

The River Gade

The River Gade is a chalk stream that rises in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty near Dagnall. Chalk streams are a globally rare habitat. With their clear waters and stable conditions, they are able to support many plants and animals, including rare species like the water vole.

Chalk streams are fed from 'groundwater'. This is stored in the 'aquifer' – layers of chalk which soak up water like a sponge. At various points the water emerges as springs which feed the streams.

We take our water from the aquifer too; we can help protect the River Gade and its wildlife by using water wisely in our homes.



Flood Meadows

Farmed traditionally, the mosaic of wet grassland, marsh and stream has long been an area important for wildlife, including many species that are rare or declining nationally. The meadows support a diverse community of birds. Finches, thrushes, waders and wildfowl over-winter here and other birds breed on the meadows in summer.

The flood meadows are being managed carefully to help support wildlife through sensitive control of vigorous weeds, lower livestock grazing numbers and by not using fertilisers.

The Gade Valley

The River Gade has attracted people for centuries to live, work and enjoy the countryside in this beautiful valley. The Romans created a settlement in the area now occupied by Gadebridge Park. The River provided a source of power for a corn mill at Water End, featured in the Domesday Book, and the watercress industry thrived here, using the clean clear water from the river.

The Gade Valley Discovery Walk takes in the village of Great Gaddesden and the hamlets of Water End and St Margaret's. Each of these settlements has buildings of historic interest. Great Gaddesden has the fine 12th Century Church of St John the Baptist, a 15th Century cruck barn, recently restored, and early 17th Century cottages. Gaddesden Place was built by the architect James Wyatt in 1768 for the Halsey family, who have lived in the parish since the 1300's.

The bridge over the Gade at Water End was built in the 19th Century and is particularly attractive. It has pointed arches, giving a medieval appearance.

St Margaret's takes its name from the site of an ancient Nunnery and now houses the Amavirati Buddhist Temple.



The parish of Great Gaddesden is unusual in that all of the land within it is devoted to either agriculture or forestry. Much of the land is accessible for recreation by way of the many footpaths and bridleways, and through agreement with the landowner at Water End. The parish lies completely within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



The Chiltern Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965. This is in recognition that the Chiltern countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales. For more information contact the Chilterns Conservation Board on 01844 271300 or visit www.chilternsaonb.org



An initiative of the Chilterns Conservation Board, the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project is a partnership which aims to conserve and enhance all major chalk streams in the Chilterns, and to encourage enjoyment and understanding of them. For more information contact 01844 271308



The Countryside Management Service promotes walking in the countryside and has a number of self guided walks. If you would like information about other leafleted walks or guided walks contact the CMS:

CMS West Central
Old Nursery Site, Hixberry Lane, St Albans AL4 0TZ

☎ 01727 848168

email: west.cms@hertscc.gov.uk
Web: enquire.hertscc.gov.uk/cms/

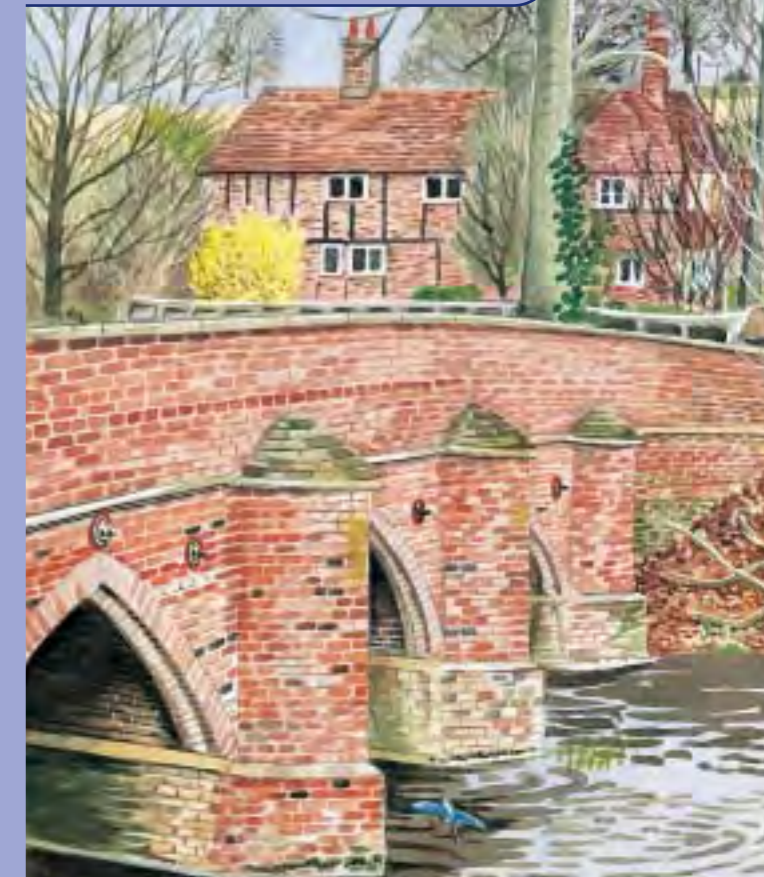


If you, a neighbour or member of your community would like this leaflet produced in another language or format (large print or audio cassette), please contact the CMS.



Chilterns Country

The Gade Valley Discovery Walk



Walk Description: A 4 mile circular walk in the Gade Valley. Allow 2 hours

Start/Finish: Wyevale Garden Centre
Pipers Hill, Great Gaddesden



How to get to the start

Great Gaddesden is situated 2 miles north west of Hemel Hempstead on the A4146 Leighton Buzzard Road. Turn left into Pipers Hill, following the signs to Wyevale off the A4146.

Parking: There is parking available at the Garden Centre, however please note the closing times and ensure that you return to your car before the car park closes.

Public Transport: Buses regularly serve Great Gaddesden. Some buses stop at the cross roads only and some go to the Cock and Bottle (no longer a public house) on Pipers Hill. Contact 0870 608 2 608 for bus times and routes.

Cycling: Cycle parking facilities are available at the Garden Centre. Check closing times and ensure you return to your bike before the car park closes.

About the route

Start: Wyevale Garden Centre, Pipers Hill, Great Gaddesden

Route: 4 miles (6.5km) **Time:** approximately 2 hours

Rating: Moderate, some hills, muddy stretches and stiles

Seasonal: Paths can be wet and muddy under foot, wellingtons recommended in winter, sturdy boots or shoes in summer

Roads: care must be taken when crossing the bridge on the main road and when walking alongside quiet lanes

This is one of a **series of walks** through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It follows **rights of way** most of which are waymarked as follows:

 **Footpath (walkers only)**


 **Bridleway (horse riders, cyclists and walkers)**

Please be considerate in the countryside


- Keep to footpaths, especially through crops, and leave farm gates as you find them.
- Please keep dogs on leads when walking through fields with livestock.
- Please do not paddle or allow dogs into the river.


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 Gade Valley Discovery Walk


 These flood meadows are open to the public by permission of the Gaddesden Estate. The agreement may be withdrawn.


Notes on the walk from the Garden Centre


 Turn right out of the garden centre car park and take the first stile on the left into the open access flood meadows. If, for any reason, the flood meadow is not accessible you can take the footpath down the western edge of the meadow.

 Follow the path into the wood and turn sharp left up a slight hill. Look out for signs of wildlife, muntjac deer and woodpeckers are common in this wood.

 Take care when crossing the bridge at Waterend.

 Turn left down a footpath between two cottages and head back across the flood meadows and head for the wood at the top of the hill opposite. This woodland is largely beech, a feature typical of this part of the Chilterns.

 Turn left after a large depression, probably a disused clay pit, and through a gap in the hedge.

 Follow the footpath around the edge of the new graveyard, through three kissing gates and alongside the hedge, down some steps to the road.

