

(Old English: Gadedenu, valley of the Gade)



This is a circular walk of approximately seven miles passing three of the best houses of their type in the County.

The walk starts and finishes at Great Gaddesden Parish Hall on Dagnall Road. The Parish Hall car park is frequently locked, but there is a lay-by opposite the adjoining cottages.

Take the footpath to the left of the Parish Hall, running up the side of the cottages, signposted Gaddesden Row.



The path doglegs to the left. Just before it turns right again take the diagonal path across the field to the woods beyond. Go through the kissing gate into the wood and take the path to your right until you come to a second kissing gate.



Beyond that go straight on with the wood on your left until you come to a field gate leading into the field beyond. Go straight ahead, up the right hand side of the field.

Eventually you will pass the front of The Hoo. The Hoo dates from 1683. In the twentieth century it was a maternity hospital. A total of 1,270 babies were born at The Hoo. The Hoo stands in exceptional Capability Brown parkland with mature trees and lush grazing and you are walking through it.



Carry on past The Hoo to the way marked gate in front of you then across the field to the gap in the hedge on the opposite side. Turn right and follow the path across the next field to a kissing gate. Keeping the trees on your left, follow the path diagonally across the field to the next gate. Beyond the gate follow the same line until you come to allotments. These open out on to Gaddesden Row.



Turn left and go along Gaddesden Row to Jockeys End until you are opposite the childrens' playground. Carefully cross the road and take Public Footpath 9 to Dene Lane, which runs up between the playground and the houses.



When the houses end follow the path down until it reaches the woods beyond (Dene Wood). Go into the wood (taking care going down the small embankment) and turn right on the broad path which follows the edge of the wood. Carry on along this path until it meets a lane.

You will see a post with a number of signs on it. Take Public Footpath 47 for Beechwood Farm, through the kissing gate on your left. Go across the field, up the hill, aiming for the row of poplars in front of you. Just before the poplars a narrow but well defined path goes off to the right. Take it. It leads down hill again to a gate giving on to the drive to Beechwood Park School.



(At the time I walked this route in June the gate was tied shut with rope and I had to climb over. Alternatively, back at the signpost, walk down the lane to your left until you get to the end of the school drive.)

The end of the school drive opens on to a relatively busy road called Puddephat's Lane. Turn right and follow the lane up the hill past the first stand of woodland to your right. Take care while walking along the lane as there are a number of blind bends. Where it begins to turn to the left there are two woods on your right and one on your left. Go down between the two on the right. This path is signed Chiltern Way.



The path here is virtually non-existent and difficult to see. Aim for the end of the wood on your left following the path along the field margin. It will come to a cross path with purple way-mark arrows. Go to the left and then carry on to Gaddesden Row JMI School.



Cross over the road and rejoin Chiltern Way on the other side. Carry on to the farm you see in front of you (Lane House). Turn left down the field edge just before you get to the farm. At the end of the field turn right. Before you is the sixteenth century, wonderfully named Golden Parsonage.

Golden Parsonage dates from 1520. The facade you see before you was built in 1705. It has appeared in many film and television productions.



Do not take the path to Golden Parsonage but the one to the right leading to the gate at the field edge.

Beyond the gate carry on until you reach the drive to Golden Parsonage. Go down the drive in front of you Continue to the right until you reach the edge of the wood just before Home Farm. To your right is a path through the wood which allows you to bypass the farm. Cross the farm drive and as you emerge from the wood there is a power line.

Follow it across the parkland until you go down the hill. At the bottom, do not go through the gate in front of you, but carry straight on up the hill in front and around the rear of James Wyatt's Gaddesden Place, one of the finest buildings in Hertfordshire.



It was built in 1768 for the Halsey family. This was Wyatt's first country house. By delightful co-incidence, his last was Ashridge, on the other side of the valley.

Once past the magnificent front of the house carry on across the parkland and successive fields, all with way marked gates, aiming for the left hand side of the cream coloured cottage at Water End and the A4146. Carefully cross the very busy A4146 and turn right. Then take the very narrow footpath to the left which will lead between cottages 9 & 10 to a kissing gate opening on the Gade water meadows.

Stick to the public footpaths. The water meadows have been closed to public access and surrounded by barbed-wire fences.

Cross the River Gade by the footbridge. Turn right and follow the footpath until you are walking along the upper boundary of the meadow. Do NOT recross the river. At the end of the meadows you will come out on to a road called Piper's Hill.



Cross Piper's Hill and go up the road opposite called Church Meadow. You will pass St. John's church and Great Gaddesden school on your left. Where the road bends to the left there is a kissing gate on your right, in the children's playground. Go through this and follow the path to the bridge over the Gade and then down to Dagnall Road. Cross over to the Parish Hall and the end of the walk.

This route last walked by CPRE in June 2016

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

CPRE Hertfordshire is a registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel 01438 717587. For more information on our work visit www.cpreherts.org.uk. We are the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.