



# The Hundred Parishes

An introduction to

## WIMBISH



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**Location:** 5 miles southeast of Saffron Walden. **Ordnance Survey grid square:** TL5834.  
**Postcode:** CB10 2XG. **Access:** B184. **Buses:** 94 and 312 to Saffron Walden (one per day).  
**County:** Essex. **District:** Uttlesford. **Population:** 1,629 in 2011.

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The parish consists of a widely spread community stretching some 4 miles from end to end and covering almost 5,000 acres.

Long views over pleasant open farmland are a feature of the parish, which is believed to have more miles of public footpaths than any other parish in Essex, making it a haven for walkers and naturalists.

The origin of the name Wimbish is not clear but the most frequently quoted explanation is that it is a combination of meadow (wim) and reedy, or bushy, (beis) place. Its first mention in historical documents was in 1042 when it was spelt Winebisc. Later in the Domesday Book in 1086 the spelling changed to Wimbeis. The parish was once two separate villages, Wimbish and Thunderley, which were united in 1425.

Wimbish does not have a traditional village centre but has several quite distinct hamlets, each with its own individual character and identity. The larger settlements are at Tye Green, Howlett End, Upper and Lower Green (or Wimbish Green) and Elder Street/Carver Barracks. The traditional village amenities are spread around these settlements. Tye Green has Wimbish Primary School, the village hall, meeting room and recreation ground. These are almost a mile from the White Hart



pub/restaurant at Rowney Corner in Howlett End (pictured here) which, in turn, is almost a mile from the shop/post office at Elder Street. The parish church stands a mile north of Tye Green.



All Saints' Church (Wimbish with Thunderley) dates from the first half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century with additions over subsequent centuries and major improvements in the 19<sup>th</sup>. The north chapel, known as Thunderley chapel, was built in 1340 and is thought to incorporate materials from the demolished church of Thunderley, a parish that was absorbed into Wimbish long ago.

The church is unusual in that it has no tower or spire. The tower was struck by lightning in 1740. Its replacement was deemed unsafe and pulled down in 1883.

The church contains 14th-century oak screens and heraldic glass depicting shields of ancient local families. An elegant brass depicts Sir John de Wantone and his wife Ellen. He fought at the battle of Crecy in 1346 and died in 1347.

Wimbish's fine listed buildings include Grade I Tiptofts, in the north of the parish near Swards End. It can trace its origins back to 1330 and is exceptional for its surviving aisled hall. It is rumoured to have been a meeting place for the 1605 Gunpowder Plot conspirators, but there is no evidence to confirm it.

Also of note is Broadoaks, shown here. It was built in 1560 and contains fine oak doors and panelling. It is famous for its priest hole which in 1594 hid the Catholic priest, Father John Gerard, for four days while his pursuers searched the house.



Between 1682 and 1776 about 25 adults and children were buried privately in gardens and fields in Wimbish. This is alleged to have begun after an illegitimate child was not baptised and was refused burial in the churchyard. The majority are buried in a small field in Howlett End, known as the Dissenters' Burial Ground. After many years of neglect it was restored about 50 years ago and is now maintained by private donation.

Howlett End is also home to a Steam Engine Yard where a number of enthusiasts maintain and operate these vehicles. Other Wimbish activities and organisations include a bowls club, "Good Companions" (an over 55s group), Wimbish Walkers (rambling group), Café Church, pilates, Brownies, film club, social/fundraising group ("the Jubblies") and a village choir.

Carver Barracks, in the southwest of the parish, has been a significant presence for many years. It opened in 1937 as RAF Debden, was operated by the American Air Force from 1942 to 1945, and reverted to an RAF base after the war. In 1975 it was renamed Carver Barracks and has since functioned as an army base. During World War II it was visited by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth and just a week later by a German pilot. He landed, realised his error and quickly took off again!

Carver Barracks is currently the home of about 500 bomb disposal army personnel and their families. The presence of a number of Ghurkhas at the barracks led to the formation of the Tang Ting Twinning Association which raises funds for additional facilities to be provided in the Nepalese village where many of the local Ghurkhas were raised. Wimbish and its neighbouring parish of Debden are formally twinned with Tang Ting.

Wimbish's most recent claim to fame is the construction of 14 properties by a local Housing Association in 2011. These were built to "Passivhaus" standards meaning that their energy consumption is only about 10% of that in a conventional property. It was the first rural housing development of its kind in the UK and won several awards. The properties are reserved for applicants with a strong local connection.

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#### **Hospitality:**

Elder Street Café & Deli, Debden Barns – 01799 543598 - [www.elderstreetcafedeli.co.uk](http://www.elderstreetcafedeli.co.uk)

Field View B&B – 01799 599616 - [www.fieldviewbedandbreakfast.com](http://www.fieldviewbedandbreakfast.com)

Newdegate House B&B – 01799 599748 - [jacky@newdegate.co.uk](mailto:jacky@newdegate.co.uk)

White Hart Restaurant & Bar, Howlett End – 01799 599030 - [www.whitehartwimbish.co.uk](http://www.whitehartwimbish.co.uk)

#### **Adjacent parishes:**

Debden, Saffron Walden, Swards End, Radwinter, The Sampfords, Thaxted.

#### **Links:**

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

History - [www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Wimbish/wimbish.html](http://www.recordinguttlesfordhistory.org.uk/Wimbish/wimbish.html)

Wimbish Passivhaus project: [www.wimbishpassivhaus.com](http://www.wimbishpassivhaus.com)

#### **Further Reading:**

*Wimbish Through the Centuries*, Isabel Wiseman – available from [www.lopinga.com](http://www.lopinga.com)

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