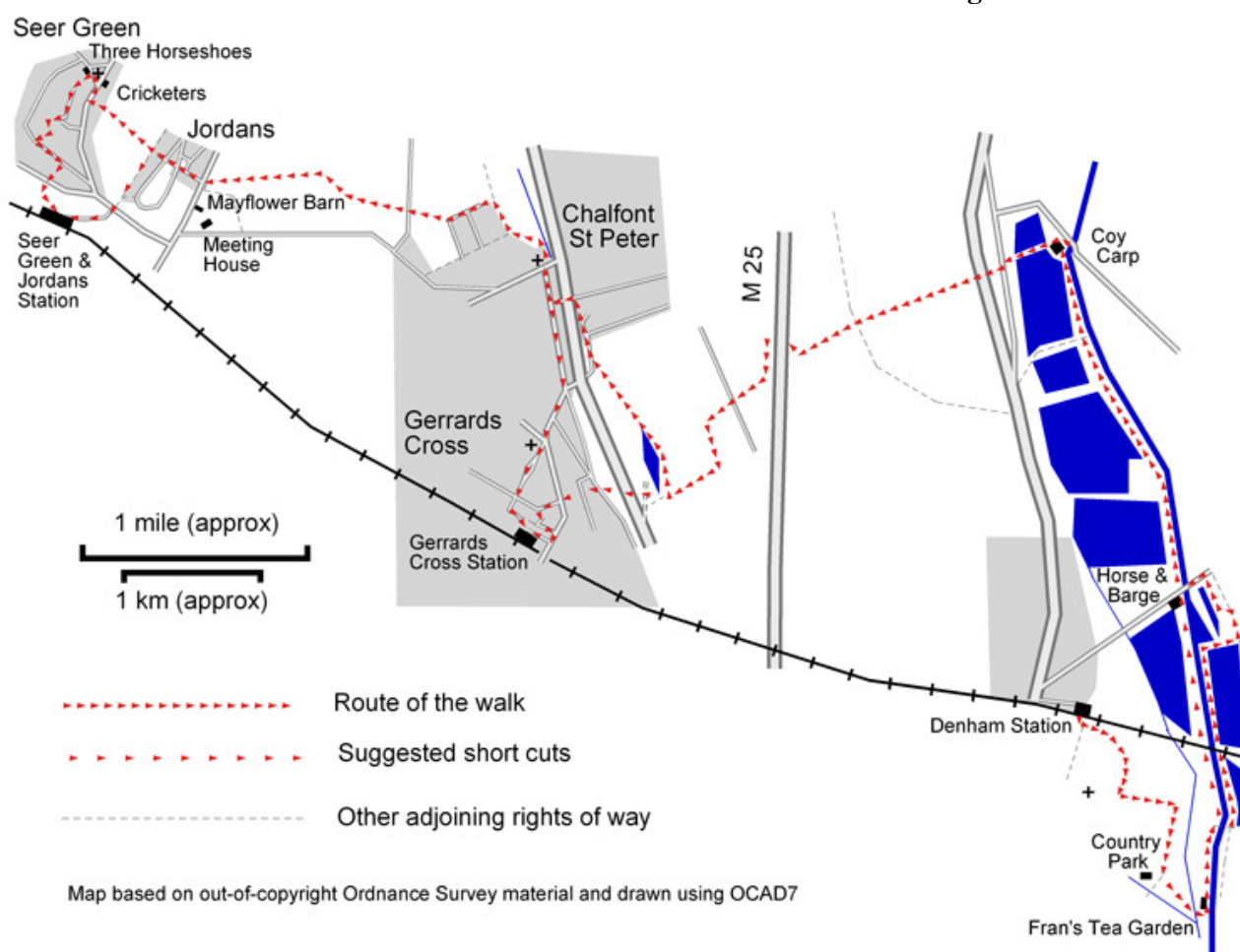


DENHAM - CHALFONT ST PETER - SEER GREEN

After crossing the Buckinghamshire Golf Club course at Denham, much of the first half of this walk is beside lakes, with abundant bird life, and the Grand Union Canal, full of activity in the boating season, but otherwise tranquil and largely deserted. The route then goes through varied countryside, mostly pasture but some arable and woodland.

The walk has Quaker connections at Jordans, where the Friends' Meeting House has been restored after the fire in 2005, though public access to the Mayflower Barn appears to have been lost.

Better road crossing 2009



Distances

Denham to Chalfont St Peter	9 miles (14 km)
Chalfont St Peter to Seer Green	3.5 miles (5.5 km) (less 0.6 miles (1 km) by short cut)
Total Denham to Seer Green	12 miles (19.5 km) (less 600yds and/or 1000yds by short cuts)

For a shorter walk on Sundays when there are no buses from Chalfont St Peter to Gerrards Cross:

Denham to Gerrards Cross 9.5 miles (15.5 km) (less 2 miles (3 km) by short cut))

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

An easy, gradual climb of 45 metres (150 feet) before Chalfont St Peter, and one of 35 metres (115 feet) later.

Travel

Denham, Seer Green and Gerrards Cross are all on the Chiltern Line between Marylebone and High Wycombe, with a frequent service, though fewer trains from Seer Green on Sundays.

For a shorter walk, there are two or three buses an hour from Chalfont St Peter to Gerrards Cross – but none on Sundays, so routes on foot are described in notes A and B at the end.

There are car parks at all three stations, for rail passengers only – buy your train ticket when you park (reduced rate after 9am weekdays and at weekends).

Buses: Chalfont St Peter is on several bus routes: 305 (High Wycombe – Beaconsfield – Gerrards Cross – Uxbridge), 335 (Newland Park College – Gerrards Cross – Uxbridge) and 353 (Slough – Gerrards Cross – Berkhamsted). Jordans is served by route 192 (Beaconsfield – Chesham).

The 331 at the Horse and Barge pub serves Denham in one direction and Harefield and Ruislip in the other.

Detailed travel information for the whole of this area is available from the Traveline South East website www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or telephone 0871 200 22 33

Refreshments

Colne Valley Country Park: Visitor Centre café.

Grand Union Canal: Fran's Tea Garden at Denham Lock (closed Mondays and Tuesdays except at bank holidays; no toilets); Horse & Barge pub at Widewater Lock; and the Coy Carp pub at Coppermill Lock.

Various pubs, cafes, takeaways and shops in Chalfont St Peter and Gerrards Cross.

In keeping with its Quaker origins, there is no pub in Jordans but the village store on the green serves hot drinks and home-made cakes (closed at 5.00pm on Saturdays and all day Sunday).

Seer Green: The Three Horseshoes and The Jolly Cricketers

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 whole of this walk is on O.S. Explorer Map 172, *Chiltern Hills East*.

Problems

Any footpath problems in Hillingdon or Hertfordshire should be reported to those councils, and not to Bucks CC.

Route

From Denham Station take the stairs down from near the booking office and at the bottom turn right.

For railway buffs, there is some splendid Edwardian brickwork here. The line was built in 1906. The Parish Council were consulted about the railway and asked that the arch be "high enough for a fully loaded hay wagon"!

As you emerge from the archway follow the path to the left to a path crossing and kissing gate.

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

Go through the kissing gate and follow the path as it curves to the right over the golf course, ignoring side paths until you come to a T-junction with an asphalt path lined with trees.

St Mary's church is to the right. It stands on a Saxon site; the tower may well be Norman but the rest of the church dates mostly from the 15th century. The chief items of interest are the 13th-century font of purbeck marble; the 15th-century Doom (Last Judgement) painting, over the south door; and numerous brasses and monuments.

Turn left and follow the path to Denham Court Mansion, now the clubhouse of the Buckinghamshire Golf Club.

The estate of Denham Court was owned by the Bowyer family from the 16th C, and there are several monuments to the Bowyers in the parish church. The poet and dramatist John Dryden (1631-1700) was a frequent visitor to relatives at Denham Court. He was inspired here to write the famous "Ode to St Cecilia" in 1697. The present house dates from the 18th century. In 1992, the estate was acquired by Asahi Brewery of Japan.

Turn right and follow the driveway 400 yards to exit by imposing gates.

The Denham Country Park Visitor Centre is to the right (note the sculpture). The Park is an area of about 70 acres of wetland and woodland habitats bordering the Grand Union Canal and rivers Colne and Misbourne. However, it serves as the main centre for the whole of Colne Valley Park, stretching from the Thames floodplain in the south to chalk hills of the Chilterns to the north. *It is open daily from 10.30am-5pm, March-October, and 11am-4pm November-February (refreshments and toilets available).*

Maps of local walks and other information can be obtained from the Centre.

The Misbourne rises north of Great Missenden and the Colne at Colney Heath in Herts. The confluence of these two rivers is a few hundred yards downstream from here.

50 yards beyond the gates, turn left through a kissing gate (joining the South Bucks Way), and then go ahead to another gate into Misbourne Meadow.

Continue ahead on the gravel path and then exit through a kissing gate to a footbridge over the River Colne on your left. Here you leave Buckinghamshire and enter Hillingdon Borough.

Cross over and follow a short path to the Grand Union Canal, which runs north-south at this point through the Colne valley.

Turn left and follow the towpath north, coming first to Denham Lock and 'Fran's Tea Garden', delightfully situated on the bank of Frays River that flows under the canal here.

Continue on the towpath to the first bridge.

By continuing ahead along the towpath you shorten the walk by about 600 yards, rejoining the main route at the next road bridge, by the Horse and Barge pub.

Otherwise cross to the other side of the canal, turn left onto the Quarry Trail and go past a lake on your right, under the railway bridge (this is the Chiltern line to Denham station) and past another lake on your right, to Harefield Marina ahead.

Here may be seen some beautifully-restored old canal narrow boats, many of which were probably built nearby at Rickmansworth (a major centre of boat-building in the hey-day of canal commerce).

Turn right alongside the marina, and then left and go on to an area of hard standing (unfortunately vulnerable to fly tipping).

In 60 yards take the waymarked path to the left, and continue ahead through the wood (past the rotting hulk of an old canal boat on the left at a clearing) to a kissing gate at the end of the Quarry Trail.

Go through and then slightly left to Moorhall Road.

Turn left and cross the road bridge (No 180 at Widewater Lock), with the Horse and Barge pub ahead on the left.

[Just beyond the pub is a bus stop for the number 331 to Denham, and opposite is the stop for buses going to Harefield and Ruislip].

Go down the path between the bridge and the pub, and turn left to rejoin the towpath.

Follow the canal towpath to bridge No 178, with Black Jack's Mill (now a house) on the left.

Continue ahead, cross a flat footbridge over a weir (here leaving Hillingdon and entering the Three Rivers District of Hertfordshire).

Continue over a humped bridge over a side arm of the canal, to reach the Coy Carp pub and bridge No 177 at Coppermill Lock (slalom poles are hung over the canal here at a water outlet, and canoeists may often be seen practising their white-water skills).

Turn left along the left-hand side of the pub car park, on a footpath signposted to Pynesfield Lake.

Cross a driveway (to the Clancy Group site), then go ahead on an enclosed path to cross another tarmac track, and follow a narrow raised path between lakes. At the far side of Pynesfield Lake, the path emerges at West Hyde Nursery.

Turn left then immediately right onto Public Bridleway No 4, cross the A412 (care) and continue up a gently rising slope to the crossing with Old Shire Lane (now a footpath and the boundary between Three Rivers and South Bucks).

Continue ahead (now in Buckinghamshire) on what is now the South Bucks Way and go up a gently rising path leading to a tunnel under the M25.

At the far end of the tunnel turn left along a stony track leading to an enclosed path through woods that emerges onto Denham Lane.

Cross Denham Lane and (here leaving the South Bucks Way) go up a driveway ahead leading to Chalfont Lodge (a nursing home).

Where the drive bears right, bear half left across a field to a metal gate and go along an enclosed path to the right of the gate.

Follow this round the edge of part of Gerrards Cross Golf Course and downhill along the edge of a wood (if the path is muddy you can avoid the worst parts by going into the wood on your right) to a driveway and a small bridge, with lake and weir on the right.

See Note A at the end for a possible short cut to Gerrards Cross station.

For the main route turn right over the stile just before the bridge, follow the right-hand edge of the lake (created by the weir on the River Misbourne) until Chalfont Park house comes into view on the left, across the lake.

Chalfont Park is a late 18th century house once owned by the great-nephew of the Duke of Marlborough, Charles Churchill, after his marriage to the daughter of Britain's first prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole. In the 1800s the house was redesigned by John Nash in the fashionable "Strawberry Hill" Gothic style.

After a period as a military hospital during the first world war, the estate became a hotel and country club in 1921 and was then taken over by British Aluminum Company after the second world war.

In more recent times, Chalfont Park house was used as the location for the health resort 'Shrublands' in the James Bond film Thunderball.

Continue north along the lake to an enclosed path leading on to Gerrards Cross Golf Course.

Continue in the same direction, to the right of a maintenance yard, and follow the right of way (marked with fading white posts) across several fairways separated by strips of woodland (look out for golf balls) into woodland in the far left (north-west) corner.

Go through the wood onto an access road (Woodside Hill) and turn right then continue ahead along Linden Drive and then keep left along a tarmac path.

Turn left and cross the bridge over the A 413, to the T-junction with the High Street Road, where you turn right.

See Note B at the end for the route to Gerrards cross station from here.

Follow High Street into Chalfont St Peter village, going past The Poachers pub and toilets on your right and The White Hart pub on your left, to the mini roundabout (bus stops are to the left; no Sunday service).

The name "Chalfont" is derived from "the spring of Ceadeles", a common name in Celtic times, and is claimed to be one of the oldest place names in Buckinghamshire. The mediaeval village was centred round the church and later became known as the village of seven pubs, which lined the High Street by the 16th century.

Until the dissolution of the monasteries, Missenden Abbey owned most of the village. After the Reformation the estate passed to the Drury family (founder of Drury Lane in London), thence to Henry Bulstrode, already a considerable local landowner, and then to Isaac Pennington, Lord Mayor of London. One of Pennington's children married William Penn who founded the Quaker colony in Pennsylvania. With the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II in 1660, the Quaker Penningtons were evicted and the estates given to the Jeffreys family, whose most notorious member was Judge Jeffreys who presided over the Bloody Assizes following the rebellion of the Duke of Monmouth in 1685.

Go ahead at the mini-roundabout with the Chalfont St Peter parish church ahead on the left (this is still High Street).

The church dates from 1714, when it was reconstructed following the collapse of the tower, but has been much altered, notably by the insertion of gothic windows. G.E. Street remodelled what he called "a very ugly little church" in 1852-4. According to Pevsner, his use of red

and black bricks was an early example of the “constructional polychromy re-invented” by Butterfield a few years earlier.

Just after the church, turn left through bollards and follow a footpath ahead, to the right of a car park, keeping the course of the stream on your right (with the back of the Greyhound Inn on the other side of it).

This is the River Misbourne, one of many Chilterns chalk stream liable to dry up as the result of excessive water extraction from the aquifers.

Follow the path to the end of wire fencing on the left, turning away from the stream (with the fencing) and bear half right across a green (between fenced and open play areas) towards wooden buildings ("Chalfont St Peter AFC").

Just before the entrance to the football club, go left over a small footbridge and then slightly right, through allotments, to a path crossing.

Turn right here and follow the path past the end of gardens and part of the way along the left-hand edge of a playing field to an enclosed path on the left, 40 yards before the pavilion.

Turn up this path and then go straight ahead up Boundary Road (which becomes Lovel End), then just after a school on the right take a footpath on the right, to Narcot Lane.

Cross the road and go into woods opposite, following a clear path that eventually emerges at fencing on the right and then immediately to a metal field gate. (The actual right of way is next to the fence but this path has become rather overgrown)

Go through and then continue ahead (ignoring unofficial paths to the right and left) across a dip, heading between two large bushy trees. (The large house behind trees to your right is Chalfont Grove, now company offices.)

Continue in the same direction through the wood ahead, going past an ancient spreading tree on your left, to a stile.

Go over the stile and then bear left (ignore the arrow pointing straight ahead) to another stile at the driveway of Grove Farm.

Go through the kissing gate ahead and past a pylon to a stile in a thicket in the far right-hand corner of the field.

Cross this and follow the post-and-rail fence and then the hedge along the right-hand edge of the next field to another stile in the far corner.

Go over and follow an enclosed path to exit through a kissing gate onto Potkiln Lane, with Seer Green Lane straight ahead.

See Note C at the end for the detour to the Quaker Meeting House and Burial Ground.

Cross over Potkiln Lane and go up Seer Green Lane (noting an old-style road sign on the right: "Slow – Major Road Ahead"). You are now in Jordans village, with the green on your right and Jordans Village Store on the far side.

The idea of creating a Village Estate at Jordans took shape in 1915-1916 when land became available and enabled Friends to fulfil a long-cherished wish to do something to preserve the surroundings of Jordans Meeting House, an area with a long Quaker history.

The declared aim was to create a village based on Christian principles where artisans, among others, could ply their trades in conditions that would provide for the development of character and self-expression. It was not necessary to be a Quaker to come to the Village.

Over the years a number of open spaces have been preserved to retain the original character of a garden village, and the areas around the Village Green, the Meeting House and Old Jordans are designated as a Conservation Area.

A plaque on the small building by the green, which houses the offices of Jordans Village Ltd, commemorates Fred Hancock, the first Secretary, and refers to the ideals of the founders.

Cricket is played on the green in summer and the village store and post office is owned by the community.

Continue ahead on Seer Green Lane, past Beech Lane on the left, to the junction with Copse Lane and ahead down a track to a footpath crossing in the valley bottom.

(For a short cut to the station, turn left here and go down to a crossroads, then follow the road ahead uphill to the station, a little over half a mile (1 km).

To continue on the main route (a further mile and a quarter (2 km)) go up the path ahead and then along a track with paddock fields on your right.

When you reach a junction (with Manor Farm on your right), turn left and continue past Hall Place (with a sunken garden) on your left to emerge onto School Lane.

Turn right (the road changes to Chalfont Road here) and take the left fork into Orchard Road then immediately left along Manor Farm Way (a cul-de-sac).

(The Jolly Cricketers pub and village store are 100 yards along the right fork. In Orchard Road, Seer Green and Jordans Holy Trinity church is further ahead on the right, with the Three Horseshoes pub on the left.)

Go through the hedge gap at the end of Manor Farm Way and turn left along Farmers Way, follow it round to the right, and at the far end go into woods (designated as a nature reserve) to the left.

Follow the waymarked path diagonally through the woods, aiming at a gap in a high wooden fence and there go along an enclosed path to emerge onto Old Long Grove.

Turn left for 400 yards to a path crossing (with a "no cycling" sign) shortly after the road begins to go down more steeply.

Turn right down an enclosed path (keeping left at a fork) to Longbottom Lane.

Cross over and take the path opposite that goes up and then left leading into the car park for Seer Green and Jordans station.

Note A: Short cut to Gerrards Cross station

From here, there is a short cut to Gerrards Cross, one mile (1.5 km) as opposed to 2.5 miles (4 km) by the main route, but you cross a dual carriageway and **traffic is very fast so please do not attempt this with children or large parties. Each walker is responsible for his/her own safety.**

For the short cut continue ahead over the bridge, then over another bridge next to a ford.

Cross the stile into the field on your right, then over a track with stiles to another stile on to the A 413 dual carriageway. Cross with great care and go up the footpath through the wood on the other side, to a road.

Continue up the enclosed path slightly to your right, cross another road, and go up another enclosed path to another road.

Cross the road and continue ahead along Orchehill Avenue to a path on the left just beyond Orchehill Court.

Go along the path to a road, turn right and follow the road to the main shopping street in Gerrards Cross. Turn right and right again for the station.

Note B: Route to Gerrards Cross Station

By turning left here, you can reach Gerrards Cross station in a little over a mile (2 km). After 600 yards, bear half right up the hill. At the top, follow the road to the left, past Austenwood Lane, then bear half right along Oval Way (notice the curious side wall of All Saints' church on your right), then continue ahead along Orchihill Rise. Follow this as it bears left, and at the end take the path diagonally right for the station, or straight ahead for shops.

Note C: Detour past the Mayflower Barn to the Meeting House

Go left along the footpath alongside the road (it may be overgrown, but it avoids the busy road) for 100 yards, and where the footpath turns left, continue ahead on the road verge.

The large red house on the left was until recently Old Jordans Guest House and Conference Centre and was originally Jordans Farm. The farm was acquired in 1639 by William Russell, one of the early Quakers, and served from 1659 as a meeting place of local Quakers. George Fox, who founded the movement, and William Penn worshipped there regularly. Meetings were frequently broken up by the authorities, and worshippers imprisoned. The building was bought by local Friends Meetings in 1911 and developed as a centre for peace and relaxation open to all. The house now appears to be in private ownership.

The wooden building end on to the road is the Mayflower Barn, so called because it is said to have been built from the timbers of the Mayflower, in which the Pilgrim Fathers sailed.

An eminent antiquarian, Rendel Harris, published a book in 1920 setting out the evidence. Most of this is circumstantial, but it does at the very least add up to a string of quite remarkable coincidences. It certainly was common for redundant sailing vessels to be brought up the Thames and broken up for building, and it is said that if you stand in the barn and look between your legs at the roof, it looks very much like the hold of a wooden sailing ship! Unfortunately there appears no longer to be public access to the barn.

To visit the burial ground and meeting house, continue down the road, take the new path beside it for a short distance then turn left to enter by a gate on the right.

In the burial ground, the graves of William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, his wives Gulielma and Hannah, and ten of their 16 children are near the meeting house.

The simple meeting house, probably the most famous in the country, was built in 1688, the year that the Declaration of Indulgence gave freedom of religion. It was badly damaged by fire in March 2005; but has now reopened. Visitors are welcome from April to November (and by appointment at other times).

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

Retrace your steps, past the former Guest House to Seer Green Lane.

Alan Sheppard