

2019 Early Summer Walk

Aldenham, the River Colne and Letchmore Heath

This year our walks will explore more of Hertfordshire's beautiful countryside and diverse landscapes. The 2019 Early Summer Walk is a figure of eight route of just over 5½ miles, starting in Aldenham, which explores surprisingly peaceful countryside in Hertsmeare District in the south of the county. Sandwiched between the M1 and Watford to the west and Radlett to the east, this area within 15 miles of central London has remained undeveloped thanks to the Green Belt. Aldenham remains a tiny village with its historic church and a number of old buildings. The civil parish of Aldenham includes Radlett (see map below).



The walk heads initially north west to reach the banks of the River Colne, then turns to pick up the route of the Hertfordshire Way for a while, heading south east. It goes past Wall Hall and to the north of Aldenham, then visits Round Bush with its pub, Battlers Green, and Letchmore Heath with another pub. The figure of eight is completed via Round Bush again and the churchyard in Aldenham. There are several options for short cuts, and one stile just beyond Battlers Green, which can be avoided by walking a short stretch of road. The route is mostly flat.

Park on the roadside in the centre of Aldenham: there is a small parking area outside the churchyard. The village is located on Church Lane, a loop off the B462 between Watford and Radlett, just to the east of junction 5 of the M1.



To begin the walk, head along the village street with the church on your right (see photo left).

Almost immediately turn left into Wall Hall Drive, which is also Public Bridleway 77 (see photo right).



Go straight ahead where the drive bends to the right, staying on Public Bridleway 77 (see photo left), with a golf course on the left. After about ¼ mile turn left onto a public footpath (see photo right). You are now crossing the golf course, so look out when going near tees and greens.



Keep straight ahead on the path. At the end go around a metal gate to reach a tarmac road (see photo left). Turn left and walk along the road (see photo right). Turn right onto the public bridleway just past Otterspool Lodge, a gothic-style cottage.





The River Colne is now close to the path on the left, with a view across adjoining reedbeds. Follow the bridleway for a short distance then turn left over the river on the footbridge (see photo left).



Beyond the kissing gate turn right onto the footpath through the meadows by the river (see photo right).

The River Colne is one of Hertfordshire's principal rivers. Its main source is in North Mymms Park south of Hatfield and many places along its course include 'Colney' in their names. There are other headwaters rising in Hatfield and near Barnet, Elstree, Borehamwood and Stanmore. Its first tributary, the Ver, meets the Colne near Bricket Wood. Flowing on through Watford, where it sometimes caused flooding, the Colne is joined by the Gade and the Chess before leaving the county south of Rickmansworth. It meets the Thames at Staines.



You might want to linger for a while here to enjoy the views of the river and its wildlife.



Where the river bears away to the right (see photo left) cross over the large pipe and follow the path to go over a concrete footbridge (see photo right).



Bear right beyond the footbridge to follow the path through a narrow field with a copse to the left. Go through the gate (see photo right) and continue past tall pine, ash and beech trees.



Go through the gate (see photo left) and turn right to follow the tarmac road, as it climbs a slight hill. Go through the next gate (see photo right) and immediately beyond turn right by the signpost to Aldenham.





The path runs downhill to another footbridge across the river (see photo left) from where there is a view looking downstream (see photo right). You are now on the route of the Hertfordshire Way marked by roundels with white arrows on a green background.



Bear slightly left across the field beyond (see photo right). Ahead is an ancient 'river cliff' now covered with trees. This feature was probably carved out when the river carried much more water than today. Cross the channel by the footbridge or simply follow the track to the right if the channel is dry. Go straight ahead along the track up a slight hill to pass a pair of metal gates. Keep going straight ahead onto Wall Hall Drive.



The mansion of Wall Hall will shortly come into view to the left (see photo right). The original house on this spot was enlarged and later given 'gothick' embellishments in the early 19th century by George Woodford Thelluson, who renamed the house Aldenham Abbey. Later owned by the County Council, it was the home of the US Ambassador Joseph Kennedy during the Second World War, then became a teacher training college and later part of the University of Hertfordshire. The mansion and its immediate surroundings are now private homes.



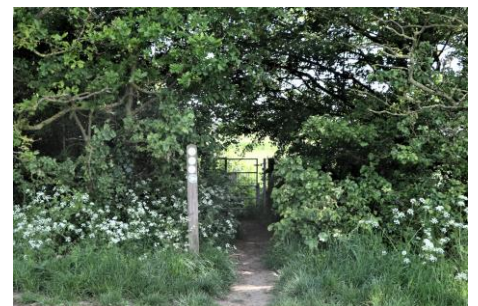
Turn right in front of the black barn resting on straddle stones (see photo left), keeping on Wall Hall Drive which is also the route of the Hertfordshire Way. The tower of Aldenham church will come into view. About 200 yards beyond the last house turn left onto the public footpath (and



Hertfordshire Way) by the signpost (see photo right). **If you wish to return straight to Aldenham from here**, keep going along Wall Hall Drive, which eventually bears left to reach the village.



To continue the walk, go straight across the field towards the pylon (see photo left), go through the gap in the hedge and the kissing gate (see photo right), then bear right along the footpath with a fence to the left.



Edge Grove School is to your left. At the far side of the field, go through the kissing gate, cross the track and go through the gap in the fence. Bear diagonally left to head for the lodge at the end of the school drive (see photo right), bearing in mind that this is a playing field and you may need to divert around sports pitches or the cricket square.



You have now reached Round Bush. At the road (the B462) turn left to walk along the pavement and ideally cross this busy road at the traffic island just before the bus stop. Turn left along the road fronted by houses (The Spinney - see photo right) towards the pylon ahead.



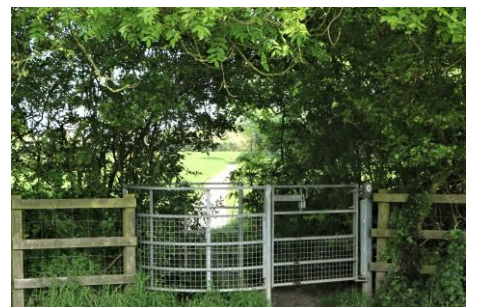
If you want to visit The Round Bush pub, instead go straight ahead along Roundbush Lane.

To return directly to Aldenham from here, recross the road and turn left along the pavement. At the junction with Church Lane, go straight ahead across the junction and along Public Footpath 15a which returns you to the village via the churchyard.

To continue the walk, at the far end of The Spinney by the pylon ahead take the left hand path, Public Footpath 17 signposted to Watling Street 1½ and Battlers Green ½. Note that the entrance is by the field gate and not by the log (see photo right). Go under the wires and through a small copse.



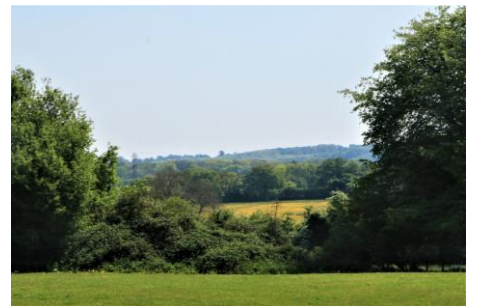
Go through the kissing gate at the far side of the copse and straight ahead across the next field (see photo left). Go through the next kissing gate (see photo right) then keep to the left of the fence heading for the group of trees ahead.



Then head for the gap in the hedge ahead, keeping to the left of the large oak tree in the middle of the field (see photo right). Go through the kissing gate and cross the next field, keeping to the left of the farm buildings, to a bridle gate. Go through the gate to the road and turn right to walk along the grass verge. Pass the entrance to Battlers Green Farm, with its retail outlets and tea rooms. There is an attractive house on the opposite side of the road: behind the early 18th century street frontage is a Tudor house.



Walk for about 75 yards along the road, then turn left onto Public Footpath 7 signposted Aldenham Road ½. Go across the field, keeping to the right of the fence (see photo left). There is a good view from here of countryside to the east (see photo right).



If you cannot manage stiles, don't take the footpath but keep straight on along the road into Letchmore Heath.



Go through the next kissing gate (see photo left) then head for the stile ahead (see photo right). Cross the stile then stand with your back to it and take the second turning on the right, which is the driveway to Fruit Farm Lodge.



Pass a new house on the left. Straight ahead the path runs to the left of a gate towards a white building (see photo left). Go through the pair of gates (see photo right). You are now on the clockwise Hertfordshire Way, indicated by roundels with a green arrow on a white background.



Go past the house on the right and straight on past a black metal gate, continuing along the drive to reach the road. Turn left to follow the road into Letchmore Heath.



To explore the village turn left into Back Lane and walk into the centre by the green, where there is a pond and The Three Horseshoes pub, as well as a war memorial (see photo left) and some attractive cottages (see photo right).



A number of houses in Letchmore Heath have plaques like this one (see photo right) commemorating former residents who left the village in the First World War and never returned. These memorials are possibly unique.



When you are ready to head back to Aldenham, walk along The Green, with the pub on the right, then continue along Grange Lane.



Just beyond the last of the buildings on the right near the edge of the village, turn right on the public footpath towards Round Bush (see photo left). Crossing the field the outskirts of Round Bush come into view (see photo right).



Go past the gate, then turn right and immediately left to retrace your steps in front of the houses along The Spinney. Alternatively, if you want to visit The Round Bush pub, turn left into Primrose Lane, then right into Roundbush Lane to reach the pub by a route with less traffic noise.



To return to Aldenham, cross the busy B462 road with care, turn left on the far side and walk along the pavement, crossing the end of the drive to Edge Grove School, to reach Church Lane.



Go straight across the lane to the gap in the hedge opposite, and

take Public Footpath 15a (see photo left) to return to Aldenham via the churchyard (see photo right).

The church of St John the Baptist dates from the 13th century, although there is a Norman window (perhaps moved from its original position). There were substantial changes to the structure and layout of the church in later centuries. No less than three 19th century restorations were followed by repairs to wartime damage completed in 1951.



Inside, the Crowmer Monument (see photo left) dates from about 1400 and some information about it is displayed (see photo right).



Another monument (see photo right) depicts Sir John Coghill and his wife who both died in 1714. The figures look very lifelike and seem to be talking to each other, quite unlike the stiff recumbent forms often found in church monuments.



This massive chest is hollowed out and carved from a single oak trunk. It is ten feet long with 17 hinges on two separate lids. Thought to be 14th century, it is perhaps one of the oldest chests in England.



There are pieces of Hertfordshire puddingstone set into the exterior walls of the church. This stone is found almost exclusively in the county and was thought to protect against evil and witchcraft.



The little spire on top of the 13th century tower is known as a 'Hertfordshire Spike', an ecclesiastical feature also largely confined to the county and common on local churches. Here it is roofed in wooden shingles. A German bomb destroyed the tower in 1940, although the bells were undamaged.



Buried in the churchyard is Thomas Carlyle Parkinson, born in Australia in 1884, who died in 1909 from the plague, while working on a cure for this disease in the nearby Lister Institute. There had been recent outbreaks of the disease, including one in India in 1903 which killed half a million people. Scientists from around the globe worked on this deadly disease at the Lister.

If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and celebrate the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone to enjoy. Our website www.cpreherts.org.uk contains more information about our work and how you can donate and perhaps volunteer.

This route was last walked by CPRE in May 2019.

Note: all walkers do so at their own risk. Suitable footwear and clothing are recommended.

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel: 01438 717587.

We are the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.