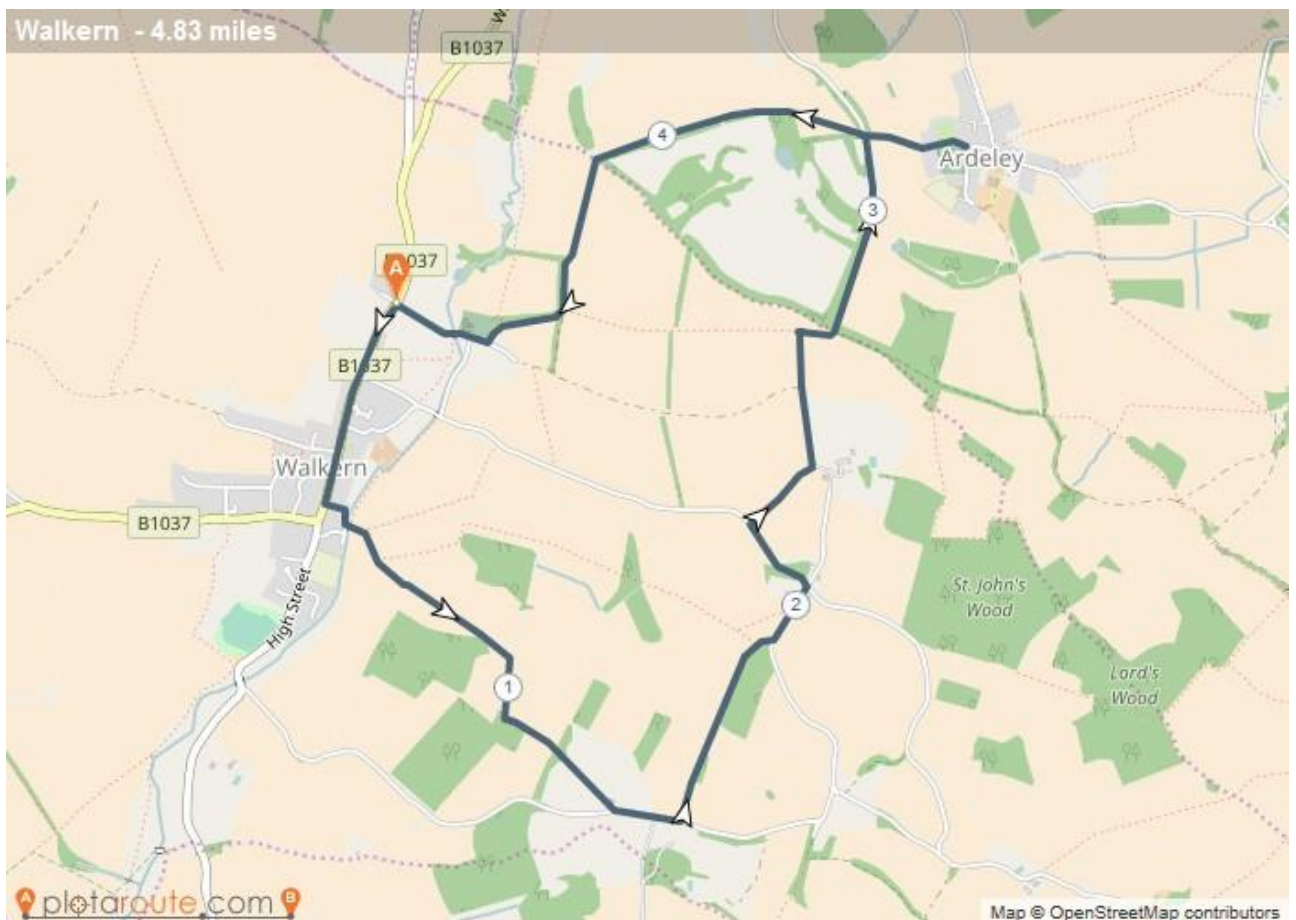


The village of Walkern lies in the River Beane valley approximately 1 mile from the eastern edge of Stevenage, on the B1037. This walk explores quiet countryside to the east of the village, with an optional short diversion to visit Ardeley.

This is a circular walk of just under 5 miles, including the diversion to Ardeley.



Park on the roadside in Walkern village: there should be space on the High Street. The walk is shown on the map as starting at point A. Look for Clarks garage in the High Street just to the north of where the B1037 turns to the west. Take the path to the right of the garage signposted for Benington and Bassus Green (although the sign might be concealed by vegetation). Bear right by the River Beane. The river is very prone to drying up here, so there may be no water.

Recently there has been a substantial reduction in the amount of water abstracted from the aquifer nearby: this should improve river flows. However, in May 2017 the river remained dry due to the exceptionally dry winter and spring.

Cross the river on the bridge then continue on the path ahead, bearing slightly right past an electricity pole. After about 100 metres, cross a ditch, then take the path which runs slightly uphill across the field ahead (see photo right) to reach a gap in the hedge.



Beyond the hedge go straight on. The path heads for the top corner of the wood on your right. After passing this point continue straight ahead to go through the gap in the next hedge.

On the far side of the hedge turn right and follow the bridleway alongside the hedge (see photo right) for about 200 metres. Stay on the path where it turns sharp left, ignoring the metal gate to the right. After a short distance running through a wood the path emerges onto the edge of a field with a hedge and trees to the left.



Pass through the belt of trees ahead to emerge onto a fenced track between pasture fields (see photo right). This runs past a pond on the left to a road. Turn left here.



Immediately ahead is Walkern Hall, built in the early 19th Century. Go past the Walkern Hall Farm buildings on the left then immediately turn left onto the bridleway which runs alongside the farm and industrial buildings. The track runs downhill to a stream, then up the other side with a wood to the right. The track bends to the right to reach a road. Turn left here to reach Bassus Green.

As you approach this tiny hamlet of just a few houses, you will see a thatched barn and a cottage ahead on the left of the road, then a thatched cottage (pictured right) on the right.



At the crossroads in Bassus Green turn left and walk along the road for about 300 metres, enjoying views over Walkern and the Beane Valley. Turn right on to the Public Byway signposted to Walkern Bury Farm.

Just before the entrance to Walkern Bury Farm turn left onto the track (pictured right) which goes downhill then uphill to an area of level ground.



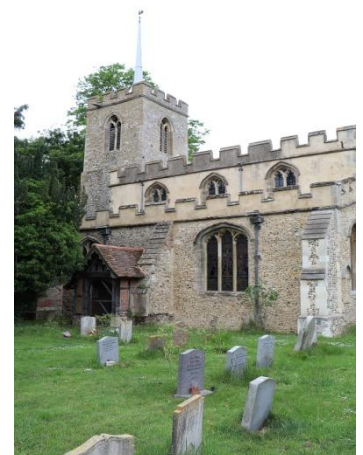
Turn right here to follow the path (see photo right) running past a tall hedge to the right, into a belt of trees.



Ignore the sign to Ardeley pointing to the right and turn left onto a path with a hedge on the left and a wire fence on the right, with views to Church Farm, Ardeley, which is open to the public (see photo right).



Continue along this path to reach the road, opposite a crucifix which is a memorial to Mark Ruddock and his colleagues, killed in September 1918. Here you might like to turn right to walk the short distance into Ardeley village, where the church of St Lawrence, dating from the 13th Century, has a tower topped by a Hertfordshire spike (see photo right).



The village green was created by the Lord of the Manor in 1917 to include thatched cottages (see photo right), a thatched village hall and a well house. Opposite is a pond.



There is a pub in Ardeley and a cafe and shop at Church Farm. Retrace your steps to the roadside crucifix when you are ready to resume the walk.

Immediately opposite the crucifix a path marked as a bridleway runs a short distance between trees to a metal gate, and beyond to a pasture field (see photo right). Once in the open field follow the worn route across the grassland keeping quite close to the left-hand boundary and heading for the point on the far side of the field where taller trees give way to smaller trees along the hedgerow. Go through another metal gate and across the footbridge.



Bear slightly left and go uphill, close to the field edge on the left, passing an old squat oak tree (see photo right).



Keep close to the left of the field passing a gate with no fence, and go through another metal gate (see photo right). Beyond the gate the route begins to go downhill.



At the far end of the next field pass through a narrow tree belt (see photo right) then turn left. You will now be heading almost due south with a field on your right and a hedge on the left, and with views of Walkern and the Beane valley ahead.



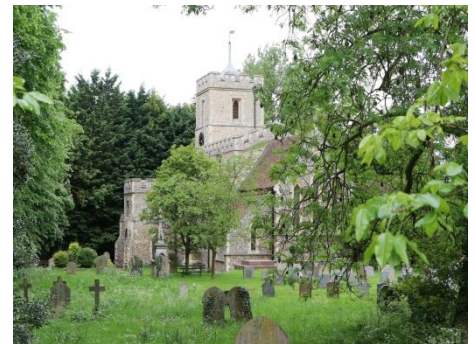
Keep going along this path. Go through the next gap in the hedge ahead and keep going straight ahead. You will now have a belt of trees on your right and a field to the left. Where the path turns left and uphill you will see ahead a path going straight on and another turning to the right (see photo right). Take the turning to the right (to the right of the post) to go through a wooden kissing gate. You will pass through some tall vegetation and emerge onto a pasture field.



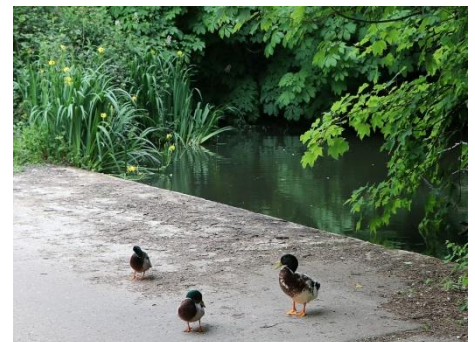
Follow the hedge to the right slightly downhill across the field (see photo right). You will eventually reach the churchyard boundary.



Turn left and head for the gap between the house and the churchyard, enjoying the view of St Mary's Church which has Saxon origins (see photo right).



Go through the gate and down the steps, then turn right down Church End to go past the church and over the ford on the River Beane, which at periods of low flow may be little more than a duck pond (see photo right).



Then keep straight on beyond the ford to reach the High Street.

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. For more information about our work and how you can help, please visit our website at www.cpreherts.org.uk.

This route last walked by CPRE in May 2017.

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

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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.