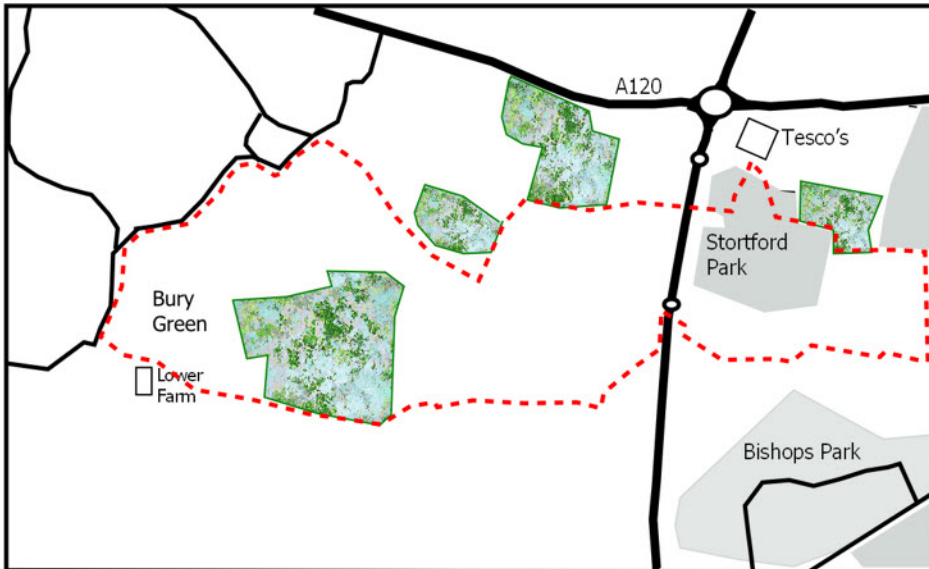


Bishop's Stortford - 5 miles

This walk offers a pleasing mixture of open fields, woods, meadows, village green and town playing fields with much to interest country-lovers and naturalists.



Start: From the front of Tescos at the Bishop's Park Shopping Centre.

OS Map ref: TL472217

Alternative starting point: Those wishing to walk out from Stortford Town centre could go up High Street, past St. Michaels Church and up to the roundabout at the top of Windhill. Turning into the top of Bells Hill a footpath goes off to the left by the wall. This will lead out to the College playing fields where you can pick up the route of the walk where mentioned later in the text.

Distance: Approx 5 miles.

Obstacles: 6 stiles, some with high steps. Long grass which will be wet after rain. A busy road to cross twice.

Surfaces: Mostly good field paths but a bit overgrown in places, tracks, country lanes, woodland track, playing fields.

Facing the front of Tescos go to the left out to the road and cross to Dukes Ride on the other side of the roundabout. A short way along you take the footpath on the right signposted to Cradle End, opposite Squires Close. This will lead you to the main road which you cross and carry straight on along the field-edge path, passing Plantings Wood on your right. This is an ancient coppice wood mainly of hornbeam trees. The path drops down and goes through a gap in the hedge where you turn left into Long Meadow.

About 250 yards along the meadow turn right at the waymark, over the stream and turn left. 50 yards further on turn right to go up the right hand side of the hedge. You will come upon a pool in this ditch and if you pause a while you will see sticklebacks which are not so common in streams these days. You will probably see more later in the walk. Keep on past a footbridge which goes off to the left and head for the houses at the top of the field. An old willow tree has fallen across the path and if it has not been cleared you can scramble under it or else divert round through the crop. At the top of the field you will emerge on to a lane at a junction.

Turn left along the lane which you follow for half a mile or more to Bury Green, keeping left at junctions. Just past Ivy Farm you will see a footpath sign to the left which cuts back to the path we have just come up, and then a bridle path is signposted. This goes in a loop round some paddocks to rejoin the lane you are on about 400 yard further on so if you fancy a detour you can take this bridleway and turn left when you come back onto the road.. Those who are happy to stay on the lane carry on for the rest of the way to come to Bury Green at the phone box. At the far side of the green turn left by the conker tree in front of The Bury and follow this lane down past Lower Farm. Opposite the farm is a typical farmyard pond, shallow at one end to allow the watering of livestock and also to drive in wagons to soak and tighten up the wooden wheels.

Beyond Lower Farm the lane becomes a track which leads over the stream. Turn left here onto bridleway 27. 400 yards further on turn left over the stream and right into the wood. The track continues through the wood for about 400 yards and for the first half of this follows the ancient wood bank which can be seen on you left. At one time there would have been a bank with a fence on top to keep out deer and other livestock which would eat the new coppice growth. On emerging from the wood follow the hedge on the right until there is a sharp bend to the left. Here you carry straight ahead over a footbridge and turn right. There is a spindle bush growing by this bridge and later in the year it should have a display of pink and orange berries.

Having turned right after the bridge carry on up the path with the ditch on you right until you come to a high grassy bank. Turn left here and follow the track across a field and then follow the hedge on your right all the way round until you come to a stile on the right which takes you on to the main road. Cross by the roundabout to another stile and then follow the direction of footpath 15 to another stile a little way through the trees. This takes you into a mown field. Follow the path round the corner to the left and head for another stile at the end of the laurel hedge. From this stile head for the gate and stile visible on the other side of the meadow. Over this stile and cross the tarmac track, bearing half right to another stile in a wooden fence. Over this stile and turn left on the surfaced path, straight over the crosspaths and follow the path until you come to a low wooden post and rail fence on the right, just before double iron gates on the left. Go to the right of this low fence and follow the hedge up to the top corner where you go through the hedge and a kissing gate.

Here you have come into the College playing fields. Bearing half left from the gate a few yards away an arrow indicates the path running between a hedge and the high mesh fence round the all-weather pitch. At the end of the hedge take the path indicated to the left. The path straight ahead leads directly to the top of Bells Hill and Windhill for those who walked out of Stortford Town Centre. Those heading back to Tescos have turned left and those joining the walk here have turned right to follow the hedge down to Maze Green Road. Turn left up the road and at the top of the hill turn left towards the playing fields. At the gates take the footpath to the right. This is a narrow path between fences and hedges. Keep on this well-used path for a few hundred yards and it will bring you out onto a road where you turn right to reach Tesco's about 100 yards away.