



# The Hundred Parishes

## Circular Walks – number 169

### Rickling and Wicken Bonhunt – 4.4 miles (7 kms)

*This walk starts in the parish of Quendon and Rickling and visits the parish of Wicken Bonhunt. Much of the route follows clear tracks and is often on higher ground with extensive views. There are no stiles. There may be opportunities to visit three churches, so please be prepared to either remove muddy boots or wear boot covers or plastic bags. Some paths may be muddy. The route passes only one possible place for refreshment, Ananta in Wicken Bonhunt, but it opens only in the evenings. There are seats in Rickling churchyard and in Wicken Bonhunt.*

**Start and finish:** The walk starts and finishes outside Rickling Church (whose churchyard usually provides a magnificent display of daffodils in springtime). There is usually room in the little slip road for two or three cars. The route starts from the entrance to the churchyard.

Ordnance Survey Grid Reference: TL499315 - Postcode: CB11 3YL.

The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 195.

A diagram of the route is provided at the end of this description.

Before setting off, and while boots are still clean, please consider visiting Rickling Church, most of which dates from the 13th or 14th century. In spring, the churchyard is carpeted in daffodils.

On leaving the church porch, we go straight ahead to return to the slip road where we turn left and then keep left along the lane, marked as Church End Farm. We pass a pond immediately on our left, followed by two barns on the right. The second is called Sarsen Barn, perhaps named after the large stone that forms part of the base of the wall at the far end. Above it is a bench mark, indicating that the height above sea level of this location has been recorded by Ordnance Survey.

After a short while, we pass thatched Appletree Cottage on the left: actually, two cottages dating from the 17th and 18th centuries and now joined together.

Immediately after Appletree Cottage, we turn left onto a grass path signposted as a public bridleway. On our right is a set of large barns and we may hear the sound of their machinery drying newly-harvested cereals. The barns are largely hidden from view by a very tall leylandii 'hedge'.

After a while, our green path joins a gravel drive that comes from the barns. We keep straight ahead on a clear track between fields, heading north.

Soon, the view opens up in all directions. Ahead and to the right, at about 1 o'clock on the dial, the red roofs belong to a new residential area on the west of Newport, nearly 2 miles away.

Later, also to the right, at about 2 o'clock, the rotating radar scanner at Debden may be visible on the horizon, around 4 miles distant. This primarily serves Stansted Airport.

After a gentle descent, our track crosses a ditch and here a notice tells us we are on the Quendon Estate. The track now climbs gently. At about the highest point, we reach hedgerow on the right and here we cross the parish boundary from Quendon and Rickling into Wicken Bonhunt.

Further along, just before the track turns left, looking through the big gap in the hedgerow on the right, we can see traffic on the M11 motorway and also the tower of Newport's parish church.

We follow the track round to the left. In about 50 yards, we follow the track to the right. [The map shows that here we are re-joining the line of the footpath which came across the field, but it would appear that the footpath has become redundant.]

The track descends, with hedgerow on the right. Ahead and to our left is a large building with red-tiled roof. This is a 21st-century house in the village of Wicken Bonhunt.

The track kinks to the right and immediately left. After another 30 yards it bears right, now along a field edge with trees on the left.

After about 100 yards, we turn left on a public bridleway, heading directly towards Wicken Bonhunt's parish church with its distinctive pyramid-shape red-tile roof. The grass bridleway, a field-edge path with hedgerow on the right, heads gently downhill towards the church.

The path becomes stony and passes between trees. On the left, we pass a large stone, about 3 feet across – perhaps another sarsen stone?

At the end of the descent, we bear right and then left to arrive in Wicken Bonhunt. Immediately opposite is the former Coach and Horses pub, now open only in the evenings as a Thai restaurant called Ananta. The building is in two halves: the thatched, timber-framed section dates from the 17th or 18th century and the taller brick element was added in the 19th century. The old Coach and Horses sign is still displayed, depicting several local characters.

When safe, we should cross the road, the B1038, and head slightly left to the Wicken Bonhunt village sign. The sign features the parish's two churches (we will pass the one at the top later) and the pub. Beside the sign are a seat and a telephone kiosk that is now home to a defibrillator. On the opposite side of the main road is thatched Clarks Cottage which probably dates from the 17th century.

Now we will go up the short lane between the village sign and Ananta, soon reaching the entrance to the churchyard. St Margaret's dates from the 13th century although it was largely rebuilt in the 1850s. If open, you are encouraged to visit. The church has fine stained-glass windows and an ancient font. The chancel – to the right as one enters the building – is little changed from the 13th century and the font is even older. The building is used regularly both for church services and as a community centre.

On leaving the church, we retrace to the lane and turn left, passing the pub on our right. On the left, just after Church Cottage, is the former schoolhouse, built in the mid-19th century of striped red and 'gault' (yellow) bricks.

The lane rejoins the main road and we continue ahead on the pavement.

Across the road on the right, half-hidden thatched Wisbey Cottage dates from the 17th or 18th century.

On the left, we pass the entrance to Wicken House and then get just a glimpse of this property which also features stripes of red and gault bricks. It was constructed in 1856 for the new rector and was built to his design. From 1945 to 2008 the building was owned by Essex County Council who used it for residential educational courses. It is now in private ownership.

We pass beneath a row of tall trees, possibly larch. When the pavement ends, and when safe, we cross the road to continue along the pavement on the right. It is now apparent that we are walking beside a stream, Wicken Water. The stream originates to the northwest of here in the parish of Elmdon and flows beside the main road through Arkesden before reaching Wicken Bonhunt. From here, Wicken Water flows east to join the River Cam (or Granta) at Newport. We will follow it closely for nearly a mile.

We pass weather-boarded Rectory Cottages on the left. On the right, there is a puddingstone at the start of the brick bridge which crosses Wicken Water at the entrance to 17th/18th-century Lower Farm.

On the left we pass thatched, 18th-century Erme Cottage and 17th-century Mill House with tiled roof. A windmill once stood on the hill behind Mill House but it was demolished in the early 20th century. Soon after Mill House, we fork right off the road, onto a grass public footpath, passing close beside two cottages and a seat on the left.

After the cottages, our route continues with Wicken Water on the right. This may once have been the main route. The current alignment of the road, going uphill and turning sharp right to return to the valley, looks to be a relatively 'modern' addition, perhaps built to avoid the flood plain beside Wicken Water.

Our path meanders, following the line of the stream.

Eventually, we pass through trees at the end of a field. From here, the official footpath bears half left, across a field and then turns right to a small thatched building. If the cross-field path looks difficult, we should try the more popular route which turns right from the trees and in about 20 yards turns left to follow the field edge for about 200 yards with Wicken Water on the right – then turning left along a track to the small thatched building.

We are now in the area that was once the manor of Bonhunt. It joined with the manor of Wicken, the area around Wicken Bonhunt parish church, in the 16th century. Evidence of a

Saxon settlement was found in this area in the 1970s during preparation for the building of the M11 motorway.

The thatched building is St Helen's Chapel. This is a Norman chapel, dating from the 11th or 12th century. It comprises both nave and chancel and has a number of tiny early windows. It is constructed mainly of flint and pebble, with some puddingstones. For many years it was used as a barn but is now treated with more respect. It has benefited from major restoration work in the early 20th century and a 21st-century thatch. The doorway may be unlocked, allowing a peek inside: it looks bigger inside than one might expect, with seating for around 30 people.

From the chapel entrance, we turn right to head south along the gravel track (that is, retracing if we took the popular route rather than the official path). We immediately pass tall, red-brick Bonhunt Lodge on our left. Just behind it is the M11 motorway.

We stay on the track to cross over Wicken Water on a concrete bridge. On the far side, we keep on the main track, bearing slightly right and later walking beside or beneath trees in a thin strip of woodland on our left.

After some 400 yards, a path joins us from the left and forks off to the right, but we remain on the wider, gravel track with hedgerow on the right.

After another 100 yards, at the end of the field, we stay on the track as it turns left, climbing with woodland on the right.

After a sharp climb of about 200 yards, we can pause and look back; we should be able to see the pyramid-shaped roof of Wicken Bonhunt's parish church, now a mile away.

When we reach the end of the woodland on the right, we turn right onto a new track, heading south and initially with the woodland on our right. At the end of the woodland, we pass imperceptibly from Wicken Bonhunt parish back into Quendon and Rickling.

We stay on this track, heading south for about half a mile. For a while the hedgerow is on our right; then it switches to our left. Over to the left, we will see some buildings around Quendon Hall, also known as Parklands, a popular wedding venue.

When the field on our right ends, we keep ahead, with woodland on our right for about 50 yards. We keep straight ahead, ignoring a track that turns off to our left. Now, we have woodland on the left.

After about 200 yards, we do not go straight ahead, but turn right, now heading west with hedgerow on the left.

In about 400 yards, we pass beside a gate and turn left onto another track. This point is marked on the map as being 104 metres (340 feet) above sea level and is probably the highest point on this walk. There are extensive views in all directions.

The wide track soon turns to the right.

After a while, a bank of tall evergreen trees on the right hides the buildings of Church End Farm. However, the trees do not hide the whining noise that comes from the building when grain is being dried, powered by the expanse of solar panels on the roof.

Just after the farm buildings, the track becomes a tarmac road and we pass Appletree Cottage on the right – we should recognise this from the start of our walk. Within 200 yards, we reach a road junction and turn right to where we started this walk outside Rickling Church. If you didn't visit earlier, please consider doing so now – after removing or covering boots if they are muddy.

You can read more about the parishes of Quendon & Rickling and Wicken Bonhunt on [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk).

This route description, last updated 18 September 2021, was downloaded from [www.hundredparishes.org.uk](http://www.hundredparishes.org.uk) Please email any suggestions for improving the route or the route description to [hundredparishes@btinternet.com](mailto: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.

