

River Chess Chalk Streams Challenge Walk

Route

Information:

Length: 2.5 miles (4 km)

Terrain: Easy flat walking on good paths some of which can be muddy after rain.

Start & Finish: Scotsbridge South Car Park, Park Rd, Rickmansworth.

Parking: as above, free for 4 hours.

Facilities: No public facilities on the route. Plenty in Rickmansworth town centre.

Public Transport: There are various bus services to Rickmansworth from Watford. Rickmansworth is also served by direct trains from Baker Street on the Metropolitan Line. The station is a short walk along the Chess Valley walk



CHILTERN
CHALK STREAMS
PROJECT



River Chess
Smarter Water
Catchment

THREE RIVERS
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Starting point- Scotsbridge car park

1 Scotsbridge Mill

We start our walk at the site of Scotsbridge mill. This is a very old mill in Rickmansworth and is the only one left from the town's five historic mills. It wasn't always a paper mill – it started as a fulling and corn mill, helping people prepare cloth and grind grain. Later, in 1746, it changed into a paper mill where paper was made for many years. Now it isn't a Mill but a restaurant. From here can you spot any of the Mill's features?



From the carpark return along the driveway to the entrance to the site. Turn left up the pavement for 100m to a gap in the brick wall. Turn left through the gap onto a path signed to Croxley Green. Go down the steps to Scots Mill Lane, bear right through the gate into the field.

2 Hedgerows

Stay straight ahead, follow the edge of the field round to the right & turn left on a path signed to the River Chess.

As you walk along the edge of the field, stop for a moment to explore the hedgerow running alongside it. They act like nature's corridors, giving animals shelter, food, and safe places to travel. They are also important to stop runoff, capturing and filtering sediments before it enters the river.

Many hedgerows are very old and full of different plants and creatures. Depending on the time of the year you might spot hawthorn flowers or berries, providing pollen and food for bees, butterflies and birds



3 Glen Chess

Follow this path for 170m.



From here you might be able to spot a big house in the distance on your right. This is Glen Chess. It was built in the 1800s by Herbert Ingram, who was an important businessman in the area owning and running a number of paper mills nearby. Those mills made the paper for a famous newspaper called the Illustrated London News.

4 Chalk streams

Before you cross the bridge can you spot fast-flowing clear water over the gravel river bed?

Gravel is an important feature of a chalk streams, providing a home for small insects and fish.



The River Chess is one of only 300 chalk streams in the entire world!

Cross the bridges over the River Chess. Turn left along the riverbank to join the Chess Valley Walk

5 Wildlife

As you walk along the riverside path it is a good place to stop and see if you can spot any wildlife. They love the wetland area on the other side of the river. Keep an eye out for Little Egret, Moorhen or even a flash of blue from a Kingfisher. Can you spot the Crack Willow trees? In winter the twigs are brittle and make a "crack" when snapped.

Continue along the path.



6 Restoring a river

The river here has been changed by people over hundreds of years. To send enough water towards a mill, the river was put into straight, steep sided channels, which made the water slow and silty.

The river can also flood and cause problems for the footpaths and nearby land. Work has been done here to help the river. Can you spot the wooden deflectors? They narrow the channel and make the water flow faster. The river has also been made less straight, adding bends (meanders) to help it become more natural again.

Continue along the path until it leaves the river and enters the recreation ground pass the green gate.



7 Watercress beds

In the early 1800s, Rickmansworth was famous for growing watercress, a healthy green plant that grows in clean, flowing rivers.

The Dorrofield family grew their watercress here by the River Chess and lived at Fishery Cottage, once known as the Pest House, where people with smallpox were housed. Rickmansworth's famous watercress was transported along the canals to the bustling London markets – and when the railway arrived, it sped to the city even faster by train. Sadly there is no longer any commercial watercress farming on the Chess.

Continue along the edge of the playing field to return to the start.

