

Chaldon Walks

Chaldon residents walked each of its footpaths regularly twice a year from the 1920s until a few years ago. There are seven walks of varying lengths designed to cover the network of official paths and bridleways within the parish. This is an attempt to preserve that tradition and provide some interesting detail. Put together by Liz Bonsall with contributions from Adele Brand, Madeline Hutchins and Lizzy Maskey. May 2020. Revised January 2026.

Chaldon Walk 1 – Chaldon Church, Happy Valley, the Golf Course, Fryern Farm, Chaldon Common Road, Birchwood Lane, Willey Broom Lane, Village Hall. 3 miles, approximately 1 ½ hours. Also extension to return to start.



Map created by Martin Lubikowski, ML Designs, Chaldon

Liz Bonsall May 2020, revised Jan 2026

Start by the Church gate. St Peter & St Paul's Church is of Saxon foundation and mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The present church was probably started late 11th century. Chaldon Church is world renowned for its famous English wall painting dating from around 1200. The spire was added in 1842. Notice the lamp posts to your left, installed in early 2020 to light the path. Re-pointing between the stonework was completed in 2025. There are ancient yew trees in the churchyard and three of the large tombs near the shed have Listed Building status (Grade II). The church itself is a Grade I Listed Building. From the gate you can glimpse 14th century Chaldon Court (Grade II*) through the trees to your left.

From the gate walk down the lane keeping the graveyard on your left. On your right is the triangle of Church Green, named as common land on maps from 1825 and 1837. It has been under the protection of Tandridge District Council since 1977. (Note the wooden fingerpost at the corner calls it Chaldon Green). **At the junction with Ditches Lane turn left and after a few yards look on the right for the signpost to Happy Valley. Follow the track uphill across a large field.** No doubt you will notice that the soil is clay with flints. **Stop when you have almost reached the brow of the slope.** Turn around, looking back the way you have come and you will see to your left, the gable end of the red brick farm cottages, Glebe House, Rectory Cottage, then a woodland hiding Chaldon Church and to the right again is Chaldon Court and Court Farm. Next, looking further right across farmland, you can see the Victorian water tower of the former Netherne Hospital, formerly the Surrey County Asylum built in 1907-9 and closed in 1994, now a village in its own right.

Continue to follow the field path. To your left is Figgs Wood and to your right is Piles Wood, a semi-natural ancient woodland. In 1939 two Gladiator planes from Kenley Aerodrome collided. One fell in Figgs Wood and the other on the brow of this hill. **Walking downhill you have Sparklie Wood in front of you.** As you walk through the gap at the woods edge, on the right, see the wonderful ridged pattern in the decaying tree trunk. This tree blocked the path when it fell in the Great Storm of 15/16 October 1987. On the other side of the path, see a wild cherry tree; having been blown over, a former branch has become the trunk of a new tree. **Continue walking through the wood to Happy Valley**, often described as one of the most beautiful valleys in the area.

Happy Valley is part of the Farthing Downs and Happy Valley Site of Special Scientific Interest because it is exceptionally rich in flora, especially lowland meadow species. Much of the countryside once looked like this but 97% of British lowland meadows have now been destroyed. Depending on the season you can see greater yellow-rattle, buttercups, cowslips and a variety of orchids. You will see plenty of magpies and blackbirds and, in the sky you may catch sight of buzzards, kestrels and red kite. In July 2019 the area was designated a National Nature Reserve and given the name South London Downs. It is also open access land, over which the public have the right to walk freely. Happy Valley is owned and managed by Croydon Council and Farthing Downs by the City of London Corporation.

Ahead of you is a hay meadow down to the valley bottom, and a hill the other side with thick hedges (shaws) and trees. **Walk downhill at the edge of the meadow, with the hedge on your right. When you reach the bottom of the valley turn right (south east).** Here is a footpath and a separate bridleway on your left. As you

walk, very dark trees in the woods to your left are ancient yews planted to define parish boundaries, at one time the parish of Chaldon had its boundary with Coulsdon here. A major sewer system runs along this valley with access manholes on concrete raised platforms. They are raised to prevent surface water seeping into the sewer system. **Turn around to see the skyline of Farthing Down. Continue south east until you reach a fingerpost with signs for three directions.** Take the path signed Public Bridleway to Leazes Avenue and walk uphill between the hedges. The Chaldon/Coulsdon boundary is on your right and you can see remains of concrete posts probably installed in 1933 when boundaries changed.

After about 50 metres you will see a permissive footpath fingerpost on your left and a twin trunked beech tree to its right. **Walk between the two then follow the path to the left** keeping the fence on your right and, at a corner, bear right. You will pass through a small copse of oak trees where you can spot oak or gall apples. These are round growths that the tree develops when gall wasps lay their eggs in leaf buds. Oak gall or iron gall ink (made from oak galls and iron sulphate) was used by the Romans, and across the Western world from the Middle Ages until late in the 19th century.

You are now entering Surrey National Golf Course. At all times be aware of golfers and keep to the right hand edge of the mown grass. Please do not go onto the golf course tracks. Please observe golfing etiquette. If someone is playing a shot from the Green the protocol is to stand still and be silent. If players are driving on the fairways you should stand still and face them.

You are now walking along what is known as an un-adopted Permissive Footpath leading from Bridle Way (BW)78 to Leazes Avenue. It is important that local people continue to walk this path and equally important that we don't trespass onto the golf course when doing so.

Keep walking uphill following the line of bramble to your right and keeping to the right hand edge of the mown grass and to the right of the golfing tees. You will pass a seat, inscribed in memory of Barry John Dunt. The seat is intended for golfers.

Keeping close to the edge of the mown grass continue until you are walking parallel with the buggy track. Waymarked posts will help you. About 100 yards after a line of trees alongside the buggy track **pause and look east across the fairways.** You can clearly see the tops of houses on the edge of Green Lane, originally part of the Caterham Guards Depot and sympathetically rebuilt keeping some of the original architectural features. Look to the left and the wooded area hides BW78 and Magazine Road. Looking across the golf course at its eastern edge is a north south hedgerow on Dean Hill and Dean Banks in which is another un-adopted footpath linking BW77 to Magazine Road. Towards your right on the skyline you can see the black pines defining the former St Lawrence's Hospital Burial Ground.

Continue south always keeping on the right hand edge of the mown grass. Towards the end of the track **bear right through a small copse of silver birch** planted in early 2000. Just before the large gap in the hedge **turn right** and continue along an indistinct grassy track to the right hand corner where there is a narrow gap in the hedge into BW77 and a fingerpost. You are doing this to preserve

the route of the un-adopted path and avoid golfers. (To your right is the cul-de-sac of Leazes Avenue.)

Turn left and walk downhill between two hedges. These were planted either side of the ancient bridleway in early 2000 and when managed ecologically provide good habitat for wildlife.

At the bottom of the hill is an area that can be muddy after rain. **Cross over and walk uphill through woodland.** You are now passing over the hill from lower Happy Valley to Upper Happy Valley. On your left is a deep wooded quarry. This is shown on old OS maps as a lime quarry, once with cattle sheds. Continuing to the top of the hill you will emerge into the open and suddenly come upon Surrey National Golf Clubhouse (SNGC), an important venue for local people.

Stand by the fingerpost and look east noticing the black pines, over the sloping end of the clubhouse roof. These pine trees define the area of the former St Lawrence's Hospital Burial Ground. The site is now owned by Chaldon Village Council and managed as a wildlife habitat by the Downlands Countryside Management Project on behalf of Chaldon Village Council. The houses on the horizon replace the grim outline of the Victorian hospital that was demolished in 1996. (BW77 continues downhill to reach Green Lane and Caterham on the Hill.)

The angle of the fingerpost is not quite correct. **To follow the public footpath cross the road and enter the wood through the gap between the trees.** You are now on Footpath (FP)74. As you enter the wood look on the ground to your left and underneath the felled trees are the remains of a Victorian field drainage system. The concrete gully or leet exists for some 20 metres into the woodland. This gully is visible in the woodland (not public access) north of the clubhouse. You are walking through an ancient track in woodland. Look up at some wonderful trees, oak, beech, maple and horse chestnut. Look out for what look like fossilised fungi growing from trees.

By the first golfers crossing the gully remains have disappeared. Look right to the car park of the SNGC. Look left to the pines of the Burial Ground. On the horizon are the houses of the former Guards Depot. You are now looking into upper Happy Valley.

Continue and passing under a huge horse chestnut and an impressive beech tree you reach the second golfers crossing. On the right are the maintenance sheds of the Golf Club. To your left you can clearly see to the south the houses of the newest housing estate, Oakgrove. That area was the site of the hospital's nurses' home and the famous 'Blue Peter' bungalow which was retained within the development.

Continue on the woodland path. At the third golf course access point look right to the Golf Club driving range and beyond that the woods of Chaldon. Look left towards Caterham on the Hill and the tower on the old Guards Depot Church.

Just ahead and to your left is a fingerpost that points a public footpath north east. This path is FP75, still a designated footpath crossing the fairways and greens to reach the east end of BW77 as it reaches Green Lane. It is not advisable to use it while golfers are playing! For more than 30 years there have been negotiations to

exchange this footpath for the two un-adopted paths, one from Happy Valley to Leazes Avenue on the west edge of the Golf Course (that you have walked today) and the other north from BW77 (just past the lake) along the west boundary of the Burial Ground to Magazine Road.

Continue along the footpath until you reach a large gap or golfers crossing. To your right you can see Fryern Broom Wood and glimpse the houses of Chaldon Mead. Look left and you can see Oakgrove and if you take a few steps along this track you will glimpse the top of the trees of Homewood where the residents of St Lawrence's Hospital enjoyed picnics amongst the bluebells.

Retrace your steps and re-join the path south. Giant horse chestnuts can be seen to your left and eventually you will catch glimpses of Fryern, an 18th century red brick house in distinctive style. Note the balcony which until the early 1900s stretched the width of the house. In the 13th century the Friars of St Thomas's Hospital owned a house on this site and the surrounding lands.

Notice the large high iron gates to Fryern on your left as you reach the end of the path. You have now reached Rook Lane (B2031). Across the road in the junction between Rook Lane and Chaldon Common Road (CCR) is the site of Dean's Place, the home of Martin Coles Harman. He was a great benefactor of Chaldon, who gave the site of the Village Hall, the car park opposite the Hall and Six Brothers Field. He also led the Chaldon Footpaths Committee in the 1920s and his son, John Pennington Harman, won the Victoria Cross in WW2.

Turn right and cross the road when safe to do so. Then turn left and walk along Chaldon Common Road (CCR). The Common, or Willey Heath as it was once called, was enclosed in 1865. CCR, once called Roffes Lane, was nothing more than a track across heathland. It became known as New or Brickfield Road in the late 19th century as brickfields stretched for about a quarter mile along the west side. To your right was the field with the Public Pond, given to the village by the Legrew family and commemorated with a headstone now next to the front door of the Village Hall. There were no houses here until the 1920s and development didn't really start until the 1930s. The Home Defence used the field between Rook lane and Birchwood Lane during WW2.

On your left as you pass no.11A you will soon notice an old red brick wall with a single storey building behind no.13.. Reaching the front of the house you are looking at Bakers Lodge. Artefacts found here date to the 18th century and can be seen at East Surrey Museum. Between nos.15 & 21 is a track leading to Beggars Lodge. These cottages are remnants of the poorhouse and were the only houses on the Common, owned by Sir Robert Clayton who owned Willey Manor. He gave five cottages to the parish in around 1740.

(The Heath to your left is a private road but also a Public Footpath leading to Caterham on the Hill and St Lawrence's Church.) **Continue along CCR, then turn right into Birchwood Lane**, at one time a major track from west of Chaldon to Caterham and once one of the best wildlife watching areas in Chaldon. With housing development and animal grazing this is sadly no longer the case. Walk along this undulating lane with houses on each side. As you reach the end of the

houses on your right you will see an open field and looking north you see the houses at the end of Mount Avenue cul-de-sac. An application to build 30 houses in this field was made in November 2025. To your left open fields grazed by sheep and horses stretch southwards to the North Downs Way. After six more houses you will pass Mark's Farm on your right. The wood to your right is Roundwood, another semi-natural ancient woodland.

Walking slightly uphill there are more open fields with giant fir trees around Roundwood Cottage on the right and Homestead on the left. Homestead is on the site of one of the first houses in the lane. Downhill again there is a cul-de-sac to the left. You then pass Rose Cottage and further along some corrugated pig barns and stables on the left.

In front of you is a signpost known as Fiveways, a great local landmark and major hub of the Chaldon footpath network. As you approach Fiveways, on the right you will see a line of silver birches which may have given the road its name. It is possible to see buzzards, bullfinches and woodpeckers in this area. **Follow the sign to Willey Broom Lane ¼ mile.**

Walking through Willey Broom Wood, an ancient woodland, notice several large uprooted trees, casualties of the 1987 Great Storm. The wood is heavily carpeted with bluebells in spring. After a short distance, the path passes between two posts signed with a yellow footpath arrow. This takes you onto a fenced and very narrow path. When you emerge into the open onto Willey Broom Lane look left where you will see the gate to Six Brothers Field, the smallest property of the National Trust. *If you take a diversion into Six Brothers Field you will see the Scout Hut and Cricket Pavilion as well as a restored meadow and field margins managed for wildlife. An Information Board tells the story of Martin Coles Harman who gave the site to the people of Chaldon who use it for various community events throughout the year.*

Turn right along Willey Broom Lane, and the first bungalow is called Puffin. Puffins live on Lundy Island which was the home of Martin Coles Harman from the late 1920s. He declared himself King of Lundy issuing his own puffin coins and stamps. He was responsible for making Willey Broom Lane a public footpath for the use of children walking from other parts of Chaldon or Caterham to school at the end of the lane. Follow Willey Broom Lane and towards the end of the private road, on the right, you will see the backs of the Old Schoolhouse, Goswell Cottage, the Village Hall and glimpses of St Peter & St Paul's Primary School.

At Rook Lane (B2031), for the purposes of the historic walk, you turn right towards the Village Hall and its car park. If you follow this direction you will pass the front of the Old Schoolhouse and notice the school bell mounted on the wall. The building was a school until 1965. The next house is Goswell Cottage, one of a few dwellings along this road until after WW1. You then reach Chaldon Village Hall, on the site which was given by Martin Coles Harman. The Hall was built as a Peace Memorial after WW1 by public subscription, part destroyed in WW2 and rebuilt with the generosity of the people of Chaldon. The car park was added in 1932.

Walk up the slope to the Hall entrance and read the inscription on the Legrew Memorial stone.

End of Walk 1.

To learn more about the history of Chaldon visit www.chaldonhistory.org.uk

To return to the church turn left and walk along the pavement. You pass two copper beeches then a splendid oak tree at Greenfield's where there is one of Chaldon's ancient ponds, restored by volunteers and the Downlands Countryside Management Project in 2007. Forty years ago the pond teemed with frogs and newts. Traffic had to slow down as frogs left the pond and crossed the road.

At the crossroads there are two bungalows, at various times a post office, general stores, off licence, dentist but now private homes. Until 2011 there was a telephone kiosk alongside the letter box. **Cross the road to the bus shelter**, built of wood in 1957 then later replaced with a steel and glass version. After objections from the Chaldon Association a wooden one was put in its place.

Now **walk down Church Lane**, once known as Chaldon Lane. You can see how exposed the roots of the trees are and how sunken the lane has become. This was an ancient north south route and perhaps used by pilgrims on their way to Chaldon Church. On the right are three new properties. Pass by The Warren, former home of Bernard Thomas Kearsley, a casualty of WW2. You will pass a fairly recently built house called Wayside, then Longlands, on land once owned by the Fryerne Estate.

Passing two new build houses on your right notice the splendid trees in the lane, including sycamore, beech and oak, the oldest planted in the 18th century. You have now entered Chaldon Conservation Area. Conservation areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance. Chaldon Conservation area covers the Church, Court Farm and Chaldon Court, Glebe House (the former Rectory), Rectory Cottage and houses and cottages in Church Lane and Doctors Lane that mostly date back to before 1914. Amongst the trees on your left is The Rookery, a late 18th century house with possibly medieval cellars. Once called The Firs (spot one wonderful remaining fir tree) it has had a varied history from gentleman farmer, London businessman, hospital outreach accommodation and now a private home. Hops were once grown in the fields to the south of the house. From 1956 it was a mink farm then a kennels. Rookery Cottage was once the gardener's cottage.

Opposite is Little Glebe, a 20th century house that featured in the Ideal Home Exhibition in the 1950s. Continue along Church Lane and notice Wood House on your left. Wood House was once called Chimawan, before that Greenshaw and originally The Nest. On the right is Garden Cottage, once stables to the Rectory.

Glebe House was the Parsonage or Rectory and in the Hearth Tax returns for 1664 had 4 hearths. The oldest part of the current house, the section with two windows either side of the front door and chimneys at either end, was built in 1760. It has had several large additions. In 1926 the new rectory was built in Doctors Lane and Glebe House became a private home and then a nursing home.

There is an avenue of very tall lime trees with seven trees along the roadside boundary of Glebe House. Can you see another seven?

Opposite Glebe House is Rectory Cottage, originally built for the Rector's servant or coachman. From 1967 – 1984 it was used as a Parish Room. Note the distinctive latticed windows and the date above the ground floor window on the gable end.

To your right is Doctors Lane. The red brick cottages you can see ahead of you are late 19th century farm cottages for Chaldon Court Farm (behind the Church and Chaldon Court). A little further up and set back from the road is Keepers Cottage, built in 1901 for the gamekeeper.

Continue straight ahead and you will see Church Green with its Novocentenary sign, 1986, and an information board installed by the Village Council in 2018. **Take the left turn and return to the Church.**

End of walk.

To learn more about the history of Chaldon visit www.chaldonhistory.org.uk