

Chapter X: By the Chess at Latimer

Raans Farm, Blackwell Hall, Chesham, Latimer, Flaunden, Chenies

All along the valley where thy waters flow. TENNYSON

RAANS FARMHOUSE, formerly the manor-house of Raans and dating from 1540, is an attractive and dignified brick building of half-H plan. Above the doorway is a shield-of-arms of the Proby family, who held Raans from 1619 to 1735. Clydesdales are bred at the farm; maybe some will be seen in the fields.

LATIMER, as Froude says of Chenies, is 'pervaded by an aspect of serene good manners, as if it was always Sunday'. And, indeed, the little grass-plot, with its big elms and the pathways of Roman brick, the cottages in their flower gardens, the tidy brick farmhouses, and the silvery Chess in the beech-fringed meadows, make Latimer in the valley a becoming neighbour for Chenies on the ridge. On the hill above the village is Latimer House in a beautiful park. The big red-brick Elizabethan mansion is modern. Tales of Charles II sheltering at Latimer after Worcester are probably fictitious. He was nowhere near Latimer, according to his account of his wanderings, given to Pepys. Charles I, however, was lodged in old Latimer House, on his journey from Holmby to Hampton Court, after the Scots had left him in the lurch. Formerly the place was called Isenhampstead, Latimer being the name of the family which once held the manor. Chenies was Isenhampstead Chenies. In a field beside the Chesham road, just to the west of Dell Farm, is the remnant of the Roman villa which supplied the brick for the pathways on the green.

LADY CHENEY'S WALK. According to local custom the lady's surname must be spelt as given here, though who she was and why the elms are named after her not even local tradition seems to know. The last of the Chenies

—the lord and his lady—are commemorated by sculptured figures in Drayton Beauchamp Church, near Tring.

How to get there and back

CHALFONT by Green Line Coach route 703 to Chalfont and Latimer Station; or by Metropolitan Line train from Baker Street Station.

CHESHAM by Green Line Coach route 709; or by Metropolitan Line train from Chesham Station.

Walk 14a

TO THE CHESS VALLEY ($2\frac{3}{4}$ miles) OR CHESHAM ($1\frac{3}{4}$ miles).

Leaving Chalfont and Latimer Station by the exit on the 'up' side, turn right, and then left—along the narrow road that runs back past the station. Follow this road out—first as a cartway, and then as a fieldpath that veers right—into a byway (Bell Lane). Continue by the forward path, which threads a long, narrow beech-wood and leads to a field (1 mile). Bear right and carry on past a big prosperous-looking farm into a road. Turn left here, for a close-up view of RAANS FARMHOUSE.

Continue along the road, and where it rises turn for the best view of Raans. Cross the railway, and turn right along the road (beside the track) lined with pine, fir, and sycamore. This road runs into the houses of Amersham Common 700 yards on, and reaches the crossways, by a shop, another 200 yards along ($2\frac{1}{4}$ miles). Amersham Station is a mile to the left; Chesham Bois and its common lie ahead. Turn right here and 100 yards on cross a stile. Keep beside the hedge on the left, looking along the valley to the right for a charming view of Latimer—a typical Chiltern scene.

Continue downhill, under the railway, and forward by Ivyhouse Dairy Farm into the Chesham road ($2\frac{3}{4}$ miles); ahead, across the Chess, Blackwell Hall can be seen.