



The Hundred Parishes

Circular Walks – number 162

Sewards End and Wimbish – 4.7 miles (8 kms)

This mainly rural walk consists of two anticlockwise loops and could be tackled as two separate outings. The first loop, to the West, is entirely within the parish of Sewards End; the second loop, to the South, is mainly in Wimbish parish. The route follows the B1053 for about half a mile and the remainder is a mixture of lanes, paths and a well-surface byway. There is one stile. Some of the paths can be muddy at times. There is nowhere to buy refreshment along the route and there is just one seat in Sewards End village, by the water tower.

Start and finish: The walk starts and finishes in the parking area beside Sewards End Village Hall. The entrance is on Radwinter Road, the B1053.
Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL571383 - Postcode: CB10 2LR.
The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.
A diagram of the route is provided at the end of the description.

Leave the parking area, cross the small green and, when safe, cross Radwinter Road onto the pavement. Turn left, passing a few houses and soon reach the junction with Redgate Lane.

Ahead, on the other side of Redgate Lane, is number 83, Foxtails. Adjoining it is number 85 with a fox emblem above the door. These two dwellings once constituted the Fox public house which closed in the 1960s.

We turn right into Redgate Lane and will walk just a hundred yards up to the right-hand bend before turning. Please be aware of traffic along this short stretch of road and in particular approaching from the blind bend ahead.

There are three timber-framed houses close to the bend, all dating from the 17th century and modernised in more recent times:

- just before the bend, on the left, is Birbecks which also has an 18th-century thatched barn;
- straight ahead, behind the white fencing, is Sewards End Farmhouse;
- and to the right, now mostly hidden, is thatched Brewery Cottage.

We will now retrace, but not as far as the junction with the main road. On the right, we pass a small pond in the grass verge, then a driveway, and immediately afterwards we turn right onto a gravel driveway (with public footpath sign and shown as the entrance to The Orchard and Bamber's Lodge), heading towards an uninviting gate.

Keep right of the main gate and pass through a metal kissing gate. Continue ahead, passing a house and bungalow on the left, before continuing along a grass path with fence and field on the left and hedgerow on the right.

When the field on the left ends, we go straight ahead on a wooden footbridge with no handrail. On reaching a new field, we go straight ahead across a narrow field. After about 50 yards, on the far side we go through the hedgerow into a larger field and continue straight ahead on a fairly clear cross-field path. We are now heading towards a distant spire – this is Saffron Walden's parish church, about 2 miles away.

Halfway across the field, over to the right on a distant hilltop, we may be able to see the white roofs of Chesterford Research Park, about 3 miles away.

To our left, not so far away, is a tall building with red roof and chimneys. This is Pounce Hall – we will see it again later.

Our path reaches a corner of hedgerow. We go into the hedgerow and soon cross a wooden footbridge with metal handrails. After the bridge, we squeeze through a gateway into another field.

We now go ahead on a field-edge path with hedgerow on the right. Ahead and slightly to the left are the red roofs of recent residential development on the outskirts of Saffron Walden, close to the Tesco store.

At the end of the field, follow the field edge round to the left, now descending beside a hedgerow that can be rich in blackberries and sloes in Autumn.

At the end of the field, we go ahead through a kissing gate. Soon, just before a pond, we turn sharp right and pass through another gate. We keep straight ahead with hedgerow on the right. To our left, a thin stream runs parallel with our path, having left the pond that we passed just a little way back.

At the end of this field, in the right corner, we cross a stile and turn left. This soon brings us to another field, where we turn right. We keep to the right of this long field, gradually getting closer to the church spire.

If we pause and look back, we can again see the tall house, Pounce Hall.

At the end of this long field, we go straight ahead, beside a pair of telegraph poles, through about 20 yards of undergrowth. At the far side, we turn left onto a track.

After only about 20 yards, our track reaches a road, the B1053, Radwinter Road, but we do not join it. We keep left and join a tarmac path that runs parallel to the road. We stay on this path for a quarter mile, climbing steadily and sometimes quite high above the main road immediately to our right.

When the tarmac path comes to an end, we go straight ahead, keeping to the left of the main road and to the left of the narrow pavement. This was once the main road. Does anyone

know when it was bypassed? Could the tarmac path that we have just left also have been the old road?

On the right we pass Pounce Hall Cottage with an attractive, rusty tree beside the drive.

The lane climbs. On the left, we come to the tall Pounce Hall which we spotted earlier. It dates from the 17th century and was extended in the 17th and 18th centuries. It has two substantial chimney stacks. Its name seems to derive from Albold de Pouncyn who owned land in Swards End in the 12th century.

Continue up this lane, now with a gravel surface. As our 'old road' approaches the new road, what appears to be the official pavement / footway (very overgrown) comes in from our right beside the *Pedestrians Crossings* sign.

After a few, relatively modern, buildings, our lane meets the main road again and we continue along the pavement on the left, for a while beside a flint wall.

We ignore a turning on the right, signposted to Cole End. At this point the B1053 changes its name from Radwinter Road to Walden Road.

On the right we pass the entrance to Dragon's Green, a small residential development that replaced the Green Dragon pub after its closure in 1994 and subsequent demolition.

On the left, thatched numbers 29 and 31 date from the 19th century.

Number 37 on the left is a flint-faced cottage which displays the date 1818. Its structure is a mixture of timber frame and plaster, flintstone and brick.

On the right, The Mill House is not listed. A windmill (a post mill) stood behind the house until it was demolished around 1915.

Next on the right, through a gateway, we get a rather limited view of number 12, Campions and its barn. The house dates from around 1580 AD and inside it has 16th-century wall paintings on the first floor. The barn is also from the 16th century. For some distance on the right, we pass the fence to the garden of Campions.

On the left, we get two opportunities to see number 57, Everards, firstly through a gateway and then from the drive entrance. Everards probably dates from the 16th century; in the early 20th century it operated as a post office. On the right of the road, opposite Everards, is a footpath sign: to its left is Cornerways and to its right, set back, is the exposed timber framing of 16th-century Gaytons.

Immediately after Everards, we pass the church of St James, built in 1847 as a 'chapel of ease', a subsidiary church to the parish church, 2 miles away in Saffron Walden. Swards End was part of Saffron Walden until 2004. St James also served as a school until 1947.

As we approach the left bend, on our left we pass number 61, The Cottage - thatched, single-storey and dating from around 1800 AD.

We will pause at the bend because we need to cross the road to the small green with a bench. This is probably the safest point, with a view of traffic in each direction. So, with great care, cross to the green.

For the time being, we will ignore the water tower in front of us. We turn right, in front of the seat, and almost immediately turn left up a narrow lane with wooden fence on the right.

On our right, we pass number 22, Tower Lodge, a single storey house dating from around 1800 AD. Opposite, on our left, is a close of relatively new houses. This is called Tylers.

We keep straight ahead, passing Prospect House on the right and a gateway on the left. The gateway is an entrance to The Towers. The building is mostly out of sight – a distinctive 19th-century house with castellated parapet and corner turrets. Here is a view of The Towers a hundred years ago, taken from an old postcard.



We continue ahead, now on a tree-lined path.

When the fence on the left ends, we cross a ditch on a wooden footbridge with no handrail. On the far side, we go straight ahead on a cross-field path. In so doing, we leave the parish of Swards End and pass into Wimbish for the next two miles.

At the far side of the field, pause and look back for a glimpse of The Towers. Then continue ahead, beneath an oak tree, into the next field and keep ahead on a grass field-edge path with hedgerow on the left. Ahead, along the far side of the field, is a long row of 50 pairs of trees that line a driveway.

When we reach the end of the field, we go straight across this impressive driveway which leads to Tiptofts Farm on our left. On the far side of the drive, we keep ahead on a field-edge path, immediately passing the Grade I-listed Tiptofts. The farmhouse appears unremarkable from the outside, having been faced with brick in the 19th and early 20th century, yet inside the timbers are visible from the original construction: it was built as an aisled hall in the 14th or even 13th century. The whole site is protected as a Scheduled Monument.

We continue ahead with hedgerow on our left.

When the hedgerow ends, keep straight ahead on a grassy path between fields.

After a while, this otherwise straight path meanders to cross an earth bridge over a ditch and then bears left, keeping the ditch on our left.

At the end of this field, we follow the field edge round to the right and in just 30 yards we turn left through a gate. There may be cattle in the next field so would dog walkers please put dogs on a lead before going through the gate.

In the next field, we go straight ahead with hedgerow on the left.

At the end of the field, we pass through a gate and then turn left onto a lane. We can ignore the bridleway that soon turns right.

We soon pass various buildings on our left that constitute Cole End Farm and, just after the farmhouse, we go straight ahead on a public bridleway, a wide track with gravel surface and generous borders of wild wayside flowers. We will continue on this rural bridleway / byway for more than a mile.

About 300 yards after the farm buildings, we stay on the byway by turning left.

In another half mile, we pass Cowgate Cottage on our left and, soon afterwards, Frogs Green Farm, both probably dating from the 17th century.

In another 100 yards, we reach a staggered crossroads of paths where we turn left, still on the byway.

In another 200 yards, we ignore a bridleway that turns off to the right. At this point, we leave Wimbish and return to Swards End parish. Perhaps now is a good time to explain that Swards End was part of Saffron Walden administrative parish until 2004 when it was granted independent parish status. Its name came from a man named Sigisweard or Sigeward who was granted land here in the 11th century. For much of the 19th century it was called Sewers End.

In another 100 yards, the byway bears left.

After a while, we see a row of bungalows over to the right – these line Radwinter Road, just East of where we parked beside the village hall. We may also catch a glimpse of the distinctive white ‘clocktower’ (there is no clock) at the top of the village hall’s pyramid roof. The hall, towards the far end of the line of bungalows, was opened in 1995.

As we come into Swards End village, we start to pass gardens on our left. These houses are in the small close, Tylers, which we saw earlier on the walk. Between the first and second houses on the left, we may catch a glimpse of the roofs of the corner turrets of The Towers. We continue beside Tylers.

The byway turns right and we pass thatched, 18th-century Old Barn House, number 36, on the right. Just afterwards, we return to the water tower that we passed earlier. The brick tower supports a water tank. The tower is inscribed “SWWU – 1905” which presumably stood

for Saffron Walden Water ???? [Does anyone know what the U stood for?]. The tank supplied the village with water from 1905 until the 1970s.

Continue past the water tower to the bench on the small green.

When safe, cross the road to turn right along the pavement. We are once again on Walden Road, the B1053, and now heading back towards the village hall where we parked.

Soon on the right is number 42, Elms Farmhouse, which dates from the 17th century.

Before long, we come to Chapel Cottage on the right, attached to the thatched Swan's Cottage. They date from around 1800 AD.

The rest of the houses along Walden Road are relatively modern. We continue along the pavement until we return to the village hall, on the right, where we started. With care, cross to the right and then cross the green to the car park.

You can read more about the parishes of Swards End and Wimbish on www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

This route description, last updated 04 February 2022, 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.

