

# Ashley Green 'Farms, Forts and Fighters'

## Summary

This is a walk into history; whether it is ancient history with an iron age fort or a reminder of a more modern conflict, a Second World War airfield where USAF bombers took off on their bombing raids. In your imagination you might see ancient Britons defending their homesteads or watch personalities such as Clark Gable, James Stuart and Glen Miller or the wife of the President, Eleanor Roosevelt, encouraging the airmen. The airfield is on the Bucks-Herts border and the walk explores that patchwork of farmland, woods and hidden corners of this part of Bucks, close to Hertfordshire. The walk is 8½ miles (14km) but there is the opportunity to rest and be refreshed at a number of pubs on the way.



## History and points of interest

- A Elgiva Theatre:** Elgiva was the wife of Saxon King Edwy. As part of her divorce settlement she was given lands in and around Chesham.
- B Quaker Meeting House:** It is said that Cromwell attended a service here during the Civil War of 1642.
- C Chesham Mosque:** Opened in 2005 with over 1,700 people attending. Money was raised both locally and nationwide to fund the construction.

**D Chesham Museum:** Reflects a unique history of industry and social reform. Free entry. At the time of writing discussions are underway to move the museum to a site in the town centre.

**E Chesham Cemetery:** This cemetery has been the Chesham burial grounds since 1858 when the one at St Mary's Church became full. The town is a stronghold of nonconformity and the 6 acres (2.4 hectares) of the cemetery is shared between the non-conformists and the Church of England. There is also a Muslim section.

**F Ashley Green:** Originally a hamlet within Chesham parish. The name probably derives from the Saxon 'Essleie' meaning ash wood or field. There are reputed to be a number of underground sandstone caves, with the entrance to one at the Water Board site passed on the walk. It is even said that there is a passageway going from the caves to Berkhamsted Castle.



**G Golden Eagle pub:** Grade II listed 17th century inn with 18th century alterations and extensions. There are claims that it is haunted. At one time the landlady was the sister of Phyllis Calvert, the film actress.

**H Sales Farm:** This area of the Chilterns has many farms built in the 16th and 17th centuries when there was a rapid growth in agriculture. Sales Farm is a Grade II listed 17th century timber-framed house. It was once part of the Grove Farm estate, which in previous times was one of the manors of Chesham.

**I Whelpley Hill:** Another hamlet of Chesham. The name is probably from the Saxon 'Hwelpa's Hill'. In the Middle Ages there was also a family called 'Whealpy'. The plague hit the village hard in 1592 and 1593. Berry Farm dates from the 16th century, but has been much altered and added to in later times. It also has an 18th century timber framed barn.

**J White Hart pub:** Was originally a 15th century farmer's cottage and a favourite for USAF during WWII. The officers mess was a shed in the garden. There is evidence of a tunnel from the cellar, possibly a priest run.



**K Bovingdon Airfield:** Was built in 1941/42 as an RAF bomber airfield. It was then handed over to the USAF and was mostly used as a bomber and a flying training base. During World War II, several film stars were assigned at one time or another to the base, including Clark Gable, James Stewart and William Holden. Among famous wartime visitors were Bob Hope, Frances Langford, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, and Glenn Miller. One of the pilots stationed there was Paul Tibbetts, the pilot of the Enola Gay which dropped the first atomic bomb on Japan. The personal B-17 of General Dwight Eisenhower was based here. In the 1960s, Bovingdon was used in the production of three World War II films, *The War Lover*, *633 Squadron* and *Mosquito Squadron*. The airfield was shutdown in 1972 and the site now houses a prison, a Saturday market and a navigational beacon for Heathrow.

**L Whelpley Hill Fort:** Probable Iron Age or medieval defended enclosure, 4½ acres (1.8 hectares) in extent. The single rampart and a ditch are gradually disappearing under the plough.

**M Moors Farm:** Formerly known as Mose Farm and was part of the medieval Grove Farm estate.

**N Grove Farm:** Although not directly on the walk the farm contains the fortified medieval moated Ashley Green House. It marks the site of the old manor house of the Cheyne family who were featured in a recent edition of the Channel Four programme *Time Team*.



It was later owned by the Lowndes family, the most famous of which was William Lowndes, Secretary to the Treasury.

**O Orchard Leigh:** During the 19th century, fruit growing was a very lucrative crop and there were many orchards across the Chilterns. Orchard Leigh was one of the largest at over 100 acres. The nearby house of the same name was once known as the Healthatorium, one of the first health farms in the country. The founder, a Czarist Russian called Dr Lief, went on to found Champneys which is a few miles to the NW of Chesham.



**P Brockhurst Farm:** At the entrance is the old granary dating from 17th or 18th century. They are often raised to keep the grain dry and away from rats.

## How to get to Chesham

Chesham is an ideal location for ramblers, cyclists and outdoor enthusiasts. It is well served by public footpaths and has good connections with the extensive path network of the local Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Visit [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org) and [www.chesham.gov.uk](http://www.chesham.gov.uk).

### By train or bus

Chesham is only 55 minutes (approx.) from London – Baker Street (Metropolitan Line) and Marylebone (Chiltern Line). Change at Chalfont & Latimer for Chesham station, unless stated otherwise; see [www.chilternrailways.co.uk](http://www.chilternrailways.co.uk) or telephone 0845 748 4950 for more details and train times. Bus services are available and can be checked at [www.buckscc.gov.uk/travelinfo](http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/travelinfo) or [www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk](http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk) or by telephone on 0870 608 2608.

### By road

The town is less than 30 miles from Central London and easily accessible from the M1, M25 and M40 motorways, with scenic drives through countryside to the town.

### Maps to accompany Walk 6

O/S Explorer Map Chiltern Hills North (181), Chiltern Society Footpath Map (17).



The Chesham Community Vision (tel. 01494 774842) has launched the following new walking routes in 2008:

- 1 The Chesham Heritage Trail (2 miles)
- 2 The Chesham Outer Ring (7.5 miles)
- 3 Tylers Hill, Ley Hill and the Chess (5 miles)
- 4 Chesham Bois and the Beech Hangers (4 miles)
- 5 Chartridge 'Hills and Vales' (8 miles)
- 6 Ashley Green 'Farms, Forts and Fighters' (8.5 miles)



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Chesham Walks  
6

8.5 miles



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## Chesham Walks 6

### Starting points

● **From the Underground Station:** Take the first left down Station Road and turn right into the High Street. At the far end go round the left hand corner and take the pedestrian crossing to the Albany Place Car Park at the Elgiva Theatre.

1 From the Albany Place Car Park at the Elgiva Theatre: Between the main entrance of the car park and Link House turn immediately left down Parrotts Path. At the end turn right into Bellingdon Road and after about 500m on the left is the Chesham Mosque and on the right, behind the Gamekeepers Lodge pub, the Chesham Museum. Walk back a few steps to enter Chesham Cemetery. *Part of the cemetery is managed for the general benefit of wildlife, particularly butterflies.* Once inside, bear right and continue through to reach Berkhamstead Road.

2 Turn left, walk along the road for 500m and at the mini roundabout continue ahead into Vale Road. Where the pavement ends, cross the road, walk along the grass verge and take the bridleway on the right. After the gate, climb steeply and go through a second gate into a wood. Within a few metres, take the footpath to the left which runs parallel to Vale Road. At the end go right uphill and almost immediately left. *In spring look out for bluebells and the lovely white flowered wood anemones along this and the following section of the route.* Follow this path as it twists upwards and where the tracks cross near the top turn left to a stile. Cross it and from here there are good views over the Vale. At the T-junction turn left and descend through two gates past Little Pressmore Farm to return to Vale Road.

3 Turn right and taking great care walk along the road to the Black Horse pub. Here, take the wide track directly opposite and stay on this bridleway as it winds gently uphill to reach Flamstead Farm. *Along the way there is a good chance of seeing yellowhammers moving along the hedgerow. Note the remnants of traditional hedge laying.* Here, do not go through the farm but turn sharp left and follow the often muddy bridleway to a road, Hog Lane. However, it is possible in the future that the path may be diverted away from the farm. *On the way there is a lovely oak tree on the left which is over 150 years old.*

4 Turn right along the lane to reach Chesham Road, where a short diversion to the left leads to the Golden Eagle pub. Cross the road and onto the village green (known as the Green and Glebe Meadow). Take the path to the right of Ashley Green Community Centre. Go through the gate and immediately bear right down to the next gate. *On the left is a hedgerow that provides a good habitat for butterflies on warm, sunny days.* After that the path continues with fences on either side. Go through the next gate and descend further keeping to the right of the hedgerow. Where it ends at a junction of paths, turn right up a slight slope and walk straight across the field to a gate to the right of an electricity pylon. This is a *good place to appreciate the lovely views and to listen for skylarks singing above the fields.* Go through and bear diagonally left up the steep slope to a further gate near the corner of a wood. The ground is often very muddy here. On the other side, continue uphill on a wide bridleway to pass Sales Farm. Ignoring paths to the left and right, go through a gate and straight across the field. Head for a gap in a hedge and then onto Whelpley Hill Park. The hard path goes straight through the Park to a road at Whelpley Hill.

5 Go left towards Berkhamsted, past the village pond and the old church and take the path to the right of the entrance to Berry Farm. This leads to a gate. Go through it and continue straight ahead to the left of the hedgerow. Bovingdon Airfield is now to the left. Pass through two more gates and exit the field at a further one at the right hand corner of the field. Walk forwards on the farm track and when it bears right towards some stables continue straight on, past a stile and farm gate to White Hill Road. On the left is the White Hart pub.

6 Turn right and, taking great care, walk along a few metres to Meadow Cottage. Cross the road, go through a kissing gate and keep to the left hand edge of the field. On the right are the remains of a Neolithic settlement. Towards the end of the field veer left. Go through the gate and the wooded area and cross a large field to Moors Farm. *A good place for bats, owls and swallows.* Follow the path as it veers right behind the buildings and on to a concrete farm track. Where a bridleway crosses keep ahead to the right of a pond. *Mallard ducks will usually be found on the pond.* The path continues between fences to a couple of kissing gates opposite each other.

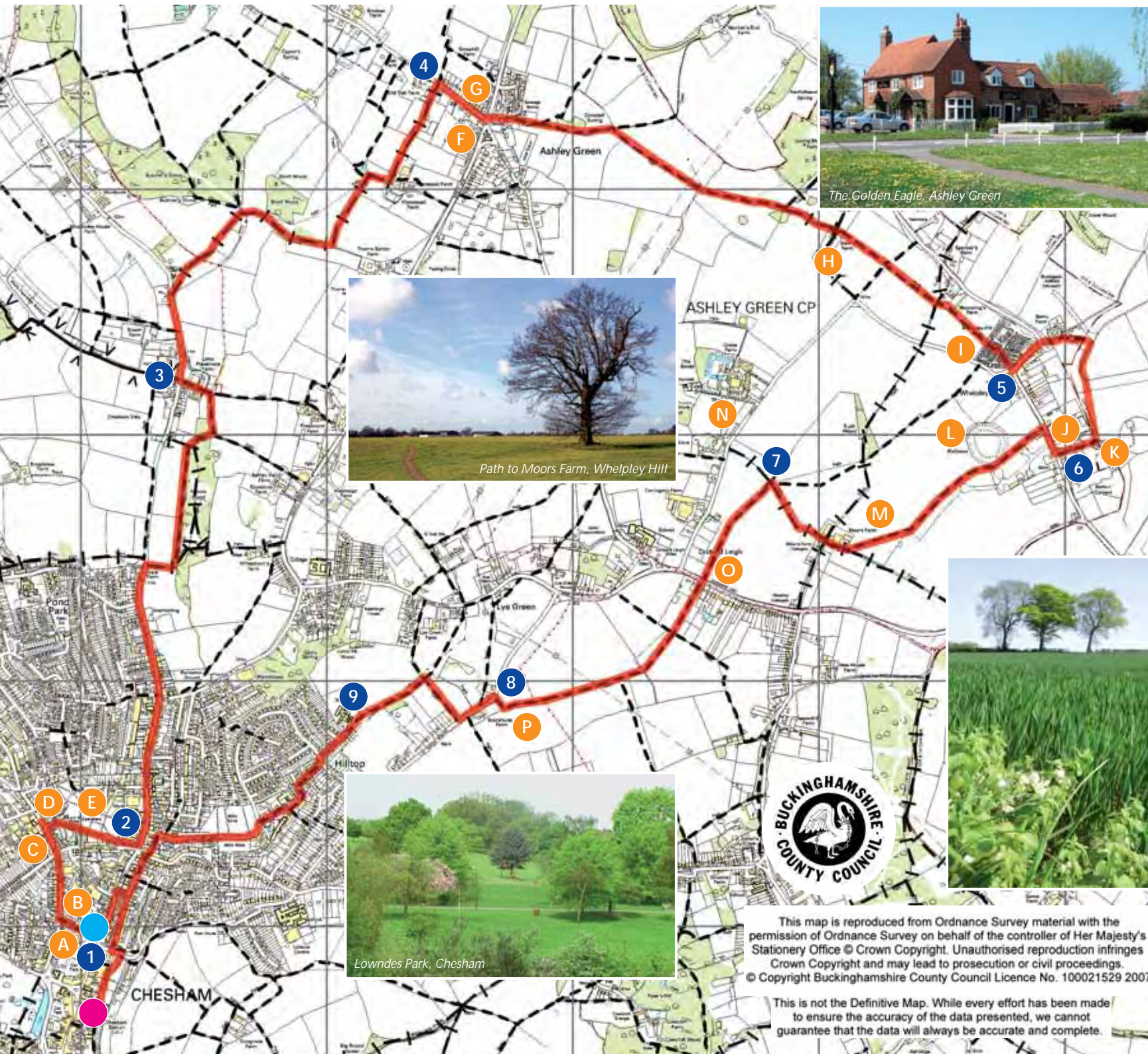
7 Take the left hand one and cross the field heading towards some electricity pylons to reach a kissing gate at Rushmere Lane. *In early spring look to the left in the field. There may be a flock of golden plovers.* Cross the road to a path between houses, pass a field on the left, through a gate and across towards the row of pylons. Go over two stiles and continue straight on under the electricity cables. Keep to the left of a line of trees and where that ends, turn right by a barbed wire fence to follow the path round to meet Lye Green Road.

8 Go through the kissing gate, turn left along the road and just beyond Brockhurst Farm, take the path to the right, signposted to Lycrome Road. After going over the first stile, keep straight ahead for 200m to a second one. Cross it and follow a line of electricity pylons to go over a further stile by Brushwood Junior School.

9 Go past the school and walk down Brushwood Road to Nalders Road. Turn left and immediately right into The Spinney. At the bottom, turn left and look for a path at the far end on the right. Follow this path downhill, past the Upper School and Endeavour Nursery to Cameron Road. Bear left down past the allotments and just after Turners Walk turn left along an alleyway. Follow this over Eskdale Avenue and along Upper Gladstone Road to Queens Road.

● **For the Underground Station:** Continue ahead into Gladstone Road and where that bends left keep straight ahead to White Hill. Cross, turn left uphill and right into The Backs. At the far end is the Station.

● **For Albany Car Park:** Turn down Queens Road to Berkhamstead Road. Turn left and then cross over at the Pedestrian Crossing. Continue along the road to the car park.



We hope that you have enjoyed this series of local walks. The Chiltern Hills have long been a favourite with those wanting to get out of town and into the countryside, as this London Underground walking book from 1934 demonstrates!



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