

STEVENAGE OUTER ORBITAL PATH

STOOP Walk 10. 6½ (+ 3½) miles Featuring STOOP Ten

On this walk you first have a choice between walks of 6½ (taking the bus to Graveley) or 10 miles (walking there). STOOP Ten first climbs a leafy bridleway from Graveley Church, then follows a ridge with pretty views across the countryside. You cross fields and pass woods as you make your way to Damask Green (part of Weston) and, on past cattle grazing in Weston Park, before arriving at Dane End Farm. From here you return to Stevenage on Link Path 1. There are two stiles. You can follow your route on OS Explorer Map 193.

Note: This walk starts with a choice –

1. Take the bus to Graveley; or
2. Walk to Graveley via Stevenage Old Town, St Nicholas Church and Link Path 8: 3.5 miles.

The description for each route starts at Stevenage Bus Station.

1. Bus to Graveley:

Link Bus: 55 Stevenage Bus Station (Stop C) to Graveley

*Alight at the Waggon and Horses (TL231279). Cross the road and turn left and then right into Church Lane. Turn first left at the side road leading to the church. This junction marks the start of STOOP Ten, the final leg of the orbital path.**

2. Or on foot *Note: About 40 minutes of varied town walking before you join Link Path 8*

Leave the Bus Station as if making your way to the trains, but cross the paved area to the left of the ramp and go down the steps. Turn right on to the road (once The Great North Road.) Continue straight on in the same direction, passing round the side of Tesco to your right and on over the footbridge to reach the Old Town. Cross to the right hand side of this road and keep on in the same direction to walk the length of the High Street. Your route takes you under an underpass, across roads joining from the right and on via traffic free Middle Row, where a wall plaque tells you something of its early history. (There is a public toilet here.) Continue past the Cromwell Hotel and across another side road.

After the war memorial appears on the Green to your left and just before the underpass, look out for a broad footpath on your right and turn right on to it. Continue on this path, through the avenue of trees, over the footbridge and on as the path continues through trees to the road, the hazardous Rectory Lane. Cross with great care and turn right. Cross to the lychgate of St Nicholas Church.

This marks the start of Link Path 8.

Link Path 8: St Nicholas Church to Graveley. 1.5 miles. Start Point: TL241262.

Go through the lychgate, up the steps to your right and follow the gravel path. Just before the Margaret Barclay memorial, turn left along a path to the right of a row of mature beech.

Note the 'Only Connect' monument dedicated to the novelist E M Forster, a resident of Stevenage, and the commemorative plaque to his friend, the composer Elizabeth Poston.

Go through the kissing gate into Forster Country. Follow the waymarked path ahead, passing a waymark post on your right, to meet a fingerpost in the hedge left. Turn right here and cross the field towards pylons. At the edge of the field go straight ahead through a gap to turn right on to a narrow path between a wire fence and hedge. At its end turn left to

go across the field under power lines. Follow this path as it goes through a gap in a hedge and alongside a field edge, with a hedge on your right, soon to meet a waymark post.

Turn left here and walk across this field, at first in open country but at a waymarked post you continue alongside a hedge on your right. At the end of this path, turn right at a waymarked post to walk, with the hedge now on your left, down the field edge to the road. Turn left on to the road and continue downhill to reach a junction with a side road on your right (235280).

This junction marks the end of Link Path 8. You now join STOOP

STOOP Ten: Graveley to Dane End Farm. 4.2 miles. Start Point: TL235281.

Follow the road to the church and turn right on a good track, shortly bearing right just before you reach the farmyard, where the bridleway is well marked but sometimes overgrown, continuing steadily uphill. It is two miles from Graveley to Weston. The path eventually levels out as you continue straight ahead, with pretty views across the fields. You pass How Wood on your left and shortly after meet a waymark post at a clear Y junction (247293). Turn right here to go across the field.

Your path now leads straight ahead, across several fields. As the path bears left round the field do not follow it but instead go through the gate ahead (Weston comes into view here) and carry straight on, on a signed bridleway across the last field to reach the village and Damask Green Road (258298). Turn right on this road to reach The Cricketers on your right.

Continuing past the Cricketers you shortly take the first left fork in the road. In about fifty yards or so, just past the houses on your left, go through the kissing gate on your right. Keeping the hedge and fence on your right, continue, to reach the drive to Weston Park House. Cross the drive and follow the left hand waymarked path. This follows the edge of the Park Wood at first and then continues in the same direction across the park through a series of kissing gates, finally reaching a road at Warren Green (265286).

Walk ahead along the road for about 200 yards, following it as it turns right. Soon the road turns left, but you continue ahead and follow this clearly signed footpath, with a hedge on your right. Follow this path for about 500 yards. Look out for a waymark post in the hedge at this point (263283) It indicates a clear path left across the open field.

Turn left on to this well maintained broad footpath, leaving the hedge behind you and follow this path across the open field. Continue in this direction, passing Longdell Wood on your right. At the corner of the wood follow the clear path waymarked across the field, passing beneath power lines. The new development at Great Ashby is in view on your right. Negotiate the stile in the corner and make your way across the field to another stile at Dane End Farm, which is visible ahead, slightly to your left. Cross this last stile.

This marks the end of STOOP Ten (271277). You now head for Stevenage on Link Path 1.

Link Path 1: Dane End Farm to Great Ashby. 0.7 miles

Turn right at the farm as indicated by a waymark post and follow this path to a junction of paths. At this junction turn right on to a roughly surfaced path, keeping to it as it bears left. Follow this broad bridleway into the Great Ashby estate. For some distance now, the route takes you past the blank boundary fences of this development to emerge at Great Ashby Way.

This completes Link Path 1.

Cross Great Ashby Way to reach the bus stop directly opposite.

Link Bus: SB7 to Stevenage Bus Station