



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

LITTLE CANFIELD



Location: 2 miles west of Great Dunmow. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5821.

Postcode: CM6 1SU. **Access:** B1256. National Cycle Route 16 (Flich Way).

Buses: (Daily) route 42 / 42A between Stansted Airport, Great Dunmow and Chelmsford and route 133 between Stansted Airport, Great Dunmow and Braintree.

County: Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 935 in 2011.

Little Canfield is a mainly agricultural parish that has witnessed growing numbers of people passing through on east-west transport routes. The first of these routes was Stane Street, built by the Romans between Colchester and Braughing. It remained the only route of any significance here for nearly 2000 years. It was classified in the 20th century as the A120 and later the B1256.

Canfield appeared in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Canefelda*. This meant a field of canes or reeds and was probably associated with the River Roding which flows from north to south through the parish.

The parish church, 400 metres south of Stane Street, dates from the 12th century, but it was substantially remodelled and made more ornate in the early 19th century at the expense of the Reverend CL Smith, an amateur architect. It retains an interesting 13th-century parish chest. The recent additions of a toilet and refreshment area have made it more comfortable and versatile for wider use, such as concerts.



In 1869, the railway was opened between Bishop's Stortford, Dunmow and Braintree. This ran parallel with Stane Street, just a little to the south. In 1895 a halt was opened in Little Canfield, close to the parish's eastern boundary. Its purpose was mainly to serve the Earl and Countess of Warwick and the many eminent visitors to their home at Easton Lodge, two miles to the north in Little Easton. The halt had been partly funded by Lady Warwick, and was named *Easton Lodge* rather than Little Canfield.

The railway line closed in 1972, but the stationmaster's house and an adjacent wooden hut that housed the crossing gate mechanism have survived and are shown below.



The bed of the railway track is largely intact and it is now designated the *Flich Way*. It is popular with walkers, cyclists and equestrians who, during summer weekends, can buy refreshments at the Green Café, a community-run kiosk with outdoor seating.

The parish is criss-crossed by footpaths, which often offer the best views of some of Little Canfield's more remote listed buildings. The parish has 33 listings, of which more than half date from the 16th century or earlier.

The increasing use of motor vehicles through the 20th century not only killed off the railway line, but brought ever-increasing volumes of traffic along the A120, Stane Street, where many of Little Canfield's residents lived. Traffic increased even more with the expansion of Stansted Airport, but relief eventually came in 2003 when a new dual-carriageway A120 was opened further north. Stane Street was re-classified as the B1256 and there was a 75% reduction in its traffic.

A further consequence of nearby Stansted Airport has been the construction of Priors Green, a major residential development on the north side of the B1256 that was first approved in the 1990s to provide airport-related accommodation. In reality, construction did not start until much later and is ongoing. Priors Green has been built partly in the northwest corner of Little Canfield and partly in neighbouring Takeley parish. It has yet to be decided whether it should continue to be split across the two administrative parishes. Priors Green has added a totally new dimension to the character of both parishes and the population of Little Canfield is expected to treble by the time construction is complete. Fortunately, unlike other nearby "airport-related" developments, Priors Green has been set up with some consideration for future needs and sustainability, having a community hall and a parade of shops.

Developments in the first few years of the 21st century have had the most dramatic impact on Little Canfield since Stane Street was built by the Romans. Whilst focus is on the transport corridor, the vast majority of the parish is still arable farmland with a scattering of farmhouses. This selection of houses and the village's public house are to be found along the B1256.



Hospitality:

Lion and Lamb – 01279 870257 – www.lionandlamb.co.uk

Green Café (May-Nov, Sat-Sun, 10am-4pm) – www.localfoodandmore.org.uk/projects/green-cafe

Adjacent parishes: Great Canfield, Takeley, Little Easton, Great Dunmow.

Links:

Parish Council: No website.

This page was last updated 28 March 2016.