



# The Hundred Parishes

## Circular Walks – number 102

Walk in the parishes of Great Waltham and Felsted through attractive countryside and the interesting village of Felsted – 7.5 miles (12 kms)

*This is a mainly rural walk of varying terrain, fairly flat and generally away from through roads. The route is anticlockwise, passing a number of World War II heritage sites and going through the village of Felsted where there are many places of interest and several establishments offering refreshment.*

*Paths are generally well maintained. There is at least one stile.*

Start and finish: Ford End in the parish of Great Waltham. There is a small car park in Church Lane, just off the B1008, opposite the church (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL678168, Postcode CM3 1LQ).

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps 183 and 195.  
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Before setting off, you may like to visit the red-brick, Victorian church and also review the interpretation panel in the car park. The panel describes the Ford End / Hartford End World War II Trail. We will walk along some of this trail and pass several concrete pillboxes and spigot mortar emplacements, each of which formed part of a defensive line constructed in 1942 in preparation for a potential German invasion. In this area the defensive line followed the River Chelmer.

Leave the car park and turn right, away from the church. Follow the road round to the left and pass through Hill Farm. Ignore a footpath that forks to the left (we will come back that way) and keep to the roadway past several large buildings and agricultural yard. After the buildings, continue ahead on a well-defined track.

The track meanders, passing a concrete structure on the left and then bearing right. Pass several mature trees on the right and, just as the track again bears right, turn left through a gate into a field. Descend gently, keeping the hedgerow on the left. At the bottom of the field continue ahead through a gateway into woodland called The Gorse. From April to June you should smell the wild garlic which covers much of the woodland floor. Pass a WWII pillbox on the left and soon emerge from the wood onto a private drive. Turn left and almost immediately right onto a relatively new public footpath which follows a pretty section of the River Chelmer on the left.

Look back and to the left to see the former Hartford End water mill, now a private house. The footpath once crossed the river immediately in front of the mill.

Pass a residential area on the left, on the other side of the river. This development is partly a conversion of the former Ridley's Hartford End Brewery which operated here for around 150 years before its closure in 2009.

When the path reaches the road, turn left (over the Chelmer). Cross the road with care and turn right, signposted to Littley Green. After about 100 yards, pause to look to the right. On the opposite river bank are the remains of two separate concrete spigot mortar gun emplacements, usually visible because of the small shiny steel spigot on which a light mortar gun could be mounted. Another pillbox is also visible in the distance.

Continue up this lane, ignoring footpaths to either side. The lane rises and turns to the left. Look back from time to time to enjoy the view as you climb away from the Chelmer valley. The road skirts round Littley Park – note its giant magnolia tree. When the road turns sharp right our route goes straight ahead for about half a mile on a wide gravel track lined with trees on the right and extensive views across the countryside. At the high point of this track, we pass imperceptibly from Great Waltham parish into Felsted parish.

When the track reaches a road keep straight ahead along the road. Soon, part of the medieval, brick-built Leez Priory comes into view. This is an extensive property, built by Lord Richard Rich for his home on the site of one of the priories which he helped Henry VIII secure from the church as part of the dissolution of the monasteries. The extensive Leez Priory is partly in Felsted and partly in the adjacent parish of Great and Little Leighs which lies outside the Hundred Parishes.

Leez Priory is now used as a wedding venue. Pass the entrance and follow the road round to the left. Soon turn right, signposted towards Felsted and Rayne. The fingerpost sign was manufactured by Maldon Iron Works and probably pre-dates the pillboxes we have seen. Almost immediately, turn left through the hedge onto a footpath, part of the Saffron Trail, a long-distance path from Southend to Saffron Walden.

The path bears right, crosses a substantial footbridge over a stream and continues with the stream on the left. The path keeps to the higher ground, close to the hedgerow on the right. The lower area to the left was once a series of large fish ponds serving Leez Priory.

At the end of the field pass over a stile and continue ahead through a narrower field. After about 200 yards take the path that turns left and almost immediately cross a bridge over a stream. On the left is a surviving, large pond. Pause to enjoy the sound of the birds. Just as the pond ends, turn right, following a hedgerow on the left.

After passing a wood on the right, turn right onto a wide track. Soon, at the end of the wood, the track bears half left but we turn sharp left to follow a ditch on the left. At the end of this field pass through a gateway and cross over a footbridge to join a road. Turn left.

The road passes through Cobbler's Green. After Hamilton House on the left, and before the road bears left, we fork right onto a public byway. Pass Potash Farm on the left and then its garden with two giant ducks, carved from tree trunks, standing beside the pond.

Just after passing Jollyboys on the right, turn right onto a lane and after about 50 yards turn right again onto a footpath (waymarked *Saffron Trail*), passing houses behind the hedge on the left.

Start to pass playing fields on the left and, 100 yards further on, turn left through a gateway and turn immediately right. Soon keep to the left of a field with the hedge on the left. Pass a children's play area on the right and emerge into a car park. Keep straight ahead to exit the car park onto a road. Immediately opposite are sports fields for Felsted School.

Turn left past Felsted's war memorial and memorial hall. Outside is the first of several interpretation panels that recount elements of Felsted's interesting history and heritage.

Much of Felsted revolves around education and its long-established private school, founded in 1564 by Lord Richard Rich. Continue along this road, Braintree Road, passing many school buildings and occasional private residences – including 15<sup>th</sup>-century The Folly on the left with its elephant topiary, then almshouses on the right. Felsted has several places to eat.

The junction with Chelmsford Road on the left is surrounded by interesting buildings including the original school opposite the junction and, behind it, the Norman church in which there is a fine memorial to Richard Rich.

Pass Chelmsford Road on the left and take the next left, Mill Road, signposted to North End and Barnston. This road descends past a variety of larger, mostly modern, houses. At the bottom of the hill stands Felsted Mill, now a private residence.

The public right of way should cross a footbridge immediately before the mill but it was closed as unsafe from May 2019 until June 2020, apparently awaiting attention from Essex County Council. If it is still closed, continue past the mill along the road for another 600 yards. Ignore a footpath to the left shortly before the road bends to the right and crosses the river. Very soon after crossing the river, turn left onto a footpath.

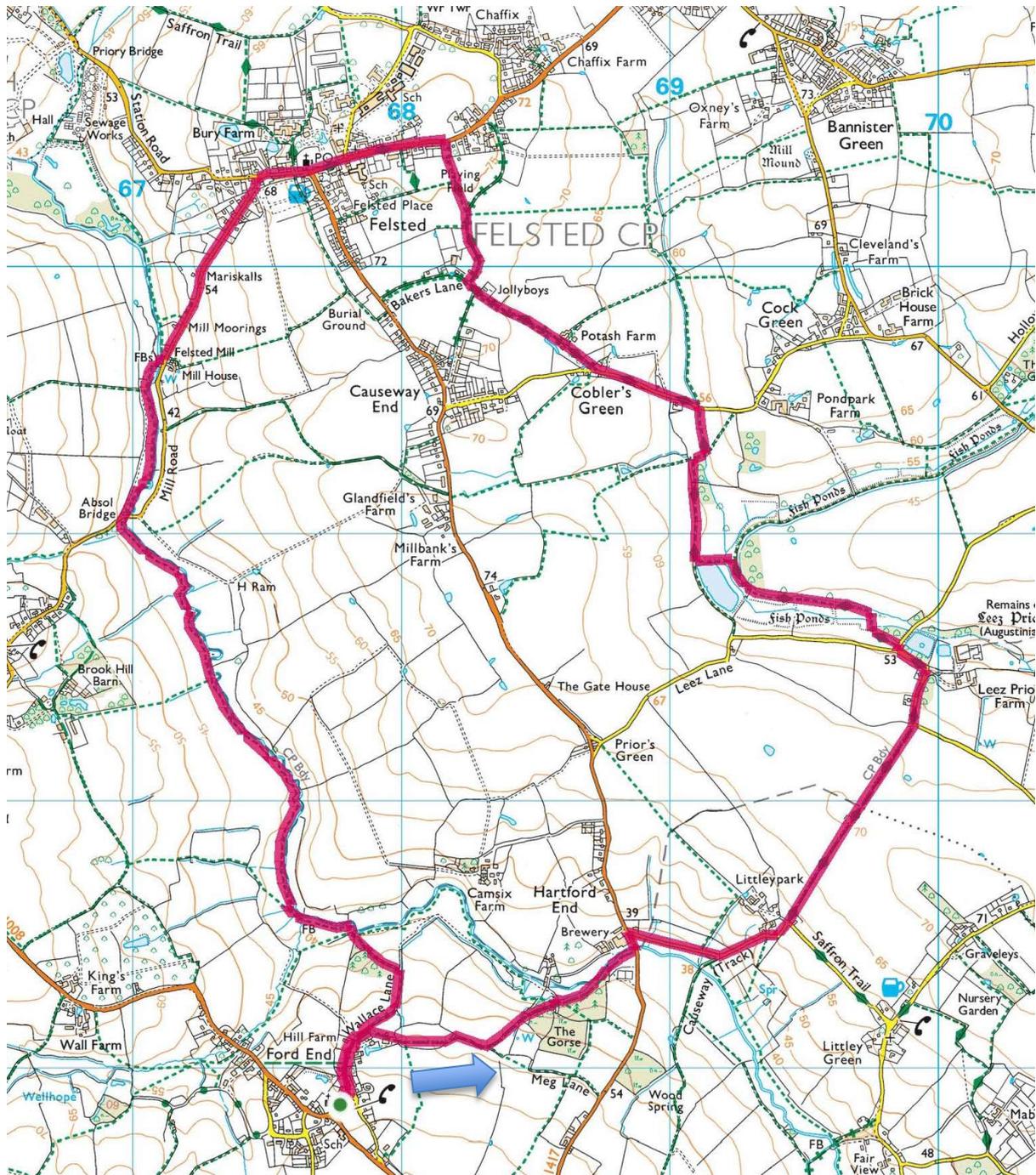
[Should the bridge and right of way be restored, pass into the mill's parking area and cross the footbridge over the millstream immediately before it flows beneath the building. Turn left and follow the footpath with the River Chelmer on the left until the path reaches a road. Cross the road with care and return to the footpath on the opposite side.]

The path meanders with the Chelmer River on the left for more than a mile. The river is gradually descending towards Chelmsford. The banks are lined with willows, many of which have been planted in recent years. Pass at least one more concrete pillbox.

About 200 yards after a pillbox, at the end of the long field, the path turns right. Almost immediately turn left across a footbridge over a stream, turn left and continue with the Chelmer on the left. About 200 yards later, turn left over another footbridge and continue ahead with the river still on the left. In 2020, the path passed a field of young willow trees all lined up like soldiers. The river and the footpath turn sharp right (at the end of the field of willows). Soon, after 40 yards, the river turns left, just before the corner of a wood. Do not turn left but go straight ahead into the corner of the wood. The entrance is not obvious but, just inside the wood, the path crosses a footbridge over a ditch.

Continue uphill on a clear path through the wood. At the top of the hill the path turns right, still with the woodland on the right. The path emerges opposite a large building that we passed early on at the start of the walk. Turn right, following the main drive through Hill Farm, bearing right to arrive at the car park where we started opposite the church.

A diagram covering this route, based on the Ordnance Survey map, is shown below. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.



This route description, last updated 10 July 2020, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to [hundredparishes@btinternet.com](mailto:hundredparishes@btinternet.com).