

The Forest Way



Essex County Council
Planning

Epping Forest

Epping Forest is a substantial part of the former Royal Forest of Waltham and is home to some beautiful trees. Many of the trees you will see have been POLLARDED. This is a form of woodland management which dates back to at least Anglo-Saxon times. Approximately every 15 years the trees would be cut to a height of 2 – 5 metres. The branches lopped off could be used by local Commoners for fuel, fencing etc. and new shoots would sprout out of reach of grazing cattle and deer. The right of Commoners to lop wood from the Forest ceased with the Epping Forest Act of 1878. The pollards have now been left uncut for over 100 years and their huge crowns cast deep shade over much of the once rich woodland floor. This shading effect means that plants such as primroses and butchers broom are becoming increasing rare.



Before cutting

Stages of Pollarding



After cutting



1 year after cutting

The Forest Way

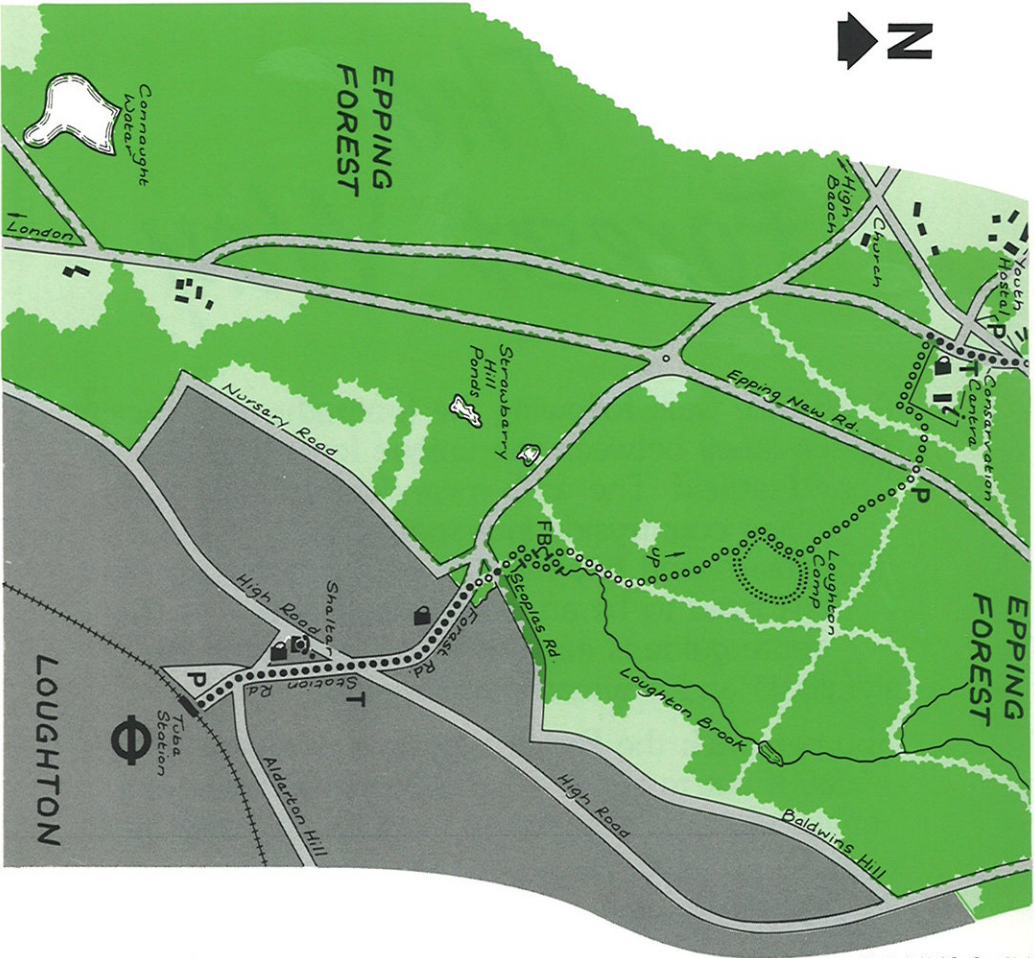
A 25 mile walk following the footpaths and ancient green lanes between the unique forests of Epping and Hatfield. The walk meanders through gently rolling countryside interspersed with isolated farmsteads and tiny hamlets of a bygone age. You don't need to be an experienced walker – the route guide is easy to follow and there are signposts and waymarks to help you.

You can walk the Forest Way in a weekend – or a day if you're keen – but why rush? Take your time, enjoy the scenery and indulge in some fresh air, exercise and Essex hospitality.

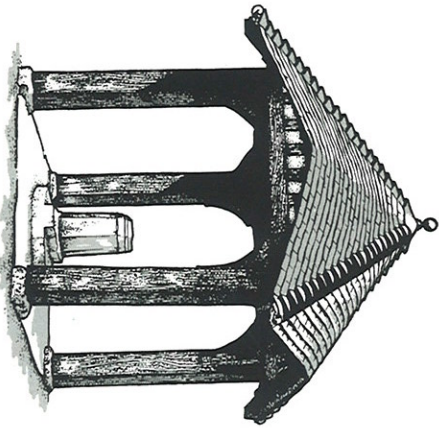
'Ways Through Essex' is an Essex County Council Project supported by the Countryside Commission.



Helping you enjoy
the Essex Countryside.



Loughton Camp. This is an Iron Age Hill Fort. Within the fort there are a number of pits and one of these is known as Turpin's cave. In the 18th century Epping Forest was the haunt of highwaymen and amongst them was the notorious Dick Turpin. Take a breather and admire the majestic trees surrounding the fort. Notice the smooth grey bark of the beech trees.

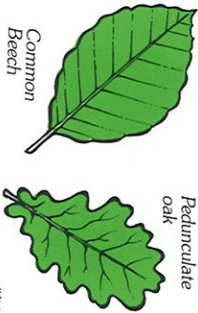


Shelter: Loughton High St.

Epping Forest. Epping Forest is home to some beautiful trees – look out for oak, hornbeam and beech. It is a substantial part of the former Royal Forest of Waltham. The Forest still stands as a great spread of wood pasture where deer and cattle graze the plains and browse beneath the trees. Long ago, clearance of the woodland for agriculture had reduced the Forest area to the size it remains today. Subsequent erosion and enclosure of Forest land resulted in the Epping Forest Act of 1878. Under this Act, the City of London Corporation took control of the Forest. It was their duty to keep the Forest unenclosed as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of the public. Apart from its scenic attractions, the Forest also contains a rich variety of wildlife.



Stinking
Hellebore



Common
Beech



Field
Maple



Holly



Hazel



Hornbeam



Common
Hawthorn

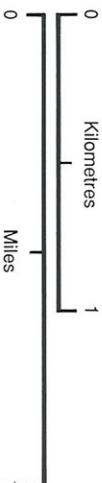


Copped Hall Green – good place for a picnic.
Copped Hall – Looking to the eastern skyline you will see the ruins of Copped Hall. The original building – a medieval manor and park – was demolished in 1748. The existing building was built in the 1750s but was unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1917. Today only a shell remains.



Beech pollard

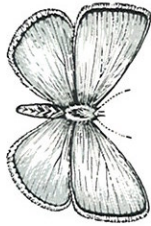
Woodredon Farm. Moving northwards the Forest Way passes Woodredon Farm, an 18th century farmhouse on the site of an ancient manor once owned by the Augustinian canons of Waltham Abbey. The name Woodredon means forest clearing and originated during the period of extensive forest clearance for agriculture which was permitted to the canons by a charter of Richard I.



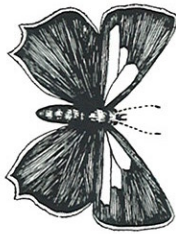
See page 14 for 'Key to maps' etc.



Meadow Brown (Female)



Common Blue (Male)



Purple Hairstreak (Female)



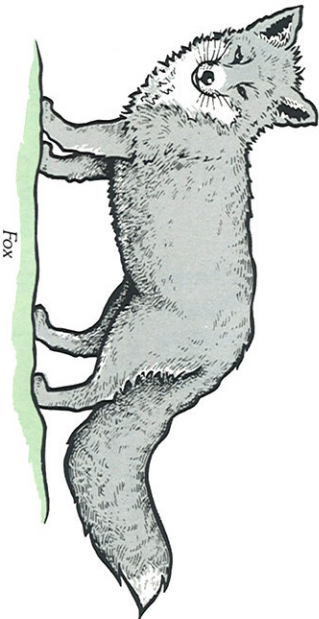
Orange Tip (Male)



Dog

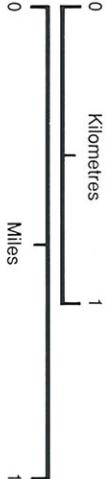


Fox



Fox

Green Lanes. Essex has over 800km of green lanes and these represent an historic network of minor roads connecting villages, hamlets and scattered farms. These lanes are no longer roads but survive as public rights of way. From the outside many appear as massive boundary hedges hiding a beautiful green tunnel within.

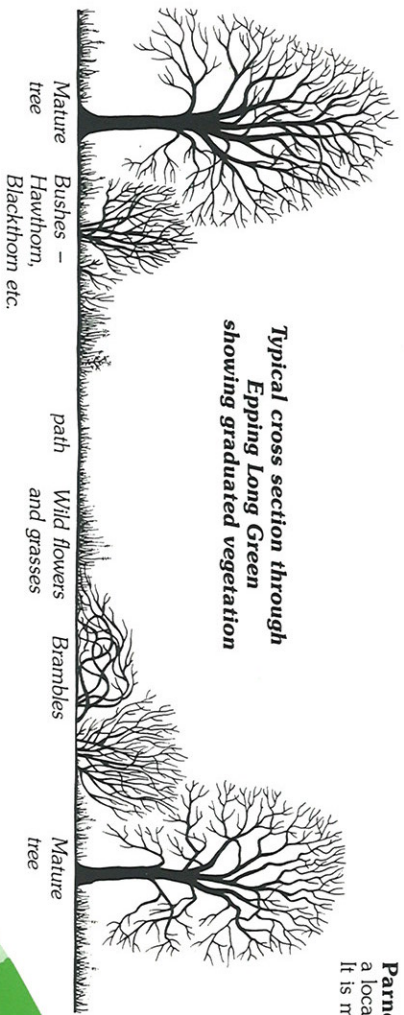


See page 14 for 'Key to maps' etc.

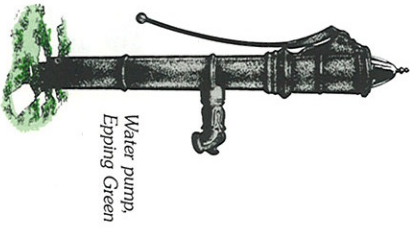
Parvills – Very attractive 16th century timber-framed farmhouse.

Ponds. Ponds were once common features in the Essex countryside but these are now disappearing at an increasingly rapid rate. The conversion of livestock to arable farming, the advent of piped water; the availability of grants for filling in farm ponds and neglect are all factors. Ponds if left to their own devices will eventually dry out – the open water disappears and trees colonise. Many of the existing ponds on the Forest Way need careful management if we are to keep the diverse number of plants and animals which they support.

Typical cross section through Epping Long Green showing graduated vegetation



Epping Long Green. An impressive green droveway which extends all the way to Rye Hill. The double hedge which runs the length of Epping Long Green is a feature of the old parish boundary and contains a rich variety of trees, plants and animals. Look out for hawthorn, blackthorn, field maple, dog rose, elm and ash. Epping Long Green is also a favourite spot for butterflies.



Water pump, Epping Green

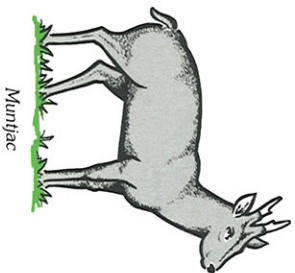


Dog Rose

Pardon Wood - This woodland is managed as a local Nature Reserve by Harlow District Council. It is mainly oak and hornbeam.



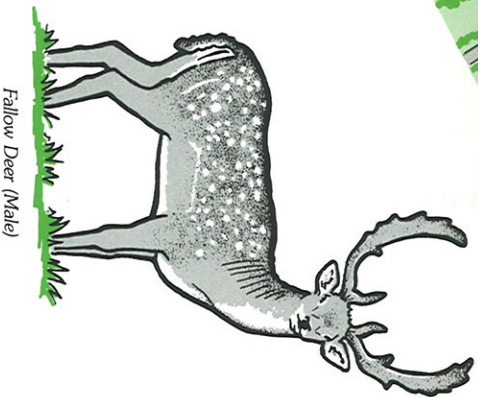
Muntjac
slot



Muntjac



Fallow
Deer
slot

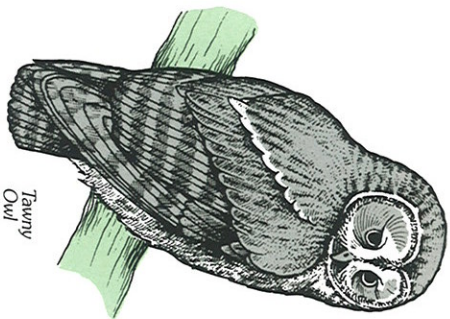


Fallow Deer (Male)

Latton Wood. Enter the peace of the woodland. Latton Wood and Hartlow Park, were included in the Royal Forest of Essex until 1301. Latton Park and Mark Bushes were common woodland with rights granted to commoners for wood and pannage. Pannage meant that the commoners had a right to graze swines in the forest.

After World War One, the Forestry Commission was established to build up a strategic timber reserve. As a result many of the broadleaved trees within this woodland were felled and replanted with faster growing conifers.

Latton Priory – The priory was founded in 12th century for Augustinian monks. They lived in great poverty on an income of only £12 a year so it was very hard to attract new members. The community ended naturally at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in 1534. The priory was surrounded by a moat and about half of this survives. Remains of the priory building have been incorporated into a barn. Note the contrast in style between new and old farm buildings . . . which do you prefer?



Tawny Owl

Lovely oak pollard. Pollards are important for hole nesting birds particularly owls.

Lattou and Harlow Commons. The route now crosses Lattou and Harlow Commons, site of the once famous Bush Fair. This was an annual event held until the 1880's on the feast of the beheading of St. John the Baptist and was important for the sale of horses, cattle and sheep.

Harlow New Town – set up in 1947 to provide new housing for 80 000 people mostly Londoners.

Rye Hill Road – a typical rural road bordered by a wide grass verge. The verge was considered essential in days of unmetalled roads to allow travellers to pick the driest ground along their route.

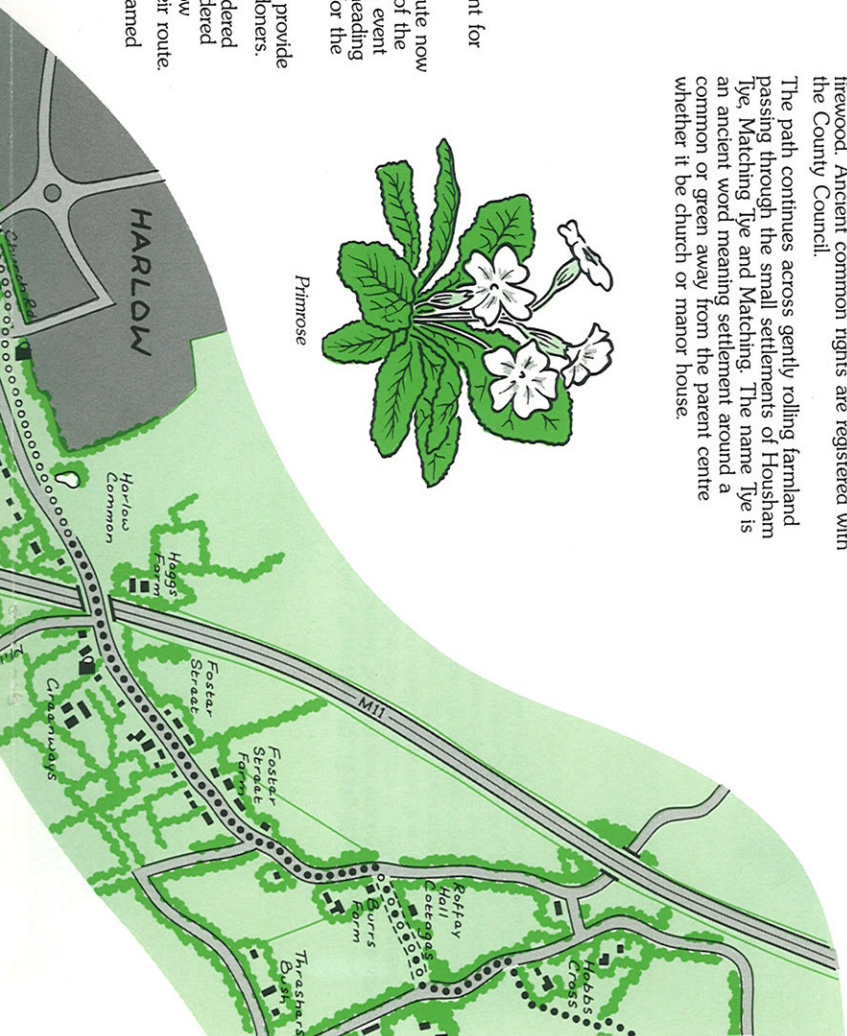
Rivett's Farm – a 16th century timber-framed building.

Common land. There are over 8500 commons in England and Wales and you will pass several of these on the Forest Way. Despite their name, commons do not belong to everyone, most have a private owner like any other land and only one fifth currently have a legal right of access for the public. Traditionally they are places for people to go for exercise and relaxation but some commons offer "commoners" (residents of certain local farms or houses) the right to graze livestock or gather firewood. Ancient common rights are registered with the County Council.

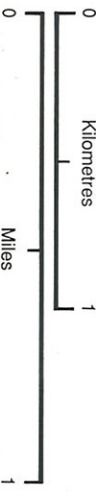
The path continues across gently rolling farmland passing through the small settlements of Housham Iye, Matching Iye and Matching. The name Iye is an ancient word meaning settlement around a common or green away from the parent centre whether it be church or manor house.



Primrose



See page 14 for 'Key to maps' etc.



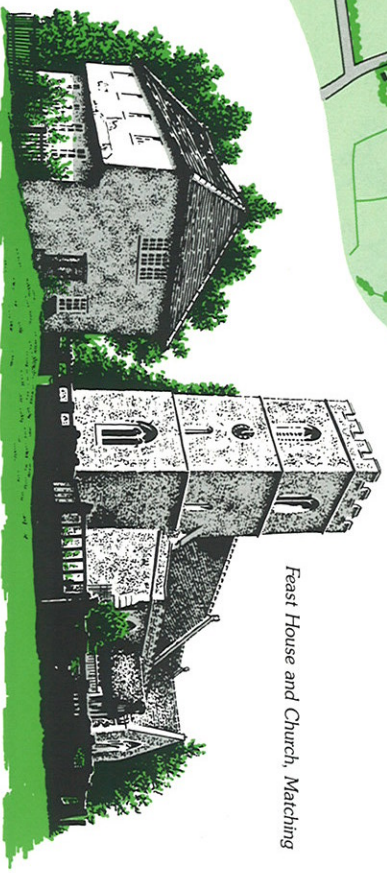
See page 14 for 'Key to maps' etc.

The Old House. The Old House was built from ships' timbers in 1450 and is thought to be the oldest house in the Parish of Matching.



The Church of St. Mary the Virgin.

The present building was constructed on the site of the original Saxon Church – which was probably made from wood extracted from the surrounding forest. In about 1200 a new church was constructed on the old Saxon foundations. Many of the church's original features have been removed or built over during renovations but the church is well worth a look inside and a good excuse for a rest!



Feast House and Church, Matching

The Marriage Feast House.

Standing to the west of the church is the Marriage Feast House. This was built around 1480 by William Chimney and was used by local brides on their wedding day.

The oak tree on Church Green was planted in 1887 to celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee.

These trees are very important for wildlife – one single oak tree can support over 250 different species of insect.

A characteristic feature of the landscape of West Essex especially noticeable from the Forest Way is the isolated farmstead. Many of these are 16th or 17th century timber-framed buildings often erected on the site of earlier settlements. Examples on the Forest Way are Parvilles, Lea Hall, Corringales and Ryes. Lea Hall and Ryes are both mentioned in the Domesday Survey. Several of these farmsteads show evidence of having been surrounded at one time by a moat. Although the function of moats is not fully understood, it is probable that they were the major needs of water supply, drainage and protection against unwanted intruders – humans and animals.

Matching: The name Matching dates back to Saxon times when the Maecca (Match) people settled in an open area of the forest. This picturesque hamlet has changed little since this time.

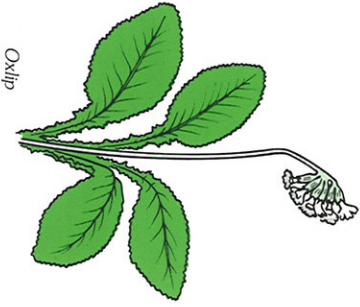
Matching Wood. Matching Wood was imparked by Thomas de Arderne under a licence granted in 1229. It remained part of the manor of Matching Hall and became known as Matching Park.



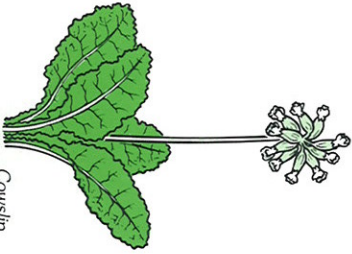
Lesser Celandine



Wild Strawberry

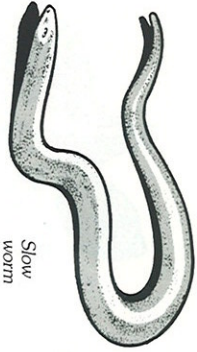


Oxlip



Cowslip





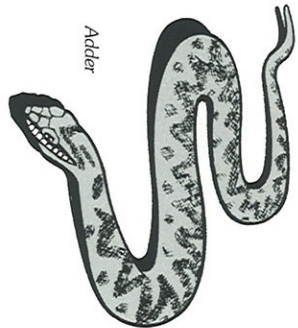
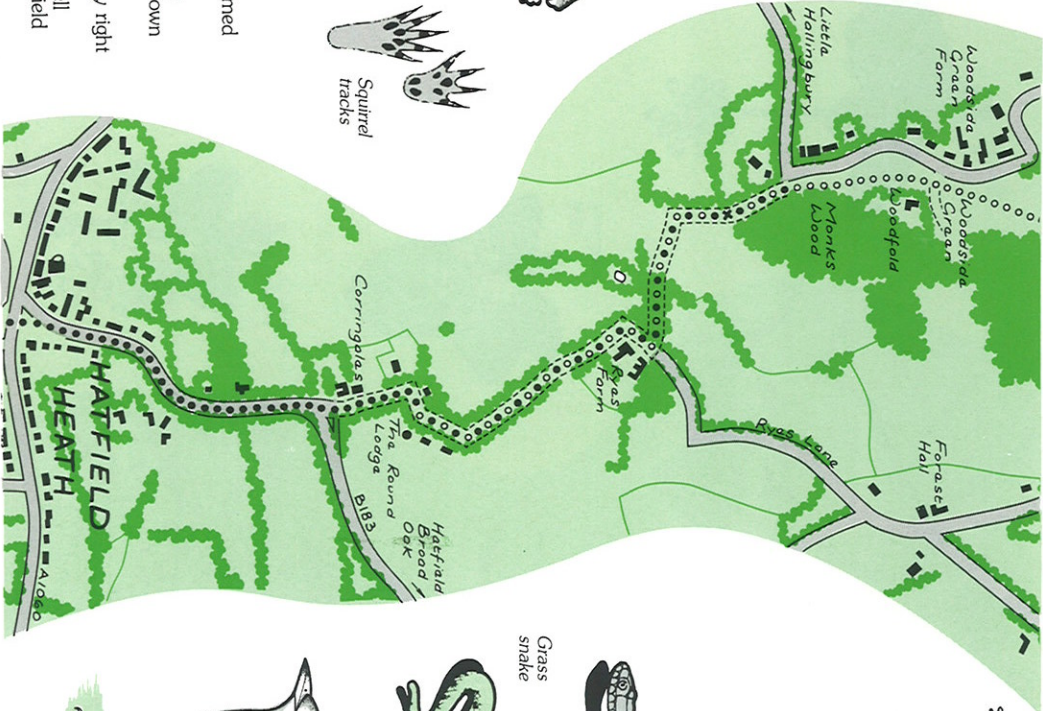
Slow worm



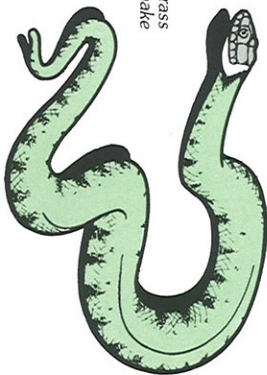
Grey squirrel



Squirrel tracks



Adder



Grass snake



Nightingale

Corringales – a 16th century timber-framed house.

Hatfield Heath. In the past century this ancient hamlet fringing the common has grown into a large village.

Village greens. People have a customary right to use village greens for lawful sports and pastimes. The village cricket match is a well known tradition and a regular sight in Hatfield Heath.

The Fitchway. The former Braintree to Bishops Stortford railway line – the Fitchway – is now managed by Essex County Council as a Country Park.

Portingbury Hills. In Beggarshall Coppice there are traces of an earthwork thought to be the remains of an Iron Age farm.

The Doodle Oak. A plaque marks the site where the Doodle Oak once stood. It was reputed to be 800 years old and measured 60ft around the base.

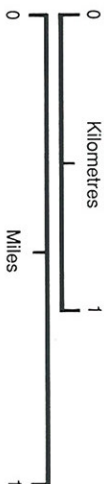
Pillow Mounds.

To the west of the Lake partly hidden by trees are large “pillow” mounds so named because of their shape. These make up an artificial warren used to keep rabbits at a time when they were highly prized for their meat and fur.

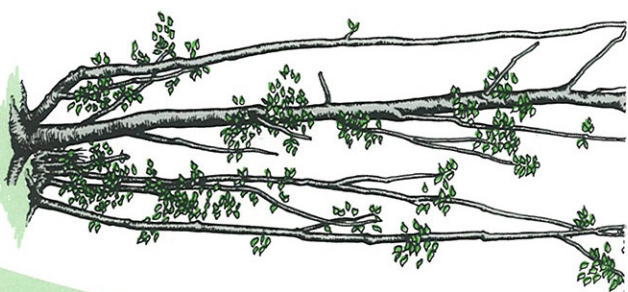
Hatfield Forest.

Hatfield Forest now belongs to the National Trust but was originally part of the great Forest of Essex. To many of us the word “forest” means an area of woodland densely planted with trees but in the Middle Ages a forest was an area of land, not necessarily all of it woodland, over which the king had the right to keep and hunt deer. The exclusive hunting rights were protected by forest law. In Hatfield Forest, many of the features of a medieval forest can still be seen today. These include deer, cattle, coppice, pollards, scrub, standard trees, grassland and a rabbit warren.

Wall Wood. The name Wall Wood is probably associated with the prehistoric Wallbury camp nearby.



See page 14 for 'Key to maps' etc.



Hornbeam Coppice



The Forest Way is clearly signposted and waymarked in both directions. These together with the guide book should make the walk easy to follow.

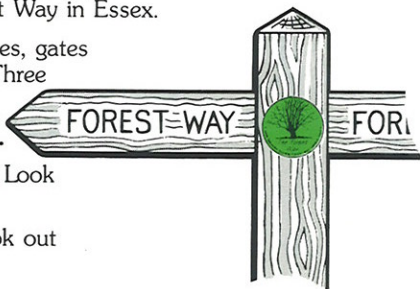
Follow the Waymarks

Follow the special Forest Way fingerposts and plaques. The plaques are bright green and unique to the Forest Way in Essex.



Look out for directional waymarker arrows on posts, stiles, gates and fingerposts. These indicate the direction to follow. Three different types of directional arrow are used.

- * Plain **yellow** – used on official public **footpaths**.
- * Plain **blue** – used on official public **bridleways**. Look out for cyclists and horse riders.
- * Plain **red** – used on official public **byways** – look out for motor vehicles as well as horses and cyclists.



Distance and time taken.
25 miles (40km) allow 9½ hours if you intend to tackle it in a day.

Going.
Slightly hilly. May be soft after rain. Wear strong boots, shoes or wellies.
Keep to the paths and use stiles and gates to cross fences. Please take care in crossing all roads.

Ordnance Survey Maps.
1:25 000 sheet TQ49/59.
Pathfinder Series – Loughton and Harold Hill.
1:25 000 sheet TL40/50.
Pathfinder Series – Epping and Chipping Ongar.
1:25 000 sheet TL41/51.
Pathfinder Series – Harlow (North) and Hatfield Heath.

1:25 000 sheet TL42/52.
Pathfinder Series – Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Airport.

Parking.
Loughton Tube Station and Hatfield Forest.

Dogs.
Keep dogs on a lead where stock are grazing. Remember the countryside is a place of work.

Transport.
The Forest Way is well served by Public Transport at both ends of the walk.

Loughton – To get to and from Loughton Tube Station use the London Underground Central Line. The service operates 7 days a week and the last train from

Loughton into London leaves at just after 11pm. For details of fare and service enquiries telephone 0171-222 1234.

Hatfield Forest – Buses run in both an easterly and westerly direction along Takeley Street. Buses running westwards go to Stansted Airport and Bishop's Stortford. From both of these destinations there are buses and trains to other parts of Essex and back to London. Travelling eastwards buses go to Great Dunmow, Braintree, Chelmsford and Southend. For bus timetable details contact Essex Busline on (0345) 000333.
For information on rail services, telephone (0345) 484950

Key to maps

●●●●● Footpath etc.	○*○*○ Byway	☎ Telephone	☀ Viewpoint
○●●●● Courtesy path	P Parking	🍷 Pub	FB Footbridge
○●●●● Bridleway	T Toilet	✕ Stile or gate	

Ways through Essex is an Essex County Council Project supported by the Countyside Commission. Our aim is to help you enjoy the Essex countryside using the County's network of footpaths, bridleways and byways. For more information contact Ways through Essex at the County Planning Department, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1LF. Telephone: (01245) 437647.

Ways through Essex would like to thank the National Trust, the Conservators of Epping Forest and Epping Forest Countrycare for their assistance with this project.

Hatfield Forest

Hatfield Forest covers an area of over 1000 acres and is thought to be the most complete surviving example of a small medieval Royal Hunting Forest. In the 12th Century the Forest was in crown ownership and was used by the King as a hunting ground for fallow deer. The Forest remained in Crown ownership until 1238. Since then the Forest has passed through many generations of landowners but despite this most has survived in its earlier form.



In Hatfield Forest you will see a form of woodland management known as COPPICING. Trees are cut close to the ground every 8 – 25 years depending on the type of tree and the timber required. This causes the stump to send up fresh shoots which are left to grow for several years. These poles are then harvested for fencing, firewood, charcoal and other products. Newly coppiced woodland was protected from grazing animals by woodbanks with fences on top. Examples of these banks can still be seen today in Hatfield Forest.

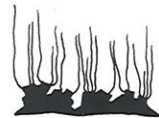


Before cutting

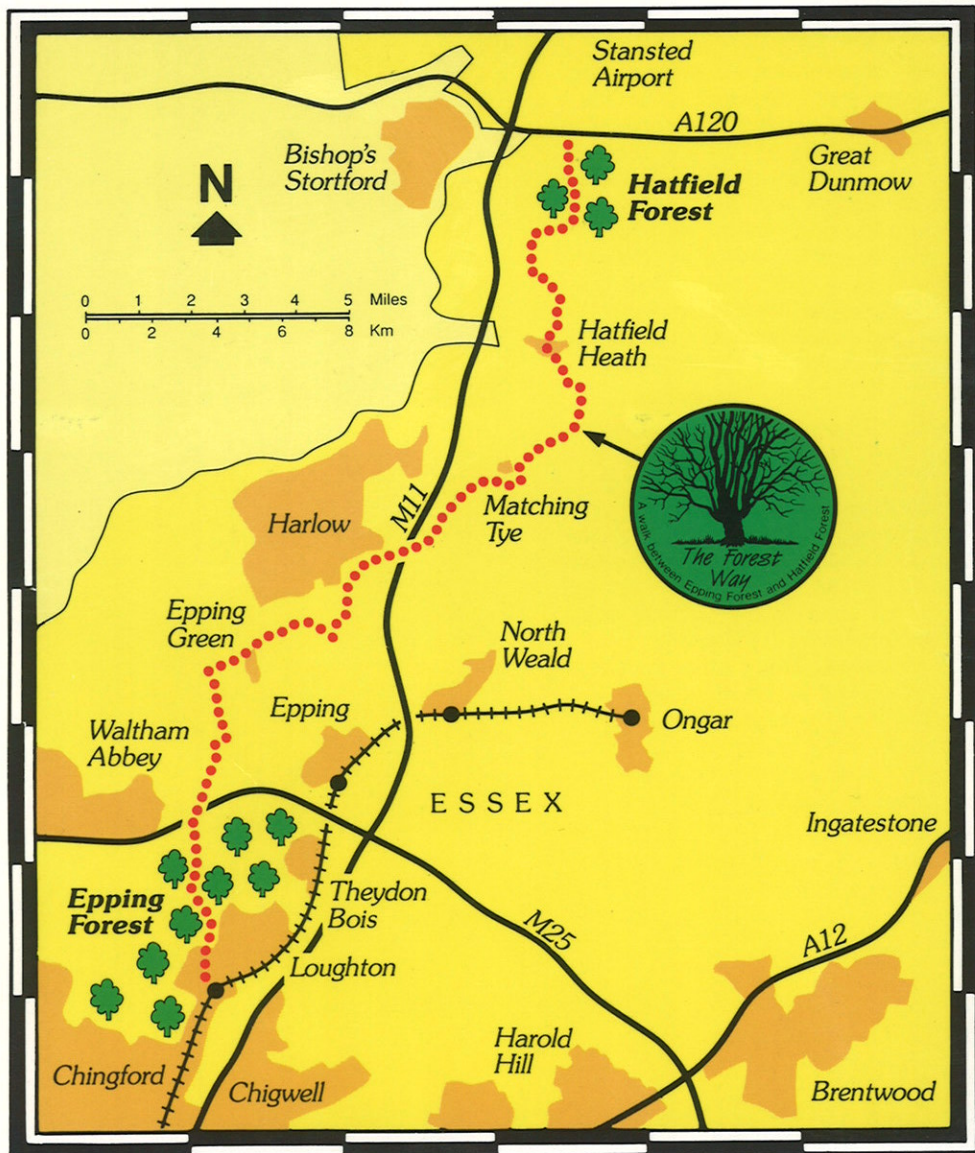
Stages of Coppicing



After cutting



1 year after cutting



The Forest Way A 25 mile walk between the forests of Epping and Hatfield.



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COMMISSION**