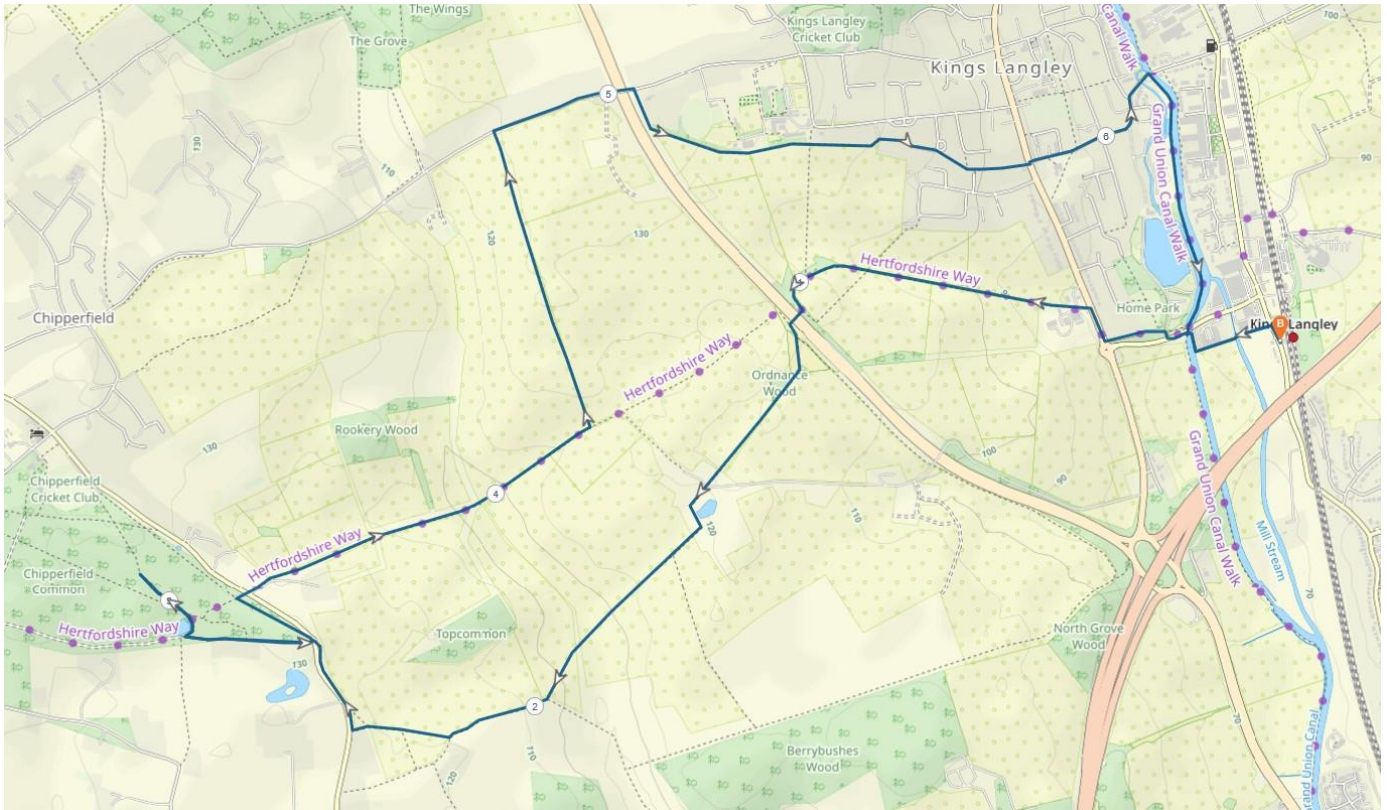




The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Kings Langley and Chipperfield



This c. 7 mile circular walk explores the open countryside on the western side of the Gade Valley as far as Chipperfield Common. You are likely to encounter cattle, sheep and horses as you enjoy far-reaching views over the undulating landscape.

The Kings 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'.

Distance: 6.9 miles / 11.1 km

Ascent: 472 feet / 144 metres

Duration: 3 hours

Difficulty: Easy to moderate - some hills

Start / Finish: Kings Langley railway station

Refreshments: There are several pubs and cafes in Kings Langley and Chipperfield

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.

Soon you will cross the river Gade.



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 and go onto the short stretch of road opposite, then turn left onto Station Footpath.

Follow this narrow road up the slight hill to the A4251/Watford Road. Turn right and after 100 yards cross the road and take Public Footpath 8 signposted 'Chipperfield Common 1¼'. 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 Hertfordshire Way.

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.

Go straight ahead on the footpath: it eventually bends to the left to cross the footbridge over the A41.

At the far side of the bridge turn left to walk through a 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.

At the next fork take the left-hand path.



Follow the path past the woodland with the hedge to the left, then go through the kissing gate to a field.

Keep on the path along the edge of the field with the hedge to the left, heading for the small woodland ahead.



Go through the kissing gate and through the wood to reach a lane by cottages with a white picket fence.

Take the lane straight ahead. Beyond a brick-built house on the right the lane turns to the left.

Just before a low brick-built shed turn right onto Public Footpath 3 signposted 'Bucks Hill 1'.



Beyond the farm buildings you emerge into pastureland looking towards a small valley. The footpath runs to the right of the fence and hedge (ignore the footpath to the left).

The footpath descends into the valley bottom by a group of trees, then passes through a kissing gate and continues up a slope between two fences.



You will soon reach a bridleway. Turn right and follow the bridleway signposted 'Bucks Hill ¼' up the hill.



Stay on the bridleway until just before you reach a tall garden hedge on the left.

At this point, turn right through a kissing gate onto the footpath which crosses the field. At the dip in the land, the footpath jogs left through another kissing gate to merge with a bridleway coming from the left. Beyond, the route runs slightly uphill between two lines of vegetation to reach a road.



Just before the road turn right to stay on the bridleway which runs parallel to the right-hand side of the road. Follow the bridleway until it ends at a curve in the road.

Cross the road at this point to enter Chipperfield Common.



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.

Upon entering the Common, continue straight ahead on the tarmac drive for a quarter-mile to reach Apostles Pond, where there are benches for a picnic lunch.

At your option, walk about 200 yards on the path to the northwest of the pond to see two Bronze Age burial mounds.

Then retrace your steps to return to the same point where you entered the Common.



Back at the entrance to the Common, with the main road just in front of you, take the wide bridleway to the left of the tarmac drive.

Follow the bridleway in a northwesterly direction through the wood for approximately 200 yards.



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



These footpath signs are on the post by the road. You will now be following the route of the Hertfordshire Way (anticlockwise).



Cross the road and take the narrow path to the left of the gate for Top Common.

Keep going straight ahead on the path, which passes horse paddocks and stables, then runs downhill alongside fields to a kissing gate.



Go through the gate and keep straight on up the hill ahead, keeping the hedge to the right.

Go through the next kissing gate then continue with the hedge to the left.



There is a good view back to the wooded ridge of Chipperfield Common from here.

At the next kissing gate, turn left onto Public Footpath 6 signposted 'Chipperfield Road 1/2'. The route leaves the Hertfordshire Way at this point.

The path runs initially between hedges, then alongside a field with a hedge to the right.

The path eventually goes past a field gate, then descends slightly to reach Chipperfield Road. Cross the road 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.

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 bridge over the A41, take the path to the right signposted 'Public Footpath 9 The Drift and Watford Road 3/4'.

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.



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.



Inside All Saints 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.

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 go under the road bridge...



... then under the old canal bridge just beyond.

Turn right up the steps immediately after the old canal bridge, then right again onto the footpath to retrace your steps to the station.



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This route last walked by CPRE in March 2025.

If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and promote the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone. For more information on our work, or to sign up for our newsletter, make a donation, or volunteer with us, please visit www.cpreherts.org.uk

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

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