

# THE CHESS VALLEY WALK

A 10 mile walk in the Chilterns

## THE CHESS VALLEY

The Chess Valley has some of the most attractive countryside in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is a landscape rich in wildlife, with a long and fascinating history. Along the way there are historic buildings and estates, water meadows, ancient field systems and nature reserves.



The Chess is a 'chalk stream'. They are fed by groundwater, which is stored in the aquifer – layers of chalk rock which work like a sponge, soaking up water until it emerges at ground level. Regular winter rainfall is needed to recharge the aquifer and keep the chalk streams of the Chilterns flowing throughout the year. Typical chalk streams, like the Chess are shallow, narrow streams, with gravel beds and clear, warm water. We take our water from the aquifer too, so we need to use water wisely in order to reduce our impact on chalk streams and their wildlife.

The wildlife of the Chess Valley is as diverse and exciting as its history. You might see kingfisher, water vole, brown trout, little egret or even the spectacular banded demoiselle damselfly, amongst many other species of birds, plants and animals.



## GETTING THERE & BACK

**Directions:** The walk starts from Rickmansworth Station and finishes at Chesham Station.

**Trains:** Rickmansworth is served by both the Metropolitan Line from Aldgate and Baker Street and the Chiltern Line from Marylebone to Aylesbury.

From Chesham there is a direct Metropolitan Line service to London that stops at Rickmansworth. For the Chiltern Line change at Chalfont and Latimer.

**Buses:** Please go to [www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk](http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk)

**By Road:** Rickmansworth Station is 1.5 miles from Junction 18 of the M25

**Maps:** Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps 172 + 181 and Chiltern Society Maps 6 + 17 +28

If you have enjoyed this walk, there are many others to try.

Visit [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org) or call 01844 355500 for Chilterns Country walks or visit [www.chesham.gov.uk](http://www.chesham.gov.uk).

This walk and leaflet is supported by:



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## HISTORY & POINTS OF INTEREST

**A Rickmansworth:** The town's history spans more than 1,000 years. Its three local rivers, Colne, Chess and Gade, supplied water for industries including papermaking, milling and watercress growing.

**B Royal Masonic School:** One of the oldest girls' schools in the country, the Royal Masonic School was founded in 1788 in East London to educate the daughters of poor Freemasons. It moved to Rickmansworth in 1934.

**C Glen Chess:** This imposing house was built by Herbert Ingram who owned and operated the nearby Loudwater Paper Mill. He founded The Illustrated London News in 1842.

**D Loudwater:** An old name for the River Chess. Local archaeological digs have found evidence of a settlement here dating back to the 4th century.

**E Chorleywood House:** Bought in 1892 and modified by Lady Ela Russell, the estate came in to Council ownership in 1939. It was designated as a Local Nature Reserve in 2007.

**F Lynchets:** The terraced field rising up the valley side is thought to date from the 9th Century. The characteristic steps known as lynchets, were formed by ploughing along the slope over many years.

**G Watercress Beds:** Watercress is one of the oldest green vegetables known to man. The River Chess, with its clean mineral-rich spring water, is ideal for producing this wonderful superfood. The watercress beds at Sarratt Bottom are the last representative of a once major industry in the Chilterns.



WATERCRESS BEDS



LATIMER COTTAGES



MEADES WATER GARDENS

**H Frogmore Meadows:** This Nature Reserve, managed by Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust is a rare example of a lowland meadow which supports an abundance of grasses, orchids and wildflowers as well as water voles. The water vole is Britain's fastest declining mammal. Once threatened with extinction, the population on the Chess is now healthy again thanks to the efforts of landowners and conservation groups.

**I William Liberty's Tomb:** William Liberty, a local brickmaker and relative of the founders of Liberty's of London, asked to be buried alone, out of fear that he would not be able to identify his bones when the time came to be resurrected. Below is the site of the original village of Flaunden where an information board explains its history.

**J Latimer:** The village is made up of a number of 17th and 18th Century houses around a village green. Latimer House (Place) was built in 1863 after the original Elizabethan house was destroyed by fire. Once the seat of the Cavendish family, during World War 2 the house became an interrogation centre for senior prisoners of war, including Rudolf Hess. It is now the Latimer Place conference centre and hotel. Below the house is Latimer Park Farm which from the 1st Century was the site of a Roman farm villa.

**K Blackwell Hall:** The site of the ancient manor of that name, the current house dates from the tudor period. From medieval times, the manor had its own corn mill the last of which was demolished around 1860.

**L Weirhouse Mill:** This is the most complete and well preserved mill on the river. Besides corn milling it was also used for the manufacture of paper.

**M Canons' Mill:** This was the site of a Saxon corn mill, referred to in the Domesday Book. It was owned by the canons of Missenden Abbey from the early 12th century. It last worked in 1937 and was demolished around 1960.

**N Chesham Moor:** The Moor (an old english name for marsh) is actually a large island. It was created in the 10th century by Lady Elgiva who diverted the Chess and built Lord's Mill.

**O Meades Water Gardens:** Originally the location of the leat for Amy Mill, of which now only the sluice gate remains, the site was then converted for use as watercress beds and later ornamental gardens. In 2008 the river was restored as part of a project to regenerate the gardens.

**P The Bury:** Built as a country house for William Lowndes, Secretary to the Treasury, the Bury was completed in 1716. Nearby Lowndes Park was once part of the grounds of the older manor Bury Hill House (now demolished). The park was donated by the Lowndes family to the people of Chesham in 1953.

Discover De Vere Latimer Estate

Enjoy a drink or dinner on our terrace and admire the breathtaking views across the Chess Valley.

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# THE CHESS VALLEY WALK

## A 10 mile walk following the River Chess in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



### Rickmansworth

**1** From Rickmansworth station entrance turn right, go down the hill and up the other side. Take the steps to the left of Waitrose and turn left at the top. Cross the bridge, go straight ahead over the grass to the trees and turn right along the path. Go down to a driveway, past a school and, where the road bends right, take the path straight ahead. Follow it past a sports ground to meet the River Chess. With the river to the right, stay on this wide path for nearly a mile to eventually climb some steps to a lane.

**2** Cross to a driveway opposite, turn left along the path and follow it for 430m to a fork. Take the right-hand path signposted to Chorleywood. Cross straight over a lane and follow the path to join a surfaced access road. Where it bends to the right, continue forward between the fences and through a gate below the M25. Follow the path to a driveway and up to a road. Turn left over the M25.

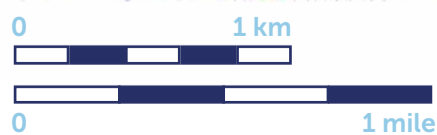
**3** Continue uphill on the pavement and turn right on a surfaced track signposted to Sarratt Mill and Sarratt Green. Follow the track for over 400m and, where it bears to the right, keep straight ahead on the grassy path towards a wooden footbridge over the river.

**4** At a junction of paths, turn right over the footbridge and walk through a small wood to a lane. Take the track opposite and, at the houses, pass through a gate on the left into a field. Stay straight ahead until the path drops down to a gate at an entrance to a wood. Go through to a lane and keep in the same direction for over 600m to the end.

**5** Where the lane turns right uphill, turn left along the concrete driveway signposted to Latimer. At the watercress beds do not cross the river but take path ahead past the metal rails. Continue on the wooden walkway past the orientation boards for Frogmore Meadow Nature Reserve. The path passes through a gate into a field. Follow the grassy track ahead through a further gate and between fences to a lane. Turn left along the lane for just over 100m to a gravel driveway on the right at Mill Farms Barns.

**6** Turn right and, where the gravel section ends, go left through the gate. Stay on this path for over a kilometre to a gate on the right just before the road into Latimer village. Go through it and the next gate, cross the road, through the gate opposite and straight up the hill ahead. Pass through the next gate, over the access road and take the path opposite past the front of Latimer Place. This section has the finest views of the whole walk. Go through the next gate, turn right uphill and follow the path around the top of the field. As the path starts to descend, look for a gap on the right. Go through, turn left and continue downhill to pass through a further gate into a field. Stay straight ahead, keeping to the right of the hedge, all the way to Blackwell Hall Lane. Turn left down the lane.

**7** Just before the left-hand bend, turn right along the gravel driveway to Blackwell Lodge. Go around to the left and through a gate into a field. Continue in the same direction through a series of gates to drop down to a bridleway. Turn left onto a busy road and then left along it past the recycling centre.



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### Route to the Bedford Arms

At the watercress beds, cross the river by the footbridge alongside the ford, and walk up the lane. 100m after the right-hand bend take the footpath to your left towards Chenies village. Follow the path past some farm buildings, cross the narrow lane (Mountwood Farm Lane) and continue straight over to emerge onto a road by the Red Lion Pub. Cross the road and turn right along the grass verge to the Bedford Arms. To return to the Chess Valley walk, retrace your steps to Mountwood Farm Lane and turn left. At the end of the lane

cross the road and the village green and take the gravel drive opposite towards Chenies Manor and St. Michael's Church. Pass the church and turn right in front of the Manor gates onto a footpath. Follow the path between the Church and Manor, downhill through a wood to a road. Cross the road and follow the lane opposite over two river bridges. Immediately after crossing the second bridge, turn left to re-join the main route.

### Chorleywood Option

From the main station entrance, cross the road and take the steps opposite on footpath 043 to Chorleywood Common. Follow the access road uphill through the estate to Common Road. Cross over to the left-hand corner of the car park, go past the information board and turn left on a path that runs parallel to the road. Go past the pond on the right and bear right across the Common towards the woods. Ahead are two broad avenues. Take the left-hand one towards a white building in the distance. Cross the main road and go through the entrance to Chorleywood House Estate on Lady Ela Drive. Keep straight ahead along the Drive for over 300 metres to a T-junction. Turn right for a few metres and bear left along a wide path. Follow this path as it drops down to a junction at the bottom. Turn left to join the main Chess Valley Walk.

### Chalfont & Latimer Option

From the main station entrance, cross the access road and go down the steps opposite to Bedford Avenue. Turn left and first right up Chenies Avenue. At the junction with Elizabeth Avenue go straight across, walk all the way to the end and take the path into the woods. Bear half right, cross a bridleway and go past a barrier to a fork. Take the left-hand path down to a wide track. Turn right, almost immediately left and down through a gate into a field. Turn left and follow the path to a gate at the bottom right-hand corner. Cross the road with care and through the gate opposite. Cross the field, through the next gate and along the drive ahead. Go over the bridge and follow the drive uphill towards a lane. Near the top, turn left through a gate to join the main Chess Valley Walk.

**8** Turn right into Holloway Lane and, at the left-hand bend, bear half right past Watercress Cottage. Go through a gate and continue forward for 130m to a gate on the right. Go through and follow the path as it winds its way through an industrial site. Cross a metal bridge and turn left along the river bank to the site of Canon's Mill. Here, turn left and immediately right to follow the riverside path until it emerges from the trees onto Chesham Moor. Stay in the same direction and take the small concrete footbridge at the end. Go over Bois Moor Road and past the tennis courts and swimming pool. Cross the road and go past the end of the terraced houses up to the river. Turn left and follow the river bank all the way to the roundabout at the main road.

**9** Cross to the brick wall opposite, turn right and immediately left through Meades Water Gardens to emerge into Germain Street. There is an option here to turn right along Germain Street, cross into Market Square, walk along the High Street and turn right up Station Road. Otherwise, turn left over the bridge and right down Water Lane. At the end turn right past the Queens Head and right again along Church Street.

**10** After 150m, cross the road and take the path to the right of the entrance to The Bury. Go through two sets of iron gates into Lowndes Park. Take the main path ahead and turn right downhill just before the end. Go through the entrance, over the pedestrian crossing and along Blucher Street into The Broadway shopping area. Turn right into the High Street and left up Station Road to finish the walk at the Metropolitan Underground Station.