

Six Walks

In and around the parish



Produced by the Parish Council



FP12 Church Green to Grange Road

Introduction to Wickham Bishops

Although there is evidence of Roman occupation, Wickham was still a very small manor at the time of the Domesday Book of 1086 and belonged to the Bishops of London. Originally centered around St Peter's Church, it gradually moved up the hill. St Bartholomew's Church was built in 1850.

The village is built along the Blackwater ridge and the hill is full of springs. It was an agricultural community – arable farming and fruit since 1824, although many of the fruit fields and orchards have disappeared in recent years.

Since the advent of the railways in 1848 travel to London has been possible. Although the Witham to Maldon branch line was the victim of the Beeching cuts, the mainline station at Witham is within easy reach and Wickham Bishops is now a popular commuter village.

The Walks

This booklet provides details of six walks of varying lengths within the parish and adjoining villages. The walks are mainly along public footpaths with stretches along roads connecting the footpaths. Some of the roads are without pavements and are outside the 30 mph speed limit. Please take care, walk on the right hand side of the road, and wear high visibility clothing for safety.

Remember that footpaths can be very muddy and uneven, so please take care. Dogs should be kept on leads or under close control at all times and please "pick up" after your dog. It is an offence to allow your dog to foul a public footpath as well as the pavement or roadway.









The Points of Interest on the following pages identify places which you might see on the walks.

Enjoy the walks!

Contents

Points of interest around the parish	Page 5
Circular Walk 1 Blackwater River Walk	Page 10
Circular Walk 2 Shut Heath Wood Walk	Page 16
Circular Walk 3 Wickham Bishops Village Walk	Page 20
Circular Walk 4 Sparkey Wood Walk	Page 24
Circular Walk 5 Rail Trail Walk	Page 30
Circular Walk 6 Little Braxted Walk	Page 34

Key to all maps

	Start/Finish	FB	Footbridge
	Walk Route		Refreshments
	Footpath FP (numbered)		Point of Interest
	Road		Viewpoint
			Take care, busy road or other hazard



St Bartholomew's Church Wickham Bishops

Was built in 1850 at a cost of £4,000 in memory of Thomas Leigh, Rector. The spire has been reshingled three times and the height is approximately 37 metres to the top of the weathercock. In 1911 a clock was donated by Thomas Dixon in memory of his four daughters whose names are on the chime.

St Peter's Church, Wickham Bishops

Built in the 11th century by Maurice, Bishop of London using some Roman bricks and tiles, it was restored in the early 19th century and a south vestry added. Leased to the Friends of Friendless Churches and currently used for production of stained glass. It won a conservation award in 1997.



The Trestle Bridge Scheduled Ancient Monument No. 217

The viaduct, presumably built by Thomas Jackson, was constructed between 1845 and 1847 as part of the Witham to Maldon railway. There is a southern span of eleven trestles 50 metres long crossing the Blackwater River, linked by a short earth embankment to the northern span of 36 metres over the mill stream.



It is the last timber viaduct to survive in England.

Wickham Mill Bridge and Sluice

This was formerly attached to Wickham Mill (mentioned in the Domesday Book but now demolished). There is an 18th century bridge of two segmental arches. To the east the millstream is contained by parallel brick walls attached to the sluice.

Blackwater Rail Trail

This trail closely follows the route of the former Witham to Maldon Railway. The track runs from the centre of Witham, through the villages of Wickham Bishops and Langford to the north of the Maldon bypass. At this point the line divided to serve the two stations of Maldon (no longer existing). Unfortunately short sections of the track had been sold by British Rail to private landowners before Essex County Council took it over.



Please note that there is no public right of way across private sections but the path can still be followed.

Shut Heath Wood

23 acres of broad-leaved woodland donated in 1995 to The Essex Wildlife Trust by the late Mrs Kitty Gimson of Heath House. Especially beautiful in the spring when it is ablaze with bluebells and primroses. The grove of huge holly trees is particularly noteworthy. The wood is home to a number of native species of birds and mammals and is an important habitat for wildlife with varied biodiversity.

The Village Hall

The original hall (now demolished) was given to the four parishes of Beacon Hill in 1929 by Sir Follet Holt.

The present hall, built in 2005, is owned and managed by Beacon Hill Sports Association, a registered charity.

www.wickhambishopsvvenues.org



Public House

The building dates from the 17th century and was used as a tavern as long ago as 1769. In 1810 'Wickham Chequers' was sold to Alice Peppercorn for £627. After 1828 it was sub-divided into cottages and in 1868 it

was three cottages. Probably originally called 'The Wayfarer's Arms'.

The Mitre or Mulberry Tree (now a tea room and beauty salon)

A 17th century building, originally The Carpenter's Arms, it was opened in the 1850's and owned by Maurice Warren, a carpenter, and subsequently run by his widow. It was renamed in the 1890's.

No longer a pub, it is now called The Mulberry Spa and Mrs Salisbury's Tea Room.



The War Memorial

Shared between Great and Little Braxted and Wickham Bishops, the war memorial was erected by Mr & Mrs Wilson of Little Braxted in memory of their son Lt Charles Oscar Wilson killed in action in 1917 aged 23. The Grade II listed monument carries 30 names in total, 22 from World War I and 8 from World War II.

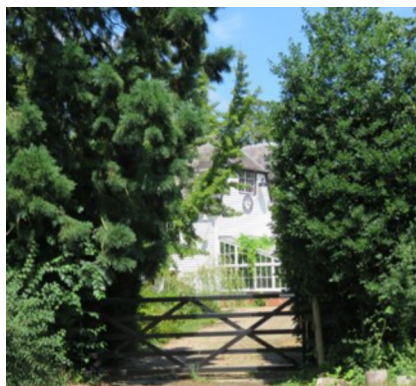


The Beacon

There was originally a beacon on this site and it was rebuilt in 1988 to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Spanish Armada. It has been lit in recent years to commemorate the Diamond and Platinum jubilees of Elizabeth II and coronation of Charles III.

Blue Mills

An 18th century wood boarded mill and adjacent Georgian mill house. The mill operated on two wheels and was the largest of the three Witham mills and furthest downstream, hence 'below' (Blue) mills. The mill is mentioned in the Domesday Book. The interior has been restored to its 18th century version. The turret clock is a distinctive feature and chimes hourly.



The Green Man, Little Braxted

In 1830 it was described as an inn and victualling shop which suggests it sold groceries as well as ale. After that William Peck lived there and Thomas Fuller, the blacksmith, lodged with him.



St Mary's Chapel, Little Braxted

The Reverend Ernest Geldart lived at Braxted Place. He broke his leg and was unable to travel to the church at Little Braxted to conduct his services, so built the chapel in 1888 and it was extended in the 1930's.

Services are still held here occasionally.



The Library, Wickham Bishops

The former infants and primary school for Wickham Bishops until Great Totham Primary School was opened. Recently refurbished by Essex County Council and also used for various village clubs.

The air raid shelter used by children and staff during the Second World War is now leased to Wickham Bishops Parish Council as a store for various things including salt bags for use during icy conditions. The Biodiversity Group has created a small wildlife area behind the shelter.



1. River Walk

Distance: 3.4 miles / 5.5 km

Approx time: 1 hour 42 minutes

Start and finish at St Bartholomew's Church car park CM8 3LA. Please park considerately and safely.

Turn right out of the car park. After 100 metres, turn right into Mope Lane and follow lane until you reach Thistle Hall on the left. Turn left onto FP1 to the right of the entrance gates to Thistle Hall.

Follow FP1 to gate and turn right into Mope Grove and continue on fenced footpath round the wood. After crossing a footbridge, turn right at gate and follow path across the field to a gap in the hedge and onto the golf course. **(Keep a look out for golfers and flying golf balls!)** Follow the waymarked path downhill beside the fairway towards the road at Blue Mills.

Just before reaching the road, turn left (Witham Road is on your right) and immediately left again before Blue Mills Bridge. Follow the path along the riverbank (FP5). Stay close to the riverbank on your right hand side, eventually leaving the golf course and following a narrow riverbank path. You may be lucky enough to see a Kingfisher.

Take care, the footpath is very narrow in parts and alongside the riverbank will be slippery in wet weather.

Walk under the restored railway trestle bridge to reach Mill Bridge and sluice and Wickham Place (on right hand side). On this section of the walk are many willow trees which are grown for making cricket bats. Also, two trestle bridge information boards can be seen giving the history of the bridge. Follow track to reach Station Road.

Cross over the road and go over the bridge, then immediately beside the bridge take steps down to a footpath which turns left along a hedge. Then bear right and go up the track across the field to the old St Peter's Church on BR21.



Turn left and follow track over the old railway line (BR21 Blackwater Rail Trail) to reach Langford Road, passing St Peter's Church on your right.

Go straight across Langford Road and take fenced path FP22 uphill. Cross tarmac drive and follow FP14 up to Wickham Hall Lane and turn left passing Grange Road on your right. Turn right onto Station Road **taking care of traffic.** At Mope Lane junction turn right onto Church Road. The car park is 100m on the left.



FP1 Benton Hall Golf Course

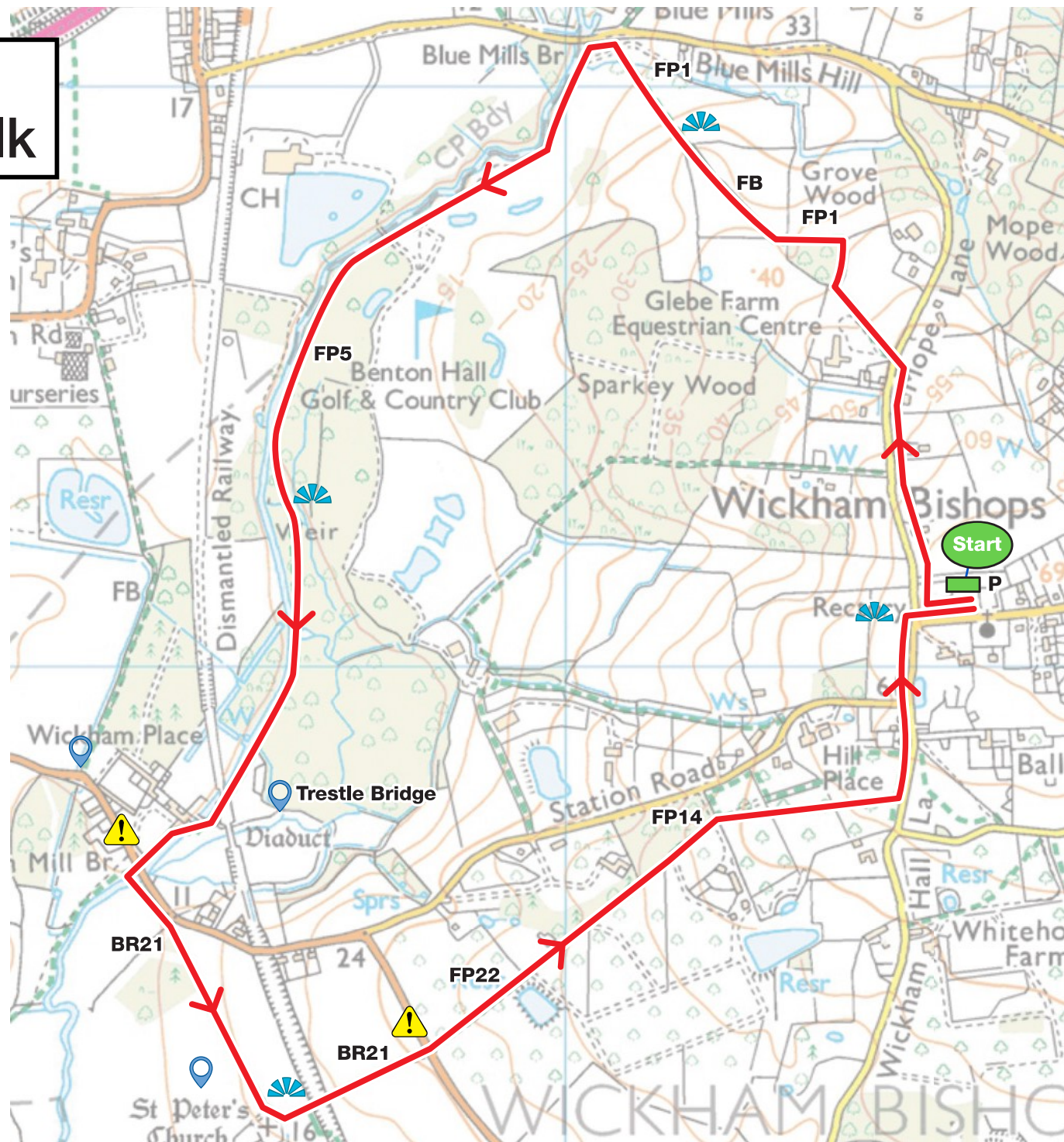


Kingfisher (Photo : Paula Freeman)



FP1 at Blue Mills

Walk 1 River Walk



2. Shut Heath Wood Walk

Distance: 4.7 miles / 7.5 km (inc paths within Shut Heath)

Approx time: 2 hours 20 minutes

Start and finish at Village Hall car park CM8 3JZ. Please park considerately and safely.

Proceed along The Street (main road through the village), past the public house on the left hand side, to reach some shops and The Mitre/Mrs Salisbury's on left hand side.

Turn left into Great Totham Road and at the sports ground, turn left to follow signed FP18 past the tennis courts on your right and between fences to emerge onto Kelvedon Road.

Cross the road and take the signed footpath Great Totham FP4 past the new houses. Follow footpath to reach Goat Lodge Road. Turn left and follow road to crossroads, noticing the beacon on the right hand side. Go straight over the crossroads along Tiptree Road until it merges with Braxted Road on the left. After 400m turn left along track with Criers Wood on your right.

The edge of Shut Heath Wood is reached after 800m on your left. Turn left and walk along the field edge with the wood on your right until you reach the entrance. Enter the wood which has several paths to be explored.

Leave the wood at the same entrance point and retrace steps to Tiptree Road and turn right. Turn right onto Braxted Road. Turn right onto Green Man Lane to come to the Green Man Pub (refreshments). To continue the walk (from Green Man Lane), turn left onto Kelvedon Road opposite the pub. Pass Braxted Place on your left and when you reach Carters Lane on your right, turn left onto Lt Bx FP4. Continue straight on the footpath across Braxted Road with Gorse Cottage on your right until you reach Beacon Hill.

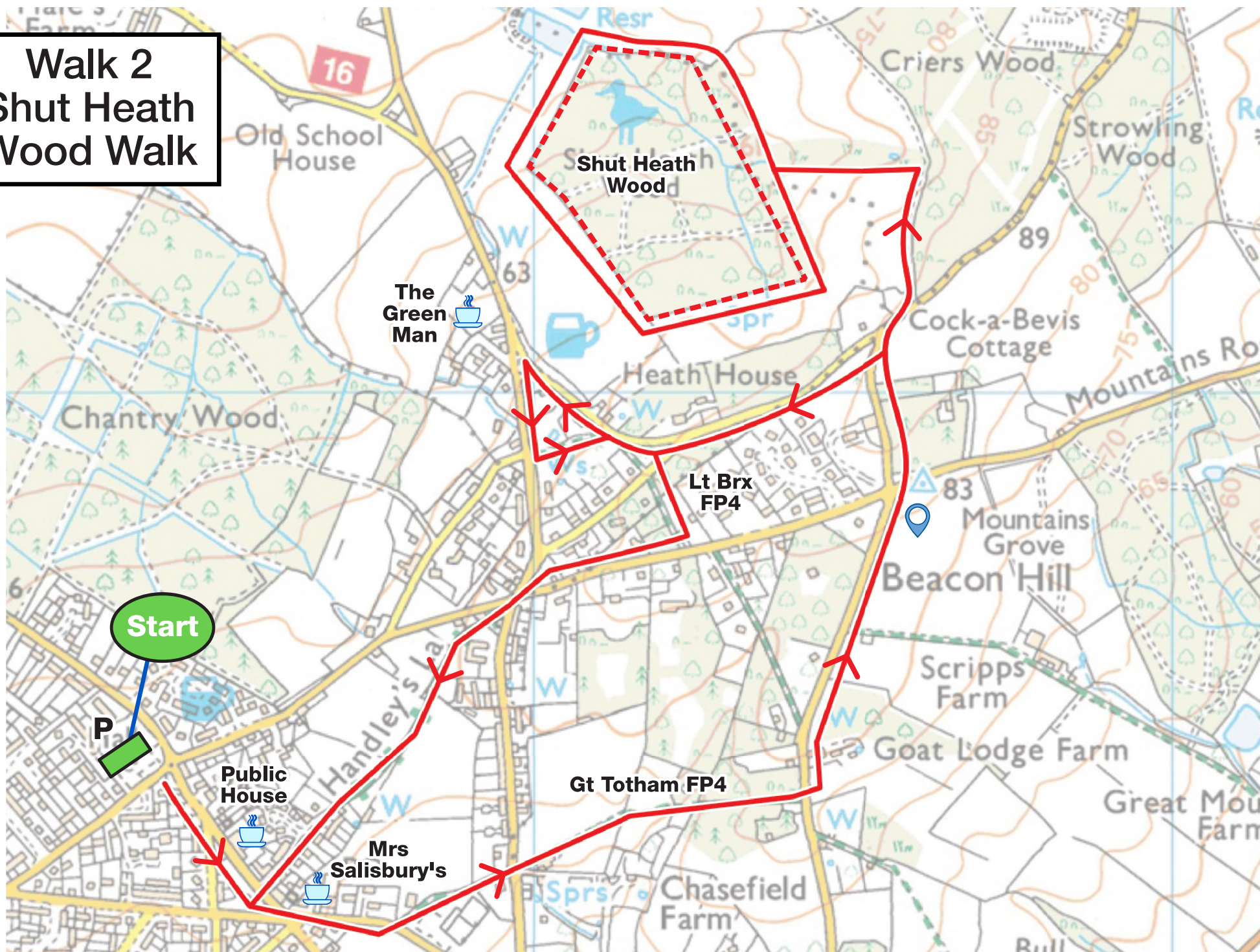
Turn right onto Beacon Hill. The gate of Great Ruffins is opposite. Follow the road to the War Memorial which is on your right. Turn left opposite the War Memorial into Kelvedon Road and immediately turn right into a Byway track which becomes Handleys Lane BW10.



Follow this (ignoring the entrance to the sports field) until you reach The Street (the main road through the village) at the end of Handleys Lane.

Turn right onto The Street to return to the Village Hall car park which is 300m away at Snow's Corner.

Walk 2 Shut Heath Wood Walk



3. Wickham Bishops Village Walk

Distance: 2.2 miles / 3.5 km

Approx time: 1 hour 6 minutes

Start and finish at the Village Hall car park CM8 3JZ. Please park considerately and safely.

Turn right into Church Road. Bear right when you reach the junction with Blacksmiths Lane (known locally as Box Iron Corner). Continue along Church Road, past Church Green on the left and St Bartholomew's Church. The churchyard is a quiet attractive area with some very old gravestones and a wildlife trail.

Turn left into Station Road with Mope Lane on your right, **taking care on the road which has sharp bends.**

Opposite the house called Lynton on your right, look for an opening on your left in the hedge to the right of The Old Dairy. Take this FP22 and follow it down with the garden to the left.

Where the fenced path turns left, go straight on into the more open area with the former orchard on the left, follow round to the left and turn left beside the driveway at the entrance gates to the adjacent house. Follow this FP14 up the hill. Turn left onto Wickham Hall Lane and continue on to Ballards. To the right of Ballards take FP13, a fenced path to Grange Road.

At the end of the footpath turn left onto Grange Road passing The Grange on the right and Roots Lane on the left until reaching the Library. At the Library, turn left onto Arbour Lane. At the crossroads with Blacksmiths Lane, go straight on to reach The Street.

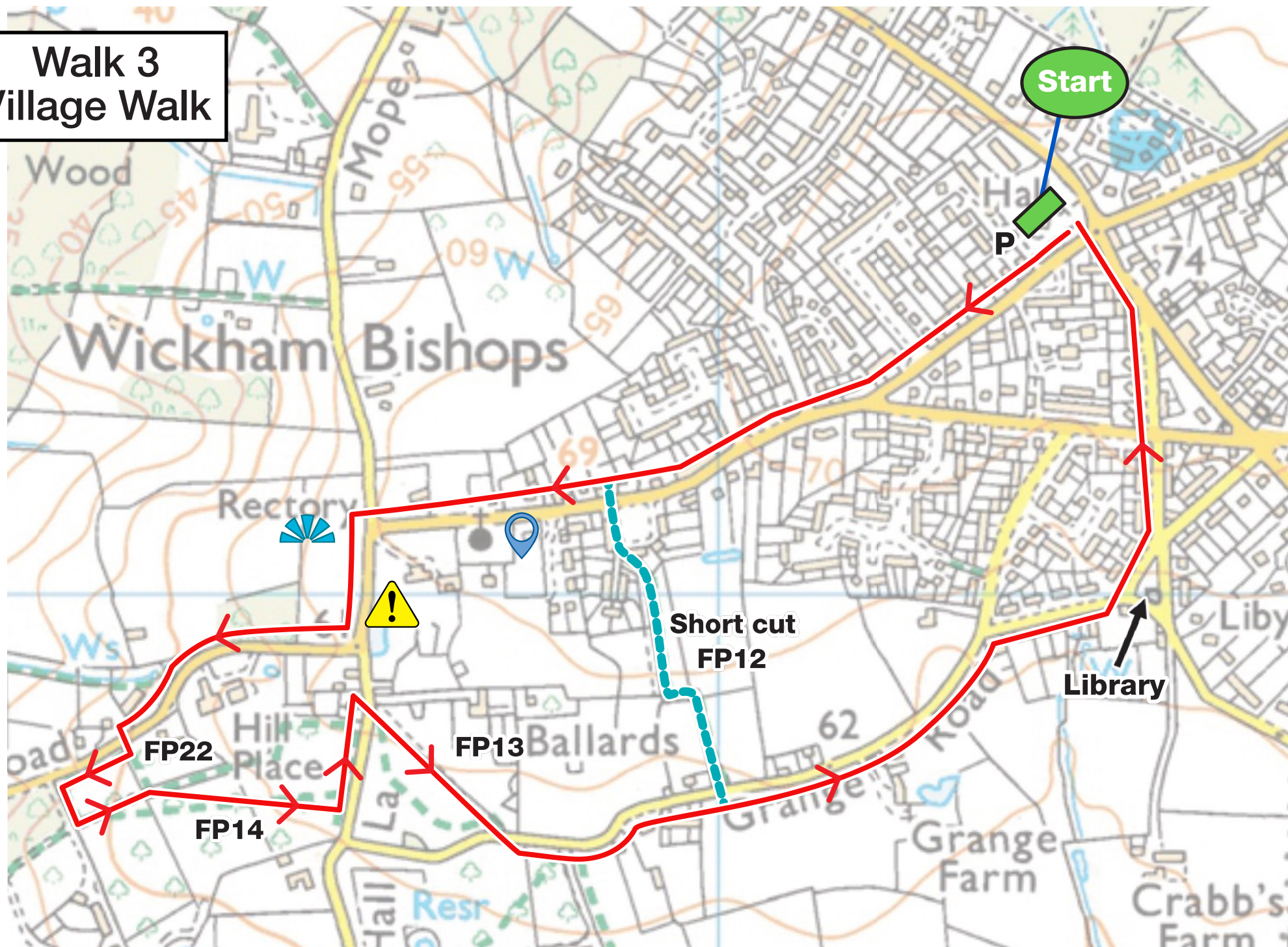
Turn left to reach the Village Hall car park.



More details of the Wildlife Trail can be found
on the Biodiversity Page

www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org

Walk 3
Village Walk



4. Sparkey Wood Walk

Distance: 2.5 miles / 4 km

Approx time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Start and finish at St Bartholomew's Church car park CM8 3LA. Please park considerately and safely.

Turn right out of the car park. After 100m, turn right into Mope Lane and follow lane until you reach a gravelled track FP2 (footpath sign) on left leading to Sparkey Wood. Turn left onto track and follow into Sparkey Wood, downhill.

At the bottom of the wood, cross a footbridge, go through the gate, and follow hedge on right hand side round to a gate on the far side of the field. Immediately through the gate, turn left uphill through another gate, and follow fenced FP3 uphill (**narrow in parts, take care**), eventually passing behind some houses to reach Station Road.

Turn right onto Station Road (**take care of traffic**). Look for an opening on your left in the hedge to the right of The Old Dairy. Take this FP22 with the garden to the left. After a short distance turn left into fenced FP15 and follow this round the garden and the boundaries to houses on the left, then turning right to walk parallel with Wickham Hall Lane. Continue along the footpath, ignoring the exit in the hedge, until the path comes out at Benton Manor. Turn right down Wickham Hall Lane.

Follow the road to Bouncers on your right and take FP16 to the left of White House Farm. Follow this through the old orchard to the gate at Grange Road. Turn right onto Grange Road, past Medlar Cottages. Turn left onto FP12 which passes Wynmor Farm smallholding. At the end of the path, turn right onto the track which leads to Church Green.

Continue straight on to Church Road, turn left to return to the car park.



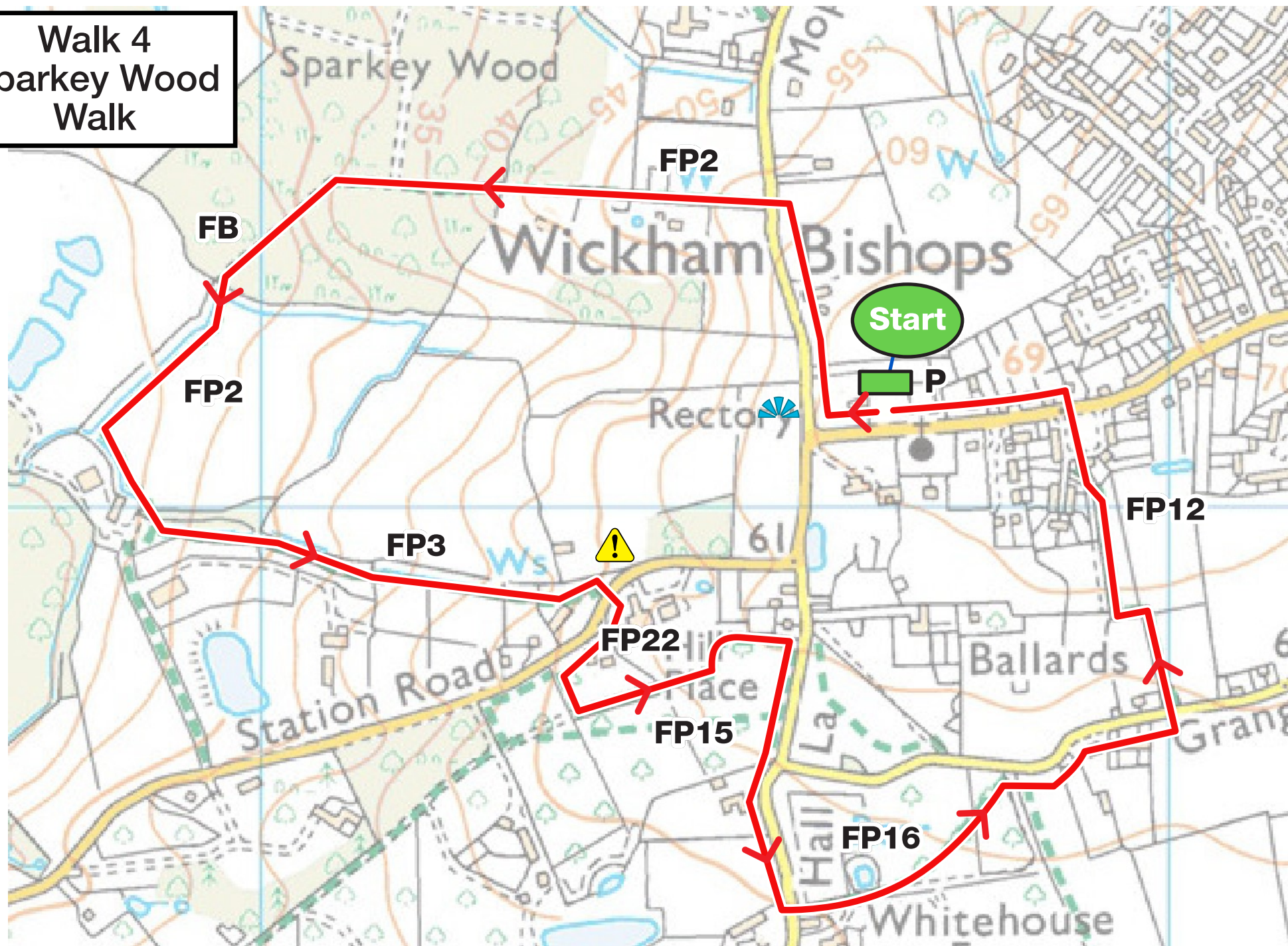
Bluebells, Mope Grove





Footpath 14

Walk 4
Sparkey Wood
Walk



5. Rail Trail Walk

Distance: 3.7 miles / 6 km

Approx time: 1 hour 51 minutes

Start and finish at St Bartholomew's Church car park CM8 3LA

Turn left out of the car park onto Church Road, and then turn right into Church Green. Take FP12 on the left between house numbers 10 and 11 and follow this passing Wynmor Farm to emerge onto Grange Road.

Turn right and follow the road past houses on both sides. Look for field gate on left hand side and turn left onto the first footpath FP17 (dog bin to your right). Follow the path alongside shrubs on right and across an open field to an opening. Follow this path with Likely Wood to your right, which then turns right and out onto open fields. Follow this down to Langford Road, taking in the expansive views across the countryside.

At Langford Road (Reigate Barn on opposite side of road) turn left on the footpath alongside the road and after a short distance turn right to cross the road **(take care, fast-moving traffic)** at a footpath sign BR19 on a track leading down to the Blackwater Rail Trail. Turn right and follow the Rail Trail, BR19.

Continue on the Rail Trail until you reach a brick arched bridge over the former track bed. Take the path to the left just before the bridge and up the embankment. Turn left for a few metres to view the disused St Peter's Church.

Turn back and return to the bridge, cross over it and up the track to Langford Road, BR21.

Go straight across Langford Road **(taking great care as there is fast-moving traffic)** onto the footpath alongside the driveway, FP22.

Follow the fenced footpath uphill and across the driveway to Fontenay. Go straight on and then bear right and up through the former orchards, FP14.

Exit the footpath onto Wickham Hall Lane and turn left. Turn right onto Station Road **(taking care of traffic)**.

At Mope Lane junction turn right onto Church Road. The car park is 100m on the left.

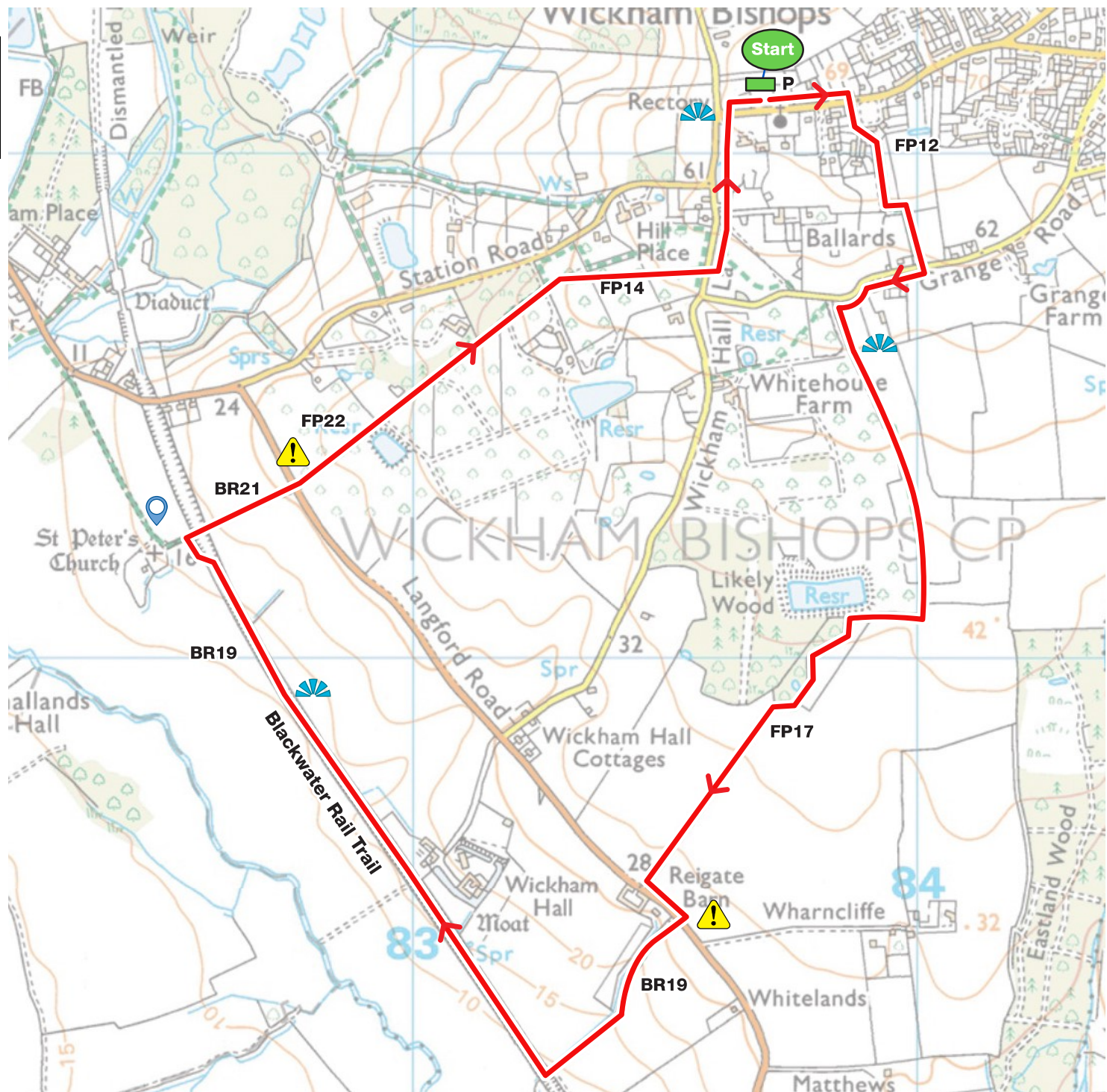


FP14 near the old orchard



St Peter's Church BR21

Walk 5 Rail Trail



6. Little Braxted Walk

Distance: 4.5 miles / 7.2 km

Approx time: 2 hours 15 minutes

Start and finish at St Bartholomew's Church car park CM8 3LA

Turn right out of the car park. After 100m turn right into Mope Lane and follow lane until you reach Thistle Hall on the left. Turn left onto FP1 to the right of Thistle Hall entrance gates.

Follow FP1 to gate and turn right into Mope Grove and continue on fenced footpath round the wood. After crossing a footbridge, turn right at gate and follow path across the golf course to a gap in the hedge and onto the golf course. Follow the waymarked path downhill beside the fairway towards the road at Blue Mills.

At the bottom of the hill continue straight ahead, crossing the road (**take care of traffic**) into Ishams Chase. At entrance gates to Glen Chantry, turn left along a gravel track. Continue straight ahead to cross field FP23 (signposted).

On reaching the hedge, turn right to follow a winding footpath through the woods. Pass Barn Grove and Sewells Farm. On leaving the wood, turn right onto a concrete track and follow this onto Little Braxted Lane. Turn right onto the road and past Braxted Bakery (CM8 3ET) on your left which is a good stop for food and refreshments (dog friendly).

At the Old School House bear right to join Kelvedon Road, which is followed uphill to find The Green Man (CM8 3LB) pub on right hand side (food, pleasant garden, dogs welcome in garden and the public bar).





Opposite the pub, cross the road into Green Man Lane, passing St Mary's Chapel on right hand side.

After a thatched cottage, turn right onto a footpath (Little Braxted FP4) and immediately turn left to follow FP4 across Braxted Road at Gorse Cottage to

reach the road at Beacon Hill.

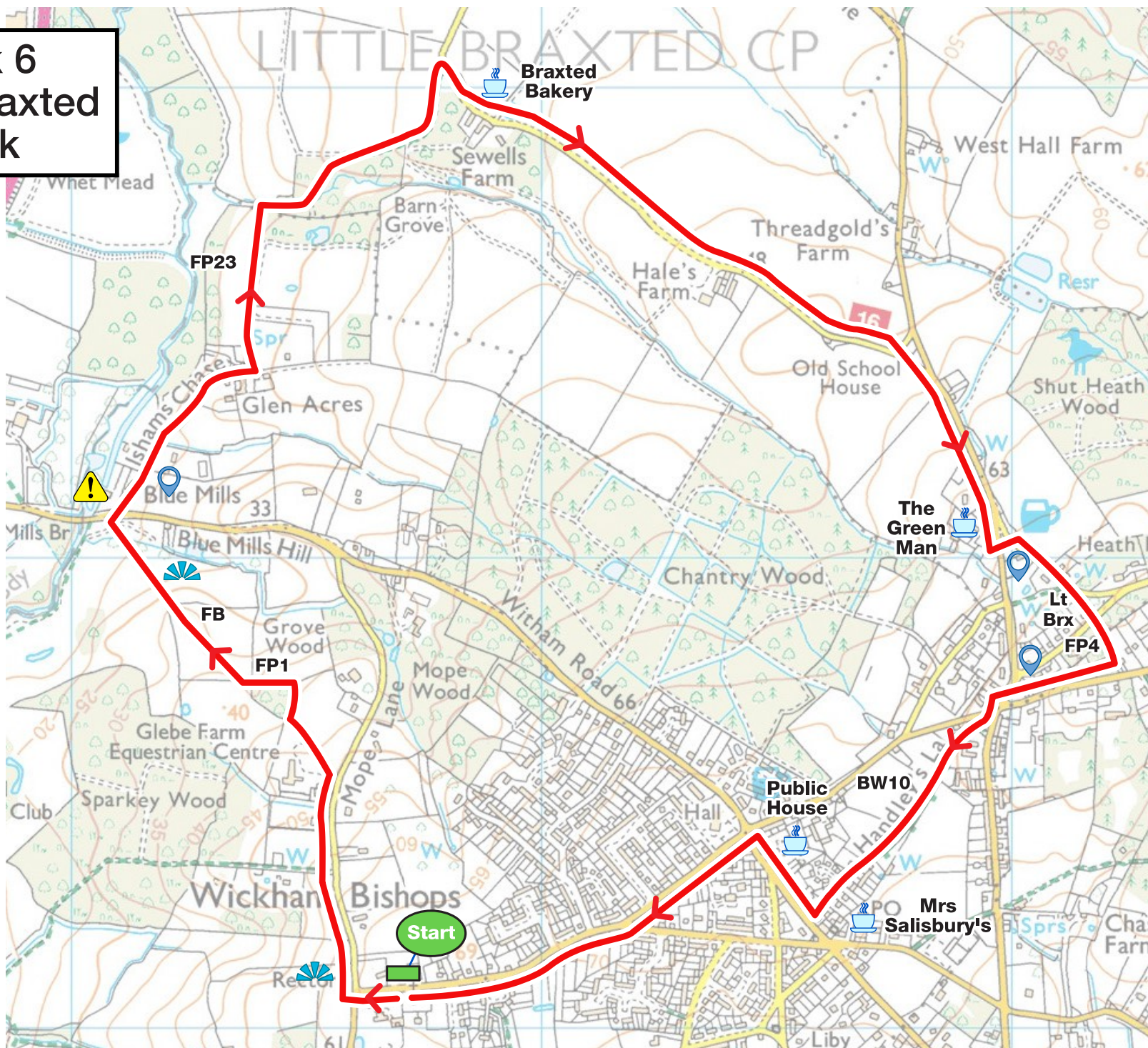


Turn right and follow road to the War Memorial which is on your right. Turn left opposite the War Memorial into Kelvedon Road and immediately turn right into a Byway track BW10 which becomes Handleys Lane. Follow this (ignoring the entrance to the sports field) until you reach The Street (the main road through the village).

(Turn left to find Mrs Salisbury's Tea Room CM8 3NN on left hand side). Or turn right onto The Street.

Turn left into Church Road at Snow's Corner and follow this road back to St Bartholomew's Church and the car park, passing Church Green on your left.

Walk 6 **Little Braxted** **Walk**





Access to the village from outside can be made by a limited bus service from Witham and Maldon (Bus 90 Maldon—Witham). If possible, leave your car at home.

St Bartholomew's Church car park

The Church allow occasional use of their car park, but please avoid Sunday mornings. The car park will also be full when there are funerals and weddings so be prepared to seek alternative parking in the surrounding roads. Please feel free to make a donation to the Church for which there is a receptacle on the post by the entrance.

Wickham Bishops Village Hall car park

The Village Hall is a busy venue. If the car park is full, please park safely on the surrounding roads. Please respect any parking restrictions within the car park.

Car parking at these locations is entirely at the discretion of the landowners and at the risk of car owners.



Safety & Guidance for the Six Walks Booklet

Please follow the Highway Code and the Countryside Code when walking

People

- Respect those you meet—be kind and pleasant
- Be considerate to others—do not park across drives or paths
- Follow the paths and signs—do not stray into woodlands or fields

Environment

- Take your litter home (including dog waste if there are no dog bins)
- Keep your dog under control especially around other people and animals (use a lead when needed)
- Care for nature, do not disturb or damage plants or wildlife

Safety and Enjoyment

- Wear a high-viz jacket or tabard for safety on roads
- Take great care when you walk near traffic
- Plan your route for transport, points of interest, refreshments and weather and note that routes may be subject to change
- Enjoy your walk, have fun, make memories

Further information:

Wickham Bishops Parish Council

Tel: 07542 190176

Email: info@wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org

www.wickhambishopsparishcouncil.org

Photographs credited to Jane Williams & Paula Freeman

*This booklet has been made possible thanks to
funding from Maldon District Council
as part of their Active Maldon Scheme 2024*

MALDON
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

