



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## LITTLEBURY



**Location:** 2 miles northwest of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5139.

**Postcode:** CB11 4TG. **Access:** B1383. National Cycle Route 11. Rail from Audley End or Great Chesterford (each 2 miles distant). Bus: none stop in the village.

**County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 869 in 2011.

There can be few places that have such an excellent published history as Littlebury. The collaborative efforts of some 40 people resulted in the publication of "A Parish History" in 2005. They are to be congratulated on a well-researched, easy to read, beautifully illustrated book of almost 300 pages that is, surely, second to none.



The purpose of this brief introduction is to whet a few appetites, hopefully encouraging folk to explore the parish either in person or through the pages of the published history – perhaps both.

The parish of Littlebury includes not only the village

associated with the Grade I-listed 13<sup>th</sup>-century parish church and the sharp bends on the B1383 as it passes through (pictured above in the early 1900s), but also the hamlets of Littlebury Green and Catmere End. These hamlets are situated a mile or so to the west on the chalk hills that rise 200 feet (60 metres) above the River Cam on which Littlebury village developed.

To the south, the parish incorporates that part of the Audley End estate that lies west of the Cam. This includes the Grade I-listed, 16th-century stable block, shown here, and also a large, ancient earthwork at the top of Ring Hill, on the west side of the road, opposite Audley End House. This



Iron Age ring fort, covering around 16 acres, has no public access, but the monument on the hill that can be seen from the road stands within the fort's surrounding embankment. The monument is the Temple of Victory, 20 feet (7 metres) tall, built in the 1770s to a design by Robert Adam to celebrate the end of the Seven Years War.

There are relatively few public footpaths here - mostly in the west of the parish where Hundred Parishes walk number 13 passes through Littlebury Green and Catmere End. The latter part of the walk traces Littlebury's parish boundary along the straight line of a Roman road that ran from their fortified settlement at Braughing to the one at Great Chesterford. Littlebury Green's corrugated iron church, shown here, was assembled in 1885 from a kit.



Littlebury has many listed buildings. The majority are in the heart of Littlebury village, which is protected as a conservation area. Shown below on the left is 18<sup>th</sup>-century Kings Mill with the mill house on the left and weather-boarded watermill to its right. The mill was originally powered by the flow of the River Cam, but by steam engine from around 1860 until it ceased operations in 1924. The Gatehouse, pictured on the right, dates from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and is thought to be on the site of an earlier property that may have been used by visitors from Ely Cathedral. The Cathedral owned the manor of Littlebury from 1004 AD until 1600 AD when it was sold to Thomas Sutton, a wealthy financier. He founded Charterhouse School and Suttons Hospital in London. The 'hospital' was actually an almshouse for retired gentlemen and still serves that purpose today. Many former hospital residents are buried at a private cemetery in Little Hallingbury.



Littlebury was the home of Henry Winstanley, clerk of works at Audley End House and later the builder of the first Eddystone Lighthouse in 1698. His home, known as the House of Wonders, stood just south of the parish church but was demolished in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. [The People pages of our website include a short article on Winstanley].

Littlebury is situated on a 'transport corridor' that runs along the Cam valley. The section of road approaching Littlebury from the south is a rare non-Roman straight road within the Hundred Parishes. This "Littlebury straight" was built in 1811, replacing the original road that ran around 200 yards to the west. The railway came in 1845 after protracted negotiations, eventually resolved by routing the line through two tunnels to avoid disturbance to Baron Braybrooke at Audley End House. The railway passes right through Littlebury parish, but Littlebury does not have its own station. The M11 motorway opened in 1979, to the west of the railway, thereby greatly relieving pressure on the A11 and causing it to be renumbered B1383.

Being bypassed by the railway and the motorway may seem inconvenient at times, but it has probably helped Littlebury to retain its character and rich heritage.

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#### **Hospitality:**

Queens Head Inn – 01799 520365 or 01799 522251 - <http://thequeensheadlittlebury.com>

#### **Included in Hundred Parishes walk:**

13: Between Audley End and Great Chesterford stations (8 miles).

**Adjacent parishes:** Saffron Walden, Wendens Ambo, Elmdon & Wenden Lofts, Strethall, Great Chesterford, Little Chesterford.

#### **Links:**

Parish Council: [www.littleburyparishcouncil.org.uk](http://www.littleburyparishcouncil.org.uk)

History: [www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/littlebury/littleburyhomepage.html](http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/littlebury/littleburyhomepage.html)

#### **Further reading:**

*Littlebury: A Parish History*, The Parish of Littlebury Millennium Society History Group, 2005.