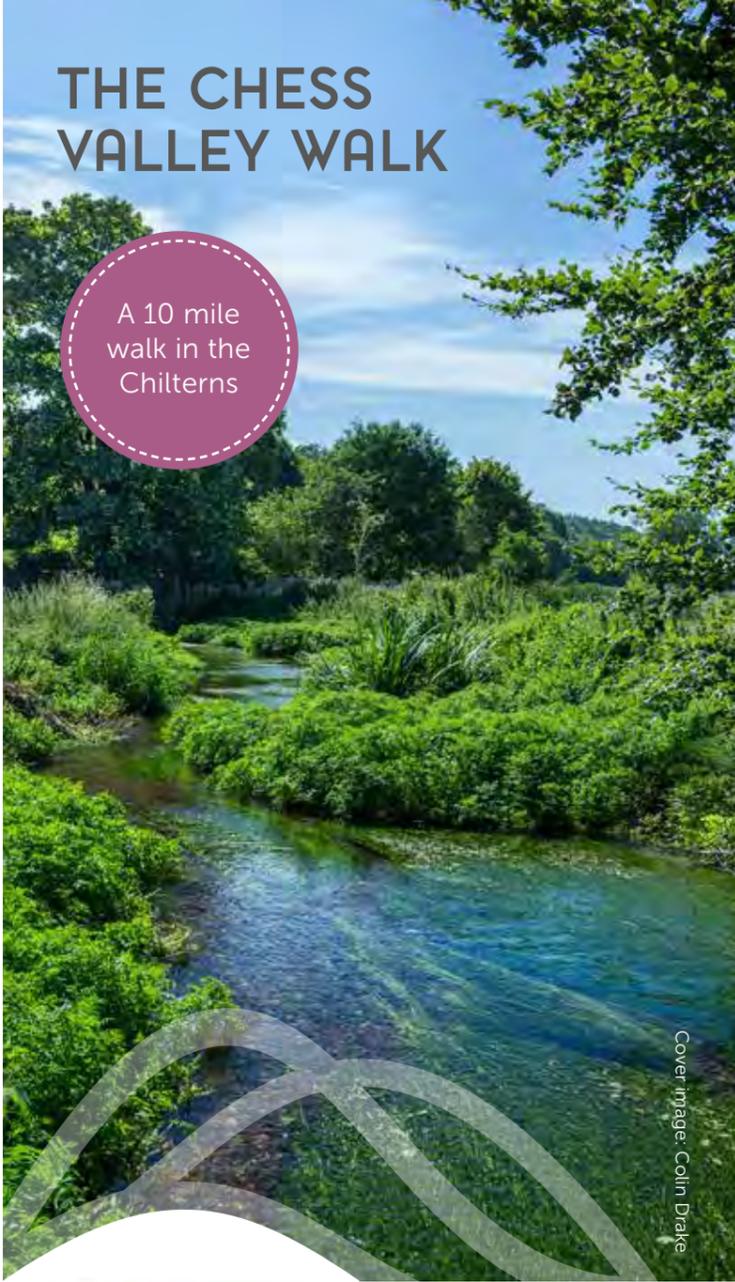


THE CHESS VALLEY WALK

A 10 mile walk in the Chilterns



Cover image: Colin Drake



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.

Water Saving:

Not many people know this, but the water we drink comes from the same groundwater sources that also flow through local rivers and streams. So, the less water we waste, the more stays in the local environment. Save Our Streams is the UK's biggest ever water saving initiative, focused on saving our incredibly rare chalk streams while saving money on your bills!

Find out more: affinitywater.co.uk/saveourstreams

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

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

For other walks in the Chilterns & visitor information including a Chess Valley visitor guide **scan QR code**.

Or visit chilternsaonb.org



This walk and leaflet was produced by the Chilterns Conservation Board (2023) and supported by:



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.

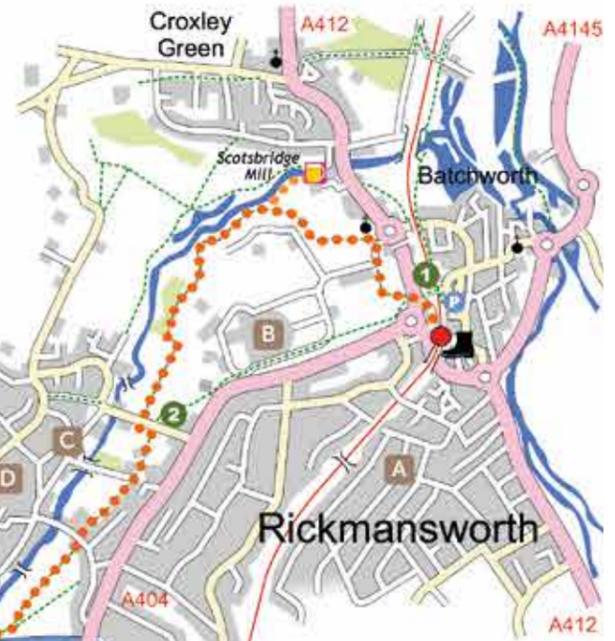
Circular Walks: There are some circular walks taking in the Chess Valley Walk and stunning countryside around, climbing up into the wooded hills and rolling fields, through villages and market towns. All the walks start from railway stations along the Chess Valley Walk and range from 3 to 5 miles. For further details see chilternsaonb.org/chessvalleywalk



A 10 mile walk following the River Chesh in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. For further information about the walk including accessibility information, options for shorter circular walks and visitor information see chilternsaonb.org/chessvalleywalk

Rickmansworth

- 1 From the station entrance turn right down the hill and up the other side. Turn right up the steps immediately after the entrance to Waitrose, turn left at the top and cross the road bridge. Go straight ahead over the grass to the trees, turn right along the surfaced path and down to a driveway. Go past the school and, where the road bends right, take the path straight ahead. Follow it round to the left and on to meet the River Chesh. Keep straight ahead and stay on this wide path for nearly a mile to climb to a lane, Loudwater Lane.
- 2 Cross to the driveway opposite, turn left and follow the path for 430m to a fork. Take the right-hand path signposted to Troutstream Way, cross straight over the lane and go through the gate to join a surfaced access road. Where it bends to the right, continue forward between the fences and through the gate below the M25. Follow the path up to a road, cross and turn left over the M25. Continue uphill to take the track on the right signposted to Sarratt Mill and Sarratt Green.
- 3 Go past the barrier into the Chorleywood House Estate and keep straight ahead along the surfaced track. Where the track forks to the right, keep straight ahead towards the wooden footbridge over the river.
- 4 Turn right over the footbridge, walk through a small wood and follow the path round to the left to a road, New Road. Cross to the track opposite and, at the cottages, bear left through the gate into a field. Keep straight ahead until the path drops down to a gate at the entrance to a wood. Go through the gate to a surfaced lane and stay in the same direction for over 600m to a concrete driveway on the left signposted to Latimer.
- 5 Turn left along the driveway to the Crestyl Barn and Watercress Farm. Do not cross the river, instead take the path ahead past the metal rails. Walk along the wooden walkways to the viewing point for Frogmore Meadow Nature Reserve. Continue along the path, go through a small wood and a gate into a field. Follow the hedgerow on the right through the next gate and between fences to a gate and lane. Turn left along the lane for 120m and turn right along the gravel driveway at Mill Farm Barns.
- 6 Go through the next gate, turn right uphill and follow the path round the top of the field to a gap on the right. The official route goes through the gap and then immediately left downhill. Alternatively you can continue down the field edge to the bottom, on a permissive path. Here, turn right over a step to re-join the official route and turn left. Follow the path through a small wood and a gate into a field. Stay straight ahead to the right of the hedgerow and through a series of gates to a lane, Blackwell Hall Lane. Turn left down the lane for a few metres and turn right along the gravel driveway to Blackwell Lodge.
- 7 Go round to the left and through the gate into a field. Continue in the same direction through a series of gates to drop down to a bridleway, Bunns Lane. Turn left to the rough parking area and left again along a very busy road past the recycling centre and turn right along Holloway Lane to the left-hand bend.



Route to the Red Lion & Bedford Arms pubs

At the watercress beds, turn left and cross the river by the footbridge to a lane. Follow the lane for 800m to the top of the hill and round the right-hand bend. Continue for a further 100m and take the path on the left. Follow it 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, continue past the Bedford Arms and, taking great care, walk along the road to the village green. Take the gravel drive directly ahead to the gates of Chenies Manor. Turn right along the path between the walls of the Manor and St. Michael's Church down into a wood. Keep straight ahead as the path drops steeply to a road. Cross the road and follow the lane opposite over two river bridges to Mill Farm Barns. Turn left to re-join the main route at waypoint 6.

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 Betjeman Gardens to Common Road. Climb the steps opposite, cross the car park and turn left past the information board. Walk forward for 100m and turn right 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 and through the Cricket Club car park. Cross the main road and go through the entrance to Chorleywood House Estate on Lady Ela Drive. Keep straight ahead along the surfaced driveway for over 300 metres to a T-junction. Turn right for a few metres and bear left along a wide path. Follow this path for 350m and fork right down through the wood down to a junction at the bottom. Turn left to take the Chess Valley Walk towards Chesham or right towards Rickmansworth.

Chalfont & Latimer option

From the station ticket hall, cross the access road and go down the steps to Bedford Ave. Turn left for 150m and first right up Chenies Ave. At Elizabeth Ave go straight across, continue along Chenies Ave to the very end and take the path into the woods. Cross the bridleway to a junction of two paths and fork left down to a wide track. Turn right and almost immediately left and continue down to a gate. Go through and turn left to descend to a gate at the bottom right-hand corner of the field. Cross the busy road and through the gate on the other side. Cross the field, go through the gate and straight ahead over the bridge. Follow the wide track uphill and, near the top, turn left to take the Chess Valley Walk towards Chesham or right through a gate towards Rickmansworth.

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

- 8 Keep straight ahead to the right of Watercress Cottage. Go through the gate, continue forward for 130m and through the gate on the right. Follow the path past the industrial site, cross the metal bridge and turn left along the riverbank to the site of Canon's Mill. Turn left and immediately right to follow the riverside path onto Chesham Moor. Stay in the same direction and go over the footbridge at the end. Cross Bois Moor Road and, just after the swimming pool, turn right across the road up to the footbridge. Do not cross, instead, turn left and follow the riverbank to the railway bridge. Cross the road and continue along the pavement to the roundabout.
- 9 Cross the main road to Amersham, turn right over Amy Lane and go through a gap in the brick wall. Stay on the main path through Meades Water Gardens and along Duck Alley to emerge into Germain Street. Turn left over the bridge and right down Water Lane to 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, just before the end, turn right downhill to leave the park. Take the pedestrian crossing, turn left, follow the pavement round to the right and walk along Blucher Street into The Broadway. Turn right into the High Street and left up Station Road to finish the walk at the Metropolitan Underground Station.

