

Starting Point: Chesham Moor Swim & Gym

- 1 Open Air Swimming Pool.** Here is our first sight of the river. Can you spot it coming out from the culvert? It is coming from **Lord's Millpond** which we will visit as our last spot on the walk. This is the site of the open-air swimming pool which has been on



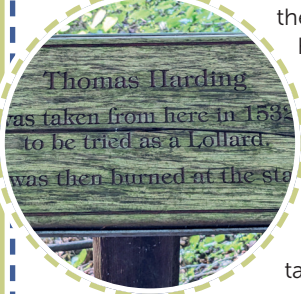
this site for hundreds of years! Bathing in the stream on the Moor was an old **Chesham** custom, but residents complained about "the bathing nuisance". In 1912 the first swimming pool was built. It is fed by spring water just like the river! Keep walking with the tennis courts on the right and then turn

right along **Bois Moor Road**. Cross over the river with the allotments on your right. These are owned by the Duke of Bedford. Continue straight ahead up **Hodds Wood Road**.

- 2 Railway Bridge.** Go under the railway bridge and continue up hill and go through a gate on the left. Cross the field diagonally to the top left corner of the field. From here you can have great views of the **Chess Valley**. What can you spot? This meadow is a rare chalk grassland with lots of plants and animals.



- 3 Thomas Harding was here!** As you go through the gate into the woods can you spot the sign? Have you heard of **Thomas Harding**? Do you know what a 'lollard' was? Take the left-hand footpath through **Chesham Bois Woods**. Can you spot



the many different tree species here? Most of the trees are Beech but there are also Ash, Cherry, Field Maple, Sycamore and Scots Pine and others. Nearby in ancient **Hodds Wood** there is a Whitebeam tree measured at 23 metres and reportedly the tallest in the country!

- 4 Burial Ground.** Walk along the woodland path until you reach the gate into the **Burial Ground**. At the top you may get wonderful views again of the valley. Can you spot a Kite or Buzzard in the sky?



- 5 Railway Bridge.** Go down the hill through the burial ground and through the gate at the bottom. Turn left and go under the railway bridge. You might be lucky to spot a train go past whilst walking under.



The **Metropolitan Line** came to Chesham in 1889, originally the railway line terminated at **Chesham Moor** until the town paid to extend it into the town. As you pass under the bridge cross the road. The cottages to your left were originally railway workers' cottages.

- 6 The Fishing Lakes.** Cross over the road and turn right along **Cresswell Road**. At the post box turn left and take the footpath between the two lakes. If there isn't too much vegetation you should be able to see through the fence to the water. What birds can you spot? Use the waterbird spotter sheet to help identify any! At the end of the lakes you will come to the river again. Can you spot fast-flowing clear water with the gravel river bed? These are features of a chalk stream.



- 7 Cannon Mill.** The "waterfall" is left over from **Cannon Mill** that stood here. It got its name from the Canons of **Missenden Abbey**, the owners in the 13th century. It was a corn mill and then converted to produce animal feed. It stopped working in 1937 and was demolished in 1960s but its weir and mill race can still be seen! Turn left and walk through the woods.



- 8 Wooded Wetlands.** You will continue along the **woodland path** with one waterway on your right and one on your left. The one on your left is actually the mill bypass created to divert water away from the mill in times of high flow. What do you notice about the two waterways now? Can you see chalk stream features in both? Go over the **wooden foot-bridge** and follow the path straight on. Keep an eye out for Little Egret, Moorhen or even a Kingfisher. Can you spot the Crack Willow growing along the path? Depending on the time of year you might see catkins hanging. In winter the twigs are brittle and make a "crack" when snapped.



- 9 Chesham Moor.** The path will bring you out onto the moor. Did you know it has had a multitude of uses from gravel extraction during the building of the railway in the 1890s, hay harvest and it was a rubbish tip in 1925! It was later grassed over as a **recreation ground** which is what it is used for today. Follow the river round to the large Willow tree and then over the bridge which takes you off the moor. Carefully cross the road and pass back along the tennis courts and back to the swimming pool.



- 10 Lord's Millpond.** Before returning home take one last opportunity to look at the river and local heritage. Cross over the road and follow the path to **Kitty's Bridge**. This is the site of the millpond which powered **Lord's Mill**. It's believed that there has been a mill here since the Saxon times and it was originally built for **Lady Elgiva**. This was the last working mill on the Chess closing in the 1950s. Can you spot the sluice gate which was used to control the amount of water to the mill? It flows down the road to outside the swimming pool where we first started our walk. Because the mill is no longer in use there is slow flow to the river which means the area has become silted and grown-over with wetland plants such as willows and dock. This is a good refuge for nesting birds. Behind you is an area of marshy floodplain.

