



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

STEBBING



Location: 6 miles west of Braintree and 4 miles northeast of Great Dunmow. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL6720. **Postcode:** CM6 3SW. **Access:** Off B1057 and B1256. **Bus services:** 16 (Chelmsford - Wethersfield), 417 (Newport to Rayne) and 314 (Great Dunmow to Braintree). **County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 1,300 in 2011.

Stebbing is a parish lying just north of Stane Street, the major Roman route from St Albans to England's oldest town, Colchester, a route that is now classified as B1256 in this area. The parish comprises a main village of the same name and a number of small hamlets which have settled roughly along the east bank of the River Chelmer tributary, Stebbing Brook. Apart from Stebbing Green, all other hamlets are, rather curiously, 'ends': Brook End, Duck End, Bran End and Church End. The term, found frequently in the Hundred Parishes, probably arose centuries ago when the settlement was not on a through route. Stebbing was named around the 6th or 7th century, possibly after a Saxon chief 'Stybba' or the Old English 'stybb', a tree stump; opinions differ. An ing(e) was a meadow or enclosure, therefore Stybba's land, or perhaps a woodland clearance.

Bronze Age burial mounds have been discovered in Stebbing, along with a first century cemetery, and there is evidence of Roman occupation in the Porters Hall Farm area, near Boxted Wood and close to Stane Street. At the time of the Norman Conquest the village was held by the Saxon thane Siward, but it is with the Domesday record that the detail of this area's history is extended. Two names are significant at this period of Stebbing's story: de Ferrers and de Peverel, names which are reflected in the village sign. These two families appear to have held much of Stebbing land through the next 300-400 years, gifting part of it, including the church, to the Knights Hospitallers until their dissolution in 1540. By this time there were three manors, Stebbing Hall in the hands of the Earls of Essex, Porters Hall and Priors Hall. Porters Hall and Priors Hall (seen here) still remain, as does Stebbing Park, which shares the parkland of The Mount motte castle. All are Grade II*-listed buildings from the 15th or 16th century. The motte has an earlier origin, probably from the 11th to 13th century; only the mound still exists.



There are many other listed buildings in the parish, most of which are clustered around Church End and along the High Street. Of particular note for the architectural enthusiast are the medieval Tan Farmhouse and The Chantry, the 17th-century Quaker Meeting House, the 18th-century Congregational Chapel and the curious Tudor Cottage, its lopsidedly drunken tilt delightfully reminiscent (for those old enough) of the Crazy House at Battersea Funfair in the 1950s. The twists and turns inside used to be dizzy-making; one wonders if Tudor Cottage has a similar effect on its residents. On a smaller scale, Rose Cottage in Church End was for some years the home of Victorian ship's doctor and prolific author Henry de Vere Stacpoole. These buildings, along with many others, are helpfully identified and described in The Stebbing Conservation Area Appraisal document (see below).

The Quaker Meeting House and the Congregational Chapel declare Stebbing's history as a centre for dissenters from the established Church of England. The relatively central location of both, and their proximity to the Anglican church of St Mary the Virgin, suggest the popularity here of non-conformist persuasion in the 17th and 18th centuries. Only St Mary's remains as a consecrated place of worship today.

St Mary's is a 14th-century church built in the Decorated tradition on foundations which are probably some 200 years older. Its most notable feature is the beautiful carved stone rood screen across the chancel arch. It is one of only three remaining in Europe, another being in nearby Great Bardfield and the other at Trondheim Cathedral in Norway. Many medieval artefacts remain, including remnants of medieval wall paintings.



For the walker there are many footpaths and small scattered areas of woodland to enjoy. A short circular walk following the footpath from Mill Lane through Stebbing Park along Stebbing Brook towards Bran End, and then back along the High Street will prove a delightful introduction to all that is best in the parish: rolling park and farmland, flora and fauna, mere and stream, beautiful buildings.

The village has a community shop and if you come at the right time you will be able to enjoy the monthly market too. The White Hart would be a good stopping off point for refreshment - open for lunches and evening meals. If you're a musician you might want to time your visit to the White Hart for the monthly Open Mic Acoustic Music Afternoons (second Sunday of the month).

Stebbing is a cohesive community with a strong sense of history and a vibrant social life. The local history society has been in existence for over 20 years. A quarterly magazine Stebbing Scene (obtainable online through the Parish Council website - see below) keeps everybody in touch and up-to-date. There is an interest group for everyone, from bowls to bell-ringing and gardening to horse-riding (try the Duck End Stables), and a laudable endeavour to hold onto those aspects of community identity which are the heart of village life.

Hospitality

The White Hart, High Street, CM6 3SQ - 01371 856383 - www.facebook.com/whitehartstebbing

Andrewsfield Milli-Bar, Saling Airfield, CM6 3TH (bar and cafe) - 0792 3981 900 -

<http://andrewsfield.com/andrewsfield-millibar/>

Motts Cottage B&B, CM6 3SE - 01371 856633 - <https://www.mottsbedandbreakfast.co.uk/>

Adjacent Hundred Parishes parishes: Felsted, Little Dunmow, Great Dunmow, Lindsell, Little Bardfield, Great Bardfield, Bardfield Saling, Great Saling.

Links

Stebbing Parish Council: www.stebbingparishcouncil.org.uk

Stebbing Local History Society: <https://stebbinglhs.wordpress.com>

Further reading:

The Church of St Mary the Virgin, Stebbing. C E Livesey. Robus 1924.

Stebbing Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Proposals. Can be downloaded from www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/1931/Sebbing-Conservation-Area-Appraisal/pdf/Stebbing_Approved_CA.pdf