

STOOP Clockwise Circuit

GRAVELEY (TL 231279) TO BEANE VALLEY, (LINK PATH 2) 6.75 miles

Take Church Lane (the opposite side of the road from the two pubs). Continue ahead, until the road turns right, where you turn left to reach the church (235281).

At the church, turn right on a good track, shortly bearing right, 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. Pass How's 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 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.

Follow this clearly signed footpath, with a hedge on your right, for about 500 yards. Look out for a waymark post in the hedge at this point. It indicates a clear path left across the open field (263283). Turn sharp left on to this

broad crossfield footpath, leaving the hedge behind you.

Follow this path across the open field and 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 housing 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 (271277), which is visible ahead, slightly to your left. Cross this last stile.

Continue ahead to follow the waymarked footpath, with the farm buildings and then a hedge on your left. This leads to a clear path on the field boundary, a hedge now on your right. As the field curves away to the left look out for a well worn path that bears right through the trees. The farmhouse is almost directly behind you at this point. Follow this path along the next field edge, with a hedge now on your right. As you leave the hedge behind, the path continues ahead but gradually changes, becoming broader. You are in a more open landscape. There are trees on your right and a clear line of trees ahead, joining the path from the right. Continue ahead, going gently downhill on this clear track.

Walkern comes into view as the track curves. There is a bank on your right. Continue, but as the track curves left towards Walkern, be on the look out for a waymark post on the bank to your right - about 500 yards before Walkern (283267). Turn right here on to the waymarked path, following it up the bank and along the field edge straight on to a T- junction. Turn left here. This is Froghall Lane. Follow this, past houses to a 'children playing' sign on the right hand side of the road (288262)

Turn right onto the footpath at the entrance to this estate, with the small play area in front of you. Bear right, past flats on your left, turn left through the alley and then turn right. At the T-junction, turn left and then turn right into

Moors Ley. Take the first left which brings you to the B1037, directly opposite the footpath on the other side (286259).

Cross the B1037 and follow the footpath ahead, going uphill alongside the first field and diagonally across the next to the kissing gate. Turn left here. Follow the path, keeping the hedge on your left, until you meet another signed kissing gate, left. Turn left, going down the steps. Follow this path down the edge of the field (286255).

Turn right, just before you reach the road, where the mill is clearly ahead of you, to your left. Your route now proceeds southwards, for about 2½ miles, along the well signed Beane Valley Footpath, the river on your left. Your path takes you through a kissing gate on your left and continues on through a meadow to meet two kissing gates. Go through the gate on the left. Continue on the clear path ahead, crossing fields and through a succession of gates, across a farm track and on until you reach a double gate, by trees (282245). This has a blue bridleway sign clearly displayed.

BEANE VALLEY (LINK PATH 2) TO WOOLMER GREEN 5.3 miles

Continue ahead as you walk across this field towards a gap in the trees ahead. You meet a kissing gate. Go through and on in the same direction. The Beane is to your left as you walk across the meadows to another kissing gate. This is newly waymarked and indicates your route - across the field towards the power lines. The path may be obscured by crops in the summer, but the public right of way across the field is clearly indicated. At the far corner of the field you meet another waymark post, always reassuring. Cross over the path leading from Benington to Aston End. You now go ahead on a curving field edge path, as though towards the water tower.

Continue with the river on your left. The route takes you across two roads. At the second road, once you are safely across, continue through a gap in the hedge slightly to your right. It is signed. Negotiate a stile to find an excellently maintained footpath. Here in spring and summer you can enjoy attractive field margins with wild flowers and butterflies, and alive with birdsong. Appreciate the provision as you continue to a waymark post on your left. Note that the path ahead now changes status to a permissive route and the right of way changes direction at this point.

Turn right here. Go diagonally left, uphill, across the field, on a clear footpath, to meet a hedge. Here the public right of way now passes through a private garden. Either continue through the garden, or make your way round it on the marked permissive path. Go out to the road (283218). Turn right and walk up the road to a fingerpost indicating a footpath left (277218).

Turn left along this footpath. Keep the hedge (and the grounds of Aston Bury) on your right, and follow the broad track ahead to the next footpath fingerpost at the field's edge. This marks the junction of footpaths 30 and 26.

Turn right here, with the edge of the wood (Astonbury Wood) on your right. Continue in this direction eventually to meet the A602 (278207). (*A short distance to your right here, and across the road, is the popular Three Horseshoes pub.*) Turn left on to the narrow footpath alongside this main road and follow it to a finger post at the brow of the hill.

This directs you across the road and the most dangerous road crossing on the entire STOOP circuit. Pedestrians are not catered for here. Traffic is moving at speed and drivers are not necessarily expecting walkers.

Cross the A602 to Raffin Green Lane opposite. Follow this lane for just over a mile, under the railway bridge, past Hazel Farm on your left, on through the wood (Skegg's Wood) and on up the hill. Follow the lane as it turns right, past Staples Cottage on your right and a larger establishment on your left. *Do not go down the public bridleway* signed to your left but continue along Raffin Green Lane. You pass the farmhouse of Raffin Green Farm and houses at Datchworth on your right.

Continue to the T Junction at the end of Raffin Green Lane (269192) and turn right. Turn left just before the church, taking the footpath with the graveyard on your right.

After a few yards you come across a thoughtfully provided bench, from which there are pleasant open views. But you now continue in the same direction along the bridleway, with the hedge on your right and eventually bearing right across the field. At the road turn right, past the school (266192), and look for a waymark on a metal gate post to your left, at the entrance to a field.

Follow in the direction indicated, along the edge of the field, again with the hedge on your right. This leads you across an open field,

heading towards trees. At its end, climb the stile and turn right and then beyond the curved brick wall opposite, almost immediately left. Go through the kissing gate here (262190).

You now go diagonally across the corner of the field to another kissing gate under the power line. Go through this too, and on in the same direction to another stile beneath a tree. Woolmer Green is now clearly in view as you climb the stile and descend on the clear path ahead. At the path's end, go down steps to a lane (256188). Turn left and then right into Garden Road.

Follow the footpath round to the flats on your right. At the flats, look for a fingerpost directing you to a footpath on their left hand side and take this, to go past the children's play area and emerge at the main road. This is the B197. There is a zebra crossing a few yards to your left. Cross the road to the Red Lion pub (254187).

WOOLMER GREEN TO LANGLEY LANE (LINK PATH 6) 6.6 miles

From the Red Lion pub walk North (towards Stevenage). Turn left into Bridge Road. Pass under the railway and immediately take the bridleway on the left leading across open ground to the corner of the wood.

At the wood, follow the track beside the wood on your left. After about 100 yards the path turns left into the wood and then immediately right. At the next waymark post continue along the permissive bridleway indicated. Follow the waymarks, eventually turning right to pass under the motorway (243186). Go past the buildings on your right and continue along the track (Normans Lane) to meet Spinney Lane. Turn right. Where the road turns right (242192), turn left on to a footpath. Keep the hedge line to your right and follow the path to the corner of a field. Turn right here to go through the hedge *in front of* the gate.

Note: A short diversion here through the gate will bring you across the field to the Robin Hood and Little John pub.

But to continue STOOP, follow the path left, with the hedge now on your left and then turn left at the T-junction to meet a road (236193). Turn right. After about 200 yards look for a waymarked path on your right and enter the wood here, following the path indicated by the finger post. Continue through the wood. This brings you to a large open field. Follow the path

across the field and after about 270 yards note but *do not take* a path crossing your route. Continue, and after approximately another 230 yards, take the path at a right angle to your left (229202). Follow this path towards a cluster of buildings and a line of tall trees. This brings you to the side of the Lytton Arms pub and the road. Turn left and cross the road to the footpath. Walk on for about 250 yards, passing Slip Lane on the left.

Shortly after, take the path right (227202) to go by Park Gate House. Continue, with the hedge on your right, following the path round to go through the metal kissing gate and into the park. Walk towards the single tree standing to the left of the memorial and then on to another kissing gate visible ahead. Go through this gate and follow the fence on your left leading downhill to meet a waymark post by a drainage ditch.

Go through the gate to the road (219209) – the B656, Hitchin to Codicote. Cross carefully and continue into the wood (Graffidge Wood), following the track. Just before the track bends to the right, take the fork right at a waymark post and follow the waymarks through the wood to the road (212210). Turn right and walk along the road for just over half a mile. Go past Easthall Farm and bear left. Immediately past the green barn, look for a finger post in the hedge, left (202219). Following its direction go up through the hedge, across the yard and out through the gate, noting the waymark.

The path here may not have been restored after ploughing, but this waymark does indicate the route of the right of way. The route now crosses the field *in the direction indicated*. It heads towards the gap in the line of trees where it meets up with a waymark post.

Turn right on to the track on the other side of the trees and follow it into Reynold's Wood ahead. Follow the track through the wood and down to the road - B651 (192217). Turn left on to the road and look for the footpath sign on the right. Take this footpath through the gate and up the hill to a metalled track. Turn right along it and follow it round, with the hedge on your left. Continue up the track which leads you to All Saints Church at St. Paul's Walden (192223).

Note: Turn right to reach the Strathmore Arms.

Walk on through the churchyard. Turn left on to the road and shortly after, turn right, on to a narrow footpath. This soon opens out to a field edge, and eventually leads back to the B651 (197227). Turn left follow the road round a dangerous bend, past the gated entrance of Stagenhoe on your left.

Leave the road by the footpath on the right into the wood. Continue through the wood and on in the same direction, diverging slowly from the road on your right, across a large field to the road (Langley Lane) (199234).

LANGLEY LANE (LINK PATH 6) TO GRAVELEY 6.8 miles

Follow the waymarked sign across the road and keep to the well trodden path until it meets a broad farm track. Turn left on to this track and follow it round until it bears round to the right. At the bend you continue straight ahead, past a waymark post and over a stile to reach the next finger post. Bear left and walk on, passing between two large houses (Langley End) and follow the signed public bridleway ahead, fairly steeply downhill. Bear right when it forks. Go on to meet the road (198241), the B651.

Turn right along the road for about 10 yards. Choose a safe spot to cross with care to a public bridleway opposite. Turn right here. Continue along a field edge for about 100 yards then bear diagonally across the field to the corner of a wood. Follow the path, keeping the wood to your left (the ruins of Minsden Chapel are in the plantation to your left as you pass) and continue in the same direction across the open ground. Your route forks to the left of the hedge for a while. Then, with the hedge on your right, you follow down a sunken lane. This brings you to the B656 and the Royal Oak pub (199254).

With the pub behind you, turn right and walk along the road for about 50 yards. Cross the road to a footpath opposite. This is signed Footpath 22 and points your clear route, uphill and across the field to Almshoebury. Continue through the farm buildings.

Turn left. Leave the farm buildings by the path going North. As this path starts to go downhill, take the left hand path along the farm track and follow it to a row of cottages on your right. After the last cottage, take the path on your left (205260) with the hedge on your right. After about 300 yards the path does a right angle turn right, through the hedge and crosses a small field, diagonally left, to reach the road at Little Almshoe cottages.

Turn left on the road and then, very shortly, take the road on your right. Keep on the road, uphill for 200 yards or so. Where the road turns right (202263), continue straight on, on to a broad track. Continue on this track to

reach a road (199268). Turn left on to the road and then take the road on our right. This leads to St. Ippollitts, with its broad Green on your right and the church (198272) on your left.

Keeping the Village Green on your right, find the path on your right on the far edge of the Green. The path descends steeply (NE) with a school on your left, between houses, to an open field. Drop down to Ash Brook at the bottom, where you turn right on to a well marked path. There is a wood on your right (and an alternative path through the wood.) The path turns sharp left and then right, to pass beneath the A602. Continue to reach the road (208275). Turn right and almost immediately arrive at a cross roads. (*Little Wymondley, with its two pubs, is about 600 yards away straight ahead.*)

For STOOP take the road left leading uphill. Continue on the road for about 300 yards. Turn left on to a well marked path (209278). Stay on this track, which passes beneath the railway, for about half a mile. Cross the road at Spring Cottage (207288) and continue on the track opposite (N). There are lagoons on your left. Follow this pleasant track for about 250 yards and turn right on to a footpath (207292). Continue along this, with a stream on your right hand side. Eventually you come to a hedge, with a road on its far side.

Turn left, keeping the hedge and road to your right, climbing uphill. After about 300 yards you meet a gap in the hedge. Go through this gap. Cross the road and turn right. You have now reversed your direction, but still with the hedge and road on your right. Eventually you reach a track (215291).

Turn left on to this track and continue along it for half a mile until you meet a clear cycle track. Turn right on to it. The A1(M) is to your left and you are converging with it. Eventually you reach a road (228284). Turn left and pass beneath the motorway. Take the path signed to your right. Continue on this path, passing Milksey Lane on your left. Soon you pass houses. Turn left on to Oak Lane. This leads you very shortly to Graveley High Street and its two pubs (231279).

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