

## St Mary the Virgin Bocking

Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee Walks series, circular walks around Bocking.

Walk No4 Blackwater Valley, Bradford Street to Stisted, Mills and wet meadows.

Description: [http://umap.openstreetmap.fr/en/map/untitled-map\\_731280#14/51.8969/0.5821](http://umap.openstreetmap.fr/en/map/untitled-map_731280#14/51.8969/0.5821)

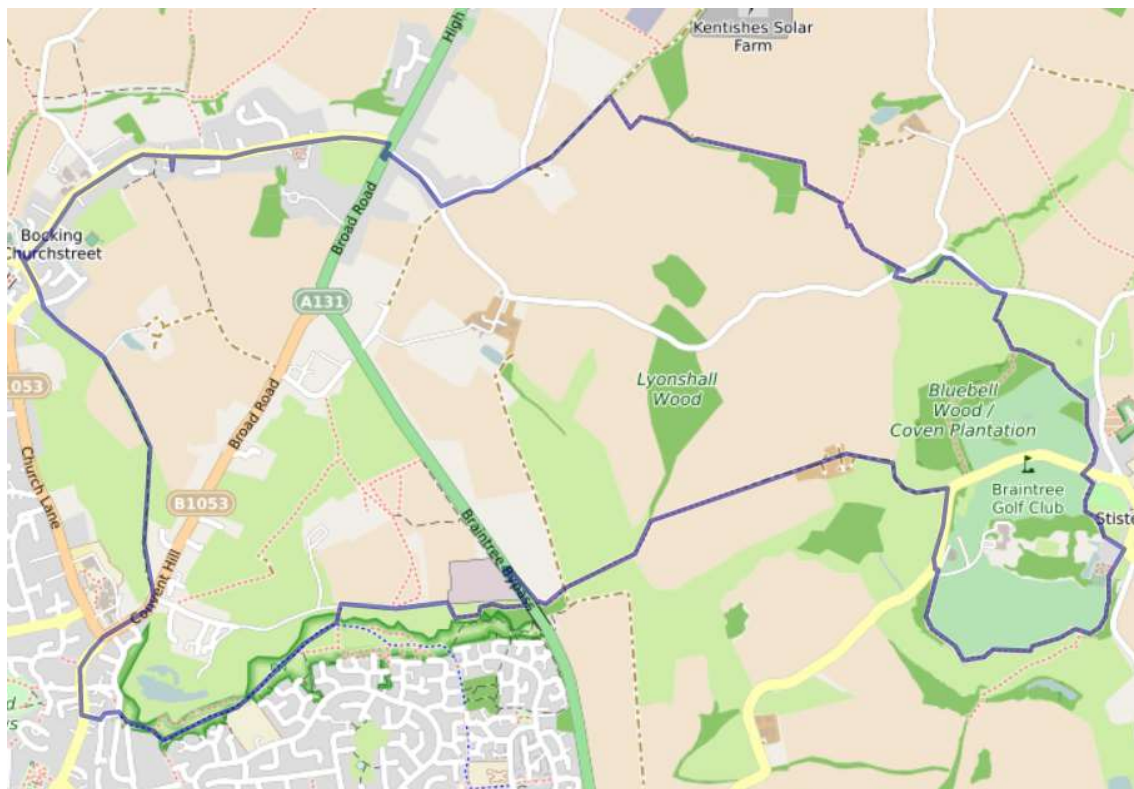
Distance 8 miles, 3- 3 ½ hours of comfortable easy-going walking, a few sections of road walking, crossing the main A131 road, care needed.

Description: Countryside walk on footpaths, tracks and short sections of minor roads, need to cross A131. Footpaths can be muddy, wear clothing and footwear suitable for the weather. As a minimum take some water with you. Follow the countryside code

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>), stay on the paths and keep dogs on a lead, as you may encounter livestock and some of the abundant wildlife. Beware of deep water as this walk involves stretches close to the river. Follow the guidance notices when walking the path around the golf course.

Start and finish at St Mary the Virgin Bocking. The Church is normally open and is well worth a look inside. Any donations help to preserve the fabric and character of this wonderful building. Refreshments can be found at the Retreat public house and in the Coop in Church Street. Toilets are available in the church hall if open, or in the Retreat if you are a customer. Public transport is the 38 bus which stops by the church and links with Braintree town centre and for the nearby railway station, also Halstead. There are refreshments available in Stisted village.

Sights: Historic Wind & Water Mills and fine old Houses, Farm land, woods, the river Blackwater and Coven brook water meadows. Abundant wildlife (see Bocking and beyond on Facebook for some wonderful pictures).



Start:



With the Church gates behind you walk past the church hall and cross Church Street, continue toward King's Bridge take the road on the left just before the bridge, Dorewards Avenue.



Walk at short distance and see the track on the right as the road bends left.



Take the track (the Chase) and continue along until the track turns left and a path is indicated going straight on,



Here looking to left you have a view of our first Mill, Bocking Wind Mill more on that later. The Chase leads to Dorewards Hall, 16<sup>th</sup> century with 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century alterations.



Follow the hedge line path with views across the Blackwater Valley of Bocking and parts of Braintree. The newly built retirement village is clearly visible, its curved shape seemly honouring a veteran oak. The path forks at the junction with a hedge coming up from the river take the righthand fork, to head towards the river and Broad Road.



The path goes between the housing to exit on to Broad Road adjacent to Convent Lane, cross Broad Road and Convent Lane and continue over the bridge it is worth a pause to take in the bridge, Canes or Bradford Mill and the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception on the corner of Convent Lane. The Chapel is part of the Franciscan Convent.



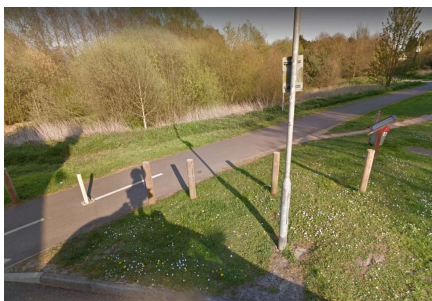
Continue on further towards Braintree the road the road is now Bradford Street, an historic Bocking throughfare, with a fine collection some very old of houses.



At the Angel Public house turn left into the car park and exit via the path at the rear.



Turn Left onto the residential road, River Mead. Then in a short distance take the path on the right into the green open space.



This is the Bocking Blackwater Local Nature Reserve. There are two path options, you can take the boardwalk by the river or the path which follows the river on slightly higher ground. Following the path keep the river on your left with small trees and shrubs through which you can glimpse the river, which shortly turns to the left. The path leaves the river and angles left crossing the open space and gets very close to the river again at a small bridge, take the path over the bridge. This is the site of our second watermill, the now demolished Straits Mill on the river the Sluice and mill stream are still visible.





Straits Mill in the 1960's.

Our walk continues on the track the other side, turn right and go towards the water treatment plant, there are occasionally vehicles on this track. At the entrance to the plant take the path on the right which leads to the river and follow the riverside walk down stream.



For information on the blackwater <http://essexrivershub.org.uk/index.php/walkovers/rivers-blackwater-and-pant-walkovers> is a good source. The path heads back towards the treatment plant boundary and follows this to the main road, with steps up to the busy A131 roadside.



Take care here as the traffic is fast moving. DO NOT cross the road immediately by the steps, but walk some 100m to the left, the verge is wide this gains extra sight of the road to give an adequate view for both you and the traffic, to allow a safer crossing.



go further up to here to cross, then find the path steps down to the field.

Walk back along the opposite verge to find the steps down to the path, turn right then there is a gap and an old stile take this and go through the field, a few steps and the noise of the road is lost and the countryside takes over your senses.



The path follows the field edge, at the farm track, take the stile to continue on the footpath into the field close to the river, walk the field edge by the fence with views over the water meadows on the lower edge of the field.



At the field gate look across toward a lone tree and you will see the bridge and way marker for the footpath.



Cross the bridge and turn left to go up the hill. The path follows the field edge until you see a lone tree, a venerable Holly tree, there is also a way marker.



Cross the field, towards the buildings of Covenbrook farm, going through the crop.





The footpath joins a farm track that leads straight on through the farm buildings.



Pass through the farm yard onto Coven Brook Lane. At first a little uninspiring



But a little further on take a moment to enjoy the view, of wet grazing meadow and numerous large oaks in the lane side fields.



Covenbrook Lane leads you to Kings Lane for our walk turn right and road walk to the golf course entrance.





You may wish to take a short diversion and continue on Kings Lane down to Stisted watermill, now residential, to view our third and final watermill, re-trace your steps.



Take the entrance and almost immediately you will see the path that leads around the edge of the golf course down to towards the river.



Please follow the advice and instructions placed by the golf course managers, as this will allow all to enjoy their day in safety.

There are some fine specimen trees to see. Once at the riverside follow down stream keeping close to the out of bounds markers.



The path passes by the gauging station on the river



and close to the end of this riverside walk, a very nice little bridge, which you can admire.



There is a set of way markers after the bridge just before our path turns to the left.



As you turn you get great view of All Saints Church, Stisted.



As you approach the Church you will need to pick your moment and cross the fairway by the tee, as you can see in the photo. Exit the golf course by the gate and the short lane running past the Church. As the lane joins the road on the left there is a finger post for our next footpath (I'm walking away from the path!)



on the adjacent wall is a blue plaque to a local artist part of the Bardfield Group.



Follow the track past the houses as it turns right, then left at this point the path leaves the track and goes through some woodland to again cross the golf course.





Go across the tee and take the gravel path around the edge of the course.



As the gravel path turns left look to the right and you will see the footpath exit on to Kings lane.



At Kings Lane turn right look across the road and see the footpath and fingerpost.



At this point a short diversion will take you into Stisted village. The Onley pub serves refreshments.

Take the path follow the instruction and keep to the footpath, not the gravel path for the golfers.



The path follows garden fences then through a small area of woodland.

cross behind the tee, to take the gravel path, at the point where the gravel path turns right look to the right and you will shortly see the way markers indicating where our path exits the golf course for the last time.



Passing through the hedge line turn left and follow the hedge.





Pass the paddock on the right.



Down the slope towards a small bridge, cross the bridge



and follow the hedge line a short distance to a gap in the hedge with way markers, pass through the gap and turn right to follow a field edge path down towards the road (Whitehouse Road)





Turn left and road walk a short distance to a fingerpost and gap in the hedge,



take this path, which on maps cuts across the crop, however its easier and more interesting to walk the field edge. Watch for animal tracks and some very large animal burrows!

The path follows high above Whitehouse Road, then turns and follows Lyons Hall road. In the field corner where the field edge turns sharp left go through the gap with waymarker.



down the steps to cross a small field diagonally to meet Lyons Hall road.



The small stream here is again the Coven Brook. Cross the road through the gap in the hedge and go up onto the field edge turn left to follow the field edge and the Coven Brook .





The field boundary curves to the right and exits onto a farm track. Take the track but almost immediately turn right and follow the hedge, do not go through the second hedge on the track, but continue uphill toward a small wood



Turn left at the wood to follow the woodland edge.



Looking at the woodland there are pheasants in the wood... and deer in the fields.

As the woodland ends cross the hedge boundary and turn left to follow the hedge line. The large Solar farm is on the left behind the hedge. Follow the hedge line as it turns right then at a large gap in the hedge take a left turn to follow the path at the field edge down to the corner and gap which leads into a byway.



Beware motorised vehicles are allowed to use this unmade track, as you'll soon realise.

Turn left and follow the track, after a shortish distance housing becomes apparent, take the right hand fork in the path clearly indicated.



Exit on to the Willoughby Lane and Sunnyfields road junction.



Go straight on and follow the lane down towards the junction with Lyons Hall Road, turn right into Lyons Hall Road and follow it to the junction with A131.



On the left at the junction you will see the crossing place with an island, cross the road here.



Turn right to walk up to the junction with Church Street, walk along Church Street into Bocking Village.

On the lefthand side after some distance you will see a driveway indicating access to Bocking Windmill, our first and now our final mill of the day, the mill is worth a closer look. Bocking Windmill is a well restored, Grade I, early 18<sup>th</sup> Century Post Mill, with open days most Bank Holidays through the summer.



Re-trace your steps back along the drive way and turn left to walk down the hill along Church Street to return to St Mary's.