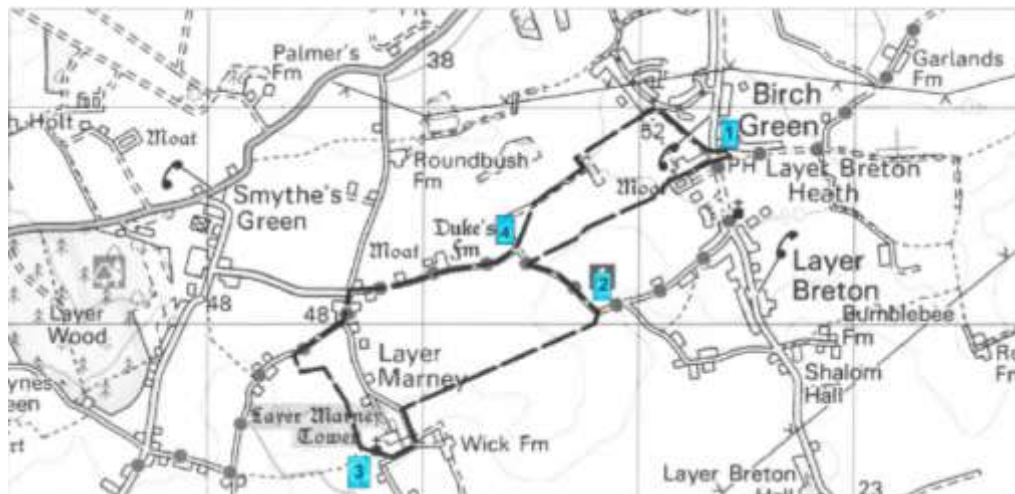


# Birch Green

Words and pictures by Laurie Page of the Public Rights of Way team at Essex County Council.



This is a walk through a quiet and serene area of the County from the village of Birch Green to the somewhat isolated Tudor Gatehouse at Layer Marney, which stands as a magnificent landmark in this part of the countryside

**Distance:** 3.75 miles

**Starting Point:** If you intend to visit the pub, you can park in the Hare and Hounds car park on the southern edge of the village. Otherwise you can park along Birch Street, towards the village.

**How to get there:** From the B1022 Maldon Road between Tiptree and Colchester, take the turning to the village of Birch. At the T-junction turn right into Birch Street and follow the road south for nearly a mile to Birch Green.

**Map:** Explorer 184 Colchester

**Refreshment:** The pub where you start is the 16<sup>th</sup> century Hare and Hounds Pub at Birch Green. Layer Marney Towers has a Tearoom.

**Place of interest nearby:** Layer Marney Towers en route. The red brick Tudor gatehouse at Layer Marney is the tallest and one of the finest in the country. It stands eight storeys high and the visitor is allowed up to the top to witness some magnificent views across the Essex countryside and the Blackwater estuary. The church is worth a visit too, with very fine tombs inside of the Lords Marney who built and lived in the buildings. It is open most afternoons from April to the end of September. There is an entrance fee to pay. (01206 330784).

## THE WALK



Hare and Hounds pub

(1) From the road junction at the Hare and Hounds pub, take the footpath off Birch Street opposite the pub, down a wide shingle track passing houses and then Stamps Farm. At the Breton Barn sign, take the footpath over the sign on the left of the stile. This takes you out into a cornfield, the path running along a hedgerow to your right. Follow this long footpath all the way, with open fields around. In the distance, the red brick building is the Gatehouse of Layer Marney Towers. When you reach the road turn left and walk down to where the road swings almost ninety degrees to the left. On the crown of this bend is a footpath on the right.



Layer Marney tower



Layer Marney tombs

(2) Take this path across the fields. A hedgerow appears on the right and then a line of trees. As you reach the crown of the upper slope the imposing Tudor Gatehouse once again comes in sight and there are splendid views of the countryside to the left. Continue to the road. If you wish to visit the Tower then turn right up the road and the entrance is on the left. Otherwise, turn left down the private road. This swings round to the right, into an unmade track and you will pass the front gates of the Tudor building with a good view of the gatehouse. Further to the right is the church of St Mary. If you have visited the Tower you can leave by the church entrance.



Layer Marney church

(3) At the end of the track you will see a footpath that goes straight on into a wide grass track. This immediately bends right and at the footpath junction at the end, take the path on the right which points to Smyth's Green. Go straight up (ignoring the path on the right) through the gap in the hedge at the end and into an open field. The footpath takes you to an oak tree in the middle of the field and then it deviates slightly left between the telegraph wires and a post in the middle of the field. The footpath terminates at the road where you turn right. Then, proceed to the next road T-junction. Turn left and proceed to the crossroads.

(4) Turn right at the crossroads and continue along this lane for about half a mile, passing Old Dukes Farm. Where the road bends ninety degrees to the right take the footpath on the crown of the bend to your left. Follow this round the edge of the field with the hedgerow on the left. The path swings round to the right, still following the field boundary. Continue along this wide path all the way. You pass through a little wooded area into another field, still with the hedge to the left. At the end of this field bear slightly left and this will soon take you to the road. To the right you will see another footpath marked by a sign. This path becomes a wide track and takes you back to the road junction close to the Hare and Hounds pub.

