



Pathway to Mountnessing Church

INTRODUCTORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION: The walks described in this leaflet have been developed as part of the Essex Wildlife Trust’s “Living Landscapes” project with the support of Billericay Town Council and Billericay Round Table. The aim is to encourage you to explore the local countryside, learning something about its management and the wildlife that lives there, as well as giving you the opportunity for some healthy exercise. Detailed instructions should allow the routes to be followed without use of a map. “Living Landscapes” is a national initiative to improve habitats for wildlife, particularly by providing wildlife-friendly corridors between existing nature reserves. It also aims to stimulate increased public interest in and appreciation of the countryside. The local “Living Landscape”, referred to as “Ramsden Heath and Woods”, covers much of the area to the north, east and south of Billericay and links the Local Nature Reserves at Norsey Wood and Mill Meadows with the woodland to the east. A number of projects to reinstate hedges, improve ponds and encourage more environmentally-friendly land-management are in progress. Further information can be found on the EWT website: www.essexwtv.org.uk.

THE WALKS: These walks all start from the car park at Queen’s Park Country Park, just off Rosebay Avenue and almost opposite Horseshoe Close, and explore the countryside to the north and north-west of Billericay. More information about the Park, its history and current management is available from the Ranger at the Norsey Wood Information Centre or from www.basildon.gov.uk. A map/leaflet outlining three short walks within the Park is also available from the Ranger. You will see the waymark posts with colour rings for these short routes as you walk through the Park. Route A in this leaflet is designed as a half-day walk and is about 5 miles/8 kms long and could be completed in about 2 hours at a brisk pace with no stops, but 3 hours would be more realistic for a family group or if stops to identify birds and flowers are included. Routes B and C are longer, 7 and 8 miles/11 and 13 kms respectively and if you wish to explore Stock or Ingatestone should be regarded as all day outings.

All three walks include footpaths which cross meadows and cultivated fields and, by comparison with the Series 1 walks, route-finding may sometimes be a little more challenging. If the paths have not been left clear by the landowners, you may have to walk through growing crops –

in single file, please. If it is impossible to walk through the crop, you are entitled to follow the field-edge. You will find in a few places that cross-field paths do not follow the exact line shown on maps. In these cases, following the path used by previous walkers is usually the easier option.

The routes are described as in January 2015 but features of the countryside are always liable to change. The names of minor roads and lanes are shown in brackets if there is no name evident at the point where you join them. There are shortcuts and/or extensions on each Route. These are described in italics and asterisks(*) indicate where you leave and return to the main route.

THE MAP: A map is included but do not worry if you find maps hard to use. The descriptions have been written to provide adequate detail for you to follow the routes without reference to the map. If you do use the map, you will find that the background colour to the text corresponds to the colour of the route on the map. Dotted lines on the map indicate shortcuts or extensions. By using the map you will be able to join up bits of different routes to devise walks of various lengths: e.g. by walking Route B as far as point **X** and then switching to Route A in reverse, returning to the start via Mountnessing Church, you could create a route of about 9½ miles/15 kms.

SAFETY AND COMFORT: Country walking is not inherently dangerous but you walk at your own risk and a degree of commonsense is required. As far as possible, the routes follow Public Footpaths and Bridleways but some stretches of tarmac road are unavoidable and appropriate care will be needed where there is fast moving traffic. The usual advice is to walk on the right so you face the traffic closest to you. Where visibility is restricted approaching right-hand bends however you may need to cross to the left and if there is a wide verge on either side, using this will be safer than walking on the tarmac.

Some paths are rough and many will be muddy in winter, so robust footwear is recommended. You may find nettles, thistles and brambles on lesser-used sections in summer. Fences may include barbed wire and protruding nails. Footbridges and stiles are often slippery after wet weather. In a few places you may meet horses or other animals – do not approach animals or allow dogs to do so and never attempt to feed them.

Flood warning! All three routes visit the valley of the River Wid, which rises in Blackmore and joins the River Can near Chelmsford. The section of the valley between Billericay and Ingatestone floods badly after heavy rain and cars are often stranded in the ford at Buttsbury Wash. Paths in the area can be impassable and it is suggested that you do not attempt these walks within 24 hours of heavy rain unless you have first checked that the road south from Buttsbury Church is open.

If you are not used to country walking, you may wish to read the Countryside Code, which can be found on the Natural England website, www.naturalengland.org.uk, before you set out. Unless specifically stated, you will need to carry your own refreshments and you will find that opportunities to sit down and rest are very limited. Inevitably, the walks are not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs.

COUNTRYSIDE INTEREST: For much of the year it will be worth taking binoculars and a bird book with you. Many birds tend to be quieter and harder to see from June to September (but many farmland birds do sing into June) and during this period looking at flowers and butterflies may be more rewarding. If you do not have books or do not want to carry them,

the Field Studies Council publishes a series of folding, laminated cards which provide useful guides to the commoner species. These can usually be obtained from the EWT Visitor Centre at Hanningfield Reservoir or other outlets.

Watching wildlife requires patience and what you see or hear will often depend on the time of year, time of day and weather conditions. Birds and mammals will often hear or see you and move away long before you see them. Moving gently and quietly increases the chance of interesting sightings.

The Wid valley provides excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife. As well as fish, you may see grass snakes (large olive-green snakes with a distinctive yellow collar), water voles and, in summer, dragonflies and damselflies. Birds which could be seen include not only the common species such as mallards, moorhens and reed buntings but also the rarer snipe and green sandpiper and even the spectacular kingfisher. In recent decades the familiar grey heron has been joined by its smaller relative the little egret, which has been spreading north from the Continent. When flood alleviation work on the river was carried out in 2012, special steps were taken to improve the habitat for water voles.

Buzzards, large birds of prey with broad, straight wings and a “mewing” call, could be seen on any of these walks, having colonised Essex from the west over the last 15 years. In spring and summer you may see and hear skylarks overhead and yellowhammers, with a song which sounds like “a little bit of bread and no cheese”, in the hedges and trees. In winter you may find flocks of redwings and fieldfares, members of the thrush family and visitors from Scandinavia, on the fields together with the resident woodpigeons and crows.

In summer, along the river itself and in other places (e.g. around stables) where flying insects are common, you will see swallows (with long tail streamers) and sometimes house martins (distinguished by their shorter tails and a prominent white patch at the base of the tail) feeding on the wing. House martins are much less common now than they once were but there are still some breeding colonies in the area.

In many places you will see evidence of the changes in farming practice that have taken place over the last 50-60 years. For several decades, farmers were given financial encouragement to create larger fields, allowing easier use of modern machinery. The removal of hedgerows destroyed much valuable wildlife habitat however and the populations of many farmland birds declined dramatically as a result. Rows of isolated trees across large fields show where some of the hedgerows used to run. Current policies are more enlightened: many remaining hedges are now legally protected and farmers are given incentives to leave uncultivated margins round their fields. You will see these in several places and they provide habitat for small mammals as well as insects and seeds for birds to feed on.

FEEDBACK: We hope you will enjoy these walks in the countryside around Billericay. If you have any comments or suggestions for improvements, please forward these to townclerk@billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk.

is a stretch with trees on both sides. Ignore all left turns and eventually you will see the main meadow of the Park on your left. You may notice that the hedge is now lower and thicker than earlier, having been “laid” about 10 years ago by visiting groups of volunteers with some local assistance. Hedge-laying is a traditional form of management involving cutting the stems almost through and bending them till they are nearly horizontal. New shoots grow vertically from the old branches, providing a dense stock-proof barrier which also offers safe nesting habitat for small birds.

Take the first available turning right, crossing a footbridge and continuing to follow the Bridleway which immediately **bends left again**. This is a good area to see woodpeckers and occasionally treecreepers. **Continue ahead** along the straight track, passing a meadow on the right. Ignore the first crossing path and **then take the next path right** following a yellow Public Footpath waymark. You will shortly cross a stile and a gravel lane. **Continue ahead**, with a high fence to your right, eventually emerging from the woodland to **follow the left side of a field**. In the next field, you will see that the path still follows the left side, separated from the rest of the field by a fence. Maps may show the path crossing the field diagonally but it has been officially diverted and you should **keep left** round two sides of the field to reach the far corner. When the woodland on your left ends, Buttsbury Church, which you pass later, is visible across the fields and, scanning further left, you may be able to pick out Ingatestone Church among the trees and Fryerning Church on the horizon.

From the small footbridge at the far field corner, the path does still cross the next **field diagonally to the left** – if the path is not clearly evident on the ground, look for two dead trees ahead and aim for the left-hand one. Soon you will see a white-topped post in front of the tree and this confirms that you are heading in the right direction. You may notice a broad uncultivated margin to this field – evidence of environmentally-friendly farming. Beyond the post, **cross a footbridge and go through a hedge-gap** onto the golf course. The correct route across the golf course is waymarked – initially look for a **waymark across to your left** and slightly to the right of a group of young trees. From here, **continue in the same direction** to a waymark in front of the next hedge. In winter you may find flocks of redwings, fieldfares and starlings in the trees. Green woodpeckers sometimes feed on the fairways – despite the name, these birds feed on the ground as much as in the trees – and fly, in characteristic bounding fashion, across the course. **Turn right at the hedge over a broad bridge** and look for another waymark by trees on your left. Here **turn left over another footbridge**, this time with metal handrails, which crosses the Stock Brook, a tributary of the River Wid.

You will now be in a meadow with the bank of a fishing lake to the right, ahead of you. In summer, swallows and sometimes house martins feed over the lakes. You may also see moorhens (black and brown water-birds, smaller than ducks and the adults having red and yellow bills) grazing on the damp grass. Sometimes bullfinches are seen in the hedge between the lakes. **Turn right, initially following the Brook and then bearing a little left**. When the embankment on your left ends, you will see the end of an overgrown hedge on your left. The official route crosses a stile hidden in the hedge about 25 yards/20 metres from the end. This is often completely obstructed by vegetation however and walking past the end of the hedge and **turning left** onto the bank of a second lake is usually the more practical option. From this second lake, **cross the grass ahead** towards a signpost and stile which should be visible in the hedge.



Oak Tree in Autumn

Route A To Mountnessing Church and the Wid Valley About 5 miles/8 kms

Do not enter the Meadow in front of you but leave the car park through the **barrier on your left**. This path is a permissive Bridleway so you may meet horse-riders. You will have trees on your left and a hedge separating you from the meadow on your right. After a few minutes you will see a pond in the trees – the Council have cleared trees from the pond and more work to allow in more light, which will encourage flowers, amphibians and insects, is planned. You will now have trees on both sides of the path. At the T-junction, **turn left** towards Rosebay Avenue where you **turn right** along the grass verge. (Cross the road and use the tarmac path if you prefer but you will soon be crossing back again.) As the road bears left, **go through a kissing-gate on your right and cross a small meadow** to reach a boardwalk which leads past a small pond. This is currently rather overgrown but mallard, moorhen, reed bunting and snipe can sometimes be seen. Continue to the end of the boardwalk and **join a rough path** with a fence on the right. This area is Hannakin’s Meadow, owned and managed by Basildon Council as a Local Wildlife Site and designated as such because of its variety of flowers and its marshy area. Cattle-grazing in late summer helps to maintain the habitat.

The path leads to a **footbridge over the stream** that has appeared on your left. After crossing the bridge you are in Hannakin’s Farm Recreation Ground. **Turn right** to follow the edge of the playing field and **turn left** at the corner of the field, still keeping trees on your right. After passing several pitches, the tree line bends away to the right and you **follow it** until you have crossed a low bank. Now head **slightly more to the left**, passing to the right of a small timber sports pavilion to pick up the **rough exit track**. This leads to Linda Gardens and you soon reach Mountnessing Road. **Cross the road** carefully and **turn right**.

The stile leads **onto a busy road** which you need to **cross** to reach **another stile opposite**. The first few yards of the next path currently lead through an area of scrub and may be overgrown in summer. You will emerge with a **gate to your right. Pass through and turn half left**, crossing the meadow towards the right end of the stables. Look for yellow waymarks as you go and be sure to avoid touching electrified fences. If you need to cross an electrified fence, look for a rubber handle which will allow you to unhook the wire safely. **Turn right** when you reach a track **then left**, still following waymarks, through an open-sided barn and onto a gravel track. **Fork right** and follow the waymarked path through more paddocks with more electrified fences, gently rising **towards the left corner of a wood**. Behind you is an extensive view towards Hutton and Brentwood.

Climb the stile at the corner of the wood to emerge into a meadow and **follow the left edge of this. Turn right** at the next corner. *(“If you turn left here and follow an enclosed track, you will be on a short-cut which reduces your walk by 1¼ miles/2 kms – but you won’t reach Stock.”)* Continue with a hedge on your left. Ignore a path to the left but **cross the stile ahead** and continue with a fence on your right to reach a lane (School Lane) where you **turn right**. The lane winds and soon reaches the main B1007. As you reach this road, take the **gravel track to your left** passing four late-17th century almshouses. **Cross the road** towards Stock Church, much of which dates from the 15th century. You may be able to visit the Church but it is often locked. There are seats beyond the porch and you may feel you have earned a rest!

To continue the walk, keep the church on your left and **branch right**, opposite the seats, following the line of small square slabs and passing the memorial cross on your right. **Continue with a hedge on the left** to a gate which leads to a footpath. This falls slightly to a (usually dry) stream-bed then rises again to reach a T-junction. **Turn left** through the metal gate and continue ahead with a metal fence on your right. After passing the Roman Catholic Church, you reach a road (Mill Road). **Turn left** to reach the centre of Stock where you will find various opportunities for refreshment.

When you are ready to continue, **cross the main road** into Back Lane and follow this till you have left the village. You pass the half-way point of your walk around here. Ignore the first footpath left (opposite derelict farm buildings) but, after the lane starts to descend and becomes more enclosed, **turn left** along a rough track. **Bear right** where another path joins from the left *(“this is where the short-cut rejoins the main route”)* and continue on the track with views to left and right. **Soon the path turns right and then left**, leaving the track and continuing along the left edge of a field where you may again find uncultivated margins. Keep a good look out across the fields from here as hares – larger relatives of rabbits with much longer legs and black-tipped ears – are sometimes seen. The field boundary bends right and then left and you continue, with White’s Wood on your left, until you reach a deep ditch with a hedge beyond. Follow the field edge **to the right**, with the ditch on your left until you reach a grassy area from where the path continues **to the left of the hedge**. There are good views in all directions from here and a line of isolated large trees crosses the field to the right, no doubt indicating the earlier presence of a hedgerow. **Continue following the field-edge path**, passing through a gap in a hedge at the next field boundary and continuing in much the same direction. Eventually **the path swings left** towards a farm, White Tyrrells. Maps show the path crossing the field to reach the road, to the left of the

When the road bends right, follow the Footpath sign pointing **left, over a stile and along the right edge of a field** between the overgrown hedges on either side of the path. This leads you over a **stile** and a **footbridge** into a field. The scrubby hedges around here, particularly the one to your left, provide good habitat for song birds, including warblers. and it is often worth scanning the sky for birds of prey – buzzards, kestrels and, in summer, perhaps a hobby. Most warblers are small, mainly brown, summer-visitors and the commonest are probably whitethroats, blackcaps (in both cases the name gives you the key to identification) and chiffchaffs (in this case the name comes from the song). **Follow the right edge** of the field until you see the path to the next (more substantial) **footbridge** which is hidden in the hedge about 40 yards/35 metres to the **left of the field-corner**. You now cross the River Wid (see Countryside Interest notes) for the first time. Do not forget to check the water and surrounding vegetation for wildlife.

Continue very slightly left across the next field where sheep are often grazing. Please note the signs asking that dogs are kept under control. This land is owned and managed by National Grid and there is a gas pipeline underground. The grazed, ungrazed and marshy areas provide a good variety of wildlife habitat with butterflies and dragonflies evident in the warmer months along with yellowhammers, warblers, finches and woodpeckers. **The next stile is just to the right of the end of the hedge** ahead of you. This leads to another footbridge and a small meadow. Crossing the **stile in the far corner** of this leads to another field and the **right edge** takes you to another “green tunnel” which brings you to the access road to the sewage works. **Turn left** here for a few yards and then take the **signposted footpath on your right**. You will now see Mounnessing Church ahead and, having crossed another footbridge, you **head straight for the church**, probably walking through crops and passing just left of a large oak tree, with extensive views towards Hutton. **Cross the road** (Old Church Lane) carefully and continue on the **signposted access road just left ahead**. This takes you past the church, parts of which date from the 13th century, and you will see an overgrown pond on your left. **Turn right** through the gate into the churchyard. There are a number of seats outside the church, and the Millennium seat, just beyond the porch, can be a pleasant spot to rest in winter sunshine! **Cross the churchyard to the opposite corner**, with the church on your right. The extensive areas of long grass and the ancient hedges no doubt provide homes for wildlife and closely cut grass would be much less valuable as habitat.

As you leave the churchyard you will be at a bend in the road. **Turn away from the road** and join a wide track with a **hedge on your right**. Several oak trees tower above the hedge and, where there are gaps, you have an excellent view back across the Wid Valley to Billericay. Eventually, the track swings **left at the corner of the field** and at the next corner you **turn right** to follow a path through a belt of trees. You have now completed half your walk. As you emerge from the trees, there is a **ditch ahead** and the path continues **to the right of this**, now with good views all round. This section of the route has a remote and rural feel, far removed from the bustle of the nearby towns.

You eventually see a house ahead, almost hidden by weeping-willow trees, and the path continues **to the LEFT** of this, beside a fence. **Turn right at the road** (Padham’s Green Road) which is usually fairly quiet, though fast-moving traffic may appear with little warning. The next 1½ miles/2.5 kms of the walk are on tarmac – but this cannot be avoided unless you

modern barn. Waymarks however suggest following the field-boundary until you reach the farmyard and then continuing to the left of the fence to reach the stile and signpost on the Ingatestone Road.

Turn right along the road, walking on the verges wherever possible. You will find that the left-hand verge gives better visibility initially but you should return to the right side of the road as you pass the farmhouse. Approaching the corner at Buttsbury Church, you will need to cross to the left side again and you then **turn left** into Buttsbury. (This seems to be the correct name of the road – maps and signs show no “Lane” or “Road.”) Buttsbury Church dates mostly from the 14th century and despite its isolated position Services are still held regularly. It is often open and visitors are welcome. You will find seats at the base of the tower with views across the Wid valley towards Ingatestone Hall. Swifts are seen around the church in summer and bats use it as a place to roost. Yellowhammers may also be seen around the churchyard. *(“If you continue ahead from the church onto a footpath, you can extend your walk by ½ mile/0.8 kms to include a section of the riverbank of the Wid. The footpath descends and soon reaches the river which you follow downstream to a substantial footbridge. Cross this and turn left to cross a second, smaller bridge and continue with the river now on your left, keeping a good look-out for wildlife as you go. In spring and early summer, this is a good area for birds such as yellowhammer, reed bunting and the increasingly rare yellow wagtail, as well as butterflies and dragonflies. The river winds along and you soon reach another substantial footbridge. Crossing this and turning right brings you back to the main route.”)* Continuing on the main route along the road from the church, you will find there is usually less traffic than on Ingatestone Road but care is still needed. You will soon **pass Church Hill Cottages on your left** and a footbridge over the River Wid on your right. *(“This is where the short extension re-joins.”)* This is Point **X** on the map and the extension of Route A also joins this route here. Next there is a signpost beside the road on your left. A footpath along the edge of the field starts here and you **follow this across a footbridge and stile** in the hedge slightly to the left, at the end of the field. Head **diagonally left** across the next field aiming for the left end of the hedge in front of you. Cross a stile and footbridge and **follow the right side** of the next field.

You will soon reach Little Farm, home of the Remus Horse Sanctuary. The path through the farm is well waymarked, **initially left and right** round the modern cottages then **over stiles** between and through paddocks. You may see some of the animals and also birds such as house sparrows and pied wagtails. At the end of the last paddock, cross a **stile on the left** and then **another stile and footbridge to your right. Take care** – there is no handrail on this bridge. You have now re-crossed the Stock Brook, flowing from the left, which here joins the River Wid on your right. This is another good place to look for wildlife.

The path now crosses the next field to a fence-gap near a telegraph post somewhat to the left of the far right corner. The path initially follows the **right field-edge** and continues **straight ahead** when the field-edge bends slightly right. If the line is not clear, you should **walk along the right edge of the field and turn left at the corner** to reach the fence-gap, now on your right. You are now on a straight track and when you reach **a T-junction with a tarmac lane** (Buckwyns Chase), there is a **stile opposite** beside a Footpath sign. You need to **cross this stile** though the lack of a step currently makes this awkward. Continue across the small meadow to the **stile beside a gate** slightly to your left ahead. You join the main part of

Please read the Introductory Notes before setting out on any of the walks described in this leaflet.



Queens Park Country Park

Country Park Walks from Queens Park Series 2 - Three circular

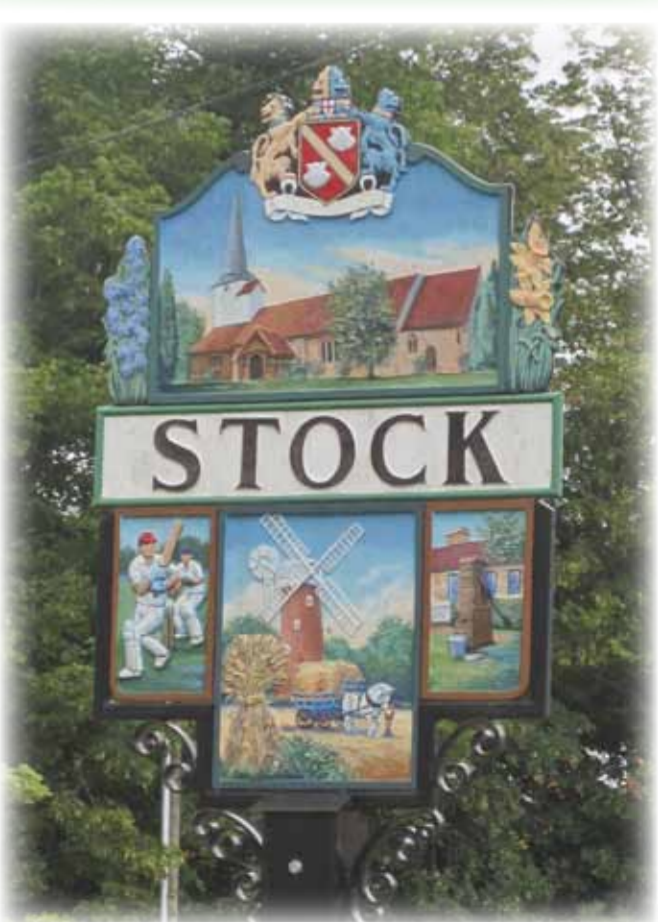


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Route A here. **Turn left** along the track towards stables. Swallows will be seen here in summer and house martins bred until a few years ago.

The track continues to the left of the stables and **turns left** before the house. Just before the metal gate across the track, there is a signpost and wooden **gate on your left. Go through here** and continue along the **right edge of the meadow**, where horses will almost certainly be grazing. You will find a stile and new footbridge, leading into woodland, just **left of the far corner** of the field. You have now almost returned to the Country Park. **The path through the woods** leads to a gate onto a crossing track where you **turn right** over a small concrete footbridge. Ignore another track that soon joins from the left. The main meadow area of the Park is now behind the hedge to your left and you soon **reach a gap**, with a green Country Park sign, which you should use to reach the meadow. By following the **right edge** along woodland and then a hedge, you will soon return to the car park.



Billericay Town Council
The Loft · Crown Yard · High Street · Billericay · Essex · CM12 9BX
www.billericaytowncouncil.gov.uk
Telephone: 01277 62573
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want to extend your walk by ¾ mile/1.2 kms. *(“The extension involves turning left at the Bridleway sign opposite Westlands Farm, initially following a rough track between two fields. This leads towards Kitchen Wood but, when you see a ditch on your right, continue to the right of the trees ahead, staying outside the wood. You will see large plastic feeders in the wood, indicating that it is used for pheasant-rearing. Follow the track round the field corner and then, after about 50 yds/45 metres, turn left and continue with a hedge on your right. The top of the tower of Ingatestone Church may be visible above the trees ahead. You will reach a concrete lane at Tilehurst (an interesting country house with tower and belvedere, elaborate gates and a walled garden, designed by local architect George Sherrin in the 1880s) and you turn right along this. As you will see from the signpost, this is a Public Footpath despite the “Private Road” sign. You will soon see Ingatestone Hall among trees to your left and then Buttsbury Church to your left ahead. Continue to the end of the concrete track and turn left just before the ditch. The path bends right, with the ditch, and leads towards the River Wid. As you approach the river, follow the path to the left. This leads round bends to a footbridge which you cross to a road (Buttsbury – curiously, maps and signs just show the single word, with no “Lane” or “Road”) where you turn right. You are now at Point **X** on the map and from here you follow Route B until the two Routes merge just before Buckwyns Farm.)*

The main route continues past Westlands Farm, and another large, neglected pond on your right, and descends gently into the valley with Buttsbury Church visible across the fields to your left. This is another good area for farmland birds – yellowhammers and skylarks may be heard and seen in spring and summer, along with the now scarce yellow wagtail, and there may be fieldfares and other members of the thrush family in the fields in winter. At the T-junction, **turn right** into Mounnessing Road. This carries rather more traffic but after less than ½ mile/0.8 km you **turn left** into Buckwyns Chase. Although this is marked as a “Private Road”, there is also a Bridleway sign and you are perfectly entitled to walk along it. You will soon come to a bridge where you re-cross the River Wid and then you **turn right**, initially beside the river – again, this is good spot to look for birds – along another signposted Bridleway. This is also the access track to Buckwyns Farm. It bends **sharply left and later right** towards stables which you keep on your right. *(“The extension re-joins the main route here.”)* Swallows will be seen here in summer and house martins bred until a few years ago. Barn owls, very pale birds with white under-parts and faces, still breed in this area and may be seen hunting over the fields. Little owls, much smaller and darker birds, are also found occasionally.

The track continues to the left of the stables and **turns left** before the house. Just before the metal gate across the track, there is a signpost and wooden **gate on your left. Go through here** and continue along the **right edge of the meadow**, where horses will almost certainly be grazing. You will find a stile and new footbridge, leading into woodland, just **left of the far corner** of the field. You have now almost returned to the Country Park. **The path through the woods** leads to a gate onto a crossing track where you **turn right** over a small concrete footbridge. Ignore another track that soon joins from the left. The main meadow area of the Park is now behind the hedge to your left and you soon **reach a gap**, with a green Country Park sign, which you should use to reach the meadow. By following the **right edge** along woodland and then a hedge, you will soon return to the car park.



Buttsbury Church



Mountnessing Church

**Route C
To Ingatestone via the Wid Valley
About 8 miles/13 kms**

Leave the car park by the gate opposite the entrance, **turn half-left and walk uphill** across the large meadow heading about half-way between two areas of woodland. Pass a seat at the top of the hill and continue in roughly the same direction **towards a metal field-gate in the hedge below**. This is a good place to scan the sky for buzzards. If you are walking in spring, look for short pink flowers among the grass. A few green-winged orchids have been seen on this slope in recent years and they may become more common. **Go through the fence-gap** beside the gate and **turn left** along the Permissive Bridleway. To your right you will see Victoria Meadow which produces an interesting variety of wildflowers and is surrounded by areas of scrub. In spring you may hear and see a number of species of warbler which take advantage of the shelter from predators which the scrub provides.

Turn right at a T-junction. (From here until you reach Point X, you are following the reverse of Route B and you should refer to the description

or village, continue ahead across the Recreation Ground, keeping well to the right if a match is in progress. Turn left when you reach the fenced play-area and then right onto a tarmac path to reach a small gate into the churchyard. Cross the churchyard, bearing left, to reach the High Street. Turning left will then take you to the Market Place where the 1960s office block on your right has an interesting mural. There are public toilets in the car park behind this building. Continuing along the High Street, you will pass an attractive group of almshouses, dating only from 1840, on your left before you reach the Station Lane junction where you rejoin the main route.) If you are following the main route, **pass the metal gate, cross the drive to Stonegate and turn left** along the tarmac path beyond. The path leads to the railway station – note the buildings designed in neo-Tudor style to complement the Hall – and you should **continue to the end of the car park. Turn right** along the road (Station Lane) – there is no public access to the fishing lake ahead which you will see marked on maps. **Turn left** when you reach the High Street. (*You may be rejoining the route here if you have visited the village.)

Unfortunately you have to follow this busy road, which becomes Roman Road, for about 600 yards/550 metres before you can **turn left** into The Leas and continue through a housing estate. You are now approaching the half-way point of your walk. **Turn right** into Tudor Close and look for a **Footpath sign on the left** near some tall Leylandii. **Follow this path, passing garages, crossing a road into Catcher Court and turning left** to reach another road (Ridgeway). **Turn right** here and **right again** (Heybridge Road) to reach another T-junction. **Turn left** here and follow this road (Burnthouse Lane) **carefully under the railway bridge** ignoring the Footpath to the left just beyond. **Continue**, along the right verge where possible, up the hill, crossing to the left verge well before you reach the bend at the top. You will see Mountnessing Windmill to your right and a **Footpath signpost on the left**. This points across the field towards an oak tree but it is clear that the farmer has left a path along the **left edge** of the field so it will be easier to **follow this**, round the field corner and along the far side, passing the oak tree and eventually **reaching a road**. **Turn left here** (Church Road) towards Padham's Green and then **fork right** following a Bridleway signpost. Initially you are on a tarmac lane but beyond the houses it becomes a track. This leads into a field where it **bends left** and soon reaches a signpost on your left, opposite a hedge on your right. **Turn right** here to follow the Footpath with the hedge on your right. At the end of this field, the path leads to a **footbridge hidden in the hedge**. Beyond this, you will notice a broad uncultivated margin along the next field edge and another rough grass area in the corner of the next field to your right. Your path leads **ahead across the field**, aiming to the right of the church towards farm buildings behind the trees. You should reach a track on a bend and you **turn right** here. The track next **bends left** and passes some impressive old barns on the right and the imposing building of Mountnessing Hall on your left. Note the false window among the seven real ones on the first floor of the 18th century brick facade – the structure of the building is 16th century. Next on your left is Mountnessing Church, much of which dates from the 13th century, and there are seats in the churchyard if you need a rest.

(The remainder of your route now follows the reverse of the first part of Route A and details of countryside interest are included in the description of that route.) Initially, **pass a large pond** on your right and then reach a busy road (Old Church Lane). **Cross this carefully** to the Footpath opposite.

Hannakins Pond

of that Route for notes on the countryside you are passing through and the wildlife that you may see.) **Cross the left of two footbridges ahead and immediately turn left** through a small gate. This path, with a wire fence on the right, soon leads **over a footbridge into a meadow** where there are usually horses grazing. Many meadows around Billericay are now used for horse-grazing and cattle are quite rare. **Follow the left side** to a gate in front of a modern farmhouse. **Turn right** along the track, which bends left, and **right again at the driveway** so keeping the stables on your left. Where the drive swings left, **cross a high stile** on your right into a small meadow. Cross this to **another stile** in the hedge almost opposite. **Cross the road** (Buckwys Chase) here and follow the signposted track opposite. Follow the straight track, passing a few buildings, until you reach a **fence-gap** and a field. The footpath continues **straight ahead** towards the far left corner of the field but if crops make the direct route impassable, you may need to follow the field-boundary round the corner to your left. Approaching the far corner, you meet the River Wid for the first time – on your left.

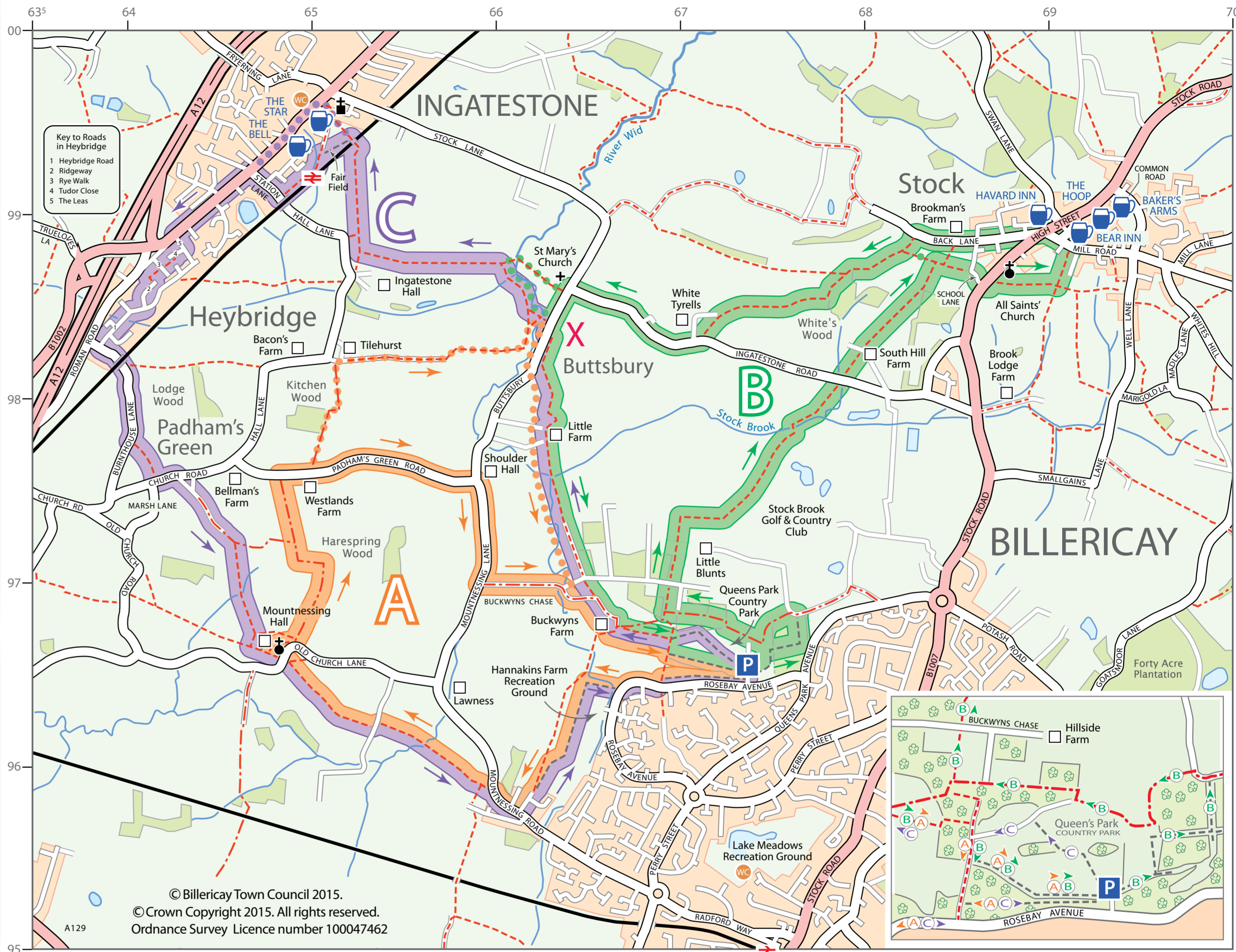
The path continues **over a footbridge (take care – there are no handrails)**, crossing the Stock Brook, often almost hidden in the scrub. **Cross a stile ahead** and then **another in the fence to your left**. You have now reached the Remus Horse Sanctuary and the path is well waymarked, **first to the right** across the paddock then **over more stiles** between other paddocks and pens. Once you have passed the barns, the path diverts **to the right and then left** around modern cottages and, behind these, you **turn right** to follow a hedge and ditch along the left edge of a field. At the next corner, **cross a footbridge and turn half-left** across the next meadow to reach **another footbridge** near the far corner. Cross this, **turn left and then right** along the road (Buttsbury).

You will soon see a **substantial footbridge** over the River Wid **on your left**. You have now reached Point X and you leave Route B here by **crossing the footbridge and then turning right. Follow the bank of the river** downstream, keeping a watch for wildlife as you go. Soon there is a good view across to Buttsbury Church on the higher ground to your right. After following a few bends in the river, you **cross a footbridge** over a side-stream. There is then a larger footbridge on your right but you **turn away** from this to follow a rough track along a field boundary. No doubt there would once have been hedges here but little vegetation remains except a few oak trees. Reaching the top of the rise, you will see the chimneys of Ingatestone Hall, set among trees behind a high brick wall, to your left. The right-of-way **leaves the track** at a waymark just before the barn ahead and follows the **right side of a small meadow**. You soon **join an avenue of small trees**, bearing right, but if you wish to see the Hall more closely or to visit (see www.ingatestonehall.com for arrangements) then divert to the left here. At the end of the avenue, the **path continues in the same direction across a large field**, passing just left of an oak tree. There are good views all round.

Eventually, the **path bears right** to reach a metal fence and a brick bridge over the railway line. This brings you to Fairfield Recreation Ground. Ingatestone Church with its impressive 500 years old brick tower is visible ahead and the High Street with pubs, etc is beyond. If you are happy not to visit the village, **turn left** as you enter the Recreation Ground and pass the cricket pavilion following a shallow ditch **towards a metal gate** – taking care not to inconvenience the cricketers or spectators if a match is in progress. (*Alternatively, if you wish to visit the church and/

The path leads **straight across** the next large field – it should be evident on the ground but, if not, aim just to the right of the shortest of the oak trees in the rather sparse line on the far side of the field. Continue beyond the oak trees in the same direction to reach and **cross a footbridge** in the hedge. **Turn left** onto the lane then **immediately right over a stile** into a “green tunnel” through trees and scrub. At the end, in the corner of a field, **turn left over a stile** and cross a small paddock to a **footbridge and another stile**. This leads into a larger meadow, probably with sheep grazing, and you **cross this to another stile and another footbridge** which takes you back across the River Wid.

The path across the next meadow follows the **left hedge** and you reach another “green tunnel” in the far corner. This leads to a narrow path between a hedge and a fence with a **stile on the left** at the end. **Cross this** and Mountnessing Road, **turning right** along the pavement as far as Linda Gardens. **Turn left** here and, at the end, continue on the **right hand track**, passing a green gate. You soon reach Hannakin's Farm Recreation Ground, passing behind a sports pavilion to reach trees ahead. **Follow the trees to the right**, passing several sports pitches on your right, and after the last pitch **continue round the corner** until you see **steps and a footbridge to your left**. **Cross this bridge** with Hannakin's Meadow ahead and **turn right** along the bank of the stream. This path leads to a boardwalk beside a small pond, then across a meadow to a **gate into Rosebay Avenue**. **Follow the grass verge to the left, turn left** at a gate onto a straight track and then **right** where a path leads off through trees. This path takes you back to the car park with the main meadow of the Country Park to your left.



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Scale 1:17100

Key to Walks		Key to Symbols	
	Route A To Mountnessing Church and the Wid Valley		A or B class road
	Route B To Stock and Buttsbury Church		Minor road
	Route C To Ingatestone via the Wid Valley		Side road
	Walk Route showing direction		Bridleway
	Shortcut or extension to walk		Public footpath
			Other footpath
			Track or Private road
			Church or chapel
			Car parking
			Toilet
			Public house
			Nature Reserve
			Rail Station