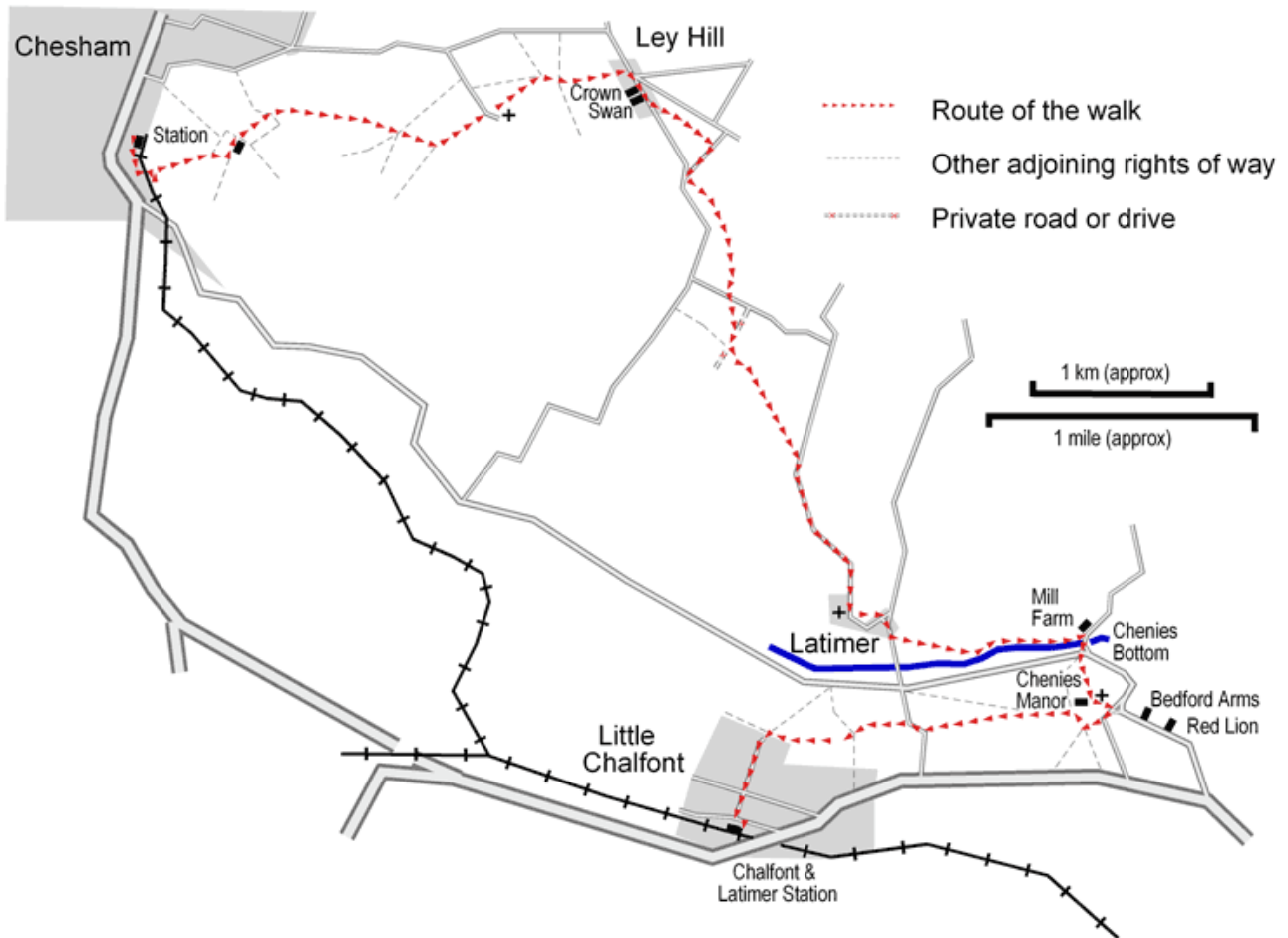


CHESHAM TO LITTLE CHALFONT

This walk rises immediately out from Chesham on to the Chiltern plateau, dipping into some delightful dry valleys and passing through the villages of Ley Hill and Latimer. It then drops down into the lovely Chess Valley, up the other side to Chenies and its Tudor manor, and along a scenic path above the valley to reach Little Chalfont. The bridleways through the woods near the end can be muddy in winter.

Checked 2007



Distance

8 miles (13km)

Three climbs of 100 to 150 feet (35 to 45 metres)

Travel

Chesham Station is served by a short shuttle train service from Chalfont and Latimer, which is on the London Underground Metropolitan line from central London, and the Chiltern line between Marylebone and Aylesbury via Amersham.

Chesham is also linked by bus with Amersham, High Wycombe, Slough, Berkhamsted, Hemel Hempstead and Watford.

Little Chalfont is on the bus route between Watford and Chesham.

Refreshments

There are pubs and cafes at Chesham, and at Ley Hill there are the Crown and the Swan (next door to each other).

At Chenies the Bedford Arms is 200 yards along the Chorleywood Road from the village green, and the Red Lion 150 yards beyond.

Teas are available at Chenies Manor on opening days.

(The Five Bells pub at Tylers Hill is now a private house.)

Opportunities for refreshments near the station at Little Chalfont are somewhat limited.

Please always be considerate about muddy boots in pubs etc; either take them off, or cover them up.

Never eat or drink your own provisions on pub premises (including the garden, if there is one).

Ordnance Survey Map

The first part of the walk is on Ordnance Survey Explorer sheet 181 Chiltern Hills North. Shortly before joining the road into Latimer, the route goes on to sheet 172, Chiltern Hills East.

Route

The walk starts from Chesham Station.

The railway line to Chesham was opened in 1889, and was for a few years the terminus of the Metropolitan Railway out of London, before being relegated to branch line status. The well preserved station with its attractive sunken garden is more like a country station than a part of the London Underground.

Chesham is rather a workaday town, and was, indeed, very much a manufacturing centre in the 19th century, known locally for the “four bs”- beer, boots, brushes and Baptists (for it was a stronghold of nonconformity).

Arthur Liberty, who had a small draper’s shop in the High Street, went on to found one of London’s most famous stores.

The town does have some very attractive features, however.

The oldest part, centred on Church Street on the other side of the ring road, has a wealth of attractive buildings near the young River Chess, including The Bury, built in 1712 for William Lowndes, Secretary to the Treasury.

The fine Parish Church is nearby, and also Lowndes Park, a magnificent open space which leads westwards to open country and the Chilterns.

Our route, which also leads quickly out of the town, is to the east.

From the station turn sharp left, go down steps and take a footpath to the left.

After 200 yards, cross the railway by a bridge on the left, turn right, then double back to the left alongside railings.

Turn right again up a steep path through the woods, which continues as a hollow way.

At the top, cross a stile, and continue straight ahead across the field (as you reach the highest point looking back down into the Chess Valley and the rooftops of Chesham) to a pair of metal gates.

Continue ahead across the next field to another pair of gates. Go through the left hand gate and along the field edge, with Dungrove Farm on your right, to pass through a gate in the field corner, and go across the next field and through a gate just to the right of some houses.

Cross the track and continue ahead by a hedge bordering the back gardens of houses, then the playing fields of Chesham Leisure Centre.

The path bends round to the right alongside a tall hedge.

Continue into the field ahead and go straight across it to a stile.

Cross this, and go down the steep slope in the same direction into the dry valley.

At the bottom, cross the track and climb up the other side, initially with an intermittent hedge on your left, noting the extensive views across to the Chess valley as you reach the top.

At the next hedge, turn left, and walk along beside it to the next gate.

Cross this and walk across the next field, aiming for the gate just to the left of what used to be the Five Bells pub at Tylers Hill.

Cross over the road and walk between Chantry Cottage and the graveyard, cross a stile and walk alongside the edge of the wood.

At the field corner in 300 yards, go over a stile to enter the wood.

Follow the path for 30 yards, bearing right then keeping to the left of a very large pit.

Bear left, but not as far left as the field corner you can see from here, for another 30 yards to a fork (you can see two faint waymarks on the trees ahead). Take the left hand fork for 70 yards to reach a path junction 15 yards from the left-hand wood edge, with a pond/hollow between the path junction and the wood edge.

Ignore the path ahead, just inside the wood edge, and turn right to go through the wood.

Ignoring a cross path, continue to a field corner, where you turn left, keeping the wood edge on your left.

Leave the woods by a stile, and continue ahead across the left-hand side of a field alongside the fence.

Cross the stile at the end and walk beside a garden, past the end of a cul-de-sac and then more gardens, to emerge between the Memorial Hall and the Methodist Chapel.

Turn right, and bear slightly left to cross a corner of the common and reach Ley Hill's two pubs.

Cross the road to a footpath sign 70 yards past the Swan by the side of the golf course.

Follow the direction shown by the sign, keeping the thicket on your right.

Carry on ahead, taking care as you cross a fairway on the next part of the golf course.

On reaching a road near the Old School House, turn right and walk down the road through woods.

After 300 yards turn left at a T-junction, and immediately left again over a stile, and follow the left-hand side of this large field alongside a strip of woodland, eventually going down into a dip, then uphill to cross a stile.

Cross another stile immediately on your left and continue in the same direction through a small wood.

Leave the wood in 50 yards, and keeping the hedge on your right, walk on until you reach a road.

30 yards to the left is a path going into Codmore Wood opposite.

Cross the stile and follow this path half left through thick woodland for about 200 yards, then bear right along a wider track.

In another 150 yards, branch left into another part of the woods, and in a further 200 yards or so, the path veers slightly to the left to reach a field.

Cross this large field diagonally to your right, aiming to pass 50 yards to the left of a barn, to reach a road at the entrance to Latimer.

Turn right and walk along the road for over half a mile (nearly 1 km), passing the Dog House, Parkfield, Latimer Mews, Latimer House and St Mary Magdalene Church.

**Latimer House was built in 1832/38 for Lord Chesham, on the site of an earlier house. It became the National Defence College, and is now a conference centre.
The church was rebuilt in 1867 by Sir George Gilbert Scott.**

Ramblers' Association: Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area

A little way past the church, go through a gate on the left, and then another gate to cross a field, passing to the left of a clump of Scots pine and a wooden animal (now becoming somewhat decrepit).

A kissing gate on the other side of the field leads across a drive and down into the small and very attractive village centre.

The diminutive green, in addition to the village pump and war memorial, has a memorial to a horse. Lord Chesham fought in the Boer War and when a notable adversary, General Villebois, was killed, Lord Chesham gave his horse a home in Latimer, naming it Villebois in honour of its owner. On its death, its heart was buried here on the green, along with its ceremonial trappings.

You will see that, unusually, the war memorial lists not only those who fell, but all those who served.

Take the right hand side of the triangle, and turn right again along the road, past the Old School, for 100 yards.

Turn left, following the Chess Valley Walk for three quarters of a mile (nearly 1 km), keeping on the track just above the flood plain, and passing on the way the tomb of two members of the Liberty family.

For a short way the path goes alongside the river, before reaching the road at Mill Farm Barns. This is Chenies Bottom.

We leave the Chess Valley Walk here, and turn right along the road, crossing the river and the millstream, and passing the old mill, to a triangle off the Chesham to Chenies Road.

Take the right hand side of the triangle, and cross the road with great care to enter a wood.

Take the left fork and follow the path as it climbs steeply up through the wood.

At the top left-hand corner of the wood it becomes an enclosed path, and ahead you will see the distinctive chimneys of Chenies Manor.

The path soon runs between brick walls, with the churchyard on the left and the renowned Manor gardens on the right.

At the main entrance to the house turn left.

Chenies Manor House was for four hundred years the home of the Dukes of Bedford, and the present house dates from the 15th and 16th centuries.

The chimneys are a particular feature and are similar to those at Hampton Court.

Henry VIII and Elizabeth I stayed at the house a number of times.

It is said that Kathryn Howard accompanied the king on one of his visits and committed adultery with Thomas Culpepper, one of the king's attendants, and the ghostly footsteps which are sometimes heard approaching the queen's bedroom are those of the king.

The gardens were created by the present owners and have frequently appeared on television gardening programmes.

House and gardens are open from April to October on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and on bank holidays.

The parish church of St Michael contains the Bedford Chapel, originally built in 1556 and described by Nikolaus Pevsner as "the richest single storehouse of funeral monuments in any parish church in England". Unfortunately, we can only glimpse them through the glass partition which divides the chapel from the main church.

Walk down the broad gravel drive to the village green.

The parish was known as Isenhampstead until the 13th century, when it became known as Isenhampstead Chenies, after the Cheyne family who owned the manor before John Russell, the first Earl of Bedford, acquired it by marriage. The name eventually became shortened to Chenies. It is very much an estate village, with most of the cottages rebuilt in an attractive style in the 1850s and 1840s.

The appropriately named Bedford Arms pub is 200 yards down the Chorleywood Road opposite (and the Red Lion 150 yards further on).

On reaching the green, bear round to the right, in front of the school.

Keep right, passing the school playground, and when the road bears left, go straight ahead along a gravel track, with a nice view shortly of the manor and gardens across to the right.

At a T-junction of tracks turn right, and on reaching farm buildings, turn left through a metal gate onto another track.

Follow this track as it bends slightly to the right, and there is suddenly a wonderful view of the Chess Valley across to Latimer.

Continue ahead, along this panoramic track, known as Lady Cheyne's Walk, as it enters a wood.

When the track meets a road, turn right onto the road for 50 yards, taking great care, and then walk ahead on the public bridleway along the top edge of the next wood.

When you reach an exit from the wood on to a field, turn right and continue in the wood, with the wood edge on your left.

Go past a sports field, a pavilion and a car park on your left.

You soon reach a crossing path where you turn left to leave the wood and emerge on a private road with houses on either side.

The private road becomes Chenies Avenue. Walk the whole length of it, crossing Elizabeth Avenue, and turn left onto another road at the end.

After 100 yards, turn right onto the private footpath into Chalfont and Latimer Station.

Little Chalfont grew up around what was originally Chalfont Road Station, opened in 1889. Before that it was just a few isolated farmhouses and cottages on the turnpike road from Hatfield to Reading. This was called the "gout road" because Lord Salisbury is said to have built it to travel more easily from Hatfield House to Bath, to take the waters.