



**Title: Wickham Bishops**

**Distance:** 3¼ miles

**Time taken:** 1½ hours

**Location:** 1¾ miles south east of Witham

**OS Explorer Map:** 183

**Grid Ref.:** TL 837 121

**Parking:** (Limited) St Bartholomew's Church car park: please visit.

**Bus:** Stephenson's Route 90 Maldon - Witham every 30 minutes (bus stop ½ mile from start)

**Train:** No train service

**Refreshment:** The Chequers, Wickham Bishops (½ a mile from the car park)

**PEAR Rating:** 

## Walk Description

This is a nice, easy stroll in the countryside near Wickham Bishops. The car park is for church visitors only, so please visit, it's a lovely church. It's usually open in the daytime. The church can get very busy Sunday mornings - best check the [Church Calendar](#) to avoid clashes with weddings etc. From the church, the route heads northwards from there along a narrow lane then descends through a small wood before going along the meandering banks of the River Blackwater (through Benton Hall golf course) and passing beneath the last wooden railway viaduct in the country. The return route takes you across fields to the redundant St Peter's Church and back up the hill to the village. Most of the route is clearly laid out, but pay attention as you enter an orchard on the way back: it's easy to miss the waymarker at point T (photo 18).

## Directions

- A.** Parking in St Bartholomew's Church car park in is for church visitors only: so please visit the church. Wickham Bishops parish church is an interesting building and usually open. Leave the car park (P) via the vehicle entrance, turn right (heading west) and walk 80 yards along the road to a junction. Turn right into Mope Lane.
- B.** Walk north along Mope Lane (1) for a third of a mile ignoring the first footpath on the left. Look out for a large house with fancy gates set back from the road on your left, called Thistle Hall. Immediately past the gates, turn left along an enclosed footpath (2).
- C.** Follow the path downhill for 175 yards to a wooden gate, then turn right into the woods. 100 yards later the path turns left in front of a 5-bar gate. (3).
- D.** Continue along the path heading downhill with woods on your left and fields on the right until you cross a footbridge. This takes you onto an enclosed path: keep going for 230 yards until you emerge on to Benton Hall golf course (4).
- E.** Follow the winding gravel path down towards the River Blackwater, turning left at a footpath T-junction near the road bridge (5).
- F.** When you reach the river bank 70 yards later, ignore the golfers' bridge and turn left to walk along a gravel path, with the river on your right (6). You will continue alongside the river for the next mile, until you pass under the viaduct at point K.
- G.** You are walking through a golf course, so keep an eye out for errant golf balls. If one lands by your feet, just pick it up and hand it back with a smile (um, that's a joke. Don't. Leave it where it lands. Golfers can get cross when strangers handle their balls).
- H.** Continue along the riverside for 500 yards, until you reach a crossroads. Go straight on. A few yards later, the gravel path disappears and you continue along grass (7).
- I.** Keep going along the riverside for a further half a mile. Some of the way you will be walking past trees and sometimes, it's just you and the River Blackwater (8).
- J.** When you reach the weir at Benton Hall Gates the footing reverts to gravel over the weir bridge. This gravel path then bears left away from the river. Cross the bridge then leave the gravel path to continue along the grass beside the river (9).
- K.** 100 yards after Benton Hall Gates, go straight ahead leaving the golf course via a wooden gate and continue walking alongside the river. After another 100 yards, you will reach two gates, one behind the other (10).

Go through the first gate, turn right for a couple of steps, then just before you get wet feet turn left to continue along the riverside, right by the water's edge.

**L.** Keep going along the river bank for another 100 yards and you will come to the only surviving wooden railway viaduct in England (11). Follow the path under the viaduct (mind your head) and 50 yards later, turn left away from the river.

**M.** When you reach a driveway turn right and follow the drive round to the right (there is an information board on your left here, giving the history of the Maldon branch line). You can hear the millrace but sadly cannot see it. Turn left along the drive to the road.

**N.** At the roadside turn left over a brick road-bridge, then immediately right down some steps to a low level footpath (12). Turn left to walk along the path with a field on your right.

**O.** 80 yards after the steps the path crosses a field entrance. There is a small post mounted letter box and a red weather-boarded house ahead and to the left, and a stable in the field on the right. Continue ahead via the 6-bar metal gate along a bridleway (13).

**P.** Follow the bridleway for about 400 yards. Initially you will have trees on your right, and later will walk through open fields towards a small copse. Hidden inside the copse is St Peter's Church, the old Wickham Bishops parish church. It's redundant now, but lovely nonetheless and well worth a visit. Turn left in front of the copse (14).

**Q.** Walk northeast up the track, over an old railway bridge, to the B1018. Cross the road and continue straight on ahead along a footpath which goes up the driveway of Wickham Grove (15).

**R.** After 225 yards the driveway splits into two: go straight on along the left fork. 150 yards later the drive turns sharp right. At this point leave the driveway and continue straight on along an enclosed path (16).

**S.** After about 300 yards, you will see a gravel driveway crossing your path and beyond that, a gap through a high hedge then a grassy path ahead. It is very easy to go wrong immediately past this point, so take stock for a moment (17).

**T.** You should see a wide grassy path ahead beyond the high hedge. There are small, gnarly fruit trees in rows on your right; behind them is a large dead tree covered in what looks like ivy. There are other large trees to the left of the path. Go straight on along the wide grassy path for about 50 yards and look out for a waymarker on the right by one of the small gnarly trees (18).

- U.** At this point, leave the wide grassy path and bear right by about 15 degrees to walk eastwards on a narrow path through the orchard. Initially there will be a single tree between you and the wide grassy path, and you should pass the dead tree on your left 40 yards later.
- V.** Continue ahead along this path walking east through the orchard for a further 250 yards. Look for a narrow gap in the facing hedge which takes you to the roadside (19).
- W.** Turn left to go uphill. At the junction with Station Road turn right to continue up the hill (20). At the top of the hill, at the junction with Mope Lane, turn right to return to the parking.

### [ROUTE DIRECTIONS at www.essexwalks.com](http://www.essexwalks.com)

The ROUTE MAP and ROUTE PHOTOS **also** need to be downloaded and saved on your computer for printing.



The Route Map PDF can be downloaded from this page: [Description & Map](#)



The Route Photos PDF can be downloaded from this page: [Photos](#)

This route description is not meant to be used in isolation, it is one piece of a three part guide to the walk. The other two pieces are the route map, and the numbered photographs. The walks work best when the description, map and the photos PDF are printed off and used in conjunction with each other.

The numbers in brackets in the description refer to specific points along the route, marked with numbered symbols and these in turn are matched to illustrative photographs which show you the lie of the land.



These symbols are shown at strategic points along the route, overlaid on a 1:50K Ordnance Survey map: [Online OS Map at www.essexwalks.com](#).

The parking facilities available on this walk are not suitable for large walking groups or those arriving in more than one car. Parking cannot be guaranteed. If you are using a car, be considerate with your parking: parking areas in rural communities are primarily for local use: please don't abuse this and spoil it for others. Check your planned visit doesn't clash with Church services. It could result in parking controls being tightened, requiring the withdrawal of the walk route.

For more see: [Advice: Courtesy](#)