



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 122

Much Hadham: a short stroll in and around the village: 2.2 miles (4 kms)

Half of this walk is along Much Hadham's historic High Street, but it starts with some quiet lanes and a stretch of good footpath. The whole of the walk is within Much Hadham's Conservation Area. There are one or two places for refreshment near the end of the walk, while several seats along the way provide opportunities to pause. There are no stiles.

Start and finish: There is usually ample space to park at the northern end of the village on the east side of the main road, High Street, near the church. The route starts from there.
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL429197 - Postcode: SG10 6DB.
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 194.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Head north along High Street, on the pavement on the right side of the road. With care, cross the junction with B1004 which goes to Bishop's Stortford. Pass 17th-century Lordship Cottage on the left with its tall chimney stack.

About 100 yards after the junction we reach the gateway to The Lordship on the right. This is a private residence and is not all visible. Through the gate we can get a feel – but please don't be intrusive. The building straight ahead through the gate is The Lordship, dating from the 1740s but with a 16th-century house to its rear. Behind that is a large moated site that is protected as a Scheduled Monument. The building to the left with a clock tower is listed as an 18th-century stable block. Both the Lordship and the stable block are listed as Grade II* (Grade two star).

Turn and retrace to the junction with B1004. With care, cross the junction and continue past a variety of interesting houses on the right and our parked car.

Much Hadham has 140 buildings that have been listed for their architectural or historical value. Of these, around two-thirds date from 1700 AD or earlier. This walk passes many but we will mention only a selection. The parish is especially rich in grand residences, many old and some relatively new. We will soon find the underlying reason.

To the left is a good view of Much Hadham's church with its tall "Hertfordshire spike" rising above the tower. Ye Olde Red Lion Hotel, on the right, dates from the 16th century. Once a substantial coaching inn, it was converted around 1980 into six homes.

Turn left into Church Lane and soon reach the Grade I-listed parish church of St Andrew which, unusually, is used by both Church of England and Roman Catholic congregations. Enter the churchyard. We will walk clockwise around the church which was founded in the 13th century. Most of the building comes from the 15th. Fork left onto the minor path and pause at the doorway to the tower, beneath the clock.

The heads of a king and queen on either side of the doorway were sculpted by Henry Moore in 1953. He lived in the parish, not far away in the hamlet of Perry Green.

Henry Moore is buried in Perry Green and his former workshop is now a museum. His sculptures were generally much larger than the king and queen and a good number can be seen outdoors around his former home. Others can be found in prominent places all over the world.

Continue to the left of the church. Over the wall to the left we can see the former summer palace of the Bishops of London. The Bishops of London owned much of Much Hadham from around 1000 AD and used the summer palace until the 18th century as a retreat from the bustle and stench of London. The Domesday Book of 1086 AD recorded that the then Bishop owned two-thirds of the parish of Much Hadham.

It was here, in an earlier edition of the palace, that Edmund Tudor was born in 1430, the son of Owen Tudor and his wife Katherine, the widow of King Henry V. In 1485, Edmund Tudor's son was crowned King Henry VII, becoming the first of our Tudor monarchs.

The palace has now been divided into private residences. The location of the Bishop's summer palace here in Much Hadham attracted other wealthy and influential people to live here. This largely explains why the village punches above its weight in terms of fine heritage properties.

Continue around the church to the porch. You are encouraged to enter and absorb its interior, not least some modern additions: a fascinating collection of embroidered kneelers and a striking glass window, installed in 1984, which depicts the Tree of Life and is based on an etching by Henry Moore.

From the church porch, turn right and leave the churchyard through the gateway by which we entered. Turn left to continue along Church Lane. Soon follow the lane to the right, passing the entrance on the left to the 17th-century Old Rectory. The house is mostly hidden behind a giant cedar tree.

After passing a few houses, the lane continues for some distance between two large gardens: that of the Old Rectory on the left and that of Much Hadham Hall on the right. Eventually, the Hall comes into view; this is the back of the house and we will see the front later.

Ignore a footbridge on the left which takes a path over the River Ash. Soon afterwards, when the lane turns right, we go straight ahead through a gate and immediately turn sharp left onto Footpath 23, signposted to Stanstead Hill. We are now on the Hertfordshire Way, a long-distance route, but we will follow it for only about half a mile.

After 100 yards, go over a concrete footbridge with handrails and continue with a field on the right.

Pass through a metal gate and bear half right to cross a drive before passing through another gateway. Continue on the pathway through a field, slightly downhill and keeping trees on the left.

The path heads towards farm buildings and passes through a wooden gate in a fence. Bear half right, keeping a fence on the right and with farm buildings to the left.

The field narrows and, at the end, pass through a gate on the left and descend onto a lane. Beware of traffic and turn right.

In about 100 yards, the lane crosses a ford through the River Ash but we bear left onto a footbridge to cross the river.

Descend from the bridge and continue along Malting Lane with railings on the left and houses on the right. Little Maltings probably dates from the 17th century.

As the lane turns to the right, pass Maltings Cottage and The Laurels on the corner, two adjoining 17th-century cottages that have been much restored.

After a short climb, Malting Lane reaches a junction with Tower Hill, the southern extension of Much Hadham's High Street. This area is called Hadham Cross. Turn left for just a few yards to stand opposite an archway entrance through a wall. This wall has been given a Grade I listing, perhaps surprising as the wall dates only from the second half of the 19th century. It is a mix of brick, flintstone and even a Hertfordshire puddingstone at the base of the rounded corner as it turns into Kettle Green Lane. The year 1697 is displayed above the archway but this probably relates to work carried out on the building behind, Yew Tree House, a farmhouse that dates from around 1600 AD.

Turn and retrace to the junction with Malting Lane. Cross the junction and continue ahead on the main road, heading in a northerly direction. We are now back on Much Hadham's exceptionally long main street. There is generally a pavement on only one side.

After about a quarter mile, we pass a row of single-storey almshouses with tall chimneys. This building was erected in 1866. Just beyond is the village sign. Soon afterwards, on the left, the war memorial is partly hidden behind a hedge. Just after the memorial is the entrance gateway to Moor Place, a large 18th-century country house with Grade-I listing. It is not visible from the main road but can be seen from the public footpath that sets off from the gate.

From now on, we are back in the High Street. It has a fascinating variety of well-maintained heritage buildings, some of whose names recall former occupants or past activities. Soon on the left we pass 17th-century Laylock Cottage and then 15th-century Morris Cottage which was purchased in 1894 by William Morris, the artist and designer, for his sister.

A little further along, the Hertfordshire Best Kept Village sign stands outside Forge Museum which certainly merits a visit and may be able to offer a cup of tea and a piece of cake. The building dates from the 16th century. The museum includes the old forge and there are some fascinating wall paintings from the Tudor era in their original location. The forge element of the building was operated by several generations of the Page family and after the last died in 1983 his daughter, Jean Page, a local historian, gave the property to The Hertfordshire Building Preservation Trust.

The White House, on the left, dates from the 16th century. Most of its exterior is over 200 years old and older features survive inside.

Immediately before a junction on the right with Oudle Lane, Vine Cottage dates from around 1500 AD. With care, cross to the pavement on the left side of the main road.

The 16th-century Bull Inn is the only surviving pub in Much Hadham village – there were once twelve – and should be able to provide refreshment. It has served as an inn for 300 years. It is reputed that an elephant was buried somewhere in the grounds after dying during an overnight stay with a circus troupe.

Continue heading north, soon passing the entrance to Grade I-listed Much Hadham Hall on the right. This is the front of the mansion whose large garden we walked beside earlier. The Hall was built in the 1720s on the foundations of its Tudor predecessor. For many years, until 1980, it was owned by Richard de la Mare, son of the author and poet Walter.

Continue on the left, after a while along a cobblestone pavement. On the right, both The Old House and adjacent Batemans date back to the 16th century. The Old House was once a wheelwrights and Batemans a grocer's shop.

Further along, on the left, Motts Cottage, also 16th century, has a fire insurance sign above the window. This was issued in the early 1800s by Royal Exchange of London to identify a building covered under its insurance policy and therefore entitled to the services of the fire brigade.

Woodham House, on the left, has an interesting plaque above the door, recalling that it was used in World War I as a convalescent home for wounded soldiers.

Just before Church Lane on the right, The Manor House is one of the newest in the High Street, having been built in 1839 to replace one that burnt down.

We have passed many lovely lamp standards on this route. Now, the one on the left has an attached bracket pointing "To The Church".

Soon afterwards, we reach Ye Olde Red Lion. Cross the road with care to where we parked.

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

The Station Walks section of www.hundredparishes.org.uk includes a 12 mile route (number 20, from St Margarets Station to Sawbridgeworth) that passes through Much Hadham.

This route description, last updated 10 August 2020, 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 on the next page. It is published under © Crown copyright 2020 OS 100062498.

