



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 111

Hildersham – a short stroll around the village – 1.5 miles (2 kms)

This anticlockwise walk explores the village at the heart of Hildersham parish. The route has no stiles but there are some steps. Dogs should be kept on a lead. Some paths can be muddy at times. The route passes the Pear & Olive restaurant and Pantry Farmshop (each with limited opening times) and Hildersham's parish church. If you hope to visit one, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags.

This walk could be combined with walk number 114, which covers a mile around nearby Bartlow.

Start and finish: There is space to park along Hildersham's High Street where this route starts near the village sign and village hall, about 200 yards northeast of the pub.
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL545485 - Postcode: CB21 6BY.
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 209.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

We suggest you start on the pavement beside the village sign. If you have a dog we recommend it is kept on a lead as the walk passes at least two fields with horses. We head southwest with a field on the right, soon passing a memorial bench which commemorates four men from Hildersham who died in either the Second World War or the Korean War.

A little further along, we pass a young lady on a swing and then Pear & Olive restaurant and associated Pantry Farmshop and café – perhaps worth noting for later! For many years, this functioned as the Pear Tree pub. Opposite, the part-thatched Corner Cottage dates from the 17th century.

We soon reach a former telephone kiosk that is now used as a lending library. Just beyond it on the right is the back of the rather hidden and privately-owned Hildersham Hall. This country house was built in the early 1800s in 70 acres of parkland.

From the telephone box, we cross the road with care to turn right beside a small green into a road signposted as leading to Meadowlands. We pass Burford House on the left, a 17th-century former farmhouse.

At the end of the short road, we keep straight ahead on the footpath, and soon keep ahead through a field.

We ignore two footpaths that leave to the left over separate footbridges. The field narrows until the path reaches a gate. Beyond the gate we can see the remains of a windmill – a tower mill built in 1863 and now incorporated into a private house.

We pass through the gate and turn left, keeping a hedgerow on the left. The path soon reaches a roadway that leads to the windmill. This is a public right of way so you could take a closer look at the former mill if you wish. Our route turns left along this roadway, walking

beside the River Granta. The river is flowing in our direction towards Cambridge where it will join the Cam and later the Great Ouse before discharging into the North Sea at The Wash.

We soon reach Hildersham Mill, a former watermill and miller's house that were built around 1860. The mill ceased to operate in 1904.

Just as we reach the mill building on the right, we turn sharp left through a gate into a field. Here, there are paths heading half left and half right. We want the one that goes half right, going diagonally across the field between temporary fencing, and heading directly towards an elevated footbridge.

We climb brick steps onto the footbridge to cross the Granta, taking care on the steep steps down at the far end.

We continue straight ahead on a path that can become overgrown or muddy at times. We soon reach a grass track where we turn right towards metal fencing and a distant pylon. In only a few yards, before the fencing, we turn left through a wooden gate. We go straight ahead, passing beside allotments on the left.

After a short rise, we follow the path round to the left, keeping the allotments on the left.

At the end of the allotments, we pass a bungalow and immediately ignore a footpath to the left. About 20 yards later, we turn right onto another footpath. This soon comes to a field. We keep straight ahead along the left of the field, initially with a wall on the left.

After about 200 yards, we reach a road where we turn left. When safe, we should cross to the right to face any oncoming traffic. On the left, we pass the entrance to the 19th-century Old Rectory with an array of tall chimneys.

Before the crossroads, when safe, we should cross back to the left. We turn left, signposted to Hildersham and, when safe, join the pavement on the right. This is High Street.

After about 200 yards, we reach Hildersham's Grade I-listed Holy Trinity Church on the right. The building dates from the 13th century and is worth a visit. It is especially notable for the colourful decoration of walls and ceiling in the chancel. Access to the chancel from the nave may not be permitted and the gate may be alarmed: please check for any notices before pushing the gate.

The church was renovated and redecorated during the 19th century, largely at the expense of the Goodwin family which provided the rectors for most of that century. The chancel was decorated in the late 1800s with biblical scenes and floral patterns on the walls, while the ceiling is covered with stars and other emblems. It is an outstanding example of Victorian decoration.

On leaving the churchyard, we turn right and continue gently downhill on the pavement. Immediately on the right, we pass thatched Church Cottage which dates from the 16th century, possibly earlier.

We pass Blench lane on the left. This leads back to the allotments.

Further along, on the right, we come to 16th-century Mabbutts: timber-framed and plastered, jettied over the pavement and with a thatched roof.

In another 100 yards, we cross the River Granta on an iron bridge that was constructed by the local blacksmith in 1886. A plate on the bridge, visible from near the adjacent ford, records that it was paid for by Elisabeth Goodwin Hemington. She was the widowed sister of the rector, Robert Goodwin.

A little further along the High Street we reach where we parked. The wooden village hall on the left started life in 1914 as a makeshift army surgical ward in Cambridge during the First World War. It was purchased many years ago by the village and transported to its present site.

Before you leave Hildersham, please consider whether a visit would be appropriate to the Pear & Olive restaurant or the adjacent Pantry farmshop and café.

You can read more about Hildersham on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 14 December 2021, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to hundredparishes@btinternet.com.

