



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## HIGH RODING



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**Location:** 4 miles southwest of Great Dunmow. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6017.  
**Postcode:** CM6 1NS. **Access:** B184. Regional Cycle Route 60. **Bus:** 59 Chelmsford - Harlow  
**County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 478 in 2011.

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High Roding is the most northerly of a cluster of eight settlements in west Essex, collectively known as The Rodings. The northern four Rodings fall within the Hundred Parishes. The Rodings is believed to be the largest group of villages in the country to bear a common name, having originated as a single community in Anglo-Saxon times as the Hrodingas, after its chieftain Hroda. It appears in the Domesday record as Rodinges in the Hundred of Dunmow, but by the 14th century the main boundaries of the eight villages had been established. The river Roding, also named from Hroda, flows south from its source in Dunmow along the west boundary of High Roding and meanders through most of the Rodings parishes on its way to the Thames

The Essex historian Peter Foley had this to say about the area:

‘This is indeed an enchanted place, this land of The Rodings, a place of sudden hills and unsuspected hollows, seldom flat but gently undulating. He who seeks contentment, here let him go. He will need no better company than his thoughts. Nor will he find reason to doubt the wisdom of a Saxon’s choice.’

The village of High Roding is a long linear settlement which follows the Dunmow to Ongar road, here known as The Street, through the centre of the parish. It is a village rich in listed buildings dating from the 14th century onwards, many timber-framed and at least half still thatched. In the 19th century, many of these would have formed the commercial hub of the village: grocer, wheelwright, blacksmith, beer retailer, shoemaker and tailor are just some of the cottage industries which have been recorded.

Today, most of the buildings are private residences, but still worthy of note for their architectural interest and the accompanying sense of history which stirs the imagination. The 19th-century school (seen here) is just one of these, and of not too distant a heritage to evoke thoughts (for some of us) of our early school days. Another is The Old Mission Hall, a plain, almost primitive non-conformist structure and a reminder of times when matters of religion were considered important and Sunday school the norm.



Of all the ancient buildings that line The Street, the 15th-century former coaching inn The Black Lion is probably the most eye-catching, its black timbers on white an unmistakable landmark. It is open from 11am and gets some good reviews. What used to be the old hay loft is reputedly haunted by the ghost of a Roundhead officer. It might be worth a visit; you never know . . . . .

The 13th-century parish church of All Saints is situated approximately a mile out of the village to the south on the edge of High Rodingbury Wood. One is inclined to speculate on why it is so far removed from the village and its people, although it was clearly established before the greater number of buildings in the village itself. Many parts of the building and its artefacts are 13th and 14th century, though there was some 19th-century repair and modification after a lightning strike destroyed the tower.



The best way to explore the parish is on foot, using the many footpaths, byways and quiet lanes. Many of these lead off the B184; this is not usually a busy road and it is quite possible to park and take a circular walk to north or south. Venturing east from the cross-roads at the northern end of The Street will take you along this winding and picturesque lane, part of Regional Cycle Route number 60.



Those needing alcoholic refreshment en route will probably want to stop off at The Black Lion. Alternatively, the quirky Roding Hall Tea Room (adjacent to Roding Hall – now sadly dilapidated and awaiting renovation) offers quality fare in snacks and teas. They also have a gift shop and farm food section and are open Monday to Saturday from 10am till 4pm.

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#### **Hospitality:**

The Black Lion, The Street, CM6 1NT - 01371 872847.  
Roding Hall Tea Room, The Street, CM6 1NN.

#### **Adjacent parishes:**

Aythorpe Roding, Hatfield Broad Oak, Great Canfield, Great Dunmow, Barnston, High Easter.

#### **Links:**

Parish Council: [www.essexinfo.net/high-roding-parish-council](http://www.essexinfo.net/high-roding-parish-council)  
Conservation area appraisal 2013: [www.uttlesford.gov.uk/highrodingcaa](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/highrodingcaa)

#### **Further reading:**

*The Rodings: Eight Ancient Parishes of Essex and a Lost Hamlet.* Peter Foley – downloadable from: [www.4devines.com/the\\_rodings/](http://www.4devines.com/the_rodings/)