



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

FELSTED



Location: 3 miles southeast of Great Dunmow, 6 miles west of Braintree.

Ordnance Survey grid square: TL6720. **Postcode:** CM6 3DQ.

Access: B1417 off A 120. National Cycle Route 16 (Flicht Way). Bus service 133 Colchester – Braintree – Felsted - Stansted (www.airportbybus.com).

County: Essex **District:** Uttlesford **Population:** 3,051 in 2011.

Felsted is a delightful village roughly equidistant from both Braintree and Great Dunmow in Essex, and lying on the north bank of the River Chelmer as it makes its way south towards Chelmsford. It is the heart of a large parish which embraces a number of small hamlets, most of which take the name Green, as in Molehill Green and Willows Green. The Hundred Parishes area is particularly rich in village greens – areas of common ownership that were once used for grazing and are now valued as areas of sporting or casual recreation. Felsted village itself is medieval in origin although excavations for both the old and new A120 (roads which follow the Roman Stane Street en route towards Colchester) have uncovered bronze and iron age sites. The name, deriving from fell (hill) + stede (place) seems something of a misnomer, since Felsted, like most of Essex, has no dramatic gradients. Nevertheless its typically gentle East Anglian inclines are sufficient to break up the skyline and please the eye with a diverse canvas.



History is all around you in Felsted and the community has clearly endeavoured to convey to the visitor the richness of its heritage. It doesn't matter if you have left the history book at home, for at every point of interest throughout the village there is a well-kept information board offering glimpses of times gone by. Incorporated into the boards are photos, records, references, reminiscences, many of which have been retained in hand-written form. This community wants you to know about its past. For the casual visitor it is all you need to garner a compelling, albeit rudimentary, mind-map of Felsted across the centuries. And for the serious historian, there is much to guide your further research.

On entering the village for the first time, it is immediately evident that Felsted revolves around education. It has four large schools which, for a village of fewer than 3,000 inhabitants, seems to the uninitiated rather excessive. But this is just the beginning of the history lesson. For the origins of Felsted School (two schools in fact – preparatory and

senior) can be traced back to the mid-16th century. Founded in 1564 by Lord Richard Riche, one time Lord Chancellor under King Edward VI, Felsted has gone through many transformations, restorations and additions and school properties dominate the village, but the original building is still in use as the prep school music department. Notable alumni (not least the sons of Oliver Cromwell) have excelled in the arts, medicine and sport – particularly cricket.

Lord Riche also founded the almshouses, shown here, and the chantry. His tomb, complete with his effigy, occupies an



enclosed chapel in Holy Cross Church, and is regarded as one of the finest sepulchral monuments in England. The flint-rubble church is a Grade I listed building, its oldest part being the Norman tower, built around 1120. Major restorations were carried out during the 1870s and in the early part of the First World War.

Clustering around the heart of Felsted village are some 50 listed buildings (only one-third of the total number across the parish). Most are pre-18th century and many medieval; seven are listed Grade I or II*. A stroll along the main thoroughfare will introduce you to many of these. Also unofficially 'listed' by Felsted residents is the elephant in the front garden of The Folly. Don't miss it!



The school buildings are set in over 80 acres of attractive green space and it is tempting to wander and explore. Numerous signs indicating private land discourage such ideas; however there are plenty of opportunities beyond the immediate environs of the village. Felsted actually has over 40 miles of public right of way. The Saffron Trail (a long-distance path between Southend and Saffron Walden) runs through it, and the Flitch Way is only a half-mile to the north. The Flitch Way is a 15 mile trail between Braintree and Bishop's Stortford following the old railway line. The serious walker can pick it up at

Braintree Station and make a lunch-stop detour into Felsted village where there are many possibilities for refreshment. The less energetic might want to try the delightfully named Felsted Frolic, or the Felsted Flitch Loop, both short, circular walks to be found on [www.walk4life](http://www.walk4life.com). A parish footpath map is available from the Parish Council.

Felsted has a well-stocked village store and offers a wide choice for those wanting refreshment – see below.

Hospitality

B&B: Argyle House, Station Rd, CM6 3DG; 01371 821559; www.felstedbedandbreakfast.co.uk
Food & drink (all in centre of village): Chequers 01371 820226 ; The Swan 01371 820245 ;
Reeves restaurant 01371 820996; Boote House restaurant (oriental) 01371 820279;
Wood Cottage Tea Room 01371 820996.

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: Little Dunmow, Stebbing, Great Saling, Great Waltham.

Links

Parish Council: www.felstedparishcouncil.co.uk

Holy Cross Church: www.felstedchurch.org.uk

The Recorders of Uttlesford History: www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk

Further reading:

A Guide to the Parish Church of Felsted in Essex. Michael Craze/Robert Stone. Available from Holy Cross Church

A History of Felsted. John Drury. 1999. ISBN 0953615405

Felsted: History and Houses. Andrew Telfer. Bury Press. 1999

The two latter publications are available from local libraries.