



Royal  
Geographical  
Society  
with IBG

## Rivers, railways and radios

A self-guided walk around Chelmsford



Explore one of Britain's newest cities  
Find out about its Roman and medieval heritage  
Meet the city's most famous residents  
Discover how its high tech manufacturing changed the world

[www.discoveringbritain.org](http://www.discoveringbritain.org)

*the stories of our landscapes  
discovered through walks*







## Contents

Introduction	4
Route map	5
Practical information	6
Commentary	8
Further information	33
Credits	34

© The Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers, London, 2015

Discovering Britain is a project of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)  
The digital and print maps used for Discovering Britain are licensed to the RGS-IBG from Ordnance Survey

Cover image: Detail from the Marconi statue © Rory Walsh

---

# Rivers, railways and radios

## Discover Chelmsford's journey from market town to modern city

Welcome to Walk the World! This walk in Chelmsford is one of 20 in different parts of the UK.

Each walk explores how the 206 participating nations in the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games have been part of the UK's history for many centuries.

Along the routes you will discover evidence of how different countries have shaped our towns and cities.



Chelmsford High Street  
Courtesy of [www.oldukphotos.com](http://www.oldukphotos.com)

In March 2012 Chelmsford became one of Britain's newest cities but there has been a major settlement here for two millennia. The county town of Essex has been the site of a Roman trading post, medieval market and Victorian industrial centre. This walk around modern Chelmsford explores how the city has reinvented itself several times and adapted to changing circumstances.



Anglia Ruskin University campus  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Chelmsford's progress has been influenced by many countries around the world. Look out for a Roman road and a bridge that spans Europe. Hear tales of a scandalous German queen and an American pioneer. Visit the 'home of radio', a former ball bearing factory and England's second-smallest cathedral.

This walk was created by a local school pupil, Ollie Barnard, from King Edward VI Grammar School for the Royal Geographical Society's *Young Geographer of the Year* competition in 2012.





---

## Practical information

<b>Location</b>	Chelmsford, Essex, East of England
<b>Getting there</b>	<p><b>Train</b> - Chelmsford station is very close to the city centre and features on the walk route (Stop 8). Services run to and from London Liverpool Street, Colchester and Norwich.</p> <p><b>Bus</b> - There are many local services to Chelmsford city centre. The bus station is on Duke Street opposite the railway station.</p> <p><b>Car</b> - Easily accessible from the M25 (Junction 28) and A12 linking London and Great Yarmouth. There are over 5,000 city parking spaces (charges apply).</p>
<b>Start point</b>	The Stone Bridge, High Street, CM1 1DE
<b>Directions from railway station to the start</b>	Turn left out of the station onto Duke Street. Continue to the end up to the junction with Tindal Square. Pass behind the statue and go along the pedestrianised High Street. The Stone Bridge is at the end past the town sign and by the Meadows Shopping Centre.
<b>Finish point</b>	Chelmsford Cathedral, CM1 1TY
<b>Distance</b>	2 miles
<b>Level</b>	<b>Gentle</b> - a mostly flat city centre walk.
<b>Conditions</b>	Some pedestrianised streets and busy roads. The city centre can be busy especially at weekends.

---

### Suitable for

**Families** - There are a couple of major roads to cross so take care with children

**Wheelchairs & pushchairs** - An entirely step-free route

**Dogs** - Must be kept on a lead in the city centre

### Refreshments

There are plenty of cafés and shops along the route

### Facilities

Public toilets are available on Market Street between the Essex County Council offices and the Retail Market (Stop 6)

### Other info

**Chelmsford Retail Market** (Stop 6) is open from Tuesday to Saturday from 10am to 4pm

**Chelmsford Cathedral** (Stops 16 and 17) is open daily

### Family friendly activities

**Chelmsford Museum** tells the story of the city from the Ice Age onwards. There is a café and children's play area plus plenty of family activities including free quizzes, craft days, Christmas and Easter events (Tel: 01245 605700)

**Hylands House & Gardens** makes an ideal spot for a picnic. The 18th century villa is 3 miles from the railway station and includes a museum, visitor centre and café.

Note that Hylands Park hosts the annual **V Festival** at the end of August so will be closed to the public during this period.

### Tourist Information

Chelmsford Travel & Visitor Information Centre is at the Bus Station, 8 Dukes Walk, CM1 1GZ (Tel: 01245 283400)

---

## 1. Welcome to Chelmsford

### The Stone Bridge, High Street

Welcome to Chelmsford. In March 2012 it was granted city status to celebrate Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee. This award actually makes Chelmsford the first city in Essex – even though the local football club have been called Chelmsford City since the 1930s!

Back in the 1930s Chelmsford was a booming high-tech town. It was home to modern industries but also had a distinctive heritage linked to Romans and royalty. The town had a cathedral and a crown court, and was home to many household names. It was a town that already felt like a city.



Welcome to Chelmsford  
© Robin Lucas, Geograph (Creative Commons License)

This walk explores how Chelmsford became a place of rapid and vibrant growth shaped by trade and industry. We will also discover Chelmsford's links to many different countries around the world.

This walk was created by Ollie Barnard, a pupil at King Edward VI School. He created the walk for the Royal Geographical Society's Young Geographer of the Year Competition in 2012 and was the winner in the 11 to 14 category. Ollie has lived in Chelmsford all his life and wanted to create a walk to introduce other people to this fascinating city.

The route starts at the Stone Bridge on the High Street and ends at Chelmsford Cathedral. The route is almost circular and is just over two miles long. The city centre, especially in the main shopping area, can get very busy at weekends. There are a few major roads to cross so watch out for traffic and use pedestrian crossings where possible. We hope you enjoy the walk!

**Directions 1** - Remain on the Stone Bridge.



---

## 2. A city symbol

### The Stone Bridge, High Street

The Stone Bridge dates from 1784 but there has been a river crossing here for hundreds of years. We know from historical records that a bridge was definitely built on this spot in around 1200.

Chelmsford has two rivers – the Chelmer and the Can. The River Can is the one below us here. The Can meets the River Chelmer beyond the Meadows shopping centre, a couple of hundred metres away from where we are now. The Chelmer then flows through the whole county of Essex to the Blackwater Estuary and into the North Sea.



The Stone Bridge  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This bridge is an ideal place to begin our walk as it helps to explain how Chelmsford got its name. The River Chelmer was named in the fifth century after a Saxon leader called Ceolmaer. 'Chelmsford' comes from 'Ceolmaer's ford' or 'Chelmer's ford' – a place to cross the Chelmer.

Hundreds of thousands of years ago the River Thames flowed through here. At this time Britain was not an island but was part of mainland Europe. This early path of the Thames flowed into what is now the River Rhine. The Rhine is one of the longest rivers in Europe at around 766 miles long. It flows through Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands. We can tell the Thames and the Rhine used to be connected through matching types of rock deposited over the centuries.

**Directions 2** - Cross the bridge towards the Meadows shopping centre. Continue a short way into the pedestrianised High Street. Take the pedestrianised street to the right called Springfield Road. Head towards a footbridge but then turn right into Backnang Square. After a short distance turn left onto another pedestrian bridge called Friendship Bridge. Stop halfway across when you can read the writing on the handrail.

---

### 3. Making friends

#### Friendship Bridge

Here we are on another bridge. This is the Friendship Bridge above the River Chelmer.

Look at the handrail and you will see three names - Chelmsford, Backnang and Annonay. Backnang and Annonay are two of Chelmsford's twin towns. Backnang is a town in southern Germany. Annonay is in southern France. Chelmsford has been twinned with Annonay since 1967 and Backnang since 1990.

Town twinning is a way to create economic and social links with other countries. It also helps to promote international understanding at a local level, particularly through business partnerships and school exchange visits. Twin towns often have things in common such as an industry, a geographical feature or a sports connection.

Like Chelmsford, Backnang and Annonay were founded near large rivers. All three towns became known for making leather goods in the Middle Ages and later became industrial centres.

As we continue look out for street signs on either side of the bridge for Backnang Square and Annonay Walk.



The Friendship Bridge  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



Markstrasse in Backnang  
Wikimedia Commons

#### Directions 3

Cross over Friendship Bridge then turn left. Use the other bridge to retrace your steps back along Springfield Road. When you reach the High Street stop by the pole with a coat of arms on the top.

---

## 4. The Great Eastern

### Town sign, High Street

This is the town sign which was put up in 1994 to mark the High Street being pedestrianised.

Despite the High Street's modern appearance, Chelmsford has been a trading site for around 2,000 years.

After the Romans invaded Britain in 43 AD they made Colchester the capital city. To link London and Colchester the Romans built the 'Great East Road'. The route still survives today as the A12 trunk road.



Chelmsford High Street (1762)  
© Chelmsford City Museums



Sculpture of a Roman centurian  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG  
Discovering Britain

Chelmsford is about halfway between London and Colchester and by 60 AD a Roman town had grown beside the Great East Road. This town was called Caesaromagus or 'the market place of Caesar'.

It largely vanished after the Romans left Britain though a few signs remain. For example a Roman fort was found under the Odeon roundabout on the other side of the Stone Bridge.

Another clue is the High Street itself. When we go along the High Street you should notice it is very straight. This is because it follows another Roman road built off the Great East Road.

---

#### Directions 4

Continue along the High Street. At the end turn left into Tindall Square. Stop beside the statue of a man in a chair.



---

## 5. Adultery and witchcraft

### Tindal Square

This statue celebrates one of Chelmsford's most famous people, Sir Nicholas Conyngham Tindal.

Tindal was born in Chelmsford in 1776. As his wig and robe suggest, he was a lawyer and judge.

During his career he helped to reform criminal law. For example he introduced the Insanity defence whereby people accused of a crime can plea innocence due to mental health problems.

Tindal is also famous for an unusual link with royalty. In 1820 he defended the Queen at an adultery trial! This was Queen Caroline, the wife of King George IV.



Sir Nicholas Conyngham Tindal  
Wikimedia Commons

Caroline was born in Brunswick in Germany. She married George while he was the Prince of Wales. Their marriage was unhappy and George asked for a divorce. He accused Caroline of adultery with her Italian servant, Bertolemeo Pergami, and even banned her from appearing in public. Tindal was part of the legal team that defended Caroline from the charges.



Detail from *The Trial of Queen Caroline* (1820) by Sir George Hayter showing the Queen with her legal defendants  
Wikimedia Commons

---

Across the road from Tindal's statue is a very impressive building. This is the Shire Hall. For over 220 years it was Chelmsford's court house. It was built in 1791 in the style of an ancient Greek palace as Greek and Roman design was very fashionable at the time.

There has actually been a court house on this site ever since the twelfth century. In the 1640s the site even held a series of trials for witchcraft.

A new court house opened in 2012 and at the time of creating this walk The Shire Hall was empty but it is still one of the city's greatest landmarks. As we will see, it is not the only landmark building in this new city being prepared for a new use.



*The Shire Hall, Chelmsford* by Philip Reinagle (1794)  
© Chelmsford City Museums

### **Directions 5**

With your back to the bank building behind the Tindal statue, turn left and cross the end of Tindal Street. Continue onto Market Road. Pass a car park entrance on your left then the Essex County Council office on your right. Turn left into the arcade of shops (opposite the entrance to Chelmsford Central Library). Go along the arcade until you reach a seating area on the left. Stop here and face the store fronts.



---

## 6. Trading places

### Retail Market, Market Street

This large building is a multi-storey car park but at street level is Chelmsford's indoor market. There has been a market in Chelmsford for over 800 years.

By the twelfth century Chelmsford was part of the estate that belonged to the Bishop of London. In 1199 a new Bishop was appointed, William of Sainte-Mère-Église.

William was from a Norman family, originally from Manche in northern France. William gained permission from King John to hold a weekly market beside the Chelmer.



Retail Market  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This market and the easy river crossing meant that a town grew here quickly and in 1218 Chelmsford became the county town of Essex. By then several hundred people lived here which made Chelmsford a large town for the time. Chelmsford remained mostly a market and agricultural town until the 1850s.

Do go into the market and explore. Inside there are 150 stalls and 20 kiosks selling many types of goods from around the world. Look out for French and Dutch cheeses, Polish sausages, Thai and Indian food, and clothes and toys made in China.

#### Directions 6

Feel free to explore the market. When you are ready, return to the front of the arcade and retrace your steps to Market Road. Carefully cross over towards the library then turn left. Continue under the library terrace, turning right onto Victoria Road South. At the end of the road, cross over at the traffic lights before the mini roundabout. Bear left into Duke Street. Stop at the building opposite the railway station. There is a bench outside if you want to sit down.

---

## 7. Knight's crusades

### Anne Knight Building, Duke Street

Here opposite the railway station is the Anne Knight Building. Until the 1950s this impressive building was used as a Friend's Meeting House – a Quaker place of worship.

See if you can spot a blue plaque on the front wall which commemorates Anne Knight, the lady after whom this building was named.

Anne Knight grew up in the town's Quaker community. Quakers are advocates of peace and justice and this background encouraged Anne to found a local branch of the Women's Anti-Slavery Society. Through the Society she travelled widely and gave lectures in Britain and France.

In 1840 she was a guest at the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London. Most of the guests were British or American but a few came from other countries, including Ireland, France, South Africa, Haiti, Jamaica, Guyana and Barbados. Several guests were former slaves.



Anne Knight  
© Chelmsford City Museums

The start of the Convention was marked by controversy. A debate took place about women guests because some of the male organisers didn't want women to go to all the sessions. Anne Knight was outraged. This led her to campaign for women's rights.

Anne published the first leaflet on women's suffrage and campaigned for female equality for the rest of her life. She spent much of her later years in France. After her death in 1862 this building was renamed in her honour. So was the town of Knightville in Jamaica – a sign of her international impact.

---

#### Directions 7

Look across the road at the railway station.

---

## 8. Transforming tracks

### Railway station, Duke Street



Chelmsford cattle market (c.1910)  
© Chelmsford City Museums



Industrialised Chelmsford  
Courtesy of [www.britainfromabove.org.uk](http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk) © English Heritage

So far we have seen some of the older parts of Chelmsford. On the second half of the walk we will visit some of the areas that emerged from the 1850s onwards when Chelmsford was transformed into a major manufacturing centre.

Several new high-technology industries set up huge factories and Chelmsford became famous for making radios, electric street lights, generators, dynamos, televisions, radar equipment and ball bearings.

So why did this happen? The answer was the railway. Chelmsford is in the middle of Essex and quite distant from other major towns. The railway created faster links to other parts of the country including London and the coastal ports.

So when the railway line opened in 1842 Chelmsford's location made it an ideal place for industries to develop. The town centre was small with large amounts of open land around to build on. Companies and workers soon settled here.



Chelmsford station before it was redeveloped in the 1980s  
© Chelmsford City Museums



---

Chelmsford's geography also affected how the railway was built. Look at the station and notice how the railway line is near the roof of the station building. In fact the railway to Chelmsford was built on viaducts - the station is built on a viaduct and an 18-arch viaduct carries the railway line over Central Park.

Viaducts developed in ancient Rome but were used worldwide in the industrial period, especially in railway towns. Today the world's longest and the tallest bridges are both viaducts. They are respectively the Millau Viaduct in France and Danyang-Kunshan Grand Bridge in China.



A section of the Chelmsford viaduct in Central Park  
© Stuart Axe via Wikimedia Commons

### **Directions 8**

Continue along Duke Street and under the railway bridge. Turn immediately left before the bus station into Viaduct Road. You can see the arches of the railway viaduct on your left. Follow the viaduct until you see a car park on your right. Go through the bollards and head into a pedestrianised area. Stop by the statue of a man standing on a globe.

---

## 9. The great communicator

### Marconi statue, Marconi Plaza

This statue celebrates a man who transformed the world - and he did it largely from Chelmsford. This is Guglielmo Marconi, the Italian inventor and 'father of wireless'. The statue shows him standing on the world with a radio microphone in one hand and a lightning bolt in the other.

Marconi was a pioneer in developing radio. Although he is often credited with inventing radio many people made experiments before him. They included Welsh-American David Edward Hughes, Heinrich Hertz from Germany, Eduard Branly from France, Serbian-American Nikola Tesla, Ernest Rutherford of New Zealand, Alexander Popov from Russia and Julio Baviera from Spain.

Before radio, most long distance messages were sent by cables. These could be slow and needed miles of expensive and fragile wiring. Radio was a way to send messages without wires - which is why early radio sets were often called a wireless.

When Marconi came to Britain in 1896 he had developed a radio system to send long distance messages. He demonstrated it by sending radio signals across Salisbury Plain and the Bristol Channel. Three years later Marconi made the first international radio broadcast when he sent a signal from France across the English Channel to Dover.



Statue of Marconi  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



Advertisement for Marconi Wireless (1924)  
Courtesy of Grace's Guide - [www.GracesGuide.co.uk](http://www.GracesGuide.co.uk)



---

By then Marconi had set up a factory in Chelmsford on Hall Road. From 1898 The Marconi Wireless Telegraph & Signal Company employed around 50 people and built radio equipment that was used to send signals worldwide including to Canada and the United States.

Marconi's factory put Chelmsford at the cutting edge of modern technology. In 1909 he was jointly awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics with German scientist Karl Braun.

Echoes of Marconi's legacy remain in Chelmsford and beyond. The area we are in now is called Marconi Plaza and later we will see a Marconi Road.

Other countries also paid tribute to him. There are statues to him worldwide and streets named after him including Guillermo Marconi Street in Mexico, Marconigaten in Sweden, Marconi Road in Hong Kong and Marconi Street in Haifa in Israel.



Marconi with some of his early radio equipment (1910)  
Wikimedia Commons



Marconi's legacy can still be seen in the city  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

---

### Directions 9

Pass the statue and continue over the plaza. Turn right into Fairfield Road. At the end turn left back onto Duke Street. Continue past the entrance of the City Council building and stop by the obelisk outside.

## 10. In memoriam

### War memorial, Duke Street

This large stone obelisk is the war memorial which was built in 1923 to honour people from Chelmsford killed in the First World War.

Many of these 359 men died in the trenches of France and Belgium including at the Battle of the Somme. Others fell while fighting Turkish forces during the First Battle of Gaza in Palestine.

One of the men from Chelmsford killed in the First World War was Eric Elsdale Molson. Eric was killed in action in 1915 near Ypres in Belgium when he was just 21 years old. His father John Elsdale Molson was born in Quebec in Canada and they were from the family that founded the Molson brewery. Today Molson is the fifth largest brewery in the world and the Molson family still own it from their headquarters in Montreal.

Look at the sides of the memorial and you can see that further dedications have been added for the Second World War and other conflicts since. Each Remembrance Day wreaths are laid here in honour of the people from Chelmsford who were killed in various conflicts.

The town itself was bombed several times during the Second World War because of its manufacturing industry.



First World War army recruitment poster  
Wikimedia Commons

#### Directions 10

From the war memorial use the traffic lights to turn into Broomfield Road. Cross over Railway Street. Stop when you reach a large square brown building on the right hand side (at the time of creating the walk it was covered in scaffolding).

## 11. A growing thirst

### Former Britvic House, Broomfield Road

We are now in the newer part of Chelmsford city centre which developed from the nineteenth century. Several famous companies boomed in Chelmsford during this time and one of them was based here in this brown building, Britvic House.

The company started when a chemist's shop on Tindal Street started selling homemade flavoured drinks. By the 1930s it had expanded to become the British Vitamin Products Company.

Britvic is now one of Europe's largest soft drinks companies. They own many famous brands in the UK, Ireland and France and export drinks to over 50 countries. They also have licences to bottle American drinks including Pepsi and 7UP.



Britvic House  
Wikimedia Commons



Britvic advertisement

Courtesy of Grace's Guide - [www.GracesGuide.co.uk](http://www.GracesGuide.co.uk)

Britvic House was their world headquarters until March 2012. The company has since moved its headquarters to Hemel Hempstead but still makes products in Chelmsford at a factory in the Widford industrial park outside the city centre.

Other manufacturing companies in Chelmsford include e2v that make electronic components for NASA and others, and German company ebm-papst that make electric motors.

#### Directions 11

Continue to the end of Broomfield Road. Cross the first set of traffic lights and stop in the space in the middle of the junction. Look at the large red brick building behind the wall.



---

## 12. Geography and history lessons

### King Edward VI Grammar School

We have come to an important stop on the walk – Ollie’s school. King Edward VI Grammar School (or KEGS) was founded by a royal warrant from Edward VI in 1551 although the school can trace its history back to the thirteenth century.

KEGS has educated many notable people over the centuries. One of the most famous alumni was John Dee, a mathematician and scientist in the sixteenth century.

He gave explorers advice on navigation and created early world maps. It is thought that he coined the phrase ‘British Empire’. Dee was also interested in magic and astrology. He was Queen Elizabeth I’s astrology advisor and claimed to see angels. While travelling in Europe he visited royals and nobles from Poland and Bohemia (the present day Czech Republic).

Another notable KEGS pupil was Philemon Holland. Born in Chelmsford in 1552 he translated Roman writers including Pliny, Plutarch and Suetonius. His translations are still popular today and one of the current KEGS form houses is named after him. Another house is named after Nicholas Conyngham Tindal whose statue we saw earlier and who was also a pupil at this school.



King Edward VI Grammar School  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



School founder King Edward VI, former pupil John Dee and Ollie Barnard who created this walk  
Wikimedia Commons / Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Today KEGS has an international outlook through partnerships with schools in Germany, France, Kenya and China. The school also organises expeditions called World Challenge. These allow groups of KEGS pupils to visit schools and villages in remote places around the world and help with community projects. Through World Challenge pupils from this school have visited India, China, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, Bolivia, Tanzania, Uganda and Madagascar.



Top: Postcards of life at King Edward VI Grammar School (c.1904) © Felix O, Flickr (Creative Commons License)  
Bottom: the same rooms today © Rory Walsh, RGS-IBG Discovering Britain  
The schoolroom (top left) is now the school library and gymnasium (top right) is a modern fitness centre

### Directions 12

Cross back over at the traffic lights towards Broomfield Road. Turn left and then bear left into Marconi Road. Take care here of the cycle path. Continue to the end of Marconi Road – on the right hand side is the former Marconi factory. At the end of the road turn left. Continue up to the roundabout. Carefully cross Rectory Lane on the left. With the parade of shops behind you cross over Bishop Hall Lane. Stop facing the modern building with the glass front.



---

## 13. International exchange

### Lord Ashcroft Building, Anglia Ruskin University

From one of Chelmsford's oldest education institutions we have come to one of the newest. This is the Chelmsford campus of Anglia Ruskin University. This university originated from the Cambridge School of Art which was formed in 1858 by artist and critic, John Ruskin.

The three campuses – in Cambridge, Peterborough and Chelmsford - make up one of the largest universities in eastern England with over 31,500 students. There are around 8,500 students here in Chelmsford many of whom are from countries around the world.



The Lord Ashcroft Building, Anglia Ruskin University  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

The university also has academic partners around the world including universities in Germany, Hungary, Greece, Switzerland, Malaysia, Singapore and Trinidad.

This campus is known as the Rivermead because it is next to the River Chelmer. The large glass-fronted building is the Lord Ashcroft International Business School and is named after (now) Baron Ashcroft, the University's Chancellor. Baron Ashcroft is a businessman and politician with dual nationality in Britain and Belize.

As well as being home to thousands of students, the Rivermead campus is one of the city's biggest employers. The University has helped to attract new people and economic activity to the city after the decline of some traditional industries. This modern campus opened in 1995 and at the next stop we will find out what used to be here before the University.

#### Directions 13

From the Lord Ashcroft Building turn right and head towards the bus stop. After a short distance stop by the University sign left of the roundabout. Look at the long orange building across the road to the left

---

## 14. The Way around the Globe

### Globe House, Hoffman's Way

Before the Rivermead university campus was built this area of Chelmsford looked very different. Most of the land here used to be a factory owned by the Hoffmann Manufacturing Company. It was formed in 1898 and named after American inventor, Ernst Gustav Hoffmann.

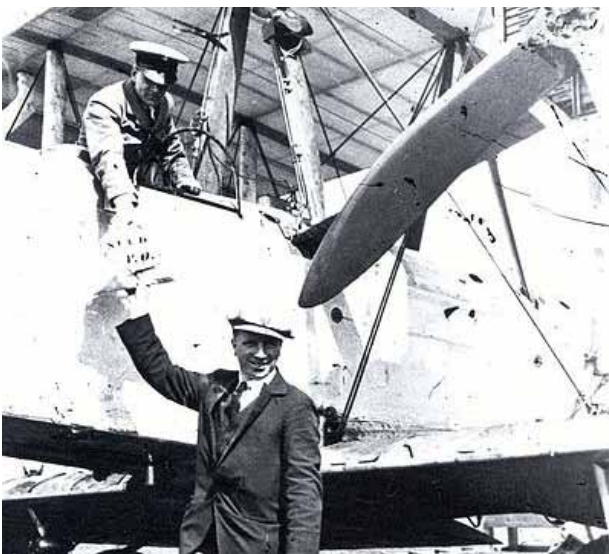
Hoffmann made ball bearings. Ball bearings are small metal spheres. They reduce friction in the moving parts of machines. The first ball bearing patent was issued in France and used on a racing bicycle.



Advert for Hoffmann ball bearings (1905)  
Courtesy of Grace's Guide - [www.GracesGuide.co.uk](http://www.GracesGuide.co.uk)

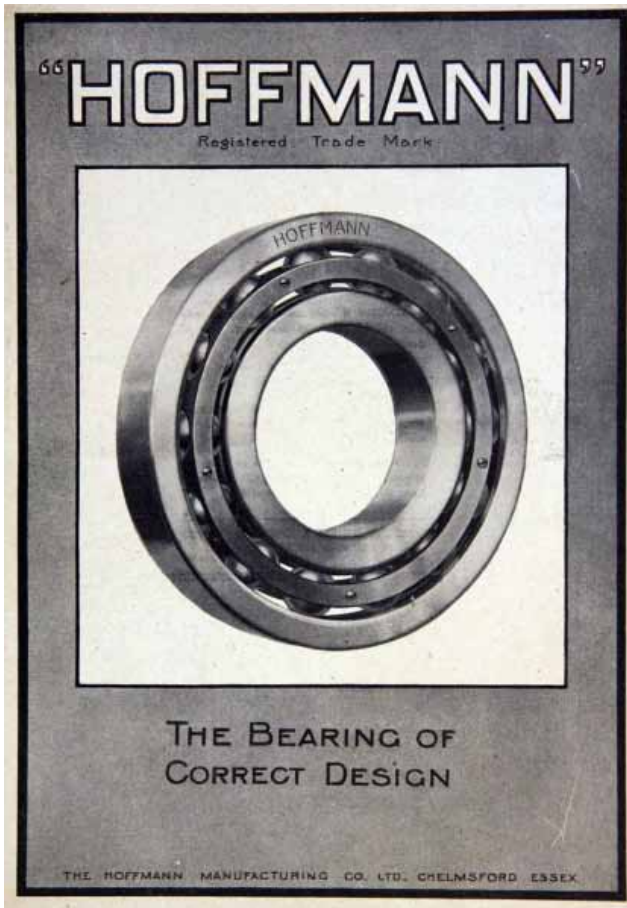
This part of Chelmsford was home to the world's first ball bearing factory. Hoffmann Ball Bearings became world-famous for their strength and precision. They were used worldwide in cars, military equipment and aeroplanes.

A famous example was when Hoffmann ball bearings helped the first non-stop aeroplane flight across the Atlantic. In 1919 pilots John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown flew a Vickers Vimy from the United States to Ireland. When they landed in Galway they used a Marconi radio - also made in Chelmsford - to tell the world about their successful flight.



Left: Pioneer aviators Alcock and Brown loading mail onto their Vickers Vimy  
Right: Taking off at the start of their historic flight  
Wikimedia Commons

By the 1930s Hoffmann had 3,500 staff and was Chelmsford's largest employer. After several mergers Hoffmann became part of NSK, a Japanese company. Then in 1989 the factory closed and most of it was demolished. One of the few remaining buildings is Globe House which is now an office block and gym. Another legacy of the company that transported the world is the name of the road here - Hoffmann's Way.



The bearing of 'correct design' (1920)  
Courtesy of Grace's Guide - [www.GracesGuide.co.uk](http://www.GracesGuide.co.uk)



Globe House - the only surviving Hoffmann building  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



Hoffmann bearings were widely used in cars  
Courtesy of Grace's Guide - [www.GracesGuide.co.uk](http://www.GracesGuide.co.uk)

#### Directions 14

Cross over Hoffmann's Way. Continue to the front of Globe House and look out for a blue plaque on the wall. Use the crossing in front of Globe House then turn left. Continue along New Street, crossing Bishop Road and Marconi Road. Stop at the large building with the gates onto the street and white clock tower. Note: At the time of creating this was it was partly obscured by boards and scaffolding.



---

## 15. The home of radio

### New Street Works

At the last two stops we saw how Chelmsford's former industrial sites have been regenerated. Here is another example.

We are outside the New Street Works. When Marconi's first factory became too small a larger one was built here.

The New Street Works was the world's first purpose-built radio factory which is why Chelmsford is often called the 'Birthplace of Radio'. The phrase appears on road signs on the way into the city.



A period postcard of the Marconi works  
Courtesy of [www.oldukphotos.com](http://www.oldukphotos.com)

When the New Street Works opened in June 1912 Marconi equipment was in great demand. Two months earlier the ocean liner Titanic had sunk off Nova Scotia in Canada. Crew used the Marconi on-board radio to raise the alarm and summon rescuers. An enquiry into the disaster concluded "Those who have been saved have been saved through one man, Mr Marconi... and his marvellous invention."

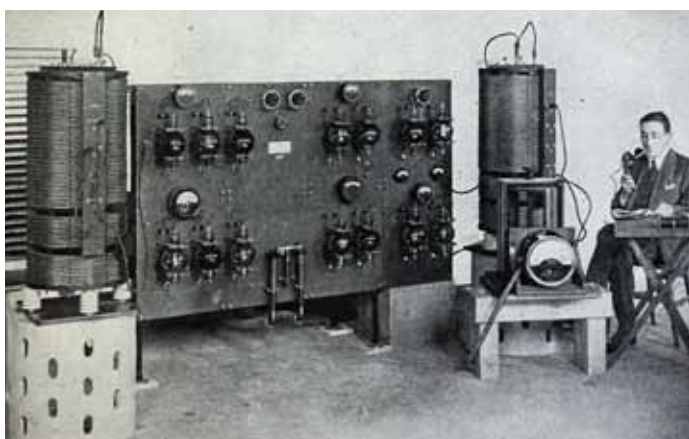
As well as making radios the New Street Works made a famous radio programme.

In 1920 the Australian opera singer Dame Nellie Melba sang here. Two giant masts were built on the factory roof and used to broadcast her performance.

It was the first international radio entertainment show - the signal travelled as far as New York and eastern Canada. A blue plaque on the wall celebrates the event.



Left: Dame Nellie Melba  
Right: The 140 metre tall radio masts used to broadcast her performance  
[Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/)



World's first broadcast transmitter  
at the New Street Works (1920)  
Courtesy of Grace's Guide - [www.GracesGuide.co.uk](http://www.GracesGuide.co.uk)



All wrapped up - the Marconi works being regenerated  
for housing and office space (February 2013)  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Sadly Dame Nellie Melba's performance here was the high note in the building's history. By the time Guglielmo Marconi died in 1937 his company had expanded into television, radar and marine equipment. The company changed ownership several times and was eventually split up. In 2008 the New Street Works closed. The buildings stood empty and fell into disrepair.

When we were first compiling this walk the New Street Works had been bought by a housing developer. The site has now been used for new houses and offices including many of the original Marconi buildings. The development is another example of how the city's former industrial sites are being regenerated.

### Directions 15

Continue along New Street and go under the railway bridge. Cross Victoria Road then pass the police station and court building. Immediately after Church Street turn right through the gate and into the grounds of Chelmsford Cathedral. Take the diagonal path to the front of the Cathedral. You should be able to see the porch and a sculpture on the corner wall of a man with a key.

---

## 16. A window to the world

### Cathedral, off New Street

Did you know that Chelmsford Cathedral is the second-smallest cathedral in England? Only Derby Cathedral is smaller.

Though small, Chelmsford Cathedral has played a large part in the local community for over 800 years. The Cathedral is dedicated to St Mary the Virgin, St Cedd and St Peter. Look at the cathedral's corner wall and we can see a sculpture of St Peter. St Peter was one of the twelve apostles and was a fisherman from Bethsaida in Israel. He is said to hold the key to heaven. This is why he is shown with a key, a net and fishing boots.

St Peter's Chapel inside the Cathedral records local people who gave their lives in war. There are several memorials to soldiers from the Essex Regiment including men who died in Burma and Turkey. The chapel also features an Italian lamp and a sculpture by Austrian artist, Georg Erlich.



St Peter sculpture  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG  
Discovering Britain

Do go inside the Cathedral if it is open to see its many interesting features. Entrance is through the South Porch which dates from 1460. It was extended in 1953 to mark Anglo-American friendship. During the Second World War many US servicemen were stationed in Essex. The porch's stained glass windows are of US forces' coats of arms.



Chelmsford Cathedral, the second-smallest cathedral in England.  
The South Porch stained glass windows (right) feature coats of arms of the US armed forces  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain



---

As well as historic links to other countries the Cathedral currently raises money for people around the world. Monthly collections fund the Cathedral's Mission Partnerships which are community projects in Swaziland and Kenya. For over 20 years Chelmsford Cathedral has been linked to Embu Cathedral in Kenya. Windows in Embu Cathedral were donated by people from Chelmsford Cathedral and funds are now being raised to build a new medical centre in Embu.



Embu Cathedral in Kenya  
Wikimedia Commons

---

### **Directions 16**

Feel free to go into the Cathedral if it is open. When you are ready, leave through the South Porch. Follow the path from the Cathedral to a small building opposite with a curved wall. Find a blue plaque on the wall.

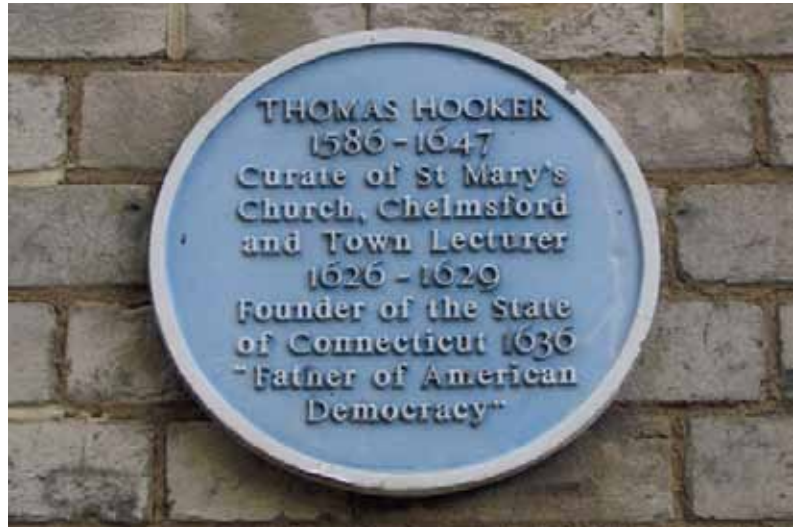
---

## 17. Endings and beginnings

### Thomas Hooker plaque, Duke Street

High on the wall here is a plaque dedicated to Thomas Hooker. Hooker was the town lecturer (a type of curate) at the Cathedral from 1626 to 1629 before he left Chelmsford for the New World.

He travelled to Rotterdam in the Netherlands then sailed to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in America. Because of his origins there are several towns and cities in America and Canada called Chelmsford. In fact Chelmsford in Massachusetts is another of Chelmsford's twin towns.



Thomas Hooker plaque  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Hooker soon fell out with the Massachusetts colony so he and his followers formed a new town called Hartford. Hartford became part of a new colony called Connecticut. Hooker helped to draft a set of rules called the 'Fundamental Orders of Connecticut'. These are often considered the first US constitution and earned Hooker his title 'The Father of American Democracy'.



*Hooker and Company Journeying through the Wilderness from Plymouth to Hartford, in 1636* by Frederic Edwin Church (1846)  
Wikimedia Commons

---

With the story of this remarkable man we have reached the end of our walk. On this walk we have discovered how a Roman trading post became a medieval market, a high-tech manufacturing centre and then one of Britain's newest cities.

From building bridges to developing radio, from medieval traders to modern business students, Chelmsford's story is one of invention and transformation. And the city is still changing today.

This story has connected Chelmsford to at least 49 different countries around the world. Maybe you spotted more international links. If you did, please let us know by visiting the Walk the World website where you can find more walks to try in different parts of Britain. We hope that you have enjoyed this one.



Some of the sights of Chelmsford  
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

---

### Directions 17

The Cathedral grounds are in the centre of the city. Go through the gate and turn left to reach Tindal Square and the High Street. To go to the bus or railway stations, turn right from the gate into Duke Street.



---

## **Further information**

Find out more about the walk story and places of interest along the route:

### **Britvic**

[www.britvic.co.uk](http://www.britvic.co.uk)

### **Chelmsford Cathedral**

[www.chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk](http://www.chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk)

### **Chelmsford City Council - Visiting Chelmsford**

[www.chelmsford.gov.uk/visiting-chelmsford](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/visiting-chelmsford)

### **Chelmsford Retail Market**

[www.chelmsford.gov.uk/market](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/market)

### **Chelmsford Museum**

[www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums)

### **Chelmsford War Memorial**

[www.chelmsfordwarmemorial.co.uk](http://www.chelmsfordwarmemorial.co.uk)

### **Hylands House and grounds**

[www.chelmsford.gov.uk/hylands](http://www.chelmsford.gov.uk/hylands)

### **Marconi Calling**

[www.marconicalling.com](http://www.marconicalling.com)

### **Marconi Development**

[www.marconiredevelopment.co.uk](http://www.marconiredevelopment.co.uk)

### **Marconi Veterans Association**

[www.marconi-veterans.org](http://www.marconi-veterans.org)

### **Visit Essex - Chelmsford**

[www.visitessex.com/chelmsford](http://www.visitessex.com/chelmsford)

---

## Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Walk the World walk:

- **Ollie Barnard** for creating the walk and providing the audio commentary
- **Ollie's parents** and **Dr Stuart Hitch**, Head of Geography and Geology at King Edward VI Grammar School for their valuable time and support
- **Rory Walsh** for creating the walk resources, providing photographs and acting as narrator
- **Jenny Lunn** for editing the walk materials
- **Caroline Millar** for editing the audio files
- **Britain From Above, Chelmsford City Museums, Grace's Guide** and **oldukphotos.com** for kind permission to include archive images
- **Stuart Axe, Alastair Bennett, Felix O, Paul Fenner, Robin Lucas, Tigger Snapper, Robin Webster** and **Trevor Wright** for additional images







**Britain's landscapes are wonderful.**

**There is a tremendous variety within our shores – whether in the countryside, in towns and cities or at the seaside. And every landscape has a story to tell about our past and present.**

**Discovering Britain is an exciting series of geographically-themed walks that aim to bring these stories alive and inspire everyone to explore and learn more about Britain. Each walk looks at a particular landscape, finding out about how forces of nature, people, events and the economy have created what you see today.**

**The self-guided walks are fun, informative and inspiring. Prepare to discover something new, to be surprised and to find the unexpected.**

**Visit [www.discoveringbritain.org](http://www.discoveringbritain.org) to**

**Send your review of this walk**

**Search for other walks**

**Suggest a new walk**