



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 158

Takeley and Little Canfield – 5.8 miles (9 kms)

This is a flat walk, mainly on footpaths and bridleways. It heads East for about 1.5 miles along the Flitch Way and returns along a variety of paths. It takes in parts of Takeley and Little Canfield parishes. Some paths can be muddy and some rather overgrown at times, so stout footwear is recommended. There are no stiles. The route passes two parish churches and also the Four Ashes pub in Takeley soon after the start, so please be prepared, before entering any, to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags. There are several seats along the way.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes in the car park outside Takeley's Silver Jubilee Hall, on the B1256 about 200 yards West of the traffic lights at Takeley cross roads.
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL559213 - Postcode: CM22 6QH.
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

In the car park, the war memorial includes the names of those who were killed on active service during the two World Wars and also of seven parishioners who died when a German bomb fell on Takeley Street in December 1940.

Immediately opposite the car park are Ivy Cottage and Stone Cottage, once a single dwelling dating from around 1500 AD.

Leave the car park and turn left on the pavement.

We are heading East along the B1256. Until 2003, this road was classified as A120 before being bypassed by the current A120. Long before that it was Stane Street, constructed by the Romans between Colchester and Braughing.

The first building on the left is now a private residence but it was once a vicarage and then, for around 30 years in the late 20th and early 21st century it was known as Aklowa. It was the site of an African heritage village where Felix Cobbson, who was born in Ghana, promoted awareness of the African way of life through workshops and performances of drumming, dancing and singing.

We pass Attridges on the right, a house with 16th-century origins.

On the left, we pass the grounds of Takeley Cricket Club and then a former school building which for many years at the beginning of the 21st century served as the office for Stop Stansted Expansion, a community group that successfully campaigned to restrict the growth of nearby Stansted Airport.

When we reach the crossroads with traffic lights, the Four Ashes pub is immediately on our left. At the corner, we will turn right by crossing the B1256 when permitted by the pedestrian traffic lights.

On the far side is a small green which includes the Takeley village sign and a sarsen stone that was unearthed at Stansted Airport during an archaeological dig at the site of a Bronze Age settlement dated at about 1500 BC.

Now, use the pedestrian lights to cross the B183, Station Road. Turn right on the pavement and soon turn left into Elm Close. When safe, cross this road and turn right into Sycamore Close. Cross to the pavement on the left and follow the turning round to the left.

After only about 50 yards, on the right is Takeley Station House, part of Takeley's former railway station. Cross to the house and pass through the small car park on the left. This will bring us onto the platform, with the bed of the railway track in front of us.

The route of the former railway is now designated as the Flitch Way Country Park and the track is a public bridleway which runs most of the way between Bishop's Stortford to our right and Braintree to the left. The railway operated from the 1860s until 1972, mostly under steam.

We turn left along the platform and soon go down the slope onto the Flitch Way, which we will follow in an easterly direction for a mile and a half. The route is generally well shaded with mature trees, so does not receive much sun and can be muddy in places. The Flitch Way is open to walkers, cyclists and horse-riders. If you have a dog, please be ready to rein it in.

After a while, we pass beneath a bridge, ignoring the path to the right. We occasionally pass buildings on the left, mostly new as a result of recent infilling between Stane Street and the Flitch Way.

About a mile along the Flitch Way, we pass imperceptibly from Takeley parish into Little Canfield parish and then go past Runnells Hey on our right.

Some time afterwards, the housing estate on our left comes to an end and we have fields to the left – at least in 2021. Over to the left, we pass a pink house, Warren Yard, which dates from the 17th or 18th centuries.

Now, for nearly half a mile, we have a high wooden fence on our right. This hides an extensive area that has been used since at least 1947 for extraction of sand, gravel and clay and subsequently as a landfill site.

We pass industrial buildings at Crumps Farm on the left and then cross a gravel roadway that provides access to the landfill site. Cross the roadway and continue along the Flitch Way, but for only about 5 yards before forking right onto a public footpath.

Continue along the footpath, initially parallel with the Flitch Way and then, after about 100 yards, bearing right, keeping a high metal fence on our right.

After another 100 yards, the path turns left, through the hedgerow. Stay on the path, heading towards Little Canfield parish church. Cross a concrete bridge over a stream. This is the River Roding which flows from left to right, heading south to join the Thames at Barking Creek.

Continue uphill with a fence on the right. This is the only noticeable climb on this walk.

When the path reaches a roadway, we turn right and soon fork left into the churchyard of All Saints Church. You are encouraged to visit the church, but first please remove or cover muddy boots. Little Canfield's parish church dates from the 12th century. Like so many churches, it was substantially remodelled in the 19th century. The tower and steeple were added in 1856 AD when much of the interior was re-decorated. There are several memorials to members of the Wyatt family of Little Canfield Hall which we will pass later.

On leaving the church, turn right from the porch and then right again to retrace down the gravel path and leave the churchyard. Bear right to continue ahead on the lane, now heading North.

Pass bungalows and houses on the left and then descend to pass beneath a railway bridge that carries the Flitch Way.

In another 100 yards, just as we return to the former Stane Street, we pass 16th-century Blatches on the left.

At the road, now called B1256, we turn right to view a group of ancient and attractive dwellings. Stay on the pavement on the right. Opposite is 15th-century Hall Cottage.

On our side, we pass four cottages: 16th-century Culborne, 17th-century Thatched Cottage, 17th-century Old Forge and 16th-century The Endway. Here, when safe, we will cross and retrace on the opposite pavement, with perhaps a better view of the four thatched cottages.

On our side, we can better see the substantial 16th-century stepped chimney stack at the eastern end of Hall Cottage. At the end of Hall Cottage we will turn right, but first pause for a better view of Blatches on the diagonally opposite corner.

Now turn right, signposted to Little Canfield Hall. This is a public footpath, as well as the drive to the Hall. We will walk up the drive for nearly half a mile. If you have a dog, please ensure it is on a lead before reaching the buildings.

The drive reaches a group of buildings and we stay on the main route. On the right is a building which displays the date 1770 and stag of the Maynard family who owned much of the land hereabouts for several hundred years until the 20th century.

Ahead is the main building, Little Canfield Hall. We will follow the drive to the left of the Hall. Before the Hall, on our left is 14th-century Tithe Barn. The Hall itself dates from the 16th century and has been extended over time.

Keep ahead on the gravel drive, with various buildings on the left and then bear right with hedgerow on the left. This soon brings us to a metal gate on the left.

Pass through the gate. Sometimes there are inquisitive horses in this field. Once through the gate, turn left on the field edge and then bear right to leave the field through another metal gate at the far side of the field.

Immediately, go over an old brick footbridge over a stream – the River Roding again – and emerge onto a field. We go straight across this field, about 200 yards, heading towards a building with a silver roof. Part-way across the field, a low brick wall comes into view ahead. Now head for this. At the far side of the field, we reach a lane, opposite the wall.

Straight ahead is Frogs Hall Farm which dates from the 17th century. When safe, cross the lane and turn left, facing any traffic, with pillars and railings on our right. We follow this lane for about 600 yards as it bends to the right and then left.

When the lane makes a sharp left turn, we turn right along a stony, clearly-defined byway with hedgerow on each side. For the next half mile, the byway defines the boundary between the parishes of Little Canfield to the left and Takeley to the right.

After about 200 yards, ignore a footpath that leaves to the left over a footbridge.

As we approach housing, the path bears left, still clear and now with a ditch on the left. The path continues, heading West, through the 21st-century residential estate known as Prior's Green, with relatively little interference from the development's roads.

When our path emerges onto a cycle path, with care cross and keep straight ahead. Then, with caution, cross Burgattes Road to continue along the byway.

It almost feels like we are in another world (a parallel universe?) to the housing on either side – rather like walking on a canal towpath through the centre of a city.

In about 300 yards, we again cross Burgattes Road with care. To the left is a roundabout. We keep straight ahead on the byway and in so doing leave Little Canfield parish behind. From now on, we will be in Takeley parish.

In another 200 yards, the byway joins a lane, Jack's Lane, and we bear left onto it. The byway soon goes off to the right but we continue ahead along Jack's Lane, passing a variety of old and new residential properties on the left.

Just before the end of Jack's Lane we pass Cherups on the left, a 17th-century house with thatched gazebo.

At the end of Jacks Lane, we turn right beside a small green and with The Limes on the right. Continue along this lane for about 200 yards.

Soon we pass 17th-century Hollow Elms Cottage on the right and then Woodside. Just after Woodside, cross the lane with care and turn left onto the public footpath, a field-edge path with hedgerow on the right.

After about 200 yards, we walk beside Prior's Wood on the right for about 400 yards. The wood is private, so please enjoy it from the public footpath. Ahead is the headquarters building of Weston Homes, a developer of residential property.

Just after the end of the wood, we turn left through the hedgerow onto a small grass field. Go diagonally across this small field into a residential estate. Diagonally cross a small parking area and then turn right and walk along the road, North Road.

At the end of North Road, we reach a fairly busy road, Parsonage Road. Here, we turn right, keeping on the pavement. Pass the Weston Homes office and then several houses on the right.

Just before the road starts to rise (to cross over the A120), cross Parsonage Road with care and turn left off the road, passing beside a metal gate. Turn right onto a track which soon reveals itself to be a former roadway, complete with centre white line.

On the right, we pass rather dilapidated wooden steps that are the official footpath route down from Parsonage Lane. Here we join the Harcamlow Way long-distance path for the next half mile. At the end of the former road, turn left onto a straight path with hedgerow on each side (and the A120 just beyond the hedge on the right). Beware of rabbit holes in the path.

We reach a field on the left, with the Weston Homes building in the distance over to the left, and continue ahead with the field on our left.

At the end of the field, keep straight ahead between shrubs, then bear slightly left to keep shrubs on the right. Pass beneath telephone wires and keep straight ahead into shrubs – once there the path is fairly clear, albeit rather overgrown in summer. Keep straight ahead with trees on each side

Within 200 yards, we reach Takeley's parish church which dates from the 12th century and was heavily renovated in the 19th. If it is open, you are encouraged to visit, but first please either remove or cover muddy boots.

From the church porch, go straight ahead along the main path. After a few yards, we pass a tree on the left, just before a path joins us from the left. The tree was planted by Takeley Parish Council in 2008 in memory of Felix Cobbson who founded Aklowa, the African Heritage Village which we passed near the start of this walk.

The churchyard is usually resplendent with snowdrops in January / February. The path passes a parking area on the right and then becomes Church Lane.

At the end of the lane, we reach the B1256, Dunmow Road, and turn left, staying on the pavement on the left. We are now in the Takeley hamlet of Brewers End.

Cross the entrance to Church View Close on the left. The housing estates on our right, the South side of Dunmow Road, were built in the 21st century and are on the strip of land between Dunmow Road and the Flitch Way.

After about 200 yards, on the left we pass the white-weatherboarded The Chestnuts, built as a hall house in the 15th century or even earlier. Soon afterwards, we pass a 19th-century cast iron water pump.

On the right we pass Takeley Chapel and The Christian School. These associated buildings are around 200 years old and provide education for pupils aged from 7 to 16.

Very soon, we return to Silver Jubilee Hall where we started this walk.

You can read more about the parishes of Takeley and Little Canfield on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 20 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.

