

Chapter VIII: Along the Chess to Chesham

Chorley Wood Common, Sarratt Moor, Chenies Bottom, Latimer, White End Park

... The river, which, 'though men may come and men may go', has flowed and will flow on for ever, winding among its reed beds, murmuring over its gravelly fords, heedless of royal dynasties, uncaring whether Cheney or Russell calls himself lord of the waters. FROUDE: *Chenies and the House of Russell*.

CHORLEY WOOD originated in the 'old village' (here before the railway came) which now comprises a modern Gothic church, some inns, a shop or two, cottages, and houses of good type on the Upper Road (the northern boundary of the common). A 'new village' of villas has arisen near the station in the valley south of the common. The common is a hillside tract of turf and gorse, where rambblers, golfers, and cattle follow their own particular inclinations. A mile or so south is Heronsgate, a quiet agricultural settlement, with the Land of Liberty. The tavern sign recalls that Feargus O'Connor and Ernest Jones inaugurated here one of their Chartist co-operative smallholding schemes. Nearby is King John's Farm, which is associated with Penn, the founder of Philadelphia—the City of Brotherly Love that became the capital of the rebel colonies. Chorley Wood is just within the Herts border. Just over it, in Bucks, is Chenies.

SARRATT BOTTOM. Mount Wood lies on the ridge across the stream. This beautiful stretch of the Chess Valley forms the subject of a picture by Sir Alfred East, R.A., the landscape painter.

CHESHAM. The Old Town lies below in the valley ahead, with the church and the Elm Avenue conspicuous, and the New Town to the right. To the left are the rich plantations and coverts of Latimer. Beyond Chesham Old Town rise, fold upon fold, the ridges about Pednor, Ballinger, the Missendens, and Chartridge, while to the right are the hills of the Tring and Wendover section of the Chilterns.

How to get there and back

CHORLEY WOOD by Green Line Coach route 703; or by Metropolitan Line train from Baker Street Station.

For walkers who travel out of town by coach, the start is at Chorley Wood Church, which is close to Solesbridge Lane. The walking distance is thus shortened by half a mile.

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

Walk 11a

CHORLEY WOOD TO LATIMER (4½ miles) THROUGH THE CHESH VALLEY.

Turn right outside the main entrance of the railway station, then, after 230 yards, take the gravelly track that runs up to CHORLEY WOOD Common. Passing through the gorse (left at the fork 200 yards along), the track gives views over Chorley Wood Bottom on the right. Making for the church spire, turn right along a cross-track when about 200 yards from the church, and carry on to a white notice-board, bearing verses that seem to be a crib from those on Oxshott Heath. Reaching the Upper Road, keep *forward* along Solesbridge Lane. The road drops 100 ft. in the next 400 yards and reaches Solesbridge House on the left, revealing the Chess below (1 mile). Turn in through the white gates, and follow the path beside the wall, through a gate, and then forward by a grassy track, with the Chess in pollard willows close by. Continue along to a corner stile and then by firs and larches out by a footbridge. Do not cross, but keep forward through the pumping-station enclosure to North Lane. Taking the stile opposite, carry on—with Sarrattmill House across the stream and Goldingtons on the ridge above—to a gap in a whitethorn hedge. Passing through this (into Bucks), an exquisite landscape of the wood-framed valley is revealed, with the Church End of Sarratt on the ridge above the Chess. Carry on still, to Turveylane Wood (2 miles). Here turn right, cross the footbridge over the watercress brook and, passing over the water-meadow of Sarratt Moor, cross the Chess. Taking the left-hand stile, proceed by the gravelled carriage-way,