



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 156

Helions Bumpstead – 4.2 miles (7 kms)

This walk is entirely within Helions Bumpstead [pronounced hell rather than heel], a sparsely-populated parish. The route is a mixture of quiet lanes and footpaths. Some paths may be muddy. There are several seats along the route. There are no stiles. The route passes the Three Horseshoes pub whose opening hours are limited. It also passes the parish church. If you would like to visit either, please be prepared to remove muddy boots or to put on boot covers or plastic bags.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes at the small car park beside Helions Bumpstead Village Hall and recreation ground, near the centre of the village.
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL653416 - Postcode: CB9 7AH.
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 210.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

A plaque on the far wall of the car park tells us that the recreation ground beyond the wall was purchased by public subscription in 1920 as a permanent memorial to the sixteen young men of the village who were killed in action in the First World War. We will visit the recreation ground later.

From the car park, return to the road and turn right along Mill Road. We will stay on this road for about a mile, initially on pavement, passing a variety of buildings, mostly residential and long established. The road is generally fairly quiet, but we should normally keep to the right to face any oncoming traffic.

After a while, with care, cross the junction with the Steeple Bumpstead road and continue ahead, now on Haverhill Road.

We pass two thatched cottages on the left, Oak End and Thatched Cottage. A little later, we pass Gospel Hall on the right. It displays the date 1998 but was originally built in 1886 as a Plymouth Brethren chapel.

Soon afterwards, we reach Slate Hall on the left, a building of two halves. The left is timber-framed and dates from the 17th century; the brick section was added in the 19th century.

We come into the hamlet of Pale Green, passing thatched, 17th-century Krikseys on our right.

After the road bends to the right, we pass Parsonage House on our left. It dates from the 16th century and has two rows of fine chimneys, also from that century. Parsonage House was the setting for the 1945 film "The Seventh Veil" starring James Mason and Ann Todd. It was the best-attended British film of 1945 and one of the most viewed British films of all time.

We pass imperceptibly from Pale Green into the hamlet of Wiggens Green. Thatch Cottage on the right dates from the 17th century but was extended in the 20th.

As the road turns left, we pass Peggy House on the right. This was previously the Pig and Whistle public house. In 1914, Helions Bumpstead was at the heart of the Agricultural Strike. Farm workers were dissatisfied with poor employment conditions and were frequently thwarted in their attempts to join a trade union. On one occasion, an estimated two thousand farm workers gathered on the green outside the Pig and Whistle to listen to suffragette Sylvia Pankhurst speak in support of their cause. The building ceased to be a pub around 1960.

Opposite Peggy House is Wiggons Farm, with an associated converted thatched barn. Both buildings date from the 16th century and have been updated in more recent times.

Just after Wiggons Farm, we will turn and retrace, but first let's explain a little more about the Agricultural Strike.

About half a mile further along this road is Copy Farm. Back in 1914 this was a flashpoint that ignited the Agricultural Strike when the farmer sacked ten of his labourers after they refused to leave the Agricultural and Rural Workers' Union. Soon, 800 local farmworkers went on strike. After a long and bitter two months, with war looming and the harvest about to be wasted, a settlement was agreed. All the workers were reinstated, allowed to remain in the union and given improved pay. Soon afterwards, many of the younger men left their employment again, this time to go to war. Many never returned.

Now, let us turn and retrace past Peggy House. Just afterwards, pause before the postbox. Opposite, on our right, is a better view of Wiggons Farm.

Continue past Well Come Cottage on our left.

Later, we get another view of Parsonage House on the right.

Cross the entrance on the right to Haven Farm.

Pass a few cottages on the right, the last of which is Haven Cottage, and then turn right onto a footpath. This is a field-edge path with hedgerow on the right.

When the hedgerow ends after about 50 yards, continue straight ahead on a cross-field path, following beneath a line of telephone wires.

At the far side of the field, turn left, with a ditch and hedgerow on the right, now heading West.

At the end of the field, go straight ahead between trees and cross a footbridge with a single metal handrail. On the other side of the footbridge, we turn left.

In about 40 yards, at the end of the trees on our left, we leave the field and immediately turn right, again heading West on a field-edge path with a ditch on our right. Ahead and to the left (at about 11 o'clock), we can see the tall communication tower at Castle Camps, nearly 2 miles away.

Stay on the field-edge path as it turns left.

At the corner of the field, turn right and in about 20 yards reach a lane. Turn right.

In about 300 yards, we pass Draper's Cottage on the right.

In another 100 yards, we pass a lane on our right and soon afterwards we cross the road with care to turn left onto a concrete bridleway. Immediately on our right is Ivy Todd, a farmhouse that dates from the 16th century.

We will follow this concrete track for some distance.

After passing a modern stable on the right, we find the date 1977 in the concrete: presumably the year of the track's installation. Over to the left, we can sometimes see the tower of Helions Bumpstead's parish church.

After a while, we pass an ancient seat in the shade of an oak tree.

Not long after the seat, the concrete path ends but the wide track continues, later passing another seat.

In due course, our bridleway reaches a lane at Sage's End. Here, we turn left along the lane, Sage's End Road.

We pass Rolls Farm on our left and the drive on the right towards Helions Farm and Great Hall. We pass the Helions Bumpstead 30mph sign, and 40 yards later we turn left onto a footpath. Cross a wooden footbridge with metal handrails and then climb up steps that were rather eroded in June 2021.

Go straight ahead on a field-edge path beside a tall hedgerow on the right.

When the trees in the hedgerow end, turn right and continue on a grass path, still with hedgerow on the right and later the backs of gardens.

At the end of this grass path, we descend steps with a metal handrail, down to the road, Camps Road. With care, join the road and turn right.

On the right, we pass Highfield House and then a drive which leads to 16th-century Moss's Farmhouse.

Opposite the drive, on our left, is The Old Marquis, another much-extended house dating from the 16th century. This house, now largely hidden behind its hedge, once functioned as an inn, the Marquis of Granby, reverting to a private dwelling in 1960. It was one of many

pubs, up and down the country, that were given that name. The Marquis of Granby (1721 – 1770) was the eldest son of the Duke of Rutland, but died before his father so did not become Duke. He was a well-respected army officer, rising to become Colonel and commander-in-chief of the Royal Horse Guards. He provided financial assistance to his former men, enabling them to become pub landlords when they retired from the army. His financial support came with the condition that the pub be named The Marquis of Granby. It was to this Marquis of Granby that Sylvia Pankhurst retired for the night in 1914 after making her speech outside the Pig and Whistle.

The Old Vicarage, on our right, stands sideways to the road. It has been extended over the centuries since its 16th-century origins.

Very soon, we reach a small green on our left. Cross the road with care and turn left to walk around the green, passing several seats. From the far seat, we get a better view of The Old Vicarage. At the end of the green is the village sign, erected in 1977 to celebrate Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee.

Here, we turn left, passing two maps of the parish footpaths, and continue up Church Hill. Stay on the path, away from the road, passing Upper House on our left and then entering the churchyard. As always, you are encouraged to view the inside of the parish church, but please cover or remove boots if they are dirty.

St Andrew's dates from the 13th century although the nave may be even older. Most of the red-brick tower was rebuilt in 1812. The inside is exceptionally light, benefitting from south-facing windows in oak frames that were installed in 1956, the same year that the porch was added, constructed from the timbers of an ancient cart shed.

From the church porch, bear half left and descend to Church Hill. Turn right. Soon pass 17th-century The Sparrows on the left.

In another 100 yards, return to the crossroads with the village sign. Ahead of us is a house built around 1700 AD and now divided into two homes: Inglenook Cottage on the left and Lower House on the right.

Cross Church Hill with care and turn left into Water Lane. When safe, cross to the right and continue ahead. In about 100 yards, we come to the Three Horseshoes on the right.

This pub, named by the blacksmith who ran it in the 1860s, was central to village life until its closure in 2014. The landlords sought permission to change its use, but this was opposed by the community who came together to purchase it. It is now owned by The Helions Bumpstead Community Benefit Society Limited, funded mainly by local people. In June 2021, the pub had only limited opening hours.

Continue ahead. On the right, we pass three listed buildings: 17th-century, thatched Merlins Cottage and later 17th-century Roslyns and then End Cottage from the 16th century. All have been updated in more recent times. At End Cottage, we will turn and retrace a few yards.

Just before Roslyns, we turn right onto a footpath, crossing a ditch on a footbridge with metal handrails. Ascend a few steps, pass through a kissing gate and keep ahead. Curiously, there is a sign here that requests No Photography.

We continue on a path with gardens on our left and an equestrian area on the right.

We soon reach a fence and here bear right with the fence on our left. At the end of the fence, keep straight ahead, uphill. Towards the top of the climb, there is a small statue on the right. We can pause here, catch our breath, and look back at the view.

At the top of the climb, we pass through another kissing gate and come onto the cricket ground. We need to make our way to the far side of the cricket field, beyond the pavilion. It is suggested that we circumnavigate the field in an anti-clockwise direction: turn right to the top of the field, then left along the top of the field, past a rather curious wall, and then left again to descend beside the trees towards the pavilion, with a view beyond to Castle Camps' communication mast.

Keep to the right of the pavilion and pass through a small car park. Join a gravel path and descend, soon reaching the gateway into the car park where we started this walk.

You can read more about the parish of Helions Bumpstead on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 07 June 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.

