



# The Hundred Parishes

## Circular Walks – number 106

Rural walk mainly in the parishes of Henham and Chickney, also including a little of Widdington and Debden – 6.8 miles (11 kms)

*This is a rural, fairly flat walk, largely on gravel tracks, passing through the village of Henham and visiting the remote Saxon church at Chickney. There is a pub near the start and finish.*

*Paths are generally well maintained. There are no stiles.*

Start and finish: Henham, by the war memorial. Park somewhere nearby on the road.  
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL546285, Postcode CM22 6AJ.

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

From the war memorial, head west along Church Street, signposted towards Elsenham Station. Pass The Cock pub on the right and the parish church on the left – you may like to visit these at the end of the walk. Keep to the right, facing any traffic.

When the lane bears left keep straight ahead on a gravel track. After a short descent, keep half right on the main track, ignoring paths to left and right. Continue on the gravel track uphill for ¼ mile to Henham Lodge Farm.

Pass the entrance to commercial properties on the left and go through a gate. Turn immediately left and pass between commercial buildings on the left and housing on the right. Keep following the hedge on the right, soon turning right and then right again. Follow the main track, passing sixteenth-century Henham Lodge Farmhouse on the right and, on the left, a small copse that includes foxglove trees with their large leaves and foxglove-like flowers in springtime. Stay on the track, leaving the small residential area behind, with a hedgerow on the right.

The route follows this path in a northerly direction for about a mile, imperceptibly crossing from Henham parish into Widdington, and then passing beneath two power lines.

After an uphill stretch, pass barns and then older buildings to the left and join the drive from Amberden Hall which we have just passed on the right. The Hall is part of what was a much larger building when originally constructed in the sixteenth century. Pass ponds to right and left before leaving through a gateway.

Turn right onto a lane (Green Croft Lane) which soon becomes a gravel track. In about 50 yards turn sharp right to continue along the byway, now heading south and passing Amberden Hall on the right.

After about half a mile, having crossed another parish boundary into Debden, the byway passes the very tall metal tower which has been visible for much of the walk. This communications tower was constructed as part of a national microwave radio network in the 1960s. Should you be tempted to climb this structure, please observe the notice which states that a permit must be obtained first!

Soon pass on the right the site which has for many years been used for banger or stock car racing. The byway passes a reservoir and water tower before reaching a crossroads. Once, just over the road, there was a small railway station known as Sibleys.

Turn right onto the road signposted towards Henham. For around 40 years until 1952 the railway ran beside this road, with steam trains operating between Thaxted and Elsenham, where it joined the main Cambridge – London line. Pass Lovecotes Lodge Campsite on the right.

Follow the road round to the left, ignoring the footpath that goes straight ahead along the route of the old railway. We have just left Debden and entered the small, sparsely-populated parish of Chickney (the population in 2011 was around 30).

When safe, cross to the left side of the road. In about 100 yards the road turns right but our route goes straight ahead, passing Burnt House on the left. This public byway is called Chickney Green and later Chickney Lane. Please stay alert for where we leave this lane – it is obvious once you reach the point described in the next paragraph.

After a quarter mile pass a thatched cottage on the right. After another quarter mile or so of gently meandering lane, just before a gradual bend to the right, a field-edge path comes in from the right. Almost immediately, another path goes off to the left. Turn left onto this unmarked path, passing between two single oak trees. We are now heading East along a wide grassy path with hedgerow on the left. Our route follows a clear permissive path and not a cross-field footpath as shown on maps.

After about 500 yards, at the bottom of the field and with a lake in sight to the left, turn right and continue with a hedgerow and ditch on the left. You may see and hear clay pigeon shooting over to the right on the far side of the field.

After another 200 yards, turn left and pass between metal barns. Follow a gravel track uphill. At the top of the climb keep left, pass a house and soon reach Chickney Church on the left.

This Saxon church is one of the oldest, possibly the oldest, place of worship in the Hundred Parishes, built sometime between 850 AD and 1000 AD. Its churchyard is oval, suggesting it may have been sacred in pre-Christian times. The building has been cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust since 1972 and is usually open to visitors.

Leave the church and turn right to retrace part of our route: after 100 yards follow the track round to the left and with a hedgerow on the right. Over to the left, across the valley, you may see the village of Broxted and the top of its church spire. After another 300 yards turn right onto another gravel track, descending past farm buildings on the left.

At the bottom of the hill, the track divides. Our route turns left into a parking area (for the shooting club).

Keep to the left, with a hedgerow on the left, and now following the Saffron Trail, a 70-mile long-distance route that diagonally crosses Essex between Southend and Saffron Walden.

Leave the parking area and keep straight ahead with a line of trees on the left. On reaching a wood, keep ahead with the wood, Hawland Wood, on the left. After about 50 yards the path turns left into the wood. Follow the main path (which may be muddy in winter) through the wood.

Leave the wood – and pass from Chickney parish into Henham parish. Keep straight ahead, initially with a hedgerow on the left and then with fields on either side, descending and then climbing gently with a hedgerow on the right. After passing a house on the left, the wide path turns left and soon reaches the drive of the house we have just passed. Turn right and follow the main route, bearing left and right and then climbing gently through Woodend Green on a road lined with horse chestnut trees.

On reaching a junction, turn left along Henham's High Street, keeping to the left which soon has a pavement.

Henham is a village of many greens.

After a while, on the right, the large bell reminds us that this was once a public house, The Bell, before its conversion to a private house in 1978. Almost immediately opposite, on the left, is Henham Village Hall, set back with a green in front. Near the end of this green, turn left towards Starr House. Not long ago this served as a garage and, before that, the Starr and Garter pub.

Turn right, passing Starr Cottage, and keep straight ahead along a narrow path past some lovely thatched cottages. Pass a school on the right and the village sign on the left. The sign features a dragon, last seen here in 1669. On reaching the road, Crow Street, turn right towards the war memorial.

If you were to continue past the memorial and round to the right you would soon reach Henham village store. Alternatively, if you wish, keep left at the war memorial to visit the church and The Cock public house.

You can find more information about the parishes you have passed through on the website [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk).

This route description, last updated 12 October 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).

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

