

Saturday Walkers Club

SWC Walk 197. Loughton to Epping

This walk takes you along tracks and paths through the ancient woodland of Epping Forest (“the people’s forest”) and a possible visit to the High Beach visitor centre before lunch in Upshire. After your pub lunch you go through open countryside and farmland passing close to Copped Hall a ruined country house currently undergoing long term renovation. The walk ends in the bustling town of Epping at the end of the Central Underground Line.

Note: The path through Epping Forest from paras 7 to 11 in the walk instructions can be difficult to discern and follow. You are strongly advised to bring a map and compass or use a gps device.

Length	<p>Main walk 13.8 km (8.6 miles)</p> <p>Allow 4 hours for the walk but 6 hours to include lunch and a tea stop. If you wish to stop at High Beach visitor centre or Copped Hall then you will have to ensure you can complete the walk in sufficient daylight. In winter you should reach Epping around 3.30pm but if you are losing light you can leave the route at para 29 and do about 2km along a road (there is a pavement) direct to Epping High Street.</p>
Maps	OS Explorer 174 1:25,000 and OS Landranger 167 1:50,000
Toughness	3/10 a few gentle, short climbs.
Features	<p>The walk is best done in autumn for leaf colour and when there is reduced canopy and views and vistas open up but it can be done at any time of year. However sections will be muddy in winter. After lunch you leave the forest and are in open countryside where there are some good views around Copped Hall park.</p> <p>This walk is close to London and crosses some main roads and after lunch there will be traffic noise from the always busy M25.</p> <p>Epping Forest</p> <p>This is London’s largest open space at around 6,000 acres and stretches 12 miles from Manor Park in East London to just north of Epping. The forest, rich in wildlife, is of national and international importance with two-thirds of it designated an area of special scientific interest. It is renowned for its ancient pollarded trees, primarily oak, beech and hornbeam which support a wealth of insects and fungi, many of them rare and vulnerable.</p> <p>The forest and surrounding open areas have a significant population of the distinctive dark coloured fallow deer and it is common to see these in the more open areas. Muntjac deer are also present and 10 of the 18 species of bat</p>

	<p>found in Britain have been recorded.</p> <p>Cattle have been introduced to rejuvenate rare heathland flora and you may see these in the afternoon on the way to Copped Hall.</p> <p>High Beach Visitor Centre</p> <p>The centre is located at High Beach a traditional Epping Forest beauty spot. It is open 7 days a week and there are a pub, the up-market Kings Head, and other refreshments and toilet facilities nearby.</p> <p>The Centre has booklets about its conservation work and maps showing trails and walks. Further details about the centre and its work can be found here.</p> <p>Copped Hall</p> <p>Copped Hall is a ruined country house currently undergoing long term extensive renovation. There is evidence that the site has been occupied from Roman times and a substantial building was first erected in the 12th century. A new neo-classical house was built on the site in the 1750s but was almost completely destroyed by fire in 1917.</p> <p>The Copped Hall Trust is gradually restoring the building but only parts of the hall and gardens can be opened to visitors.</p> <p>There are open days and guided tours but only on specific Sundays and there is a charge for these. You can find the visitor timetable and costs by visiting the Copped Hall Trust website above and clicking on the What's On link.</p>
Walk options	<p>Shortening the walk</p> <p>You can shorten the walk by staying on the wide Three Forest Way and not turning off it to head in a northwesterly direction towards Epping New Road (para 7). Stay on the wide track, crossing two roads and continue all the way to Epping. You will join up with the main walk at the end of Para 30 of the main walk instructions. This is a walk of around 6 miles, almost entirely through woodland, and could make a high summer evening walk with dinner and/or drinks in Epping. Instructions for this route, including a shorter start though Loughton, are included at the end of the walk directions. You will need paragraphs 30 to 36 of the main walk text for the finish through Epping.</p> <p>You can cut short the walk by catching an hourly 13 bus at a stop on the main road between either of the lunch-time pubs (see below). This is the Waltham Cross to Epping service. There is no service on Sundays or public holidays.</p>
Transport	<p>Loughton and Epping are both in Travel Zone 6 and are on the Epping branch of the Central Line so you will need an appropriate travel or Oyster card for your journey. Trains are very frequent and return trains from Epping to Central London run until well after 23.00 hours (journey time 50 mins)</p> <p>It takes around 40 minutes to travel from Oxford Circus in Central London to</p>

	<p>Loughton on the Central line. You can use the Transport for London journey planner to calculate your journey time from other stations. See here for details.</p> <p>There is car-parking at both Loughton and Epping Forest underground stations and this walk is suitable for those wishing to use cars.</p>
Suggested trains	<p>In winter it is recommended you start the walk from Loughton Station by 10.30am which means taking a Central Line tube train from Central London around 9.45am.</p> <p>In summer or early autumn you can be much more flexible about the start time although if you are doing the walk on a Sunday and plan to visit Copped Hall you will need to time your start accordingly.</p>
Lunch and tea	<p>You can have an early lunch or refreshments at High Beach Visitor Centre (4.4km 2.7m into the walk). Here there is a refreshments kiosk and seats just off the main route of the walk. You can get sandwiches, baguettes, pies and hot and cold soft drinks. It is also a good spot for a picnic. The Visitor Centre itself also has a café.</p> <p>Also at High Beach is the Kings Oak hotel/pub (0208 508 5000) which has undergone extensive renovations and has outside seating.</p> <p>Your lunch time pub is the Horseshoes (01992 712745) in Upshirebury Green which has a reputation for friendly service and good food. The pub is 8km (5 miles) into the walk. Two routes to the pub are described: one which follows countryside trails and takes you directly to the pub but may be very muddy in winter. The alternative, slightly shorter, route is along drier tracks but with some road walking.</p> <p>Near the Horseshoes pub there is St Thomas' Church where just beyond the church building there is a grassy area with wooden benches which is a pleasant spot for a picnic lunch despite the traffic noise from the nearby M25.</p> <p>For tea there are any number of pubs, cafes and restaurants in Epping High Street including the following pubs, the George and Dragon, the Black Lion and the Duke of Wellington together with various cafes including the Costa Coffee and Café Nero chains. Café Mio at 88 High Street, Epping (01992 560333, open till 3.30 except Sundays) is recommended. See this link for information about other tea options in the High Street.</p>
Version	<p>June 2023 (full walk check)</p> <p>November 2024 (short walk checked and instructions added)</p>
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Detailed Walk Directions

A. Loughton Underground station to Epping Forest Field Centre (4.2 km, 2.6 miles)

1. Leave Loughton underground station and take the left hand pavement and head towards a large Sainsbury's supermarket ahead of you. At the traffic roundabout take the left fork, Old Station Road, and pass Sainsbury's to your left.
2. In a 200m you reach the busy High Road. Your onward direction is straight ahead up Ollards Grove using the pedestrian crossing to your left. Where this road forks take the left fork, Ollards Grove, climbing steadily.
3. In 350m you reach a T junction with Forest View Road. Turn left along a lane . In 50m you pass a steel barrier to continue down an earth path (Dragons Path) with a brick wall to your left. In 60m you pass a steel barrier to reach Nursery Road. Turn left on this road and in 200m, just a few metres beyond Upper Park on your left, cross Nursery road and turn right onto an earth car-wide track through woodland.
4. Continue along this potentially muddy car-wide track through attractive woodland. After 300m, at the end of a field visible to your right, come to a T-junction with a wide earth track and turn right. Continue ahead on the wide track, ignoring ways off.
5. In 150m there are some ponds away to your left. 200m beyond these you pass a large pond immediately to your left. Continue past a metal barrier and in 30m you reach a tarmac road. Cross this road with care, go past a metal barrier, and continue on the clear wide path ahead - the Three Forest Way.
6. This woodland track gently descends and you continue on this wide track, ignoring all ways off. After 200m, a track merges from the right. In another 100m, the path crosses a ditch in a slight dip.
7. **!!** Another 200m further on, you are at the bottom of a gentle slope and the track ahead of you starts to gently rise **[A]**. There is a cross-paths where a small stream passes under the track you have been following; you can see the brickwork of a small bridge below you). There are No Cycling and No Riding signs marking the path that goes off to the right. **!! Immediately beyond the stream, turn left off the track, your direction west, to first cross a potentially muddy patch and then follow the small path ahead.!!** (This is where the short walk goes straight on along the wide track instead of turning left). The path is initially indistinct, but keep just to the right of the stream (your direction about 300°) and footpath posts with yellow arrows soon show the way ahead.
8. ***(The next section of the walk through woodland to reach the busy Epping New Road has intermittent footpath posts with yellow arrows on them to guide you but you need to pay attention as the path can be indistinct particularly when it is covered by winter leaf litter or if there have been forestry operations that have obscured the paths. A compass and a map or a gps device would be very helpful here. You should be heading in a generally northwesterly direction to meet Epping New Road)***

9. In 100m, pass a 1m high footpath post with an arrow showing the way ahead. In 80m, pass another footpath post to your left showing the way ahead. In 100m, cross a wooden bridge to your left over a ditch. 20m ahead of you there is another footpath post and you follow this as the path bears right.
10. After 30m the path swings to the right. After autumn leaf-fall, the onward path may not be clear, but fear not! If you follow the features on the ground, you will find the way to a clear track. Carry on at the same level across the hillside, your direction about 350°, soon with some fallen trees and logs to your right. The path narrows and descends slightly into thicker woods, now with a stream visible about 40m below you to your right. Keep going and after about 200m you come to a ditch which you cross. Once over the ditch, turn left uphill with the path. The path may again be indistinct but continue uphill (northwest) with the ditch initially to your left. In 100m a yellow arrow on a footpath post finally appears to show the way ahead, bearing slightly right. You should start to hear traffic noise ahead of you and this busy road (Epping New Road) should soon come into view.
11. As the road becomes visible the path widens and you pass another footpath sign 20m before the road. Go down to this busy road and cross it with care to go through a wooden gate slightly to your left. Continue ahead for 20m and then turn right on the clear car-wide dirt track, as indicated by a yellow arrow on a footpath post.
12. Continue ahead on this undulating track through woodland with the busy road away to your right. In 300m ignore a footpath to the left. 200m further on, with the track veering left, you reach a fork where you turn left passing a footpath post on your right. Continue along this track, ignoring all ways off until in 350m you reach a metal car-barrier and a tarmac road.
13. Away to your left after crossing two roads is a refreshments kiosk with seats where you can get sandwiches, rolls, pastries and hot drinks.
14. **(You are now at the Epping Forest Field Centre. The nearby Kings Oak pub on Queens Green 200m down the left of the two forks is a possible early lunch stop although it is reported not to be walker-friendly! However, it does have a cafe with outside seating selling burgers and ice cream. Just before the pub is the access to the visitor centre and some toilets.) See [here](#) for details of the Visitor Centre and its facilities.)**

B. Epping Forest Field Centre to the Horseshoes pub (3.3 km, 2.1 miles)

15. If you are not stopping for refreshments or visiting the Centre, cross the road and turn right to go between a number of wooden posts and continue ahead on the wide track with the road to your right.
16. In 500m you pass a metal barrier, cross a road, and pass another metal barrier to continue along the track. In 100m ignore a wide track to your left. In 500m take the right fork (although 30m way along the left fork there are some views of Waltham Cross and a possible picnic spot). Continue along the track as it veers gently to the right and then to the left. In 300m go through a metal gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate. In 80m you reach a 2-armed footpath sign and a metal barrier.

17. Cross the busy main road and bear left along a path. In 100m you reach Woodreden Farm Lane and turn right along a tarmac road. You soon pass some buildings and paddocks to your right and in 200m go through a gate to the right of a cattle grid and a brick column with a sign for Woodreden House. Continue along the tarmac lane in open countryside.
18. In 250m the tarmac lane turns left towards the impressive Woodreden House but you continue ahead along a car-wide dirt track with a line of telegraph poles immediately to your right. In 100m go left, passing a house on your right. Follow the track as it bears right and then left and in 200m cross a wide bridge over the M25.

Non-road route to the lunch pub - the Horseshoes

19. After crossing the bridge, initially take the path straight on, signposted Upshire, but almost immediately turn left into a field, marked as a permissive footpath. The path crosses the field and veers right into a wood. The clear path meanders through the wood for 400m, marked with posts with pink arrows on the reverse side.
20. Emerge from the wood through a gap in a wooden fence and turn right up a grassy slope. At the top of the slope turn left and continue beside a fence for about 200m until you come to an open area with benches - a possible picnic spot - and a sign for Upshire. Follow the sign to turn right through a squeeze stile and continue on a narrow enclosed path soon reaching a main road with the **Horseshoes pub** immediately on your left.

Alternative route to The Horseshoes pub (This is 500m shorter than the main route but does mean some road walking)

After crossing the bridge ignore a path to your left and continue on the wide track signposted Upshire, veering right. Soon the track goes between broken barbed wire fences in open countryside. In 400m you go through a gate to the right of a metal field gate.

After passing a house to your left you come to a 2 armed footpath sign and just beyond that over a grassy area there is a busy main road. Cross the road and turn left along the pavement. In 80m you pass **St Thomas Church** on your left and in a further 80m on your left you reach the pub.

If you have brought a picnic lunch you can go through the gate of St Thomas Church, continue ahead through the cemetery and in 70m reach an open grassy area with benches and fine views over the countryside (although you will hear the drone of the M25 traffic).

C. Horseshoes pub to Copped Hall (1.9 km, 1.2 miles)

21. After leaving the pub cross the road and turn right along the pavement. You pass St Thomas Church on your right and continue along the pavement. In 500m, turn left down Fernhall Lane (or in dry weather, you can walk through the wood parallel to the road for the last 200m). Continue down the lane for 200m and then take the right fork now called Long Street. Follow this road as it swings to the left. In 250m as the road veers left, take a

fork to the right past a no through road sign and continue along a car-wide track marked as the way to Lower Lodge.

- 22 In 300m, in front of Lodge Farm, track to your right. In 50m go through a gate passing Lower Lodge Cottage on your right and continue ahead. In 50m ignore the footpath to your right and continue ahead on the wide tarmac track following a sign Copped Hall 1. There are open fields to your left and you pass a half timbered house to your right. In 400m you are at the top of a gentle rise. Continue along the lane now going gently downhill.
- 23 Just after the track swings sharply to the right there is a yellow-topped footpath sign on your left. Leave the wide track and follow the footpath sign down a grassy path. In 70m you reach another footpath post and cross a small wooden bridge over a ditch where there is a 2-armed footpath sign
- 24 The footpath sign points across a rough field to a white house about 150m away in the top right hand field corner. On reaching the field boundary, cross the stile onto a lane where you turn right to reach the T junction.

D.Copped Hall to Epping (4.4 km, 2.7 miles)

25. **Visiting Copped Hall.** At the T junction turn right following the footpath sign to Crown Hill. In 150m, just after a pond, veer left to pass a five barred gate and continue along a rough track to Copped Hall just ahead. After visiting the hall retrace your steps to the T junction where you continue ahead.

Continuation of main walk

26. If not visiting Copped Hall, turn left at the T junction. Soon the M25 can be seen (and heard) ahead of you in the distance. In 400m you pass a WW2 concrete bunker just off to your right. 30m beyond the bunker turn right through a small metal squeeze stile to the left of a gate and then follow the footpath sign on a path along the left hand edge of a wide field. The lane is just beyond the hedge to your left. In 80m you pass into the next field. In 100m pass through a small clump of trees.
27. In 200m pass a 5-barred gate to your left and continue along the field edge now with a wood to your left. In 150m, by a sign for Copped Hall Park, turn left through a squeeze stile and then turn right along a field edge following a footpath sign.
28. In 60m pass under telegraph wires. In 250m after gently climbing you reach the field edge with a wooden fence. Go round the broken step stile on your right and immediately turn left along a forest path with a fence to your left and the M25 below to your right through trees. In 120m you pass a stile on your left and a redundant step stile with a dedication.
29. Bear right with the path and then go over a bridge crossing the M25. Bear left with the path and in 60m reach a busy main road.

(If the light is fading you can turn left on this main road and continue for about 2km to the centre of Epping and its shops, cafes and pubs. See the end of these walk directions for the route back to Epping Underground station from Epping's main high street.

30. To continue the walk: cross the road with great care, go over a small ditch and keep ahead for 50m across a grassy field with a sports ground to your left, heading for a wood. Enter the wood and in 10m take the left fork **[B]**. In 40m turn left on a wide track soon passing a footpath post with a yellow arrow to your right (this is where the short walk route rejoins). To your left through the wood is a cricket pitch and pavilion. In 200m continue ahead at a cross paths. In 100m pass a car-blocking barrier and continue ahead through a small car park to reach a busy road in 80m.
31. Cross this road with care to turn left and then in a few metres veer right past a barrier to go along a tarmac path. At this point, you are recrossing the M25 which emerges from a tunnel below to your right. In 70m you reach another road, which you cross and turn left. In 30m you reach a T junction where you turn right along a road following the sign for Epping and Loughton. In 50m ignore the public bridleway sign to your right and continue along the pavement. In 30m you pass the Forest Gate Inn to bear right with a minor road past some cottages to your right with woodland to your left.
32. In 200m the minor road swings sharply to the left but you continue ahead on an unmade road past a sign for Bell Common. Continue on this unmade road, ignoring ways off until in 200m you go through 3 wooden posts and bear slightly right across a grassy area and reach a tarmac road in 30m.

(Here is the best place to leave the walk route and head to Epping High Street for meals and refreshments. At the tarmac path go left and then pick up a track to your right through Bell Common which after a short distance meets up with the main road where you continue along the pavement to Epping High Street. Alternatively you could just keep on the tarmac path until it reaches the main road where you turn right to reach the main shopping area of Epping High Street in a few hundred metres.)

33. **To continue on to Epping Underground Station (note there are no amenities on this direct route to the station, not even a shop):** cross the track and cross another grassy area between bushes to come to a bench on the left in 50m. Cross the grass, staying near the top of the slope with a fence on your left, to enter a wooded area and pick up a clear path. Follow the path through the wood, marked with posts with yellow arrows on the reverse. At a fork, keep left to stay on the edge of the wood, ignoring a marked path downhill across another grassy area. In 150m you reach a concrete bridleway sign and a road.
34. Turn left along the road and in 100m you reach a T junction. Cross the road and turn left soon passing some impressive trees over to your left. You soon cross over Sunnyside road to your right. In 80m cross over Woodland Grove to your right. In 40m past Woodland Grove just beyond a street lamp go down an easily missed tarmac path to your right soon going down some steps. Continue on the enclosed path as it goes round an extensive car park until you come out to a road. Epping Forest Underground station is 40m away to your right.

Returning to Epping Underground Station after refreshments and drinks in Epping High Street

35. From Epping High Street find Station Road off the High Street at a traffic island about 60m beyond St Johns Baptist Church. Go down this road for 300m to pass Cedar Court

on your right. 50m beyond Cedar Court turn right with Station Road to reach Epping underground station in 120m.

36. If you have had tea at the recommended Café Mio, 85 High Street, then to get to Epping Underground station turn left out of the café and in 100m turn right into Station Road and then see the above paragraph.

Instructions for a short evening walk from Loughton to Epping (9.8 km, 6.1 miles)

1. Leave the station and walk ahead along Station Approach. After 150m fork RIGHT into Station Road (the main walk route goes left). In another 400m cross the High Road and continue straight on along Forest Road, signposted To the Forest.
2. At the end of the houses, fork right on the path into the wood, away from the car road. In 70m turn left at another road and immediately right on to a permissive path round a small pond, signposted Forest Way. Follow the concrete path downhill round the pond then follow a broad track into the forest, your initial direction 10 degrees, soon crossing a wooden bridge. Carry on and cross another bridge in 150m.
3. Follow the path, with a stream to your right, for 100m and you come to an awkward looking stream crossing. Avoid this by cutting through the trees to the left on to an obvious wide gravel track. Turn right (north) on to this track - you are now briefly on the main walk route at point **A** (paragraph 7). But after just 100m, where the main walk turns left at the bottom of a dip to follow the stream, you keep straight on uphill.
4. Continue on this path for 2.3 km until you reach the busy A121. In more detail:
 - After 500m you could detour left to try and spot the remains of Loughton Camp (an Iron Age fort); there are a number of faint paths through the trees.
 - After 900m keep right on the main track (the left fork would lead you back to the main walk route near the High Beach centre).
 - In another 600m you cross a wider stream where an arrow on a tree marked Epping Forest Golding Hill Trail marks the onward route.
5. Cross the A121 with care. There is a car park and a bus stop for the 66 bus between Loughton and Waltham Abbey. The path continues to the right of the car park, but it swings left at a white post, keeping a square stone structure on your right, and then swings right again to continue downhill at initially 80 degrees. ***700m after the car park, turn LEFT at a T junction of paths** (The path right leads to Theydon Bois tube in 3km).
6. You reach another car park and the B172 after 1.5km. Cross the road and continue through the car park past a vehicle barrier on to the obvious track in your previous direction (north at first, then curving NE) - ***it's the widest track, with a raised bank on the left** (this is part of Ambresbury Banks, another Iron Age fort). In 300m go straight on at a cross paths.
7. Proceed for another 2km ignoring all turn-offs. You come to a junction with houses visible on the left and possibly a car park on the right. Take the path going half right and you are on the main walk route at point **B** (paragraph 30).