



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## GREAT SALING



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**Location:** 4 miles northwest of Braintree. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL7025.

**Postcode:** CM7 5DT. **Access:** north off B1256. Bus 9/10 between Great Saling and Braintree.

**County:** Essex. **District:** Braintree. **Population:** 282 in 2011.

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Great Saling is a small diamond-shaped parish in the heart of the Essex countryside. There has been a settlement here since at least the 11th century, and probably much earlier. Records indicate that one Robert de Salyngge was the owner of the manor during the reign of King Henry II, and it may be that the Saling name was thus derived. Another suggestion is that it was named



after the Old/Middle English word for the European willow - 'sallow', and indeed there still are fields of willow around the outskirts of the parish. Certainly, it seems that the parish church (seen here) had its origins around this time. The nave of the Grade II\*-listed church of St James the Great is considered, in part at least, to date from the 12th century, although much of the church's early origins have been obscured by 19th-century repair and 'restoration'. The west tower was added in the 14th century. The flint rubble building has a 15th-century octagonal font, a shape reflected in the much later 19th-century pulpit. One of the first marriages officiated

from this pulpit would have been that of Samuel Ryder, the businessman and golf enthusiast who gave his sponsorship and name to the prestigious Ryder Cup golf tournament. St James is worth a visit, though its location is not immediately obvious. It is situated on the north side of the village and is set back off the road in the grounds of Saling Hall, but at the time of writing is not signposted. Dense shrubbery has grown up around the churchyard which also serves to conceal it from view.

Saling Hall is of a similar era. It was described by the author and historian Philip Morant in his *History and Antiquities of the County of Essex* (1763-68), where he dates it in the first half of the 12th century. Nothing remains of the first building; the existing house was built around 1570 and remodelled in 1699. Saling Hall has changed hands by sale only three or four times over the last 800 years, but 2013 saw new ownership and further refurbishment. Traditionally the delightful gardens have been open to the public at certain times; it is to be hoped that they will be again. Please check the website (see below) before planning a visit. The website offers an introduction to the history and horticulture of the estate.



The Gallery in the Garden holds a varied programme of arts and crafts exhibitions across the year and also has a tea room. The website will advise on dates and times, although groups wishing to visit at other times may apply to do so by arrangement. Admission is free. From time to

time there is also an open exhibition, for which any aspiring or established artist is invited to submit work. The gallery is set in the orangery of the Repton-landscaped grounds of Saling Grove. Saling Grove is a private residence and not open to the public, but the gallery and tea room open onto its beautiful 18th-century walled garden.



Across the road from the Gallery in the Garden is The White Hart, a 17th-century Grade II-listed building which was originally an inn and more recently a tea room. Sadly, it has now closed.

Another eating place of the same vintage is the Timbers Restaurant and Bar on the southernmost edge of the parish. Timbers is, as its name suggests, a timbered barn which was originally part of a

working farm. It is part of a cluster of Grade II-listed 17th-century farm outbuildings which have been preserved and now comprise the Blake House Craft Centre. The centre is home to numerous small retail outlets selling gifts, crafts and home accessories, with intriguing seasonal events include lawnmower racing and the amazing Great Maze.

Probably the most well-known event of modern times in the history of Great Saling was the building of the first European United States airbase during the Second World War. It was known then as Andrews Field USAAF Station 485 after Lieutenant General Frank Andrews, commander of the US forces in Europe until his death in an air accident in 1943. It was built rapidly during 1942/3 using hardcore rubble from the London Blitz. At the height of its operations it employed over 800 American servicemen, but at the end of the war the airfield quickly fell into disuse and was abandoned by 1948. In 1972, two local farmers brought aviation back to the area and Andrewsfield Aviation was licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority in 1976. It has to be said, of course, that a good half of the airfield (and vehicular access) is actually in the neighbouring parish of Stebbing, but walkers can discover it using the excellent Great Saling Parish and Bardfield Saling Parish Footpath Map, obtainable from the parish council.

The Footpath Map is a must for anyone wanting to explore the leafy lanes and wooded areas of this delightful area. Today, apart from a memorial on the village green, one would never know that this parish had, albeit in a small way, made a significant contribution to the war effort and functioned as a vigorous hub of the military machine. Today it is at peace, sleepy in appearance to the casual observer, although this belies an active and cohesive community proud of its parish.

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### Hospitality

Orangery Tea Rooms (Wednesday to Sunday - at Gallery in the Garden) CM7 5DP -

[www.galleryinthegarden.co.uk](http://www.galleryinthegarden.co.uk)

Timbers Restaurant and Bar. Off B1256, CM77 6RA - 01376 552553.

Palm Trees Restaurant (oriental cuisine). Off B1256, CM77 6SG - 01376 328088.

[www.palmtreesrestaurant.co.uk](http://www.palmtreesrestaurant.co.uk).

Golden Grove Caravan Park, CM7 5DW - 01371 850185 – [www.salinggrove.com](http://www.salinggrove.com) .

**Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes:** Felsted, Stebbing, Bardfield Saling, Shalford.

### Links

Parish Council: [www.essexinfo.net/greatsalingpc](http://www.essexinfo.net/greatsalingpc)

Saling Hall: [www.salinghall.com](http://www.salinghall.com)

Gallery in the Garden: [www.galleryinthegarden.co.uk](http://www.galleryinthegarden.co.uk)

Blake House Craft Centre: [www.blakehousecraftcentre.co.uk](http://www.blakehousecraftcentre.co.uk)

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