

HATFIELD HEATH WALKS

WALK 1: South to Pincey Brook

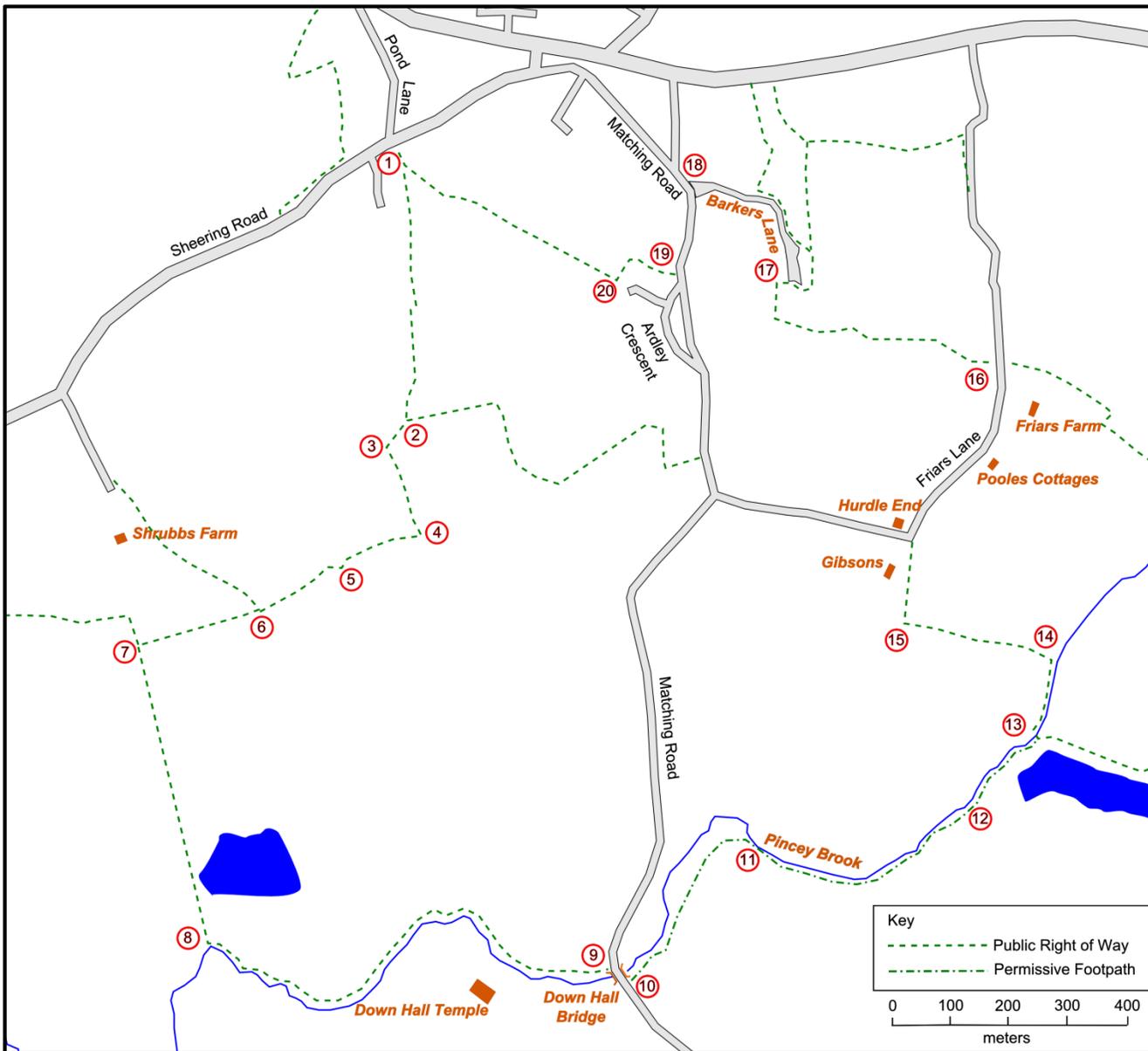
Length: 5.8 km (3.6 miles)

Duration: approx. 1 h 20 min

This walk uses definitive and permissive paths and a short stretch of road. Some stretches can be very muddy when wet so suitable footwear should be worn.

The walk begins on Sheering Road opposite the junction with Pond Lane (1). At approx. 80 m above sea level, this is the highest point on the walk. Follow the footpath along the drive of Blaisdon Lodge and through the narrow gate to the right of the garage. After passing between the properties, the path opens out into a small field which you cross diagonally and take the narrow path between barbed wire fences and brambles (take care) until it crosses a small footbridge into open fields.

Follow the left hand side of the field until you reach a junction (2) and take the path that crosses the field to the right at its narrowest point. Turn left (3) and follow the field boundary as far as a flight of steps (4) which you take down to a bridge. After crossing, continue straight ahead. After 150 m, the path switches from the left to the right of the boundary (5) until it reaches a junction (6) with the path from Shrubbs Farm coming in from the right.



This is the first in a series of walks that explore the footpaths of the Parish of Hatfield Heath. Points of interest along the way are indicated in the text with an **i** symbol. Each walk starts from a location around the circumference of the village green, and being circular in nature could be joined at any convenient point.

① **Shrubbs Farm:** *The building dates from 16th century, but a farm is recorded on the site as far back as 1298.*

Head straight across the field, heading for the way-marker post (7), then turn left and follow the track downhill towards Pincey brook (8). This is the lowest point on the walk being approx. 54 m above sea level. The reservoir that you have just passed on your left has a capacity of 12 million gallons.

① **Pincey Brook:** *Flows from Stansted Airport to the River Stort just north of Harlow shortly after passing the Gibberd Garden.*

Turn left following the meandering course of Pincey Brook until you reach the Matching Road (9). As you walk this section, you may be able to glimpse a temple amongst the trees of Down Hall Wood across the stream.

① **Down Hall Temple:** *The poet Matthew Prior lived at Down Hall from 1720. He commissioned Charles Bridgeman, gardener to King George II, to design the gardens including this temple.*

① **Down Hall Bridge:** *A well-known landmark as far back as the 1200s*

Carefully cross the road, turning right to cross the bridge, then look for a metal kissing gate (10) on your left. Pass through the gate (marked as a Permissive Footpath) and cross the meadow where a second kissing gate (11) leads into a narrow wooded area that follows the course of the Pincey Brook.

This strip of shrub land developed due to the straightening of the brook from its original course on the right of the footpath. The path reaches a ditch at the far end of this area (12). Cross the ditch (the bridge was dilapidated at the time of writing, but the ditch is usually dry) and continue with the field boundary on your left until you reach a concrete footbridge (13) on your left which you should cross. (Before crossing the bridge you may like to climb up the bank on your right to see two more reservoirs which are usually home to a variety of water birds.)

After crossing the footbridge, turn right keeping the brook on your right until the path turns left (14) up the left hand side of a field boundary. Turn right (15) along the track that leads past Gibsons and when you meet the road (Friars Lane) continue straight ahead.

① **Gibsons:** *Parts of the house date from the 1400s. During WW2 the barns were used to store fittings from P&O liners that had been requisitioned for military use.*

① **Hurdle End:** *Built mid-16th century, was once owned by Thomas Dowsett of Gibsons. On 5 Nov 1930 the thatch was set alight by fireworks and was replaced by the tiled roof we see today.*

① **Pooles Cottages:** *Originally a separate farm until amalgamated with Friars in the mid-1800s.*

① **Friars Farm:** *Believed to be at least the third farm house on this site. As viewed from the road, the right half of the house was built in the 18th century, with the taller section on the left being added in 1875. During WW2 a German spy in transit was secured in the cellar overnight.*

After passing Pooles Cottages and Friars Farm, you take the footpath on the left (16) and follow the field boundary until you reach a wide grassy opening, Barkers Lane (17), on the left. (Just before the boundary path itself makes a sharp left turn.)

① **Barkers Lane:** *Part of the Village Green, cleared and re-opened in May 2007. It was here that Mr Barker kept the pony and trap that he used for his "commute" to Hallingbury Park many years ago.*

Follow Barkers Lane until you reach Matching Road again (18). Turn left and look out for the path (19) on the right of the road just before the entrance to Ardley Crescent.

Take this path over the footbridge and around the backs of the houses where it crosses another footbridge (20) and turn immediately right along the field boundary. Keeping straight ahead, you will shortly meet a mowed pathway and emerge through a gate (please close it after you have passed) to the place where you started (1).

We gratefully acknowledge the input we received from Frank Walsh and Liz Wright whilst writing this walk.

For further information about the village visit:
www.hatfieldheath.com

Ian and Stella Hughes 2015