



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to **STANSTED** **MOUNTFITCHET**



Location: 2 miles north of Bishop's Stortford. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5124.
Postcode CM24 8AE. **Access:** Stansted Mountfitchet station on London Liverpool Street to Cambridge line. B1383, B1051, B1351. National Cycle Route 11. **Regular Buses:** 7 (Mon-Sat) to Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Airport; 510 to Harlow, Stortford, Airport via Foresthall Park.
County: Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 6,011 in 2011; approx 8,000 in 2015.



Stansted is a Saxon word meaning stony place, whilst Mountfitchet is a corruption of Montfiquet, a tiny village in Normandy, northern France, whose name came across the Channel with William the Conqueror. After the Norman Conquest, the linked Gernon and Montfichet families governed extensive territory in England, including Stansted where they built a castle.

Several generations later, Baron Richard de Montfichet, was one of the barons who forced King John to sign the Magna Carta in 1215. This was a landmark declaration on the long road that led to the constitutional law that governs most of the English-speaking world. The Magna Carta limited the king's authority and recognized the rights delegated to his barons. It was signed on Baron Montfichet's land at Runnymede, not far from Windsor. However, King John soon renounced the Magna Carta and destroyed Montfichet's castle in Stansted.

The Magna Carta and its association with Stansted Mountfitchet are illustrated on the approaches to the village by the figure of a medieval knight.

Today, Mountfitchet Castle, together with the adjoining toy museum, is one of the foremost visitor attractions within the Hundred Parishes, especially for children. The castle was constructed in the 1990s to depict what its Norman predecessor may have been like – a bustling community with lots of domestic animals, protected by a wooden palisade.

Man has been here for thousands of years. Evidence of Neolithic, Iron Age and Roman settlements were uncovered during the archaeological excavations that preceded the major expansion of Stansted Airport in the late 20th century. The airport was one of many that were hurriedly constructed by American forces in the 1940s and were instrumental in bringing World War II to an end. The long runway, built for the heaviest bombers, encouraged retention of the base after the war for civil use. Despite considerable local opposition, Stansted became London's third airport in the 1980s. Today, the airport is a major employer, but the recurring threat of further expansion makes it a worrying neighbour.

The village grew out of a number of hamlets – Burton End in the east, now close to the airport, Bentfield End in the west and two central elements: the Chapel (along what was once the London-Newmarket coaching route, later classified as the A11 and now the B1383) and Lower Street (near the castle). In the 21st century they have been joined by Foresthall Park, a residential development on the former Rochford Nurseries site that has increased the parish's population by a third to around 8,000.

The village's several churches include 12th-century St Mary's and Victorian St John's in the village centre (shown here). Two particularly grand memorials in St Mary's are to Sir Thomas Middleton, a Lord Mayor of London who lived at Stansted Hall, and his daughter Hester Salusbury. They died in the early 17th century.



Stansted Hall, pictured below in winter, was rebuilt in the 19th century and today is used as a college by the Spiritualist movement.



Those arriving in the village from the south are welcomed by the outstretched arms of an 18th-century tower windmill. It is cared for by a volunteer group, the Stansted Millers, who open it to visitors (see links below) and hold a traditional village fete each August Bank Holiday Monday.

Between Norman times and the 21st century, Stansted Mountfitchet has been home to more than its fair share of distinguished residents, many of whom have left their mark. Notable former residents have included Lord James Blyth (1841-1925), whose various premises were used in the early 20th century for research into tuberculosis (TB); Sir Walter Gilbey (1841-1914) of Gilbey's Gin fame; and jazz trumpeter/singer Kenny Ball (1930–2013).



Scattered throughout the parish are over one hundred listed buildings, including 16th/17th-century Savages (pictured here) in Lower Street.

The railway station, which opened in 1845, provides an essential commuter link to London and Cambridge. The station is the convenient start or finish point for several Hundred Parishes walks, including number 3, which highlights many of the village's landmarks along its 3 miles. National Cycle Route 11 runs roughly north from here along quiet lanes through some lovely countryside to Whittlesford Station.

Much of Stansted Mountfitchet parish consists of attractive countryside – a mixture of gently undulating farmland and woodland - with two nature reserves – Turner's Spring at Burton End and Aubrey Buxton Reserve to the north.



Stansted put out the flags in 2012 to welcome the Olympic Torch as it passed through the village.

Despite recent expansion, Stansted Mountfitchet retains its village atmosphere and its residents insist that it is still a village, not a town.

There are good shopping facilities and a great abundance and variety of places to eat, mostly in two areas - along the B1383 and in the Lower Street area, close to the station.

Accommodation:

Chimneys Guest House, Lower Street – www.chimneysquesthouse.co.uk – 01279 813388
Kings Arms Hotel, Station Road – www.kingsarmshotelstansted.co.uk – 01279 815699
Linden House Hotel, B1383 – www.lindenhousestansted.co.uk – 01279 813003
Old Bell Hotel, B1383 – <http://www.theoldbellhotel.com>/01279 816555

Pubs and Restaurants:

Ash, Burton End – www.theashpub.co.uk – 01279 814841
Bean House Coffee Shop, Lower Street – 01279 817777 – www.thebeanhouse.co.uk
Bombay Butler (Indian), Station Road – www.bombaybutler.co.uk - 01279 815298 or 816492
Brasserie, Lower Street – www.thebrasserie.lowerstreet.co.uk – 01279 817177
Cock, B1383 - www.thecockatstansted.co.uk – 01279 812964
Cork House bar and bistro, Lower Street – www.thecorkhouse.co.uk – 01279 817474
Crimson 8 (Oriental), Castle Walk – 01279 812818
Dog & Duck, off Lower Street – 01279 812047
Kings Arms, Station Road – www.kingsarmshotelstansted.co.uk – 01279 815699
Linden House, B1383 – www.lindenhousestansted.co.uk – 01279 813003
Old Bell Hotel, B1383 – 01279 816555
Pino Pizza and Grill, Station Road – 01279 817822
Queens Head, Lower Street – 01279 815746
Rose & Crown, Bentfield Green – 01279 812107
Royal Tandoori, Chapel Hill – 01279 815688
Sonargow (Indian), Castle Walk – 01279 815706 or 815797
Wood Grill, Cambridge Road – 01279 813699 – www.woodgrillrestaurant.co.uk
Yeomans Cafe, Lower Street – <https://cafeyeomans.wordpress.com> – 01279 817755
Yummy's cafe, B1383 – 01279 817610

Included in Hundred Parishes walks:

- 1: Circular route from Stansted Mountfitchet railway station (11 miles).
- 2: Circular route from Stansted Mountfitchet station (7 miles).
- 3: Circular route from Stansted Mountfitchet station (3 miles).
- 4: Between Stansted Mountfitchet and Newport stations (7 miles).
- 9: Between Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Mountfitchet stations (6 miles).
- 12: Between Stansted Mountfitchet and Elsenham stations (4 miles).
- 18: Between Ware and Stansted Mountfitchet stations (17 miles).

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes:

Birchanger, Farnham, Manuden, Ugley, Elsenham, Takeley, Great Hallingbury.

Links:

Parish Council: www.stansted.net
Mountfitchet Castle: www.mountfitchetcastle.com
Stansted Windmill: www.stanstedmountfitchetwindmill.co.uk
House on the Hill toy museum: www.stanstedtoymuseum.com

Further reading:

Village map showing footpaths; Walks booklet – each available from parish council – 01279 813214
Around Stansted Mountfitchet (in old postcards), Paul Embleton
Stansted Station, a history, Ralph Phillips
They Sleep in Heroes' Graves, Stansted Mountfitchet during both World Wars, Glyn Warwick.