

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.



Cygnets

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 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

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 or call 01844 355500 for Chilterns Country walks or visit www.chesham.gov.uk/Walks/Chesham_Walks.aspx

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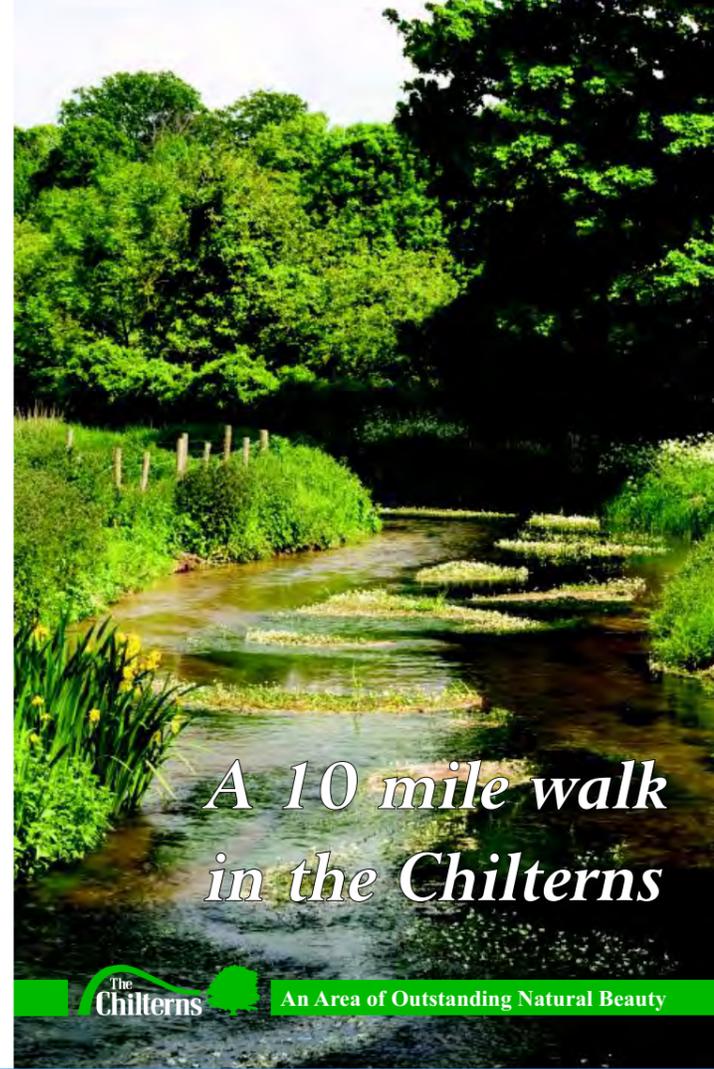
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The Chess Valley Walk



A 10 mile walk
in the Chilterns



An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

History and 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 into 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

- H Frogmore Meadows:** A Nature Reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest, it is a small meadowland haven untainted by fertilisers and pesticides where wildflowers and water voles abound. The water vole is Britain's fastest declining mammal. Although under threat of extinction at one time, the population is now healthy thanks to the River Chess Water Vole Recovery Project.
- 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.



Latimer Cottages

- 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.



Meades Water 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.





The Chess Valley Walk

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

1 From Rickmansworth station entrance turn right, go down the hill and up the other side.

Go up the steps to the left of Waitrose and turn left at the top. Cross the bridge, go straight ahead over the grass to turn right on a path under an avenue of trees. 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 just to the right. Where this path forks, take the right hand one signposted to Chorleywood and Troutstream Way. Cross straight over a lane (Troutstream Way) and follow the path to join a surfaced access road. Where this branches right to buildings, continue forward between fences to go through a gate below the M25. Follow the path as it becomes a driveway up to a road. Turn left and cross over the M25.

3 Just up from the bottom of the hill turn right on a surfaced track signposted to Sarratt Mill & Sarratt Green. Follow the track for a third of a mile and where it branches right to buildings take the grassy path straight ahead towards a wooden footbridge over the river.

4 At a junction of paths, cross over the footbridge and walk through a small wood to a lane. Cross the lane to a track. Keep straight ahead and pass through a gate to the left of a house and telegraph pole. Walk along the grassy path until it drops down left to a wooden gate at an entrance to a wood. Go through to a lane and keep in the same direction to the end.

5 Where the lane turns right uphill, take the concrete driveway on the left signposted to Latimer. At the watercress beds do not cross the river but look for the path ahead past a couple of metal rails. Continue on the wooden walkway past the orientation boards for Frogmore Meadow Nature Reserve. The path emerges into a field at a gate. Follow the grassy track ahead through a further gate and then between fences to a lane. This section of the path can be muddy at times. Turn left along the lane.

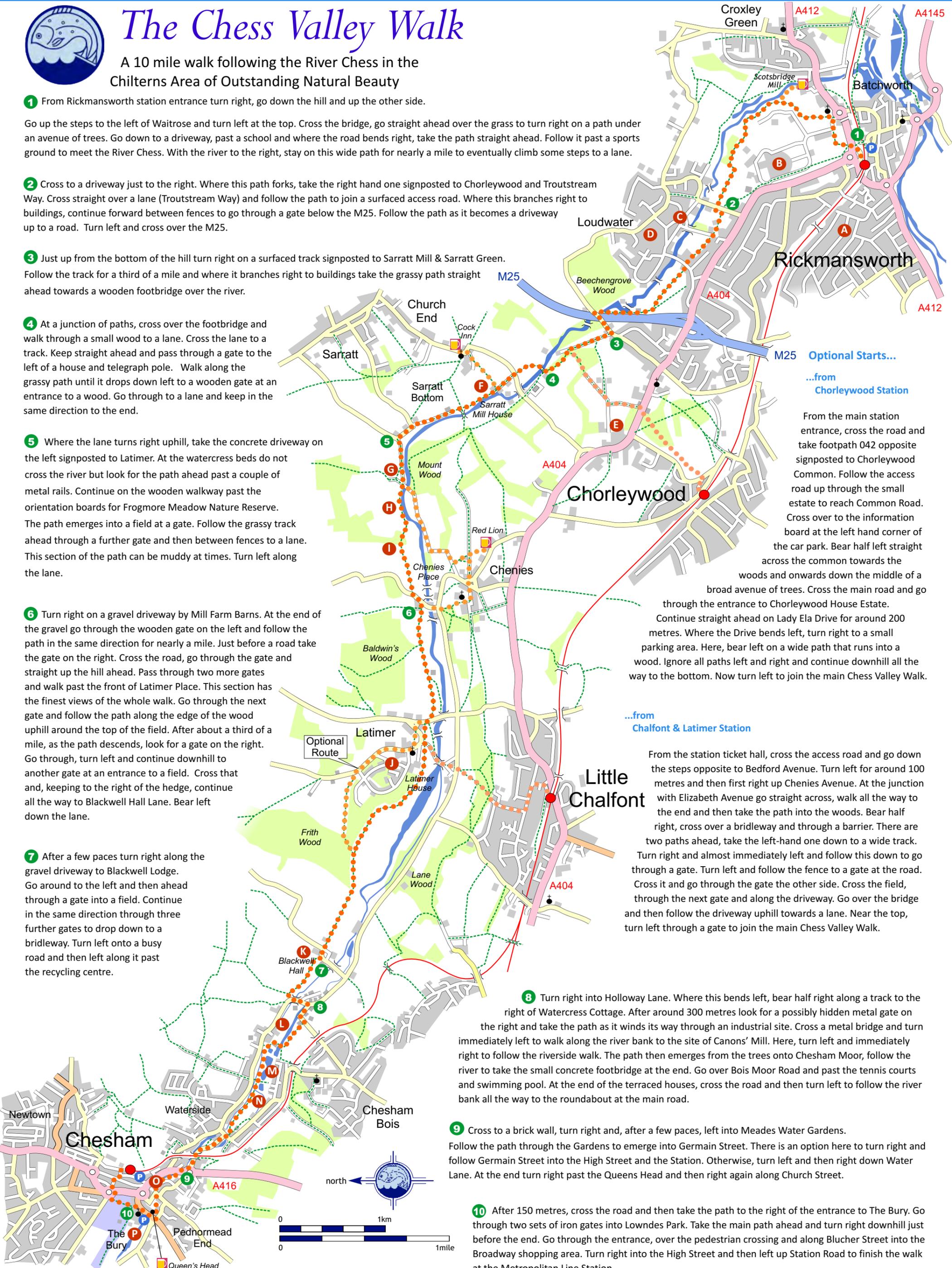
6 Turn right on a gravel driveway by Mill Farm Barns. At the end of the gravel go through the wooden gate on the left and follow the path in the same direction for nearly a mile. Just before a road take the gate on the right. Cross the road, go through the gate and straight up the hill ahead. Pass through two more gates and walk past the front of Latimer Place. This section has the finest views of the whole walk. Go through the next gate and follow the path along the edge of the wood uphill around the top of the field. After about a third of a mile, as the path descends, look for a gate on the right. Go through, turn left and continue downhill to another gate at an entrance to a field. Cross that and, keeping to the right of the hedge, continue all the way to Blackwell Hall Lane. Bear left down the lane.

7 After a few paces turn right along the gravel driveway to Blackwell Lodge. Go around to the left and then ahead through a gate into a field. Continue in the same direction through three further gates to drop down to a bridleway. Turn left onto a busy road and then left along it past the recycling centre.

8 Turn right into Holloway Lane. Where this bends left, bear half right along a track to the right of Watercress Cottage. After around 300 metres look for a possibly hidden metal gate on the right and take the path as it winds its way through an industrial site. Cross a metal bridge and turn immediately left to walk along the river bank to the site of Canons' Mill. Here, turn left and immediately right to follow the riverside walk. The path then emerges from the trees onto Chesham Moor, follow the river to take the small concrete footbridge at the end. Go over Bois Moor Road and past the tennis courts and swimming pool. At the end of the terraced houses, cross the road and then turn left to follow the river bank all the way to the roundabout at the main road.

9 Cross to a brick wall, turn right and, after a few paces, left into Meades Water Gardens. Follow the path through the Gardens to emerge into Germain Street. There is an option here to turn right and follow Germain Street into the High Street and the Station. Otherwise, turn left and then right down Water Lane. At the end turn right past the Queens Head and then right again along Church Street.

10 After 150 metres, cross the road and then 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 then left up Station Road to finish the walk at the Metropolitan Line Station.



Optional Starts...

...from Chorleywood Station

From the main station entrance, cross the road and take footpath 042 opposite signposted to Chorleywood Common. Follow the access road up through the small estate to reach Common Road. Cross over to the information board at the left hand corner of the car park. Bear half left straight across the common towards the woods and onwards down the middle of a broad avenue of trees. Cross the main road and go

through the entrance to Chorleywood House Estate. Continue straight ahead on Lady Ela Drive for around 200 metres. Where the Drive bends left, turn right to a small parking area. Here, bear left on a wide path that runs into a wood. Ignore all paths left and right and continue downhill all the way to the bottom. Now turn left to join the main Chess Valley Walk.

...from Chalfont & Latimer Station

From the station ticket hall, cross the access road and go down the steps opposite to Bedford Avenue. Turn left for around 100 metres and then first right up Chesham Avenue. At the junction with Elizabeth Avenue go straight across, walk all the way to the end and then take the path into the woods. Bear half right, cross over a bridleway and through a barrier. There are two paths ahead, take the left-hand one down to a wide track. Turn right and almost immediately left and follow this down to go through a gate. Turn left and follow the fence to a gate at the road. Cross it and go through the gate the other side. Cross the field, through the next gate and along the driveway. Go over the bridge and then follow the driveway uphill towards a lane. Near the top, turn left through a gate to join the main Chess Valley Walk.

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