

Moreton and Magdalen Laver History

Magdalen Laver is a small rural parish between Chipping Ongar to the south east and Harlow to the north west. The parish has an unusual number of ancient wooden framed farm houses, the oldest of which dates from the 14th century. Several of these are on moated sites. The houses are manor houses, farm houses and the village rectory. One of these houses at Bushes farm is passed on the walk.

Moreton is also a small rural parish closer to Chipping Ongar than Magdalen Laver. It lies on rising ground from the bridge over the Cripsey Brook at 52m (170ft) above sea level to 85m (280ft) by the church. An unusual number of moated and pre-18th century houses indicate that Moreton was formerly an important place in the area. The White Hart Inn is the older of the two pubs dating possibly from the 16th century. Opposite the White Hart is the Nags Head an early 18th century building.



Moreton Bridge

About the Walk



St Mary Magdalen Church

The Moreton - Magdalen Laver Walk is an attractive 10km (6 mile) circular walk partially along the Cripsey Brook. It will take approximately 3 hours to complete.

The footpaths on the walk are in good condition but they will become muddy after wet weather. There is a small amount of road walking involved, please be aware of traffic and take care. Please follow the Country Code. Keep dogs on a lead near livestock and keep to the footpath when walking across privately owned land.

There is parking available at Bobbingworth Nature Reserve.

For any footpath queries please contact Essex County Council on 08457 430 430.

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Moreton - Magdalen Laver Country Walk



Cripsey Brook

Points of Interest

1. Bobbingworth Nature Reserve

The site is almost nine hectares and was formerly used for gravel extraction, following which in the 1960s it became a domestic rubbish tip. Since 2009 Countrycare, with help from volunteers, local schools, and corporate volunteers, has created a diverse mixture of new planting and meadow. 5,000 trees have been planted on the reserve, a wildflower mix was sown to help speed the spread of wildflowers and a population of slow-worms have been released onto the site.



Slow-worm

2. Moreton Village

Two thousand years ago Moreton was the point at which a roman road, called Stane Street, crossed the Cripsey Brook. Stane Street connected Great Dunmow to London. Although the original bridge has been replaced, there is still a crossing there today. The present brick structure dates from 1783. The roman road at this point is no longer visible but can be seen at nearby Tawny Common.

3. Bushes Farm House

The Grade II listed moated farmhouse was built in about 1500, extended in the early 17th century and restored in 1933. There are wings to the house extending north and east. The north wing is a two story structure probably dating from the late 15th century. The east wing which is at right angles to the rest of the building is the site of the medieval hall now much altered, a large chimney and ceilings have been added.



The Bushes Farm Oak is one of the 50 favourite trees of Epping Forest District. It stands at the top of the hill between Bushes farm and Moreton on private land so there is no direct access. But it can be seen from the footpath that runs close by.

4. Pole Lane Local Wildlife Site

Pole Lane is approximately 1.5 km (1 mile) long running from Tilegate Green to High Laver. Originally part of the main route between Harlow and Chipping Ongar the lane is now a by-way, but not suitable for motorised traffic. These track ways provide valuable connective corridor habitat for birds, small mammals and invertebrates and in 2009 was selected as a Local Wildlife Site (Ep154).

5. St. Mary Magdalen Church, Magdalen Laver

The parish church of St. Mary Magdalene consists of a nave, chancel, west tower and south porch. Most of the walls are of flint rubble, those in the nave include some Roman brick. The tower is of timber. The nave was built early in the 12th century. The flints are set in herring-bone courses in the lower part of the walls, while above there are indications that the Roman brick was arranged in decorative bands. In 1855 the rector of the parish was William Webb Ellis, the inventor of the Rugby Union.

