



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

GREAT WALTHAM



Location: 5 miles north of Chelmsford. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6913.
Postcode: CM3 1DP. **Access:** A130, B1008. Regional Cycle Route 50. **Bus:** 42/42a/52
Chelmsford - Gt Waltham - Gt Dunmow - Takeley – Stansted.
County: Essex. **District:** Chelmsford. **Population:** 2,172 in 2011.

Great Waltham is one of the largest parishes of Essex, lying mostly in the broad valley of the River Chelmer, which here runs from north to south. The name Waltham has a Saxon derivation meaning wood (walt) home (ham). The area was once part of the extensive Forest of Essex, whose remnants include the ancient woodlands of Epping and Hatfield Forests. Today, set in gently undulating open farmland, it must look very different. The parish comprises numerous villages and small hamlets, most notably Great Waltham in the south, Ford End, Howe Street, North End, Littlely Green and Broads Green.

Approaching Great Waltham village from the east will offer the most distinctive introduction to the visitor, with the rolling parkland of the Langleys estate to the right. Langleys takes its name from its fourteenth century owners, although its origins can be traced at least two centuries further



back. The estate and its Georgian mansion are privately owned, having been in the same family since the early 1700s. Langleys is not open to the public, but footpaths that cross the park offer some fine views of the grounds and house (seen here in an old postcard). Those walking the Essex Way, the long-distance path from Epping to Harwich, will find themselves traversing the park.

The road from the east comes to the central Banbury Square with the eye-catching red-brick chimneys of Badynghams (shown on the right) signposting the church clock tower of St Mary and St Lawrence behind. Badynghams (known locally as the Guild Hall – although it never was) is a striking building, medieval in origin. It has had many alterations over the centuries; early photos show it with an integral village shop and post office, though this is long gone and it is now a private home.



The Norman church of St Mary and St Lawrence is one of many listed buildings in the village. On first entering one is struck by the exceptionally wide nave which lends an air of space and light unusual in medieval churches. It has a ring of eight very ancient bells (the first cast in 1336) said to be the finest in the county. Also of note is the ornate Jacobean monument to the Everard family (early owners of Langleys), with its curious, tiny child effigies at the base.

It is worth following the ecclesiastical theme as one heads north through the parish for there are two other churches which shouldn't be missed. The first en route is the lovely red-brick church of St John the Evangelist in Ford End, built by the Chelmsford architect Frederick Chancellor in 1870. Set originally upon an osier bed (one wonders at the rationale), the church has been beset with structural problems over the years, but is currently safe and the bells which were quiet for two decades in the 1980s and 90s are ringing again. The church is home to a memorial to the Rev Arthur Shearly Cripps, twice vicar, missionary to Zimbabwe and nephew of the politician Sir Stafford Cripps.

Continuing north one arrives at the appropriately named North End, a small hamlet overlooking the Chelmer Valley towards Causeway End and Felsted. North End's small green is pictured here.

North End is home to the extraordinary Grade I-listed Blackchapel, shown below. It is a timber-framed chapel with adjoining priest's house, built in the 14th century and still in use for services today. Known as a chapel of ease, it is independent of the parish and the diocese of Chelmsford and was consecrated as a convenience to worshippers who found it difficult to get to the parish church. The chapel houses rare box pews, a three-deck pulpit, a barrel organ dating from 1790 and, reputedly, the smallest font in England.



For walkers, the Waltham Wanderers have a range of walks open to all. The parish council has produced a small range of leaflets identifying circular walks in the area. 'Beating the Bounds' will take you around the 16 miles of parish boundary and suggests, for the less energetic, some shorter cross-cutting routes too. 'The Ridley (of real ale fame) Round' is a shorter walk, taking in 6 miles of the Essex Way and guiding you carefully in the direction of all the important hostleries. After 150 years, the eponymous brewery at Hartford End is sadly no more. Fortunately, however, a direct descendant of

the brewery family owns the Compasses in Little Green. This is now the home of log fires, real ale, good food and the Essex Huffer. For the uninitiated (probably most people outside Essex and many inside), the Essex Huffer (traditionally 'half-a' loaf) is a large triangular over-filled bap. Substantial sustenance after one of the above long walks.

Despite their dispersal over such a wide area, the residents of the parish remain a cohesive community. At no time is this more evident than during the annual Midsummer Festival when, over the months of May, June and July all can participate in an extensive programme of music, dance, sports, walks and activities of all kinds, laid on by resident organisations and brought together by the Great Waltham Community Network. Here is the heart and soul of the parish.

Hospitality

B&B: The Compasses (Little Green) – www.compasseslittlegreen.co.uk - 01245 362308

Food & drink: The Compasses (as above); Butchers Arms (North End) www.butchersarms-essex.co.uk - 01245 237449; Walnut Tree (Broads Green) 01245 360222; Green Man (Howe Street) www.galvinrestaurants.com/s/315/the-green-man 01245 408820; Beehive (Great Waltham) 01245 360356; and Rose and Crown (Great Waltham) www.roseandcrowngreatwaltham.co.uk - 01245 360359.

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: Pleshey, High Easter, Barnston, Flitch Green, Felsted.

Links

Great Waltham Parish Council: www.greatwaltham.org.uk

The Essex Way: www.essexway.org.uk and www.visitessex.com/discover/rural/TheEssexWay

Waltham Wanderers Walks: (see parish council website)

Churches of St Mary and St Lawrence and St John the Evangelist: (see parish council website)

Further reading:

Gt Waltham Parish Plan and *Gt Waltham Design Statement*. Available from the Parish Council
North End Village Design Statement. As above

Victorian Hamlet: Howe Street 1837-1901 by Alan Maddock, 118 pages, published 2004.

Little Guide to St Mary and St Lawrence Church. Available from the church