

# HATFIELD HEATH WALKS

## WALK 2: North to Broad Oak

Length: 8.5 km (5.3 miles)

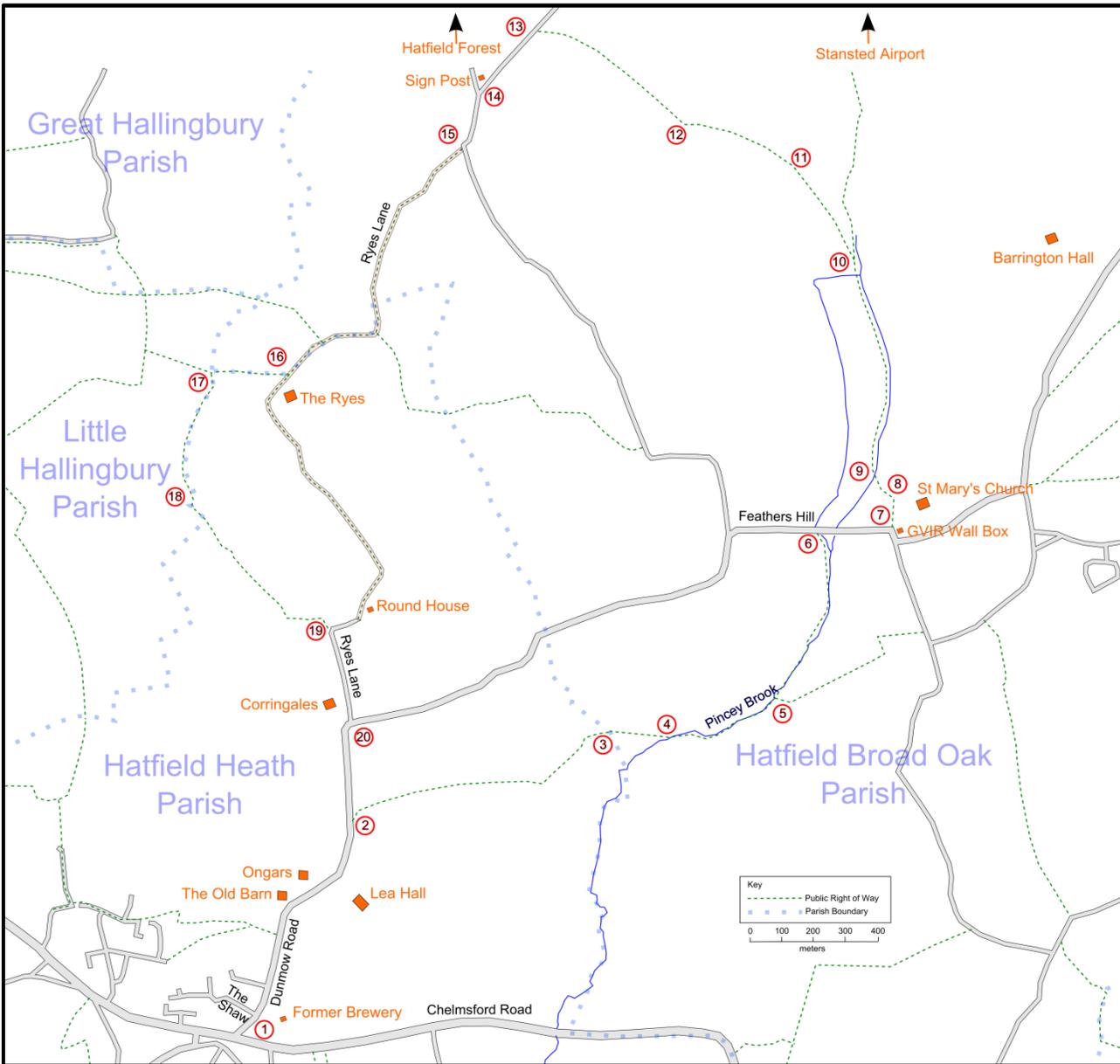
Duration: approx. 2 h 30 min

*This walk uses definitive paths, roads with pavements, and a short stretch of minor road without a pavement. Some paths may be muddy when wet so suitable footwear should be worn.*

The walk begins at the junction of the Dumnow Road and Chelmsford Road (1), opposite the village sign. For many years, a wooden dovecote stood here, remembered in the name of the nearby house "The Old Dovecote". Head north along the Dumnow Road. On your right you may catch a glimpse of Lea Hall through the trees.

**① *Lea Hall:*** *One of three manors in Hatfield Heath (along with Ryes and Down), the timber-framed hall stands within a moat.*

On reaching the finger post (2) opposite Town Grove, turn right, passing the stables on your left and continue along the field edge with views of Broad Oak church ahead. The hedge in front of you, marks not only the field boundary, but also the boundary between Hatfield Heath and Hatfield Broad Oak parishes. To the right of the large gap in this hedge, the path crosses a footbridge (3), then after a few hundred meters crosses Pincey Brook by means of another footbridge (4) on the right, leading into a small wooded area. On leaving the wood, follow the field boundary with the brook to your left until you meet a junction with a poplar-lined path joining from the right (5). Ignore this path and keep following the brook.



This is the second 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 ① 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. For other walks and further information about the village visit: [www.hatfieldheath.com](http://www.hatfieldheath.com)

After crossing a substantial bridge, continue along the other bank of the brook until you reach Feathers Hill, next to a small garden centre (6). Turn right towards Hatfield Broad Oak. At the top of the hill cross the road just around the corner, opposite the pillar box, where visibility is better.

① **George VI wall box:** *Dating from between 1937-1952 this box is now out of service, having been replaced by the higher capacity Elizabeth II pillar box.*

Head left towards the finger post (7) and through the church car park.

① **St Mary's Church:** *This early medieval church was part of a Benedictine Priory until the destruction of the latter in 1583. John Warren was ejected from the vicarage in 1662 and subsequently established the Hatfield Heath United Reformed church.*

Pass through the kissing gate (8), and after taking in the view across the valley, head diagonally downhill to another footbridge (9). Take heed of the red sign warning of the possible presence of a bull and cattle in the field ahead. Follow the path to the right from where the top of the control tower of Stansted Airport is just visible on the horizon ahead.

① **Stansted Control Tower:** *At 60 m in height, this was Britain's tallest control tower when it was constructed in 1996.*

After a pair of kissing gates (10), the path forks to the left across the flood plain towards the metal railings of a footbridge (11) and then onto another kissing gate (12). Turn right up the hill where an old concrete waymarker post indicates FP14 diagonally across the field.

As you ascend the path over two fields, take time to pause and look back at Broad Oak church, Barrington Hall and the control tower.

① **Barrington Hall:** *This neo-Jacobean style hall was built in 1734 for John Barrington, though not completed until 1863. It currently houses the HQ of CPL Aromas Ltd.*

After crossing the open fields, the path passes through a hedge into the corner of a field and follows the hedge line, over a ditch to a wooden stile. The path veers left and crosses planks over another ditch, then to the right of a pond and over a couple more stiles to reach a road (13). Turn left along the road, being aware of any traffic (no pavement), until you pass a EIR lamp box and reach a junction with an old guidepost (14).

① **Guidepost:** *This cast iron guidepost, probably manufactured at Stanton Iron Works, Derbys, has been directing travellers since the 1920/1930s.*

At this junction turn left and shortly turn right (15) into Ryes Lane. (Although marked as a private road this is a public right of way.) Follow Ryes Lane until you reach a metal gate across the road (16), just before The Ryes.

① **The Ryes:** *Mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086 as having one household, half a plough team (4 oxen), 4 acres of meadow and woodland.*

Pass this gate and turn right through an avenue of limes. At the end of the avenue (17) turn left and follow the field edge (this is the boundary with Little Hallingbury Parish), across a wooden bridge and continue until the path turns left over a concrete footbridge (18).

The path passes through a small wooded area then emerges over a footbridge and follows the left-hand border of a new plantation of Christmas trees. The path eventually rejoins Ryes Lane at Skringills (19). Pause to look along the lane to the left where you will see an unusual thatched building.

① **The Round House:** *This former lodge cottage is actually octagonal, not round, and dates from around 1800.*

Head straight on down the Lane, past Corringales until you meet the Dunmow Road (20). Cross carefully and follow the footpath along the road back to Hatfield Heath.

① **Corringales:** *First mentioned in a charter of 1217, and for a period until the 1790s was combined with Ongars.*

As you approach the village look out for a pair of old buildings on your right (Ongars and The Old Barn.)

① **Ongars:** *A late 16<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed building. Ongars farm may date back to the 1400s.*

① **The Old Barn:** *During the 1930s this late 16<sup>th</sup> century building was the home of Florence Desmond who had a long career in theatre, radio and cinema.*

Finally, when passing The Shaw housing development, reflect that until 1987 this was the site of a working abattoir.

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

Ian and Stella Hughes 2015