

Chigwell History

Chigwell was traditionally a farming community, but has now developed into a largely urban area. It dates back to at least medieval times and is mentioned in the doomsday book.

In the 1800s Chigwell was a favourite destination for Charles Dickens. In his novel Barnaby Rudge the Maypole Inn was based on the Kings Head Inn and the name was taken from the Maypole pub in Chigwell Row. Charles Dickens once described Chigwell as:

"the greatest place in the world...Such a delicious old inn opposite the church...such beautiful forest scenery...such an out of the way place!"

From 1933 to 1958 there was an RAF presence based at Roding Valley Meadows. During the Second World War it provided barrage balloon protection and during the Cold War it was involved in Britain's coastal nuclear early warning system. In 1953 it briefly housed the RAF contingent taking part in the Coronation celebrations. Evidence of RAF Chigwell can still be seen today at Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve.

Today Chigwell still attracts the rich and famous from footballers to Lords.



The Intone Stone (photo by Claire Rogers). This stone can be found just to the side of the track leading to the former barrage balloon sites. "Intone" refers to a Coastal Command operation involving the 220 Squadron and The Mobile Signals Unit from RAF Chigwell. Their task was to undertake anti-submarine duties in the Atlantic.

About the Walk



Green Lane

This walk is approximately 3 miles long and will take about 1 ½ hours to complete.

Start on Courtland Drive, IG7 6PN.

The footpaths on the walk are in good condition, but they will become muddy after wet weather, so sturdy footwear is recommended. There is a small amount of road walking involved along main roads, please take care whilst walking along these. Please follow the Country Code. Keep dogs on a lead near livestock, and keep to the footpath when walking across privately owned land.

For any footpath queries please contact Essex County Council on 08457 430 430.

For more information about Countrycare visit:
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Our thanks to John Redfern for his contribution.



Chigwell Country Walk



The Old Kings Head (photo by Rob Irwin)



Points of Interest

1. St Mary's Church

St Mary's Church is of fine Norman origin. It contains a medieval brass commemorating Samuel Harsnett, Vicar of St Mary's from 1597-1605. It is considered to be the best of its kind in the country. Harsnett later became Archbishop of York and founded Chigwell School in 1629. William Penn founder of Pennsylvania State, USA was educated there. Geoge Shillibeer, inventor of the London Omnibus is also remembered in the church. His horse-drawn bus made its first journey carrying passengers from Marylebone Road to the city in 1829.



Photo by Rob Irwin

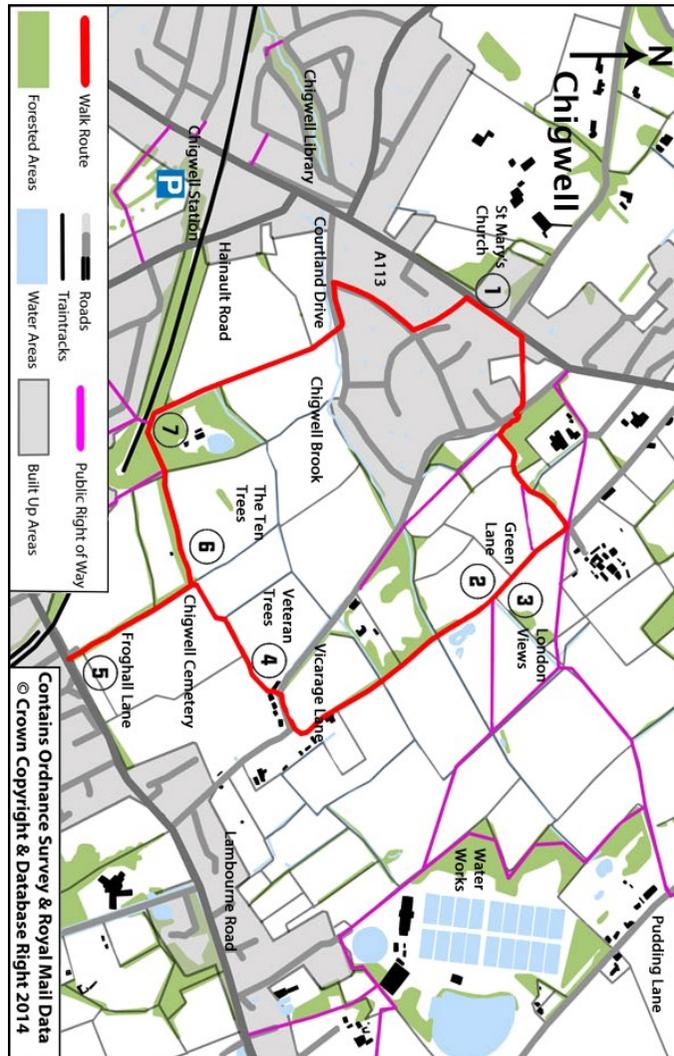
2. Green Lane

The trees on Green Lane were hit badly by Dutch Elm Disease but the hedges and verges are still important habitats for wildlife. A dead or dying tree will support many types of



Stag Beetle

beetles and fungi, while holes and hollows are often lived in by birds and bats. In summer bats can be seen feeding on insects by the Chigwell Brook after dusk. The Pipistrelle is the most common and smallest of Britain's bats. Impressively it can eat up to 3000 insects in one night.



3. London Views

On a clear day views of Claybury Hospital, Canary Wharf and the Post Office Tower are among the landmarks of the London skyline that can be seen from this viewpoint.

4. Veteran Trees

The large oak trees are remnants of the hedgerows which used to mark out the old field boundaries. The large fields created by removing hedges make farming more efficient but at the expense of the landscape and wildlife.



"The Dickens Oak" Vicarage Lane, Chigwell.

5. Froghall Lane

This green lane is lined with blackthorn and hawthorn hedges which can be a colourful sight at the right time of year. In spring the trees are white with blossom and in the autumn they are purple and red with fruit.

6. The Ten Trees

The tall poplars on the knoll are still known as the "Ten Trees" even though only three remain today. The other seven were lost in the storm of 1987.

7. The Loop Line

A hawthorn tunnel leads to the "Loop Line". It was built by the Great Eastern Railway Company in 1900. They also developed an orchard in a local farm, planting 600 fruit trees of 47 different varieties. The farm supplied Liverpool St Station's Great Eastern Hotel with fresh fruit and vegetables. In the days of steam the morning milk train stopped by the footbridge and the produce was transferred from a donkey cart to the London bound train.