

THE OLD CHEQUERS AND GADDESSEN ESTATE, HERTFORDSHIRE



Moderate Terrain

5 miles
Circular
2.5 hours

170417



Access Notes



1. The walk is relatively flat for the most part, with just a few gentle slopes.
2. The chalk paths can get very muddy in winter and after periods of rain.
3. There are no stiles on route. The first mile (to Briden's Camp) has no gates and follows wide chalk tracks, so in dry periods a 2 mile 'there and back' version of the route would be suitable for rugged pushchairs and rugged disability buggies.
4. For the remainder of the route, you will need to negotiate a few kissing gates plus some gaps alongside vehicle gates. You will cross a couple of horse paddocks (although the horses barely noticed us when we walked through) and two sheep pastures, so take particular care with dogs at these points.
5. There is a 300 metre stretch along the edge of a country lane which needs care.

A 5 mile circular pub walk from the Old Chequers in Gaddesden Row, Hertfordshire.

The Old Chequers is an independent, family run pub serving delicious fresh food, where walkers and their canine pals are made very welcome. The walking route explores the stunning surrounding Hertfordshire countryside, discovering the picturesque and historic Gaddesden Estate and a stretch of the Chiltern Way. You will enjoy peaceful tracks leading you between rolling fields and pockets of mixed woodland with expansive views throughout. Along the way, you will see some of the estate's historic buildings including Gaddesden Place and the Golden Parsonage.

Getting there

Gaddesden Row is located in the Chiltern Hills, north of Hemel Hempstead. The walk starts and finishes at the Old Chequers pub which has its own car park.

Approximate post code **HP2 6HH**.

Walk Sections



Start to Big Wood Crossroads



Standing in the front car park with your back to the pub, turn right along the wide grass verge (passing the pub's garden on your right). Continue past Holly Cottage on your right and immediately afterwards, turn right onto the public footpath (signed to Briden's Camp). Follow this short stretch of enclosed track (this can be boggy) which soon emerges to the corner of a crop field. Keep straight ahead with the crop field on your right and a hedgerow on your left.

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Follow this field-edge path, through the dip and up the other side. Continue just until you reach a wide gap in the hedge on your left, with a wide field gate visible through this gap. Dog-leg left (through the hedge gap) and then right to join the grass track with a wire fence on your left. When the wire fence on your left ends, continue ahead on the track following the hedgerow on your right.

Simply keep ahead, ignoring any tracks off to the left and right. Later, this main track begins to swing right, passing the woodland known as Big Wood on your right. This woodland is awash with bluebells and their scent in the late spring. At the end of this unmade track, pass through (or alongside) a gateway to reach a crossroads of tracks (with a fingerpost to your left).

1 → 2 Big Wood Crossroads to Gaddesden Place



Turn right to join the stone access track, with the woodland on your right and beautiful views across the rolling hills on your left. Continue to the end of this access track, passing a row of terraced cottages on your right to reach a T-junction with the road in Briden's Camp.

NOTE: This next 300 metre stretch follows the edge of this country lane, so take care of traffic, particularly on the bends. Turn right along the road edge, with the cricket field across to your left. Follow the road as it bends left and then right, passing the entrance for Gaddesden Place Stables on your left. Continue along the road edge for another 100 metres, to reach the entrance for Home Farm Business Centre on your left. Turn left here onto the driveway, signed as Public Footpath 22 to Gaddesden Row.

Follow the driveway ahead, passing through the gap to the right of the large vehicle gate. 50 metres later, ignore the permissive horse path to the left, instead keep ahead for another 40 metres to reach a pair of field gates on your left. Turn left here, passing through the gap or small gate alongside the field gates, to enter a large grass field. With your back to the field gates, walk at about 1 o'clock (signed as Footpath 21 to Gaddesden Place). Follow this grass track through the field centre, with views of the beautiful Victorian Home Farm across to your right.

At the far side of the field, you will reach a bridle gate ahead. NOTE: You will be sharing the next two fields with horses and there are also electric fences around, so take care with children and dogs. Go through the gate and walk diagonally right (about 1 o'clock) to reach a metal gate at the far side (this was marked with two colourful flags when we walked). Use this gate to enter the second paddock and go ahead through the centre, heading just to the right of the woodland that sits at the side of the manor house, Gaddesden Place. You will come to a metal gate at the far side, with the manor house just to your left. Do NOT exit the paddock, but it is worth pausing here to learn more about the

manor house.



Gaddesden Place to Marsh Wood



Gaddesden Place, today owned by Charles Moir, is used as a private house and also as the headquarters for Moir's firm of software developers. Built in 1768 for the Hasley family, it was the first work of the architect James Wyatt, later responsible for the famous Pantheon in London and buried in Westminster Abbey. The house has been used as a location for many TV dramas, commercials and films including episodes of Lewis, Foyle's War, Hustle, Jeeves and Wooster, Little Britain and Spooks.

Still within the horse paddock, turn right and follow the paddock edge (with a wire fence on your left) down to the bottom corner. Go through the bridle gate ahead to enter the large grass pasture (which may be holding sheep). If you glance to your left here, you will see a village with a stone church nestled in the valley bottom. This is Great Gaddesden, alongside the River Gade, and gives you an idea of the beautiful views that the manor house enjoys.

Walk straight ahead on the grass track, heading gently uphill and passing under the minor power lines. You have now joined the Chiltern Way. As you approach the top of the pasture, with the power lines still on your right, swing right under the power lines (passing a beautiful old fallen tree on your right). Follow the grass track which leads you through a wide wooden gate to enter Marsh Wood.



Marsh Wood to Gaddesden Row



Follow the wide track ahead into the woodland, going ahead at the crossroads and passing the rear of the buildings at Home Farm on your right. At the far side of the wood you will emerge via a gateway to reach a staggered junction with a stone vehicle

track. Go straight ahead to merge onto this stone track and follow it between hedgerows, trees and crop fields. Soon, another of the beautiful historic buildings within Gaddesden Estate comes into view ahead, the red brick Golden Parsonage.

It is worth pausing here, to understand the history of the Gaddesden Estate. The Hasley family were documented as the tenant farmers for this land (then owned by a Priory) back in 1520. In 1544, soon after the dissolution of the monasteries, the Hasley family bought the land from the crown. The family continued to farm the area and built the Golden Parsonage as the family home in the early 1700s. When the family felt that the Golden Parsonage had become outdated, they commissioned and moved into Gaddesden Place in 1768. The Parsonage was converted to a school and stayed that way for 60 years. Gaddesden Place remained the principal mansion house until Sir Thomas Halsey returned to the Golden Parsonage in 1950. Members of the Hasley family still reside in the Golden Parsonage and it is from here that they care for the estate.

Before you reach the Golden Parsonage, you will come to a gateway with a fingerpost on your right. Pass through the gateway and then immediately fork left on the path heading diagonally across the field. This grass path leads you to a kissing gate at the edge of a sheep pasture. Go through the gate and continue in the same direction, passing just to the left of the collection of old trees sitting in the centre of the field. At the far side, exit via a kissing gate and continue on a narrow, fenced path to reach the corner of a grass area.

Turn left, following the left-hand edge of this grass area (with trees and a hedgerow on your left). You will come to a T-junction with a vehicle driveway, with the gate for a pretty black and white property, The Lane House, on your left. Turn right, following the drive away from the house, and continue to reach a T-junction with the road, Gaddesden Row.

Follow this bridleyway with a woodland on your right and fenced horse paddocks on your left. You are now heading into the Upperwood Farm Stud, so you will notice the horses in the surrounding paddocks are thoroughbred racehorses. You will reach a junction of tracks, with a circular horse-walker on your left. Turn right here and follow the farm driveway, passing through (or alongside) the entrance gates (noting the carved owl on the left-hand gatepost). When we walked (in April), the paddock on the left had many mares with adorable young foals. At the end of the drive you will reach the road, Gaddesden Row. Turn left along this for just a few metres and you will come to the Old Chequers on your right for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before

4 → 5 Gaddesden Row to End



Cross over the road with care and go ahead into the access drive (signed as a byway to Ballingdon Bottom). Pass the school on your left and continue ahead to join the pretty green track, lined with hedgerows. At the first crossroads, you will see a yellow-topped waymarker post. Here we leave the Chiltern Way.

Turn right and follow the track with a crop field on your left and a tree line on your right (Note: the official right of way actually runs to the right of the tree line, but this track is the accepted permissive route). At the end of the field, pass through the large hedge gap ahead to reach a junction with a quiet country lane. Turn right along the lane, taking care of traffic, for just 60 metres and then turn left onto the bridleyway.

