

Walk Details



What was it like in World War II in Chrishall? Was this little village affected? – take this walk to find out.



Length and time
1 1/2 to 2 hours
5 miles



Refreshments
Red Cow pub at Chrishall, King William IV pub at Heydon

Country Code and Disclaimer

Please keep to public paths, leave gates as you find them, keep dogs under control, take your litter home and take care on roads. Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.

Chrishall Archive Group have attempted in all good faith to provide adequate safety warnings and they cannot in any way be held responsible for any claims arising from damage to person or property.

1. This walk starts at the war memorial in the centre of Chrishall. You will note that there are no names on the war memorial for World War II. Chrishall was lucky; while a number of men went to fight, all of them returned home. We know that at least 7 Chrishall people were in the armed forces (including one woman).

2. When World War II broke out Chrishall was primarily an agricultural community, although it did have a bus garage — read on to find out more. Bryan Rogers, who grew up in Chrishall during World War II, recalls being on holiday when war broke out and returning to find that evacuees from Bruce Grove School in Tottenham, London had arrived. See the QR code for his memories.



3. With the Red Cow pub to your right, take the road diagonally right which runs behind the rear of the pub. This road is called Church Road. The first house on the left in Church Road is called Ede's Cottage. It replaced an old cottage. During World War II the Negus family lived in this cottage. They took in an evacuee called Norman Sherry (there were 14 evacuees in total in the village). The QR code tells of his memories of living in Chrishall during the war. The Negus' daughter was called Ede and the house that is now on the site is named after her. The Negus' son, Wally, served in the navy during World War II.

4. Now notice the thatched cottage to the right of Ede's Cottage, called 'the Gate'. During World War II Mr and Mrs Rush lived here. They also took in an evacuee. Her name was Joan Draper. You can read some letters between her and her parents when she was an evacuee, in the Chrishall Archive.

5. If you look diagonally opposite further along Church Road, you will see a cream brick house called Stanmore Place. Mr and Mrs Crocker lived here during the war, which at the time was the telegraph exchange. They housed 2 evacuees.

6. Retrace your steps to the war memorial, and again with the pub to your right, look straight ahead and slightly to your left. There is a close of houses called Loveday Close. During World War II, the left hand side of the close was a bus depot run by a Mr Weedon. Buses ran from here to Cambridge, Royston, Saffron Walden and Bishops Stortford. The bus to Bishop Stortford ran via the airfield at Nuthampstead, which was built in 1942, for use by the United States Eighth Air Force. There is a memorial to the Americans next to the Woodman pub in Nuthampstead, which is about 6 miles from Chrishall.

7. Norman Sherry, one of the evacuees, talks about the bus depot being bombed (although no bomb exploded), also that it was machine gunned (as it had been mistaken by the Luftwaffe for Duxford airfield - more on Duxford later).

8. Now follow the footpath sign that runs through Loveday Close. As you approach the end of the Close, there is an unmarked path on your right, take that path between houses and you will soon see a footpath sign on a fence. Follow the path with a hedge on your left and green netting on your right and it will eventually lead you out to open fields. Look back to your left and you will see the rear of Wire Farm - read what Norman Sherry had to say about a German twin engined bomber (which he thought was a Heinkel 111) flying low over him and others near Wire Farm. Continue ahead along the path towards some woods. Although Norman is not clear, it seems likely that these are the woods where the bomber crashed, being as Norman recalls, 'taken out by a spitfire'.

9. When you reach the woods, walk through the gap into the woods and immediately turn left on the path that runs just inside the woods.

10. You might like to think about the Home Guard that was formed in Chrishall. The Chrishall section was part of No 1 platoon whose headquarters were at Elmdonbury in the neighbouring village of Elmdon. For photographs of the home guard taken at Elmdonbury, see the QR code at the bottom. Elmdon is about a mile from where you are standing.

11. Continue along this footpath for about 1/2 a mile and you will eventually come out onto a road on a sharp left hand bend. On your right is a house called Dormers. Continue straight ahead away from most of the houses. At the first bend, which is a junction with a road heading left, ignore the road to your left and continue along the road you are on which bends right. Shortly afterwards you will come to a junction on your right with the road to the right marked as Hertford Lane. Turn right onto Hertford Lane and almost immediately on your right is a clump of small trees. If you look

carefully you will see an old look out post in the trees. This was used by the Royal Observation Corps during World War II See the QR code to read about the lookout in the words of Joe Hagger, who was one of those who manned the post during the war. His recollections were written down just after the end of the war, when soldiers were still being brought home and food was being taken out to Holland.



12. Now retrace your steps to the junction of Hertford Lane. As you turn left to leave Hertford Lane, take a quick look to your right. The road leads to Chrishall Grange, about a mile or so downhill. During World War II there was a prisoner of war camp at Chrishall Grange and another one close by at Ickleton Grange. The Chrishall Grange camp was

built in woods by the US Air Force in 1943 originally as accommodation for some of its personal based at Duxford. It seems to have become a German prisoner of war camp in August 1945, after the war had ended. The prisoners worked on local farms. At least one, Karl Schirok, worked at Wire Farm (which we saw from the back earlier on in the walk). The camp at Ickleton Grange was an Italian prisoner of war camp. See QR code for a detailed and interesting article on both prisoner of war camps.

13. When you reach what is now the left hand bend junction with a road now on your right, take the road to your right marked towards Heydon. Walk along this road for about 400 yards. Just after the footpath sign on your left and the pumping station on your right, a panoramic view will appear on your right. If you look back slightly, you will see in the middle distance a white building which is part of the Imperial War Museum site at Duxford (open daily).

If you look closely you will see there are about 5 buildings, all of which are part of the museum. The airfield at Duxford was the first RAF squadron to equip with the new Supermarine Spitfire. The first Spitfire was flown into Duxford in August 1938. Douglas Bader (the legendary fighter pilot with artificial legs was based here for some of the war see pictures at <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/13-photos-of-duxford-and-fowlmere-during-the-battle-of-britain>. During the Battle of Britain (July-October 1940) Duxford, along with Fowlmere (see below), was used to defend the Midlands and to help the fighters of 11 Group (who were protecting the South East of England including London). In 1943 Duxford became the home of the 78th fighter group whose primary job was to escort the US eighth force bombers (some at least of whom were based at Nuthampstead) on their daylight raids over Germany. After the war Duxford was used as the setting for the film the 'Battle of Britain'.

14. To the left of Duxford you will see a road heading over a hill. Beyond there (and out of sight)

lies Chrishall Grange and beyond that the village of Fowlmere. Fowlmere also had an airfield and it initially served as a satellite for Duxford. From July 1940 spitfires were based at Fowlmere. From then until spring 1944 various RAF units were based there. Fowlmere was active during the Battle of Britain in 1940 and was hit on 31 August of that year. In 1944 it was turned over to the US 339th Fighter Group. After the war the site was used, from 1946-1958, to resettle Polish refugees. There is a museum at Fowlmere which is much smaller than Duxford. It opens one Sunday a month. Check website here <https://fowlmereairfield.com/museum> Both Duxford and Fowlmere are approximately 4-5 miles from Chrishall.

15. Continue along the road for about 1/4 of a mile passing a house built in the Elizabethan style called Hillside House on your left. You will reach a junction with a road on your left called Abrams Lane. Apparently during 1940 a German fighter plane crashed in one of the fields here and the villagers surrounded the pilot until the military arrived to take the

pilot away. Continue straight ahead on the road signposted towards Heydon and Royston and called Heydon Lane. Walk along this road, passing a 30 mile an hour sign and a house on the right followed by a large pond, which is known as Spring Pond. One night during World War II a captain in the Home Guard at Heydon, Percy Barnes, took care of two ladies sheltering by this pond as a doodlebug went over. Percy was awarded an Order of Merit from King George VI for this act.

16. Follow the road with a long wall on your right and continue towards the centre of the village to reach the church which will appear on your left by a bus shelter.



17. Note the church has a new tower (compared with the rest of the building). The tower was bombed by the Nazis in 1940. Over the door of the church you will see wording stating that the church was destroyed by the Nazis in the Battle of Britain 1940 and that it was completed and consecrated by the Bishop of Chelmsford in July 1956.



18. Immediately inside the church on your right hand side, you will see reference to 3 Heydon men who died during the second world war - John Green, Douglas Oyston and Edward Wright. Douglas and Edward are buried next to each other in the graveyard. You will find their graves at the back of the graveyard. John Green died building the Burmese railway and is buried in Thailand.



19. Leave the churchyard by the entrance that you came in through and turn left to continue along the road, for about 100 yards passing Heydon Place on your left and Chailey House on your right. Look for a footpath sign on your left. Take this path which goes along the left hand side of garden. (If you want a break you can continue straight along the road at this point to come to the King William IV pub- in about 50 yards – but check opening times first. To rejoin the walk afterwards retrace your steps to this point).

20. Take the path which, after passing along the side of a house becomes wide and grassy, with trees on the left and a field on your right.

21. At the end of the trees continue straight ahead. Follow the footpath as it goes left with a copse on your right. At a junction shortly beyond the copse turn right. Be careful here as the junction is in the middle of a patch of grassland and can be difficult to find. At this point, to your right you will see Duxford museum again. Ahead of you will see a white house, follow the path downhill and then as it turns left. About 5 yards after the left turn, turn right over a bridge and continue to follow the path now with a fence on your right, until you come to a lane



22. When you reach the lane, turn to left and you will very soon see a house called Cedar House at the junction of the lane with another road. During the second world war a Mrs Langford lived here. There was, at the time, an orchard at the rear of the house and Mrs Langford together with the WI, used to gather great quantities of fruit and cook them in a huge pan to make jam which was packed into boxes to send to the troops along with socks and balaclavas, which she organised everyone in the village to contribute to. At the junction just beyond Cedar House, turn right and this will lead you back into the centre of Chrishall. Walk beyond the war memorial to the Red Cow pub. As you face the pub, notice the cottage to your right. Joe Hagger, who was one of those who manned the out look post mentioned earlier in the walk, lived here. His day job was a cobbler.

23. To complete the walk, you might also want to listen to the Imperial War Museum recording of Dennis Smith, who lived at

Chrishall Grange as a teenager and was a delivery driver before leaving Chrishall to join the army, and what happened to him during World War II especially his experiences on D Day.
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80018717>



QR codes for this walk



Point 2: Bryan
Rogers'
memories



Point 11: Joe
Hagger
Observation
Corps



Point 3: Norman
Sherry
memories



Point 12: Article
from the Ickleton
Society about the
Prisoner of War
Camp



Point 10: Home
Guard