



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 128

A countryside walk through three of the Rodings: Leaden Roding, White Roding and Aythorpe Roding: 9.2 miles (15 kms)

This clockwise, rural walk in The Rodings is mostly through fairly flat, open countryside with good views. The route passes through three parishes. Around half of the route is on good clear paths and around half on quiet lanes with short stretches along busier roads. In 2020 there was only one pub en route, the Axe and Compasses (01279 876648) at Aythorpe Roding after about 6.7 miles. There are no stiles as such, but we do climb over two gates that incorporate metal steps on either side. There are no seats for the first 6.7 miles apart from those in church porches and church lychgates.

Start and finish: The walk starts from a lay-by beside the B184, outside Rodings Primary School in Leaden Roding, a quarter mile north of the mini roundabout junction with A1060. The lay-by is at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL594137 - Postcode: CM6 1PZ. The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 183. A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

From the lay-by, head north on the pavement, with the school on the left. Just after the school grounds, turn left into Long Hide, a new residential area. Keep to the left of the houses, along a grass path with hedge on the left. When the path reaches a field, turn left, keeping the hedgerow on the left. In about 50 yards, cross a wooden footbridge with handrails and immediately turn right. To the left, on the far side of the field, the spire of Leaden Roding parish church can be seen amongst trees. Follow the field-edge path with hedgerow and ditch on the right. We will keep heading in this westerly direction for about a mile.

At the end of the field, bear right, pass a concrete area on the left, and continue ahead with hedgerow on the left.

At the end of a long field we reach a metal gate which incorporates a metal step on either side. Climb over the gate and turn right onto a concrete path. In about 30 yards, turn left and go over a similar metal gate. From the gate, go straight ahead on a cross-field path, heading towards a large, rounded willow tree on the far side of the field.

At the far side of the field, cross a stream on a wooden footbridge with handrail. This stream is actually the River Roding which rises near Dunmow and meanders in a southerly direction to flow into the Thames at Barking. The river and the several Roding settlements take their name from an Anglo-Saxon chieftain named Hroda. This walk passes through three of the eight Rodings. A fourth, High Roding, is included in walk number 127.

Having crossed the bridge, descend a few steps on the far side. Here, keep ahead for 50 yards and then turn left, keeping a ditch on the left (do NOT bear right towards woodland). We are heading towards a red-brick house in the distance.

After about 80 yards, we must cross the ditch on the left, with care, using a wooden bridge with no handrails. This bridge was not very obvious and somewhat overgrown in September 2020 although there is a waymark post on the far side. On the far side, turn right to continue heading westwards towards the red-brick house, now with the ditch on the right and occasional substantial willow trees.

This path bears right to meet a lane. Turn left onto the lane, passing 16th-century Lucas Farm on the right. Soon, ignore a footpath on the right and continue up the lane.

Pass Gryphons on the right and soon come to a road junction with a small green and an ancient Maldon Ironworks fingerpost sign. Keep to the left, signposted to Leaden Roding. The signpost is a reminder that this was once the main road before it was straightened, probably in the 1960s. On the right, behind the hedge, is a house called Warwicks which dates from the 17th century.

On reaching the main road, A1060, turn left and stay on the grass verge. After about 200 yards, cross the main road with great care and turn right along the approach road to New House Farm. The farmhouse dates from the 17th century and was extended in the 19th or 20th centuries. As the road turns left in front of the farm buildings, we turn right onto a footpath, initially with a hedgerow on the left and then on a clear path between open fields. Imperceptibly, we pass from Leaden Roding parish into White Roding parish.

When the field on our left ends, we turn left and immediately right, now with the hedgerow on the right. Straight ahead, White Roding windmill comes into view. It lost its sails many years ago.

The field-edge path bears left. As we approach a thatched house, bear right to pass beside the house and emerge onto a lane, where we can see the front of the thatched property, Moncks Green Cottage – another 17th-century building that has been extended in more recent times. We are now in the village of White Roding at the south-western extremity of this walk

Turn right on the lane, soon passing Matching Lane on the left, signposted to Matching Green.

Just before the windmill, when safe, cross to the pavement on the left. The former windmill is thought to have been the last built in Essex. It is a tower mill, constructed of bricks in 1877 to replace a post mill that had blown down. It is just the top, the cap, of a tower mill that rotates to position the sails into the wind. On the other hand, the whole structure of a post mill rotates on a central pivot. The mill ceased to operate in 1931.

Continue along the lane, passing varied and attractive houses. Little Timbers, Old Bakery Cottage and Dovecote Cottage on the left are all listed buildings that date from the 17th century. The Old Post Office, on the right, has some quirky adornments, especially its giant spider's web. The unusual Church Cottage on the left is also listed and is 19th century. Just beyond, The Old Rectory on the left dates from the 16th century or earlier and, like most of these ancient buildings, has been brought up to date for modern living.

Soon turn left along the approach lane to St Martin's Church. The church predates all the houses by several centuries and merits further inspection, especially if open. There are seats outside if a break is needed.

Some of the church's structure dates from the 11th century and building materials include recycled Roman bricks. The Roman bricks were used when constructing the nave and the arch leading to the chancel, whilst the two central windows in the north wall have been identified as 11th century. The church tower is a relatively recent structure from the 16th century.

Retrace along the lane to the road. Old Rectory Cottage, immediately opposite, is another 17th-century listed building. Turn left and keep to the left. School House on the right has two of the largest stone lions to be found in the Hundred Parishes. On the left, Ivy House dates from the 18th century.

Approaching the junction with the A1060, keep to the pavement which bears left. Opposite the junction, just to the right, the Black Horse pub was closed in 2020. The building to our right, on our side of the main road, with a tall chimney stack and almost opposite the Black Horse, was also once a pub until around 1990 - the Whalebone.

When safe, cross the main road and turn left for a short distance before turning right onto Marks Hall Lane. We will stay on this lane for more than a mile.

Pass the Old Forge on the right, a two-storey house that has been modernised since it started life in the 17th century.

Continue along this lane, nicely tree-lined until it reaches the rather grand-looking Marks Hall Farm on the right.

Just before the lane turns left, look straight ahead across the valley. In the distance, over a mile away, you may be able to see Aythorpe Roding Windmill which we will pass later (in the summer of 2020 a temporary lack of sails - under repair - meant that the distant building was not so obviously a windmill).

Pass the entrance to Prows Farm on the left.

About half a mile later, pass the entrance to Cammas Pykle and Cammas Hall Farm. *Pykle* is a derivation of *pightle*, meaning an enclosed piece of land. Cammas Hall Farm is a popular pick-your-own destination but the public entrance is some distance further on.

Follow the road round to the left, but for only 20 yards, for a half view of Cammas Hall itself, a 16th-century farmhouse on a moated site. With care, cross the road and retrace a few paces to the corner and turn left onto a grassy footpath/track, passing Cammas Cottage on the left.

This is the far northwest point of the walk and we now head East for some distance. This straight path is well defined but used from time to time by tractors so may be rutted or muddy.

After about half a mile, we reach a lane and turn left.

Pass 16th-century Poplars Farm and an associated barn of similar age and then follow the lane round to the right. We have just crossed the parish boundary from White Roding into Aythorpe Roding.

After a quarter mile, pass the entrance to New Hall on the left and almost immediately cross the River Roding. Over to the right the spire of Aythorpe Roding Church comes into sight.

Pass the new Broad Bridge Cottage on the left and, fairly soon, turn right onto a lane signposted to Aythorpe Roding Hall and Church. In about 200 yards reach the church dedicated to St Mary the Virgin. The 13th-century church merits closer inspection but is usually locked. The spire appears to lean and its shingles seem to have been attacked by wood peckers. The lychgate and porch each offer seating should you need a rest before the final push to lunch!

Continue down the lane with the church on the right. In the distance to the right is Aythorpe Roding Hall, a 16th-century manor house. Continue on the lane and soon pass through a gateway. Almost immediately turn left onto a public footpath and continue with hedgerow on the right. After about 300 yards, Aythorpe Roding windmill appears to our right – we will visit it later.

When the field comes to an end, cross a footbridge with handrails and immediately turn left, following a hedgerow on the left. Fairly soon, reach a lane and turn right. Just before the lane reaches a junction with the B184 road, the thatched Axe and Compasses pub is on the right. This popular pub and restaurant was built as a house in the 17th century and has been extended over the centuries to provide hospitality.

The Axe and Compasses marks the far northeast point of this walk.

From the pub, turn right onto the B184 and remain on the pavement on the right. Over to the left, about two miles distant, you may be able to see the tower of High Easter church on the horizon.

Continue past Gunners Green on the right with an enticing view of the windmill. However this is a private road, so continue until we reach Aythorpe Roding Village Hall on the right. Turn right, into the car park and then pass immediately to the right of the hall. Cross the green behind the hall and then keep to the right of a house behind a fence. Keep the fence on the left for about 70 yards and then turn right, on a short path between fields to the windmill. The mill is in private ownership in private grounds, but there is sufficient visibility to appreciate its external workings.

The windmill is the largest surviving post mill in Essex. It was built before 1770, operated until 1932 and was restored to working order in 1981. It was undergoing refurbishment in 2020. The main wooden structure pivots on a wooden post so that its sails face into the wind.

Retrace the last 100 yards and then turn right, keeping a fence and hedgerow on the left. Soon, turn left over a footbridge with handrails and then enter Aythorpe Roding Cricket Club's ground. Keep ahead, with the field of play on the right and a hedgerow on the left, leaving the field onto a gravel car park area. Soon, opposite Oak Cottage, turn left to return to the B184.

Immediately on the left is Aythorpe Roding's village sign and a bus shelter with seat. Our route turns right along the main road, passing a 19th-century cast iron water pump on the green on the right. Stay on the pavement on the right, facing oncoming traffic, for about a quarter mile.

On reaching a junction, cross the road with caution and turn left, signposted to Keers Green. Soon on the right is Old Mill Close, a small residential estate built around 2015 on the site of a disused commercial depot. The lane through the hamlet of Keers Green passes beside a variety of attractive homes, a few modern additions but mostly dating from the 17th century. An exception is Judd's Cottage on the left, just before the entrance to Keers Farm. The thatched Judd's Cottage goes back to the 14th century.

Soon after Cut Elms Farmhouse on the left, turn right onto a gravel drive, passing Cut Elms Cottage on the left. The path soon enters woodland where we keep straight ahead. Ignore a path that heads left. Bear right and continue beneath trees. We follow this path, heading south, for nearly half a mile, initially through a narrow strip of woodland.

After leaving the wood, we have a hedgerow and deep ditch on the right. At the end of a field, cross a footbridge with handrails and continue with hedgerow on the right.

At the end of the next field, we follow the path to the left and very soon round to the right, now on a field-edge path with the hedgerow on the left. At this point we imperceptibly cross another parish boundary, passing from Aythorpe Roding into Leaden Roding.

When the path reaches a road, ahead is another cricket ground, Cloghams Cricket Club, with a tiny thatched pavilion. From our footpath, turn right onto the lane, now in Leaden Roding village, passing several houses, the first of which is called Longfields.

Just before a road junction note Chalks Green on the left, a piece of common land which is kept as grassland and upon which 80 species of flowers have been recorded.

At the road junction, turn right. Cross the entrance to Rosdene Gardens and soon reach a busy junction with mini roundabout, Leaden Roding's village sign, erected in 1994, and a seat on the small green. Here, we turn right, passing a shop on the right.

Keep to the pavement on this side of the road, again the B184. The Granaries, on the right with an impressive chimney stack, dates from around 1600 AD. Opposite, on a small green, a shiny metal object is the spigot mounting for a portable mortar gun. The spigot and its circular concrete base would have been installed here during World War II to defend this stretch of road against the feared German invasion.

Pass the Fire Station on the right.

With care, use the pedestrian crossing to reach the other side of the main road. Soon reach the lay-by beside the school where we parked.

You can read more about each of today's parishes on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 08 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.

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

