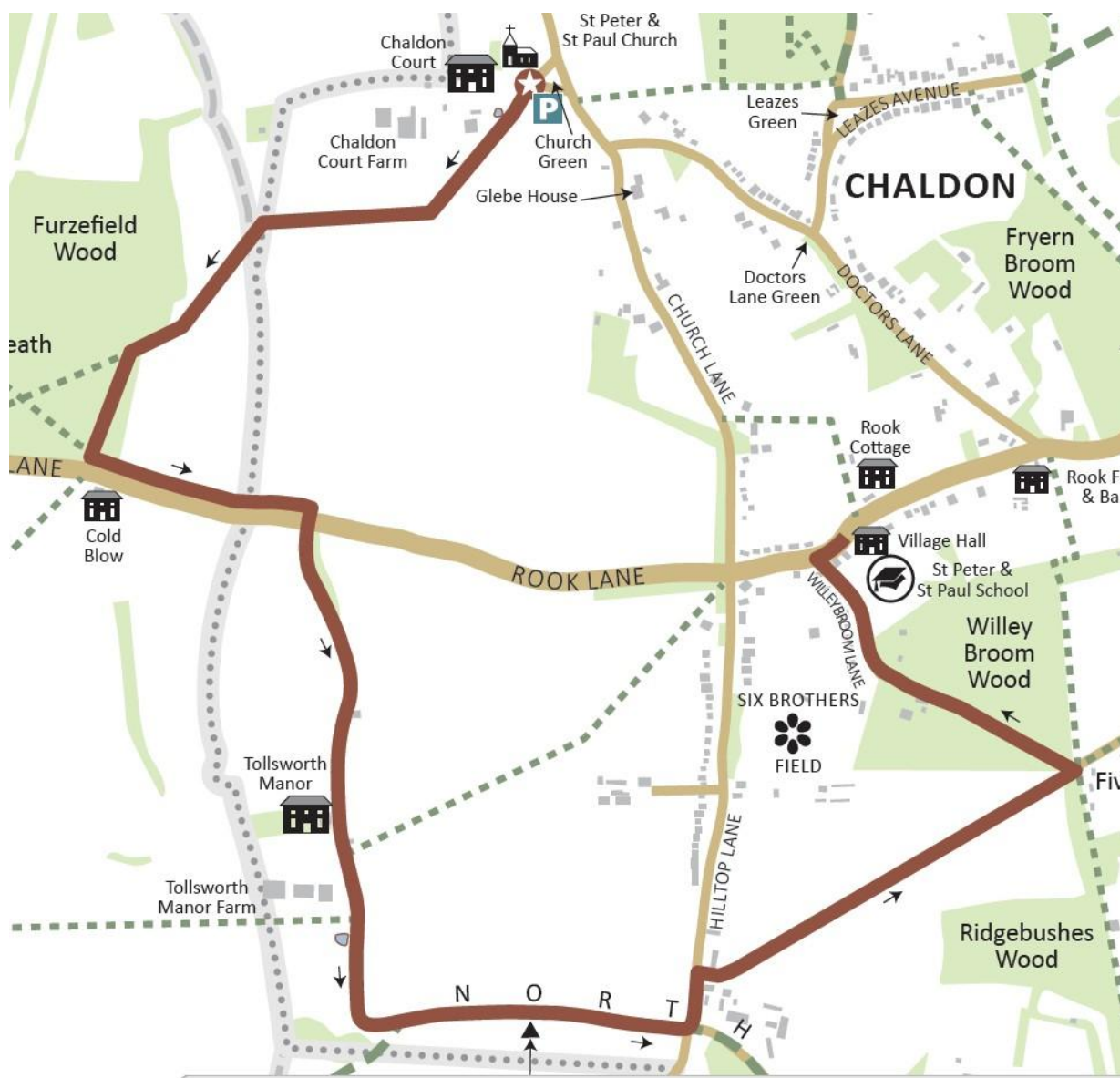


Chaldon Walks

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 April 2026.

Chaldon Walk 4 – Chaldon Church, Alderstead Heath, Tollsworth Manor, North Downs Way, Hilltop Farm, Willey Broom Wood, Village Hall. 2.25 miles, approximately 1 hour. Also extension to return to start.



Map created by Martin Lubikowski, ML Designs, Chaldon

Start by the Church gate (note the name inscribed) facing the church. 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 11thC. The spire with wooden shingles was added in 1842. Chaldon Church is world renowned for its famous medieval wall painting dating from around 1200. The seat along the church path is in memory of Dr & Mrs Williams who were generous benefactors. Notice the new lamp posts to your left, installed in early 2020 to light the path. 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.

As you leave the churchyard / with your back to the churchyard gate, the wooden field gate to your right used to be the drive to Chaldon Court. Notice the tall ancient sycamore trees on either side of the old drive. Depending on the leaf cover, you may glimpse the house from here (and again later). Most of the building dates from 1366 (established by dendrochronology, dating the tree rings in the timbers). None of its timber framing shows on the outside. It is a Grade II* listed building.

The flint wall of the field is 18th or 19th century and was repaired in 2003, partly paid for by grants from Tandridge District Council and Surrey Historic Buildings Trust. From just past the sign saying Private, but not on the concrete track, on the left you will see a pond with yellow flag irises and reed mace (bullrushes). This was restored just before 1986 for the Novocentenary (900 years) celebrations of Chaldon / the Church since the Domesday Book. Lesley Metz, whose family paid for the church gate with her name on it, was a prime mover in the restoration of the pond. It is on private land. Turning back from the pond, on your right there is a stile beside a field gate.

Pass through the kissing gate (this and the next one were organised by Chaldon Village Council, installed in 2025 by Croydon Ramblers through Surrey County Council and funded by two residents of Church Lane. More information available at www.chaldonwalks.org.uk)

You are now entering a working farm. **Follow the path (FP4) across the field, heading to the hedge ahead.** The large old trees within the field are where there used to be hedges and field boundaries. First thing on your right is a low flint wall rebuilt in the 1980s when the pond was restored. You can glimpse the pond from here and, depending on leaf cover, see another view of Chaldon Court. For many centuries this was the farmhouse for Court Farm, facing the old farmyard. There were two huge timber framed barns, 17th and 18th century and Grade 2 listed buildings. Unfortunately, in 1990 they blew down in storms. A little further along the path you can see a long length of high flint wall which is the remains of an unusually long cowshed. Turn to your left and admire the splendid vista of Chaldon's Conservation Area included with the Church and Chaldon Court. You can glimpse, from left to right, the farm cottages, the chimney of Keepers Cottage, Doctors Lane, Glebe House, Rectory Cottage, Wood House and the Rookery.

At the end of this field path, just before the second kissing gate, on the left there was once a pond, shown on 18th and 19th century maps and the 1914 OS map. No sign of it remains other than the occasional pond vegetation. **Pass through the gate and cross the track** (now private) that leads from Chaldon Court Farm to Tollsworth

Farm. **Please do not use this track. Your route is straight ahead** across open farmland towards Alderstead Heath (now woods) and Furze Field Woods. To your left in the distance are Tollsworth farm cottages, Tollsworth Manor then further round to the right, Alderstead Farm.

On your right you can see Chaldon Court Farm buildings and usually a large hay/straw store. Continue along the path. This used to be a field boundary with a hedge on the right. Soon in the distance to the right you can see the Grade 2 Listed Victorian Water Tower of Netherne. You can look along the valley towards Coulsdon, with another water tower, this one and the new houses are built on the site of Cane Hill Hospital. Do listen and watch for skylarks as you cross these fields. Flocks of starlings and occasionally lapwings can also be seen.

Ahead are the remains of an old stile in solitary isolation. Until the end of the 20th century there was a field boundary here with a hedge north/south and this stile is all that remains. The hedge marked the parish boundary between Chaldon and Merstham (see map). As you walk uphill turn around and look at the expanse of farmland (occasionally with views to the north of London on a very clear day). This farmland is the first to be reached after leaving London and Croydon. It is all Green Belt land. The soil is clay with flints over chalk.

The path skirts the edge of the wood, and in the first section of hedge / wood edge you will see elder, brambles, dog rose (pink), field rose (white), hazel and blackthorn. **The path then enters the woods over a stile.** Immediately turn to your right, walk round and admire a heavily coppiced ancient beech tree. Nearby are several multi-stemmed hazels.

This is Alderstead Heath, now heavily wooded. You will see a number of concrete tracks. They date from WW2 when the area was used by Canadian troops as a secret food store, in case of invasion. Some remnants of buildings still exist and can be seen alongside the tracks (but not on this walk).

Bear left and at the signpost take the left hand track. Listen to the amazing birdsong. You will see holes in tree trunks and small tracks through the undergrowth, both signs of the wildlife that live here. There are many elder trees, with their corky bark, and some with jelly bracket fungus on them. Notice the orange algal growth on many of the tall tree trunks. This can be used as an indicator of North, as there is more on the North, less on the South side of trunks. (Look back as you pass them, and you will see less algae.) The ground cover includes a vast quantity of nettles, but here is also dog's mercury, an indicator species of ancient woodland, and wild garlic (evident in the spring). **At a crossroads of paths turn left and keep left again at a fork in the path.** To your right and across the road you can see Cold Blow. Cold Blow is a medieval Hall house with the central part dating from about 1500.

Go through the gap in the hedge following waymarked signs, continuing straight ahead. Keep to the edge of the field walking parallel to the road (usually noisy) with a hedge between. This path was created in 1994 so that walkers on the newly created Downlands Circular Walk could avoid the increasingly dangerous traffic on Dean Lane. Ahead are the woods of Chaldon and to your left you can see Chaldon Court Farm. The wildflowers in the hedge edge here include rosebay willow

herb, the enormous leaves of burdock and hogweed. Dip down and head for a large tree. If it's a very clear day, just past the tree look left and see London. **Next the path turns right through a kissing gate then dangerously straight onto the road with no verge. If you have children or dogs with you, prepare them for this. Take very great care crossing the B2031 to the concreted farm access road to Tollsworth Manor Farm. Walk down the concrete track** past the farm cottages to your left and continue until you reach Tollsworth Manor on your right, admiring what is a significant 14th century medieval Grade II* listed building. Local stone has been used to cover or replace its timber framing. The house and farm belonged to Merton Abbey from about 1200 to the dissolution of the Abbey in 1538. From 1936 to 1967 the house was a popular Youth Hostel, enabling hundreds of people to enjoy its country setting. A beautiful cherry tree stands in the gravel driveway and the garage is on the site of the old farmyard pond. The house and gardens are open to the public on occasions.

With the working farm ahead of you, leave the concrete track and follow the track to your left. This track bears left and then right, heading south. At the next fork continue south on the main track, keeping the hedge to your right (a fingerpost And an old green metal sign point the way to Shepherds Hill). Ancient earthworks exist behind the dense hedge as well as another of Chaldon's ponds (no visible signs exist). You will glimpse a signpost ahead on the brow of the hill. When you reach the top of the hill admire the spectacular views north, including the London skyline, and south across the Weald towards the South Downs. This is a good place to look for buzzards (which have fan-shaped tails) and red kites (which are clearly forked). You can also see and hear the major motorway network of M23 and M25. **Follow the bridleway to your left.**

Keep left, between hedges and you are joining the North Downs Way (marked with a fingerpost in the hedge). This is an ancient trackway and still walked today by pilgrims from Winchester to Canterbury. Gaps in the hedge to your left give more views of London, including showing Wembley arch to the West. After about 100 metres, on your right, you may spot a storm damaged trunk of an oak tree, and just after this, notice the white undersides of the leaves of a whitebeam.

You will reach a wide gap in the hedge on your right. Walk to the concrete trig point (see the Ordnance Survey website for a fascinating history of trig points / trig pillars). Notice the two magnificent ash trees and stunning views across the Weald towards the South Downs, and to the West along the Surrey Hills. You are standing above the network of stone mines existing below Chaldon that provided stone for such famous buildings as Westminster Abbey, London Bridge and Windsor Castle, as well as for local buildings. Access to the mines was at ground level at the bottom of the escarpment, with tunnels gently sloping down following the seam of stone. The blocks of stone were brought out on sledges pulled by oxen.

On the other side of the track almost opposite the gap was once Hilltop Cottage, clearly shown on OS maps until 1872 and with a footpath going diagonally towards Tollsworth Manor Farm. The footpath is shown on OS maps until 1946 although it wasn't officially extinguished until 1994. No sign remains of the cottage, its garden or pond.

On the next section of the track, you can see raised banks on each side and the hedgerows are very old. It has been estimated (by counting the number of species present) that the hedge on your right is possibly 700 years old and on your left 500 years old. In springtime these hedgerows are filled with a huge variety of flowers.

At the end of the track you come to the Chaldon Village sign (installed 2003) at the brow of Hilltop Lane. Concrete slabs have been placed here to prevent vehicular access on the bridleway.

Cross the road with care then turn left along Hilltop Lane. After about 100 metres turn right at the signpost (hidden behind a mirror) and walk up the driveway beside Pilgrims Lodge. Keep close to the left hedge. Pilgrims Lodge was once part of Hilltop Farm, supplying Chaldon with its milk until the 1950s. Externally the chimney indicates its age and inside some exposed framing indicates early 17th century.

Once past Pilgrims Lodge you will see a newly restored barn, once part of the farm. **Climb the stile and walk through the concreted yard keeping to your left until you come to a second stile.** There are five stiles along FP13 between Hilltop Lane and Birchwood Lane. Take care at the third stile which has barbed wire on the post. Look to the right here and you can see a raised bank leading to the woodland. This is thought to be part of a Celtic field system. The path you are on is shown on maps over a long period including the Tithe Map of 1837. The fields to your left are known as Purley Field and Hilltop, to your right The Eleven Acres and ahead is Broom Field. Originally arable, pasture and mangold (or mangel-wurzel, a root vegetable related to beets, grown primarily for animal fodder), these fields are now increasingly used for horse grazing. In 1953 a grand housing development plan for 151 properties on these fields did not succeed.

Follow the path always heading for the next stile. Ahead you have Ridgebushes Wood to your right and Willey Broom Wood to your left. Both are ancient woodland and with the fields provide an important wildlife corridor that runs from Happy Valley in the north through to the North Downs in the south. On the edge of the wood to your right is one of Chaldon's ancient ponds, not accessible to the public, nor visible from the path.

When you reach the wood climb over the fifth stile and 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 4.

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

To return to the Church cross to the car park and take the path in the right hand corner. To your left was the site of the first Scout Hut erected in 1950. The scouts moved to Six Brothers Field in 1973. The path passes between meadows mostly used for horse grazing. This valley is a natural water course. The field to the west can become a small lake in times of high rainfall as happened in 2019.

The path turns sharply to the west with Longlands on your left and the newly built house replacing Plava Shuma on the right. You have passed through what was Glebe land (ie belonging to the church) stretching from Rook Lane down the valley towards the church. The Tithe Map of 1825 shows two of the fields were called Upper and Lower Longlands.

As you reach Church Lane look up at the splendid beech tree before **turning right to walk down the lane**. This is an ancient north south route and quite sunken. Notice the tree roots on the high banks.

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 reach The Rookery on your left. 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 in 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.

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