



The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

WICKEN BONHUNT



Location: 4 miles southwest of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL4933.
Postcode: CB11 3UG. **Access:** B1038. 2 miles west of Newport station. Shopper bus only.
County: Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 223 in 2011.

Wicken Bonhunt is a small parish covering an area of around one square mile or three square kilometres. It appeared in the Domesday Book of 1086 as two hamlets: Wica and Banhunta.

Nowadays, the B1038, Wicken Road, passes through the village of Wicken Bonhunt itself and most residents live along this road.

The M11 motorway crosses over Wicken Road just inside the parish's eastern boundary. Only a hundred metres from the northbound carriageway stands the parish's oldest building, St Helen's Chapel. This tiny chapel of flint and pebble, comprising nave and chancel, dates from the 11th or 12th century and is one of the oldest buildings in the Hundred Parishes. For many years it was used as a barn, but is now treated with more respect, its 21st-century thatch shielding tiny 12th-century windows.



In the centre of the village, the parish church, dedicated to St Margaret, has a 13th-century chancel. The rest of the church was almost completely rebuilt in the 1850s. The tower has a distinctive pyramid-shaped roof. Since 2013, the parish church has also been used as the village community centre.

The village pub, the Coach and Horses, stands on the main road, close to the parish church. The thatched element is timber-framed and plastered, dating from the 17th century, and the brick-built extension was added in the 19th. Over the years, the colour of the exterior walls has changed quite often. At the time of this review they were cream. For the last few years, the establishment has functioned as a Thai restaurant. Passengers in the coach on the pub sign are cartoons of old village characters.



The churches and the Coach and Horses are among the parish's 17 listed buildings, of which 11 date from before 1700 AD. One of the most interesting is Brick House, built of red brick around 1600 AD. Sadly, it is barely visible behind its high brick wall, a little west of the pub along the main road. Brick House was the home of the Bradbury family who were related to Dame Bradbury who, in the 16th century, founded the school of that name in Saffron Walden.



Another notable building, standing back from the road a little east of the pub, is the former rectory. It was built in 1856 by a newly-appointed rector, Reverend John Hanson Sperling. He was responsible for the detailed design which catered for his young family and several servants. They stayed only six years before he took up a new appointment. The Rectory was sold by the church in 1919. From 1945 to 2008, Wicken House, as it was then called, was owned by Essex County Council who used it for residential educational courses. It was also used for parish functions. It is now in private ownership.

The attractive and varied dwellings along Wicken Road include this group to the east of the pub.

Wicken Water flows through the parish, coming from Arkesden in the northwest. Just as in Arkesden, it flows beside the main road, with several houses accessed via bridges over the stream. It passes close to St Helen's Chapel on its way to Newport, where it flows into the River Cam. A footpath that accompanies the stream - from the village past the chapel and on towards Newport - probably follows the original route taken by pre-motorised traffic before the present road was built with a more northerly alignment.



Two of the Hundred Parishes station-to-station walks pass through Wicken Bonhunt. This view of the parish church may be seen on walk number 11, approaching the parish from the south.



There is excellent in-depth coverage of various aspects of Wicken Bonhunt's history on the website of the Recorders of Uttlesford History – see link below.

Hospitality:

Coach and Horses (Ananta Thai restaurant) - 01799 543519 - www.anantathaifood.com

Included in Hundred Parishes walks:

4: Between Stansted Mountfitchet and Newport stations (7 miles).

11: Between Newport and Audley End stations (10 miles)

Adjacent parishes: Clavering, Arkesden, Wendens Ambo, Newport, Quendon & Rickling.

Links:

Parish Council: No effective internet presence.

Recorders of Uttlesford History: <http://recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/wickenbonhunthome.htm>