

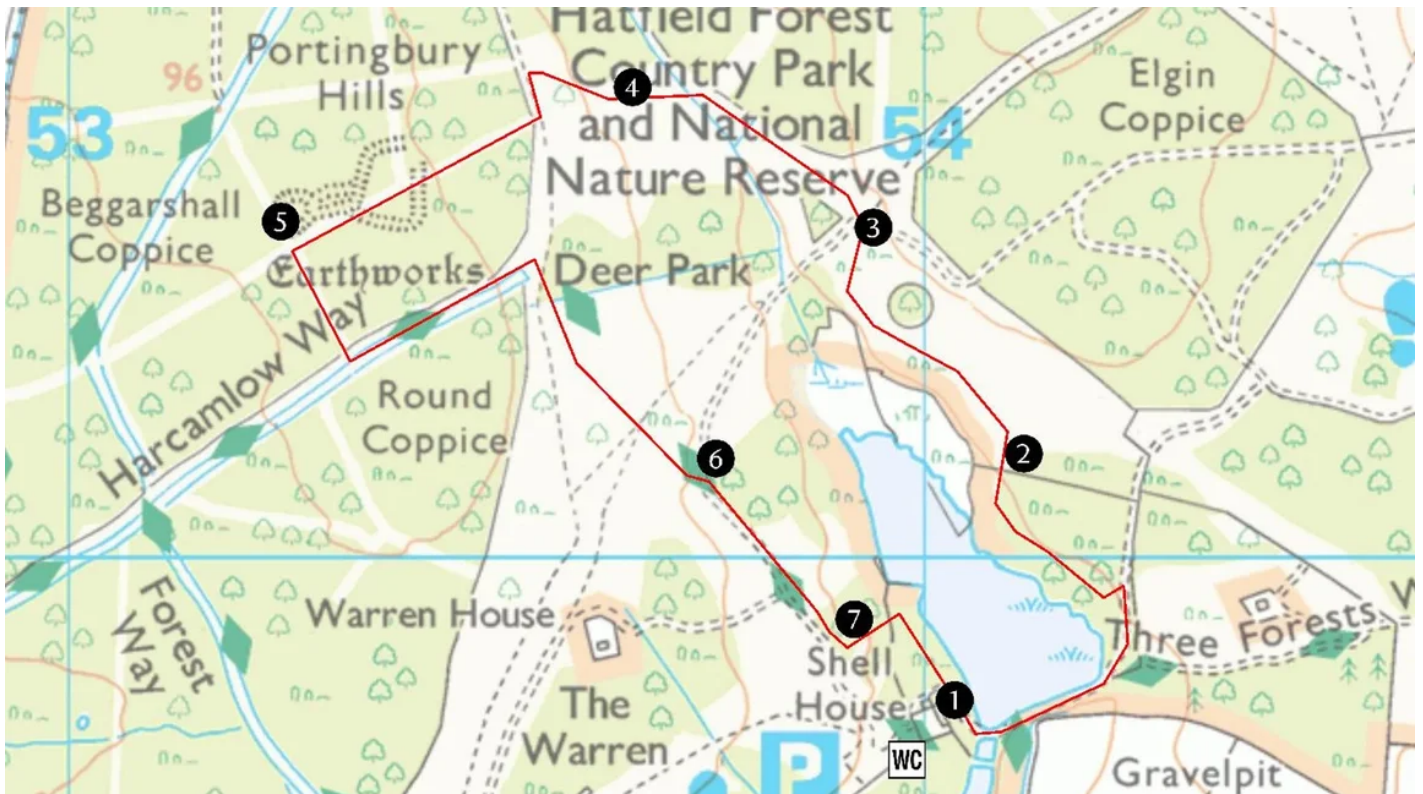
ESSEX, BEDFORDSHIRE & HERTFORDSHIRE

## Hatfield Forest walk

Enjoy the varied scenery on this circular walk at Hatfield Forest as you discover the sights that make it a National Nature Reserve and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Follow the rides and visit Portingbury Hills. Look out for evidence of coppicing.

### 1 Plan ahead

The area around Portingbury Hills can become very muddy in later autumn and winter so this walk is best enjoyed from April to October. Please note that there are no longer any waymarkers for this trail. During the winter months you will need to book your parking at weekends and during school holidays.



### Information

Address: Hatfield Forest, Bush End Road, Takeley, Bishop's Stortford, Essex CM22 6NE.

OS map: Landranger 167

Activity: Walking

Easy: A lakeside and forest walk. Please see Terrain section for more details.

Dog friendly: Dogs are welcome, but please keep them on leads near livestock, around the lake and wherever temporarily signed.

Full trail: Miles: 1.7 (km: 2.72)

Duration: 1 hour 30 mins - 2 hours

### Terrain

The route of this circular walk runs alongside the lake and then through the forest before heading back to the lake. Paths can be muddy after wet weather so boots may be necessary. There are no bins provided, please take your litter home with you.

### Total steps: 7

Start point: Shell House, grid ref: TL540197

1. Starting from in front of the Shell House, cross the dam at the end of the lake and join the boardwalk heading into the coppice. After about 70m, cross a small bridge and then take the left fork for a short distance before turning right onto a short stub of the boardwalk. Follow a trail through the trees, bearing gradually right, until you emerge into more open ground and reach a five-bar gate, next to a pedestrian gate. Look out for a group of conifers on the right, just before you reach this gate: Scots, Corsican and Austrian pine, together with cedar of Lebanon.
2. Pass through the gate (please shut behind you) and, bearing left, skirt the marsh area. Immediately after this area bear right, through the gravel pit, a small area of hillocks and hollows, following the path between short wooden posts. The small plantation to your right is beech. Bear right and uphill, aiming for the bend in the entrance road. Cross the road, aiming for the further side of the small plantation of sweet chestnuts.
3. Bearing left, skirt around the top of the sweet chestnut plantation, aiming for a gap in the trees. Continue downhill across the hummocky ground, looking out for large disused badger setts, now colonised by rabbits, as well as large ant hills, which are home to the yellow meadow ant. Cross Shermore Brook using the small wooden bridge.
4. Continue uphill from the bridge, across open ground, taking a right fork about half way up. Turn left as you approach the trees and then after a short distance, turn right into a narrow ride, to enter Beggarshall Coppice. This can become quite muddy. Continue for about 300m, passing open ground on your right. This is Portingbury Hills. Look out

for low mounds and ditches. These are the visible remains of a small settlement, originally thought to be of Iron Age origin but now believed to be medieval.

5. At the cross roads, turn left and follow the ride, past a tree in the middle of the ride, until you reach a wider ride. Turn left again and follow the wide ride past two trees in the middle of the ride. Just beyond this, bear to the right, heading for the main open plain. Look out for young pollarded trees.
6. On emerging into the main plain, head towards a large isolated horse chestnut tree, by the side of the main estate road, just beyond the rising bend. Look for the newly exposed views of the lake through the thinned out trees.
7. At the horse chestnut, turn left across the road and then walk on the grassy margin by the newly cleared ground. Admire the views towards the lake which have been revealed by this work. Head for the hitching post and then the pedestrian gate, next to the five-bar gate, leading into the cafe parkland. Turn left and make for the old oak tree. This particular one is about 450 years old and its base is protected by a low railing. Walk around the outside of the railing and finish back at the Shell House. Reward yourself at the café – a cup of tea and perhaps a bite to eat? (Please note the present map shows an earlier route for this final stage – please ignore)

End point: Shell House, grid ref: TL540197

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