



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 152

Hatfield Heath – 3.9 miles (6 kms)

This walk is mostly in the parish of Hatfield Heath, with about a mile in Little Hallingbury countryside. The route is a mixture of roads and footpaths. There are no stiles. Some paths may be muddy. There may be an opportunity to visit Hatfield Heath's parish church and there are several eating places near the start and finish, so please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes at a small car park behind the shops and eating places set back on the north side of the A1060. The narrow entrance to the parking area is near the eastern end of the slip road, close to the village sign, and just before Nursery on the Heath and a fish and chip shop.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL525151 - Postcode: CM22 7FA.

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 parking area, leave by the only car entrance onto the slip road. Note the village sign to the left with its focus on a game of cricket.

With care, cross the slip road, then the main road (A1060) and then the minor road (Matching Road) to reach the War Memorial. Pause here for a moment. We are now on Hatfield Heath. The area to our left is the cricket field. On match days, the field of play extends beyond Matching Road and the boundary crosses over the road.

A straight track passes to the left of the war memorial to a house on the far side of the green. The building dates from the 17th century and was once the miller's house. The windmill, a brick-built tower mill, stood to the left of the miller's house, overlooking the cricket field, but it was demolished in 1909. To the right of the track, close to the miller's house, is the cricket pavilion.

Retrace a few steps to Matching Road, turn right and walk along the field edge beside the road. [If cricket is being played, it would be wise to cross the road and walk along the green to the left of the field of play.]

Continue beside Matching Road until the junction, where we turn sharp left onto the lane with Oak Lodge soon on our right. We pass several attractive homes. The last three buildings are all listed: Amberton Cottage and Elm Cottage both date from the 19th century and the thatched Manse Cottages is from the 16th century.

The lane comes to a junction with the main road, Chelmsford Road, A1060, opposite Hunters Meet. When safe, cross the main road and bear left onto the green. To our right is Hunter's Meet Restaurant, built on the site of a glassworks which manufactured medicine bottles during World War II and into the 1950s. Bear half left to cross the green diagonally.

Soon reach Dunmow Road, the B183, opposite The Shaw. Turn right and keep to the pavement on the right-hand side. This road can be busy and traffic frequently speeds, but we need to stay on it for about half a mile.

Soon, note 17th/18th-century Clipped Hedge Cottage on the left with a pair of fox finials on the thatched roof.

Most of the properties along this road are relatively new; we will point out a few of the older ones. On the left, we pass a series of ponds.

After passing the house called Heathfield on the left, the next property has no visible name. According to its listing, it is called The Old Barn. It is a late 16th-century barn, now converted to a house. Originally, the barn was part of Ongars Farm, which we will come to next.

Ongars was built as a farmhouse around 1550 AD and has since been extended and updated.

On the right, we pass several semi-hidden homes. Behind them, out of sight, is Lea Hall, a house with 15th-century origins situated on a moated site. The large area encompassed by the moat was recorded as early as 1306 AD and is now protected as a Scheduled Monument.

After Foxgloves Farm on the right, we ignore a footpath on the right at The Three Chestnuts.

Later, when the pavement ends, continue on the grass verge for a short way and, when safe, cross to the left and turn left into Ryes Lane. Soon pass Corringales on the left (16th-century origins but mostly rebuilt in 1947) and continue up this quiet lane.

In about 200 yards, we pass Skringills on the left, built in 2020. Just afterwards, the lane turns right but we will go straight ahead onto the public footpath. Before starting on the footpath, further down the lane we can see The Round House, an unusual hexagonal, single-storey, thatched dwelling, built around 1800 AD as a lodge house. Beyond The Round House, in the distance, we can see Hatfield Broad Oak's parish church.

Now onto the footpath - which soon turns left and we pass round the back of Skringills. After a short tree-lined path, we turn right to continue along a wide grassy path with a ditch on our right. To our left, for some distance, we follow a plantation of Christmas trees.

When the plantation ends, we go straight ahead, over a stream on a wooden footbridge with metal handrails. On the far side, pass through a short stretch of young woodland, not Christmas trees! Then cross a concrete footbridge with metal handrails. On the far side, we turn right and follow a field-edge path with ditch and woodland on our right.

We are now on another clear, wide grass path. After a while, we pass a long lake on the right.

At the end of the field, keep straight ahead through the hedgerow on a wooden plank bridge with no handrails. Keep woodland on the right and after about 50 yards we reach a bridleway. Turn left.

Our new wide path heads gently uphill between fields on either side.

At the top of the rise, we turn left at a junction of paths. Here, a signpost tells us that we have just been on the Forest Way and are now joining both the Three Forests Way and Harcamlow Way. The Three Forests Way is a 60-mile route that links three Essex forests: Epping, Hainault and Hatfield; The Harcamlow Way is an 80-mile figure of 8; the Forest Way is a relatively modest 25 miles, linking Epping and Hatfield Forests.

Having turned left at that junction, we now have hedgerow on our right.

At the end of the field, turn right, still on the Harcamlow Way and now on a tree-lined path.

When the tree-lined path ends, we go straight ahead, now with a ditch and occasional shrubs on our left. After a short while, the footpath switches to the left of the ditch. Keep ahead but now with the ditch on our right.

At the end of the field, cross a wooden bridge with metal handrails on each side. At the other side, immediately turn left, now with the ditch on our left and heading towards some houses.

At the end of this field, we pass beneath a minor power line and then, just before reaching a bungalow, turn right. Continue along a field-edge path beside private property on our left.

After about 100 yards, turn left between properties. Keep straight ahead and soon walk beside a gravel drive on the right.

At the end of the drive, we reach another drive and turn left, heading briefly towards the gates of Little Hallingbury Park. Some of the house dates from the 16th century, although much was restored after a fire in 1982. We head towards the house for only about 10 yards before turning right off the drive onto a footpath. The first section may be muddy at times.

Continue with a pond on the left and then along a field-edge path, gently climbing with ditch on the right.

When the ditch on the right ends, continue ahead on a straight cross-field path. This may be muddy. At the end of the field, cross a wooden footbridge with metal handrails on each side and, on the far side, continue ahead on a grassy cross-field path, heading towards a series of low buildings.

Towards the end of the field, continue ahead, now with a ditch on our right.

The buildings, now on our right, are what remains of Prisoner of War Camp number 116.

At the end of the field, we go straight ahead, across a ditch and then bear to the right. The path soon comes onto a drive and ahead of us is the main part of the POW camp.

The camp was constructed in 1941 -1942 and housed Italian prisoners and later German prisoners. These are not listed buildings but are included in Uttlesford District Council's Local Heritage List. There were over a thousand POW camps around the UK and this is one of the best preserved. Surviving, or part-surviving, buildings include both prisoner huts and brick-built accommodation for the guards.

Towards the end of the war, more prisoners were accommodated in tents. War ended in 1945 but Germans were not allowed to return home until 1947. Many of the buildings were subsequently used as chicken sheds.

Continue along the road, now Mill Lane, passing houses that are mostly new. A notable exception is 18th-century Thatched Cottage on the left.

Soon we come back into Hatfield Heath village, meeting the A1060. Immediately opposite is The Mill. This was once a brewery before conversion to a flour mill at the beginning of the 20th century. By the 1960s it became a warehouse and in the 2010s it was converted to offices.

Turn left onto the main road, here called Stortford Road. On the right, immediately after The Mill, is Tudor Lodge which dates from about 1600 AD.

On the left we pass several groups of cottages and we soon reach the Heath on the right.

We pass the thatched Thatchers pub on the left. It dates from around 1580 AD when built as a barn. It was subsequently converted to four cottages and became a public house in the early 20th century. Until relatively recent times, it was known as the Waggon and Horses.

Soon on the left we pass Rosemary Cottage, dating from the 18th century. Its distinctive slate roof is what is known as either a Mansard, Gambrel or Dutch roof: a two-sided roof with two slopes on each side.

Further along, we pass the intriguingly-named Friendly Terrace.

Cross the junction with Broomfields on our left.

Pass the Old Vicarage on the left with its high Gothic windows. Soon we pass the Village Hall built in 1970, and then Hatfield Heath Primary School. The school's foundation stone was laid in 1899 by Henry Montagu Butler whose as-yet-unborn grandson would be RAB Butler, local Member of Parliament and Deputy Prime Minister in the 1960s.

On the right is the parish church. Do take a look inside if it is open (removing or covering boots if they are dirty), but take care crossing the road. Holy Trinity Church was built in the 1850s. Its six bells were hung in the 1960s.

Continue heading East along the pavement with the Heath on the right.

Thatched Beehive Cottage dates from the 17th century and for the early part of the 20th century was the premises and shop of a harness maker.

The Village Tea Room on the left may tempt you! On the small green outside is the old village pump, installed in the mid 1800s.

We then pass several more shops and restaurants including 17th-century White Horse Inn which was recorded as an inn as long ago as 1779. A little further along is Dorringtons the bakers which occupies part of a building which, until 2013, was another pub, The Stag.

We soon reach the entrance to the car park where we started.

You can read more about the parishes of Hatfield Heath and Little Hallingbury on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 19 May 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.

