

## Crab Apple

As you wander along Leas Lane look out for Crab Apples in the hedgerow in late summer. These small fruits are extremely sour and Crab Apple wine is reported to be potent. You have been warned!

### Distance and time taken

2.8 miles (4.5 km) – 2 hours.

### Going

Undulating countryside and can be wet in places. Wear strong shoes, boots or Wellington boots. There is a well surfaced cycle track running down the west side of Chest Wood.

### Habitat types

Old woodland, marsh, farmland, open countryside.

### Ordnance Survey Map

Explorer 184.

### Refreshments

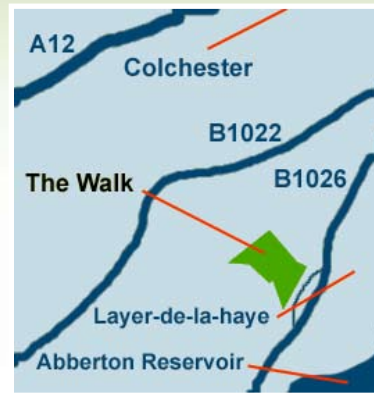
The Layer Fox or Donkey and Buskins public houses

### Dogs

If you take your dog with you, please keep it under control, preferably on a lead.

## Dragonflies

The Roman River supports many dragonfly species including the iridescent Banded and Beautiful Demoiselles. Males of the Banded Demoiselle can often be seen aggressively defending their territories or courting females with a fluttering display flight. The luxuriant vegetation along the Roman River is extremely important for dragonflies, for instance, submerged plants may be used for egg-laying. Many species of dragonfly are also important indicators of clean water. The Emperor, Britain's largest dragonfly is particularly sensitive to water pollution and can be seen along the clean water of the Roman River.



## Dog's Mercury

Under the dense canopy of the woodland you may find Dog's Mercury, a sombre green plant with square stems and unobtrusive yellowish green flowers. The plant is dioecious which means that the male and female flowers are on separate plants. The whole plant is considered mildly poisonous, particularly at the time of fruit ripening; however there are no reports of poisoning in humans. Wash your hands if you touch this plant to be on the safe side!

## Layer-de-la-Haye

Layer, as its known locally, is thought to have been founded in Saxon times, with its original name, Legra, meaning 'lookout'. The elevation of Layer made it an ideal vantage point for the Saxons in spotting raiding parties from the Essex coast. Its name changed to Leire or Leger in later years which means 'mud'. Leger is a Norse word, which is likely to have referred to the marshland surrounding the settlement.

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## Otters

The otter was quite common in Essex in the 1940s and 50s but suffered a rapid decline in numbers in the 1960s and unfortunately became extinct in the 1970s due to the poisoning from agricultural chemicals which ran off into the rivers and streams from surrounding farmland. However, the otter has since recolonised many of its old Essex haunts.

Country Walking in Essex

# Roman River Valley