

WATTON AT STONE TO HERTFORD NORTH

approx. 6 miles

A country walk through fields, muddy and uneven terrain. Has been done with snow on the ground. For refreshments before starting the walk, there are three pubs in Watton at Stone, with the George and Dragon and the Bull at one end of the village and the Waggon & Horses at the other. Ordnance Survey Landranger Map 166.

1 Turn right out of Watton-at-Stone Station (left goes to the village). Cross the road and go left into Church Lane. Follow the road to T-junction & turn left over bridge. Carry on and pass Church on your left. At the road junction bear right up Perrywood Lane.

2 After a short distance (110 metres), take a path to the left, signed to Sacombe and Stapleford, passing a farmyard on the left and before long reaching a small wooden gate. Go through this gate and take the path bearing left through the middle of a field, aiming to the right of a large oak in a fringe of trees.

3 Pass over a stile and through a small woodland; then after a second stile, go across the middle of a field (marker post), aiming to the left of a small wood. On your left you'll see Woodhall Park (now a school) including the cupola of the converted stable block.

4 The path comes out on a farm track. Keep along this, eventually passing a cottage on the left to reach a road (the A119 previously the A602). Cross over the road; go through gates by the gate house of Woodhall Park and continue along the drive.



Woodhall Park

Watton is mentioned in the *Domesday Book*. The suffix 'at Stone' dates from the early 13th century and is derived from two large examples of Hertfordshire puddingstone, now at the Waggon and Horses public house. Hertfordshire puddingstone is a conglomerate sedimentary rock composed of rounded flint pebbles cemented together by a younger matrix of silica quartz. It is entirely natural and like other puddingstones, so called because the embedded flints resemble the plums in a Christmas pudding.

On a more recent note, Rupert Grint who plays Ron Weasley in the Harry Potter films was born and bred in the village.

5 Bear right over a bridge over the River Bean, noting that it is quite wide on left (signpost). Continue to the right along the edge of the river with Home Farm and River House on left, following the track as it swings left.

6 75 metres after last farm building (a brick built barn with vented 'honey-comb' design), go right over another bridge. The path bends to the right and crosses yet another bridge. Make for a metal fence (on right) and go through the remains of an old kissing gate in the middle (signpost). Go gently uphill towards another signpost and, keeping right towards the river, continue to a wall where a tall wooden stile has to be negotiated.

7 On the other side of the wall, the fenced path borders the River Beane. Follow this, ignoring a cross track and eventually passing through some woodland to reach a grassy area bordered by houses. Continue along the river and then follow a road (Clusterbolts) lined with houses to come out opposite Stapleford's church of St Mary.

8 Pick up the footpath leading down the right-hand side of the church, signposted to Bullsmill (the sign itself is by the entrance to St Mary's church). The path is also signposted as the Gravel Walk Nature Trail. The River Beane is immediately to the right and, given the route's formal status, it is no surprise that the path itself is well defined and makes for easy walking.

The trees of Foxleys Wood rise to the left, whilst open fields predominate on the opposite bank. As the trees trail off, the path emerges at Bulls Mill.

9 Go through steel gates at the marker post and turn right. The path becomes a long straight concrete road (farm buildings on right) and after about 500 metres reaches a road. Continuing in same direction joining the road and in 25 metres pick up a footpath on the right leading into trees.

10 This soon leads back to the river, under a railway bridge and through a kissing gate. The path and the water soon diverge, with the path heading left towards some houses. Go through the gate on the far side of field and along the road between the houses.

11 On reaching a junction, bear right and then left (100 metres), passing through a kissing gate to pick up a marked footpath. This marks the start of Waterford Marsh, an area of common land, through which flows the river. Follow the river for approximately 1.25km until it goes under a road (the A119) and the path emerges on to it.

12 Turn left onto the A119, walk 350 metres until it crosses a bridge with steel panels. Take the track on the left signposted Bengeo. Slip by the side of the metal gate onto the path and follow it –



St Mary's Stapleford has served the community for nearly a thousand years. The chancel and part of the nave is Norman. The tower, steeple and other parts were added in 1874. Much restoration work

has been completed over the past 40 years including re-roofing and re-furbishing of the interior. The church may be open at weekends.

initially straight and then bearing right past some buildings and through Little Mole Wood. Emerge onto Molewood Road and follow it as it bears round to the left.

13 At the crossroads, turn right into Beane Road (there are the remains of railway banking on the left that at one time linked Hertford North and East stations). Follow this to the mini roundabout and then turn left. Hertford North Station is diagonally opposite and the Bridgehouse Pub on the left.



Waterford Marsh

Trains from Bowes Park to Watton at Stone run hourly at weekends and up to mid afternoon in the week, when they become more frequent in the rush hour. The journey takes approximately 30 minutes. Trains from Hertford North to Bowes Park run every 20 minutes during the week and half hourly at weekends.

The journey takes approximately 25 minutes.