

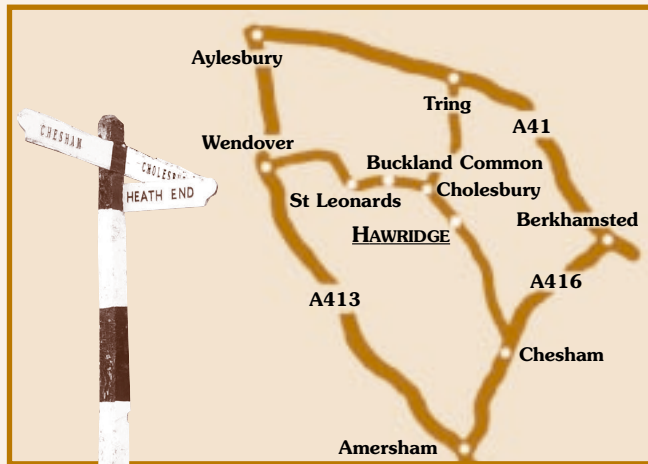
The Parish of Cholesbury-cum-St

Leonards in Buckinghamshire can be found to the north-west of Chesham. It stretches almost 4½ miles and at its highest point rises to over 250m within the Chiltern Hills, a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is evidence of prehistoric settlements and the area is mentioned in 8th century records. The four 'hilltop villages' that make up the present-day Parish (Buckland Common, Cholesbury, Hawridge, and St Leonards) evolved during Saxon times from upland pastureland of so called 'strip-parishes' associated with villages downhill in the Aylesbury Vale, subsequently becoming detached hamlets and then villages. Together with the outlying areas of Braziers End, Heath End, Lanes End and The Vale they have constituted the civil parish since 1934.

Heath End probably acquired its name from the hamlet's close association with Wigginton Heath, which in medieval times would have been an area of almost impenetrable scrub stretching from Wigginton along to Heath End. Historically Heath End was part of the Manor of Hawridge, being land valued for its agriculture and woodland. Around the 1600s many of the fields, including some on which commoners' rights prevailed, became incorporated into the estate attached to the Parsonage. The original Rectory was built during the reign of Queen Anne and it is believed was demolished during the early 20th century.

The Geology of this part of the Chilterns is characterised by the chalk laid down 100 million years ago, on which a layer of clay with flints was later deposited. Subsequent exposure by weathering accounts for the thin layer of topsoil. Elsewhere deposits of gravel and sand are found. The hilltop villages have been established above the small often steep-sided dry valleys which characterise the area. These valleys were formed by melt-water flows at the end of the last Ice Age. The unique geology contributes greatly to the characteristic landscape - the heaths, meadows, woodlands and ponds - and has also played an important part in local industry - clay and sand for brick making, lime for house building and agriculture and flint for road-making.

DIRECTIONS



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Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards:-
Local History Group
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Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons Preservation Society
Parish Map Artists
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The Landlord of The Rose and Crown

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Jubilee Walks in the Hilltop Villages



HAWRIDGE COMMON & HEATH END

2



Time 2 to 2½ hrs
Distance 3 miles or 5 km

Jubilee Walks in the Hilltop Villages

This is the second in a series of walks produced to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II in 2002 and the 40th Anniversary of the Local History Group. These walks aim to illustrate the local and natural history of the Parish. An additional feature of this walk is Hawridge Common, managed on behalf of the Lord of the Manors by the Commons Preservation Society.

The Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards Local History Group

was founded in 1962 to stimulate interest in the Hilltop Villages. A programme of talks is organised for the first Friday of the month from October to May and outings to places of historical interest are arranged each summer. The group also carries out research on the history of the Hilltop Villages and maintains an archive of items of historical interest. New members and visitors are always welcome.



Hawridge and Cholesbury

Commons Preservation Society was formed in 1967 with the co-operation of the Lord of the Manors to protect the commons, to keep the paths and rides clear and amongst other matters preserve the commons as a wildlife sanctuary. During the winter, working parties undertake essential maintenance now that the commons are no longer grazed, to ensure the character of the commons is retained.

Green Lanes are the byways remaining after the current road network developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The original byways linked otherwise remote settlements providing the main trade routes to and from nearby towns.

The origin and purpose of green lanes can sometimes be determined from the age and variety of trees, shrubs and perennial flowers that inhabit the hedges on either side. Most of these ancient track-ways have now disappeared or have been incorporated into modern day minor road networks. Both Hawridge Lane and Hill Farm Road have escaped such fates.



Hawridge Lane connected the villages of Hawridge and Bellingdon. Long before the much newer road up The Vale, Hawridge Lane would have been the principal route to Chesham. In earlier times the village of Hawridge did not stretch along the road as today. Instead it comprised

Hawridge Court and St Mary's Church as well as close to the Rose and Crown and in Hawridge Vale.

In the past Hawridge had closer associations with Wigginton and Berkhamsted. Apart from the drovers' track that ran along the bottom of the commons, there was no established road from Hawridge to Cholesbury. Instead, Hawridge Lane led to Stoney Lane which in turn connected with what is now Heath End Road, then the main route to Wigginton, and the renamed Hill Farm Road, an important route to Berkhamsted.

The Rose and Crown

Records indicate there has been a pub here since at least 1753 when Thomas Wheeler was recorded as the first licensee.



Horseblock Lane

The name is said to be associated with the English Civil War, when during the 1640s Parliamentary soldiers were billeted in the area for a period, and this was the location where their horses were quartered during skirmishes at Wendover and Chesham. Alternatively, it is suggested the name derives from a fierce battle there, when horses that had been killed blocked the lane and were then used by Parliamentary soldiers as a barricade against the Royalists.



Hawridge and Cholesbury School

The Hawridge and Cholesbury Elementary School was founded in the 1870s under the stewardship of the

Rev. Jeston. The original schoolhouse was built on land given by the Lord of the Manor. Prior to this only a simple education was provided for children at the straw-plait school.

Hawridge and Cholesbury Commons

The commons have been owned by Lords of the Manors since before 1088. The manors were combined in 1714. Until the end of the 19th century, there are records of many encroachments by local inhabitants, with varying fines being levied. The 1810 Court Roll records that George Franklin (Landlord of the Rose and Crown 1804-1819), with William Howard, built two cottages on land obtained by encroachment on the waste. Both were fined one shilling and the cottages were allowed to stand. Grazing was practised until the 1960s by George Brown, who brought his cows up to the common each day. Some of the houses continue to have 'Rights of Common'. Today, as a result of recent work the commons have been designated a County Wildlife Site.