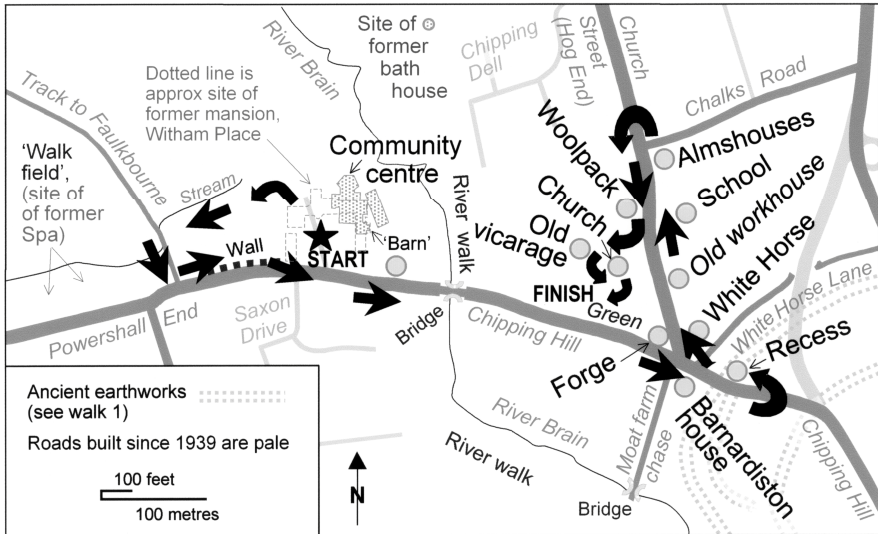


WALK 2

THE VILLAGE OF CHIPPING HILL



The route of walk 2. Chipping Hill was once a flourishing settlement, with a church and a market. It became less important after Newland Street was set up in about 1200. But many of its fine medieval houses still survive, some built in the 1300s, and there is a 'village' atmosphere. Note that my ideas about the details of Witham Place have changed since I wrote 'Witham 1500-1700: Making a Living' (and are still unproven).

The distance is about two thirds of a mile (1 km) (or $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile (1 $\frac{1}{4}$ km) if you return all the way to the starting point). Street numbers are given in brackets in the text (but not marked on the map). Landmarks may of course change or even disappear as time goes by. Pages 16 to 20 of the colour section show examples of bricks, railings, street furniture etc.

Start in the car park at Spring Lodge Community Centre, Powershall End (sometimes known in the past as Post Hall End).

Community Centre – foundation stone just inside, laid by Council chairman Ted Smith in 1973 – first used 1975, formally opened 1976, much used and enjoyed ever since. **Witham Place** once stood here (see the map)



‘The Barn’, now a meeting room at the Community Centre, as it was in 1914 when it was ‘in danger of falling to pieces’. Originally part of the mansion at Witham Place, built in the 1500s. The rest was demolished c 1850; materials auctioned then included panelling, wrought iron, and exotic trees. There have been several reports of a ghost. © Crown Copyright NMR.

- a large mansion (built just before 1556), 90 yards across (82 metres), round a courtyard. In 1745 it was ‘a very ancient and excessive pile of building’. A small part survives in the Community Centre as ‘the Barn’.

Walk straight along the drive through the car park, away from the road, for about 75 yards (70 metres). Then turn 90 degrees left into the narrow grassy area to go lengthways along it.

Walking on grass or path or tarmac (or some of each), keep fence on left and houses on right. **Overgrown ground** with willow trees on right was Witham Place’s lake. After about 150 yards (140 metres) (at lamp-post 36), **track** crosses at end of path (leads to village of Faulkbourne). Facing you on the other side of it is **Walk field** (formerly a long ‘walk’ or avenue of trees). At its far end was Witham Spa (c 1735-54) with a pump and several buildings (see pages 37-38). Considered for cemetery in 1930 but found to be too wet.

Turn left along the track, then left again along the road (Powershall End).

On your right side are **white cottages** (26-30) – 26 was used for worship by local Catholics 1800 to 1851, and named after Lord Stourton, Catholic resident of Witham Place in late 1700s. On left side, **long red brick wall** (probably late 1500s) of Witham Place, 80 yards survive (75 metres). Faded diamond-shaped pattern in darker brick. On right, **housing estate and Saxon Drive** built 1970, had been site of Church allotments since 1841. On left just past entrance to Community Centre, **Spring Lodge** (3), grey brick house built c 1840 for farmer Robert Bretnall. Also **Mill House** (1) – 1857 to house the miller, extended 2001 by weather-boarded facsimile of former water mill which burnt down 1882 (as had an earlier one in 1776). Mill pond – in 1929 ‘nothing but an open cesspool’ (no sewers in Powershall End then). On right **two red brick houses** (6-8, one now called Spring Cottage) – c 1870. Springett family lived here and at earlier house c 1820-1970s – caught eels in the river.

Cross the road where you can, and continue over the bridge using the wooden footway; afterwards continue on the right side of the road up the hill.

Brick bridge over river Brain built 1770 to replace a wooden one – took only three weeks (see page 46). Substantial repairs 1815, footway added 1973. Approaching far end, carving on top of near parapet, virtually invisible now, made in 1915 by soldiers from Royal Warwickshire regiment, billeted in Witham for training. **River Walk** crosses here.

Up the hill, **Bridge House** (55A), built 1980s – named after the card game. A barn here earlier, probably the tithe barn. The **next three houses** built in the 1400s. First (**55**), wrongly called ‘manor house’ – Chipping Hill didn’t have one. Old stonework found under the road in front in 1983. Milk sold from basement early 1900s. Shoemakers’ shop c 1850-1970s – at first the Abbott family, of whom Walter left 1860s and later had chain of big London shops – they were sold 1937, some to Clarks, others to K Shoes (Witham folklore reverses this to say wrongly that Abbott’s started K Shoes). Second (**53**) – wall paintings inside, date 1606. Third (**51**) – base of brick chimney stack (restored 1966) – would have been inserted in older building, perhaps in 1600s. **Telephone pole** – markings show it was put up by the GPO in 1957, 36 feet long and medium girth (it is pictured on colour page 20). ‘**Chantry Villas**’ (47-49) with name and date – 1897, on site of four earlier tiny cottages – no known association with a chantry.



Chipping Hill green and the parish church in about 1916, with three Scots soldiers on the left-hand pavement. The cottages left of centre (32-34) were demolished as unfit in 1932. Owner Charles Richards wanted to build a new house in their place, but the Council bought the land instead because the green was 'considered by a great number of people to be a beauty spot'. Local residents contributed to the purchase money

Pause to look across the road at **the green**, market place till late 1300s. Travelling fairs closed 1891 (said to attract 'the worst characters of the neighbourhood'). Since 1978, site of Church's annual Medieval Fayre. **Oak tree** first planted 1937 to commemorate George VI's Coronation died. This replacement presented by Harry Ashby 1944 – has original 1937 plaque. **House** to left of churchyard entrance (28, formerly 26-30) once known as 'Druggles and Struggles', built c 1350. Resident Edmund Taylor imprisoned in Tilbury fort 1685 for preaching in favour of uprising against James II. **Large houses** to their right (26 (Mole End) and 24 (formerly 22)), partly from 1400s – together were home of Lollard family of Roydens in early 1500s, and of nonconformist George Lisle in 1660s, imprisoned in Colchester for preaching to 70 or 80 people here. In 1672 both Taylor's and Lisle's houses licensed for nonconformist worship. **Brick fronted house** further right (20-22) built early 1700s, became New White Horse then Kings Head (till 1863). One of several places said to have a tunnel to the church – none have yet been found.

Back on your own side of road, **house with shop window** (45), built 1400s and 1500s, formerly Post Office – a 'shrill whistle' was sounded at 7 p.m. to warn of the last post. A pump nearby was a meeting place. Once was a mile post here, but black dome left of window probably newer. **'Old House'** (43),

same age, home in 1934 to 'Madam Elicia of London, a clairvoyant, palmist and crystal reader'. **House set back** (41), perhaps mid 1700s. Wide **newer house** (39) on site of old shops. **Tall house** (37, Oaklands) with date 1880 – early one of Joseph Smith's, moulded bricks from James Brown's catalogue, and cast iron railings (shown on pages 15 and 17 of the colour section). **Telephone pole** much newer than previous one – see markings – put up by BT in 1991, 9 metres long, light in girth. Code '2 I' tells BT where the pine tree was grown and by whom.

Crossing Moat Farm Chase, you also cross over Walk 1. **Barnardiston House** (35), partly from 1500s, many additions including imposing brick front. Wrought iron railings with cast tops. Named after Dame Katherine Barnardiston of Witham Place – owner, not resident – in 1630 she gave the rent to charity for preaching or schooling. Refreshments for Spa customers served here 1740s. 'Young gentlemen's boarding school' 1858 to 1894. Francis Crittall, future philanthropic industrialist, a pupil 1870s – found it like 'the sunwashed fragrance of a spring day', compared to 'fear-wracked' schooldays in Braintree. **Brookcote** (29), built 1897 as a 'small cottage', 'arts and crafts' style – builder hoped for five more next door, but drains inadequate. Designer George Sherrin – notable architect, work includes Spitalfields Market in London. In Second World War, hostel for evacuee children, then day nursery.

A few paces further, cross Chipping Hill, ready to return

'**Recess**' (14), elegant white brick, built early 1840s (shown on colour page 19) cast iron railings and gate. Once called 'Beatenberg' (changed after First World War by new occupants, the Dean family – they had been criticised for having a German relative). '**Bramstons**' (16), home (1840s to 1880s) of prosperous Miss Mary Ann Bramston (elder sister of the vicar) – was looked after by coachman, cook and housemaid in 1881. **Forge and house** (18), the most photographed place in Witham – house partly built c 1375 (roof structure is shown on colour page 2), wooden additions and shutters late 1600s, renovated by Braintree District Council and County Council 1970s.

Go up left side of White Horse into Church Street (once called Hog End – it was the main road to Braintree until the railway cut across the top of it in 1848).



The blacksmith's forge at Chipping Hill during the first year of the First World War. The soldiers and horses are from the Army Service Corps Territorials. Blacksmiths started up here before 1600, and horses continued to come till 1992. The business now receives commissions for special ironwork from all over the country (see also page 28).

The **White Horse** (2), built 1600s, public house since 1680 or before. **Two houses** (4-6), formerly one, built late 1500s. Previous house was home of Raven family of Lollards early 1500s. John Coote here c 1820-81 – prosperous furniture maker, upholsterer and auctioneer. Divided 1880s – at far end was home and office 1880s-1890s of George Mason Ball, important Agricultural Union organiser – many farmworkers lived in Church Street. Across the road, square **door** in wall – possibly for emptying former privy.

Shopping precinct (8-16), built 1955 (local architect Stanley Bragg included features like gables and ‘panelled Essex plaster’, attempting to echo medieval styles nearby). Previously, old shops included butcher's with own slaughterhouse behind. **Red brick house** against pavement (22, near end has mark from roof of previous neighbour). Used for Church of England Infants' school 1866-1900 – winding stairs, up to 100 pupils, some as young as two. British Restaurant 1941-43. Row of **plastered cottages**, formerly parish workhouse (24-40). Main part purpose-built 1714, one of earliest small-town workhouses in England. Plaque with date and initials of parish officers (probably Thomas Woodgate, Samuel Newton, Francis Raven,

William Skinner). Temporary Union workhouse 1834-1839, then became cottages (see pages 48-50, 59, 99). Still known as ‘Charity Row’. Combined attic from former workroom. Two original black and white door numbers (26 and 30) provided by the Council in 1922 (one shown on colour page 20).

Set back, ‘new’ **Infants School**, built 1902 by non-denominational Witham Board. Temporary cookery and woodwork centre 1930s. Many extensions in last thirty years. Former site of one of the parish gravel pits. No evidence for a wool market as sometimes suggested. **Red brick house** (42) - ornate 1930s oak porch from cut-down gable ends, replacing older iron porch. **Three white cottages** (44-48), built c 1700 by Matthew Lurkin – paid ‘one good fatt Turkey’ annually for the site. Furthest one (44), grocer’s and baker’s shop c 1840-1989, shop front removed 1992. Formerly haunted by cat sitting on the stairs. On the corner, **Greene’s almshouses** (50-52) founded before 1493 – rent of land in Springfield provided the residents with twopence a week and wood and candles. Rebuilt 1860.

Stop on corner of **Chalks Road**, look up Church Street. Behind little houses on the corner was Richards builders’ yard c 1860s-1970s, with deep saw pit. Just past, was a road block in Second World War. Further up, both sides, **small terraced houses**, occupants very poor till mid 20th century, many farmworkers (see page 89 and colour page 19). Others called it ‘Little Hell’.

Cross Church Street to walk back.

Tall brick house (11), ‘Totscott’, built 1732. Typical early 1700s – blue-black panels surrounded by red in front, chequered brick at back. Fine cast iron railings. Disused **Quaker burial ground**, behind wall and gate with yew trees, founded 1667 when Quakerism illegal. Headstones not used at first, but some from 1800s. **Bungalow** (9), sub-Post Office and shop till 1970s. **Woolpack** (7) built 1600s.

In corner of **churchyard** till mid 1800s was a small cottage for parish clerk (James Dace 1816-64 – his son founded the well-known local music shops). Flint boundary **wall** of churchyard probably late 1800s. Iron **arch** over gateway in memory of Wadley family, shopkeepers nearby. From the gateway see the **parish church** mostly from c 1330s, probably replacing an earlier one on a bigger site. Originally called St Nicholas, spelling changed to Nicolas 1930s. Looking at this **east end** – on left side the south **chapel**

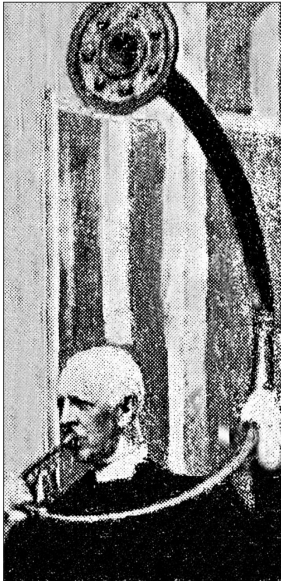


The Woolpack in about 1881. It was never connected with the local wool industry, which had virtually disappeared when these two houses first became an inn in about 1800. Landlord Thomas Hook is standing outside with his wife Betsey and some of his children. The photo belongs to his great-great grandson, who lives in Canada. There used to be a bakery and a brewery in the yard (now flats).

(built c 1444) for a chantry (bequests by rich residents for prayers) – on right a **vestry** (late 1300s) of ‘rag’ stone, formerly two storeys. All the end except the vestry refaced in flint in 1850s.

Turning into the churchyard take the right hand path so that you go round the church anti-clockwise.

Past the vestry, the wide window of another small chantry chapel. After this, north side of original church – walls of flint and stone with medieval bricks (see colour page 17) (and a very few Roman ones). Out to your right, tall extravagant **monument** with draped urn – for prosperous vicar Andrew



Canon Francis Galpin, vicar of Witham 1915-21 and rector of Faulkbourne 1921-33. He was a world famous authority on ancient musical instruments, with over 600 in his collection (most now at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, U.S.A.). Here he is demonstrating a horn. He was also an eminent student of archaeology and botany.

Downes, died 1820 (name now invisible). In front of you, large **old red brick Vicarage**, now private house. Mostly mid-1700s for Reverend George Sayer – also had gardens landscaped (see pages 33-34 and page 6 of the colour section). Several alterations since. Francis Galpin, vicar 1915-21, had a world-famous collection of 600 historic musical instruments, but sold many of them in about 1917. Old extension on left demolished 1939 – probably because too big – another suggestion is that it was haunted. Sold 1960s – smaller house purchased nearby for vicar (known as rector since 1994).

Church tower – started life shorter with a wooden turret. Latter replaced by higher red brick top 1743, in turn replaced with present tower 1877 after much argument. Eight bells, early 1600s to 1932, one of latter to celebrate a century of ringing by the Chalk family. **West door** has Ordnance Survey benchmark from 1870s carved to right of it (rather battered). Round to the **south side** of church – walls refaced in flint in 1850s. In front of **porch**, by the path, the oldest surviving **tombstone** – Matthew Nicholls, 1700, former Quaker, became a churchwarden (see page 27). Carved skull on stone is a style of the time (nothing to do with plague). Flowering **trees** planted by Harry Richards 1945 to celebrate 60 years in church choir.

Church interior (if accessible) – somewhat denuded by past restorations, particularly in 1877. South **entrance arch**, re-used from a building of date c 1200. **Church chest** from 1300s (north aisle). Carved **chancel screen**, lower part from 1400s in oak. Three **helmets** or ‘armets’ in the south chapel. (there used to be four – see the illustration on the facing page). **Boards** on walls under the tower recording charities. **Monuments: 1500s** – recumbent judge John Southcott and wife Elizabeth (opposite south door, formerly in north chapel); magistrate Francis Harvey and wife Mary (chancel). **1600s** – funeral hatchment of Richard Kenwelmarsh (north wall); Robert Barwell the

younger (chancel, florid memorial); George Lisle (south wall – omits his nonconformist activities). **Later, in chancel** – Pattissons, especially William and Sarah, drowned 1832 on honeymoon; Easts, from Berkshire, used to have some of Witham tithes paid to them, was said of Sir Gilbert East's funeral procession (1828) that 'as respects ostentation and grandeur, it has never perhaps been exceeded in this county, excepting in the instance of her late Majesty'. **West window** donated 1849 by famous architect Sir George Gilbert Scott in memory of his employee, Witham carpenter Henry Green Mortimer (who died in a fall from scaffolding during rebuilding of St Nicholas church at Hamburg in Germany; some said he was pushed).

Leaving the church by the main door, go forward through the churchyard onto the green. If you want to return to the start, turn right down the hill.



Four helmets from the parish church, dated c 1580-1750, displayed on a tombstone. When this photo was taken in 1914 they were kept in the vestry and the choirboys used to play with them. Three are still in the church. The fourth, 'one of the most handsome examples of its type remaining in the country', was stolen in 1966. It's now in Royal Armouries at the Tower of London (via a Bermondsey street market). © Crown Copyright NMR.