



The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

CPRE Hertfordshire Walks Kings Langley and Chipperfield

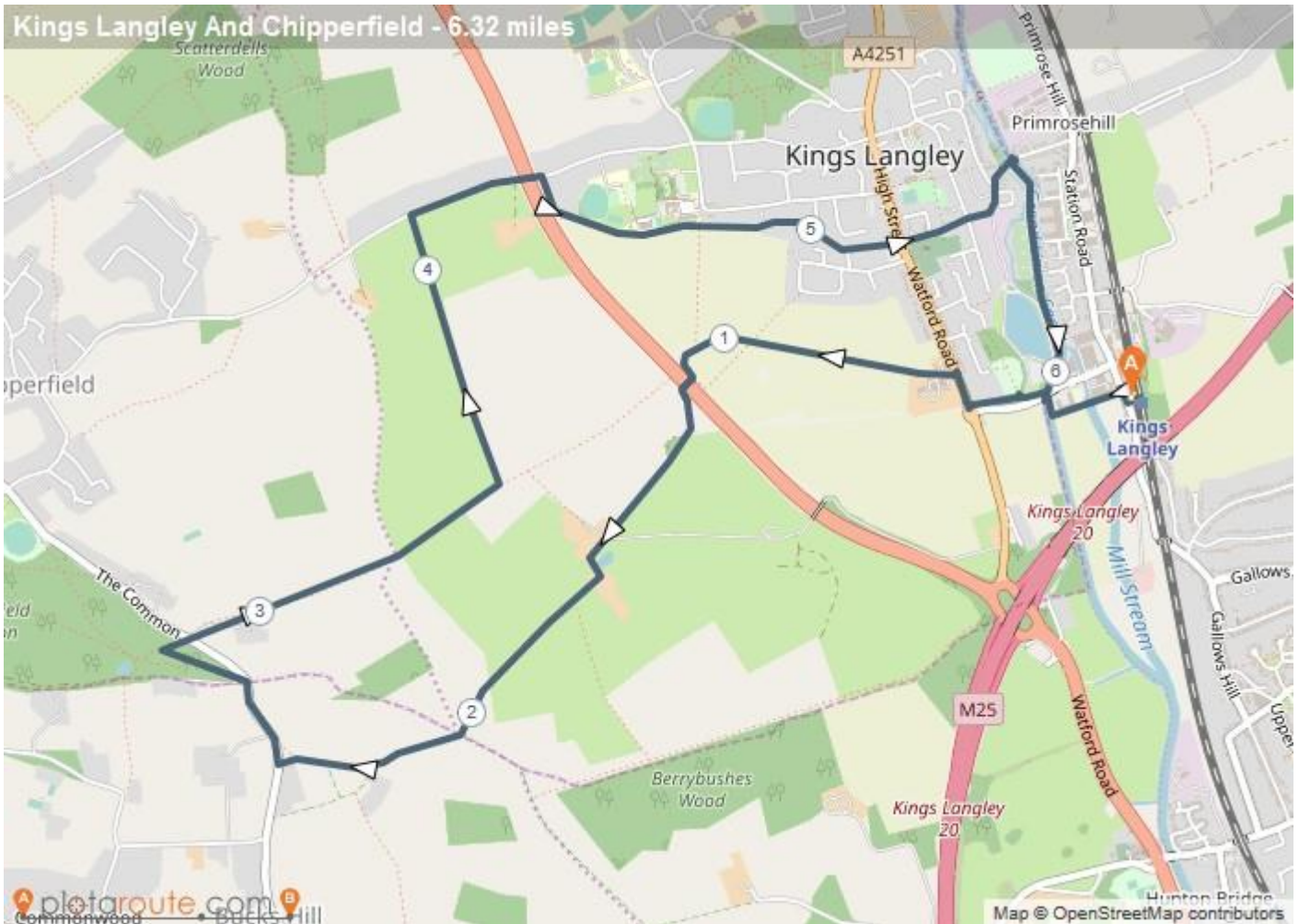
This walk of a little over 6 miles starts and finishes at Kings Langley railway station, which lies just outside the M25 and is the next station after Watford on the line from London Euston. Half a mile from the start of the walk you reach open countryside. The walk climbs up the western side of the river Gade valley to reach Chipperfield Common. The return route to Kings Langley goes near to the site of a former royal palace which gave the village its name. The final section of the walk passes through the churchyard of All Saints Church then runs along the towpath of the Grand Union canal.



The King's England volume for Hertfordshire, edited by Arthur Mee and published just before the Second World War, describes the countryside around Chipperfield as 'a wide and lovely stretch of Hertfordshire' and 'one of the best bits of country within easy reach of London'. The photo above, typical of some of the views encountered on this walk, looks down a peaceful valley from near Bucks Hill: a similar scene might have been encountered here back in the 1930s.

In Chipperfield and Kings Langley there are various options for refreshments. There are no stiles on the route. Parts of the route may be muddy, especially in the winter months.

If travelling to the area by car, it is recommended that you park in the car park on the edge of Chipperfield Common rather than in Kings Langley, where parking opportunities are limited. Directions for joining the route described from the car park are included at the end of the route description. The car park is at grid reference TL045015. Use the postcode WD4 9BL. Note that this adds about a mile to the route.



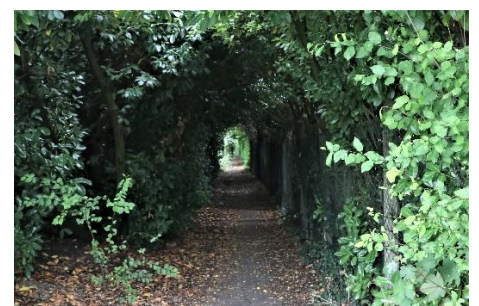
North is at the top of the map

Note that sections of this walk run along the route of the Hertfordshire (Herts) Way, which is clearly waymarked using roundels and fingerposts. There are two different designs of roundel: those showing a white arrow on a green background mark the anticlockwise route, while green arrows on a white background show the clockwise route:

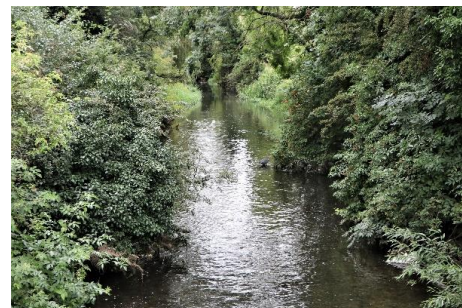


To begin the walk:

Leave Kings Langley station building by the main exit onto the road and turn right. Go along the road and almost immediately cross the road and go down Public Footpath 68 signposted to Kings Langley Village Centre. This runs along a path below an archway of vegetation (see photo 1).



In a short distance you will cross the river Gade (see photo 2). This fast-flowing stream, which derives its headwaters from the underlying chalk aquifer, powered the early industry in the valley, including paper-making which was developed into a major enterprise by John Dickinson.



Continue on this footpath and cross the bridge over the canal to reach the road. Cross over, go slightly left onto the short stretch of road opposite, then turn left onto Station Footpath. 2

Follow this narrow road up the slight hill to the road (the A4251/Watford Road). Turn right and in approximately 100 yards cross the road and take Public Footpath 8 signposted 'Chipperfield Common 1 3/4'. You pass through Wayside Farm, which houses one of the county's last remaining dairy herds. Go through the kissing gate to take the path leading uphill to the right of the barn. You are now on the clockwise Herts Way: there is a roundel on the post by the gate (see photo 3). 3



Follow the footpath uphill, keeping straight ahead. A fine view of the Gade valley will unfold behind you. Here between 1924 and 1929 a factory was built for the Ovaltine company in the Art Deco style: the company had first set up a small factory here in 1913. Beyond the railway an egg farm and a dairy farm were established for the company between 1929 and 1932 as model farms, both built in a half-timbered style. The company left Kings Langley in 2002 and its buildings have been converted to residential and office use. Near one of these farms there's a large wind turbine (see photo 4). 4



Go straight ahead on the footpath: it eventually bends to the left to cross the footbridge over the bypass (A41). At the far side of the bridge do not stay on the Herts Way but turn left to go downhill slightly and walk through an area of young woodland planted to commemorate the centenary of Hertfordshire County Council's rural estate in 2008. Where the paths diverge take the right-hand path (see photo 5). At the next fork take the left-hand path (although the other path eventually meets this path again). 5



Go along the path past the woodland with the hedge to the left, then go through the kissing gate to a field (see photo 6). Keep on the path which runs along the edge of the field with the hedge to the left, heading for the small woodland ahead. Go through the kissing gate then through the wood to reach a lane by cottages with a white picket garden fence.



6



Take the lane ahead leaving the cottages and the white picket fence to the right (see photo 7). Beyond a brick-built house on the right the lane turns to the left. Just before the low brick-built shed turn right onto Public Footpath 3 signposted 'Bucks Hill 1'.

7

Beyond the farm buildings you emerge onto an area of pastureland looking towards a small valley (see photo 8). The footpath runs to the right of the fence and hedge (ignore the footpath to the left). This is a peaceful stretch of countryside and you might like to linger here for a while: there may be red kites overhead.



8



The footpath descends into the valley bottom by a group of trees (see photo 9), then passes through a kissing gate and continues up a slope to reach a bridleway (see photo 10).

9

10



You might want to spend a moment enjoying the view from here, then take the bridleway signposted 'Bucks Hill ¼' (see photo 11). Stay on the bridleway until just before you reach a tall garden hedge on the left (see photo 12).

11

12



Turn right onto the footpath which crosses the field (see photo 13), eventually merging with a bridleway coming from the left. Beyond, the route runs between two lines of vegetation (see photo 14) to reach a road.

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14



Just before the road turn right to stay on the bridleway which runs parallel to the right-hand side of the road (see photo 15). Follow the path to reach the edge of Chipperfield Common on the opposite side of the road (see photo 16).

15

16



Much of this hilltop area is over 400 feet above sea level. The soils are poor and until the last century the area was sparsely populated with extensive tracts of woodland and grazed common land. Chipperfield Common covers 117 acres (47.5 hectares), once part of the manor of Langley (later Kings Langley), a royal possession from the Norman conquest until 1630 when Charles I sold the manor to pay his debts. In the 20th century the then Lord of the Manor gave Chipperfield Common to the local authority on condition that it was managed in consultation with local people. The common has become woodland since grazing ceased in the early 20th century.

Take the wide bridleway to the right of the tarmac driveway seen in photo 16, leaving the green notice board you can see in photo 17 to your left. Follow the bridleway for approximately 200 yards.

Turn right along a short stretch of path to the road. You will see a brown wooden gate ahead (see photo 18).



17



If you have followed directions from the Chipperfield Common car park you will meet the route at this point.

18



These footpath signs in photo 19 are on the post by the road. You will now be following the route of the Herts Way (anticlockwise). Take the narrow path to the left of the gate for Top Common (see photo 20).

19

20



Keep going straight ahead on the path, which passes horse paddocks and stables, then runs downhill alongside fields to a kissing gate (see photo 21). Go through the gate and keep straight ahead up the hill ahead, keeping the hedge to the right.

21



Go through the next kissing gate then continue with the hedge to the left (see photo 22). There is a good view back to the wooded ridge of Chipperfield Common from here (see photo 23).

22

23



At the next kissing gate, turn left onto Public Footpath 6 signposted 'Chipperfield Road 1/2' (see photo 24). The route leaves the Herts Way at this point. The path runs initially between hedges, then alongside a field with a hedge to the right.

24



The path eventually goes past a field gate (see photo 25), then descends slightly to reach the road (Chipperfield Road). At the road cross over and turn right to walk along the pavement. In the first half of the 20th Century, as more people owned cars, and electricity was supplied to rural areas for the first time, new housing began to proliferate in the countryside. In the Gade valley rows of housing plots bordering the lanes sprang up with little planning control.

25



The regulation of such uncontrolled growth was a key reason for the formation of CPRE in 1926, as fears grew that large areas of countryside would be engulfed. CPRE's campaigning led to the Restriction of Ribbon Development Act which was finally passed in 1935 and put an end to this type of development: a major victory for the fledgling organisation. The patterns of ribbon development are still very apparent all along this section of the Gade valley, especially near railway stations. This stretch of road is bordered by original ribbon development plots, where many of the homes still display classic design features of the inter-war period.

Immediately after crossing the bypass (A41), take the path to the right signposted 'Public Footpath 9 The Drift and Watford Road ¾' (see photo 26).

This path runs initially alongside garden boundaries, then passes school buildings, then garden boundaries again. Eventually it threads its way between houses to emerge onto Kings Langley High Street. It may be quite overgrown in places.

26



There's a glimpse of the Old Palace pub to the left (accessible by another footpath). At the time of the Domesday Book, the manor of Langley was held by a half-brother of William the Conqueror. The manor was later acquired by Eleanor of Castile, wife of Edward I. After their coronation in 1274 she built a large palace and established a deer park here. Edward II stayed here often with his friend Piers Gaveston and founded a priory nearby. The palace went into decline after a fire in 1431. The site of the former palace is now occupied by the school. Only a small fragment of the palace has survived, together with part of the priory which has been incorporated into the school buildings. A cellar built under the palace was discovered in the 1960s when the school was extended.



From the High Street go straight over the road and into the churchyard opposite. Fragments of a 13th century building remain here but most of the church is 15th century, subsequently altered in the 19th and 20th centuries. Outside, the 'Hertfordshire spike' above the tower is typical of many of the county's churches (see photo 27).

27

Inside the church you can see the tomb of Edmund of Langley (1341-1402), the fifth son of Edward III who was born and died in Kings Langley. He became the first Duke of York and founded the York dynasty. His tomb was moved to this church from the priory church up the hill after the Dissolution. Some say his tomb was intended for Richard II. There is much more of interest in the church including a carved Jacobean pulpit with a tester or cover typical of this period (see photo 28).



28

Resume the walk by walking downhill on Church Lane, which runs alongside the churchyard from its junction with the High Street. At the mini roundabout go right and walk along Water Lane as far as the canal bridge.



Just before the bridge turn right onto the canal towpath, here a pleasant green corridor. Just past the former Lock Keeper's cottage (see photo 29) go under the road bridge, then under the old canal bridge which now carries the footpath to the station (see photo 30).

If you have parked in Chipperfield, turn right off the towpath just BEFORE the road bridge, go ahead onto Station Footpath and follow the directions from alongside photo 3.

29

Note the wear from towing ropes on the iron reinforcements under the canal bridge. Turn right up the steps immediately after the old canal bridge, then right again onto the footpath to retrace your steps to the station.



30

To join the route described from Chipperfield Common car park (see photo 31)



Facing away from the road, take the well-surfaced path leading away from the end of the car park to your left towards the Apostles' Pond. The route is marked 'Fish Pond Path' on the board at the edge of the car park.

31

The well-surfaced path runs through the attractive woodland of Chipperfield Common (see photo 32).



32

You will pass one of Chipperfield Common's eight veteran Spanish (or Sweet) chestnut trees, believed to date from around 1600 (see photo 33).

Nearby are two Bronze Age tumuli - burial mounds which are also thought to mark the boundary of territories of that date in the Gade and Chess valleys.



33

Continue until you reach the Apostles' pond, one of several ponds on the common - they were essential to provide water for grazing livestock (see photo 34). The term Apostles' reflects the fact that 12 lime trees once stood around the pond's perimeter.

Continue past the pond leaving it to the right.



34



Just beyond the pond you reach the signpost in photo 35: you need to join the Herts Way in the anticlockwise direction. Take the narrow path seen in the middle of photo 35 which leads through the woodland (photo 36 is further on).

35



36

Keep going along this path (which may be overgrown in places). Eventually you will reach a crossing over a wide track (a bridleway) and the gate to Top Common shown in photos 18 and 20 will be in sight ahead (see photo 37). From here follow the main route description of this walk starting from photo 18.

To return to the car park at the end of the walk retrace your steps from here or explore other paths on the common if you wish.

Note that management of the common may alter the appearance of the route in some of these photos.

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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 August 2020.

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 local branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.