

Essex short walk. SWC 276 Epping to Chipping Ongar

Distance: 12.5km (7.8m)

Toughness 2/10; ascent 148m; descent 176m.

Explorer Maps 183 and 184

Landranger Map 167

Summary

This is the third of the “NE Central Line” walks which enables a continuous route from Leytonstone in Travel Zone 3 to Ongar in deepest Essex. The other two walks are:

- SWC walk 241 Leytonstone to Loughton -12.8km (8m)
- SWC walk 197 Loughton to Epping – 13.4km (8.4m)

This walk is best done in the summer or autumn (May to October). The short distance means it could easily be done in winter but some woodland sections – particularly through Gernon Bushes an SSSI- could be boggy and muddy). About 40% of the walk is through woodland.

The route follows the well sign-posted Essex Way. It celebrates the former Epping to Ongar tube line which closed in 1994. By then the line was carrying just 80 passengers a day. A heritage railway group now operates a very limited service with tickets that can be booked on-line.

Walk options:

You can extend the walk by 1km to view the 11th century St Martins Parish Church (Grade 1 listed building) and the remains of a Norman castle. You will then use the bus stop outside Ongar station opposite Love Lane.

To make a **long** Essex summer walk you could start at Loughton underground station and use the directions for SWC 197 and then the directions for this walk to make a long walk from Loughton to Ongar of **25.9km (16.2m)**; Toughness 6/10. You would need to start walking around 10.15 am with a pub lunch in Epping.

Walk Features

Essex Way

This is an 82 mile long distance footpath linking Epping and Harwich. The route takes you through ancient woodland, open farmland, tree-lined river valleys and leafy green lanes, with plenty of picturesque and historic villages along the way. It is divided into day-walk sections of 8 to 12 miles which can all be accessed by public transport. The Essex Way web site has more details and maps.

Gernon Bushes SSSI

This 79 acre site is the last remnant of the old Coopersale Common, with ancient coppice and spring bogs. It has many ancient hornbeam pollards plus some more recent woodland and a network of ponds. Your route passes an information board about the site.

St Andrews Church Greensted

This is billed as the oldest wooden church in the world (!) and the guidebook, available from inside the church at a small cost, claims people have worshipped on the site continuously for 1,300 years. The nave walls were probably erected in 1060. However most of the church has been rebuilt in later centuries including the 17th century spire.. It is usually open and makes a fine place to rest before the final short leg into Ongar. The church still holds weekly services. You can find further information about the church on its website [here](#)

St Martins Parish Church

An 11th century church and a Grade 2 listed building. British History online has a detailed history which can be read [here](#)

Refreshments

Lunch pub: **Green Man**, Toot Hill (01992 522255); extensive menu, attractive outside courtyard seating for warmer days. Directly on your route.

Ongar High Street has a number of pubs and cafes. Turn right at the end of the walk and go along the High Street. In 30m the café immediately beyond Budworth Hall usually closes early but continue on and just beyond the Kings Head pub there is another small café.

For more choice you could get off the bus in Epping High Street which has a greater variety of places for meals, drinks and refreshments. From Epping High Street you will then have to walk about 500m to the underground station.

Travel

The walk starts from Epping underground station which is at the far north-eastern end of the Central Line and is in Zone 6.

You return to Epping underground station **by bus** from Chipping Ongar –journey time 30mins.

420 Bus – Ongar High Street (o/s Kings Inn) to Epping underground station.

Monday to Friday

Check the timetable inside the bus shelter but for the 420 there should be two buses an hour on the half hour and hour. Last bus just after 21.00.

bus stop also o/s Ongar station – opposite Love Lane are 1 minute later than above.

Saturday

Bus stop o/s the Kings Inn: very similar to Monday to Friday timetable.

bus stop also o/s Ongar station – opposite Love Lane are 1 minute later than above.

See web site [here](#) for full timetable.

Sunday Service

501 bus. Limited service every 2 hours

Bus stop o/s Kings Inn 15.43, 17.43 19.43 (last bus)

o/s Ongar station 15.44, 17.44, 19.44 (last bus)

See timetable [here](#)

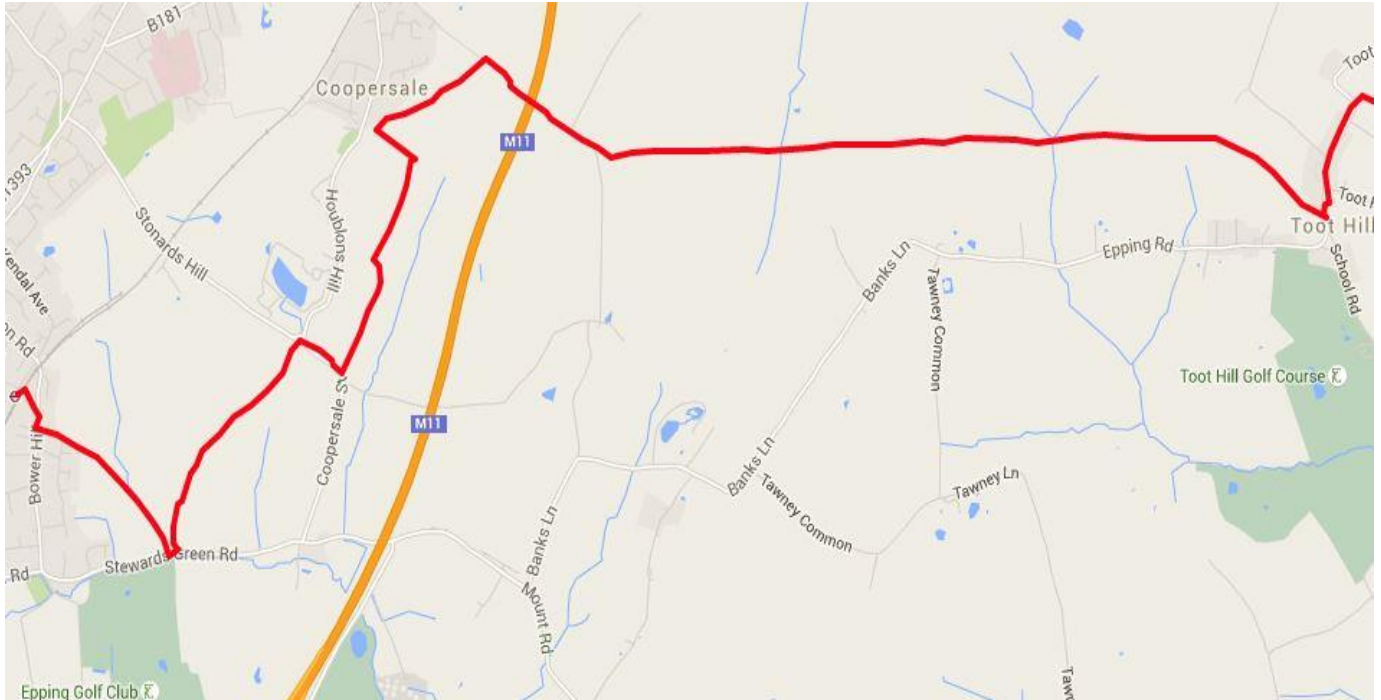
Alternatively you could book a taxi back to Epping

- A2B cars, just off Ongar High Street 01277 365300
- Toots Taxis, just off Ongar High Street 01277 362002

Summary walk notes with maps.

An OS map and a gpx route file is also available on the walks page..

Map 1. Epping underground to Green Man, Toot Hill (suggested lunch pub) paras 1-9



1. Leave Epping Underground station and turn right along an approach road. In 30m turn right over the station footbridge.
2. Go down the road ahead, Hillcrest Way and at a T junction bear right down Bower Hill. In 40m follow an Essex Way footpath on the other side of the road to your left.
3. Continue on the track to meet Stewards Green Road where you turn left !! then in 10m turn sharp left up Stewards Green Lane following a footpath sign..
4. Continue on this tree-lined track until you reach junction with Stonards Hill. where you turn right on a potentially busy road passing **Theydon Oak pub** away to your left.
5. Where the road bends sharp right take a signed path to your left. There is a wooden fence on your right. Cross a ditch and continue on the path through a small field. Follow the path into the next field as it bears sharp left and then in 30m bears right. Continue ahead on the path along the field edge, a line of bushes to your left and open ground to your right.
6. You reach a wood. There is a wooden bench just away to your right. Enter the wood cross over a wooden duckboard and then immediately turn left soon crossing wooden duckboards over potentially muddy stretches to go up some steps and continue ahead on the clear path
7. You reach an information board describing **Gernon Bushes**. Here turn right on the path to pass a school on your left and continue on through woodland.
8. You cross some wooden duckboards to meet a T junction with a car-wide track. Here you turn right on the track soon crossing a footbridge over the M11 to continue ahead along the edge of woodland.
9. The Essex Way enters Birching Coppice and you continue on through High Wood and Ongar Park Wood ignoring all cross-paths.! This stretch is potentially muddy even in summer and the main path may become a little diffuse as little side-paths are created to avoid the worst of any mud.).

10. You reach the end of a long woodland section . Ignore a path to your left and continue ahead on the Essex Way through open countryside. You reach a small woodland on your right and ascend a wide rutted track. You continue ahead through open countryside.
11. !! You eventually go up a wide and rutted track and after a short climb and just as the track bears gently left your onward path goes through the bushes to your right. In a few metres you reach the next field and here turn left along the field edge. In 80m the path is directly opposite a wide gap in the bushes and trees to your right. Cross the narrow field to follow the path through the gap into open fields. .
12. Continue on the path negotiating an electric fence crossing and then go over a stile onto a tarmac road - School Road, Toot Hill. Here you turn left along School Road to reach the **Green Man** in 40m.

Map 2 Green Man, Toot Hill to Chipping Ongar (paras 13-16)



13. Turn left out of the Green Man to continue up School Road and bear right up Toot Hill Road passing Mill Lane on your left.
14. Where Toot Hill Road turns sharply left you continue ahead following a footpath sign and in 20m turn sharp right with the Essex Way along field edges to you right.!! In 30m the path leaves the field edge and you bear right across a wooden bridge to go along a narrow and potentially overgrown path through bushes. You cross a stile and continue with the field edge on your left.
15. You ignore a cross-paths and continue ahead along the Essex Way.
16. !!You next turn sharp left with the signposted Essex Way going through horse paddocks and squeeze stiles.to come to Greensted Road.
17. Cross Greensted Road and bear right along the Essex Way heading towards Greensted.
18. At a T junction turn right with the Essex Way passing the ancient wooden Greensted Church on your left.
19. Immediately after the church turn left with the Essex Way and continue on soon crossing a track and then continuing ahead across a large field on a clear path with Chipping Ongar ahead of you.. You cross a bridge, go up a tarmac road soon passing a large Sainsburys store on your right. You reach the junction with Chipping Ongar High Street.
20. Turn left along the High Street to reach your bus stop (Kings Inn) in 15m. There is a bus timetable in the shelter. Turn right for pubs and cafes and for the path to visit St Martins Parish church and the remains of the Norman castle.(After your visit you can continue on a short circular path - see OS map and gpx route - to pick up a bus stop just before Ongar's former underground station and opposite Love Lane. There is no seating or

shelter at this bus stop so you need to time it so you arrive there close to the time for the bus's arrival at Kings Inn).

Peter Boon