

Woodgrange Web Walks – Epping Forest 1

Walk 3. Chingford, via Whipps Cross and Heigham's Park boating lake.

DIRECTIONS

Start

Start at the changing rooms on Wanstead Flats (1), at the junction of Capel Road and Tylney Road. (Note: numbers indicate image numbers on the accompanying image sheet and on the accompanying slideshow).

The walk

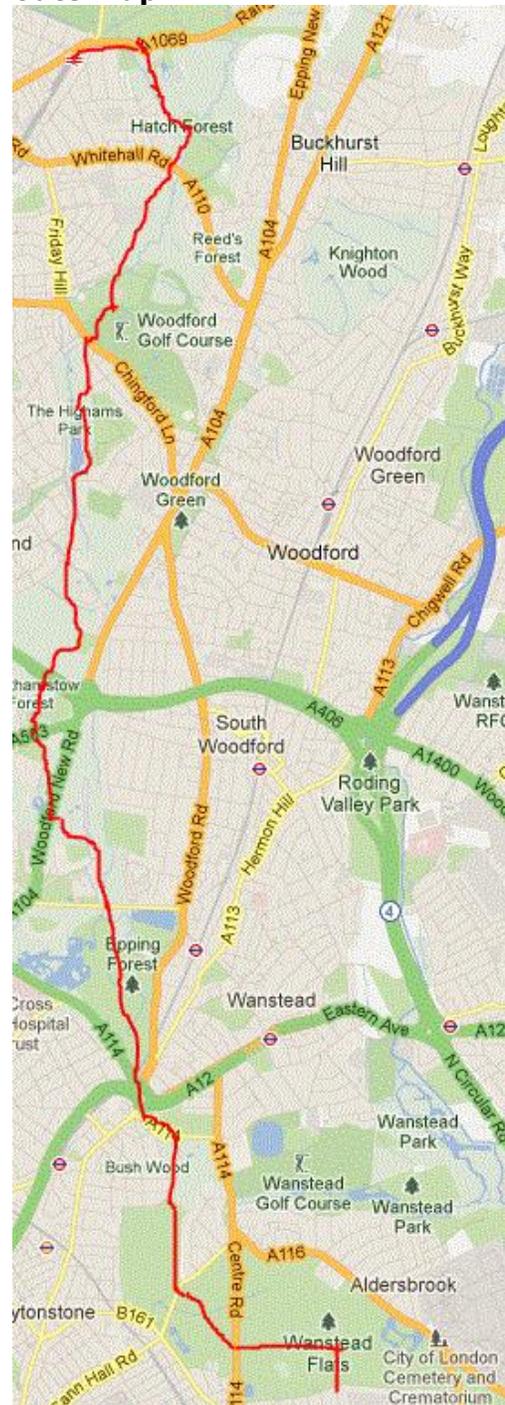
Head north between the football pitches, turning left when you get past the first one. Follow the rough path with the twin tower blocks ahead and to the right (2) until you reach the car park at Centre Road. Cross at the central refuge a few yards to the left, then head across the Flats, bearing right (3), following the path that leads to the bend in Lake House Road, now keeping the twin tower blocks to the left.

At Lake House road (4), cross carefully and follow the right hand side of the Flats (5), keeping trees and houses to your right. When you reach the diagonal avenue of trees, cross this then bear left past the lampposts (6) on the made up path towards Bushwood. Just before you reach the road, turn right along a small path running alongside the road (7). This meanders away from the road (8), eventually meeting it again at the junction with Bush Road. Cross carefully at the triangle (9) (traffic in Bush Road sometimes speeds round this corner) and continue to the pedestrian crossing (10).

Cross Bush Road here and continue on the pathway that leads across the Green Man roundabout (11) and emerges at the bridge crossing the Central Line. Just past this there is a barred gate (12), which you should go round heading directly towards a small gap in the trees ahead (13). Through the gap, head for a thicket slightly to your left, about 200 yards away, (14) and on reaching this go through and dog-leg left then immediately right (15) and go straight on (16). You should be halfway between the boating lake to your left and the Snaresbrook County Court to your right, with its distinctive towers (17).

Eventually you will come to a small car park on Snaresbrook Road (18). Cross the road and continue past the barrier into the woods ahead

Route map



(19). The path goes past housing over to your left then the sports facilities of Forest School. Soon after, the forest opens up and you should closely follow the bush on your left (20) until it funnels into a small path bearing right (21), back into the trees. Follow this path until it dog-legs to the right; just before, you can see a small pathway on the left cutting through the bushes (22/23) and over a small stream (24), and on to the Woodford New Road. It is easy to miss this small path, but if you carry on, you will get caught behind fencing that runs right up to the North Circular Road.

At Woodford New Road you should see the old Rising Sun pub (now a bar/club) to your left (25) and a bus stop and central refuge nearby where you should cross. On the other side, turn right and follow the pavement a short while until you can dive back into the forest on your left (26). [This is about the half way point of the walk.] Go past the reeds and bullrushes marking an old pond on your left, following a course that moves gradually away from the road. A path comes in from the left (27) and soon you can just make out a wall on the left (allotments). Continue forward using the white-topped posts as markers (28). Eventually, after bearing further to the left, the forest opens to a sharp rise up (the dip at the bottom can be very muddy after rain) (29). At the top of the rise, you will see a bridge in front of you (30) where you cross over Forest Road. Follow the track as it bears right (31) and soon after you will cross another bridge (32) over the A406 (North Circular). From here there are clear views across north east London.

Continue into the forest (33) which eventually opens out to the right (34)(look out for the large Gipsy Smith stone over to the left - 35/36). Walk round the wood with the open space to your right until the path divides as it goes back into the forest. Take the left fork (37) and head in this direction for several hundred yards, eventually meeting a path coming in from the left, with a row of houses just visible beyond (38). It is extremely easy to get lost on this stretch with dense woodland and criss-crossing pathways. A compass will help avoid a U-turn (try to maintain a course a few degrees west of north).

When you arrive at Oak Hill road(39), cross this, go round the gate ahead and follow the path opposite (40) through a clearing (with a bench over to the right) (41). After the clearing, you meet other paths. Bear left along the path through the wood with houses just visible over on the left (42). Continue through the forest heading due north (43) until eventually you come to The Charter Road (44) where you can see Highams Park Boating Lake opposite. Cross the road (45) and go round the right of the lake as far as you can (46). When the lake tapers to a stream, and you can just make out a small footbridge over the stream (47), pull away from the lake up the hill to the right through the trees until you approach some houses at the top (48). Keeping to the left of the houses, follow the path as far as you can until it meets Chingford Lane (49). Cross here and follow the path through a lightly wooded area until it bears right meeting another path coming in from the left (50). Almost immediately, take the left fork (51) through the woods in a north/north-easterly direction until eventually it meets golf links on the right (52). Keep going on this path, eventually passing houses on the right, until you meet Whitehall Road (53).

Cross here and continue with the forest on your left and open space on your right. After a couple of hundred yards, you come to a line of trees coming in from the right (54). Immediately following this is a path to the left, crossing a stream (the Ching) (55). Take this path, walking through woodland until you reach open space where the path divides. This area can be very muddy after heavy rain(56). Take the right fork (57) and continue up the hill, eventually passing tennis courts away to the right and then a pond.

If you continue ahead you will come to Rangers Road, with the Royal Forest Hotel directly opposite, Here you can get refreshments and typical pub-chain food and perhaps make a visit to the Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge next door. Or, a few yards past the Hunting Lodge, you will find the Butler's Retreat, with an excellent cafe offering hot and cold drinks and good food.

Alternatively, at the pond, bear left through the woods to meet the junction of Rangers Road and Forest Side. Follow Rangers Road as it curves round into Chingford. Shortly after, there is a bus station, then the railway station. There is a very nice Italian coffee stall on the railway station.

Return

From Chingford Bus Station, the 97 bus takes about an hour to get to Stratford. Much quicker is the train to Liverpool Street (every fifteen minutes) then train back to Forest Gate or Manor Park. Alternatively, alight at Walthamstow Central and go to Queen's Road to get the Overground to Wanstead Park or Woodgrange Park. The walk between these stations is a little tricky because of the irritating absence of a footbridge between them. If you have had enough walking, you could take the escalator down to the Victoria Line to go one stop to Blackhorse Road and get the Overground there.