



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## RADWINTER



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**Location:** 4 miles east of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6037.  
**Postcode** CB10 2SW. **Access:** B1054. **Bus:** 18 (Mon-Sat: Saffron Walden – Haverhill).  
**County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 612 in 2011.

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Researching information for The Hundred Parishes is always an intriguing occupation, no matter which parish is under scrutiny at any given time, but it would be true to say that the digging required to unearth information varies enormously from parish to parish. There is always a rich seam of history to be mined, for this is an area with deep and widespread roots of ancient community, but uncovering them is much harder in some parishes than in others. Radwinter is not a difficult one.

At one time a bustling agricultural town which boasted four windmills, two forges, numerous hostelrys and places of worship and all the commonly associated shops and trades, it has today gone the way of most small rural communities. The commerce has all but disappeared and the casual visitor observes a small, quiet, attractive village. However, one only has to



carry out the most cursory of online searches to discover that Radwinter is very much alive and well with a vibrant and cohesive community, proud of its heritage. This is perhaps largely the work of the Radwinter Society, a group formed in 2004 for the promotion and welfare of local history. It's recent publication "RAF Great Sampford"



recounts the story of the WWII airfield which, despite its name, was almost entirely in Radwinter parish. The interested investigator will find a wealth of information available via the links and 'Further Reading' section below. The parish community is concerned not just with how it was; they appear equally interested in how it functions today. As well as the historical material, the parish maintains a frequently updated website, full of local information for residents and visitors. The 2013 Conservation Area Appraisal demonstrates a real concern to maintain and protect the 'unique sense of place' which is valued so greatly.

This love of the parish is centuries old. In the mid-16th century, the rector, William Harrison, wrote 'The Description of England', based predominantly on his life-long experience of the local area. [A short account of Harrison appears in our People pages]. The Bullock family who were lords of the manor and rectors across the 18th and 19th centuries made a major contribution to community buildings, particularly following the great Radwinter fire in 1874. Twenty-four dwellings (in fact the greater part of the village centre) were lost that day, only the Red Lion Inn and the parish church being spared. A major re-building project was rapidly established by the Rev Frederick Bullock in collaboration with the Arts and Crafts architect William Eden Nesfield. The almshouses, and the village hall seen here, are a product of that partnership, as is the re-modelling of the church. An intriguing illustrated correspondence between these two men has been compiled in the publication 'A Deuce of an Uproar', still in print today.





The parish church of St Mary the Virgin has been described as a great porch with a church attached. One can see why. The origins of the church are 12th century; what exists today is largely the late 19th-century Nesfield rebuild, though he has retained the unusual 14th century porch. One of the most significant artefacts within is a 16th-century Flemish reredos, gifted to the church by Bullock in 1888. It may be difficult for the visitor to gain access to view, for St Mary's is kept locked apart from Sunday services and an occasional open day. However, there are some excellent images and detailed description to be found on the Radwinter History websites below.

There are over 50 listed buildings in the parish, all at Grade II with the exception of the church and The Old Vicarage at Grade II\*. A little under half are 19th century and part of the post-fire rebuild, though a goodly number are Tudor. A few are blessed with delightful names that boggle the imagination: Cricksies, Hylas, Dogknolls and Godknolls. One can only wonder.

The parish is good walking country and there is much to explore. The Radwinter Information Pack has details of rights of way, but online there are some helpful circular walks in the area. Matt Fry's route will take you almost out to Thaxted but starts and ends in the village. Walk4Life would suggest that we follow in the steps of Dick Turpin, beginning at the Bluebell Inn (the birthplace of the infamous highwayman) in the nearby parish of Hempstead, but circling west and round the village of Radwinter. If you can time your visit for the first or third Wednesday morning in the month, you will find a cafe in Radwinter Village Hall. Failing that, the recently refurbished Plough Bar and Grill is open on Saturdays from midday, and from late afternoon into the evening during the week.

Footpaths are everywhere in the parish, and it is possible to follow the banks of the River Pant as it flows from Wimbish to the west of the parish, through Radwinter village and east towards Great Sampford. Also worth a visit are the Bendysh Woods, Great and Little, in the far north of the area. These are ancient deciduous Forestry Commission woodlands which, although damaged by conifer planting in the past, are in the process of being restored. Spring is a good time, for wood anemone and the rare oxlip are here, and deer frequent the area.

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### Hospitality:

The Plough: Sampford Rd, CB10 2TL, 01799 599224, [www.theploughradwinter.co.uk/](http://www.theploughradwinter.co.uk/)  
Bendysh Hall B & B: Ashdon Rd, CB10 2UA, 01799 599220,  
[www.bendyshhallbedandbreakfast.co.uk/](http://www.bendyshhallbedandbreakfast.co.uk/)

### Adjacent parishes:

Wimbish, Swards End, Ashdon, Hempstead, The Sampfords, Castle Camps.

### Links:

Parish Council: [www.radwinter.org](http://www.radwinter.org)  
Radwinter Society: <http://www.radwinter.org/RadHisthome.php>  
History: [www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Radwinter/Radwinter\\_home.html](http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Radwinter/Radwinter_home.html) and  
Matt's Walks: [www.matfrygbr.co.uk/radwinter.html](http://www.matfrygbr.co.uk/radwinter.html)  
Walk4Life: [www.walk4life.info/walk/following-the-footsteps-dick-turpin](http://www.walk4life.info/walk/following-the-footsteps-dick-turpin)

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### Further reading:

*Radwinter's First World War* by Michael Southgate, 2014, Radwinter Society.  
*A Deuce of an Uproar: William Eden Nesfield's Letters to the Rector of Radwinter in Essex*,  
C Aslet and JFW Bullock, published 1988 by Friends of Radwinter Church.  
*Description of Elizabethan England 1577*: William Harrison, Kessinger Publishing  
*RAF Great Sampford* by Michael Southgate, published by The Radwinter Society, 2016.