



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 115

Little Hadham - 4.1 miles (7 kms)

This clockwise walk explores some of the parish of Little Hadham, passing through three of its eight hamlets: Bury Green, Hadham Ford and around the crossroads, each of which is protected as a Conservation Area. Most of the route is on quiet lanes with some footpaths. There is a pub, The Nag's Head, about half-way round at Hadham Ford but it has limited opening hours – best to check before relying on it. If you hope to visit a church or a pub, please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags. There are no stiles.

Start and finish: There is ample parking space beside St Cecelia's Church at Church End, down the first lane on the left off the (old) A120 heading East from the traffic lights (signposted to Hadham Industrial Estate). Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL446228 - Postcode: SG11 2DZ. The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194. A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Leave the parking area along the road by which you entered and, at the roadway, turn left.

Almost immediately, ignore a footpath on the right and enter a commercial estate. Pass a car park on the right and bear right along the roadway, passing commercial buildings on the left. When the surfaced road ends, keep straight ahead through a gateway onto a fairly wide, gravel track.

Soon ignore a track that leaves to the left.

After a while, the track runs beside a fence on the right before bearing left, but at this point our route turns right through a metal gateway. This brings us into an estate of residential properties. This is Hadham Hall, a range of buildings that functioned as a Hertfordshire County Council school between 1952 and 1990 and now serves mainly as private residences. The main buildings were constructed in the 16th century for Henry Capell.

Follow the roadway round to the left, passing homes on the left and a green on the right. Then follow the waymarked footpath round to the right. The footpath is identified as the Hertfordshire Way, a long-distance trail. Pause before reaching the archway.

Please turn around to appreciate the three main 16th-century brick buildings. The Great Barn, across the green to the left, was used as the school hall. The main building to the right is Hadham Hall itself; Queen Elizabeth I spent one night here in 1578. The archway behind us is part of the Gatehouse range, part dating from the 15th century.

Now, pass through the archway, noting the Hertfordshire puddingstones next to the exit. Please turn and look back at the brickwork.

Continue ahead, staying on the footpath on the left and passing an interesting notice board. In 2021, much of its display was taken from the Little Hadham pages of "The Hundred Parishes: An Introduction", the Society's first hardback publication.

Keep straight ahead along the drive, beneath a fine avenue of trees. When the drive turns left, keep straight ahead on the footpath.

The footpath soon reaches a main road (still numbered as A120 in 2022 although the main route now bypasses this former Roman road, Stane Street). The speed limit of 40mph is not always respected, despite the blind summit to the right, so cross with great care and turn right along the pavement for about 100 yards. Turn left into Millfield Lane.

After about 100 yards, ignore the lane to the left (it goes to Green Street, one of Little Hadham's hamlets). After a while, we pass part-thatched Millfield Cottage on the right. It dates from the 17th century or earlier.

Ignore a byway on the right and follow the lane round to the left, passing the entrance to Silver Leys Polo Club. 100 yards later turn right onto a short gravel track and almost immediately go left into Grove Millennium Wood, a community planting in 1999. It can be a little muddy through here in winter.

Soon, ignore a path to the right and keep straight ahead. The winding path through the wood offers a brief diversion from the lane, passing informative signs, a pond and picnic tables before leaving through a gate. Now turn left, following a hedgerow on the left and fencing on the right. Pass through two gateways and across a bridge to return to the lane.

Turn right. In just a few yards, we join another lane that comes from the left. Very soon we enter the pretty hamlet of Bury Green. More than 20 of Little Hadham's 130 listed buildings are to be found here, scattered around the green, mostly dating from the 16th or 17th century. The thatched Old Cottage, on the left, may be even older.

At the end of the green, Bury Green Farmhouse, over to the right, dates from the 15th or 16th century. We follow the lane round to the right, but do pause and look back. You may like to rest a while on the well-positioned bench before pressing on.

Our route follows this narrow rural lane, Acremore Street, for nearly a mile [footpath alternatives were considered but are not easy to follow].

Around half way, we pass Acremans on the left. This probably started life as a hall house in the 16th century. Sadly, the adjacent farm buildings have been in ruins for many years. In another 100 yards, pass thatched Acremore, also from the 16th century.

Hoecroft Lane, a byway, comes in from the right and at this point there is a view of the Ash valley which we are approaching. Around this point, Acremore Street becomes Ford Hill and descends fairly steeply past an entrance on the left which is both a driveway to 16th-century Suffylde and a bridleway to Much Hadham.

Towards the bottom of the hill, we pass a row of single-storey thatched outbuildings on the left. They are not as ancient as they may appear, dating from around 1800 AD. Soon afterwards, the lane ends at a small green with Little Hadham's war memorial. Note the puddingstone on the near (eastern) corner of the green. To the left is 16th-century The Old Brick House with its tall chimneys.

Immediately after the war memorial, turn right onto the road signposted to B. Stortford and Puckeridge. When safe, cross to the pavement on the left, immediately passing Ashmeads, yet another house dating from the 16th century.

We are now in the hamlet of Hadham Ford, sometimes just called The Ford, and we will pass many varied and listed buildings in the next quarter mile. Next on the right is Gouldborn which started life in the 15th century or earlier as a timber-framed open hall house.

Stay on the pavement which briefly diverges from the road to pass over the River Ash on a footbridge. On the right is Little Hadham's village sign and 1880 water pump. They were joined in 2021 by a large puddingstone that was unearthed during construction of the Little Hadham bypass. The stone, actually a conglomerate of many rounded pebbles, was probably formed 50 million years ago and deposited in Little Hadham by a retreating glacier, perhaps 10,000 years ago.

Cross Chapel Lane (which leads to a 19th-century chapel on the left in about 50 yards). On the right is a footbridge over the river. This leads to a footpath that climbs a short steep hill for this view down onto the hamlet.



Our route continues ahead on the road, passing 19th-century, red-brick Ashford House and then the Nag's Head pub, said to have been built in 1595.

Just after the Nag's Head, cross with care to the pavement on the right.

Next on the left is Houghtons. It dates from the 16th century and in the early 20th century it functioned as a shop, "Houghton, draper and grocer".

Further along, on the right, the long Thatched Cottage comprises two 16th-century thatched, timber-framed dwellings that were later linked by the insertion of the brick element.

Almost opposite on the left is Saddlers, sideways on to the road and dating from around 1700 AD.

Ignore a footpath on the left that goes to Westland Green, another hamlet of Little Hadham parish. Pass Little Hadham Village Hall on the right.

After a playing field on the right and opposite a bench, Halfway House on the left dates from the 17th century. It was once the home of Captain William Harvey, one of only seven men who sailed with Captain James Cook on all three of his great voyages of discovery between 1768 and 1779. Harvey died in 1807 and is buried near the porch in Little Hadham churchyard.

After a stretch of road with few buildings, we cross the new flood relief gully, completed in 2021, and enter the hamlet known as The Ash, best known for the lights that manage traffic at this staggered cross roads with the A120. On the left, immediately before the junction, is 16th-century Manor Farm. Through the gateway is a 17th-century thatched barn.

We need to cross the busy A120 – possibly most safely negotiated by making a diagonal crossing from the near right corner to the far left corner. Take great care.

Once across, please pause and look around to consider each of the buildings around this crossroads. We should be standing opposite Manor Farm and outside Ashe Cottages, now three dwellings but built as one in the 17th century.

Perhaps best known is the 17th-century red-brick house opposite, The Angel. This was once a pub and was the home around 1970 of the folk-rock band Fairport Convention. They moved out soon after a lorry driver misjudged the bend and crashed into the building. The driver was killed and much damage done to the house. The traffic lights were installed three years later. After the opening in 2021 of the Little Hadham bypass, the crossroads is now considerably quieter.

Also visible from this spot, looking east up the old A120, Bridge House Cottages displays the date 1726 and, just beyond, Bridge House shows both 1500 and 1726. Each building probably dates from the 17th century. Just beyond these buildings, the road passes over the River Ash; the road bridge was built only in the early 1900s; before then, the river crossing was a ford.

We continue in our northerly direction of travel. Almost immediately, on the right and half hidden behind a high gate, is ancient The Whare with tall chimneys, a hall house dating from late 15th or early 16th century.

A little further along, on the right, Providence House stands sideways-on to the road. It has been altered since its 17th-century origins and once served as a village school.

We continue climbing for another 100 yards or so. Shortly before Lime Kiln Place on the left, we should cross with care to turn right onto public footpath 38, signposted to Church. This starts as a field-edge path with hedgerow on the right. Keep straight ahead, climbing steps onto a solid wooden footbridge over the River Ash. Descend steps and continue ahead on the footpath, climbing steadily towards Little Hadham Church. Over to the left is the new bypass.

The parish church, dedicated to St Cecilia, is listed at Grade I and merits a visit. Entry is through the porch straight ahead (after removing or covering dirty boots). The memorial to 18th-century explorer Captain William Harvey stands just outside, near the porch.

Exit the church through the porch and turn right and right again to return to the parking area where we started.

You can read more about Little Hadham on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 12 February 2022, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to hundredparishes@btinternet.com.

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

