



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

LEADEN RODING



Location: 7 miles southwest of Great Dunmow. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5913.
Postcode: CM6 1PZ. **Access:** A1060, B184. **Bus:** 59 between Chelmsford and Harlow
County: Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 616 in 2011.

Leaden Roding is one 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 and meanders through most of the Rodings parishes on its way to the Thames.

An excellent introduction to this green and pleasant countryside can be obtained by following The Rodings walk (see the Essex Walks website below) which meanders over a 7-mile circular route starting from Leaden Roding Church.

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.’

Known as Ledenchirche in the 12th century and Rothyng Plumbum in the 14th, the curious preface Leaden to this Roding parish appears to derive from the church of St Michael and All Angels, the first church in the area to have a lead roof. The roof is now tiled. This small church dates from Norman times and has a shingled broach spire and weatherboarded belfry, one of whose three bells is dated 1523 and the earliest dated church bell in Essex. Along with many of the isolated churches in this area, St Michael’s is sadly locked during the week, but one knowledgeable church enthusiast who has managed to gain access has offered (on <http://stepneyrobarts.blogspot.co.uk/search?q=leaden>) this little gem of an observation:



‘The 14th century font has the staples into which the cover was padlocked so that witches should not steal the water for their magical rites; the font cover was adapted for the staples in the 17th century, reminding us that the Reformation did not reform away the old belief in witchcraft. Many a sermon against witches would be preached from this perfect little 16th century pulpit.’



This is a closer view of one wall of the church.

In ecclesiastical life, St Michael's and Leaden Roding have since 1995 formed a joint benefice with neighbouring Abbess, White and Beauchamp Rodings, usually now known collectively as the South Rodings Parish.



As with much of the Rodings countryside, Leaden Roding is criss-crossed with many footpaths and byways through fields and wooded areas. For guided walks in the area the Rodings Walking Group is worth discovering. They walk on Sundays and on Friday evenings during the summer. You can find their details on the Walking in Essex website (details below).



Available to download from the parish council website is their own quarterly periodical, rather cleverly entitled *The Leaden Reading*. This is an excellent introduction to the life of the parish, which though very small and very rural, is also very much alive. All kinds of activities are going on throughout the year, from the Roothing Quilters to the Cloghams Cricket Club. Many are centred in the Village Hall, which seems to be the main village social hub. It's a warm and welcoming read; there's probably no better way to get to the heart of this community.

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: White Roding, Aythorpe Roding, High Easter.

Links:

Parish Council: www.essexinfo.net/leadenroding

Walking in Essex: www.walkinginessex.co.uk/rodings.php

Essex Walks: www.essexwalks.com/walks/the_rodings.html#page=page-1

Further reading:

The Rodings: Eight Ancient Parishes of Essex and a Lost Hamlet. Peter Foley. Downloadable from: www.4devines.com/the_rodings/