of concrete on the approach to the Green Man roundabout.

At <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/1837902> you will find the map covering this section of the route.

## Route

**1.2** Make your way to the south-east corner of the square (by the Tube station entrance and opposite South Africa House). Cross the road using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then turn left to walk up the right-hand footway of Charing Cross Road with South Africa House on your right.

Turn right onto Duncannon Street, with the church of St Martin-in-the-Fields on your left.

On the left, you will pass Maggi Hambling's *A Conversation with Oscar Wilde* at the foot of Adelaide Street.

Continue ahead to take the left-hand footway onto Strand.

Across Strand you will see Charing Cross station, with a replica of the Eleanor Cross in the forecourt. The original cross (one of a set which was erected between 1291 and 1294 in memory of Eleanor of Castile, wife of King Edward I, noting the nightly



*Replica of the Eleanor Cross,  
Charing Cross station*





*A Conversation with Oscar Wilde, by Maggi Hambling*

*Bush House*



resting-places of her body as it was conveyed to London from Harby in Lincolnshire, where she died) was destroyed during the Civil War: the statue of King Charles I occupies the original site of the cross.

The replica was erected in 1865, so it is hardly surprising that it is more ornate than the original. In fact, the replica was commissioned by the South Eastern Railway Company to lend some *gravitas* to their new station and its incorporated hotel.

Strand (more often than not, it is saddled with the definite article) was originally the point at which the tidal Thames water lapped the land on its north shore, before Bazalgette's improvements (notably, the main sewerage system) created the Embankments. The Thames thereafter ran more narrowly (and more swiftly).

These works, and the building of bridges with wider arch-spans, were the death-knells for the frost fairs on the Thames, the faster flow preventing ice from forming on the river. Many businesses which popped up on the ice were suddenly deflated as a result.

Continue along Strand, with its shops, refreshment-houses, theatres and High Commissions, crossing to the right-hand footway at the foot of Southampton Street, using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. You will soon pass the entrance to the Savoy Hotel.

The Savoy Hotel was built next to the theatre where Richard d'Oyly Carte had staged the "Savoy Operas" of WS Gilbert and Sir Arthur Sullivan. Claude Monet was an early guest (and was only one of many artists who have painted river scenes from his hotel bedroom), and it soon became London's best-known hotel, frequented by the good and the great.

Savoy Court is the main entrance to the hotel, which is reached off Strand. It can boast two curious claims to fame. Cars drive on the right (this was originally to allow cab drivers to open the passenger door from within the vehicle), and the roundabout at the hotel door defined the required maximum turning circle for a London taxi.

Cross over Lancaster Place, the road leading northwards from Waterloo Bridge, using



the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and continue along the right-hand footway of Strand.

On your right, you will pass Somerset House (once the headquarters of the Inland Revenue, and now an art gallery) and King's College London. On the left is Bush House (indelibly associated with the BBC World Service), St Mary le Strand church, and the Australian High Commission.

Pass to the right of St Clement Danes, which was designed by Sir Christopher Wren and later became the "RAF church".

Behind the east end of St Clement Danes stands a statue of Samuel Johnson, the lexicographer..

On the left, the Royal Courts of Justice rise up, after which the dragon pillar announces your arrival within the City of London: here, the street name changes to Fleet Street. Legal offices and their attendant businesses still abound, though this is no longer the centre of London's newspaper industry.

When you reach El Vino, the legendary location of past journalistic liquid lunches, cross the road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to take up the left-hand footway of Fetter Lane.

Fetter Lane has been in place since at least the fourteenth century. For many years, there was a gibbet at the junction with Fleet Street. The street has played host to politics (the Socialist Party of Great Britain was founded here), religion (for many years the headquarters of the London Moravian Mission), and law (there are several specialist court buildings on the street to this day). There is a statue of John Wilkes (1725-97), the journalist and politician, where New Fetter Lane takes the traffic.

Pass to the left of the Wilkes statue: here, the main traffic route becomes New Fetter Lane, but you should take the narrower Fetter Lane which runs parallel.

As you emerge onto High Holborn, look up above the door of the building on your left to find the arms of the city of Birmingham. This used to be offices of the Midland Bank,



*Dr Samuel Johnson*



*Holborn Bars*





*Equestrian statue of Prince Albert, Holborn Circus*

*Smithfield market clock*

founded in that city. On the other side of High Holborn, the symphony in brick is Holborn Bars, which housed the Prudential Assurance Company for many years (and which is now used as an event space): it is a true high-point of Victorian Commercial Gothic.

When it was built (work started in 1878), the building boasted a chapel, restaurant and theatre hall. The building had separate entrances for women, who had their own library and roof promenade. The provision of electric lighting and hot running water throughout represented the epitome of modernity. It is Grade II\* listed. Charles Dickens lived on the site before the current building was erected.

**1.3** Turn right to follow the right-hand footway of High Holborn to the end of New Fetter Lane at Holborn Circus. Turn left to cross High Holborn, passing in front of the equestrian statue of Prince Albert as he doffs his hat to the traffic with practised geniality.

This major junction has been an important meeting-point for centuries. The junction was laid out in 1867, specifically to its commanding design, with six roads converging at the statue of Prince Albert. Following recent remodelling, the junction is now of five roads, with St Andrew's Street running onto New Fetter Lane. The A4 branches off the A40 at this point.





Turn right to cross over the end of Hatton Garden, home of the London diamond trade, and make your way down the left-hand footway of Charterhouse Street, crossing the end of Ely Place.

Ely Place was, as the name might suggest, the location of the London *pied-à-terre* of the Bishop of Ely, and the close remained outwith London jurisdiction until as recently as the 1930s. In addition to the primary ecclesiastical jurisdiction, even the pub was licensed by the magistrates of Cambridgeshire.

At the foot of the hill, where the River Fleet used to run (and still does, though in a culvert), cross Farringdon Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and rise on the other side, still on the left-hand footway. Smithfield Market is on your right. Turn left onto St John Street, but not before glancing at the Grand Avenue to your right, with its finely-painted roof trusses.

Cross over Cowcross Street and follow the left-hand footway of St John Street. Opposite a tree-clad central refuge, bear left onto St John's Lane ahead (and noticing the inconsistency of the street nomenclature). This leads you through St John's Gate: beyond the gate, keep to the right-hand footway to reach Clerkenwell Road.

The gate dates from 1504, and formed part of Clerkenwell Priory, of the Knights of St John. Following the dissolution of the priory, the building served many purposes: Samuel Johnson worked here, and it was the childhood home of William Hogarth, whose father ran a coffee-house (Latin lessons came with the coffee, apparently).

When, during the 1870s, the Order of St John was revived, the building became the headquarters of the Order and of its rather better-known subsidiary, the St John Ambulance service, which is the principal provider of volunteer First Aid support to many events throughout the land.

On the far side of Clerkenwell Road is the priory church, which has ornate gates facing onto St John's Square: the gates commemorate Sir Thomas Docwra, prior and diplomat, who supervised the building of St John's Gate.

Cross Clerkenwell Road using the refuge, and walk up the right-hand side of St John's Square, past the Docwra gates, then ahead onto Jerusalem Passage, to reach Aylesbury Street.

Aylesbury Street contains fine examples of Art Deco architecture, of which there is quite a quantity in Clerkenwell.

Turn right here, then take the first street on the left, Woodbridge Street, following its left-hand footway. Pass on your left the "Clerkenwell Medical Mission" at Woodbridge Chapel.

*St John's Gate*







*Finsbury Bank for Savings*

Woodbridge Chapel dates from 1830, and was built (ironically, on the site of a former distillery) for Independent Calvinists; it later incorporated the medical mission. Today, an evangelical sect occupies the building.

At the end of Woodbridge Street, bear right onto Sekforde Street, passing on your left the solid white sometime headquarters of the Finsbury Bank for Savings.

This was one of the “penny savings” banks set up in the early part of the nineteenth century in order to encourage a culture of saving and insurance among the urban populace: they used the idea of keeping out of the workhouse as a strong incentive to save, or to invest in a “penny policy” to cover burial costs. Charles Dickens was a client, and later espoused the expansion of the idea, along with the remarkable Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906), of whom more will be told when the walk reaches Victoria Park (see page 16). The premises in Sekforde Street were built for the bank in 1840: the building is now a private residence.

At the end of Sekforde Street, turn left to regain St John Street. Cross Skinner Street, and continue up the left-hand footway of St John Street. When you reach Islington Museum on

your left, usse the pedestrian crossing to continue on the right-hand footway: here there is a row of shops fronting a slab tower block, Wyclif Court. Pass to the left of the shops and turn right into Wyclif Street, with the red bulk of College Building of City, University of London on your left.

*Northampton Square*



The university’s history goes back to the Northampton Polytechnic Institute, which was founded in Clerkenwell in 1894, and to an extent also to the Northampton Institute (founded in 1852) which was established for the education of local people. Both of these name-check the Marquess of Northampton, who donated the land. These grew into the City University in 1966, and then, as a constituent college of the federal University of London, to its current title (with its often



unwieldy comma). As a university, there have always been close links with the Corporation of the City of London, with degrees in business, finance and law, but there has always been a wide range of subjects — when the Polytechnic Institute was established, there were courses in (among other subjects), applied physics, horology, and “Domestic Economy and Women’s Trades” (my quotation-marks). The Lord Mayor of London is *ex officio* the Rector of the institution.

**1.4** Continue on the right-hand footway of Wyclif Street to reach the gate into Northampton Square. You may either walk through the square, passing its central shelter on your right-hand side, or take the left side of the square past the main entrance to the university (and passing the memorial to the Marquess of Northampton on the wall).

Exit the square along Ashby Street, using its left-hand footway. You will come out onto busy Goswell Road. This street forms part of the A1 road which runs between London and Edinburgh.

Turn left along the left-hand footway of Goswell Road, following it to the junction with Moreland Street. Use the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to cross Goswell Road, and follow the right-hand footway of Moreland Street to its end, crossing to the left-hand footway by the pedestrian crossing just before the end of the street. Turn left onto Central Street and follow the left-hand footway to reach City Road.

Buses run up and down the City Road (though not necessarily in and out the Eagle) linking with stations at Angel and Kings Cross to your left, and with stations at Old Street and Liverpool Street to your right (from the bus stop across City Road).

**1.5** Cross City Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then turn right to cross Graham Street in like manner. Follow the left-hand footway of City Road to the junction with Wharf Road on the left, just before a site containing a petrol station and a fast-food outlet. Turn left to follow the left-hand footway of Wharf Road to reach the Regent’s Canal. Cross the bridge and, opposite the Narrowboat pub, turn left to descend to the towpath.

Off to the right (south-west), a short detour on the towpath will take you to City Road Basin, and to the east portal of the Islington Tunnel.



Moreland Street





*Left — The Narrowboat pub,  
Wharf Road*



*Right — Regent's Canal  
near Wenlock Basin*

The Regent's Canal was dug between 1812 and 1816: the canal system which linked London and the Midlands needed easier access to the docks on the Thames than the tidal river (from Brentford) would afford, and the route from Paddington to Limehouse completed that missing link. City Road Basin was an important wharfage facility for the north-west side of the City, and for surrounding areas of the City and Islington.

Some parts of the canal between here and Stratford may not be the prettiest of areas, and at times, much of the length of the towpath is packed with pedestrians, runners (at various speeds) and cyclists. Beware, though — many of these speed-users exhibit behaviour which is consistent with not being literate enough to read the simple signs and path-markings which indicate the “rules of the towpath”. Despite these potentially dangerous unpleasantnesses, the canal presents the only practicable route between Islington and the Olympic Park.

Turn left along the towpath to pass beneath Wharf Road, beyond which, there is a canal-level entrance to the Narrowboat pub. Almost immediately, you will pass Wenlock Basin on the far side of the canal. You will soon pass a lock on the canal, and pass beneath a bridge, which carries New North Road.

There are bus services on New North Road: access to road level is by a stairway beyond the bridge.

Note that the towpath is surfaced with flagstones rather than the more usual tarmac or pounded earth. This is because high-voltage



electricity cables have been laid below, capitalising on the canal's efficient (and easily inspected for maintenance) route through London.

**1.6** Continue along the towpath to the next bridge, which carries Bridport Place at Baring Road: here, the canal bends slightly to the right. Beyond the next bridge (Whitmore Bridge), the canal bank is lined with restaurants, cuisines covering the world from Venezuela to Japan.

A bridge takes you over the entry into Kingsland Basin, and on towards Kingsland Road.

Kingsland Road has frequent bus services, and Haggerston station is a mere 300m to the north.

Pass beneath Kingsland Road, then pass beneath the Overground railway (this time, the Windrush Line between Dalston and Surrey Quays via Whitechapel). Here, the towpath now runs parallel to Dunston Street.

The next bridge is Haggerston Bridge, of the older arched design: beyond this bridge, the towpath is slightly below the level of the street on your left. Next, the towpath passes beneath Queensbridge Road, and then passes a lock to reach another bridge, this time carrying Pritchards Road over the canal.

All the way from Wharf Road, the canalside buildings have been subject to kaleidoscopic change. Tnnnnhere is a rich mix of old industrial buildings (some of which are still active), bright new housing (almost all of which is blocky complexes of flats), estates of social housing, and the rebirth of old establishments as new businesses (such as the Kingsland restaurant area).

This large-scale rejuvenation of stretches of the canal can mean that the towpath becomes very crowded, particularly during good weekend weather. Additionally, the lure of living on the water has drawn many more people — and given the state of the property market, one may see one reason why this might be more of a



*Top — Kingsland Basin  
Above — Haggerston Bridge*





*Cambridge Heath gasworks*

practical requirement — which brings more pressure to bear on the towpath, and on the sought-after tranquillity.

Broadway Market, which lies off to the left at this bridge, is situated on one of the main drovers' roads into London, and has been a hub of shops and markets since the late nineteenth century. As well as having all the week-round shops, cafés and pubs, the area hosts a vibrant Farmers' Market on Saturdays.

**1.7** Beyond this bridge, skeleta of deflated

gasometers fill the view on the far side of the canal (at least until they are bundled out of sight by new flats), and after another dip beneath the Overground (this time, the services on the Weaver Line out of Liverpool Street), you will reach Mare Street.

There are good bus links from Mare Street. Cambridge Heath station is just south of here, but services are limited compared to the level of bus-borne connectivity.

Beyond Mare Street, the canal bends gently to the right, and the buildings on the left give way to the greenery of Victoria Park.

The area now known as Victoria Park was created from a purchase, by the Crown Estates, of 88ha of land in 1845. The park was designed and laid out by Sir James Pennethorne, a pupil of John Nash, who designed The Regent's Park — many people have noted the similarities between the two parks. Victoria Park soon became an essential green lung for the East End, and was for many children the only extent of unbuilt land they saw. William Morris was one of many well-known people to use its Speakers' Corner, which was a park feature for a century.

*Old Ford Lock and stables*



Continue on the towpath, passing beneath Bridge 53, which carries the access to the park from the Bonner Gate. About 150m beyond the bridge, there is a gate in the fence on the left.

This is a point of decision: to follow the towpath or to explore the park? Both routes have their merits, but the park route will take you to an

area replete with shops and eating establishments, with transport options, as well as showing you some of the historic aspects of the park itself. The towpath route is simpler, and probably quicker, and it will give you access to its own history.

Your choice — the park route is described as an alternative (and is thus printed in green) after the towpath route below.

The towpath route continues ahead, passing Old Ford Lock. Next to the lock, there are the stables which used to house the draught-horses which worked the canal. Pass beneath Old Ford Road, then after a further 60m, leave the towpath to your left, then double back for a few metres and turn right to descend to the towpath of the Hertford Union Canal.

**1.8** Make your way along the towpath to the first bridge: this is a major access point for Victoria Park. The next bridge is a skew bridge: continue to the simple Three Colts Bridge at Gunmaker Lane.

This is the point at which the Victoria Park alternative (described below) rejoins the towpath route.

For the route via Victoria Park, leave the towpath (approximately 150m beyond bridge 53) to reach the perimeter carriageway through the park. Turn left along the road for a few metres, and turn right to take a path which crosses an ornate wrought-iron bridge onto Pagoda Island.

A pagoda was brought to the park when it opened in 1845: it came from Hyde Park, where it was a gateway to the Chinese exhibit at the 1842 Exhibition. The pagoda suffered damage during the Second World War and was demolished some years later. In 2010, when the park's refurbishment got under way, the original designs for the pagoda were consulted, and a replica was built. This return to Pennethorne's original plans for the park included a bridge across the lake from the canalside carriageway (which you will have crossed): it had not been built in 1845, but was at last completed.

Turn left at the pagoda to cross another bridge. At the T-junction of paths, turn right, then bear left to reach a shelter. Take the right-hand path beyond the shelter: it leads out onto the perimeter carriageway. Turn right along the carriageway to reach Grove Road.

To the left, there is a major cluster of shops, cafés and pubs to cater for all tastes. From stops beside the shops, buses on the 277 and 425 routes will take you to rail and Tube links at Dalston (Overground services), Mile End (District Line, Hammersmith and City Line), Canary Wharf (Jubilee Line and Overground

*Pagoda, Victoria Park*







*The Burdett-Coutts fountain, Victoria Park*

services) and Stratford (Central Line, Jubilee Line, Docklands Light Railway, Overground, Elizabeth Line, and National Rail services).

Cross Grove Road, and enter the east side of Victoria Park. After a few metres, pick up a path which goes off half-right (east) towards a spired high-Victorian structure which looks as if it might have broken away from a corner of St Pancras station — a

terracotta ice-floe — and drifted across London to its resting-place in the park. This structure is the Burdett-Coutts Drinking Fountain. You will reach it with a bend of the path to the left: you can hardly miss its presence.

The fountain commemorates the redoubtable Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts (who was later ennobled in her own right by Queen Victoria as Baroness Burdett-Coutts) was a remarkable philanthropist, and was one of the wealthiest heiresses of the Victorian age, the second barrel of her surname coming from the Coutts banking family.

An early foundation was a modest property in Shepherd's Bush as a safe residence for women who had, in the usual wording of the day, "fallen into immorality" — that is, into thievery or prostitution. The co-founder was Charles Dickens. She was a founder of what is now the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, endowed three Anglican dioceses in Australia, Canada and South Africa, and pioneered social housing in Columbia Square (Bethnal Green).

She helped Turkish peasants in the wake of the Russo-Turkish War, and set up a sewing school in Spitalfields for women affected by the collapse of the silk trade. She paid for the fountain and statue of Greyfriars Bobby in Edinburgh, and was president of the RSPCA. All this, and much more, was achieved out of her inheritance (which was cut by 60% when she married a foreign national in 1881).

Set off from the fountain in an east-south-easterly direction (ninety degrees right from your approach path), and continue to a junction of four paths. Bear half-right towards a bridge over the canal, but do not cross the bridge. Instead, rejoin the towpath, keeping the canal on your right.

This is Three Colts Bridge on the Hertford Union Canal, and dates from 1830: it is a Grade II\* listed monument. The name probably derives from the arms of the Colet family: John Colet was a Mayor of London. There was a Three Colts pub nearby in the eighteenth

century. The Hertford Union Canal was dug to link the Regent's Canal with the River Lee by a short cut.

Here, the more direct towpath route and the facility-rich Victoria Park alternative route merge again.

**1.9** Follow the towpath down past a couple of locks, and pass beneath the roaring A12, the approach/egress for the north end of the Blackwall Tunnel. Beyond, there is one final lock to bring the canal level to that of the River Lee Navigation, the Hertford Union Lower Lock. Beyond the lock, the towpath bends left to join the River Lee Navigation.

The spelling of the river's name is inconsistent — is it Lee or Lea? Upstream, it's Lea (after all, the river rises at Leagrave, on the north side of Luton). Some will try to separate the river (Lea) from the navigation (Lee), but that does not always settle the matter.

At the next bridge, you must rise to road level, cross the river, and corkscrew down to the right to maintain your northbound route, the water now on your left. Pass beneath the railway (the Mildmay line of the Overground between Stratford, Hackney Wick, Willesden Junction and beyond), then at the next bridge, rise to the road level.

Turn right, and enter the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, passing the Copper Box arena on your right. Cross Waterden Avenue and take the broad walkway ahead. This crosses the River Lea.

The Waterglades is a newly-dug wetland area which uses and treats runoff water from the housing areas (previously the athletes'



*Hertford Union Canal*



*River Lee and the stadium*





*A straggly rowan tree tries hard to redeem the architecturally negligible environment of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park*

village) for recycling or before depositing it cleanly into the River Lea.

Beyond Olympic Park Avenue, the sterile walkway becomes Honour Lea Avenue: continue to the junction with Temple Mills Lane.

Stratford International station (served by Docklands Light Railway and Southeastern high-speed services, but with no international services) is about 550m over to the right, along Celebration Avenue (the whole post-Olympic zone is saccharine-coated with these toenail-curlingly kitsch

street-names): there are shops and restaurants on the way, and of course the vast Westfield mall is beyond (just in case you should need a bridal gown or yoghurt-maker for your forward route towards Epping).

The area now known as the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park was created, initially for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, out of a huge brownfield site of steel mills, marshalling yards, and many other industrial premises. About 150 years ago, this industrialisation was just beginning: the railway yards were on the east side at Temple Mills, and Stratford New Town (almost a century before the likes of Hatfield or Glenrothes) had built over the market gardens to provide housing for the incomers. To the south, there were soap works, brushmakers, chemical works, printworks, and a host of other factories.

The bulk of the area, though, was just low fields by the many branches and cuts of the River Lea. There was a grain mill, roughly where the main stadium stands today. In the fields were the beginnings of industry: a spinning mill, a tar and turpentine distillery, and the Photogenic Gas Works (which stood roughly where the Waterglades wetland area stands today) — “photogenic” coal gas was made by a special manufacturing process to optimise its use for street-lighting.

Following the departure of the Olympic Games, there are new houses, new shops and restaurants, and new leisure facilities, but it is all a bit sterile (early Milton Keynes, but with taller buildings and no red cycleways) and, along with the cringeworthy street-names, the whole assemblage tends to make the place look a bit like a child’s model town. It remains to be seen how well it stands the test of time.

**1.10** Starting from the junction, make your way eastbound on the right-hand footway of Temple Mills Lane. Pass beneath the rust-coloured bridge which carries pupils from Chobham Academy to their sports facilities, then cross the Lea Valley railway line. Draper Fields is now on your left.

Cross High Road Leyton by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to take the right-hand footway of Crownfield Road ahead, and walk its full length to Leytonstone Road (which becomes High Road Leytonstone north of this junction). Cross the road ahead by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing onto the right-hand footway of Cann Hall Road.

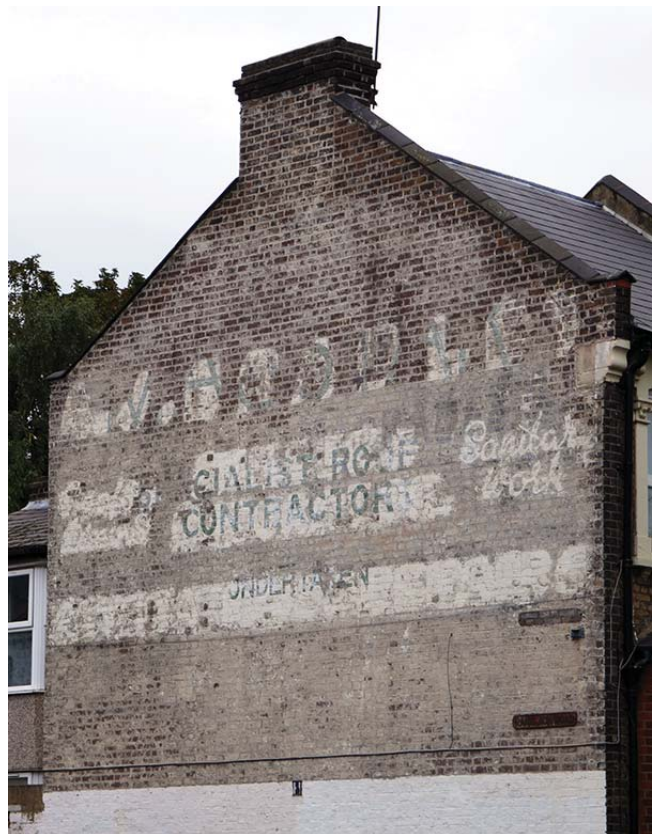
The domestic architecture is not particularly special in this area.

Take the first road on the right, Blenheim Road, then turn left to follow the left-hand footway of Ramsay Road. This has the advantage over Cann Hall Road of being quieter. At the next crossroads, there is a corrugated iron church, a prefabricated 'tin tabernacle'.

The need for new churches came with the urbanisation of the later part of the Industrial Revolution, as towns and cities expanded very quickly. At the same time, there was a drive to inculcate continuing church attendance in rural areas among people who had no transport, or who would be likely to use the lack of transport as an excuse to their employers for non-attendance.

The formation in 1844 of the Free Church of England, separating nonconformists from the Church of England, and the increasing self-identification of Methodists and other nonconformist denominations and sects, brought the need for more church buildings (apocryphally explained in Wales as "so that I have a chapel I don't go to").

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Church of Scotland had identified the need for over forty new churches, and the renowned engineer Thomas Telford produced a standard design. However, these kirks, cheap and not-very-cheerful as they were, (this is Scotland, remember) were still too expensive and would have taken too long to build in the rush for churches and chapels



*Ghost advertising,  
Cann Hall Road*



*Tin tabernacle,  
Ramsay Road*



throughout the rest of the country during the second half of the century.

Several companies, based in such cities as London, Liverpool and Glasgow, built prefabricated churches in corrugated iron (St Ikea's, anyone?), offering them by mail order via catalogues. Some companies segmented the market and concentrated on serving one type of purchaser (gentry, railway companies, and so on).

Some of these churches are still in ecclesiastical use, others have changed use (there are scout halls and discotheques), while others exist as no more than barns or iron shells in hedges. Yet others have, of course, returned to dust — or possibly to the great scrapyard of Time.

**1.11** Your feet now take the left-hand footway of Ramsay Road all the way to its end. Just before reaching the railway, the road takes a traffic-calming jog to the right: the left-hand footway just carries on regardless. After you have passed beneath the railway (the Suffragette Line of the Overground between Gospel Oak and Barking Riverside), it is a short step to the end of Ramsay Road: here, turn left onto Dames Road, and advance along the left-hand footway to reach the junction with Cann Hall Road.

From the bus stops here, you may reach stations at Forest Gate (Elizabeth Line) and Upton Park (District Line and Hammersmith and City Line) from left to right, and Leyton (Central Line) and Wanstead (Central Line, Hainault Loop) from right to left.

Turn right to cross Dames Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing: go forward to reach Jubilee Pond, a recent addition to this corner of Wanstead Flats.

It is at this point that you enter the area of Epping Forest which is maintained by the Corporation of the City of London. In Victorian times, the Corporation purchased, out of City revenues, tracts of land to provide areas for the recreation of the expanding population of London — open land such as Hampstead Heath and Burnham Beeches, commons in the southern extremity of London, and parks

such as Queen's Park and West Ham Park. You will be walking on land owned and managed by the Corporation until you drift into Epping suburbia at the end of the walk.

It has not taken long for a variety of wildlife to claim Jubilee Pond as home, and the accessible stations for both wheelchair-bound fishing and pram-bound watching are well used by the locals.

*Jubilee Pond,  
Wanstead Flats*



Pass to the left of the pond, then to the right of a rough car park, crossing a track from the car park at right angles. Ahead, pass between trees and continue until you reach a cross-track. If the track from the pond starts to bend right, you have overshot. Turn left onto the cross-track, which will lead you out onto Lake House Road at a bend. Cross the road, passing to the left of a chevron sign and some trees.

Immediately beyond the roadside trees, turn right onto a clear path through a line of trees, with sportsfields on the left. Continue ahead with houses on the right: eventually these will drift away from the line of the path. Carry on ahead (northwards) through the trees, until you arrive at a five-way path junction. Here, take the path to the left (with the street-lamps) out to Bushwood (a street). Cross the road and turn right to reach and cross Leyspring Road.

Leytonstone station is 800m distant from this point — follow Leyspring Road and keep ahead through an arch, and ahead to High Road, where turn right, then turn left to follow Church Lane to the station.



*Path alongside sportsfields,  
Wanstead Flats*

Continue ahead along the left-hand footway of Bushwood to reach Browning Road at the end. Cross Browning Road and turn right to follow the left-hand footway out onto Bush Road. Turn left along the left-hand footway, passing a pair of bus stops. You will soon reach a light-controlled pedestrian crossing. This is the south end of the sprawl of the Green Man Interchange.

Ahead, on High Road Leytonstone, there are frequent bus services to a variety of destinations, including Leytonstone station (Central Line), a couple of stops down to the left.

Cross Bush Road by the crossing, and plunge ahead. Your direct route will take you beneath the roundabout's roadway twice (ignore the crossing path in the middle), then over the Central Line. Do not bear left to the road (unless you need a Stratford-bound bus) but push ahead, in a few paces taking the path option to the north-north-west, rather than the north-westerly one which leads back towards the road.

About 40m ahead, a path wheels off to the right, with trees on the right: do not take this. Continue ahead, just west of north, passing three individual trees on your left before passing through a small copse.

In the open land beyond, make for the left-hand edge of a row of trees ahead: turn to the right here, then bend round to the left to pick up your west-of-north direction. From here, the path leads





*Epping Forest heathland,  
north of Whipps Cross Road*

out to Snaresbrook Road at a small car park: this is the end of this section.

If you should stray too far to the left, you will reach a couple of ponds: pass between them, then aim north-north-east to the car park. If you stray to the right, you will come out onto Snaresbrook Road at Eagle Pond: turn left along the road to reach the car park.

Buses on Snaresbrook Road will take you to a station for onward connections, but not by a direct route. Snaresbrook station (Central Line, Epping branch) is about 550m off to the right — pass the pond and turn right (opposite a carvery pub): at the next junction, turn left using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to reach the right-hand footway of High Street, then take Station Approach on the right, up to the entrance to Snaresbrook station.

There are all facilities on High Street beyond the railway bridge.

*Eagle Pond, just east of the  
start-point, on the link from  
Snaresbrook station*



# Snaresbrook to Epping

## 18.1km; 4hr 00min

## 242m ascent

### Introduction

**2.1** This section continues northbound through Epping Forest, passing just to the east of the centre of Chingford, to reach Bell Common, after which there is a simple descent to the station at Epping.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/1837905> covers this section of the route.

### Route

**2.2** If you are arriving at Snaresbrook station (Central Line, Epping branch), descend Station Approach and continue along the left-hand footway of High Street to reach and cross Hollybush Hill, then turn right along the left-hand footway to Snaresbrook Road, where follow the left-hand footway past Eagle Pond to reach the car park. Cross the road at the car park, and set off to the north along a track which will be muddy after rain. Follow the main path past a small open area on the right, then (where the main path bends right) bear left to follow the left edge of some more open land. Behind a fence on the left, you will see the corner of a school building. Follow the path into the woodland, and keep to the main path running northbound. There are occasional glimpses of a road to the left: about 1km after the fork by the school, take a short path which runs out to a road junction (you should be able to see the colours of the traffic lights).

*Point of departure from the main track at the corner of the school land*







*North Circular Road*

*Do not succumb to the black hole to the left of the house off Woodford New Road*



Cross Woodford New Road by a divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then turn right. Cross Forest Road by another such crossing, but do not advance to the major roundabout ahead.

Turn left to make your way along the right-hand footway of Forest Road. Note the waterworks buildings across the road from the bus stop: these give the name to the roundabout, a major

intersection for the North Circular Road.

Just beyond a bus shelter, take a path on the right which almost immediately ascends to The Circle, a grassed area which in fact covers an underground reservoir. Turn left, and follow the circumference of the circle clockwise through 90° to a path which goes off to the left into the woodland.

Almost immediately, turn right onto a broader path which leads to the footbridge over the North Circular Road, with the Waterworks Corner roundabout visible to your right.

The North Circular Road was designated and constructed in the inter-war period to link up the suburbs and their growing industrial areas, moving components between factories, and workers between home and work. It was designated (with its southern twin) as one of the concentric London Ringways during the 1960s, but that multi-loop project hit the political buffers, leaving areas of planning blight. The M25 approximates to another Ringway and, though it has relieved some of the congestion on the North Circular Road, much delay still exists, in particular near junctions which were never upgraded. It is estimated that a regular user of the North Circular Road will spend 60 stationary hours per year, admiring the roadside houses and verges.

**2.3** Cross the bridge, and continue on the path ahead. Soon, the land opens out to the right, with views across the greensward to Woodford New Road on the right.

You will catch a glimpse of a bus stop out on the road: this gives a possible, though hardly the best, link to Walthamstow Central station, and also (of



even more diluted usefulness) to Loughton and Debden stations.

Ahead, the main path draws you to the left of a house, but you should take a path off half-left at a white-topped pole (one of a huge number found throughout the Forest). Keep on following this track past the corner of some housing, following a bearing between north-west and north-north-west. The half-open nature of the woodland allows more light to penetrate than in other areas, particularly at times when the sun is low in the sky, and can shine from beneath the top cover of the trees.

Where you are presented with a choice of three tracks ahead, choose the rightmost of the three. Follow this track until you can see houses ahead: bear right to join another, broader track which runs parallel with the line of houses, out to a road.

This road is called Oak Hill; up to the right, there is a modern hotel: it is mainly a business, conference and events hotel, but it also contains a bar and restaurant.

Cross Oak Hill; at a path junction by the corner (on your left) of an estate of flats of varying ages over the past century, turn left and follow the path northwards through the forest, eventually arriving at The Charter Road. Cross the road to the foot of the lake in Highams Park.

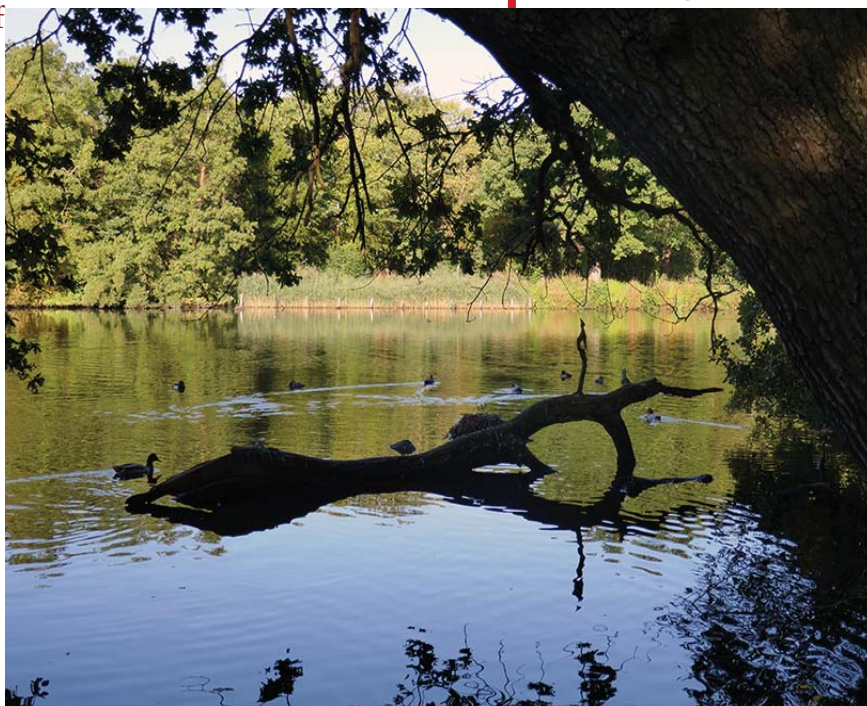
From this point, in 1km you may reach Highams Park station (on the Weaver Line of the Overground) by walking to the left, then left along the full length of Handsworth Avenue, then right on Hale End Road. The station is on the right at the level crossing.

**2.4** After you have taken a look at the short boardwalk at the foot of the lake, take the path to the right, to follow the lakeside along all of its eastern shore as far as the lakehead.

The lake is one of twenty-four within Epping Forest. Some are used for angling, some for boating, others are just there in the landscape. Many of the



*Morning light in the forest south of The Charter Road*



*Highams Park lake*





*Corporation traffic barriers at Chingford Lane crossing, looking ahead to The Lops*

lakes are man-made, either to enhance the scenery, or to regulate water flow. Some have been constructed to cover bomb craters from the Second World War. This lake predates the 1878 Act, having been designed in the early part of the nineteenth century by Humphrey Repton, the renowned landscape architect and gardener.

At the lakehead, do not cross to the left, but keep on northwards, gradually easing up to the right to join a track

with house-backs to the right: this track emerges onto Chingford Lane.

After you have crossed Chingford Lane, continue ahead on a clear path which runs in a north-easterly direction.

This area is known as The Lops, a reference to the common practice of lopping, or pollarding, the trees of the forest for better timber management. Pollarding in the Forest was a commoner's privilege until 1878, when the Epping Forest Act extinguished the commoners' rights in exchange for free access for all to the Corporation's forest lands. Some pollarding has been re-established recently by the Corporation, but the results of more than a century's cessation of the practice may be seen in the many trees throughout the Forest which have huge boles and multiple trunks.

*Traditional grassland management, practised on Whitehall Plain*

Keep to the north-easterly direction as you cross a path at a staggered junction. Keep the golf course on your right to its north-western corner; the path then continues, its direction now more a





north-north-easterly line. The watercourse known as The Ching is on your left.

**2.5** This path through Hatch Wood brings you out onto Whitehall Road, the final road crossing before you reach Chingford. Cross the road, and continue along the left edge of the field. Pass through a small copse into the next field, and on to a hedge boundary.

The grassland fields here are being managed in a traditional way by the Corporation. It is part of an overall process of re-introducing forest management practices from the past, as long as they do not conflict with modern requirements. This includes the re-introduction of grazing by cattle, which was suspended during the BSE epidemic of the late twentieth century. The English Longhorn cattle are kept in place by an invisible electronic fence. The wildlife, such as fallow deer and adders, are not restricted by electronic collars in the same way.

Beyond the hedge boundary, turn left and cross the infant Ching on an earthen bridge. Follow the clear path uphill. After about 450m, you will see evidence of a pond — rushes at the very least, if not actual standing water — on your right. Ahead, a path crosses diagonally: as you rise to it, you will see a mini-cliff formed at its edge.

Turn right onto this path, which leads to a forest car park. Follow the path out to the road, opposite the white wall of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. Cross the road using the refuge and turn right along the left-hand footway of Ranger's Road to reach the adjoining Butler's Retreat.

Butler's Retreat is today a café: the hotel (on the other side of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge) has a bar and restaurant — you need not want for refreshment hereabouts.

To reach Chingford station (one terminus of the Weaver Line of the Overground), go back to the west for 700m, continuing on the right-hand footway, past the Hunting Lodge, the Visitor Centre, and the hotel/pub. Cross Bury Road, when the street becomes Station Road, past some shops on the right, to a pedestrian crossing. Cross over, and continue ahead across the forecourt to Chingford station.



*Oak tree on the ascent  
towards Chingford*



*Queen Elizabeth's  
Hunting Lodge*





*Butler's Retreat*

The building known as Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge was commissioned by King Henry VIII in 1543, and was renovated for Queen Elizabeth I in 1589. The purpose of such buildings was to allow the chase to be viewed. There is no documentary evidence, however, that either monarch ever stayed at the lodge.

Adjoining the Lodge to the left is a new Visitor Centre for

Epping Forest, run by the Corporation and operating out of an old stables block adjacent to the hotel on its left. The building entitled Butler's Retreat is one of several which were built in the Victorian era to serve as places of rest and refreshment (the latter strictly non-alcoholic, such was the sway of the temperance movement in 1891) in areas of the Forest which had become popular touring destinations.

To reach this point from Chingford station (Overground), cross the station forecourt, cross Station Road at the pedestrian crossing, and turn right. Follow the left-hand footway for 700m, passing shops on the left, then crossing Bury Road, and continuing until, on the left, you reach a hotel, a Visitor Centre, Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge, and finally Butler's Retreat.

*Memorial drinking fountain, Chingford Plain*



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Epping Forest is the popular description for the most southerly extent of glaciation in Britain during the Ice Age, and much of the land covered by the Forest today, a tongue between the valleys of the River Lea and the River Roding



has poor gravelly soil unfit for agriculture. This has given us the heathland and the forested areas which today make up the Corporation's lands of Epping Forest.

**2.6** From the eastern end of Butler's Retreat, turn left to take a path down the side of the building to reach a granite drinking fountain, a memorial to a local MP. Ahead, a fingerpost indicates the available path options.

Take the one which points half-right, and descend gradually to the corner of a wood at the bottom. Continue ahead into the wood, and follow the clear path up the gradual ascent of Magpie Hill, and then ahead on the flat top of Long Hill. After about 1.2km from your entry-point into the woodland, cross over a crossing path.

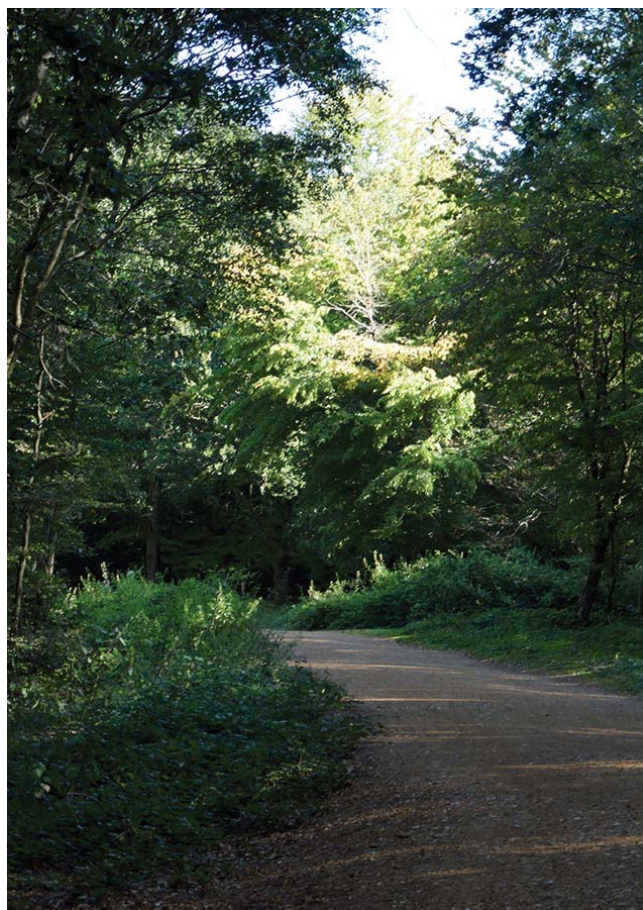
**2.7** About 600m ahead, the path veers briefly to the right to reach the corner of some open land. It then veers left again to follow the left edge of the open land, soon re-entering woodland to climb gently through Hill Wood, taking a right bend to come out onto, and cross, a road at a traffic squeeze, with a 20mph sign to the left, at Gate 83.

**2.8** Cross the road to reach a path slightly to the right of the squeeze-zone (Gate 82). Follow this path as it bends round the left: you will begin to hear the sound of traffic on Epping New Road to your right. When the path starts to distance itself from the road by turning to the west of north, you will come to a path junction with a clear path on the right.

If you continue ahead here, you will soon reach a road. Turn left here for a car park, a snackbar, and a pub. A detour to the pub, and then back to this point, will be slightly less than 1km in total.

Turn right at the path junction: this new path will lead you out onto Epping New Road opposite the Mount Pleasant forest car park.

If you come out onto the road opposite a gate, with a brown sign indicating the car park 200m ahead, just pop back into the woodland and continue on the main path to the turning described above.



*Path through Hill Wood*



*Gnarled and exposed roots on the route at High Beach*





*Critical stump post just north of Broadstrood car park: do not follow the main path, but turn left at the post*

This area of the Forest is known as High Beach. Alfred, Lord Tennyson is one of many luminaries down the ages to have lived in this area: Tennyson was treated for depression at a private asylum here, as was John Clare, another poet. Their times at High Beach overlapped: they may have met.

Cross over Epping New Road, and enter the car park.

Take the path which sets out from the right-hand side of the car park: it starts off southbound, then after a slight bend or two, begins to settle itself more consistently in a south-easterly direction.

**2.9** After about 600m, turn left onto a path which soon begins to bend to the right. The path descends as it bends, then bends left at the bottom, where a stream is crossed.

The path ascends to the north and gradually bends to the right to take up a north-easterly direction. This path comes out onto the road (Goldings Hill) at Broadstrood.

Here, there is a car park on each side of the road. There is also a bus stop for non-TfL services (not on Sundays, though) between Waltham Cross and Loughton.

Cross to the north side, and take the path on the right-hand side of the north car park, but turn left immediately behind the car park, at an anonymous waymark stump post.

If you find that the land is sloping away to your left, it means that you have missed the stump-post, and that you are heading south-east. Turn back to find the stump post and retrieve the correct route.

The path runs along the back of the car park, then bears right (in an easterly direction), then half-left to pick up a north-easterly line into a slight depression.

**2.10** Continue by ascending the hill on the other side of the depression. The path bends to the right, then comes out to meet a larger path on Copley Plain. Turn to the left to follow this path northbound: it will run out into a small car park: as at Broadstrood, there are in fact two car parks, one on each side of the road.

Cross the road, and follow the path ahead to the left of the northern car park: you will soon see a broad track running parallel to the path on its right. At a suitable place, cut over to the right to continue along the broad track. Ignore a forest road which goes off to the left: the track will begin to bend to the right. Once you have executed the main bend, look out on the left for a gap which leads to a wooden



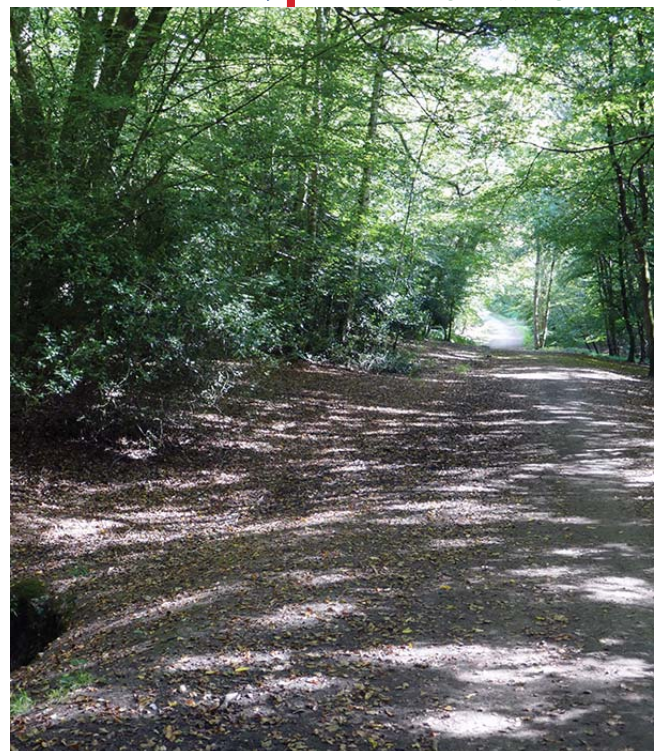


*Ambresbury Banks*

notice-board. The descriptive text on the notice-board points out Ambresbury Banks which stand before you.

Ambresbury Banks, like Loughton Camp about 4km to the south-west, dates back 2600 years to the Iron Age. It is a 4.5ha hillfort. Recent pollen analysis has established that there was no change in the forest ecology at that time, so it seems that the Iron Age settlement was simply a residence of safety. There is evidence of occupation during the Roman era: the local legend that it is the location of the last stand of Boudicca in the Iceni Revolt of 61CE has been disproved (as has it been for several other such claims, which were probably no more than local tourist puff). The single original entrance was set in the north-western side of the fortification, though there are other punctures in the banks today. The site has been subjected to archaeological digs and examinations several times since the first analysis was undertaken in 1881 by Augustus Pitt-Rivers.

*Path through Epping Thicks*



**2.11** Return to the path and turn left to continue on an eastbound trajectory: the path will bend to the left to take a fairly straight line just to the north of a north-easterly direction to dip and rise through an area known as Epping Thicks. Continue ahead until a patch of open land is seen just ahead, just beyond a path junction. Do not, though, advance onto the open land (it is in fact the roof of the M25 Epping Forest tunnel), but



## Bell Common

*From the top — cottage in vernacular style; Forest Gate pub; the apron of greensward on the east side of the Common*

turn right onto the crossing path to reach a car park. Exit the car park onto Theydon Road.

Cross the road, then turn left. Immediately, veer right on a refuge path which passes the building which houses the air-conditioning equipment for the M25 tunnel below. Beyond the motorway, the path bends slightly right, and comes out onto Ivy Chimneys Road.

Cross the road.

From the bus stop on your right, there are services on a very roughly hourly basis to the Woodlands stop near Epping station, but it is hardly worth the trouble and expense when the end of the route is so close (and downhill all the way).

Turn left, then follow the right-hand footway round to the right at the junction to enter Bell Common. Follow the right-hand footway to reach the Forest Gate Inn on the right.

The Forest Gate Inn, as well as dispensing food and drink, with late breakfasts from 1000 (though not on a Sunday, when the pub opens at 1200), operates a bed-and-breakfast establishment (which you will have passed just before you reach the pub) and a restaurant (just beyond the pub).

**2.12** Once you have passed (or just possibly exited) the pub, do not bend left with the road, but continue ahead along the access road for the odd-numbered houses on the south side of Bell Common.

Beyond the final house (which is set back from the others), go forward through a wooden traffic barrier onto the open land, and then turn right. This leads you onto the right-hand side of an apron of grass:



depending on the season, the paths across may be more or less obvious. Keep to the path closest to the hedge on the right.

Do not drift through a hedge-gap on the right (despite the attraction of a waymark stump post), but continue downhill in an east-south-easterly direction until you come out onto a street.

If you find as you descend that you can see the ceiling bubble-lights of a school, you are in the wrong field — you will need to bear over to the far left-hand corner and go back through the hedge, turning right to pick up the route leading to the road ahead.

The street is called Western Avenue — it certainly does not have the majesty of the A40 from Acton to Hillingdon, but it fits our current purpose.

Turn left, and follow the left-hand footway round to the right to meet Centre Drive: cross the road here and turn left along the right-hand footway of Centre Drive.

Cross over first Sunnyside Road then the more modern Woodlands Grove; about 40m beyond Woodlands Grove, turn right down a narrow enclosed path which becomes a flight of steps (which is clearly contemporaneous with the estate of houses now behind you). The path, still enclosed, bends to the left and follows on round a right-hand bend: beyond the tall fence on the right is no more than Epping station car park — the security precautions seem to be somewhat overblown. At the end of the path, turn right to follow the road down to Epping station, the end of the route.

Epping station is served by Central Line trains all the way across London to West Ruislip, a journey of one-and-a-half hours (and the longest single-segment journey on the Tube network).

Epping town centre lies about 850m to the north. Go to the top of the station approach road, and turn left onto Station Road. At the end of Station Road, turn right onto High Street to reach the shopping area.

Epping is a market town (and has been since the establishment of a market charter in 1253): its weekly market day is Monday. The town contains several buildings which have been listed for their architectural merit.

The Great Eastern Railway reached Epping in 1865, and by 1892, there were 22 trains a day from Liverpool Street. The line became part of London Underground in 1949. Today, it sees about 4 million entries/exits per year. The journey from Epping to West Ruislip, at just short of 55km, is the longest journey on the Tube without changing trains.

*A vintage bus run by the Epping and Ongar Railway at Epping station*







*Essex Way plaque*

The former section of the Central Line between Epping and Ongar is run as a heritage railway, the Epping and Ongar Railway. The company is extending the working line back towards Epping gradually, as funds and planning committees permit.

The Essex Way begins at Epping station, and crosses the county to Harwich in its north-eastern corner — there is a plaque to that effect on the station wall.

About 12km from here along the Essex Way, you will reach Chipping Ongar; on the way there, you may pick up St Peter's Way, which starts at Greensted's log church and ends on the shore of the North Sea at Othona, Bradwell-on-Sea.

The Three Forests Way is a circuit walk taking in the three forests of Hainault, Epping and Hatfield.

*Platform roundel*

