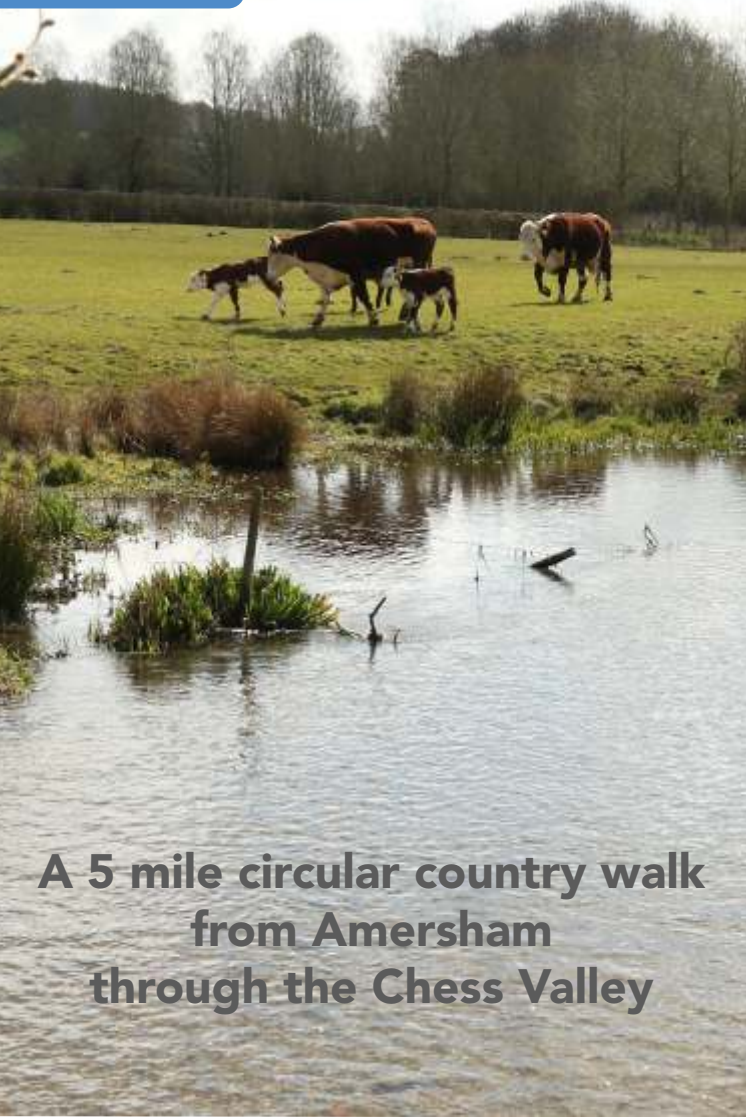


Chess Valley Walk

LOCAL
STORIES
AT
THE
AMERSHAM
MUSEUM

WALK 2



A 5 mile circular country walk from Amersham through the Chess Valley

Points of interest

The River Chess rises just north of Chesham and runs 11 miles to join the River Colne at Rickmansworth. The Chess valley has a long history of human habitation.

A There were water mills along the length of the river; for example, from mediaeval times Blackwell Hall had its own corn mill, demolished around 1860. Latimer Park Farm **C** occupies just one of a number of Roman villa sites and further along, towards Sarratt, terraces along the hillside are thought to have been the site of medieval vineyards. There are other signs of settlements along the Chess Valley; just a little further along the valley, between Latimer and Chenies, the original village of Flaunden was located on the banks of the Chess and it wasn't until the 18th century that the village expanded further up the hill. The old village has now disappeared apart from some flint rubble walling, hidden in the midst of a copse, which are ruins of the old 13th century church of St Mary Magdalen. It was abandoned in 1838 when a new church was built at the top of the hill. The chalk-filtered water of the Chess is ideal for growing watercress and this industry flourished along the length of the Chess during Victorian times. With the arrival of the Metropolitan Railway in the 1890s, the Chilterns watercress farms could supply the London hotel trade. The industry declined and the only remaining working watercress farm is further towards Rickmansworth, at Sarratt.



Looking back across the valley of Latimer and Latimer Park Farm

B The first mention of there being a manor at Latimer was in 1194. In 1331 it was given to William Latimer by King Edward III and it remained in the ownership of the Latimer family until the mid 16th century. During the early 17th century the manor was bought by William, Lord Cavendish of Hardwick, later Earl of Devonshire. In 1647 King Charles I was



Ornamental lake

Amersham Museum Walks

This guide is one of several self-led walks created by Amersham Museum in 2021. Go to www.amershammuseum.org to find more.

The museum offers a programme of themed, guided walks. Topics include Tudor Amersham, the early development and later expansion of old Amersham, Arts & Crafts architecture, Modernism and drovers routes. Go to <https://amershammuseum.org/events/guided-walks/> for details of dates and how to book.

Amersham Museum

Amersham Museum is an award-winning accredited museum, sharing the stories of local people and places. The museum is housed in part of a Grade II listed medieval hall house in the heart of Amersham, a historic market town. The museum has a beautiful physic garden, next to the River Misbourne.

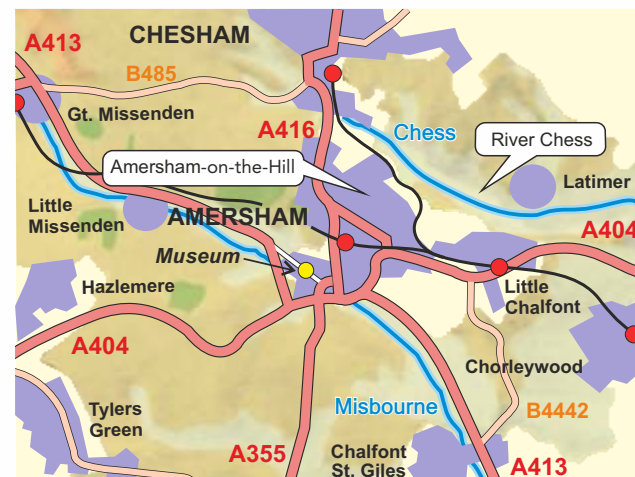


The museum runs a wide range of activities for people of all ages, including reminiscence groups, singing, art and literature workshops and an accredited art club for children. It is brilliantly supported by a team of 125 volunteers and a Friends group.

www.amershammuseum.org

Chess Valley Walk

This 5 mile walk starts and finishes in Amersham-on-the-Hill.



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

Buses: Go to traveline.info

Maps:

Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 172 and Chiltern Society Maps 6 and 17.



The River Chess

Photographs in this leaflet were mainly provided by Linda Gould

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imprisoned, en route to Hampton Court, in the Elizabethan house which was here until it was gutted by fire in the early 1830s. The replacement, red-brick Tudor style mansion, was built in 1838 for the 1st Baron Chesham.

The ornamental lakes now beside Latimer Park Farm (below the manor house, on the banks of the Chess) were created when the manor grounds were landscaped, possibly by Capability Brown. The property descended through the Cavendish family until the 4th Baron died in 1952. Soon after, having been used during WWII as one of the centres of highly top secret activities run by MI5 and MI6, the house became the home of the British military's National Defence College.

In 1974 an IRA bomb caused damage, and when the College moved out in the 1980s the house was renovated and is now run as a hotel and conference centre.

D Raans is the earliest named manor in Amersham, the name seeming to come from John de Ran Orran who was mentioned as having land in Amersham in 1235. Edmund Brudenell, King Richard II's lawyer, lived here in the 1300s and over the centuries the manor has been home to many other powerful occupants. The Grade II listed timber framed farm house was built in 1540 but now much of Raans Farm has been developed, most of the modern dwellings having been created from former farm outbuildings.



Raans farmhouse

Chess Valley Walk

A 5 mile circular country walk from Amersham through the Chess Valley

Start: The junction of New Road with Chestnut Lane, Amersham-on-the-Hill (HP6 6EL). Standing with the length of New Road behind you, set off along the footpath ahead of you, crossing Stubbs End Close and reaching the end of another road (Stubbs Wood).

1 Do not turn into this road but go ahead through a kissing gate and take the footpath downhill. Follow this path turning right to pass under the railway line. Once through the gate at the end of the railway tunnel, the path continues through another kissing gate, through gates across the drive of Ivy House Farm, then emerges on the Latimer Road.

2 Cross over (can be busy) and continue along Blackwell Hall Lane opposite. The road crosses the River Chess and passes Blackwell Hall on the left.

3 Round a bend, take the right hand turning opposite Blackwell Farm Cottages where footpath signs direct you to the Chess Valley walk. Follow the track past the farm, continuing straight ahead into open fields. Cross several fields, keeping the hedge on your right, until you reach woodland.



View of Chess Valley from near the start of the walk



Latimer House



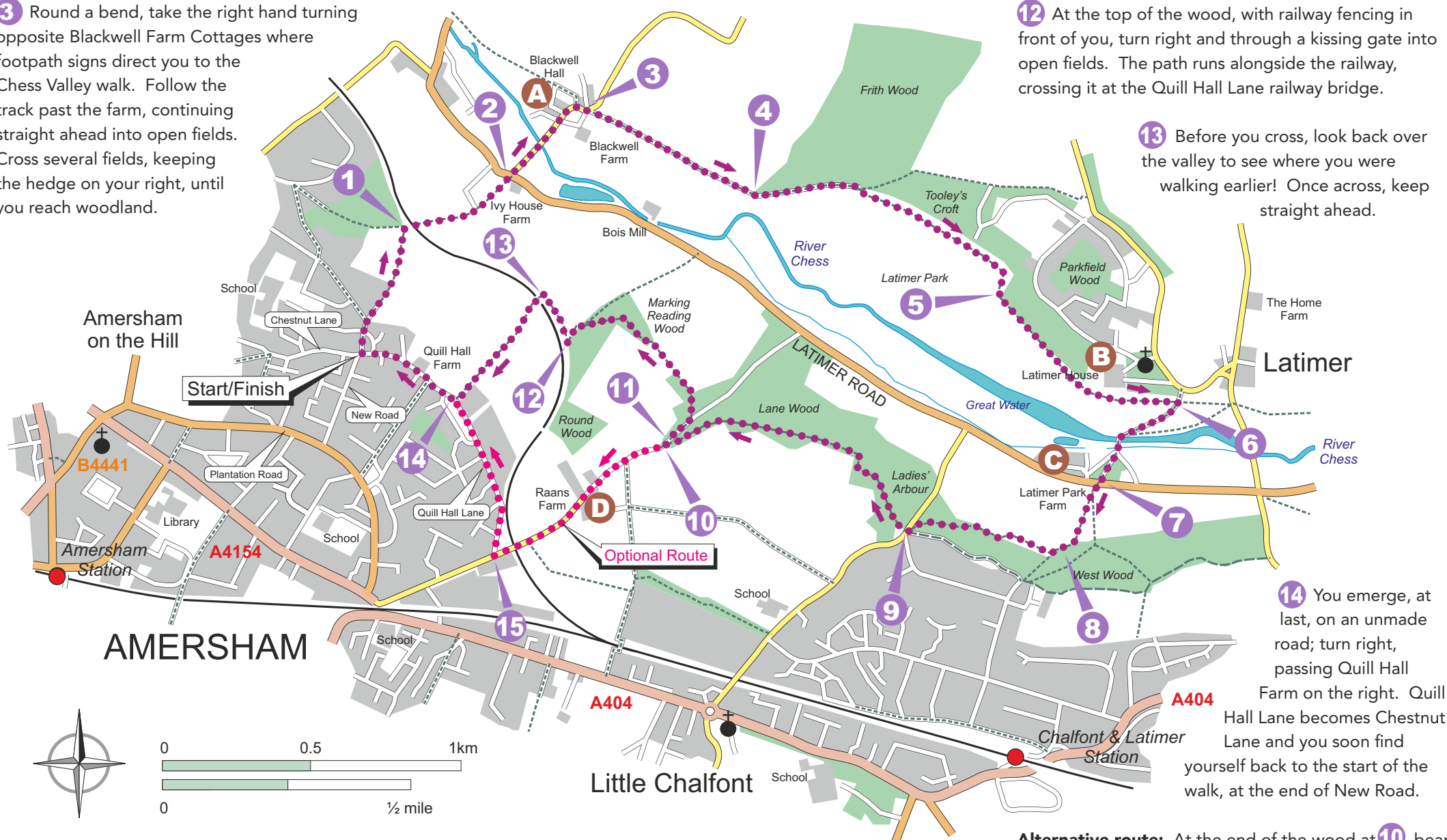
View from hill near Frith Wood

6 Leave the Chess Valley walk here, turning right onto the drive and walking downhill to cross the Chess where it drops over a weir at the end of the ornamental lake and then meanders onwards along the valley. Continue ahead through a kissing gate and across a paddock to reach the Latimer Road once more.

11 Soon, after less than 100m, bear left slightly uphill and then follow the edge of woods, with fields on your right. After a short stretch in open farmland, the path leads back into woodland (Market Reading Wood). Again, follow the main track winding through the wood.

12 At the top of the wood, with railway fencing in front of you, turn right and through a kissing gate into open fields. The path runs alongside the railway, crossing it at the Quill Hall Lane railway bridge.

13 Before you cross, look back over the valley to see where you were walking earlier! Once across, keep straight ahead.



4 Enter the wood (Frith Wood), keeping to its right hand edge. The public right of way continues straight ahead along a narrow path at the edge of the wood, but soon, at a small stile, walkers often cross and walk along the edge of the field now with the woodland on the left.



Frith Wood

5 Continue round the curve of the field, and when you reach the far corner of the wood keep left, still following the Chess Valley walk sign. Continue, with the woodland to your left. The path gently descends, with views down to the River Chess and Latimer Park Farm below you. Pass Latimer House on your left and reach a tarmac drive.

7 Cross the road and, ignoring the path directly ahead, take the lesser path which bears diagonally right up towards woodland (West Wood).

8 Enter the woods, staying at the lower edge with fields visible to your right. After a while this path slopes up to a wider track. Turn right and continue along this track until you reach a road (Bell Lane).

9 Cross, walk ahead, and follow the waymark sign on the right, opposite Forest Cottages, which takes you back into woodland (Lane Wood), where you stay on the main track.

10 At the end of the wood (the last stretch of the walk can become very muddy after much rain – possible alternative route from here, see below) turn sharp right onto the bridleway which leads downhill.

14 You emerge, at last, on an unmade road; turn right, passing Quill Hall Farm on the right. Quill Hall Lane becomes Chestnut Lane and you soon find yourself back to the start of the walk, at the end of New Road.

Alternative route: At the end of the wood at **10** bear LEFT onto the bridleway, walking between fields before joining a road which passes through housing at Raans Farm; continue along this road, over cattle grids. Soon after crossing the railway turn right, by a builders' yard, into Quill Hall Lane. Now continue in this direction ignoring any turnings. Walk along an unmade road then, back on tarmac, pass Quill Hall Farm on the right. Quill Hall Lane becomes Chestnut Lane and you soon find yourself back to the start of the walk, at the end of New Road.

We hope that you have enjoyed the walk. Please get in touch with any feedback or for further information: info@amershammuseum.org

Points of interest (details on reverse side)

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| A Blackwell Hall | B Latimer House |
| C Latimer Park Farm | D Raans Farm |