

St Mary the Virgin Bocking

Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee Walks series, circular walks around Bocking.

Walk No1 Bovingdon Woods

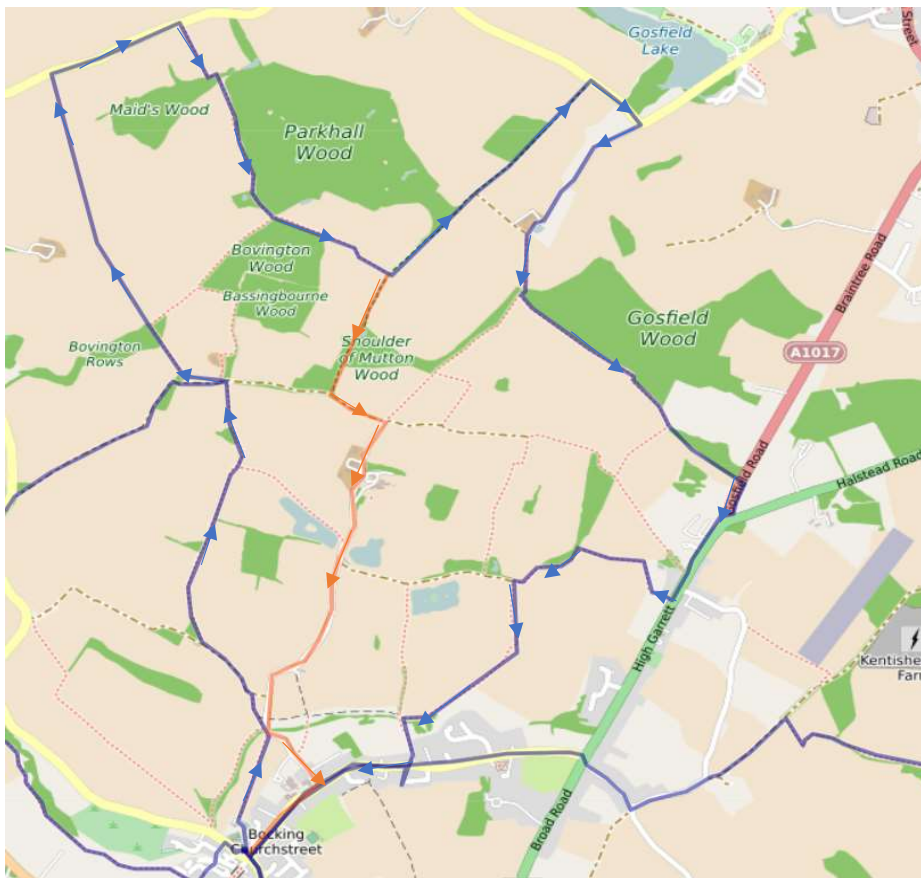
Description:

Distance 9 miles, 2 ½-3 hours of comfortable easy-going walking. Possible short cut indicated.

Description: Countryside walk on footpaths, tracks and a short section of pavement main road. Footpaths can be muddy, wear clothing and footwear suitable for the weather. Follow the countryside code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>), stay on the paths and keep dogs on a lead, as you may encounter livestock and some of the abundant wildlife.

Start and finish at St Mary the Virgin Bocking. The Church is normally open and is well worth a look inside. Any donations help to preserve the fabric and character of this wonderful building. Refreshments can be found at the Retreat public house and in the Coop in Church Street. Toilets are available in the church hall if open, or in the Retreat if you are a customer. Public transport is the 38 bus which stops by the church and links with Braintree town centre and for the nearby railway station, also Halstead.

Sights: conservation farming, woods, with abundant wildlife (see Bocking and beyond on Facebook for some wonderful pictures) Bocking Wind Mill <https://www.braintree.gov.uk/bockingwindmill/> A short diversion to Gosfield Lake resort can be made at "half way" (entrance fee £2 for pedestrian Adults) for refreshments and facilities.



The woods on the walk are mainly coppice woodland of medieval origin on chalky boulder clay. Some unusual tree types, such as small-leaved lime and plateau alder. Other trees include sessile and pedunculate oak, ash, maple and hornbeam, with occasional wild service tree. The understory has elder, hazel, field maple and hawthorn, while the ground flora is mainly bramble. There are many natural ponds. This gives this farm land it's unique character and conservation value. Please stay on paths and do not roam the woodland.



This image was taken from the top of High Garrett Radio Mast, showing the extent of Woodlands you are walking. Image from <https://www.28dayslater.co.uk/>

Start: St Mary's church, proceed up the drive to Bocking Hall, take the footpath between the Hall and the duck pond head through the gate and across the field to the distant hedge line.



Through a gap in the hedge



Go across the bridge, walk a short distance to meet a concrete farm track. Turn left here and follow the track, up the slight hill. On your left across the field is the small Hamblyn wood.

As you approach a Y junction in the path our direction follows the right-hand field edge path.

It is worth a short detour on the left-hand path to find a bench in memory of Christopher Tabor. A local landowner farmer and conservationist. Re-trace your steps.



As you follow our path along the field edge you can see our next wood, Oak Wood, on the right. The path follows an uphill route in a roughly straight line. As always, it is worth looking back to take in good views of St Mary's Church, Bocking Hall and the Bocking Wind Mill.

Keep the hedge on your left passing through two field boundaries. You pass a small patch of woodland on your left to follow an enclosed often muddy track. This then opens out with the field edge on your left and hedge line on the right.



Continue to meet a concrete farm track, turn left here and follow the track.



Ignore the fingerpost on the right indicating the path past Beckwith's Farm. A short distance further on take the field edge path on the right, leaving the concrete track.



after some distance the main track bears more to the right, towards Bovingdon Wood, our path is quite hidden as a narrow footpath through a small wood called Bovingdon Rows. The path marker maybe hidden in the wayside plant growth.



Pass through the wood into open fields, the path follows a field edge gently up hill. These open fields are the habitat of the field hare and deer so keep your eyes open.



On the left you will see Little Codham Farm, at the path junction with the farm track you pass close by a small pond



The path then heads across the open field to the distant hedge line, pass through the hedge line at the way marker.



The path goes straight on crossing the next field



Then meets Parkhall Road, here you are at the highest point on the walk, at 90m elevation, turn right and road walk, initially quite comfortably, but as you pass through cottages and a farm the lane narrows to single track so take care with traffic.

Park Hall Road



Deer in the fields at Park Hall road



At the Cottage with a straw cat on the roof look to the right and you will find the path, pass through the iron gate and the path takes you through to paddocks.

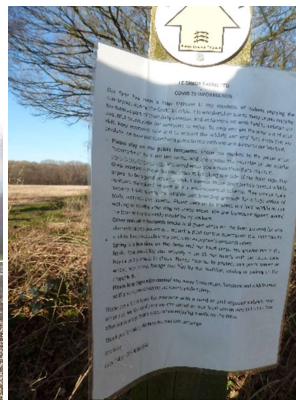


At the end of the Paddocks on to another gate, into our next wood, Maid's Wood. The path takes a left turn, then a right turn to cross a ditch, the path then follows the edge our next wood, Parkhall Wood.



The path then heads through a very wet small tongue of Park Hall wood with lots of fallen branches across the path. An alternative is to follow the field edge around this small section wood, keep it to your left.

Exiting this small piece of Park Hall wood, you see Parkhall wood to your left, the path you take goes straight on with now Bovingdon Wood to your right.



sound advice at anytime

Continue on the path the wood across the field to your left changes name to Blackbird's Wood. A slight kink in the path, a and field edge walk to a T junction with a farm track.



At The T junction looking toward Gosfield

Here you can shorten the walk by turning right heading through a small wood called shoulder of Mutton, to another T junction turn left and walk along the paved track a short distance to the top of Fennes Road. Turn right here to take Fennes Road, you pass Fennes and Home Farm with the shooting grounds and fishing lakes. Keep to the road, watch for traffic, and this takes to back to Bocking at the Village Club, turn left to walk back to the church.

For the main walk turn left and follow the track past the edge of Pentantram's Wood, across open fields, to the next wood on your left, this is Kemp's Wood.



The path then crosses open fields and from here the view ahead is of Gosfield Hall, visited by Elizabeth I and home to the future King Louis XVIII of France.



At the road turn right for a short easy road walk



to where the road takes a 90 degree turn to the left. Here a short diversion continuing along the road takes you to Gosfield Lake Resort, entrance fee applies to use the facilities.



The walk route takes you right down the lane to Hammas Farm. On your right as you walk down towards the farm is wet pasture which is a rarity now in Essex.



Passing through Hammas Farm the path heads diagonally across the field, it is well marked where you can and cannot walk.



The path crosses the corner of our next wood, now called Gosfield Wood, previously known as The Nurseries, with stands of young Beech trees.



Follow the path along the field edge towards Gosfield Road, which can be quite busy. Cross the road immediately, so as to make use of the pavement, head towards the traffic lights and the junction with Halstead Road.



At the lights recross the road and walk the pavement towards Braintree. You are in the hamlet of High Garrett, which was the site of a WW2 PoW camp and American base they installed the radio mast which you have seen for most of the walk. Once past the lights you pass Foley House on the right and a nice thatched cottage and repurposed chapel on the left.



18th Century Cottages
now one house.



Foley House



Chapel now Stone the Crows

Ignore the first path on the right, but take the second between houses.



The path goes to the bottom of the house gardens and turns right to follow the back gardens.

The path then turns left to follow the field hedge. After a turn to a more southerly direction the path becomes a farm track.



Follow the track and look to your left you will see the sign for the path, this is just before the ditch, and a concrete track which goes straight on don't go on that. Alternatively you can cross the ditch by the concrete track and then immediately turn left to follow the field edge.

The path continues through trees on the left you can see fencing which is where the new housing is to be built. Here the true footpath meets the alternative field edge path which then continues through trees,



The path then opens out to field edge walking with a small stream and back gardens to the left.



After some distance look to the left and you will see a substantial bridge, across the stream. Cross the bridge and through the gate to follow a muddy path up towards Bocking Village, passing paddocks on the left.

At Church Street cross the road and head right, this is the highest point of church street, keep a lookout for a small driveway indicated as a route to the Wind Mill, which is well worth a look. Bocking Wind Mill is a well restored, Grade I, early 18th Century Post Mill with open days most Bank Holidays through the summer.



Re-trace your steps to Church Street turn left and follow the road down hill to finish at St Mary's Church.