

Chalk was formed 100 million years ago in the Cretaceous period which followed the death of the dinosaurs. To give you an idea of how long ago that was, if you counted at a rate of 1 year every second, it would take you more than 3 years to count to 100 million! Chalk was formed from the bodies of tiny creatures which lived in a warm sea. As they died they sank to the sea-bed and their bodies were gradually pressed together.

There is a thick layer of chalk beneath Essex, but in most of the county it is buried under clay and gravel. Around Clavering, the rivers

Stort and Cam have cut down through these Essex 'highlands' to uncover the chalk on their valley sides. The Essex chalklands attract types of plants and animals which make it very different from the rest of the county.

Amongst the summer wild flowers growing on the hedgebanks of Parsonage Lane are the tall hairy stems and purplish flowers of the wild marjoram which loves Clavering's chalky soils. In ancient Greece wild marjoram was a symbol of happiness. Wedding couples were crowned with it.

Terrain

Undulating, some rough terrain

Ordnance Survey Map Ref

Explorer 195
Braintree & Saffron Walden

Parking Horseboxes

Parking by arrangement in the meadow behind *The Fox and Hounds* in Clavering (not the pub car park)
Tel: 01799 550321

Refreshments

The Fox and Hounds, Clavering.
Supermarket on Stortford Road, Clavering.

Transport

Clavering to Newport Station (1.2m/2km)

Public Transport Information
0870 608 2608

Vets

Mercer & Hughes, Devon Lodge, 14
Radwinter Road, Saffron Walden, Essex
CB11 3JB Tel: 01799 522082

Places to visit

Audley End House, Saffron Walden (English Heritage) (6.4 miles/10.4km)
Magnificent, Jacobean stately home, with grounds landscaped by Capability Brown.
Admission fee. Tel: 01799 522399

Mole Hall Wildlife Park, Widdington (5.7 miles/9.2km) Rare species from around the world plus domestic animals.
Admission fee. Tel: 01799 540400

Bridge End Gardens, Saffron Walden (6.6 miles/10.7km) Restored Victorian garden, including hedge maze.
Free admission by appointment with Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre. Tel: 01799 510444



Country Rides

CLAVERING

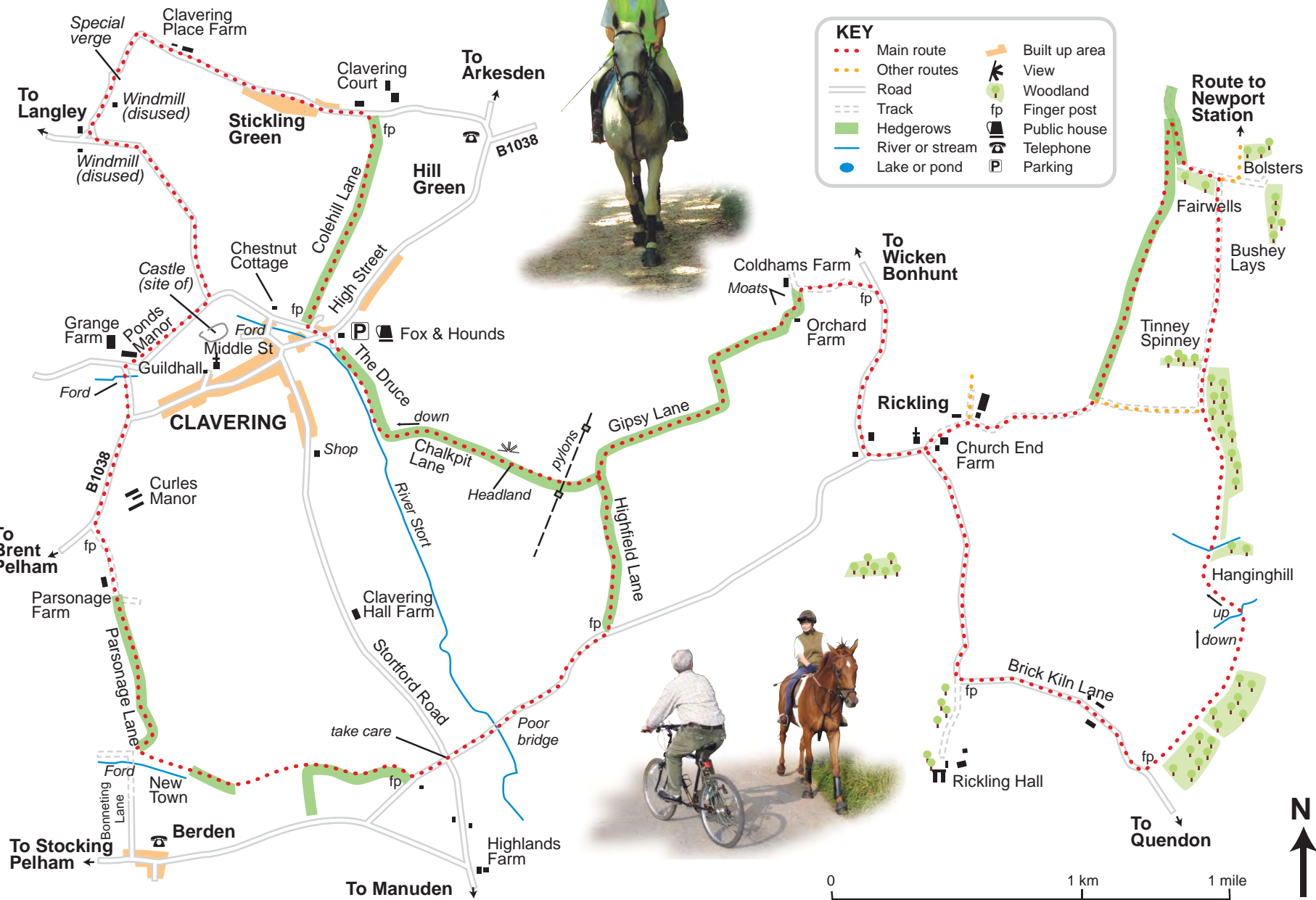
12.8 miles/20.6 km

As you follow these chalky lanes past thatched cottages and isolated farmhouses, it is hard to believe that Clavering could have a darker side. It was master detective Sherlock Holmes who said that most wicked crimes weren't committed in the city but in the lonely houses of the 'smiling and beautiful countryside'. As usual, he was right. Clavering has been called the murder capital of Victorian England.



Ponds Manor could claim to be the prettiest house in Clavering, but it has a darker side to its past. It was here that Sarah Chesham poisoned her husband and three children. The old yew tree in the front garden is where she is said to have hidden the arsenic with which she poisoned her husband's rice pudding. Yew trees have traditionally been seen as omens of impending doom.

Overlooking the ford in Middle Street is Chestnut Cottage. It is the smallest house in Essex. It is only 8 feet wide and 10 feet from front to back. Upstairs is reached by a ladder.



Moat Farm, now Orchard Farm, became infamous nationwide in 1903 when the remains of Miss Camille Holland were found buried there. She had vanished four years earlier, only three weeks after moving to Moat Farm with the mysterious Herbert Samuel Dougal. After a sensational trial, Dougal was found guilty of her murder and hanged.