

Pleshey has one of the best surviving Norman castle earthworks in England. The whole village is ringed by a defensive ditch and bank. Inside this is a 50 foot high castle mound and its moat. You can get a good view of these from Pleshey's main street. A 15th century red-brick bridge still spans the moat.

In 1397 King Richard II heard that his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, was plotting to overthrow him. The King lured Gloucester away from the safety of his castle at Pleshey. He was taken to Calais, where he was murdered by hired assassins. In Act 1, Scene 2 of William Shakespeare's 'Richard II' Gloucester's widow sighs "With all good speed at Plashy visit me".

She speaks sadly of the castle's "empty lodgings and unfurnish'd walls".

Unfortunately, none of the castle is left today.

The Lord of the Manor at Pleshey had two deer parks created in the surrounding countryside. Wooden fences were built round the outside to stop the deer escaping. The servants loved it because they didn't have to worry about their master coming home in a bad mood after an unsuccessful day's hunting.

Have a look at the collection of leather bottles if you call in at Pleshey's Leather Bottle Inn.

The castle site is privately owned. It is possible to look around the castle site by prior arrangement with the owner's land agents, Strutt & Parker, on 01245 258201.

Terrain

Fairly easy going, unsurfaced routes

Ordnance Survey Map Ref

Explorer 183 Chelmsford and the Rodings

Parking Horseboxes

Parking by arrangement
The Leather Bottle, Pleshey.
Tel: 01245 237291

The White Horse, Pleshey.
Tel: 01245 237281

Refreshments

The Leather Bottle, Pleshey.
The White Horse, Pleshey.
Pubs and shop on Barrack Lane,
Great Waltham

Transport

Pleshey to Chelmsford Station
(4.7m/7.5km) Public Transport
Information 0870 608 2608

Vets

Clarendon House Veterinary Centre,
24 The Green, Writtle, Chelmsford
Tel: 01245 422206

Places to visit

Hylands Park, Writtle
Large parkland with Victorian
formal gardens, lakes and woods.
Free admission
Tel: 01245 490490 x 2078

Aythorpe Roding Windmill
(5.7 m/9.2km) Post mill restored
to full working order. Essential to
phone first for details of open days.
Tel: 01621 828162

Country Rides



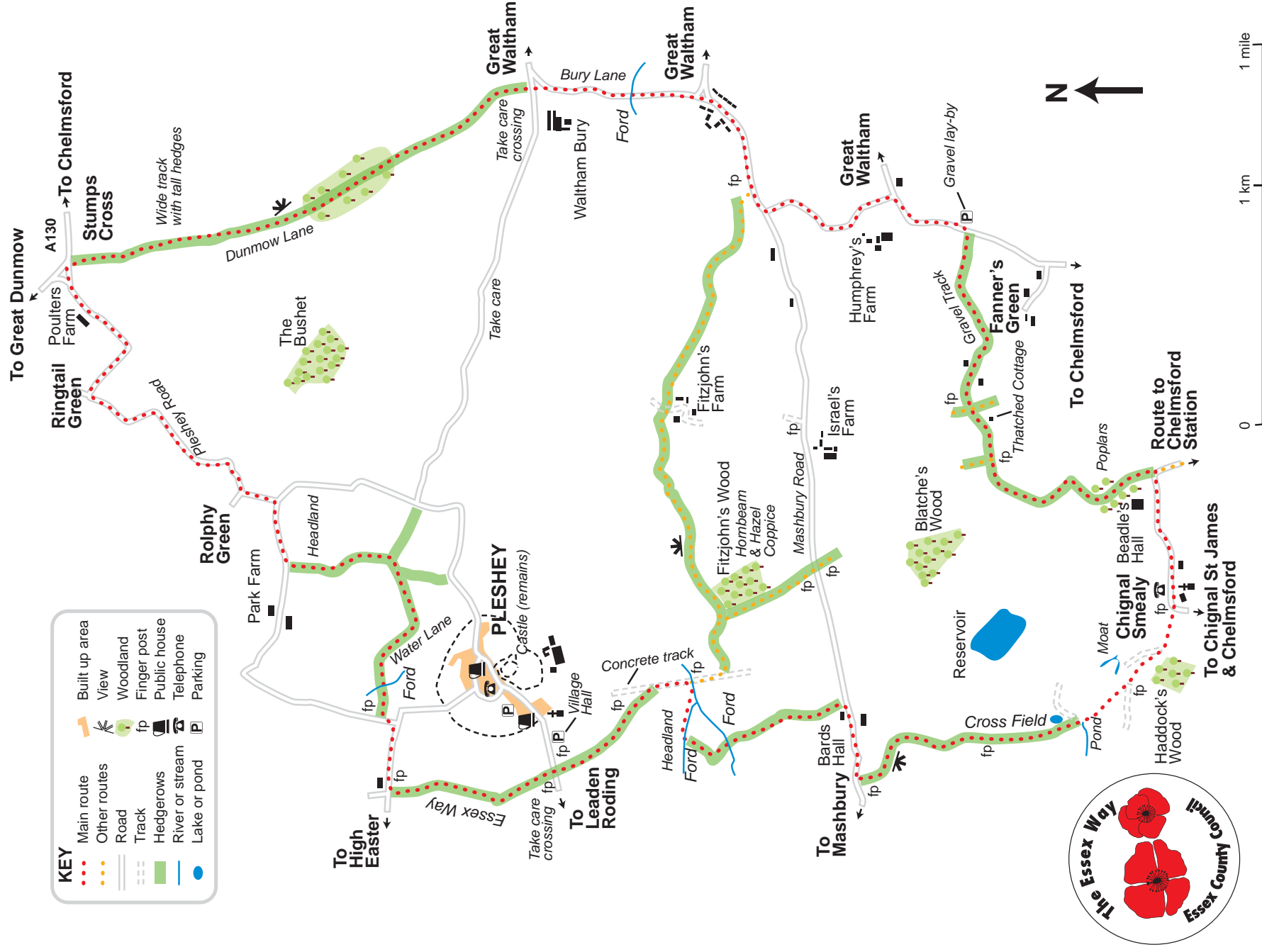
PLESHEY

9.2 miles/14.8 km

Imagine yourself riding along these ancient lanes in the heart of Essex when suddenly you hear the sound of pounding hooves behind you. A medieval messenger gallops past and disappears in a cloud of dust. He is carrying word of conspiracy and murder to his master. The pen of William Shakespeare ensured Pleshey a lasting place in the history of one of the dark deeds of medieval England.



Dunmow Lane used to be the main road between Chelmsford and Great Dunmow. Part of your Country Ride route follows the Essex Way, an 81 mile long distance route between Epping and Harwich. Guidebooks for the walk can be bought from Essex County Council.



There is an avenue of tall, slim Lombardy poplar trees alongside the bridlway near Beadle's Hall. Only the male trees grow into this easily recognised shape. There are many other kinds of trees along this lane. Can you identify the hornbeam, larch, holly and cedar?

How did the tiny village of Chignal Smealy get such a strange name? The name Chignal comes from 'Cicca's nook' (the small place belonging to Cicca). Smealy means 'small clearing'. Chignal Smealy used often to be known locally as 'Brick Chignal' because of its all-brick church.