



# Cheshunt to Broxbourne Walk

River Lee Country Park and Waltham Abbey.



<b>Length</b>	<p><b>Main Walk:</b> 17¼ km (10.7 miles). Three hours 40 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 7½ hours.</p> <p><b>Circular Walk, returning to Cheshunt:</b> 12¾ km (7.9 miles). Two hours 40 minutes walking time.</p> <p><b>Circular Walk, with alternative afternoon:</b> 11¾ km (7.3 miles). Two hours 25 minutes walking time.</p>
<b>OS Map</b>	<p>Explorer 174. Cheshunt, map reference TL365022, is in Hertfordshire, 7 km <b>NE</b> of Enfield. Waltham Abbey is in Essex.</p>
<b>Toughness</b>	<p>1 out of 10.</p>
<b>Features</b>	<p>The <b>Lea Valley</b> is a wide floodplain which has long been both an important transport corridor and a natural boundary (eg. between the Saxons and the Danes in the Dark Ages). Its rivers provided water and power for many mills and factories, although nowadays the journey out of London seems to offer an unbroken line of light industrial estates, warehouses and retail parks. This does not exactly lift the spirits when seen from the train, but on the Herts/Essex border just before Cheshunt the view abruptly changes to the tree-lined lakes of <b>River Lee Country Park</b>.</p> <p>There are good opportunities for bird-watching in this wetland landscape of rivers and filled-in gravel pits, and several locations where orchids can be seen in late May and June. A series of sculptures are dotted around the park and the walk route goes past many of them. A more recent attraction is the <b>Lee Valley White Water Centre</b>, where you can watch canoeists and rafters tackling the slalom course constructed for the 2012 Olympic</p>

Games. On the way into **Waltham Abbey** you could divert to the historic **Royal Gunpowder Mills** site, which is open on some summer Sundays; admission is £15 (2024).

In about 1030 a black crucifix was brought to this market town and one of the pilgrims attracted by this 'Holy Cross' was **Harold Godwinson**, then Earl of Essex and later (briefly) King Harold II in 1066. He built a larger stone church on the site and this in turn was rebuilt in Norman style after the Conquest. It was extended again in the 12<sup>th</sup>C when **Waltham Abbey** was built by Henry II as part of his penance after the murder of Thomas Becket. It was the last monastic house to be closed by Henry VIII in the Dissolution of the Monasteries and most of the abbey was demolished in 1540. Fortunately, part of its medieval nave survived to become the present **Church of the Holy Cross**: reminiscent of a scaled-down Durham Cathedral, it is well worth a visit.

After a loop around the **Abbey Gardens** the walk heads northwards along the edge of **Cornmill Meadows Dragonfly Sanctuary**. It then has to skirt around part of the extensive gunpowder works site in order to return to the Country Park, where it follows woodland and lakeside paths before joining the River Lea's towpath. A stretch through a water meadow leads into the **Broxbourne Waterside** area, a centre for boating and canoeing with a café and a pub for refreshment before the journey home.

### Walk Options

The afternoon route goes quite near Cheshunt station so a shorter **Circular Walk** is possible.

The route out of Waltham Abbey was added in 2025 to avoid having to retrace the outward route along a main road. However, as the new route might be waterlogged after heavy rain the original has been retained as an **alternative afternoon** for the Circular Walk.

Several short cuts are mentioned in the directions, including one at Seventy Acres Lake designed to help late starters catch up with a group walk. Conversely, there are several places where you could extend the walk by detouring to bird hides and other points of interest mentioned in the directions.

If you want to curtail the walk after Waltham Abbey you could head for the station at Waltham Cross. This is 1½ km away along a busy main road but there are regular buses, some of which also go to places with underground stations (eg. Loughton).

### Additional Notes

Previous versions of this walk included a Long Circular Walk option starting from Broxbourne. This has been modified and is now available in the Broxbourne Circular via Waltham Abbey walk (#427). There is a fair amount of duplication between these two walks but some of the stretches are done in the opposite direction.

### Transport




Cheshunt and Broxbourne are served by Greater Anglia trains from Liverpool Street and Stratford on the lines to Cambridge, Bishop's Stortford and Hertford East. The normal off-peak service is six trains per hour (four on Sundays), with a journey time of 20-28 minutes to Cheshunt. All trains

call at Tottenham Hale, on the Victoria line. There is also a (slower) half-hourly London Overground service between Liverpool Street and Cheshunt, via Seven Sisters.

Oyster PAYG and contactless can be used at both stations but a simple **return to Broxbourne** (or Cheshunt for the Circular Walk) might be better value. Cheshunt is in TfL Zone 8 but Broxbourne is outside the numbered zones.

*A London Freedom Pass is only valid for travel to Cheshunt on the London Overground service from Liverpool Street, not on Greater Anglia trains.*

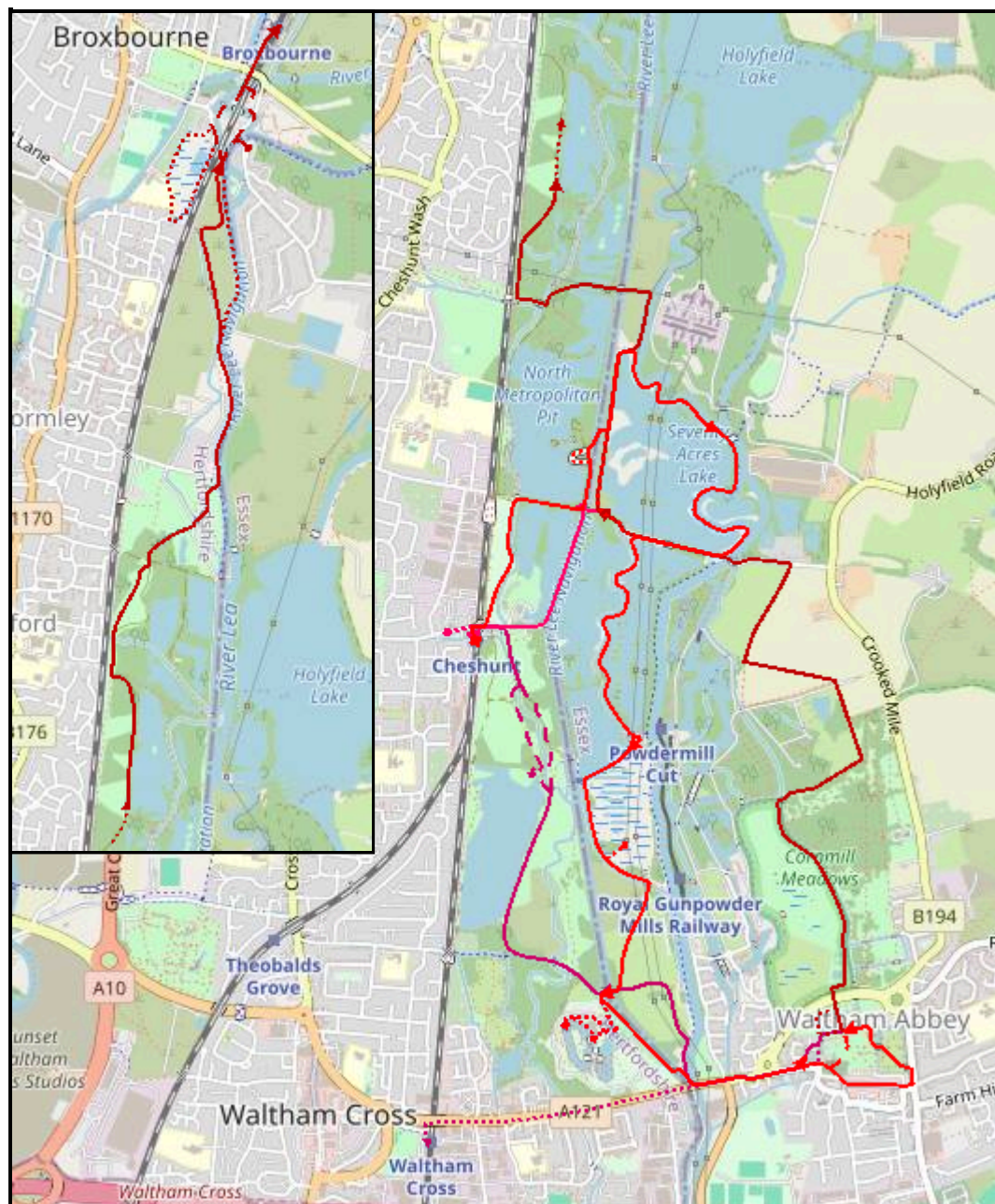
<b>Suggested Train</b>	Take the train nearest to <b>10:30</b> from <b>Liverpool Street</b> (or <b>Stratford</b> ) to <b>Cheshunt</b> .
<b>Lunch</b>	<p>There are plenty of refreshment places after 7–7½ km in <b>Waltham Abbey</b>, but the pandemic took its toll on the town's pubs and several have closed or significantly changed in character.</p> <p>The suggested lunch pub was originally the <b>Crown</b> (01992-732590) in Romeland; this McMullens pub closed for a few years but reopened in 2023 as a Red Oak Tavern and would be worth trying again. The Crown's former owners took over the <b>Welsh Harp</b> (01992-848368) in Market Square, but this closed suddenly in early 2025 and its fate is uncertain. Two other pubs on Sun Street are the refurbished <b>Sun Inn</b> (01992-914249) and the <b>Angel</b> (01992-718671), but neither have been tried.</p> <p>As an alternative you might be tempted by <b>Bake You Happy</b> (01992-916560; closed Mon), a 'Tearoom and Cake Shop' alongside Highbridge Roundabout. There are more cafés and fast food places in and around Market Square and Sun Street.</p> <p>An earlier refreshment stop is possible at the <b>Brew Street Kitchen and Bar</b> in the <b>Lee Valley White Water Centre</b> (03000-030616). Although primarily serving visitors taking part in the activities, this modern food outlet declares that it is "open to everyone, from rafters to ramblers". It has plenty of indoor and outdoor seating and is open daily to at least 4pm weekdays, 4.30pm weekends.</p>
<b>Tea</b>	<p>For the <b>Main Walk</b> there are two places at <b>Broxbourne Waterside</b>, a pleasant spot on the way to the station. The <b>Old Mill Retreat Café</b> (01992-460960; open daily to 4pm winter, 5.30pm summer) serves home-made cakes, while for stronger stuff the nearby <b>Crown</b> (01992-462244) is part of the Vintage Inns chain. There are also some snack bars on the covered walkway to the station platforms, but for other places you would have to detour to the town's High Street, 400m off the walk route.</p> <p>For the <b>Circular Walks</b> there are two cafés and two pubs just past <b>Cheshunt</b> station on Windmill Lane: <b>Hackberries Cafe &amp; Bistro</b> (01992-910057; open daily to 5pm) and the small <b>Rose Cafe</b>, plus the <b>Red Cow</b> (01992-623509) and the <b>Maltsters</b> (01992-631369) pubs. On the <b>alternative afternoon</b> route an earlier refreshment stop is possible at the <b>Brew Street Kitchen and Bar</b> (see above).</p>

**Help Us!** After the walk, please leave a comment, it really helps. Thanks!  
You can also upload photos to the   SWC Group on Flickr (upload your photos) and videos to  [Youtube](#). This walk's tags are:

By Car	Start	Finish
<b>Help</b>	National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • TraveLine (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234	
<b>Version</b>	Apr-25 <a href="#">Sean</a>	
<b>Copyright</b>	© Saturday Walkers Club. All Rights Reserved. No commercial use. No copying. No derivatives. Free with attribution for one time non-commercial use only. <a href="http://www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml">www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml</a>	

## Walk Directions

## Walk Maps



All maps © OpenStreetMap contributors

## Walk Options ( Circ. )

### M. Main Walk (17¼ km)

- a. Circular Walk, returning to Cheshunt (12¾ km)
- b. Circular Walk, with alternative afternoon (11¾ km)

## Walk Directions

### A. Cheshunt Station to the Wildlife Discovery Centre (2¼ km)

1. Arriving from London, leave the station near the front of the train and turn right to cross the railway tracks, via the footbridge if necessary. On the other side immediately **turn left** into the signposted **River Lee Country Park**<sup>1</sup>, with the first of several information panels for the **Waterbird Discovery Trail** at the back of the small car park. Take the right-hand path through this semi-open area.

2. The surfaced path goes past a series of small wooden structures (for exercising your dog!) with a stream on the right, the **Small River Lea**<sup>2</sup>. Later **Cheshunt Lake** is visible beyond the stream. At the end turn right to cross the stream and follow the track between two lakes, with the one on the left having the less appealing name of **North Metropolitan Pit**.
3. Just before the track rises to cross the **River Lee Navigation**<sup>3</sup> *fork left* onto a path running parallel to its towpath. You will be crossing the navigation at the lock 300m ahead, but shortly before reaching it there is a gate on the left into a fenced-off area of wet woodland.
  - If you wish you can detour around this **North Met Pit Orchid Area** on a continuous section of boardwalk (part of the **Orchid Discovery Trail**), returning to the main path a little way ahead.
4. Either way, immediately after the exit from the Orchid Area *fork right* off the main path onto a broad grassy path going up to **Cheshunt Lock**. Cross the navigation and follow the path out to another Waterbird information panel. For the main route *turn left* onto the perimeter path around **Seventy Acres Lake**, initially heading **N**.
  - For a much shorter route around this lake (but bypassing the Discovery Centre) you could turn right instead. In the south-western corner of the lake you would fork left at a **Viking Sign Post** sculpture in a triangular path junction and meet the main route coming from the opposite direction in a further 150m. If you take this short cut (saving 1¾ km), resume the directions at [8] in §B.
5. For the main route follow the path around the north-western corner of the lake and then *fork right* at a triangular path junction to start coming back along its north-eastern side. The path follows a meandering course between the lake and the **Old River Lea** and eventually comes to a new building on the right with a bird hide which you could visit, the **Wildlife Discovery Centre**<sup>4</sup>.

## B. The Discovery Centre to Hall Marsh Scrape (2½ km)

6. Continue on the perimeter path around the lake, passing a viewing platform down on the shore and a footbridge across the river on the left. The path makes a wide loop alongside a meander of the river (Horsemill Stream) and eventually leads into a small car park, now with the wide **Flood Relief Channel** on your left.
7. *Turn right* to go through the car park, away from the channel. *Fork right* in front of a patch of grass with a **Bird Transition** sculpture and follow the path over a high footbridge between two lakes. Shortly before the path curves right *turn left* onto a side path, heading **S**.
8. Follow this unsurfaced path for just over 1 km as it meanders along a strip of land between **Hooks Marsh Lake** (on the left) and a stream on the right, with **Police Pit** and later **Friday Lake** beyond it.
9. At the end of this stretch cross a footbridge over a stream (**Powdermill Cut**), ignoring a boardwalk on the right leading to the edge of Friday Lake. In front of a small grassy area containing a **Banded Demoiselle** sculpture *turn right* onto a path heading away from the Flood Relief Channel, with **Hall Marsh Scrape** off to your left.

## C. Hall Marsh Scrape to the White Water Centre (1¼ • 1¾ km)

10. Follow the path between Hall Marsh Scrape and Powdermill Cut, with the steel **Phoenix Hide** offering an unusual viewing point across this floodplain grassland. At the corner of the scrape do not cross the footbridge ahead but *turn left* onto another surfaced path. Follow this path for 500m, gradually curving round to the left and heading back towards the Flood Relief Channel.
  - Two-thirds of the way along you could make an out-and-back detour to **Snipe Hide**. Old information panels show another viewing point on this stretch but Teal Hide has disappeared.

11. About 75m before the path reaches the Flood Relief Channel **turn right** to cross a stream on a wide bridge. Go through a gate and follow a grassy path across a large open area, the **Showground**. On the far side this merges with a path coming from Waltham Abbey and you cross the Lee Navigation on the Canal Bridge. **Veer left** down a slope towards an entrance into the **Lee Valley White Water Centre**.  
*If you want to visit the centre (which has a café), follow the directions below.*

## 12. Detour into the White Water Centre (+~½ km)

- Go through the pedestrian entrance onto an enclosed path and skirt around a lake to reach the main building. There are steps from the Reception area up to the **Brew Street Kitchen and Bar** on the first floor.
- There are paths from the large Terrace behind the café and around the side of the building to the Olympic course. If it is operating you can watch canoeists and rafters tackling it from a footbridge.
- To resume the walk retrace your steps out of the centre.

*If you want to curtail the walk and go directly to Cheshunt station, go to §L.*

## D. The White Water Centre to Waltham Abbey (Romeland) (1 km)

13. Make your way to the towpath alongside the Lee Navigation and turn right to head **SE**. Cross the navigation at **Waltham Town Lock** and veer right across a patch of grass with a **Viking Ship** sculpture to the main road ahead.
14. Turn left onto the A121 and go up to the traffic lights. Unless you want to make a long out-and-back detour along Beaulieu Drive to the museum at the former **Royal Gunpowder Mills**<sup>5</sup> (500m away), keep ahead at this junction. You are now on the B194 (Highbridge Street) and should use the pedestrian crossing to switch to its right-hand side before reaching Highbridge Roundabout.
15. Go past the right-hand side of the large roundabout (with the **2012 Olympic Shield**<sup>6</sup> in its centre), passing the **Bake You Happy** tearoom on the right and a **Barge Yard** information panel on the left. Carry on along Highbridge Street, crossing the Old River Lea and heading directly towards Waltham Abbey Church. For the first of the possible lunch pubs, **turn left** into a residential street (Romeland) after 100m to find the **Crown** on your right.

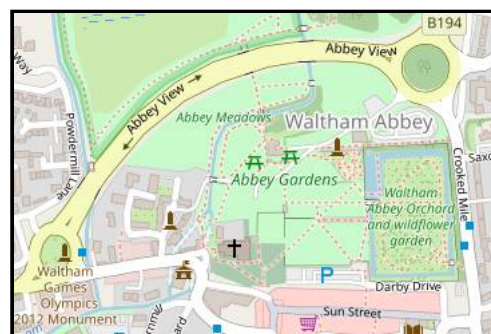
## E. Romeland to the Abbey Church Centre (1 km • 350m)

16. If you have been visiting the Crown, return to Highbridge Street and turn left. At the end of this street you pass the **Town Hall**<sup>7</sup> on the right and come to the west door of the **Church of the Holy Cross and St Lawrence**<sup>8</sup>, which is well worth a visit.

*The main route goes out along Sun Street and loops back through the Abbey Gardens. If you are not planning to visit any of the town's other refreshment places you could take the short cut in [18] through a different part of the gardens.*

## 17. Main route (1 km)

- Take the tree-lined path on the southern side of the church, passing a statue of **King Harold**<sup>9</sup> high up on its south wall. Where the path splits **keep right** to stay on the main path.
- The path leads out to Market Square via a short passage beside the (possibly closed) **Welsh Harp**. Bear left across the square into the pedestrianised Sun Street.



- c. About halfway along this street you go over a pavement mosaic marking the **Greenwich Meridian**<sup>10</sup> and pass the **Sun Inn** on the right.
- d. At the end of the street the **Epping Forest District Museum**<sup>11</sup> is in an attractive half-timbered building on the right and the **Angel** pub is on the left, just before the junction with Quaker Lane.
- e. Join Quaker Lane and turn left at the traffic lights ahead onto a residential street (Crooked Mile). In 75m **turn left** through a gate into **Waltham Abbey Gardens**<sup>12</sup>. Cross a moat on a wooden footbridge into the old **Abbey Orchard** (and wildflower garden).
- f. **Turn half-right** to cut across the orchard to the middle of its western side. Cross another footbridge into the main part of the gardens and **fork right** onto a path leading to the enclosed **Rose Garden**.
- g. If you exit on its northern side you will come out opposite the site of the medieval **Bloomery Forge**<sup>13</sup>, in which case turn left onto the path alongside the garden, soon passing another pavement mosaic marking the **Meridian**.
- h. Follow the path up to the building ahead (the **Church Centre**), where there is an information panel about the **Infirmary and Chapel**.
  - If instead you exit the Rose Garden through the **Sun & Moon** gateway on its western side, the Church Centre is straight ahead.

## 18. Short cut (350m)

- a. Take the tree-lined path on the southern side of the church, passing a statue of **King Harold**<sup>9</sup> high up on its south wall. Where the path splits **fork left** to stay alongside the church.
- b. Veer left around the back of the church to come to a stone slab **memorial** marking the king's possible burial site.
- c. With the church behind you, go diagonally across the patch of grass to the left towards an iron grille in the stone wall. Go through a gap in the wall to its right.
- d. Turn left and go alongside the wall to the other end of this medieval stone passageway, where there is a **Cloister Passage** information panel (and a slightly better view of its vaulted ceiling through the grille at this end).
- e. Follow the path up to the building ahead (the **Church Centre**), where there is an information panel about the **Infirmary and Chapel**.

*If you are finishing at Cheshunt via the alternative afternoon route, go to §K.*

## F. The Abbey Church Centre to the Viking Signpost (3½ km)

- 19. Take the path past the left-hand side of the Church Centre, heading **N** towards a footbridge over the **Cornmill Stream**.
  - Before leaving the gardens you might like to take a closer look at the **Ancestor**<sup>14</sup> sculpture on the grass off to the left, and perhaps also the **Abbey Gateway**<sup>15</sup> beyond it. If you exit through the Gateway there is a footpath around the outside of the gardens which meets the direct exit by the footbridge.
- 20. From the footbridge follow the path through a subway under the town's ring road and **turn right** onto a fenced grassy path in front of **Cornmill Meadows Dragonfly Sanctuary**<sup>16</sup>. In 50m, shortly before reaching a bridge over the Cornmill Stream, **turn left** through a wooden gate.
- 21. Follow a clear grassy path heading **N**, soon passing an information panel about the three small **Abbey Fish Ponds** off to the left. The path goes alongside the stream all the way to the north-eastern corner of the water meadows, where you leave them via a footbridge across the stream.

22. Turn left onto a broad grassy path, which immediately swings right. This potentially muddy path climbs gently alongside a high chainlink fence around part of the extensive gunpowder works site, later with a closely-packed line of tall conifers on the right. At the end of the trees turn left to continue alongside the fence.
23. In 150m go through a wooden gate to continue along a field margin. At the corner of the works site **turn half-left** as indicated by a footpath waymarker post to go gently downhill across a vast farm field, heading **WNW**.  
*The next 400m might be a quagmire in wet weather. OpenStreetMap actually shows the path as going around the field edge (which is not the right of way), but there is no field margin on this stretch so it is unlikely to be any better.*
24. If the right of way is not marked out, aim for a pair of waymarker posts 50m to the left of a wide gap in the hedge boundary at the bottom. On reaching them turn right to go along the field margin, with **Hooks Marsh** on the other side of the hedge. In the field corner cross a (possibly temporary) works access road flanked by gates onto a lane.
25. Turn left onto the lane to go through the hamlet of Fishers Green. In 250m the lane crosses the **Flood Relief Channel** on **Fishers Green Bridge** and leads into a small car park for the Country Park, which you might recognise from your outward route in §B.
26. **Fork right** in front of a patch of grass with a **Bird Transition** sculpture and follow the path over a high footbridge between two lakes. Ignore the side path off to the left which you took previously and follow the main path up to a **Viking Sign Post** sculpture in a triangular path junction.  
*If you are doing the Circular Walk (to Cheshunt), go to §J.*

#### G. The Viking Signpost to Ashley Lake (2 km)

27. **Fork right** at the path junction to stay on the lake's perimeter path, heading **N** along its western side. In 300m keep ahead where the path from Cheshunt Lock joins from the left. Repeat the outward route in §A around the north-western corner of the lake and then **fork left** at another triangular path junction, leaving the perimeter path.
28. Follow the path alongside the Old River Lea, with a large electricity substation coming into view beyond the river. In 250m **turn left** at a path junction flanked by a pair of **Wildlife Bench** sculptures. The path soon rises to cross the Lee Navigation on a high bridge and continues along a strip of woodland between two lakes.
29. The path curves round to the left and in 250m merges with another path from the right, briefly heading back towards Cheshunt and running alongside a stream, the **Small River Lea**. In a further 50m you reach a major path junction, with a path off to the right leading to a bridge over the railway line, 150m away.
30. **Turn right** at the path junction, crossing the Small River Lea and briefly going alongside **Turnford Brook**. Before reaching the railway bridge **turn right** again onto a broad cycleway. This runs parallel to the railway line for 200m, then turns half-right to move away from it. In a further 200m it bears left to go alongside the large **Ashley Lake**.

#### H. Ashley Lake to Broxbourne Waterside (3 km)

31. Follow the cycleway alongside the large **Ashley Lake**. At the far end it veers back towards the railway and runs parallel to the tracks for 150m. Where it bends right the suggested route is to **keep ahead** on a broad grassy path through a semi-open area. In 250m the path goes through a small dip, after which you **fork right** to rejoin the cycleway after 50m.

32. Bear left onto the cycleway and go straight ahead at a major path crossing. In 50m **fork right** onto a side path and follow this for 200m, going past a vehicle barrier onto a lane. Turn left briefly onto the lane, then almost immediately veer right through another barrier onto the continuation of the footpath.
33. After crossing a stream on a wooden footbridge the path curves left and goes through a semi-open area dotted with trees. In 150m, shortly before reaching the car park at the end of Wharf Road, **veer right** onto a side path leading to the wide **River Lea** (which is navigable on this stretch).
34. Turn left and go along the towpath for 650m. Just before the start of a line of pollarded willows on the left-hand side of the path, there is an information panel for **Silvermeade**<sup>17</sup>. If conditions permit, the suggested route is to go through a wooden kissing gate into this water meadow.
  - If the meadow looks waterlogged you could simply continue along the towpath for a further 650m and resume the directions at the start of the next section, where the main route rejoins from the second of two more gates into the meadow.
35. Inside the water meadow turn half-right and follow a faint grassy path all the way across the main part of the meadow, parallel to a stream on the left and passing several small fenced-off areas. On the far side go through a wooden kissing gate and cross a tree-lined stream on a wide bridge.
36. Follow the grassy path as it swings right and then left to go around two sides of a smaller part of the meadow. At the far end exit through a kissing gate to rejoin the River Lea's towpath by the start of another section of the Lee Navigation.

## I. Broxbourne Waterside to the Station ( $\frac{3}{4}$ • $1\frac{1}{2}$ km)

*There is a choice of routes to the station, with the café route in [37] including an optional circuit around some wetlands on a long boardwalk. If the café has closed or you need something stronger, either take the pub route in [38] or use the map to detour to the town's High Street via Mill Lane or the Recreation Ground.*

### 37. Old Mill Café route ( $\frac{3}{4}$ • $1\frac{1}{2}$ km)

- a. If exiting the water meadow **turn left** onto the path alongside the River Lea, going under a low railway bridge and past the car park for the **Old Mill Retreat Café**.

*In the marshy area behind the car park there is a horseshoe-shaped "Wetlands and Woodlands" trail, although at the time of writing it was fenced off for repairs. Even when open it should not be attempted if the back of the car park is under water, since part of the boardwalk through the wetlands area will be flooded too.*



#### b. Optional Wetlands & Woodlands extension (+ $\frac{3}{4}$ km)

- If conditions permit you could do this extension in either direction. The wetlands section is a long boardwalk which starts from the back of the car park; the woodlands section starts between the café and a Canoe & Cycle Hire shed. Whichever direction you take, ignore steps up to an exit at the far end and return on the other path.

- c. To head for the station, go past the Canoe & Cycle Hire shed and **turn right** to cross the river. **Veer left** through the ruins of **Broxbourne Mill**<sup>18</sup> and follow a tarmac path running alongside the river. Just before this goes under the railway, **turn left** up steps onto a metal footbridge.

### 38. The Crown route (¾ km)

- a. If exiting the water meadow zig-zag right and left to cross the River Lea on a footbridge, continuing alongside the Lee Navigation. At the next bridge go up steps to a narrow lane and cross the navigation to come to the **Crown**.
- b. After visiting the pub, retrace your steps over the road bridge and follow the lane round to the right. Go past a small car park opposite the **Lee Valley Boat Centre** and across another waterway.
  - A short out-and-back detour up the steps on the right would reveal the site of **Broxbourne Lido**<sup>19</sup>.
- c. To head for the station, go into the car park opposite the steps up to the lido and **veer right** to go diagonally across it. In the far corner turn left onto a tarmac path going under the railway and **immediately turn right** up steps onto a metal footbridge.

39. To complete the walk, cross the River Lea and follow the path up a slope and under Station Road. The station<sup>20</sup> is at the far end of its long car park, with the entrance on the left. All the platforms are accessed via an overhead walkway, with trains to London leaving from Platforms 1 or 2.

### J. The Viking Signpost to Cheshunt Station (1¼ km)

40. **Fork left** at the path junction, cross the Lee Navigation and **immediately turn sharp right** to go down to its towpath. Turn right to go under the bridge and head **S** on the towpath for 500m, passing **Cheshunt Lake** on your right.
41. After passing the lakeside sailing club (Herts Young Mariners) **veer right** onto a short path leading into Pindar car park. There are some wooden sculptures in a clearing off to the left which you could detour around if you are not pressed for time, but to complete the walk follow the car park's access road out to the level crossing in front of Cheshunt station.
  - There is a direct entrance onto Platform 1 on this side of the crossing if you want to go straight back on a Greater Anglia train.
42. There are several refreshment places less than 150m away on Windmill Lane, on the other side of the crossing: the **Red Cow** pub and **Hackberries Cafe & Bistro** on the left; **Rose Cafe** and the **Maltsters** pub on the right.
43. Return along Windmill Lane to the main station entrance. London Overground trains leave from Platform 3, on this side; cross to Platform 1 via the station footbridge for Greater Anglia trains to Liverpool Street or Stratford.

### K. The Abbey Church Centre to the White Water Centre (1½ • 2 km)

44. Take the path heading **SW** away from the Church Centre, passing a tall wooden sculpture on the grass off to the right, the **Ancestor**<sup>14</sup>. The path merges with another from the left and leaves the gardens through the **Abbey Gateway**<sup>15</sup>. Cross the **Cornmill Stream** on a wide bridge and turn left onto a path alongside it.
45. You will be leaving Waltham Abbey along Highbridge Street, retracing your outward route. The most direct route is to cut through Romeland on the right (passing the **Crown**), but if you want to (re)visit the Abbey Church continue alongside the stream, passing the **Mill site** and the **Rectory** on the way to the church.
46. Either way, go back along Highbridge Street and continue past Highbridge Roundabout, now on the B194 and passing the **Bake You Happy** tearoom. Use the pedestrian crossing to switch to the right-hand side of the B194 before reaching the traffic lights.

47. Unless you want to make a long out-and-back detour along Beaulieu Drive to the museum at the former **Royal Gunpowder Mills**<sup>5</sup> (500m away), keep ahead at this junction. You are now on the A121 and in 150m you reach the town bridge across two river channels.
- If you want to curtail the walk by finishing at **Waltham Cross** station, simply continue along the A121 for a further 1 km, crossing to its left-hand side at some point. On the railway bridge go down a flight of steps to the station forecourt and cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.
48. To head for Cheshunt, **turn right** off the road onto the broad path between the two channels, passing a **Viking Ship** sculpture on the left. Follow the path for 200m as it swings round to the right alongside the Flood Relief Channel. Before it curves back to the left, **turn left** through a metal fieldgate into the Showground.
49. Follow a broad path through this large open area, at first tracking a line of pylons and later veering left to head **W**. On the far side the path briefly merges with the outward route in §C as you cross the Lee Navigation on the Canal Bridge. **Veer left** down a slope towards an entrance into the **Lee Valley White Water Centre**.
- If you want to visit the centre before continuing to Cheshunt, follow the directions below.*
50. **Detour into the White Water Centre (+~½ km)**

- Go through the pedestrian entrance onto an enclosed path and skirt around a lake to reach the main building. There are steps from the Reception area up to the **Brew Street Kitchen and Bar** on the first floor.
- There are paths from the large Terrace behind the café and around the side of the building to the Olympic course. If it is operating you can watch canoeists and rafters tackling it from a footbridge.
- To resume the walk retrace your steps out of the centre.

## L. The White Water Centre to Cheshunt Station (2¼ km)

51. Take the path heading **NW** away from the canal bridge for 400m, passing a sign for a **Disc Golf Course** and crossing the Small River Lea. At a triangular path junction **fork right** and keep right at further junctions to head **N** alongside a large lake, **Bowyers Water**. In its north-eastern corner the path forks and you can take either route: both go past a large wooden sculpture.
52. **Giant's Chair route**

- Fork left at the path junction. In 75m the route continues ahead at the next path junction (but a short out-and-back detour to the left would bring you to a viewing platform over an **Orchid Area** in front of the lake).
- Continuing on the main route, the path merges with another from the left and goes along the right-hand side of a meadow (**Thistly Marsh**), soon passing the **Giant's Chair** sculpture on the right.
- In a further 150m **fork right** onto a path through some trees. Cross the Small River Lea on a footbridge and **turn left** onto a cycleway, rejoining the other route.

## 53. Green Man route

- Fork right at the path junction to cross the Small River Lea on a wooden footbridge. Where the path splits again in front of the **Shrine** sculpture (of a 'Green Man'), **fork left**.
- In 150m the path merges with a cycleway coming from **Waltham Common Lock**. In a further 300m the other route rejoins from a footbridge on the left.

54. Follow this cycleway for 250m, passing a group of wooden sculptures in a clearing on the right along the way (which you could detour around if you are not pressed for time). At the end turn left onto Pindar car park's access road to come to the level crossing in front of Cheshunt station.
  - There is a direct entrance onto Platform 1 on this side of the crossing if you want to go straight back on a Greater Anglia train.
55. There are several refreshment places less than 150m away on Windmill Lane, on the other side of the crossing: the **Red Cow** pub and **Hackberries Cafe & Bistro** on the left; **Rose Cafe** and the **Maltsters** pub on the right.
56. Return along Windmill Lane to the main station entrance. London Overground trains leave from Platform 3, on this side; cross to Platform 1 via the station footbridge for Greater Anglia trains to Liverpool Street or Stratford.

## Walk Notes

1. **River Lee Country Park** is a large open space between Broxbourne and Waltham Abbey. It is part of the linear Lee Valley Regional Park, which follows the course of the **River Lea** for 42 km from Ware to the Thames. [By convention the spelling *Lee* is used for constructed features such as the Navigation and the Country Park, whereas the natural river and place names derived from it are spelt *Lea*.]
2. The **River Lea** runs for 68 km from its source in the Chilterns near Luton to the Thames in east London. It splits into several waterways (Old River Lea, Small River Lea, etc) as well as the constructed channels.
3. The **River Lee Navigation** was constructed alongside long stretches of the River Lea in the 18<sup>th</sup>C to improve navigation, which had become more difficult with the increased extraction of water into the New River.
4. The **Wildlife Discovery Centre** opened in December 2020, replacing the Bittern Information Point. It contains a large bird hide overlooking Seventy Acres Lake and a 5m-high viewing tower with 360° views.
5. The **Royal Gunpowder Mills** were acquired by the Crown in 1787, taking over a private business which had been operating for over a century. Production continued until 1945 when the site became a research centre for rocket propellants, but this closed in 1991. A heritage centre has been open to the public since 2001.
6. The **2012 Olympic Shield** commemorates the building of the Lee Valley White Water Centre, which was constructed to hold the canoe slalom events. It depicts King Harold surrounded by King Henry VIII and various civic and Olympic plaques.
7. **Waltham Abbey Town Hall** was built in 1904 in a Continental Art Nouveau style.
8. The **Church of the Holy Cross and St Lawrence, Waltham Abbey** was rebuilt in Norman style between 1090 and 1150, the fourth church on the site. When construction of the abbey started in 1177 it was greatly lengthened eastwards but the extended nave, transepts and chancel were all demolished in 1540. The west tower was added in 1556 after the old (east) tower collapsed.
9. **King Harold (Godwinson)** is said to have been cured of paralysis while praying before the Holy Cross when Earl of Essex. After his death at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 legend has it that his body was brought to Waltham, but some historians have speculated that he is buried in Bosham church, in West Sussex.
10. The **Greenwich Meridian** was established as the universal baseline of 0° longitude at an international conference in 1884. In Waltham Abbey its location is marked by pavement mosaics in Sun Street and the Abbey Gardens. A small part of this walk follows the **Greenwich Meridian Trail**, a long-distance coast-to-coast route which was inaugurated in 2009 to mark its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
11. The **Epping Forest District Museum** of local history is contained in two historic houses which have been skilfully combined into a single building.
12. **Waltham Abbey Gardens** were laid out by the Denny family, who built Abbey House on the site of the former abbey at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup>C. The house was demolished in 1770.

13. The **Bloomery Forge** smelted iron ore and provided metalwork for the abbey and its farm (a bloom is an iron or steel bar in an intermediate stage of manufacture).
14. The **Ancestor** sculpture (1992) was carved by artist Helena Stykianides from a single oak tree cut from Epping Forest. It represents an Augustinian canon and has a series of enigmatic images on the back.
15. The **Abbey Gateway** was the main entrance to the monastic area, with separate arches for horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians. The interior wall is one of the earliest brick walls in the country, partly built with large medieval red bricks known as 'Waltham Great Bricks'.
16. **Cornmill Meadows Dragonfly Sanctuary** is an area of partly-flooded rough grassland surrounded by slow-flowing rivers which together support many species of dragonflies and damselflies. It has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
17. **Silvermeade** is an area of wet grassland dissected by a network of ditches. The fences along their sides are to protect the banks and provide a habitat for water voles.
18. **Broxbourne Mill** is mentioned in the Domesday Book and produced flour until the late 19<sup>th</sup>C. In the 20<sup>th</sup>C the mill wheel powered a small engineering works, but the three-storey building burned down in 1949. It has been partially restored by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority.
19. **Broxbourne Lido** was built by the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority in 1978, but demolished only 30 years later because it did not meet contemporary health & safety standards.
20. **Broxbourne Station** was relocated from its original Station Road site in 1959, hence the distinctively modern building (which is Grade II listed) on a railway line which opened in 1840.

» *Last updated: April 27, 2025*

© Saturday Walkers Club. All Rights Reserved. No commercial use. No copying. No derivatives. Free with attribution for one time non-commercial use only.  
[www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml](http://www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml)