



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

DUXFORD



Location: 7 miles northwest of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL4745.

Postcode: CB22 4XT. **Access:** Whittlesford Parkway Station on Cambridge – London Liverpool Street line; A505; National Cycle Route 11; Bus: Citi 7 (Cambridge – Saffron Walden).

County: Cambridgeshire. **District:** South Cambridgeshire. **Population:** 2,099 in 2011.

Duxford is most widely known for its aircraft museum and air displays, but the parish also has an interesting and attractive village with the unusual distinction of two 12th-century parish churches, each of which is Grade I-listed.

The parish appears in the 1086 Domesday Book as Duchesuorde, meaning Ducc's Enclosure. Although apparently not named after a river crossing, Duxford village is on the west side of the River Cam and has a number of places where travellers on the ancient Icknield Way could have forded the river. Archaeological finds have demonstrated man's presence for several thousand years, including an Iron Age settlement and Roman encampment on Pepperton Hill, which has commanding views, especially to the north, to the more low-lying parts of the parish and beyond.

The basic layout of the village is thought to be from Saxon times, with two parallel roads that were strands of the Icknield Way leading to separate river crossings. Although these routes were only about 300 yards/metres apart, they evolved into separate communities, each with a lord of the manor and a Norman church. St John's Church, in the north, closed in 1874 when the benefices were united and its bells were transferred to St Peter's. St John's is now cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust which carried out repair work that revealed wall paintings from as long ago as the 12th century. The first photo shows St John's Church and the village green. The second is of St Peter's Church and St Peter's Street.



The parish is rich in listed buildings, including 14 on the airfield, but the majority are around the conservation area in the centre of the village. Three of Duxford's four public houses are listed.

The Red Lion, in the far north of the parish, dates from the 16th century and perpetuates a long tradition of hospitality in that area. A hospital was established there in the 13th century beside the wooden Whittlesford Bridge that then spanned the River Cam. Today, English Heritage cares for the simple 14th-century Chapel of the

Hospital of St John the Baptist. The chapel may itself have served as the hospital, and both may have provided accommodation for travellers. The railway line between Cambridge and London Liverpool Street was constructed along the Cam valley in the 1840s, passing close by the Red Lion and giving rise to a level crossing beside Whittlesford Station. In 1961, the A505 road was opened, rising above the river and the railway line, thereby by-passing the old road and making the level crossing redundant.

Duxford's airfield lies beside the A505, about one mile to the west of the village. It was built towards the end of the First World War, many of its buildings being constructed by German prisoners of war. In 1938, as the Second World War approached, Duxford was the first airfield to take delivery of the British-built Spitfire fighter planes that were to play a major part in the airfield's activities and for the RAF generally during the war.

RAF Duxford played an important role during WWII, and was one of thirteen wartime airfields within the Hundred Parishes. From 1943 to 1945, it was assigned to the American Air Force.

One of the squadrons based here in 1940, including the period known as the Battle of Britain, was commanded by Douglas Bader. He was famous for the fact that he had lost both legs in an air accident some years beforehand. His story was told in the 1956 film *Reach for the Sky*.

Shortly before the war, Frank Whittle flew regularly from Duxford whilst studying at Cambridge and developing his ideas which culminated in the invention of the turbojet engine. This was adopted late in the war and dramatically re-defined the design of military and, later, civil aircraft.



After the war, Duxford reverted to the RAF until its closure as a military base in 1961. Its runway was shortened in 1977 to make way for the M11 motorway. Today, the airfield is the home of Imperial War Museum Duxford and the American Air Museum, with over 200 aircraft included within their displays.

Attractions:

Imperial War Museum, Royston Rd, A505 – 01223 835000 - www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-duxford
Duxford Chapel, Station Road - www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/duxford-chapel

Hospitality:

Duxford Lodge Hotel, Ickleton Road – 01223 836444 - www.duxfordlodgehotel.co.uk
Holiday Inn Express, Station Rd East – 01223 497070 - www.hiexpresscambridgeduxford.co.uk
John Barleycorn pub, Moorfield Road – 01223 832699 - www.johnbarleycorn.co.uk
Plough pub, 57 St Peter's Street – 01223 833170 - <http://theduxfordplough.co.uk>
Red Lion Hotel, Station Road East – 01223 832047 - www.redlionwhittlesfordbridge.com
Wheatsheaf pub, 4 St Peter's Street – 01223 836650 - <http://wheatsheafduxford.co.uk>

Included in Hundred Parishes walk:

14: Between Great Chesterford and Whittlesford stations (5 miles).

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: Chrishall, Hinxton, Ickleton.

Links:

Parish Council: www.duxfordvillage.com
British History Online: www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=66724