



Start:

Bus stop at Brewers End, Takeley, near the Parish Church.

OS Map ref: TL556214.

Distance:

6 miles
(with 4 or 2 mile options)

Obstacles:

3 stiles. A narrow path. Muddy patches in winter.

Surfaces:

Mostly good field edge paths, tracks, country lanes, footpaths along main roads.

Takeley to Hatfield Heath via Hatfield Broad Oak

This is a linear walk from Takeley to Hatfield Broad Oak and on to Hatfield Heath. For much of the way the route follows the grassy valley of the Pincey Brook which is rich in wildlife, but there are also open views, well-kept greens, picturesque and historical houses and beautiful gardens. It is planned so that one can do a 2, 4, or 6 mile walk using local buses which pass the starting and finishing points every hour. The 301 service runs from Saffron Walden via Bishop's Stortford and Takeley to the airport, and the Village Link 5 service runs from Saffron Walden via the airport, Takeley Four Ashes crossroads, Hatfield Broad Oak and Hatfield Heath to Bishop's Stortford. Both services operate hourly in both directions from Monday to Saturday.

The walk starts at the bus stop at Brewers End near Takeley Church using the no. 301 bus from Stortford. Some may prefer to go by car to Takeley and park at the church and walk out to the bus stop. You then have the option of a 4 mile walk to Hatfield Broad Oak or a 6 mile walk to Hatfield Heath and from either place catching a no. 5 bus back to Stortford. If your car is at Takeley then take the bus the other way back to the Four Ashes crossroads from where it is a ten minute walk back to the church.

From the bus stop carry on eastwards for about 100 yards. Cross the road to the footpath between gardens after the second house on the right. 200 yards further on cross the old railway line that is now the Flitch Way and carry on across fields with a hedge on your left and views to Hatfield Forest to the right. Keep on this path which eventually curves round and down to the far corner of a field where you turn left into a thicket, across a bridge over a little stream and after a few yards turn left up a bank to an open field. Turn right to a gate and a stile, and then bear left along the mown path through the meadow down to another gate and stile and on to a road.

You are now at Bush End Green. The road to the right leads up to an entrance to Hatfield Forest. Today we carry straight on across the green to a gap in the hedge with a bridge over a ditch and emerge onto a cross-field path straight ahead. This leads to a field edge path carrying on in the same direction with a ditch and hedge on the right. The fallow deer have tracks through this hedge which they regularly use when travelling from the Forest to Canfield Hart, an ancient wood a mile to the east. The path will come to where a track crosses. Turn right onto the concreted section and follow over the Pincey Brook to the road. Turn left along this road where you can see wild hops growing in the hedge on the left. Feel their stems to see how they can climb. Carry on past the junction following the sign to Hatfield Broad Oak.

At the bend in the road, ignore the finger post to the right and go straight ahead to the metal gate where a stile and another finger post are obscured from view by the bushes. You now follow this path through meadows along the valley bottom all the way to Broad Oak. Watch for sparrowhawks and buzzards circling overhead. After about a mile and three gateways you will see a barbed wire fence following a stream on the left. The footpath goes behind this fence. It is narrow but the bushes are trimmed. The path comes to a concrete footbridge over the stream. Cross this and bear half right up the hill where the top of the church tower is visible. Go through the wooden kissing gate and turn right into the lane leading to the centre of Hatfield Broad Oak where there is a shop or pub for refreshment..

Those wishing to catch a bus either back to Takeley or to Bishop's Stortford turn left at the Post Office into the High Street and find the bust stops at the far end round the corner at The Dukes Head. Make sure you get the bus going in the right direction.

Those arriving on a bus and getting off at the Dukes Head must walk up the High Street to the junction by the Post Office to pick up the route.

From the Post Office our route carries on across the road and past the island with village pump and flagpole to proceed down Cage End. At the bottom turn right into New Barn Mead. On reaching the Sausage Factory turn left behind the car park barrier and go up the slope to turn right with a line of poplar trees on your left. This path leads down to follow Pincey Brook and then through scrub to reach a footbridge. Over the bridge turn left and follow the field edge with the brook to the left until the path swings right at a waymark. Now follow the path up the hill and continue with the hedge on the left until passing through stables to reach a road. Turn left onto the footpath and follow for about half a mile to Hatfield Heath, enjoying the attractive gardens along the way.

On reaching the Heath turn right for shops and pubs. The bus stop is 200 yards along opposite the White Horse, Post Office and tea room, and from here you can catch a no. 5 to Bishop's Stortford or back to Takeley.